The Green Rising
Mobilising Millions of Young People to Protect their Communities from the Climate Crisis
Temperatures are rising.

Sea levels are rising.

Young people are rising too.

Rising to take action.

To protect themselves and their communities.

Challenging governments and corporations to follow their lead.

Protecting what they love from a climate crisis that is here - NOW.
Introduction

The world is experiencing a triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. In 2022 alone, millions of people were displaced or died as a result of droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, wildfires, and other extreme weather events. UNICEF’s 2022 heatwave report shows that 559 million children are exposed to high heatwave frequency and by 2050, virtually every child on earth — over 2 billion children — will face more frequent heatwaves. Last year has deepened the worst drought on record in the Horn of Africa, bringing communities to the brink of famine. Severe floods affected 19 countries across West Africa and plunged one-third of Pakistan underwater. Children are being left behind in developing the foundational skills and green skills they need to adapt to the new realities of climate change and that would enable them to power the green transition. For young people, and especially for marginalised girls, the climate crisis threatens their future livelihoods and survival. Urgent action is needed NOW to make education systems climate resilient and to engage children and youth in meaningful climate action. The world’s children and youth bear the least responsibility for the climate crisis, but they are suffering its greatest consequences.

Today’s governments and leaders are responsible for tackling the greatest existential threat facing humanity.

The UN Secretary-General has openly acknowledged the failure of governments, businesses, and international organisations to protect the planet with a direct appeal to young people:

“My generation has largely failed until now to preserve both justice in the world and to preserve the planet. It is your generation that must make us be accountable to make sure that we don’t betray the future of humankind.”

— António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

Small acts when multiplied by millions can change the world.

— Ugandan climate justice advocate Vanessa Nakate
The Green Rising
10 million young people
taking action to protect
local communities
against the climate crisis

While young people are not responsible for the climate crisis, they cannot afford to wait, and in many communities taking action now is a matter of survival. Over the next three years (2023-2025) UNICEF, Generation Unlimited and their ecosystem of public, private and youth partners will support the global mobilisation of millions of young people – at a grassroots level – to take concrete green actions to protect and adapt to the devastating impact that climate change is exacting on their families, neighbours, villages, towns, and cities.

The Green Rising commits to contribute to a just green transition in which the most vulnerable youth are empowered with the education, skills and opportunities to be champions for the planet.

We will support 10 million young people to take action by 2025.

With a presence in more than 190 countries and territories around the world, UNICEF and Generation Unlimited’s ecosystem of partners are uniquely positioned to mobilise youth in all corners of the globe, within their local context. #TheGreenRising is rooted in gender-transformative action and climate justice, leveraging the power of young people to build a more equal, peaceful, and sustainable world.

We will help ignite youth-led actions at scale, while supporting the expansion of actions young people are already taking. #TheGreenRising will allow us to amplify their work, giving it the impetus that will inspire even more participation. The initiative will include metrics and tools that will help young people track and communicate the impact of their activities to a wider audience, browse through other creative ideas for their projects or find inspiration from a community of like-minded, action-oriented young people.

We will help youth on their journeys of change-making with mentorship and guidance, providing additional resources, trainings, and other incentives to inspire them to sign up, show up, and continue along a trajectory of leadership and impact. Depending on the level of financial support, we hope to also provide funding to scale their projects.

The initiative will bring together civil society organisations, youth-led organisations, foundations, tech platforms (e.g. Goodwall, U-Report, YOMA, Learning Passport), governments, and private sector partners in support of young people.

Volunteerism: Young volunteers take action on a wide variety of environmental issues – ranging from planting trees and monitoring air pollution levels to conserving water, reducing waste, and recycling.

Advocacy: Young people run campaigns to leverage their collective voices to drive change in their communities, their countries and in the world: from local school boards and district councils all the way to COP28 and the United Nations.

Skills, Jobs & Entrepreneurship: Young people help power the net zero transition - developing green skills via formal or informal trainings and curricula; take jobs in the green economy; innovate and create green ventures. Upskilling girls unlocks women’s leadership for climate action and powers a just green transition.
What Youth Action looks like

- **Nigeria**: Youth tackle environmental issues through the Green Challenge
- **Mongolia**: Measuring air quality and alerting community members when it is unsafe outside
- **Egypt**: Created organic fertilizer made from recycled sugarcane waste decrease water usage in farming
- **Burkina Faso**: Learning about solar energy and installing solar panels
- **Kazakhstan**: Challenging friends to stop using single use plastic for a month
- **Lebanon**: Setting up systems to turn biowaste into fuel
- **South Africa**: Collecting water quality data on local streams and providing an early warning system where action needed
- **Chad**: Planting of trees in Gassi, at the primary school of Digo
- **Armenia**: Engaging local youth groups to create renewable energy from environmental waste
- **Kenya**:
Leveraging COP28

#TheGreenRising will kick-off in Spring 2023 by accelerating, scaling, and measuring actions that young people are taking - in partnership with UNICEF Country Offices, Generation Unlimited and its ecosystem of partners – and leaning into existing youth networks and climate action initiatives (e.g., Global Volunteer Initiative, Imagen Ventures, U-Report, UPSHIFT) in a sprint leading up to COP28.

In December 2023, COP28 in Dubai will serve as the launchpad to tell the story of the 1+ million young people who are taking climate action to protect their communities – in every corner of the world – and to catalyse more young people and partner organisations to join #TheGreenRising.

#TheGreenRising will leverage various digital platforms (e.g. Goodwall, TikTok, UN Live, Instagram) to connect youth to COP where they will be livestreamed via interactive and immersive technologies. Participants in Dubai will hear from these young people reporting live from the frontlines of the climate crisis, be confronted and inspired by their actions and called on to take their own commitments and turn them into action as well.

#TheGreenRising will help to make this year’s COP the most inclusive ever – ageless, borderless, gender transformative. It’s an opportunity to drive media attention by bringing what’s happening outside of COP into COP, by listening to the voices that historically have not had the privilege, access, or resources to be spotlighted on these stages.

UNICEF and Generation Unlimited’s ecosystem of partners are singularly positioned to not only support youth action at scale but also bring young people together with global decision makers. UNICEF is a trusted partner with governments, corporations and young people taking climate action, and as one of the most influential advocacy organisations, can support young people to generate both an immediate and long-lasting impact.

1. Give the stage (physically and virtually) to young people from underserved communities taking effective action to protect their communities from climate change.

2. Unveil a challenge from youth to governments and corporate leaders to follow their lead and move from talk to action – NOW – because the climate crisis is HERE and it is a matter of survival.

3. Call on youth from around the world to join #TheGreenRising and start acting to protect and prepare their communities for the new climate reality.

#TheGreenRising will leverage COP28 to galvanise support while making the platform inclusive and borderless by doing the following:

- Mobilizing millions of young people to protect their communities from the climate crisis.
- COP28 in Dubai showcases the first 1 million actions of #TheGreenRising and galvanizes broader support. In 2024-25 #TheGreenRising scales to 100 million.
Youth Climate Action Examples

Mongolia
Young volunteers spread out across the country with monitoring devices that capture & measure air pollution levels, especially in Ulaanbaatar & the other major cities in the country where air pollution has been defined as the worst in the world. The volunteers use the data to run awareness and advocacy campaigns in their communities — alerting people when air toxicity levels are especially high, identifying areas of most risk, and providing communities with cleaner alternatives for heating their homes.

Kyrgyzstan
Nearly 1,000 young people have been trained in Disaster Risk Reduction to go to schools in their villages, running simulations in areas that are prone to earthquakes and hard for the government or any one organization to reach. The programme has reached close to 260,000 school students (80% girls) and 248 children with disabilities, as well as 14,362 school administration staff, benefited from emergency skills development through DRR training and simulation exercise. The young volunteers train students & teachers what to do in times of an earthquake and verify that each school has the tools in place to respond in case of an extreme weather event.

Burundi
1,000 young people are building cleaner energy stoves for cooking and water purification, reducing wood utilization, reducing indoor pollution that affects mainly women and girls and generating earnings to finance their studies. Participating girls have developed green and STEM skills and are now inspired to get involved in other development projects to protect their communities from the impacts of climate change.

Malaysia
Youth have engaged in climate/environmental action that is framed in localized narratives, sensitive to local needs, and ensuring that diverse groups are represented in terms of location, ability, gender, and ethnicity. Youth-led environmental groups are using local & indigenous knowledge to protect the environment and created a national platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration to build projects that respond to local climate impacts. 70 local environmental organizations, 39 youth-led enterprises, 11 academic institutions and 16 government entities are now part of this youth-led network.

U-Report Climate Action
Responding to demand from children and young people to learn more about climate change and what they can do about it, UNICEF’s U-Report platform developed a Climate Action Chatbot. Over 12,000 young people used the bot to get a variety of information such as climate facts – from causes, to impacts, to solutions. It also piloted a new ‘Act’ feature, which coached users on how to create their own advocacy campaign, be it petitioning for solar panels on the roof of their school or lowering air pollution in their city. This new feature acts like a mini advocacy workshop on your phone by asking users six simple questions that help to produce a campaign plan.

Viet Nam, Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Honduras, UAE, India, Indonesia, Saint Vincent & Grenadines and Anguilla
UNICEF is supporting Ministries of Education to prepare children and young people with knowledge, attitudes and skills for engaging in effective climate action — ensuring children learn and gain awareness of climate change in schools through the formal education curriculum, developing climate action frameworks for K-12 education, and upskilling the teaching workforce in climate literacy. As more students learn about climate change and are equipped with skills to respond to the crisis, we’ll see more young people stepping up to take action as well.

India
Over the next 3 years, 1.1 million youth will be trained in water conservation practices in Maharashtra and Karnataka - states that have been declared perennially water-stressed - and take on a variety of actions such as fixing leaks and flows of taps, encouraging people to use less water while brushing teeth / bathing / doing the laundry, and advocating for community soak pits. This network of youth volunteers is projected to reach 4.4 million community members with essential water saving and recharge actions, saving up to 40 million cubic meters of water for use.
We know that young people can play an outsize role in protecting the climate and environment.

When young people from marginalized backgrounds have opportunities to lead climate action and advocacy, improved environmental outcomes emerge:

• Effective and coordinated collective action takes place to adapt to the climate crisis at grassroot level.
• Inspire others to follow and change their own behaviours and can catalyse larger systemic and cultural changes.
• Challenge governments and private sector leaders to respond with clear action and resources.
• Develop green and transferable skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

• Support climate-smart and gender-transformative community initiatives that build resilience at local level, engaging schools and local leaders
• Leverage school platforms to engage communities in protecting ecosystems, preserving water sources and forests, using cleaner energies, and turning waste into energy.
• Mobilize their communities, using gender-transformative approaches, to adapt and prepare for the next climate event that may strike.
Will you join #TheGreenRising?

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