

MODULE 3: SDGs and the importance of youth work. National youth strategies and International programmes

Youth Workers 4 Global Goals

CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH



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INTRODUCTION

Youth workers and youth in general, have a very important role to play for the achievement of the Global Goals. Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Youth-led organizations need to be encouraged and empowered to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local, national and regional policy. They play a significant role in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Agenda as well as in holding governments accountable. With political commitment and adequate resources, young people have the potential to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

In the following module, youngsters will learn what is youth work, why youth workers and leaders can contribute to the SDGs as well as examples of National youth strategies and International programmes focused on the achievement of SDGs.



I. SDGs and the importance of youth work

Connected to each other like never before, young people want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. They are also agents of change, mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet. Moreover, contributing towards harnessing youth workers and leader's potential as active citizen for peace and development can set agendas for empowerment of marginalized youth from different slum clusters with objectives to encourage active citizenship and to identify and promote young change-makers whose leadership will catalyze the achievement of peace and SDGs in local, national and international level.

In the following part we will see what is youth work and why youth workers and leaders can contribute to the achievements of the SDGs.

a. What is Youth work and why is important?

Youth work is complex series of professional principles, practices and methods which we often describe as the science of enabling young people to believe in themselves and build positive futures. Youth work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to “fix a problem”. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person's understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes. Therefore, youth work needs to be transformational, harnessing skills of young people not fulfilled by formal education.

According to the European Commission, youth work has three essential features¹:

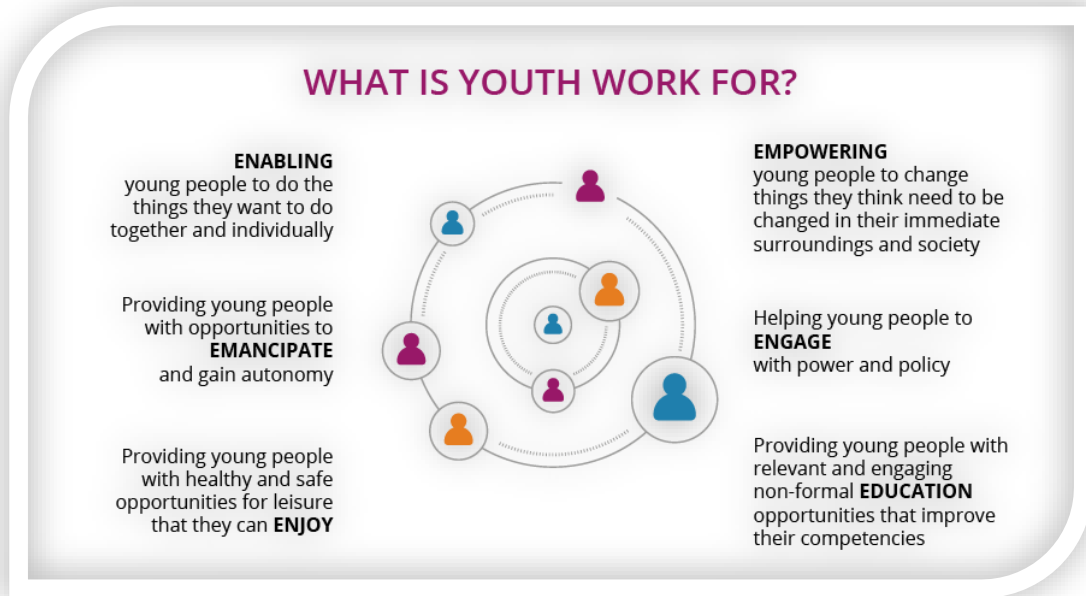
- Young people choose to participate
- The work takes place where the young people are
- It recognizes that the young person and the youth worker are partners in a learning process;

Moreover, youth work is a broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of “out-of-school” education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. Youth work is organised in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities). It is delivered in different forms and settings (e.g. open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach and detached) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/work_en



Effective youth work and youth initiatives seek to empower young people and encourage their active participation in society. It equips them with skills, competences and experiences for life, thereby maximising the protective factors which enhance the development, well-being, autonomy and social inclusion of all young people, including those with fewer opportunities.



The potential of youth work to contribute to policy objectives including social inclusion can be further optimized through a quality-focused and evidence-informed approach which places young people center-stage in the design and the delivery of youth work provision. This approach supports young people’s participation, development and progression in a way which affirms their strengths, enhances resilience and competences and recognizes their potential to build individual, communal and social capital. However, the range of themes that youth work covers is just as diverse as the types of people and organizations involved. Political activism, street work, sports activities, social enterprise and leisure-time activities can all be termed “youth work”.

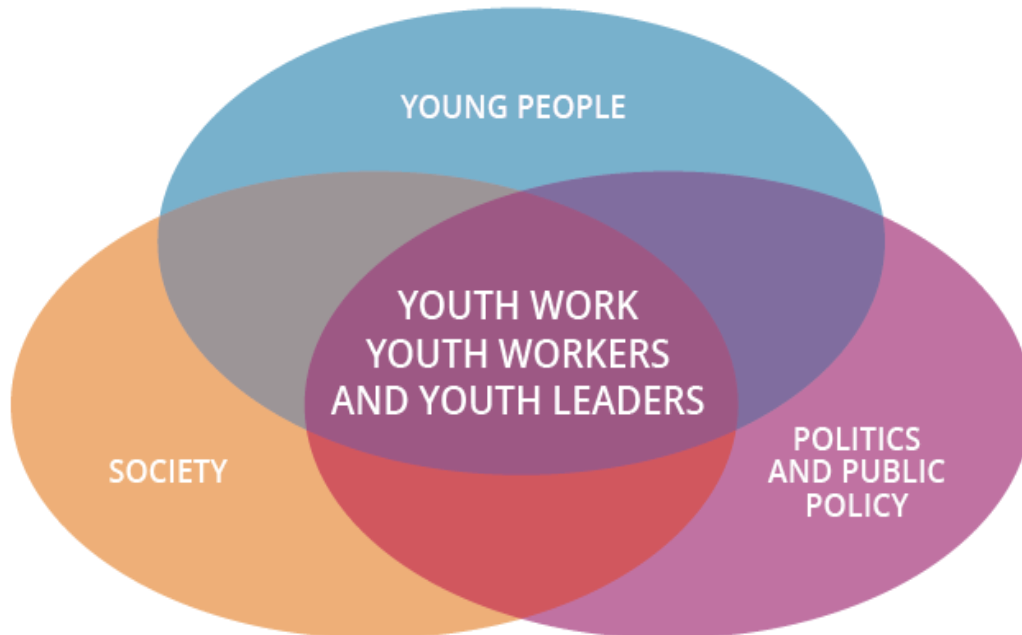
Youth work usually has the following characteristics²:

- Value-driven: youth work tries to serve the higher purposes of inclusion and social cohesion
- Youth-centric: youth work serves key needs and aspirations of youth, identified by young people themselves
- Voluntary: youth work is not obligatory, and relies on the voluntary participation of young people
- Developmental: youth work aims at the personal, social and ethical development of young people

² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-essentials>



- Self-reflective and critical: youth work tries to make sure it is doing its best to live up to its mission
- Relational: youth work seeks authentic communication with young people and to contribute to sustaining viable communities.



Youth work is also about the place of young people and their concerns in society and the public sphere. It is also about influencing society, politics and power relations, especially if those position young people at a disadvantage, marginalise them or exclude them.

In addition, youth work has been recognized worldwide by leaders, governments, authorities and networks to be one of the most essential fields of development in modern societies. Through its programmes, actions and initiatives, youth work is preparing a new generation of powerful young people to run, influence or change for better parts of our societies and for the achievements of the SDGs.

b. Youth workers and the SDGs

Youth workers and youth in general, have a very important role to play for the achievement of the Global Goals. Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Youth-led organizations need to be encouraged and empowered to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local, national and regional policy. They play a significant role in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Agenda as well as in holding governments accountable. With political commitment and adequate resources, young people have the potential to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.



Youth workers are good critical thinkers and they can identify, analyse and solve problems systematically rather than by intuition or instinct. Critical thinking is thinking about things in certain ways so as to arrive at the best possible solution in the circumstances that the thinker is aware of. In more everyday language, it is a way of thinking about whatever is presently occupying your mind so that you come to the best possible conclusion. Part of being young involves making sense of personal experiences and asking questions about the world around you. Youth have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases, so like this contribute to different issues related to the SDGs.



Moreover, youth workers are great change-makers. They have the power to act and mobilise others, to create change for the good of all, and engage their peers and the entire society in realizing a world where everyone is a change-maker. Around the world, change-makers are making a positive difference— they're revamping education, improving health outcomes, inventing new technology, fighting to save the environment, and building powerful social movements. Youth workers equipped with creativity, energy, and fresh perspective, hold incredible power for unlocking solutions to society's greatest challenges. In fact, young leaders across the globe are already creating change in their communities, from smashing the stigma around mental health to fighting food insecurity. Furthermore, youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media. It is revolutionizing how youth-led activism gains momentum and power. The power of that voice was evident around the world, when four million young people—many under the age of twenty-five—protested across 150 countries in September to demand urgent action on climate change in one of the largest youth-led strikes to date. However, while the climate strikes are the most recent success story of youth-led protest facilitated by social media, they are certainly not the only instance of vast turnout and successful political organization at the hands—or fingers—of young people.

Another important trait of the youth workers is that they are innovators, and with their innovation methods they can bring new solutions to old or current problems. In addition to bringing fresh perspectives, young people often have direct knowledge of and insights



into issues that are not accessible to adults. Youth best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions. With competent youth workers who can guide youth as mentors, young people can develop their ideas and learn critical skills and techniques, so later they can understand better the problems that need to be addressed for solving different issues relate to the SDGs. Youth workers and youngsters can form an excellent community that is working actively for engaging with new ideas about urban sustainability and resilience³.



With their good communication skills, youth workers can contribute a lot for the proper communication of the development agenda to the young people and to their local communities as well as countries and regions. Through effective communication they can make other young people believe in the change that others can bring for the achievements of the SDGs. When we talk about communication skills, we refer to listening skills, empathy and open-mindedness. Being a good listener

is one of the best ways to be a good communicator and if youth workers are not good listeners, they can have a trouble in understanding someone else opinion. Also, empathy is vital in understanding the needs and issues facing young people, and it is important to recognise the potential they have. It is essential to acknowledge the injustice that youth may have experienced while working towards the goals. In addition, a good communicator should enter into any conversation with a flexible, open mind. Be open to listening to and understanding the other person's point of view, rather than simply getting the message across.

Youth workers with their leadership skills can contribute a lot to the achievement of the SDGs, driving a change in their communities and involving more youth in their mission. Youth-led organisations and networks, in particular, should be supported and strengthened, because they contribute to the development of civic leadership skills among young people, especially marginalised youth. Youth workers are the people that see things in their community that need to be addressed. However, leading can be done in many ways, because there is not only one way to do something, nor is there a better or “right” one. There are many roles a youth worker can undertake, cumulatively or individually, to help foster the development towards common goals, but this will also depend on the certain situation.

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>



II. National Youth Strategies and International Programmes

In the following part, we will see several UN Youth Strategies, National and International programmes, and initiatives that have been launched around the globe.

a. Youth2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy

On Monday, 24th September 2018 at a High-Level Event at the United Nations in New York, was officially launched the *Youth2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy*. The Strategy aims to facilitate increased impact and expanded global, regional and country-level action to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people in all their diversity around the world, and to ensure their engagement and participation in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other relevant global agendas and frameworks.



Young people's empowerment, development and engagement is an end in itself, as well as a means to build a better world. The UN recognizes it cannot achieve its mission without partnering with young people and ensuring they are not only heard but understood, not only engaged but empowered, and not only supporting but leading global efforts and processes. Young people need to be full-fledged partners in the United Nations work to build a better world for all, as they are both beneficiaries and partners. Through its Youth Strategy, the UN seeks to become a Leadership Example, Knowledge and Innovation Pioneer, an Investment and Solution Catalyst, and an Accountability Leader, by converging toward commitments and carefully selected actions giving life to each of these. These cross-cutting system-wide actions and interventions, will support the overall capacity of the UN to advance and deliver on the five key priority areas outlined in the subsequent section of this strategy.

The UN will support youth leadership across the organization and build staff awareness and capacity on youth-related issues through several activities such as mainstreaming structures, youth engagement platforms, dialogue opportunities, capacity building, strengthening internship programs and talent management.



The UN will strengthen knowledge production and management systems; become a credible source of expertise on youth development and engagement; and facilitate evidence based global awareness on the realities and needs of the world's young people. It will set forth comprehensive data tool for monitoring global, regional and national progress in young people's development using SDG, WPAY, and other indicators, with continued efforts to expand the availability of disaggregated data. Additionally, UN plan to develop a system-wide repository with easy access to all youth-related knowledge and programs across the UN; this could include a clearinghouse of good practices, case studies, research material, etc.



The UN will accelerate resource mobilization efforts and facilitate partnership solutions to advance the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy and strengthen the funding base and mechanisms for youth-focused programming and youth-led actions at all levels. It will be created an online umbrella platform to attract and direct investment in youth related programming towards strengthening existing UN funds that support youth and key UN youth initiatives. Moreover, a common resource mobilization strategy will be needed, with a specific focus on mainstreaming youth across existing funding mechanisms and identifying funding solutions for under-financed areas, such as support for youth-led initiatives, movements, networks and organizations, youth participation mechanisms and youth policy work. It should be mobilizing greater resources at the country level by strengthening and expanding UN join programmes on youth.

It's important to notice that the ownership of the UN Youth Strategy is equally shared by all members of the UN system at the global, regional and national levels. If you want to know more about the Youth2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy, you can see all the report [here](#).



b. Youth for Global Goals

Youth 4 Global Goals (Youth4GG) is an initiative that aims to activate young people to contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, also referred to as the Global Goals and Agenda 2030.

Activating youth will happen in three stages: Awareness, Understanding and Action
Awareness: they consider a young person is aware of the SDGs when he/she knows a) there are 17 Goals and b) they are due by 2030 - Social media campaigns; AIESEC's Outgoing Preparation Seminar (+10k youth), AIESEC's incoming Global Volunteer projects
Understanding: the person is considered to understand an SDG when she/he knows a) the target of one SDG and b) how to contribute to it - AIESEC's Youth Speak Forum, SDG Curriculum, AIESEC's Incoming Preparation Seminar
Action: they consider that a person takes action if he/she is actively contributing to SDG through daily actions/projects.

Youth 4 Global Goals Annual Report | 2016

About Youth 4 Global Goals

Youth 4 Global Goals (#Youth4GG) is an AIESEC Initiative through which we aim to mobilize youth towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We believe that the global youth is an integral part of the equation to achieve the SDGs.

www.youth4globalgoals.org

Youth4GG is divided into three phases:

- Awareness** (Eye icon): Youth is aware of the 17 SDGs. We spread awareness about SDGs and Importance of collaboration for the Goals through global campaigns.
- Understanding** (Head with lightbulb icon): They understand at least one target of the SDGs and know how to take action to contribute towards it. We arrange YouthSpeak Forums globally to discuss the global issues.
- Action** (Hands icon): We mobilize volunteers to be a part of our projects aligned with the SDGs. Through these experiences they are empowering individuals and communities to work towards the implementation of SDGs in their countries, while developing themselves.

There were created 1-2 activities per SDGs to be taught at schools, separated by elementary, middle and high school curriculums; SDG Ambassador program - Ambassador program that aims to inspire youth, educators and others to engage youth in their communities (school, friends, youth CSOs, etc.) to be aware of the SDGs; Youth Action Mapper - Development of a youth action platform which aims to connect all SDG-related opportunities (projects, short volunteering opportunities, among others) into one single platform UN Volunteers - Engagement of youth through UN's online volunteering platform for short tasks related to research, design and translation.

Youth4GG is an initiative powered by AIESEC - world's largest student-run organization in the world, with a global team based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, focused on engaging global partners (ADB, PwC, UN Habitat, etc.); driving global marketing



campaigns; development strategies for Measurement of Impact and supporting AIESEC entities (+128 countries and territories) to implement the framework. The goal is to have 100% AIESEC operations - intercultural project-based exchanges - aligned with the SDGs. ADB Youth for Asia hosts a team of 15 young individuals working towards including youth as partners in development, directly involving youth into ADB projects. This team has a sub-team of 3 youth focused on mobilizing youth towards the SDGs across Asia and the Pacific in a big synergy with AIESEC entities in the region, facilitating partnerships with other organizations (AYLA, Scouts, VSO, etc.) and direct support to AIESEC local entities on Designing and Monitoring Framework understanding and implementation, incentives creation, etc.

c. The Danish Youth Council and DUF's Youth Delegate Programme

The Danish Youth Council (DUF) is an umbrella organisation consisting of 72 diverse children's and youth organisations. DUF promotes democracy as a way of life, actively engaging young people in organisations and society locally, nationally and internationally. Working cross-politically, DUF highlights and safeguards the interests of its member organisations in relation to politicians and public authorities, ensuring the framework for voluntary youth organisations on a political level.



DUF works via a number of projects to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and strengthening democracy as a whole. A main project in this regards is the "School Election", which is facilitated by DUF in cooperation with the Parliament and Ministry of Education and is a simulated election with

more than 60,000 participating students. The elections have run on a test basis for two years, and by making this mandatory and recurring, young voter participation could be strengthened. Moreover, DUF is working to lower the voting age to 16 to ensure a greater degree of youth involvement and influence. Furthermore, DUF is working through the project "day of democracy", which visits vocational schools and production schools, to ensure that even young voters from disadvantaged backgrounds are included and motivated to vote, as well as informed about the opinions of the different parties and clear on their own opinions.

Moreover, DUF works through public discourse and organisational work to ensure adequate funding and resources for youth civil society, thus working towards ensuring strong partnerships as outlined in SDG 17. DUF also works to ensure that Danish society lives up to the principle of "leaving no one behind". In terms of integration of immigrants, this poses a particular challenge, as schools lack prayer rooms, making it difficult for religious minorities to receive the quality education outlined in SDG 4 without compromising their religious liberty, and much public and civil life is not geared



towards being inclusive to immigrants and descendants of immigrants. To this end, DUF is working to make society more inclusive.

Within the youth sector, several organisations are increasingly addressing and adapting the SDGs in their strategies and activities, leading to further strategic interest and dialogue across the sector and among its volunteer members. A number of youth organisations are raising awareness and increasing commitment internally in terms of integrating all three dimensions of sustainable development in their work. Aspects of environmental awareness are steadily being promoted, addressing and challenging the sector's own carbon footprint and commitment to delivering results. A shared political interest in engaging with representatives and official youth delegates at the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) meetings indicates further interest and commitment across the sector.

Every year, six Danish youth delegates represent the Danish youth at the UN as well as other multilateral fora. The youth delegates are representatives of Danish children and youth organisations and appointed by DUF for a two-year period⁴.



Denmark has had a young representative included in its delegations to the UN General Assembly since 1972, except from 2008-2014 when the programme was temporarily suspended. In 2018, the programme was redesigned and now consists of a total of six youth delegates working with human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals as an overall framework and appointed in pairs to following three thematic focus areas:

- Equality and SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights)
- Climate and Environment
- Democracy and Partnerships

⁴ <https://en.duf.dk/dufs-international-work/the-danish-youth-delegate-programme/>



The Youth Delegate Programme is a part of DUF's cooperation with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Global Youth Programme.

The role of the youth delegates is to represent the Danish youth in the Danish delegations to the UN and other multilateral fora and to bring the voices of youth to be heard in international decision-making processes. In addition to this role, the youth delegates are also active agents in communicating and embedding global agendas among the Danish youth as well as interacting with DUF member organisations and other children and youth organisations working with or within these themes.

d. UN Youth Climate Summit

The UN Youth Climate Summit is a platform for young climate action leaders to showcase their solutions at the United Nations and to meaningfully engage with decision-makers on the defining issue of our time. The last event took place in September 21, 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York prior to the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in September 23, 2019.



The Youth Climate Action Summit brought youth climate champions together from more than 140 countries and territories to share their solutions on the global stage, and deliver a clear message to world leaders: we need to act now to address climate change. The event gave voice to the demands of young people for far swifter action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Climate Action Summit, and the Climate Youth Summit, succeeded in focusing the attention of world leaders, from government, the private sector and civil society, on the urgency for action to address the climate emergency, and on increasing climate action. It was designed to be a different kind of Summit. Countries were also asked to present concrete and realistic plans compatible with these goals. The Secretary-General asked leaders to come to the Summit to present plans, not make speeches. The most ambitious



plans were presented on 23 September, creating a unique opportunity to showcase leadership towards transformative climate action that would make change in the world.



Moreover, another wonderful initiative related to the climate change is the **Young Champions of the Earth**. In 2020, seven young people – selected from every global region – will be named Young Champions of the Earth. These winners will receive seed funding, intensive training and tailored mentoring to bring their big

environmental ideas to life. Shortlisted finalists from every region will be selected following an open call for applications. In addition, each winner is expected to implement its big idea and keep UNEP (The United Nations Environment Programme) updated on their progress by producing videos and blogs that we will share on the website.

The 2019 year’s Young Champions of the Earth award ceremony was held during the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly Week on 26 September, 2019, in New York. The seven young people were chosen because of their great initiatives such as community based conservation, for the saving of the world’s last wild placed, the Okavango Basin; the project for turning rainwater into drinking water; the Cacao project that aims to combat deforestation by reviving barren lands through tree planting, creating economic forests and nurseries, promoting fair trade and reforestation, while empowering farmers with higher incomes.

Another initiative that was supported by UNEP is “Making virtual trees real”. It was launched “Plant the Forest” website to reach more people in their reforestation efforts. In future, they are also planning to launch a “Plant the forest” educational gaming project, where their

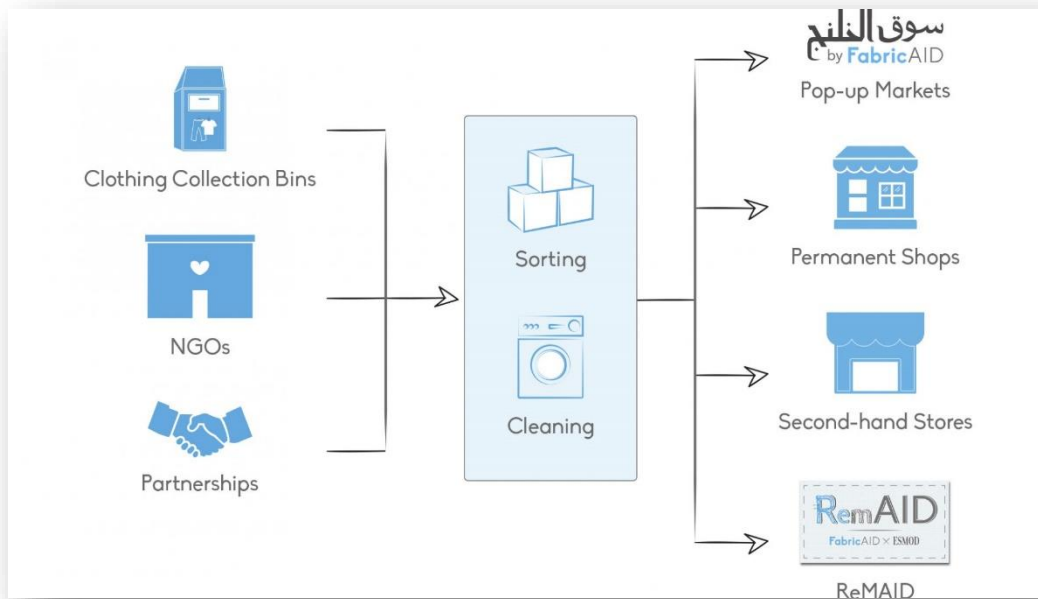


actions in virtual reality lead to tree restoration in real life. People can grow their own virtual forest and, in parallel, new forests planted by their volunteers will emerge. Like in the game, insects, animals and birds will inhabit them. Step-by-step, players will learn



about environmental restoration and what they need to do to make animals appear in their forests. [Here](#) you can learn more about the initiative.

“First aid for fabric: remaking fashion futures” have received an award as well. The impact of dumping clothing in landfill sites is catastrophic and natural fibres such as cotton or silk produce greenhouse gases upon degradation, while synthetic fibres such as polyester are non-biodegradable, leading to similar impacts on the environment as plastics. Chemicals from dyes can have severe impacts on soil and water sources from run-off.



FabricAID reuses and recycles unwanted clothes. Clothes are graded, sorted into over 46 categories, cleaned in their warehouse and redistributed to disadvantaged communities at US\$0.3 – US\$2 per item. So, they have sold more than 60,000 items of clothing to more than 7,000 beneficiaries. In addition, they collect new and gently used clothes, shoes, and accessories through their network of smart clothing collection bins located all over Lebanon, and garments that cannot be reused are shredded for pillows, chairs, couches, mattresses, and bean bags. In collaboration with the Orphan Welfare society, they also work with students from ESMOD Fashion School to create fashionable clothes and with woman refugee tailors from NGO Sawa for Development and Aid, who tailor the fabric into clothes. The new creations are sold at fashion shows at prices ranging from 100\$ to 200\$ to middle-class customers, under the brand name RemAID by FabricAID⁵.

Moreover, another five wonderful initiatives have received UN Champion of the Earth award for passionately demanding climate action. The annual Champions of the Earth

⁵ <https://www.fabricaid.me/>



prize is awarded to outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a positive impact on the environment. Since 2005, Champions of the Earth has recognized 88 laureates, ranging from world leaders to technology inventors. Let's see also some of them.

Fridays for Future Movement

Fridays for Future is a dynamic global student movement pushing for immediate action on climate change through active campaigning and advocacy. It was chosen as Champion of the Earth for inspiration and action because of its role in highlighting the devastating effects of climate change.

Fridays for Future has millions of passionate activists who insist that their voices be heard on what many see as the defining issue of their generation. The movement was inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who sat in protest in front of the Swedish parliament for three weeks last year to draw attention to the climate emergency.

Now every month, students around the world take to the streets to demand that politicians do more to acknowledge and act upon the reality and severity of climate change. These regular marches have attracted more than one million young people in more than 100 countries. As Thunberg says: "Everybody is welcome. Everybody is needed".



The Fridays for Future movement has electrified the global conversation about climate change at a time when the window of opportunity to avoid the worst effects of rising temperatures is closing. Global emissions are reaching record levels and show no sign of



peaking. Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying and extreme weather events are becoming more common and more destructive around the world⁶.

In addition, last June 2019, Thunberg and the Fridays for Future movement were honoured with Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience award, which celebrates people who have shown unique leadership and courage in standing up for human rights.

Patagonia

Patagonia was chosen as Champion of the Earth for entrepreneurial vision because of a dynamic mix of policies that has put sustainability at the heart of its successful business model. From a small company making tools for climbers, Patagonia has become a global leader in sustainability. Its drive to preserve the planet runs through the entire business from the products made and the materials used to the donation of money to environmental causes.

Before it became a household name, Patagonia was a small outfitter of climbing tools, tucked into a Ventura, California, building that still smelled like the meat-packing plant it had once been. In the 16 years' prior, its founder, Yvon Chouinard, an accomplished rock climber, had gone from selling hand-forged mountain climbing gear to the largest supplier of climbing hardware in the US.



In the '80s, Patagonia voluntarily imposed a 1% "earth tax" on itself that donates 1% of its profits to grassroots environmental organizations. (As of October 2019, it's donated over \$100 million total.) The company started using recycled polyester from plastic soda bottles in the early '90s. After workers got headaches from the formaldehyde on finished

⁶ <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/fridays-future-named-un-champion-earth-award-passionately-demanding>



cotton, it went organic in the mid-'90s. In 2012, it was the first California company to sign up for voluntary B Corp certification. In 2016, it donated 100% of its Black Friday sales (\$10 million) to environmental organizations. It even makes its own beer out of a regenerative grain that restores biodiversity and stores carbon.

Currently, almost 70% of Patagonia's products are made from recycled materials. By 2025, the goal is to be using 100% renewable or recycled materials.

Patagonia also encourages its employees to act as activists. Its environmental internship program allows employees from all parts of the company to leave their roles and, instead, work for an environmental group of their choice for up to two months. They still receive their pay checks and benefits. Local environmental groups get a free intern, and employees bring back new inspiration and a renewed commitment to the environment upon their return⁷.

It also empowers site visitors to act as activists. Patagonia Action Works connects them directly with the company's grassroots grantees. You can search by city, state, or grantee to see how to get involved immediately.



Patagonia describes itself as The Activist Company, and it is clear about its aims: “At Patagonia, we appreciate that all life on earth is under threat of extinction. We aim to use the resources we have—our business, our investments, our voice and our imaginations—to do something about it.” In 2017, Patagonia was awarded the Accenture Strategy Award for Circular

Economy Multinational at the World Economic Forum in Davos for driving innovation and growth while reducing dependence on scarce natural resources.

Ant Forest

Ant Forest, a green initiative, has also received a 2019 Champions of the Earth award, the UN’s highest environmental honour, for turning the green good deeds of half a billion people into real trees planted in some of China’s most arid regions.

Launched by Ant Financial Services Group, an Alibaba affiliate, Ant Forest promotes greener lifestyles by inspiring users to reduce carbon emissions in their daily lives. When they do, Ant Forest rewards them with ‘green energy’ points, which can be used to plant a real tree.

The aim is to combat desertification, lower air pollution and protect the environment.

⁷ <https://www.businessinsider.com/patagonia-un-champions-of-the-earth-award-2019>



Ant Forest users are encouraged to record their low-carbon footprint through daily actions like taking public transport or paying utility bills online. For each action, they receive 'green energy' points and when they accumulate a certain number of points, an actual tree is planted. Users can view images of their trees in real-time via satellite.



The Ant Forest platform is also exploring innovative solutions to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of local people by leveraging the power of digital technology.

Since its launch in August 2016, Ant Forest and its NGO partners have planted around 122 million trees in some of China's driest areas, including in desert regions in Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Qinghai and Shanxi. The trees cover an area of 112,000 hectares (1.68 million) and the project has become China's largest private sector tree-planting initiative⁸.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has been chosen as Champion of the Earth for policy leadership because of its pioneering role in the protection of nature and its commitment to ambitious policies to combat climate change.

Notably, the Central American nation has drafted a detailed plan to decarbonize its economy by 2050, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. It hopes to provide a template for other nations to do the same and curb the deadly emissions causing rapid, disastrous climate change.



⁸ <https://www.unenvironment.org/championsofearth/laureates/2019/ant-forest>



The decarbonisation plan consists of maintaining an upward curve in terms of economic employment growth, and at the same time generating a downward curve in the use of fossil fuels in order to stop polluting. How are they going to achieve that? Through clean public transport, smart and resilient cities, sound waste management, sustainable agriculture and improved logistics. The plan includes bold mid- and long-term targets to reform transport, energy, waste and land use. The aim is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, meaning the country will produce no more emissions than it can offset through actions such as maintaining and expanding its forests.

Costa Rica's success in placing environmental concerns at the heart of its political and economic policies shows that sustainability is both achievable and economically viable. Officials say Costa Rica aims to change the paradigm of development, envisioning a consumption and production system that generates an environmental surplus rather than a deficit⁹.

Professor Katharine Hayhoe, Climate Scientist



One of the world's most influential communicators on climate change, Hayhoe is an atmospheric scientist who studies what climate change means to people and the places where we live. She evaluates long-term observations, future scenarios and global models and develops innovative strategies that translate future projections into relevant, actionable information that stakeholders can use to inform future planning for food, water, infrastructure and more in a changing climate.

Moreover, for her stalwart commitment to quantifying the effects of climate change and her tireless efforts to transform attitudes, Canadian climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe was chosen as the Champion of the Earth for science and innovation.

Hayhoe has served as a lead author for a number of key reports, including the US Global Change Research Program's Second, Third and Fourth National Climate Assessments and

⁹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/championsofearth/laureates/2019/costa-rica>



the American Association for the Advancement of Science's What We Know and How We Respond reports. She also serves on advisory committees for a broad range of organizations from the Smithsonian Natural History Museum to the Earth Science Women's Network to the Young Evangelicals for Climate Action. She has received honorary doctorates from Colgate University and Victoria College at the University of Toronto.

These five initiatives were great examples on how people and businesses can have and must have a positive impact on our planet. However, there are much more initiatives supported by the United Nation such as the Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace, "Youth-GPS": a 5- year global programmatic offer designed to sharpen the organisation's response to the challenges young people face worldwide by supporting young people as agents of change in the 2030 Agenda at the global, regional and country level; providing cutting-edge research and tools; fostering innovative partnerships; as well as piloting and scaling-up catalytic initiatives. In Latin America and the Caribbean, United National Development Programme, in partnership with OIJ (Organismo Internacional de Juventud para Iberoamérica), supports "**Juventud con Voz**" ("Youth Voice"), a digital platform led by young people to engage in issues relating to democracy, political participation, public policies and the 2030 Agenda, etc.

However, achieving the 2030 Agenda will require strong partnerships between young people and all stakeholders so that the challenges faced by youth are addressed, their contributions recognized and they are included at all levels of decision-making.