



Local Conference of Youth

7-8 October 2021

**A conference of the youth,
by the youth, for the youth.**

Funded by

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Local Conference(s) of Youth or LCOY(s) are organized before or during the global COY in different parts of the world, in order to increase access of youth to opportunities for policy training and capacity building. The LCOY feeds into the Global Conference of Youth (COY), which prepares young people for their eventual participation at the annual UN Climate Change Conference, also known as Conference of the Parties (COP). LCOY(s) are further divided into National LCOY (intended for youth of one country), and Regional LCOY (intended for youth of more than one country, that is for a region/sub-region).

Local COY(s) focus on climate related topics which have high national or regional importance, discuss and develop respective outputs, which are fed into the Global COY and consequently into the climate negotiations on a global scale. CEE India has hosted the LCOY for South Asia region in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 prior to this one.

The Local Conference of Youth

LCOY India 2021

LCOY India 2021 was held on the 7th and 8th of October, 2021. Due to the pandemic situation and the various restrictions, which came along with it, LCOY 2021 was decided to be hosted on a virtual platform.

The overarching theme for this year's Local Conference of Youth was 'Youth Action for Restoration Solutions'. The theme chosen for this is in line with the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Along with this, on the same World Environment Day of June 6 2021, CEE launched the 'Act to restore' Campaign consistent with the theme of Ecosystem Restoration. This inspired us to come up with a concept that would include the subject of 'Youth' as well as 'Environment restoration' and how the two can come together to combat climate change and revive the environment, thus the theme 'Youth Action for Restoration Solutions'.



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Logo

LCOY India logo is inspired by the power of one, to amplify the power of youth together. In one of the webinar's Mr. Atul Bagai, Head, UNEP India, stated that it is time we go back to our roots of making 'प्रकृति देवो भव' meaning 'Nature is God'. The LCOY logo personifies the same emotion where the human figure is carrying a tree over its head showing the respect and due importance Nature needs right now. Also, various circles in shades of blue show the amplification each young individual can create through innovation, implementation, advocacy, awareness, education and youth action for restoration solutions.

Recommendations

Policy Making

According to UN estimates, there are 1.21 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the world today, accounting for 15.5 percent of the global population. The ***need to include youth voices in the global climate policy making process*** has become more pressing than ever as young people, whose futures are threatened by accelerating anthropogenic climate change, are increasingly demanding action towards a more just, equitable, and climate-resilient society.

Women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change in some demographics than men primarily as they constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. They also face social, economic and political barriers that limit their coping capacity.

The ***Gender Composition Report*** of 2019 by the UN Climate Change department showed that the number of women represented in the bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was not in line with efforts to create gender balance in the Convention. Only two constituted bodies reported near gender balance in 2019 as opposed to three last in 2018. This indicated a step back in gender balance in climate decision-making under the UN.

Women and girls around the world have received increasing recognition for their leadership. ***However, in the climate decision-making process, women's voices are not yet equally represented. This is a gap in the climate policy making process which needs to be filled.***

Climate change has disproportionate impacts across social groups. Various studies have shown that indigenous communities living in rural areas and remote regions as well as marginalized communities are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to a larger dependency on natural resources for their livelihoods; hence making them important stakeholders.

Yet, they are largely inadequately represented when it comes to the climate discussions and policy making process. ***More involvement and contribution of these communities while decision-making is required*** to bridge this gap, to ensure greater community resilience to climate change effects and higher efficacy of adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Language and communication are important issues when it comes to communicating climate change policy, particularly in terms of use of scientific jargon. This often leads to extended scientific explanations of the issue which leads to disengagement from certain sections.

Since climate change is a global issue which affects people from all stratas of society, *the need to communicate climate policy in a more inclusive way while also using vernacular language is the need of the hour*, especially when communicating with stakeholders living in remote areas who are not familiar with the English language and the sections of society who might not have adequate access to education.

Develop and execute a dedicated and time-bound emission control plan for each city/local region and not generic plans for the entire country which are difficult to monitor and hence, regulate.

Energy efficiency improvements are often considered to be easy to attain, but they do require consumers to spend more when buying products. *Consumer-centric incentives that reward people for taking steps that reduce their use of fossil fuels and, by extension, reduce their carbon footprint such as tax benefits and subsidies* would encourage the use of energy efficient technology, eventually contributing to climate change mitigation.

Limited communication and engagement exists between the government departments and the various youth working groups working at the national level. *The presence of a national central youth focal point would ensure free communication between the aforementioned parties.* For meaningful youth representation in the climate policy making process, it is vital to have effective communication between members of youth groups working on ground-level and policy makers.

Stricter, more decentralized enforcement and monitoring of legally binding Carbon pricing policies that require emitters to pay for their carbon emissions, such as a carbon tax (which would require carbon emitters to pay a tax for each ton of carbon they emit), or a cap-and-trade program (which would require businesses to have a permit for each ton of carbon they emit).

An interesting point made during an expert discussion on day one of LCOY India 2021 was the focus on educational qualifications over on-ground experience in India. *Policy mandates by the governing authorities to give an upper hand to individuals who have taken group or individual action towards restoration and climate action* while securing jobs would ensure more involvement of youth in restoration activities and would incentivize them towards skill development required for climate action.

Education

In a country like India which is heavily at risk from climate change impacts, teachers and students need to understand the threats and opportunities which come as a result of climate change better. Although India is one of the few countries where environmental education is mandatory in formal education, 65% of the Indian population remains unaware of climate change as an issue.

Practical knowledge is very important in climate education. The current syllabus primarily focuses on facts and figures and has little practical education. This adds to the aforementioned lack of awareness and disengagement towards climate action especially amongst the youth. ***Transforming the environmental syllabus right from primary levels and above is necessary to engage and inform the youth about the gravity of the situation.*** The nuances of climate change, its gravity and effects in day-to-day lives must be included in a more detailed approach in school curriculums. This might include collaborations with local NGOs or regional, national or global organizations. Organizations like the CEE are committed towards this goal but this needs to happen at a larger scale for bringing collective change.

Accessibility to education is a huge concern, especially in less developed regions, but accessibility to proper/fact-based climate literacy is another major issue which is present in developed, developing nations and under-developed nations alike. Wide-spread denial of anthropogenic climate change and climate-related misinformation competes against the data reported by climate scientists, which overwhelmingly shows that climate change is man-made.

Ensuring there is transparency and no involvement of parties with vested interests while propagating climate education is extremely important to tackle issues of climate change denial.

Demand creates supply. Education and awareness are the foundation of skill development, especially amongst the youth. ***Education targeted towards creating new demand cycles among stakeholders would automatically ensure a shift in the current production infrastructure which focuses on fossil fuels as energy sources to cleaner energy sources.*** This could be done through measures like having a dedicated task force at the local level for propagation of awareness.

Education is recognised for its ability to empower, inform and motivate those engaged, the wider community and government to take action on climate change. Although one of the reasons for disengagement of youth with restoration and climate action besides the obvious lack of awareness, is the method of delivery. Since it is primarily theoretical its engagement among youth reduces.

Better methods of delivery for propagating climate change education, especially to the youth; such as workshops, activities, mentorship circles and exposing them to newer alternatives like podcasts or audiobooks would improve the level of climate literacy.

Climate knowledge is not limited to just urban sectors. For example, indigenous and communities living in rural areas as well as communities who are involved predominantly in agricultural activities, have centuries of traditional knowledge regarding adapting to the changing climate.

A common (digital or physical) platform where different communities can share their knowledge with their counterparts would help propagate knowledge which has been a part of their culture all along, while ensuring there is an engaging exchange of information between stakeholders involving different demographics.

Skill Development

Realising the need for conserving biodiversity, minimizing habitat loss and reducing pollution to address climate change; governments all over the globe have formulated 'green' plans for economic recovery, especially after the pandemic.

Skill development of youth in line with the global and nationally determined goals has to be a priority. The lack of platforms for targeted skill development, which is accessible at the most remote areas is an impediment to taking eventual climate action.

Capacity building through awareness and education needs to happen at a more grassroots level, as communities living in remote areas are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Highlighting the direct effects of climate change in their day to day lives and what they can do to mitigate and adapt to the same by providing them with knowledge which is easily understandable and also resources can help build capacity of the entire community.

Although this is the age of digitalization, there is still a huge dependency on physical infrastructure. Individuals and organizations were forced to work remotely during the pandemic while also shifting towards a more robust digital infrastructure. These lessons need to be carried ahead and adopted in life post-pandemic as well. Majority of carbon emissions are due to energy consumption, since energy transition is a slow process, reducing consumption is one of the ways we can accelerate the process of reaching our net zero goals.

Skill development which equips employees to work remotely without compromising on efficiency should be a focus point as it has a massive impact on overall energy consumption.

Over four billion people use various social media platforms globally. Social media is a tool which is accessible and is being used by people in remote rural areas as well as urban centres. Due to its massive reach and impact across individuals of all ages, especially the youth, social media becomes an important tool for climate action. Social media not only has the capability to raise public awareness and change public perception about climate change, but also has the power to influence the politics of climate change; if used correctly. ***The skills to use social media as a tool in order to achieve the aforementioned goals needs to be taught to people across all sections of society through skill development activities by the government as well as independent organizations and NGOs.*** Making people realise they have a stake in the global climate movement and they could take part in it through platforms they use daily could be revolutionary.

Community Partnerships

Community-led responses have the potential to contribute significantly to reducing the impacts of climate change and building resilience from the smallest rural community to the centres of our big cities. Since we have already talked about the representation of youth and marginalized communities and their involvement in the global climate change policy making process, we have already highlighted the importance of synergy between the different sections of society, the government, different working groups and organizations working towards restoration and climate mitigation. There have been various cases in the past where communities have come together for conservation and eco-restoration as well as taking a stand against ecosystem destruction in the name of progress, at the local, and global levels.

Empowering local communities and having local youth representation at the ground level is essential for the voices of communities to be heard at higher decision-making levels. Communities have the power to educate people at more grassroots levels at which the higher authorities may not necessarily reach.

Having a structure to reward and authorize individuals and communities who have worked notably towards restoration and climate action will not only incentivize people from their community to work towards the same, but will also inspire other communities and groups. This will also open doors for free and effective communication between local communities and decision makers at the regional, national and eventually the global level.

A platform where working groups and individuals working towards climate action can connect with funding agencies and can view their projects, interact and communicate with them, would help with funding and monitoring of climate projects and hence strengthen community partnerships, which in turn help them adapt better to the impacts of Climate Change.



What do the Young people say?

“
Shivam Singh
Learn-Share-Act-Repeat
”

“
Rumit Walia
We can still redirect the
change with a collective
and innovative action. ”

“
Jil Sheth
Small steps can lead to
big changes ”

“
Areefa ali
Bridge the gap to amplify
the voice of young
climate-change warriors ”

“
Archie Kapoor
It's high time that our voices are heard and taken
into consideration while framing a policy because it's us who are
going to bear the brunt of climate change the most. ”

“
Rakhshinda Akhtar:
Dear leaders, listen to the generation who are
passionate and willing to be a change maker with
innovative solutions. ”

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