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1.3 Youth Climate Leadership & Green Action

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You Can Lead Change

Climate leadership starts from your everyday experience. Observing environmental challenges in your local community helps develop awareness, responsibility, and initiative - key elements of youth climate leadership.

Youth action at local level is widely recognised as a key driver of environmental and social change. For this reason, the European Union and UNESCO actively invest in youth participation and community-based initiatives to strengthen leadership, responsibility, and active citizenship.

(https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en; <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/14th-unesco-youth-forum-young-leaders-unite-climate-action-and-social-impact>)

Real change begins when young people recognise concrete problems around them and feel motivated to take action within their own context.

1 —> Reflect on Your Community

What environmental problem do you notice most in your daily life?

Waste and plastic in public spaces

Lack of recycling or information

Pollution, noise, or traffic

Lack of green areas

High energy consumption

2 —> Reflect on Your Role

What small action could you realistically take to improve this situation?

Raising awareness among friends or neighbours

Organising a small local action or event

Sharing information online

Collaborating with a local group or association

Changing daily habits and inspiring others

Working on everyday local challenges makes climate action real and achievable.

By taking small actions in your community, you build confidence, take initiative, and start acting as a climate leader.



Youth Making a Difference

Green Loop — Pokhara Circular Economy Youth Project

Youth volunteers in Pokhara organised creative awareness campaigns (street theatre, digital outreach, interactive events) to promote circular economy principles like Reuse, Reduce, Recycle in their city. Starting with local youth leadership and passion, they reached thousands without major initial funding.

Source:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org.np/youth-climate-and-social-action-project-2024-2025?utm>



Climate Youth Awareness & Action Clubs — Odisha (India)

Young volunteers formed Youth4Water clubs in schools and communities in Odisha to raise awareness on water conservation, sanitation, and climate change. These clubs are grassroots, peer-led, and driven by young people's desire to protect natural resources in their own towns.

Source:

<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/community-and-youth-led-action-climate-change-and-conservation?utm>



These examples show that young people can start meaningful climate and sustainability action right where they live, with creativity, teamwork, and simple ideas. You don't need big budgets to begin making a real impact.

What Is Youth Climate Leadership?

Youth climate leadership is about turning concern into action. It's about noticing problems, inspiring others, and creating solutions.

Leadership is not a title, it is a choice to act and involve others.

1 —> Reflect on Leadership Examples

Think about someone who inspires change in your community. What do they do differently?

They start small but consistently

They involve friends, neighbours, or peers

They share their ideas and motivate others

They turn challenges into practical solutions

2 —> Reflect on Your Strengths

What personal skills or ideas could help you lead change?

Creativity in solving problems

Communication and storytelling

Collaboration and networking

Persistence and patience

Ability to motivate or inspire others

Seeing leadership in action helps you realise it's accessible.

Understanding your own strengths shows you how to contribute and build community impact, turning small initiatives into meaningful local projects.

Leading Local Eco-Projects

Local eco-projects are hands-on actions that improve your community and environment. They can be small, creative, and low-cost, yet inspiring and impactful.

Concrete Examples of Simple Youth-Led Projects

Urban Green Spaces & Mini Gardens

Transform empty lots into green spaces or community gardens. Plant native species and involve schools or local groups.



- Look for a small unused space (school yard, street corner, community area)
- Talk with 3–5 friends or classmates
- Contact a school, youth centre, or local group
- Start with one simple activity (planting day, clean-up + pots)

Zero-Waste Campaigns

Organize local clean-ups, workshops on plastic reduction, and week-long challenges to reduce waste.



- Identify one common waste problem in your area
- Choose one clear message (e.g. “less plastic this week”)
- Organise a clean-up or a short awareness challenge
- Share results with photos or short posts

Climate Education Labs

Host peer-led sessions on climate, energy, and sustainability. Use quizzes, debates, or mini-projects to engage your community.



- Pick one topic you care about (energy, waste, mobility)
- Invite peers to a short session (school, youth centre, online)
- Use quizzes, games, or short videos
- Encourage discussion and ideas for local action

Sustainable Mobility Week

Promote walking, cycling, or plogging (jogging + litter picking) in your community. Track participation and share results to inspire others.



- Choose one week or one day
- Invite friends, classmates, or neighbours
- Track participation (photos, steps, km, bags collected)
- Share the experience to inspire others



Generate Your Idea: Taking the First Leadership Step

Creating an eco-project means acting as a climate leader.

Leadership starts when you develop a vision, take initiative, and assume responsibility for change.

VISION – Seeing the opportunity for change -> Identify a local problem and imagine a simple, realistic solution.

Which small eco-project could you start in your community with peers?

- ❖ Which local space needs greening or cleaning?
- ❖ Could you organize a week-long sustainability challenge?
- ❖ Is there a school or community center to engage?
- ❖ What everyday waste issues can you creatively address?

INITIATIVE – Turning ideas into action -> What is your first action and who will you involve?

- What is your project idea?
- What is the first action you will take?
- Who will you involve to start?

RESPONSIBILITY – Leading with commitment -> What role will you take to make it happen?

- What role will you take in this project?
- How will you support others involved?
- How will you make sure the action happens?



Climate Storytelling: Giving Meaning to Action

Being a climate leader is not only about taking action, but also about making your action visible and meaningful to others.

Sharing your story helps build trust, inspire participation, and strengthen your role as a green leader in your community.

What to communicate as a green leader

YOUR MOTIVATION - Why do you care about this issue?

- A personal experience
- A local problem affecting your community
- A value you strongly believe in

YOUR ACTION - What are you doing, concretely?

- A clean-up, a project, a campaign
- A small step that others can replicate

YOUR IMPACT - Who benefits from this action?

- Your peers
- Your neighbourhood
- Your local environment

How to increase your visibility as a green leader

Be visible where your community is

- Share short updates on social media or community channels
- Use photos or short videos to show action, not just ideas

Involve others in your story

- Tag people or groups involved
- Acknowledge collaboration and collective effort

Be consistent, not perfect

- Share progress, not only results
- Show learning, challenges, and next steps

For practical guidance and tools:

- **Check out the Storytelling for Youth Work (SALTO-YOUTH)** to explore tools, activities, and exercises for youth storytelling.
[\(https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/storytelling-for-youth-work-multimedia-guide.3339/\)](https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/storytelling-for-youth-work-multimedia-guide.3339/)
- **Explore the “Youth Participation Toolkit” (SALTO / Participation Pool)** to support youth participation, create narratives, and develop inclusive projects.
<https://participationpool.eu/resource/youth-participation-toolkit/?utm>

Green Advocacy in Everyday Life



Green advocacy is about making sustainability real in your daily life. You don't need a budget or a big organisation—small actions can influence your friends, family, and local community.

How Green Advocacy Happens

Green advocacy can take many simple forms:

- **Share online:** Post a photo or short video showing how you reduce waste, recycle, or save energy. Tag friends to join.
- **Organise small events:** Local clean-up, tree planting, or swap events. Even 1–2 friends count!
- **Talk to your school/community:** Suggest small improvements (e.g., recycling bins, eco-club).
- **Support others:** Join or promote local eco-projects, even if you can't lead them.

Mini Scenario – Choose Your Advocacy Action

Scenario: You want to support a local eco-project but have no budget.

Possible actions:

- ✓ Post a 1-minute Instagram/TikTok story with tips
- ✓ Invite friends to a community clean-up
- ✓ Contact a local youth centre or environmental group
- ✓ Share simple eco-tips in your neighbourhood

Even small steps turn into shared responsibility. Every post, every conversation, every action counts—and inspires others to take part in sustainable change

Building Community Collaborations

Sustainable change grows through collaboration.

Community partnerships help eco-projects become stronger, more inclusive, and longer-lasting.

Working with local actors turns individual initiatives into shared community efforts.

Your Local Sustainability Ecosystem

Every community already has potential partners:

- NGOs and informal groups
- Schools and universities
- Local authorities and youth services
- Small businesses

How Collaboration Strengthens Impact

Collaboration helps to:

- Share resources and skills
- Increase visibility and trust
- Reach more people
- Reduce isolation and burnout

Small partnerships can make a big difference. ^{and} ^{social} enterprises

When young people connect with others, projects move beyond single actions.

Community collaboration builds support networks and creates the conditions for sustainable, inclusive impact over time.

Have a look at some significant examples:

- [SchoolFood4Change](#) (students + farms + local authorities)
- [Bavarian & Spanish Eco-Schools](#) (schools + businesses + NGOs)
- [Giovani Ambasciatori per la Sostenibilità](#) (students + municipality + associations)

From Action to Collective Impact

Effective climate leadership connects **action, storytelling, and collaboration.**

Acting locally creates change, storytelling gives meaning, and collaboration helps ideas grow.

Together, these elements transform small initiatives into shared and sustainable community impact.

The Climate Leadership Cycle

Act - Start with a simple local eco-action.

Tell - Share why it matters and what you are doing.

Connect - Involve others and build partnerships.

When action, narration, and collaboration work together, climate initiatives become more visible, inclusive, and resilient.

This approach helps young people overcome isolation, build confidence, and create lasting change in their communities.

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