



## Opening Remarks

This document is written by Youth in a non-technical manner. It is a compilation of problems, suggestions, and projects of pressing climate change issues. The final output does not claim to cover all topics and discussions of COY13 in full and is not intended to be a policy document.

This document was created following an 'open door policy'. Any participant could contribute as much as desired. The following people took main responsibility for creating this document: Lucy Njuguna, Katja Garsson, Passy Amayo Ogolla, Espoir DelMain, Sarah Zauner, Tamani Rarama, Michael Morgan, Ashfred Norris, Jesus Eduardo Calvillo Garcia, Oscar Abel Sanchez Velazquez, Gabriel Waqaiquma, Shivani Iata, Jozefien Buseyne, Kunal Singh, Karime Valdez, Sivendra Michael, Trizer Omugarm Mathias Edetor and Simone Boggreve. Felix Boxler and Niklas Wagner of the COY13 Team moderated the writing process.

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## Introduction

COY13 attracted over 1,000 young people from more than 100 different nationalities. Over the three days of the conference, approximately 200 programme sessions took place. These sessions focused on three main points: inform, sensitize and activate. Apart from that, many organisations were present at COY13 to showcase that youth is needed to accelerate climate action. In general, participants used COY13 to learn from each other about successful engagement in climate activism and advocacy.

The 13th Conference of Youth (COY13) is an official event of YOUNGO, the youth-constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COY13 took place in Bonn from the 2 to 4 November 2017. It is an international gathering of youth who are passionate about climate change topics. At the start of COY13, the 1300 participants were invited to contribute to a final document. This document intends to give an insight to the topics discussed during the conference.

In general, this document intends to inspire climate activists around the globe. People can retrace what has been discussed and displayed. It also reflects the energy and effort that contributors and the participants have put into turning this COY into a successful event. It outlines the reflection upon three concrete topics of COY13: **Climate Justice, Activism, and Policy and Advocacy.**

Various inputs were used for developing this document. The Final Output team attended and documented programme sessions such as the Talanoa sessions. Talanoa is a Fijian process of getting together and listening to each other's stories. It prioritizes listening to each other over achieving the most effective outcome. Also, the Final Output Team reached out to participants for input and feedback via placards and online surveys.

Subsequently, each of the three topics will be presented in form of a chapter. Each chapter starts with the respective problems to be analysed and generic solutions to be suggested. Secondly, concrete actions which have been presented during the conference are introduced.

### *The primary aim...*

*...of this final document is to document the outcomes of conversations, and discussions, and the progress that was made during the conference in Bonn. It focuses on what Youth claims to be the essential issues in combatting climate change.*

### *The guiding questions have been*

- Which problems does Youth encounter regarding climate change?*
- How could potential solutions look like?*
- What can the youth do?*
- What is the youth doing already?*

## Climate Justice

We, the young people at the Conference of Youth 13, want climate justice, and we want it now. Working for climate justice requires to explicitly address several interconnected issues; issues like Human Rights, Indigenous Rights or the importance of Gender that are often left out in discussions around climate change. Yet, they are equally important and part of the solution. These are pertinent to the youth; therefore, we call upon urgent and concerted effort towards resolving them. The aim of this section is to shed light on some of these cross-cutting key problems, although we recognize that there are still others that are context-specific.

### Climate change disproportionately affects the vulnerable

Climate change has disproportionate impacts across social groups. Yet, the most affected ones are often inadequately represented in climate change discussions and decision-making processes. This applies for youth, women, and indigenous people in small island states and developing countries but is not limited to those. Consequently, already fragile livelihoods are additionally threatened by the impacts of climate change. As recently seen in Puerto Rico, one result of this is people being forced to flee their homes to the mainland to escape weather extremes. During such instances, many young people believe that empathy and solidarity are needed. Connected to this is a policy issue that is related to climate justice.

#### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*Many young people at the COY believe the availability of formalizing special migratory status for the young population of Small Island States in countries with the highest greenhouse gas emissions could be a way to begin working towards equity in nations with climate refugees and nations that will need to host them. Similarly, there is global variation, whereby the more vulnerable countries who are least responsible for the emissions are impacted the most by climate change, yet lack the resources to address the impacts. A large proportion of young people present that the issues rooted in an inequitable world need to be addressed through the advancement of gender justice and women's rights as part of the solution. In addition, another part of the solution should be overcoming structural barriers that diminish social, economic and climate justice outcomes.*

*In general, the treatment of climate refugees and their overall well-being should be a priority for everyone.*

## Balancing economic development with equity and equal rights

Young people recognize that international development is needed to achieve equity and equal rights for all. Besides, there is also a global demand for sustainability to mitigate climate change. These two issues can cause contrasting and sometimes competing activities. Many traditional economic drivers of development come from extractive industries. Yet, sustainability and development can also work together.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*Young people at COY13 support the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Many youths believe the industrialized countries should radically decelerate their greenhouse gas emissions. And support developing countries in their activities. Developing countries should make sure that their path fulfils the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*Many youths recognize that it is hard to find solutions for all issues at hand without creating other ones. They see an example for this in ensuring the local governance of health care, energy, and water supply. Adequate training, financial, and technical support must be put in place, to enable people to take control of these systems. This should be the task of entities and other more privileged stakeholders with the goal to mitigate climate change and to adapt to it. By doing so, they should reflect about the impacts of climate change, the power and agency they can have to protect the spaces they live in and come from.*

*However, this presents an inequitable distribution of action and agency. It also maintains the power of more privileged parts of society and their direction over marginalized communities.*

## Continued and detrimental reliance on fossil fuels

Climate justice cannot be discussed adequately and achieved without casting eyes on the huge proportion of the global population and the lack of access to affordable and clean energy for both industrial and private use. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), about 2.5 billion people within developing countries depend on biomass as a primary source of energy. A trend that has led to the premature death of women and children exposed to indoor pollution. Furthermore, the fossil fuels continue to be of preference especially for industrialization. New sources of hydrocarbons e.g. in Eastern Africa get discovered. Hence, new players are introduced in the extraction of oil, gas, and coal as a solution to energy poverty and economic growth. Even so, global efforts of transition into sustainable, accessible and renewable energy exist.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13:*

*A consensual end to the continuous use of fossil fuels by the wealthiest economies would be an ideal solution. This would allow for greater investment in renewable, and affordable energy for all now, and to the benefit of future generations. A group of young people called "#Decarbonize #Decolonize" was present at the marketplace of COY13. The main message and campaign is 'KEEP IT IN THE GROUND'. They refer to the continuing extraction and use of fossil fuels and the contribution to carbon emission on a global scale.*

## Unequal resource distribution and corporate distance effects

Resources and privileges are distributed unequally. This is often linked to existing economic, social, and cultural structures across different levels. At COY13, UK Youth Climate Coalition presented the effects of capitalism and neoliberalism. They found that both approaches contribute to global injustice. Both drive exploitation, and unequally distributed negative effects of climate change.

Today, multi-national corporations (MNCs) govern our economies. They are based in locations that do not see the effects of their extractive or degrading practices on a day to day basis. Besides, MNCs are not led by people that suffer from the effects of their actions. This creates even more of a divide between actions and consequences. Thus, MNCs can continue practices that degrade and extract but ultimately oppress people including but not limited to women and young people in developing nations and small island states and the environment. A presentation from Green School Bali focused on one specific MNC which impacts and drives the “conflict palm oil industry”. Its headquarter in New Jersey, USA, is far away from the areas in the Global South that are affected due to the firm’s actions.

Many youths believe that countries, MNCs, and other entities that need to be held accountable for their actions.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*A solution the young people realize is to use the voice of the youth in highlighting and shining a light on the way money governs our global systems and how it can and does perpetuate injustice globally. To do this, we must think about which populations are affected the most. Like in many other instances of environmental injustice, this targets already marginalized populations including but not limited to the Global South, youth, women and Small Island States. While recognizing, honouring, and uplifting these stories and voices of the most affected populations, we see the value in stories and value-based language to connect on a personal level with these multi-national corporations as one of the most powerful ways to bridge the gap between leading and working for these corporations and understanding fully and feeling the effects of their actions. In addition, the youth see the only sustainable way to bringing about these changes is a bottom-up approach. In this way, we can be assured that the voices of people being most affected are considered while bringing the issues to the eyes of the people who control these multi-national corporations.*

*As the custodians of the earth, we have a shared responsibility to maintain and try to improve the capacity of the earth to sustain future generations. However, the current rates of exploitation and degradation of natural resources, pollution and observed extinction of species is a clear violation of the rights of future generations. To address this, an open dialogue should be generated between the young people from small islands and developing countries and their respective governments. Developed countries should renew commitments to provide the mentioned young people with the required support, which includes access to information and financial support to enable their engagement in climate action at all levels.*

## What has been done at COY? What can still be done?

At COY13 it was evident that young people are present and engaged in climate action. Many youth-led initiatives presented their activities at COY13. Most of them promote the active participation of youth, women and indigenous people in climate action. Many of them highlight the threat to essential natural resources or raise awareness to overcome misconceptions towards poverty. Other initiatives showcased youths who are successfully operating start-ups to combat climate change. Generally, many innovative and creative ways of creating awareness on the problems and the need to act were presented. COY has facilitated the sharing of knowledge between different cultures and communities. This contributes to breaking down assumptions and prejudices which contribute to climate injustice.

In the Talanoa sessions, we heard from diverse voices from all around the world. They presented issues they believe are the most important in their respective countries. It was clear that youths are concerned about the divide between those in power and those who are most affected. This usually corresponds to power positions between the Global North and Global South. Similarly, some youths expressed that this divide is further reflected by the bias against young people in leadership positions. The idea was presented to create more opportunities for youth to get involved in such decision-making settings. Many youths agreed that they need to be a key part of decision-making processes to ensure that their voices are heard. However, youth sometimes do not have training in how to have effective interactions in such spaces.

Also, people highlighted the need for global networks and connecting youth movements worldwide. Also, some people presented the ideas of more accountability and consequences in global climate negotiations. Governments, companies and other stakeholders must be held accountable for the impacts of any of their actions. In addition, youth presented the idea of using more specific language in the international documents that can work congruently with measures to hold nations accountable to agreements they make. Within this piece of international legislation, some youth argued for the stop of blaming communities. While these local communities depend on these economies some youth also believe a solution is to demand a transition through developed countries supported by civil society, politics, and industry. Also, some youth believe that officially recognised systems and legal obligations must be in place to ensure that all citizens have equal access to clean water and unpolluted air, regardless of any social characteristic. In addition, youth recognize sessions which provide background and training on UNFCCC negotiations and UN declarations or other legal instruments as a powerful tool for creating awareness among youth of official policy processes and outcomes on the international level.

COY13 was key in enhancing every individual's capacity to feel empowered, and included. Many participants are confident to engage on the national and international level. This includes participation at COP23 but also holding accountable that national governments.

## Policy and Advocacy

The increased awareness of climate change issues has motivated youth networks to engage in activities targeting policy improvements. Most of youth networks at COY13 has broadened the scope for advocacy work at different levels in recent years. At COY13, young people from around the world discussed issues, solutions, and recommendations on policy improvements.

### Lack of inter-generational spaces within policy and advocacy

Participants from both the Global South and the Global North stressed that advocacy needs to start with individuals. From there, it should expand to the society. Finally, the whole generation must change their attitude and perceptions towards environmental sustainability. This result was supported by a survey whereby participants highlighted the importance of raising awareness on mitigating and adapting to climate change. Besides, discussions outlined the need to diversify the economic mainstays and to increase versatility in response to climate change impacts. This also means to incorporate coping strategies that have served well even if they appear primitive.

#### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*There should be a stronger involvement, recognition, and appreciation of vulnerable communities. This particularly applies for youth, women, LGBTQI communities and people with disabilities. They need to be involved in policy making, and formulation of the strategies on climate change adaptation and mitigation.*

*Young people must be recognized and included as equal and prominent partners contributing to the development of our society. Many youths acknowledged the importance of a multi-stakeholder approaches to youth development. Besides, they highlighted the need for frameworks and cross-sectoral youth policies. Thus, this creates mechanisms for genuine and meaningful engagement in policy and decision-making, and a clear recognition on the part of governments.*

## Inactive youth participation in policy-making

Interviews conducted and policy positions from local COYs in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Fiji, Guinea, Mexico and Uganda indicate that many young people have limited knowledge on the implementation of existing policies related to climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction at national or regional level. There has been significant progress towards the ratification of international conventions and agreements such as UNFCCC by most of countries. Those ratifications require legislative changes to be translated into policy and practical actions. However, if such measures are not adequately put in place, young people's voices will not be represented.

On the same note, the results highlighted the lack of consultation and collaboration amongst stakeholders, particularly youth and marginalised groups who are advocating for an effective implementation of policies. Young people must be involved in all stages of policy formulation and implementation. Active youth participation is crucial to develop inclusive, sustainable policies.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*Young people should work together with the national governments. Thus, policies according to its corresponding nationally determined contribution ascribed in the Paris Agreement can be implemented. Young people can contribute through participation on public consultation and submissions. They can also volunteer, or diffuse scientific information to the population. Young people can also bind youth-NGO actions with the government agenda. They can also report about social-environmental activities, as well the status of local, regional, and international policies.*

## Limited education and capacity building

Many youths noted the importance of education and capacity building. Both are needed to address climate change at different levels of governance. Yet, youth find that many climate change challenges continue to exist because of inadequate approaches. The fragmentation of international institutions results in ad hoc, short-term project-based approaches to capacity building. Thus, it reduces opportunities to foster enhanced, strategic and sustained approaches. Yet, this is needed to support transformational change. Besides, only by enabling all stakeholders to build capacities it is possible to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This particularly applies for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*It is critical to improve capacity building on the ground to succeed. This can be achieved by enhancing institutional governance. Also, administrative systems need sustained resources provisions. This is highlighted by lessons from UNFCCC operating entities, relevant implementing agencies, and other multilateral agreements (e.g. the Montreal Protocol). Integrating innovation in youth development requires deliberate planning, on-going management, resource allocation and robust monitoring and evaluation. Capacity and educational gaps of a community need to be better identified. Ways to increase synergies, coordination, collaboration, and coherence should be highlighted. More importantly, policies and programmes promoting the use of alternative approaches to youth engagement are most effectively delivered through and with young people themselves.*

*In the session by Campus Climate Corps, participants recommended that climate change programmes should be integrated into the educational system. In that way, young people would be deal with it already very early. They considered encouraging proactive plans for young climate change activists in the educational sectors. Also, they recognized the effective contribution of children to raising climate change issues at national level.*

## Restricted access to climate finance for young people

The majority of the local COYs and Talanoa sessions highlighted difficulties of young people to access climate funds. This detrimentally affects their position to start climate action projects, and to attend local, regional and international climate negotiations. They stressed that the main issue is the failure of local governments and donor agencies to recognise that climate finance is climate development and youth empowerment is power to lead.

### *Approaches proposed at COY13*

*Youths call for a free and more open access to climate funding. Some youths suggest creating an official UNFCCC platform that contains announcements and a contact index of NGOs. This is needed to increase synergies, collaboration, and coherence among existing bodies and activities within and outside the UNFCCC. Also, a unified certification system to credit youth organizations is needed.*

*Youth also urge a greater recognition and inclusion of diverse youth identities and youth-led networks. They provide platforms for young people to voice their views, as partners on sustainable development, climate justice and other issues that directly impact their lives. Young people demand spaces to*

- strengthen and reorient the structures and system for Youth development including National Youth Policies and Youth Development Framework;*
- Create mechanisms or platforms for Youth Dialogue with leaders;*

*Besides, some young people call for new modalities for effective and adequate resource allocation and funding, towards youth-led initiatives and activities that explore and strengthen relationships with development partnerships.*

## **Additional policy suggestions from youth at COY**

### Strengthening evidence-based policy

Local COYs in the Pacific and throughout Africa noted a lack of evidence-based policies. They identified poor monitoring and evaluation systems as reasons. Limited resources and technical capacities hamper effective collection and analysis of evidence. Such evidence will assist in identifying needs, measuring progress achieved. It also assists countries to shape sustainable evidence-based policies for climate development.

Enhance partnerships with global youth networks and communities using digital and social media and other possible ICT platforms for sharing our experiences, challenges and learning on climate change adaptation and mitigation at local, regional or international levels.

### Improving policy documentation

The aim is to enhance partnerships with global youth networks and communities. This could be done by using digital and social media and other possible ICT platforms. Through those channels they can share experiences, and challenges. Also, it can serve to learn about climate change adaptation and mitigation at different levels of governance.

### Mainstreaming in climate change action policies and plans

The Pacific Youth Climate Action session focused on the issue of intersectionality amongst climate change policies. LGBTQ\* communities, and other marginalised groups face systemic injustice and social inequality. According to the panellists, most organisations protecting the interests of these groups had attempted to integrate climate change within their work programmes. But they faced barriers to access resources at national, regional and international level.

### Formulation of a Penal Code for non-binding international agreements

Surveys were conducted among COY13 participants whether global agreements should be binding and punitive. Results show that almost 86% of respondents believed that global agreements should be both binding and punitive.

## Activism

Youth activists from all around the world generally face similar challenges as it relates to the sensitization of the public on the current climate change crisis. At the same time, each country has its own unique difficulties that stifle the resilient spirit of the Youth and this must be highlighted if we are ever to effectively fight the issue. This chapter seeks to address the problems faced by youth climate change activists, as well as suggest effective solutions which can be implemented to mitigate the occurrences of these issues. Young activists all over the globe face tremendous challenges which affect the progress of activism. Different countries face different issues depending on the social, political and economic status of the country. In face to face interviews and the Talanoa sessions, the main issues shared by young participants is as follows.

### Collaboration

Each country has its own development plans as well as its implementation on activism. At COY13, young people from around the world explained and discussed problems in their respective countries. Many governments do not create policies that advocate for or encourage activism. Young activists are not valued or recognised as wished by public institutions and the legal sectors. This creates tension and misunderstanding. Thus, young activists utilizing civil disobedience as a form of protest or expression.

Yet, policy-makers need to recognise the contributions of youth towards decision-making. Also, the creation of an annual activist work agenda on climate change would empower young activists to be part of the decision-making processes.

Outcomes of the Local COY Mexico brought up the required connection between youth and senior representatives of organisations. Communication and information-sharing between youth-led grassroots, national and regional civil society and social movements is vital. This requires ongoing spaces for constructive and honest dialogue. Also, safe spaces and an opportunity for youths are needed to share challenges and strengths. Communication spaces between those are needed to develop relationships between activists and youth societies of different countries. This allows the exchange of experiences and reinforces common causes that have a thorough affect.

There is a need to create more opportunities for young people to be part of and take ownership of the decision-making and implementation of climate change policies. These enable youth to highlight grassroot issues and experiences on how climate change affects the society. Youth-led strategies can strengthen and enhance more resilient sustainable movements. Besides, young people can use their juvenile right to create actions in the current and future climate situation.

We recognize the significance of a multi-partner way to deal with youth improvement. Many youths also see the need for empowering structures and cross-sectoral youth strategies. Those

foster a bona fide and important engagement in strategy and basic leadership. They would also acknowledge the esteem and part of youth in all advancement.

### **Small Island States**

Small Island Developing States also recognize the valuable contribution of young people to national, regional, global processes for climate justice. There is a need to create opportunities for young people to be part of and share ownership of the various processes in strengthening and enhancing a more resilient young people's and sustainable movement. This can be done by ensuring youth-led strategies, in the implementation of the conflict prevention and human security framework.

In some Small Island States, young people are not recognised because of traditional beliefs and customs. Young people might have to submit to the elders or the leaders of the clan. It has become a prominent factor that hinders the performance and interest of young people in pushing the agenda forward in their communities. At the Youth Climate Change Conference 2017 in Kingston, Jamaica, it was highlighted that Youth of the region are not as included as they should be in policy creation and implementation. This hinders progress and the Youth feel marginalized in some instances. Their unique perspectives and contributions tend to be not sufficiently valued.

SIDS have been able to undertake several important activities designed not only to meet their reporting obligations under the Convention but also to take early action around climate change. An example could be mangrove planting done by Pacific Survival Pacific Youth in action to fight for the carbon emissions as mangroves are found to reduce the emission 3 times more than the natural plants according to the local COY Pacific 2017.

### **Connection and collaboration of young activists**

One of the outcomes of the Youth Climate Change Conference YCCC 2017, held in Kingston, Jamaica, October 10th, 2017 was that to effectively coordinate initiatives to fight global climate change, the youth should develop a social media toolkit. This would provide a clear framework for mobilizing the youth, so everyone can get involved and streamline operations. The Youth can only be effective if they are organized and efficient in their project implementations.

Besides, the Kingston Framework introduced and reinforced that youth activist should continue to work together towards a framework that is a youth-led action. Youth should have training courses for disaster risk reduction be engaged in citizen science.

Regions face diverse policy issues. Hence, communication and information-sharing between youth-led institutes are absent. It is vital to have ongoing communication between national and regional movements. This mechanism requires an informed, open and inclusive membership. This

would add value to existing youth engagement mechanisms, through shared work, and solidarity. Besides, they can build joint positions in these and increasingly limited geopolitical spaces.

### **Youth-led initiatives at COY13**

We, the young participants at COY13, realise that climate change is posing serious risks to our lives and for the globe. The time for talk is over, let's go for action. COY13 produced many great initiatives encouraging action. Some of the many initiatives that were presented during the COY13 are the following:

The 'Stop talking, start planting' campaign is a child-led initiative that aims to fight the climate crisis by planting trees. They mobilize young people to plant trees and to act. With this campaign, already more than 40 million trees were planted throughout the world. The campaign aims for more support and donation and wants to encourage more people to plant trees in their countries.

Another exemplary initiative is the 'Give Youth a Chance' Campaign initiated by the International Association for the Advancement of Innovative (IAAI). This campaign aims to mobilize resources that empower young people to take meaningful and rewarding action for climate change. It's a large-scale partnership where the wealth holders in the world are linked to those who want to fight for climate change but lack the right resources. In a structured way, resources will be mobilized and provided by youth.

The Decarbonise Decolonise NGO pledges for taking indigenous knowledge into account at the same range as scientific level. It recognized the effectiveness of proper public consultation as prior to climate change programs; the establishment of natural reserves within native land lease where indigenous right is at stake; encouraging the full participation of indigenous pupils before the law and implementing their non-discrimination through legal bodies and to assure their equal rights regardless of their educational background.

Mangrove Ecological Restoration initiatives is an active program that is funded by Vinaka Fiji, Yasawa Trust Foundation that holds activities that involve individuals from any age range to help work for Green Growth Environment. The sole purpose of this activity was to achieve an environment safe for the humans, as for the source of food, income and ecological function, natural resource that contributes towards economy's growth and for the fauna who inhabit these plants for their habitat purposes. These animals help maintain the Earth's Ecological Balance naturally by predated upon plants and other animals, pollinating various plants, and exhaling carbon dioxide, which green plants require to live.

However, besides all these good initiatives, there is still a lot that needs to be done and what youth is going to work on during the next years, including COY14. According to one of the discussions held during a workshop about activism for climate change, young people should engage and mobilize youth in groups and networks raise voices against the impact of climate change. There was consensus found among participants that it is important to work more closely together for a safer environment and a greener planet.