

STUDY REPORT

Youth engagement in national climate
change policy (NAPs and NDCs)
formulation and implementation in West
and Central Africa

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Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AYICC	African Youth Initiative on Climate Change
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
COP28	28 th session of the Conference of Parties
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GGW	Great Green Wall
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
RCC WAC Africa	UN Climate Change's Regional Collaboration Centre for West and Central Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Organisations for Education, Science and Culture
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
YOUNGO	Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC (YOUTH + NGO = YOUNGO)
YCJF	Youth Climate Justice Fund

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Executive summary

Youth are and will continue to be among the most affected social groups if current and projected levels of global warming continue. This vulnerability of theirs seems most often blurred in climate policy formulation and implementation both at international, regional, and national levels. Youth are in many cases seen as recipients rather than contributors to key policy processes. Nine out of the top 10 world's most vulnerable countries to climate change are in sub-Saharan Africa with six of them (Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Niger) found in West and Central Africa. The region has a youthful population which will bear most of the consequences and the heavy responsibilities to cope with the more frequent and intensifying impacts of climate change.

As countries strive to address the climate crisis by putting in place policies such as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), it urges to engage youth in these policies as they need to be owned by youth who constitute the major demographic. Narratives of youth inclusion abound and in several forums this has been topical. However, information about how youth engage with policy formulation and implementation when it comes to climate change is scarce and scanty. Through this report, the UNFCCC's Regional Collaboration Centre for West and Central Africa attempts to capture youth perspectives on the state of youth engagement in West and Central Africa on two key climate policies: NAPs and NDCs. With the aim to better understand youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation in the region, the study employed a survey to analyse experiences and good practices of youth inclusion in NAPs and NDCs processes in the region and challenges for youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation. A review of literature was used to complement the survey to propose solutions to enhance youth inclusion in climate action for the region.

Results from the over 250 survey respondents and literature review show low youth participation in NAPs and NDCs processes, although respondents indicate in few instances with some examples of youth participation in some countries. General awareness of youth about climate policies is high (79%) with general youth participation in climate formulation processes being medium (50% of respondents) while their participation in NDCs and NAPs formulation processes is low (39% and 38%, respectively). In addition, being part of a youth-led organization proves to be useful in increasing youth knowledge about climate policy processes such as NAPs and NDCs. There is a disparity in information sharing across gender as data underscores poor female youth representation in the climate space in the region. Youth engagement on certain topics key for NDCs and NAPs implementation like climate entrepreneurship and finance, climate research, energy, industry, eco-tourism, and waste management is low. In terms of experiences of youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs, views are not positive in the region. Challenges to address for meaningful youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes stem from lack of inclusive governance mechanisms, financial barriers, limited capacity building, non-inclusive NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes, and lack of education on climate change topics.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. NAPs and NDCs: What are they?

Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), two major responses to climate change recognized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ - are adaptation and mitigation. In 2015, countries worldwide adopted the Paris Agreement (PA) as a global response to climate change. The PA sets clear long-term objective to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, including mitigation and adaptation that national climate actions will collectively achieve.

Adaptation refers to any process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities². Mitigation, on the other hand, is about reducing greenhouse gas emissions or enhancing the sinks of greenhouse gases³ responsible for global warming and climate change. To achieve both mitigation and adaptation goals, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were established under the UNFCCC as policy frameworks that lay down concrete plans each country (that is signatory to the PA) will undertake to fight the climate crisis at national level in the view to achieve the overarching global goal of the Convention and the Paris Agreement⁴.

NAPs identified as adaptation policy are strategic frameworks that assist countries in addressing climate change impacts and strengthening resilience, particularly in vulnerable sectors. NDCs are mostly mitigation policies of countries' commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Agreement. Both processes are critical for climate action, allowing countries to customize their policies to specific needs and national circumstances, eventually aiming for sustainable development and global collaboration.

1.1.2. Significance of Youth Involvement in Shaping and Implementing Climate Policies

As the world faces the escalating threat of climate change and its disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable people, including marginalized groups, women, children and youth, the role of the latter is instrumental to change the game. The youth of today will bear the consequences of the present actions and inactions; thus, an important demography to consider in policy making. There has been a growing global interest in enabling youth participation in decision-making, which was first emphasized in Agenda 21 after the Rio Summit.

According to the [World Youth Report \(2020\)](#), there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population⁵. As re-emphasized by [UNESCO](#), young people embody hope for better, innovative, and more effective solutions to the world's challenges⁶. [Data from the Stockholm Environment Institute \(SEI, 2022\)](#) highlight the urgency of climate change, revealing that a child born in 2020 is twice as likely to experience wildfires, 2.6 times more prone to droughts, 2.8 times more vulnerable to river floods, and a staggering 6.8 times more susceptible to heat waves than

¹ [About — IPCC](#)

² https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/11/sr15_glossary.pdf

³ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/11/sr15_glossary.pdf

⁴ See Article 2 of the [UNFCCC](#) and Article 2.1 of the [Paris Agreement](#)

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.unesco.org/en/youth>

someone born in 1960. Given these challenges, it is critical to include youth voices in environmental choices and support efforts aimed at creating a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future.

Africa's population is already the youngest in the world with a median age of 19.7 in 2020. This is a significant age gap when compared to 31.0 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 32.0 in Asia, 33.4 in Oceania, 38.6 in Northern America and 42.5 in Europe, the oldest continent. Currently, around 60% of Africa's population is younger than 25 years, and more than a third between 15-34 years old. By 2100, Africa should still have the youngest population worldwide with a median age of 35⁷. West and Central Africa has a population of 468.7 million people. **33%** of the population in West and Central Africa is under 24 far above the global average (**16%**). A third of the sub-region's current population, projected to reach 1.2 billion by 2050, is aged between 10 and 24 years old. By 2025, the region is projected to have the youthful population globally and to remain the only where youth numbers will continue to grow⁸.

Many institutions are active in promoting youth engagement in decision-making and policymaking processes. UNDP has developed a checklist for youth inclusive NDC process, providing officials and other stakeholders with a comprehensive guide for establishing a youth inclusive NDC process⁹. UNICEF works for child-sensitive climate policies and has provided guidance for developing NDCs for and with children and young people. This guidance emphasized that fewer than half of all NDCs consider the specific strengths, needs and roles of youth in the fight against the climate crisis, while two out of every five NDCs do not address children and young people's unique climate vulnerabilities across core social sectors that are essential for children, and a mere 3% of NDCs mention involving children in the NDC development process¹⁰. The Universal NDC Youth Clause is an example of youth-led effort backed by many governments to institutionalize meaningful youth participation¹¹.

Youth will inherit the planet and its challenges, including those associated with climate change. They have a long-term stake in the outcomes of climate policies given they constitute the bulk of the population. The United Nations recognises the need for involving young people in UN climate discussions, given that their futures are threatened by the effects of climate change, such as increased drought, heatwaves and flooding, and that young people stand to benefit the most from the transition to low carbon and resilience¹².

1.1.3. Youth Voices in the international climate processes

Youth voices in the climate negotiations were officially recognized under the UNFCCC in 2009 through the extension of a constituency status to admitted youth NGOs¹³. Two years later, the constituency was formalized and confirmed as YOUNGO to formally represent the voices of children and youth in UNFCCC processes. YOUNGO became one of the nine civil society constituencies of the UNFCCC. It is the network of children and youth organizations, groups, and individuals who identify themselves as children or youth below the age of 35 years¹⁴, who contribute to shaping the intergovernmental climate change policies and strive to empower youth to formally bring their voices to the UNFCCC processes¹⁵.

⁷ MIF, 2019. Ibrahim Forum Report: Africa's youth: jobs or migration?

https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_2.pdf

⁸ Youth-in-WCA-report_November-2017-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf

⁹ <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-11/undp-on-equal-terms-checklist-youth-inclusive-ndc-process.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-and-youth-sensitive-nationally-determined-contributions>

¹¹ <https://universalyouthclause.org/>

¹² <https://unfccc.int/news/youth-demand-a-greater-role-in-climate-action>

¹³ <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/youth/younggo>

¹⁴ <https://youngclimate.org/about-us/>

¹⁵ <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/youth/younggo>

YOUNGO is organized in different working groups focusing on various aspects of the UNFCCC negotiations and beyond. Besides that, YOUNGO members observe and report on climate negotiations and the implications of their outcomes¹⁶.

In recent years, youth voices have gained prominence in global discourses and responses to climate change injustices. The efforts of groups such as YOUNGO have been vital in contributing to the increased consideration of youth voices in formal climate processes. In line with the intergenerational equity and climate justice principles enshrined in the Paris Agreement, it is essential to garner youth voices on mitigation and adaptation policies both at global and regional levels. At [COP28](#), the Conference of the Parties in [Decision 16/CP.28](#) and [Decision 21/CMA.5](#) have established that a youth climate champion between the ages of 18 and 35 years will be appointed to act on behalf of the Presidency of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) to facilitate the enhancement of the meaningful, inclusive engagement of youth in climate action, including within the UNFCCC process¹⁷. This is another great key milestone in the recognition of youth as key players in climate action.

In Africa, the disproportionate impact of climate change on youth is highlighted by the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2020), stressing the urgency of their participation in shaping climate policies. In the same vein, the importance of youth in Africa's development has been emphasized in the African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa, prepared for the Copenhagen World Summit in 1995 and at the Conference of Ministers to adopt the African Youth Charter (May 2006).

1.1.4. Focus on West and Central Africa

In the Western and Central Africa Region, youth aged 24 and below make up more than 64% of the population¹⁸. Despite their demographic weight, and tremendous resource they are for the region, overall data indicate their little presence in decision making processes, including in leadership positions and roles.

1.1.4.1. Climate vulnerabilities in West and Central Africa

West and Central Africa is a region characterized by significant climate vulnerabilities and a youthful population. The region faces severe climate challenges, including:

- Extreme Weather Events: countries in the Sahel, such as Chad and Niger, experience temperatures rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, leading to frequent droughts and floods¹⁹.
- Erratic Climate Patterns: the region's climate is becoming increasingly unpredictable, complicating disaster preparedness and response efforts²⁰.
- High Climate Risk for Children: according to UNICEF, 16 out of 24 countries in West and Central Africa are among the top 30 globally where children are most at risk from climate change²¹. This includes exposure to heatwaves, water scarcity, and increased disease risks²².

¹⁶ <https://youngoclimate.org/about-us/>

¹⁷ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cop28_auv_2h_youth.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00083968.2023.2255904>

¹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/reports/unicefs-children-climate-risk-index-places-children-wca-most-risk>

²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/reports/unicefs-children-climate-risk-index-places-children-wca-most-risk>

²¹ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/reports/unicefs-children-climate-risk-index-places-children-wca-most-risk>

²² <https://www.unicef.org/wca/topics/climate-change-and-impacts>

1.1.4.2. Youth Demographics in West and Central Africa

West and Central Africa has one of the youngest populations in the world. In fact, about 48% of the population lives in urban areas, and 12% are under the age of 15²³. Although this significant demographic dividend, youth are facing enormous challenges, including limited access to education, high unemployment rates, and inadequate social protection²⁴. In addition, rapid urbanisation and high population growth strain resources and infrastructure²⁵.

The combination of these climate vulnerabilities and demographic pressures presents significant challenges but also opportunities for targeted interventions to improve resilience and development outcomes in the region, including the importance of youth involvement in addressing regional climate challenges.

1.1.4.3. Current climate policies in West and Central Africa: NAPs and NDCs

Policies to deal with climate change exist at international, regional and national levels. West and Central Africa face significant climate challenges, including droughts, floods, and rising temperatures, which significantly impact critical economic sectors such as agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods. To address these issues, many countries in the region have developed NAPs and NDCs as part of their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Countries' NDCs in West and Central Africa emphasize both mitigation and adaptation, reflecting the region's distinct socioeconomic and environmental features. Key categories include:

- Emissions Reduction Targets: countries set ambitious targets for reducing emissions, often focusing on critical sectors such as energy, agriculture, and forestry. Most targets are contingent on international assistance.
- Sectoral Priorities:
 - o Energy: a focus on increasing renewable energy (solar, hydro, and wind) to diversify energy sources and lessen dependency on fossil fuels.
 - o Agriculture: promoting climate-smart agriculture techniques to improve food security and minimize emissions.
 - o Forestry: strategies aimed at reducing deforestation and enhancing forest management to contribute to carbon sequestration.

On the other hand, NAPs in the region prioritize adaptation to climate change impacts, with an emphasis on increasing resilience among vulnerable populations and ecosystems. The key themes include:

- Vulnerability assessments: many countries have done vulnerability assessments to identify at-risk communities and ecosystems, which serve as the foundation for focused adaptation initiatives.
- Ecosystem-based approaches: efforts to restore and manage ecosystems such as wetlands and forests to increase resilience and minimize climate change.
- Disaster Risk Reduction: taking climate hazards into account in national and local planning procedures to lessen vulnerability to extreme weather events.

Overall, at the time of the study, all 26 countries in West and Central Africa had an NDC while 13 only had a NAP.

²³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/western-and-central-africa>

²⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/adolescents-and-youth-report-west-and-central-africa>

²⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/reports/unicefs-children-climate-risk-index-places-children-wca-most-risk>

1.1.4.4. Youth and Climate Policies in West and Central Africa

Climate change is one of the most pressing intergenerational equity issues of our time. Young people, in general, who presently account for more than half of the world population, are the generation that will not only be most affected by climate change but will also have the duty to address it. This important constituency, however, is often not engaged in policy processes and the development of climate change response strategies and initiatives. The issue of youth agency is most serious in Africa, which is both the most vulnerable to climate impacts and has the youngest population, with nearly 60% of the continent's population under the age of 25²⁶.

Over the past years, youth inclusion in climate policies has gained momentum owing to a string of efforts by the international community. This has been reflected in several policies and related formulation and planning processes worldwide, including in the climate policy realm such as the international climate negotiations and UNFCCC processes. On the African continent, a review of NDCs submitted by African countries highlights that (as at end of 2022) out of the 53 NDCs submitted 37 made one or more references to youth²⁷. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have begun to integrate adaptation into national development plans and climate change policies²⁸.

A recent review of NAPs and Adaptation communications in West and Central Africa indicates that youth, including children are not considered to the extent required in adaptation policies and strategies in the region (UNICEF, 2024)²⁹.

Overall, youth voices have gained significance in official climate discussions, as well as in the crafting and implementation of national and global climate strategies, and the number of youth climate councils, advocacy networks, and platforms has increased. However, there appears to be limited literature available that speaks to how youth in West and Central Africa interact and engage with NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes. To fill this knowledge gap, the UNFCCC's Regional Collaboration Centre for West and Central Africa (RCC WAC Africa) finds it relevant to undertake a survey to analyse youth voices on NAPs and NDCs in the region. Targeting youth of the region, the study seeks to gain insights on what youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs looks like in West and Central Africa. The current shift in focus in 2025 towards the formulation of third generation NDCs and NAPs provided a good opportunity to gauge how well youth in West and Central Africa assessed their level of engagement in the formulation of these policy instruments.

1.2. Aim

The study aims to explore the perspectives of youth on the formulation and implementation of NAPs and NDCs in countries of West and Central Africa. Concretely, it will aid to better understand how youth perceive their inclusion in the formulation and implementation of NAPs and NDCs, including identifying barriers and challenges youth face in engaging with these processes to enhancing youth engagement in climate action across the region.

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1. Overall objective

This study aims to analyse the views of youth on their engagements on two key climate change policies (NAPs and NDCs) in West and Central Africa.

²⁶ https://knowledgehub.southernafriatrust.org/site/assets/files/2017/youth_and_climate_change_special-report-benkenstein-et-al-002.pdf

²⁷ <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/a1bbd5b0-3492-4cd0-97fd-ed242733d6ad>

²⁸ https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/regional_briefing_on_NAPs_africa.pdf

²⁹ [UNICEF WCARO ENG Child responsive adaptation brief May 2024.pdf.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/eng/child-responsive-adaptation-brief-may-2024.pdf)

1.3.2. Specific objectives

The study seeks to:

- i. understand youth participation in the region in the formulation and implementation processes of NAPs and NDCs;
- ii. identify experiences and analyse good practices of youth inclusion in NAPs and NDCs processes in the region; and
- iii. explore challenges for youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation to enhance youth inclusion in climate action in the region.

1.4. Limitations

Even though the survey was conducted in the two major languages in the region (French and English), allowing maximum participation of youth from the region, these two languages are spoken in 23 of the 26 countries targeted in the study. Therefore, the response rate from Lusophone and Spanish-speaking countries (Cabo Verde, Bissau Guinea, and Equatorial Guinea) response was low.

1.5. Definition of concepts

Youth are defined as individuals aged between 15-24 years according to the United Nations definition, even though this definition may vary across contexts, countries, and institutions. For the purposes of this report, the definition of youth aligns with the age range used by YOUNGO (15-35 years), while acknowledging that the legal age of majority in most African countries, particularly in West and Central Africa, is 18. Therefore, in this report, youth are considered to be individuals aged 18-35 years.

Youth engagement implies the active involvement of young people in decision-making processes, community activities, and initiatives that affect their lives and the world around them. In broader terms, it includes establishing opportunities for youth to voice their opinions, act, and contribute to shaping social, political, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Meaningful participation of youth looks at the dimension of governance youth want to influence, the roles youth perform, the stakeholders youth interact with, the level of governance they participate in and the stage of decision making they participate to (as illustrated in Figure 1). This report focuses more on the stage of decision-making youth participate as the latter covers issues of climate policy formulation and implementation including agenda setting, design/formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation.

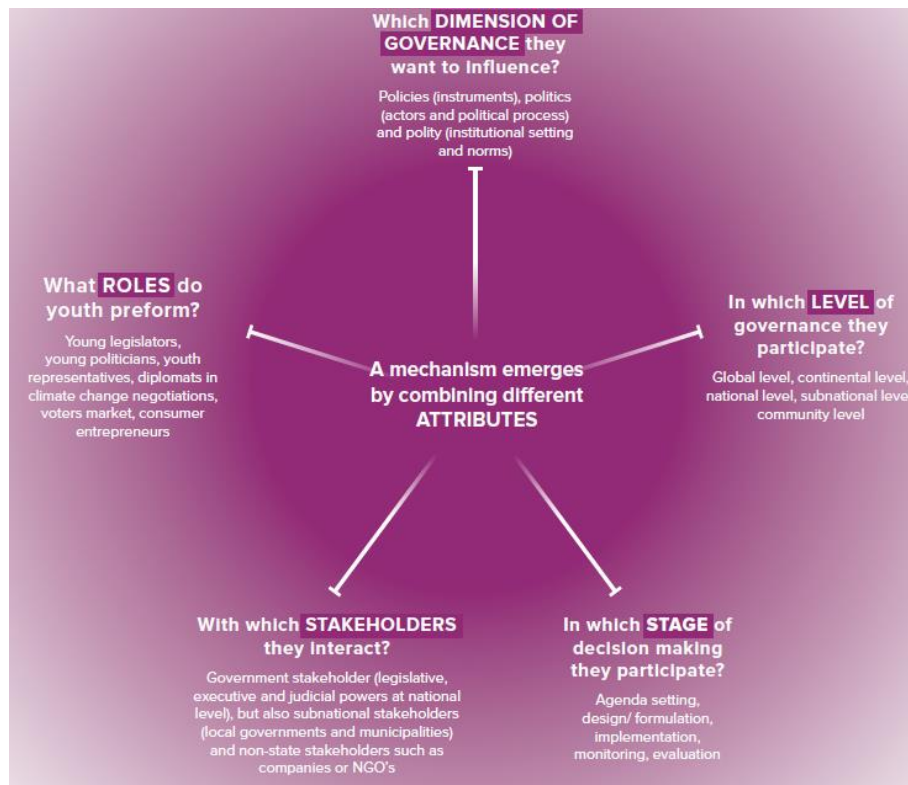


Figure 1: Mechanisms of youth meaningful participation³⁰

Climate policy formulation is the process of developing strategies, rules, regulations, and actions aimed at addressing climate change and that encompasses a) identifying the causes and impacts of climate change; b) setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate impacts; and c) promoting sustainability. This process usually includes a series of steps, such as research and analysis, stakeholder consultation, goal setting, policy development, and implementation planning.

Climate policy implementation refers to the process acting on the strategies, measures, and frameworks established during the policy formulation phase to address climate change. It includes practical execution of laws, regulations, and programs designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote climate adaptation, and support sustainable development.

1.6. Methodology

1.6.1. Target

To be as clear as possible, we needed to set an age limit, since the questionnaire was intended for youth. Based on the region under study and the legal recognition of the age maturity of youth, youth in this study are 18-35 years old. Another reason is in connection with consent from participants which is easy to get at 18 in most of the countries of the region.

The geographic scope of the study is the 26 countries in West and Central Africa which are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, São Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

³⁰ UNDP (2022). [UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action.pdf](#)

1.6.2. Process

In the view of capturing a comprehensive understanding of youth engagement with climate policies in West and Central Africa, a questionnaire was deployed through an online survey. Covering four sections: i) Background information; ii) Experiences of Youth Participation to formulation and implementation of climate policies in West and Central Africa; iii) Barriers and Challenges for youth participation in NDCs and NAPs formulation and implementation; and iv) Needs and Good practices of Youth inclusion in climate policies in West and Central Africa Region. The online survey was developed and reviewed before its dissemination among youth-led climate organizations and climate related Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with youth in the region. The targeted participants were primarily from youth-led climate organizations listed in the RCC WAC Africa’s databases and others were reached via social media platforms (LinkedIn and WhatsApp).

In all, 250 youth responded to the survey within two months from 21 August to 21 October 2024. The survey was disseminated both in English and French. After analysing the data collected, the study made use of relevant literature on youth and climate change policies to discuss the findings to answer the research questions.

Section 2: Findings and discussions

This section explores the demographic information of the respondents, affiliations of individual respondents to youth-led climate organizations, networks, and alliances.

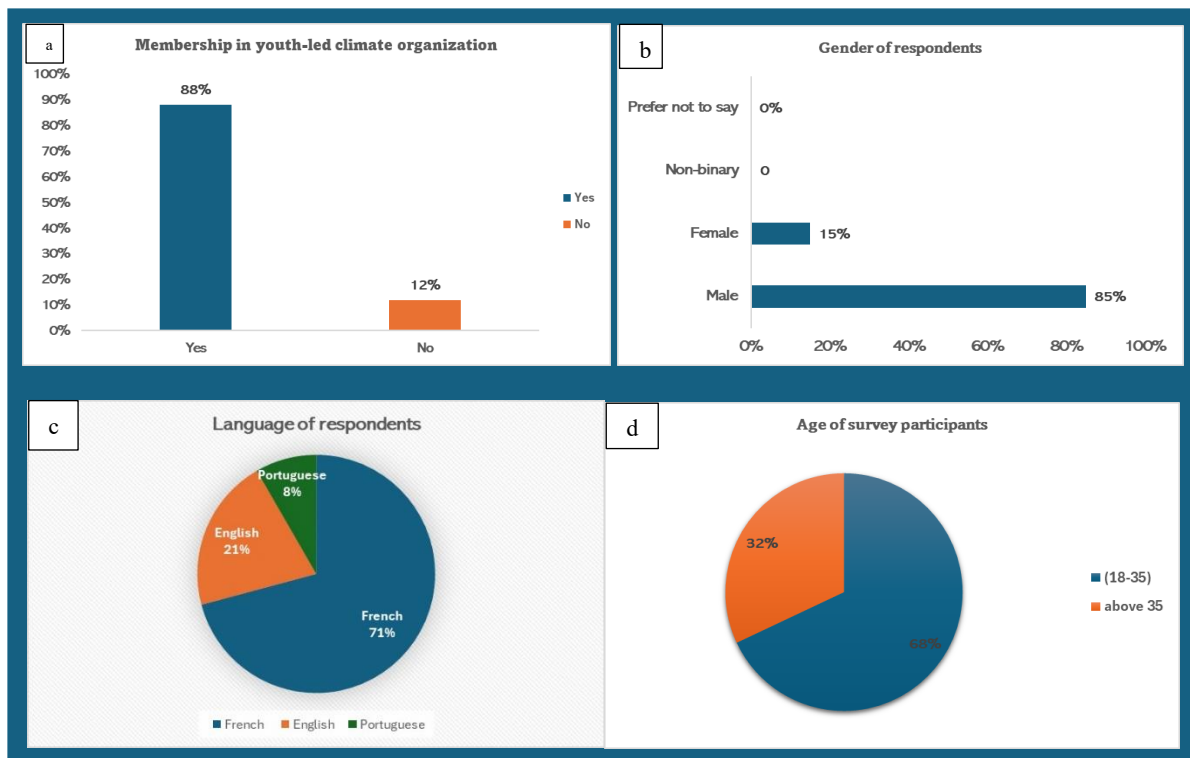


Figure 2: Socio-demographics of respondents (a. membership, b. gender, c. language, d. age)

The majority (88%) of respondents are members of youth-led climate organizations while the rest are individual youth as shown in Figure 2.

The gender parity in the responses was skewed towards male respondents. The female representation is 15% compared to male being 85%. This sheds light on how information channels amongst gender

and perhaps the minor representation of female youth in the climate space in the region. The online nature of the survey may have also limited female youth participation due to structural barriers such as, limited internet access among vulnerable groups, including women and people living in rural areas. Limited access to timely information and adequate resources like internet connectivity among others, considered as structural factors, often prevents women and girls from participating to climate discussions. Gender differences in rights, responsibilities, and opportunities are due to “historical disadvantages, women, and girls’ limited access to economic resources to own tools to access information (Antwi-Agyei et al., 2021). However, gender disparity in participation may warrant further exploration.

Respondents were mostly from French and English-speaking countries followed by Portuguese speaking countries from Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe underscoring the diversity of languages spoken in the region. No responses to the survey were obtained from two countries: Cabo Verde and Equatorial Guinea perhaps due to language barriers (as the survey was only available in French and English) as indicated in the limitations section above.

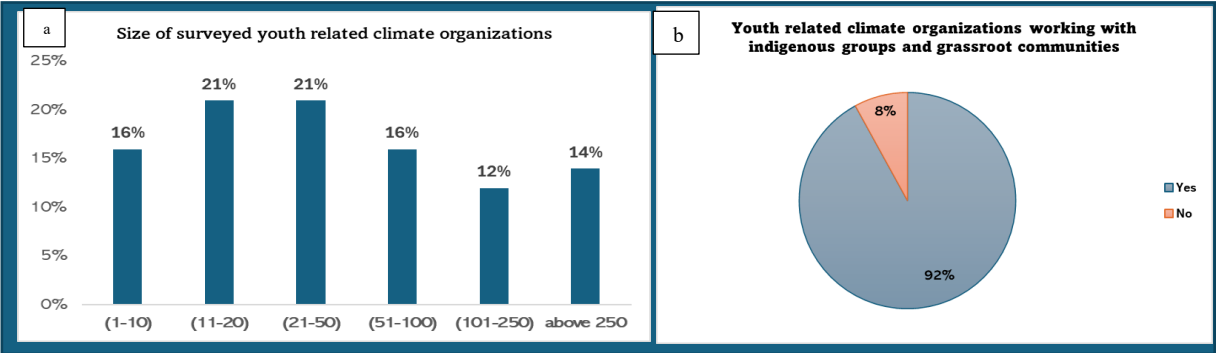


Figure 3: Membership and relationship with grassroots communities (a. membership, b. relation with grassroots)

The majority (74%) of youth participating to the survey belong to climate related organizations with membership of less than 100 people (Figure 3a). At the same time, 92% of these organizations are working closely with indigenous groups and grassroots communities (Figure 3b). This underscores the prominent community level nature of intervention in climate action of youth in the region.

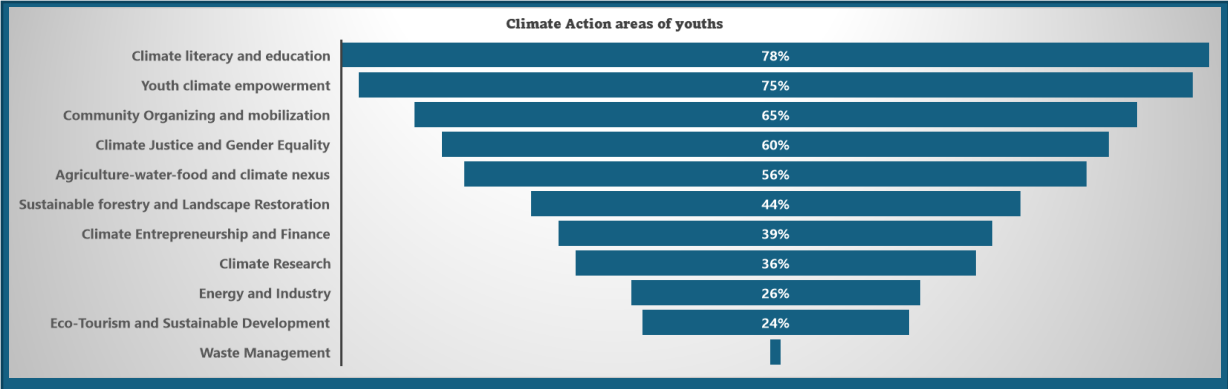


Figure 4³¹: Climate action areas of youth respondents

³¹ Respondents could select as many options as they wanted, therefore the total does not equal to 100%.

Figure 4 above details the specific areas or topics youth-led climate organisations cover the most. The various areas of climate action of these organisations include climate literacy and education, action for climate empowerment, community actions (organizing and mobilization), advocacy for climate justice and gender equality, work in agriculture-water-food and climate nexus, and sustainable forestry and landscape restoration. However, it is important to underscore that these organisations focus intersect most of these areas. Subjects like climate entrepreneurship and finance, climate research, energy, and industry as well as eco-tourism and sustainable development and waste management seem underexplored by youth and their affiliated organizations involved in climate action in the region.

Youth Awareness on Climate Policy Formulation

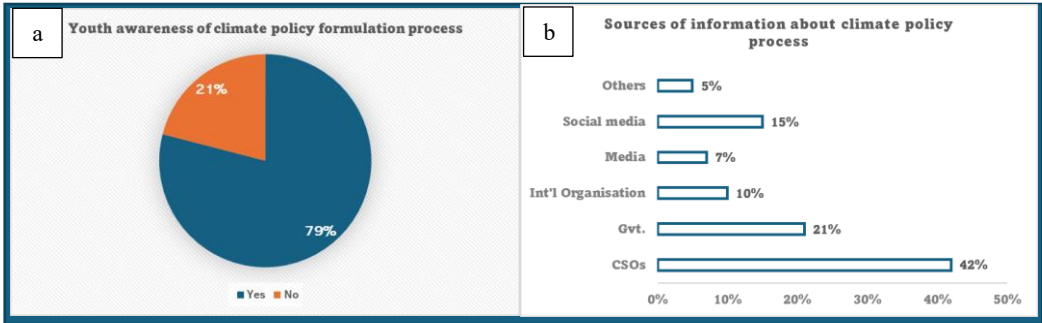


Figure 5: a. Youth Awareness on Climate Policy Formulation, and b. Sources of information

The survey reveals that, in general, majority (79%) of youth are aware of climate policy formulation processes, i.e., they know that climate policy formulation exists in their countries. Out the 79%, the majority's awareness on climate policy formulation process comes essentially through mediums like civil society organizations (CSOs) (42%) and 21% from government means (Figure 5). Social media (15%) and International Organisations (10%) come respectively as the third and fourth most common sources of information for youth on climate policy processes. Interestingly, a good proportion of participants emphasized the important role social media campaigns have played in raising awareness of youth about climate policy formulation; however, this solely works for urban areas; which may leave behind youth and youth-led organisations or any CSOs working on youth empowerment in rural areas. Rural areas in the region most likely lack social amenities, including internet connectivity and access to electricity which make the use of social media for climate action communication difficult. As most organisations work at grassroots level, information sharing from peer CSOs is dominant in the region. Although, social media and other forms of media are now being increasingly used to raise awareness of and engage youth in policy formulation, it may also pose challenges as while this has the potential to reach a wide audience, using social media may sometimes lack depth and fail to provide clear pathways for meaningful participation in the NDC formulation process. In the same way, this creates a gap in engaging young people from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from rural areas or disadvantaged communities.

Youth Participation in Climate Policy Formulation

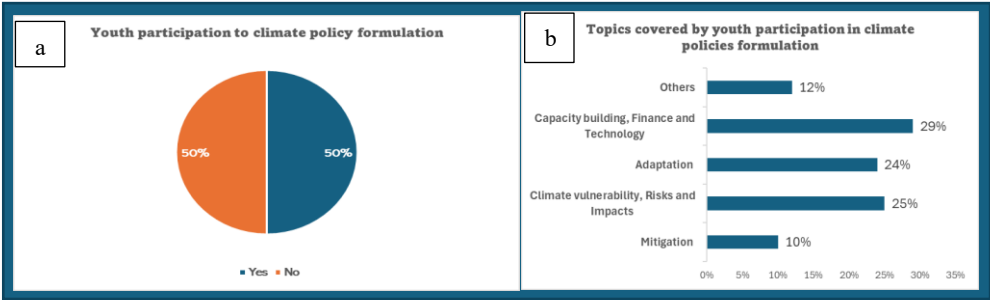


Figure 6: a. Youth participation in climate policy formulation, b. topics in which youth participate in climate policy

Broadly, results from Figure 6 indicate that general youth participation in climate policy formulation is medium (50%) in the region. Topics covered by youth participation in climate policy include predominantly capacity building, finance, and technology (29%) followed by climate vulnerability, risks and impacts (25%), adaptation (24%).

Participation in NDC and NAP Formulation Processes



Figure 7: Youth participation in a. NDC and b. NAP formulation process

Youth participation in NDC formulation and NAP formulation processes as shown in Figure 7 is only 39% and 38%, respectively denoting a limited involvement of youth in these two climate policies in the region. This may imply the limited participation of youth in government-led climate policies and initiatives. These findings align with those of UNDP Report (2023) for NDCs³² where a staggering 77.9 % of the youth reported that they have never participated in, or been invited to participate in, the formulation of their country's NDC. In fact, 61% of respondents in the report perceived the formulation of NDCs with little involvement of youth as structural. This resonates well with outcomes of the report by YOUNGO (2023) on [African Youth Needs for Climate Action](#) even though the African Union’s Youth Division highlights the role of youth councils, advisory boards among others as mechanisms for youth inclusion in governance.

Respondents described the current approaches of involving young people in the formulation of NDCs to have evolved. One of the examples of progress in youth involvement in NDCs at global level is from Climate Promise, the UNDP’s flagship programme supporting 120 countries to enhance their NDCs. In

³² <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-11/undp-on-equal-terms-checklist-youth-inclusive-ndc-process.pdf>

this programme, youth have played a prominent role, with over 80 countries facilitating youth-inclusive partnerships and youth-led actions³³. Despite this positive note at the global level, the reality seems to be quite different for the West and Central Africa region, particularly. Most participants in the survey recognized that youth involvement remains insufficient and most often tokenistic as youth are consulted but feel like their contributions are not fully integrated into the final decisions. This may reflect the limited influence youth have in the formulation of policies in the region. The survey also underscores that although initiatives exist to include youth, these efforts are often limited to ad hoc consultations.

On the implementation side of NAPs and NDCs, minimal information was gathered from youth as participants to the survey estimated very low their engagement when it comes to the implementation of NAPs and NDCs in their respective countries.

2.1. Youth experiences about the current approaches or strategies of youth engagement in NDCs formulation in West and Central Africa

Youth experiences from the survey depict the need for enhanced youth engagement in NDCs formulation. Below are a few examples of the experiences shared by youth about current approaches or strategies of youth engagement in NDCs formulation

"I have taken part in several discussions and debates on the policy of involving and integrating young people in climate issues in the DRC. As a young climate activist, I had to plead against the significant shortfall in youth participation in summits and negotiating tables on climate issues." Youth respondent from **DRC**

"In Liberia, young people are at the front of the formation of the NDCs. The Environmental Protection Agency afforded the young people the opportunity to have an exclusive Youth Dialogue on Liberia's NDCs where young people gathered for three days made recommendations on Liberia's NDCs." Youth respondent from **Liberia**

"...a step in the right direction, but they often remain tokenistic. Although we are consulted, our contributions are not always fully integrated into the final decisions. For more meaningful participation, it would be crucial to strengthen participation mechanisms, organize specific workshops for young people, and create permanent platforms for exchange with decision-makers." Youth respondent from **Mali**

"In Guinea Bissau, youth engagement in the formulation of NDCs is still an area that requires significant improvement. As a young entrepreneur and community leader, my experience has been shaped by a growing recognition of the importance of involving youth in climate-related issues, yet it is also marked by the realization that this participation is not fully leveraged." Youth respondent from **Guinea-Bissau**

"The participation of youth in the formulation of NDCs in Guinea is not effective. Personally, I was lucky enough to participate in the updating of the current NDC." Youth respondent from **Guinea**

"In my experience working with organizations like Green Hub Africa, I've seen an increasing awareness of the importance of youth involvement in climate action. However, the engagement strategies for NDC formulation often fall short of being truly inclusive and impactful." Youth respondent from **Nigeria**

³³ [UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf](#)

"The current strategies of youth engagement in NDC formulation in Cameroon include reaching out to youth to participate in NDC formulation and the organization of capacity building workshop to enhance technical knowledge and skills in the youth to participate effectively in the design and consultation phase of NDC formulation." Youth respondent from **Cameroon**

"Youth engagement in NDC formulation in The Gambia is still evolving but still facing significant challenges. Even though there has been a noticeable increase in efforts to include youth voices in climate policy processes, a lot times the inputs of youth are side-lined." Youth respondent from **The Gambia**

2.2. Youth experiences about the current approaches or strategies of youth engagement in NAPs formulation in West and Central Africa

A brief overview of youth experiences on the current approaches or strategies of youth engagement in NAPs formulation in the region indicates varied experiences but the ones that cut across the region are a growing participation of youth, but still insufficient in terms of real influence on NAPs formulation process. In addition, it can be deduced that although initiatives exist to include young people at country level, these efforts often remain limited to one-off or ad hoc consultations through stakeholder consultations, workshops, and capacity-building events organized by ministries or international development partners. Below provides an overview of a few youth testimonies on their experiences captured during the survey.

"Young people are simply not included in the process, despite our willingness to act. We are told about engagement, but our voices are ignored from the start. The problem is that current strategies leave no room for us to actively participate in the formulation of NAPs." Youth respondent from **Cameroon**

"The strategies are not known, and their elaborations do not reach the perceptions of young people because fewer know that they even exist." Youth respondent from **DRC**

"The young people have always been involved in the formation of Liberia's NAPs and the NAPs Implementation Strategies." Youth respondent from **Liberia**

"As a young person, my experience with youth engagement approaches in the formulation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in Mali shows that these initiatives are still limited. Young people are often consulted in a symbolic manner, without any real impact on the final decisions." Youth respondent from **Mali**

"There seems to be a disconnect between these innovative ideas and their incorporation into the formal NAP process. I've also noticed a significant gap in engaging young people from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from rural areas or disadvantaged communities who are often most vulnerable to climate impacts." Youth respondent from **Nigeria**

"Also, for the NAP, we are not involved by the authorities, but once developed, the document is shared online, and we manage to download it for our uses." Youth respondent from **Togo**

"Young people are not involved in the formulation of the NAPs, even if they are often consulted, this is not done throughout the entire process. They are often invited to the launch of the process or to the validation." Youth respondent from **Burkina Faso**

"Youth engagement in the NAP process in The Gambia often occurs through youth networks, NGOs, and civil society organizations that advocate for climate adaptation. These groups work to ensure that youth voices are represented in the discussions around adaptation priorities and strategies. However, direct

access to decision-making platforms remains limited for many young people, and engagement is sometimes more symbolic than substantive.” Youth respondent from **The Gambia**

2.3. Navigating the Roadblocks: Key Challenges for Youth in NDCs and NAPs Engagement

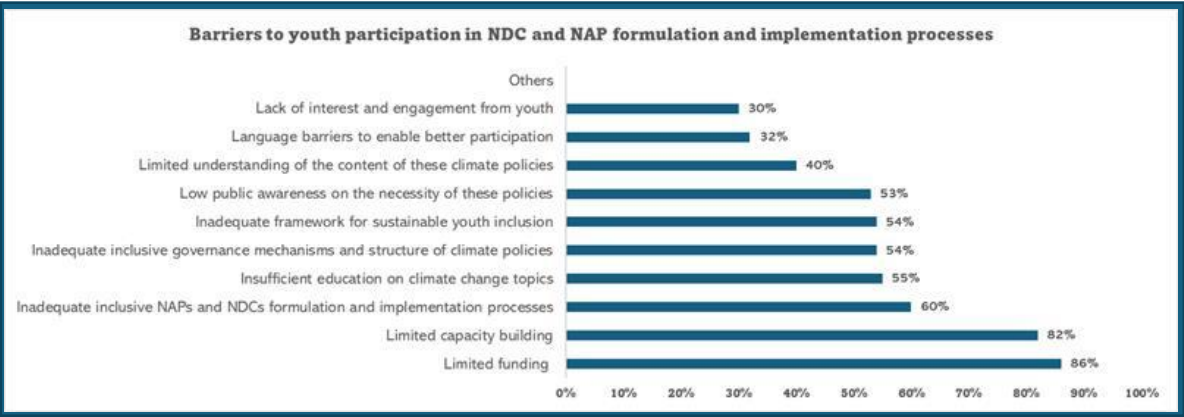


Figure 8: Barriers to youth participation in NDC and NAP formulation and implementation processes

Youth identified the above barriers (in Figure 8³⁴) to be hindering their engagement in NDCs and NAPs both in terms of formulation and implementation. Financial barriers prevail among the list followed by limited capacity building opportunities, non-inclusive NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes, lack of education on climate change topics, and lack of inclusive governance mechanisms. The list also goes on with low public awareness on the importance of these climate policies, the limited understanding of the content of these policies and language barriers to enable most participation of key groups of the society.

The constraints related to limited financing have been well documented as the major bottleneck for climate action across Africa and the region. The limited capacity building is another long-standing achilles tendon impeding youth engagement in climate policies. This limited capacity also encompasses the insufficient climate education programmes integration in schools’ curricula for the youth to have the required expertise to meaningfully participate and contribute to climate policies formulation and implementation. Youth in the region lack specialisation in key thematic areas relevant to climate change including green skills, green jobs, etc. This can be linked to the low public awareness on the importance of these climate policies and the limited understanding of the content of these policies as reflected in Figure 8.

The poor institutionalisation of youth engagement in climate policies in countries of the region explains the lack of inclusive governance mechanisms and structure about climate policies. In cases where there exist, they are often ad hoc engagement platforms that are short lived. The lack of framework for sustainable youth inclusion found from the survey speak to the findings of the [Global Youth Stocktake of the UNFCCC process Report](#) by YOUNGO (2023) where youth have been demanding to their governments to be directly involved in government-led climate policy processes.

The language barrier highlighted is real as it affects local communities’ understanding and participation in NDCs and NAPs formulation and implementation processes at country level.

³⁴ Respondents could select as many options as they wanted, therefore the total does not equal to 100%.

2.4. Good practices of youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes in the region

This section includes positive narratives of successful youth-led initiatives or projects related to youth inclusion in climate policy processes for climate action in the region. It also highlights existing collaborations between youth organizations and government bodies.

"One positive approach I've witnessed is the creation of youth-focused workshops and seminars on climate change and NDCs. These events provide valuable information and create spaces for discussion. However, they often reach only a limited number of young people, typically those already involved in environmental activism." Youth respondent from **Liberia**

"On a positive note, initiatives like the SDG Innovation Challenge, which I participated in, demonstrate the potential for youth-led solutions to climate challenges. However, there needs to be a stronger link between these innovative ideas and the formal NDC process." Youth respondent from **Nigeria**



Figure 9: Good practices of youth inclusion in climate policy process

As featured in Figure 9, in terms of good practices of youth inclusion in climate policy process, five key practices were indicated by youth as way to enhance their engagement with NAPs and NDCs policy formulation and implementation processes. Respondents stressed the importance of youth involvement not limited to consultation but extends to the co-construction of strategies and their implementation. To achieve this, there is a need for more inclusive mechanisms, capacity building programs for youth, including women and marginalized groups (local communities, for example) on NDCs and NAPs, regular opportunities for young people to express their views, and follow-up to ensure that the recommendations made by young people are considered through tracking and measuring youth inclusion and its impacts on climate policy.

2.5. Essentials for Meaningful Youth Participation in Climate Policy Process

According to UNDP Report on [Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action](#), 'meaningful youth participation in climate action describes a broad array of mechanisms of participation to

influence climate change governance where youth share power to steer the process and outcome of their participation (UNDP, 2022).

The experiences of youth engagement with NDCs and NAPs also covered their participation in consultations, forums, and workshops (such as validation or capacity building workshops) organized by ministries, national government, and their partners in respective countries. Some respondents also reported involvement in discussions on youth inclusive climate policy formulation through youth-led organizations and CSOs and in certain cases, direct engagement with government institutions or relevant line ministries in charge of NAPs and NDCs formulation.

From this observation, essentials for meaningful participation in climate plans need to be investigated for the region. The essentials elaborated in this report were drawn both from the literature and youth experiences analysed from the survey. These represent some sort of parameters which may be prerequisite for meaningful youth participation in climate plans formulation and implementation. This ensures that climate action is both efficient and fair, with benefits distributed equitably throughout society.

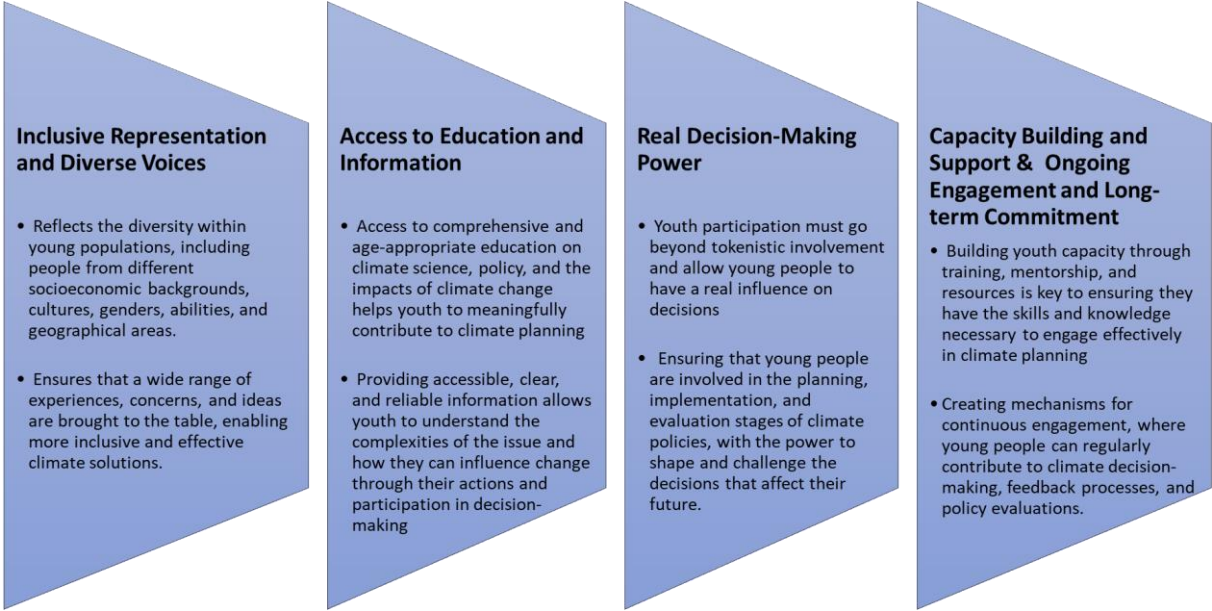


Figure 10 : Essentials for meaningful participation in climate policy process

As it can be deduced in one of the youth respondents from Mali *“My key expectations for meaningful youth inclusion in climate policies in Mali are first that our participation is not simply consultative but integrated at every stage of the decision-making process. I want to see clear and transparent mechanisms for our ideas and solutions to be truly considered and implemented. It is also essential that dedicated spaces are created for young people to engage directly with decision-makers, and that resources are allocated to support our climate initiatives. Finally, I expect rigorous monitoring of youth contributions to ensure that our engagement has a tangible impact on national climate policies.”* He continues with *“For youth to meaningfully participate in climate plans, including the formulation and implementation of NDCs and NAPs, they need several key elements. First, access to information is crucial; it is important that young people are well informed about climate issues, decision-making processes, and opportunities for engagement. Second, they need specific training to strengthen their technical skills and their ability to contribute effectively. It is also essential to have dedicated platforms where young people can express themselves and collaborate directly with decision-makers. Finally,*

financial, and logistical support is essential to enable young people to develop and implement their climate initiatives in a concrete way. With these resources, young people will be able to fully play their role in the fight against climate change and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable policies.”

2.6. Avenues for youth participation in climate policy in West and Central Africa: Practical steps

By analysing the landscape of youth engagement in climate policy in the region, the following five avenues could be anticipated to foster youth participation in NDCs and NAPs processes, among others climate policies in West and Central Africa.



Youth-led climate movements and advocacy: Youth in West and Central Africa can join or form local climate movements to advocate for policy changes, raise awareness, and participate in international climate discussions (such as climate weeks, COPs) which are platforms to raise the visibility of youth voices. Organisations like YOUNGO and African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC) constitute, among others, these platforms for youth to engage in climate action locally and globally.

Community-based projects and local action: Young people can get involved in community-based projects like reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy initiatives working alongside governments on climate solutions demonstrating youth practical involvement in climate action. Initiatives like the Green Belt Movement (Kenya) can be replicated in West and Central Africa. The on-going Great Green Wall (GGW) project in the Sahel and Sahara region can be a good example to illustrate youth engagement in adaptation implementation at local level.

National Climate Policy Consultations: Youth can be included in national policy formulations through youth specific platforms or as part of broader stakeholder engagement processes. Ensuring youth representation in government-led climate discussions and making sure they are invited to provide inputs can be a direct for influencing climate policies.

Youth participation in climate financing: Youth can engage in climate financing by developing and submitting proposals for youth-led climate action projects. By partnering with NGOs or local governments, they can secure funding from international donors to support sustainable development goals (SDGs) and climate resilience programs climate finance initiatives targeting youth to allow youth-led initiatives to receive funding: Youth Climate Justice Fund (YCJF), among others. It is also crucial to have a central repository of climate financing avenues available for youth, including building capacities of youth to enable their participation in climate finance sectors and activities.

Educational, sustained and Capacity building programmes: Governments, NGOs and international bodies can offer workshops and training programmes to educate young people on climate science, policy advocacy and green technologies. These programmes help develop skills in climate resilience, policy influence, and environmental leadership, preparing youth to engage in high-level decision-making processes. Programmes by organisations like UNDP, UNFCCC (Youth4Capacity Programme and ACE Hub project³⁵), UNDP/Italy led Youth4Climate Initiative, GIZ or the African Development Bank, etc. offer capacity building for youth in Africa.

Section 3: Conclusion

3.1. Key findings

This report was an attempt to understand youth participation in the formulation and implementation processes of NAPs and NDCs in West and Central African from the perspectives of youth using mostly a survey questionnaire supplemented by literature review. Key findings of the survey indicate the following:

1. Youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs at national level remains low in the region as youth participation in NAPs and NDCs processes appears not sustained—often tokenistic—as reported by many young people
2. Awareness of youth about NDCs and NAPs processes is medium in the region. In addition, being part of a youth-led organization seems to help youth to be aware and have more knowledge about climate policy processes such as NAPs and NDCs
3. Information channels for climate policies processes amongst gender are more skewed towards men and boys underscoring the minor representation of female youths in the climate space in the region
4. Climate related topics like climate entrepreneurship and finance, climate research, energy, industry, eco-tourism, and waste management seem yet to be given attention by youth organizations in the region
5. Experiences of youth engagement in NAPs and NDCs need to be enhanced despite the existence of few positive ones in the region. Challenges for youth meaningful engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes stem from lack of inclusive governance mechanisms, financial barriers, limited capacity building, non-inclusive NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation processes, lack of education on climate change topics
6. In-country good practices of youth meaningful engagement in NAPs and NDCs formulation and implementation are rare but building on the few positive experiences narrated by youth can help have lessons that can be shared across the region

³⁵ <https://unfccc.int/ace-hub#Youth>

³⁶ <https://unfccc.int/topics/capacity-building/projects/youth4capacity>

3.2. Future Directions

Findings from this study reveal that youth inclusion in NAPs and NDCs processes is far from achievement with significant gaps and challenges. Working to address these gaps and challenges could significantly help to improve the landscape of youth engagement on NAPs and NDCs in the region.

Future works can be undertaken by capturing further insights from Equatorial Guinea and Cabo Verde whose youth could not participate in the survey due to language barriers, among others.

Similarly, future investigations on understanding the low interest of youth-led climate organizations in areas of work such as climate entrepreneurship and finance, climate research, energy, industry, eco-tourism, and waste management will be of great addition in informing action for climate empowerment in the region.

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