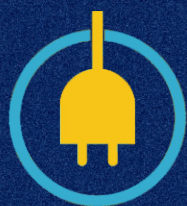




# Empowering Nigerian Youth in Climate Action: Policies and Pathways

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*Written by Ifechi Anikwe, Doosughun Takur*



Clean Technology Hub  
energy innovation centre





# Introduction

The United Nations describes climate change as an existential threat to humanity if tipping points are reached. According to the World Health Organization, impacts of climate change on health in the next 20-30 years could result in an extra 250,000 deaths/year across the globe.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, it has been estimated that through disruption in human activities caused by climate change, additional hundreds of millions of people will fall into poverty by 2030 with over 140 million becoming climate migrants in vulnerable regions of the world.<sup>2</sup> Nigerian and other Sub-Saharan Africa countries have been identified as some of the vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. Some of these impacts cut across food security, infrastructure, health, social cohesion and environmental degradation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WHO (2018) Climate change and health.  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2019) Climate Change.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climatechange/overview>

<sup>3</sup> UNFCCC (2020) Climate Change Is an Increasing Threat to Africa.  
<https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa>

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30.<sup>4</sup> The urgency of involving youth in climate action in Nigeria is paramount due to its population demographics. The current state of climate change in Nigeria is characterized by a range of environmental challenges that have significant impacts on the population. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe due to the unpredictable climate and this is ultimately leading to increased disruption in the agricultural sector, a sector where many young Nigerians gain the source of their livelihood and playing a direct role in food insecurity in the country. The impact of this is that the average Nigerian youth is disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change, such as conflicts, agricultural disruptions, and community displacements.<sup>5</sup>

The impacts of climate change also threaten the education and protection of young people in Nigeria, as schools are

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<sup>4</sup> Young People's Potential, the Key to Africa's Sustainable Development  
<https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/young-people%E2%80%99s-potential-key-africa%E2%80%99s-sustainable-development>

<sup>5</sup> The Climate-changed Child  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/147931/file/Theclimate-changedchild-ReportinEnglish.pdf>

damaged by natural disasters and children are displaced from their homes. With these disasters comes a risk to public health, as we see increased health risks due to pollution and vector-borne diseases. If the health and education of Nigerian youth are continuously threatened, the economic stability of young Nigerians is at risk. The impact of climate change on Nigerian youth underscores the need for urgent action and robust policies to mitigate these effects and build a resilient future.

There's a pressing need for collective action, and engaging youth is crucial as they bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to the table. These perspectives are crucial in policy influence because their inclusion in climate action is not just beneficial but necessary for creating resilient communities and a sustainable future for Nigeria.



### **Analysis of Current Policies**

Policies are one of the crucial foundations of climate action, and Nigeria has developed several policy instruments on climate change focused on adaptation.

Some of the adaptation specific instruments include: The National Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN) developed in 2011, the National Adaptation Plan Framework developed in 2020 and the Nigeria Climate Change and Response Strategy (NCCPRS) was developed in 2012 and recently reviewed in 2021.

Nigeria's National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action supports the provision of training on climate change adaptation to youth advocates (amongst other stakeholders) in basic methods of community-based vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning and implementation.<sup>6</sup> It also includes reference to 'gender mainstreaming for female youth and male youth to ensure that the groups have the opportunity to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes to benefit equally from climate change adaptation policies and programmes.'

The NCCPRS provides a framework for managing climate change and promoting low-carbon development in Nigeria. As a framework document, it prescribes sectoral and cross-sectoral strategic policy statements and actions for the management of climate change within the country's pursuit of climate resilient

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<sup>6</sup> National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN), <http://csdevnet.org/wp-content/uploads/NATIONAL-ADAPTATION-STRATEGY-AND-PLAN-OF-ACTION.pdf>.





sustainable development. The NCCPRS includes youth engagement and capacity building as part of its strategy. This policy document is an attempt to reflect Nigeria's recognition of the role that youth play in combating climate change and the importance of their active participation in shaping a sustainable future.

The purposes of these policies include ensuring environmental protection, fostering low carbon and high growth paths, cutting down on emissions, achieving net-zero target, building climate resilience, integrating climate change mitigation, controlling drought and desertification, among others.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, putting the policies into practice in Nigeria has proven to be a big problem mainly due to inadequate capacity building, bureaucratic bottlenecks, insufficient financial resources and a lack of will and awareness amongst political leaders. Powerful interest groups, particularly those in the oil and gas industry, have also been known to influence policy decisions and oppose climate change policies that threaten their interests. This influence has led to a situation where Nigeria prioritizes the interests of the oil and gas sector over climate change mitigation efforts, leading

to further delays in policy implementation.<sup>8</sup>

Youth involvement is essential in shaping policies that are socially just and sustainable, ensuring that their interests and the environment's health are prioritized. Indeed, approximately [80% of the latest NDCs](#) include considerations of young people compared to 40% of first-generation NDCs.<sup>9</sup>

Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outline its commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. The NDCs show the country's climate targets and measures to be adopted in actualizing them. Nigeria's approach to drafting the revised NDC was collaborative and inclusive. By holding virtual meetings and workshops in March 2020, at the peak of the COVID 19 pandemic, the Department of Climate Change brought together a diverse spectrum of partners, including stakeholders from youth-led organizations. The administration believed it was essential that young people take center stage in the consultations because of the high proportion of youngsters in the nation. About [1,000 youth](#) participated in a Climate Action Youth Dialogue across

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<sup>7</sup> How effective are climate change policies in Nigeria?  
<https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/how-effective-are-climate-change-policies-in-nigeria/>

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<sup>8</sup> Adelekan, I. O., & Bankole, A. O. (2018). Climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation strategies in Nigeria. In *Climate Change Adaptation in Africa* (pp. 123-146). Springer, Cham

<sup>9</sup> State of Climate Ambition  
[https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research\\_report\\_document/State%20of%20Climate%20Ambition.pdf](https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/State%20of%20Climate%20Ambition.pdf)

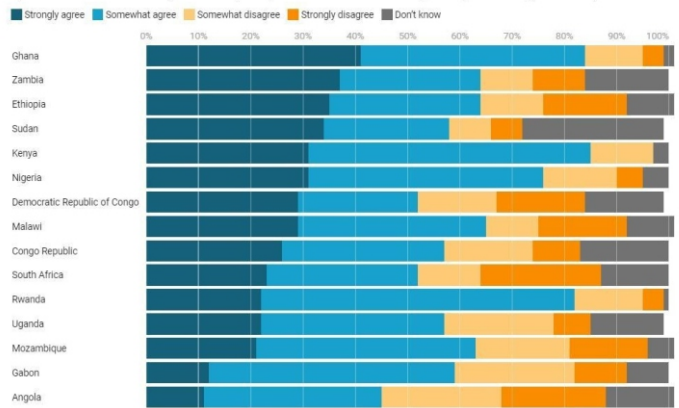
the country, a three-week consultation during which they were invited to submit written input on changes they would like to see across the seven sectors of the economy prioritized in the draft NDC. Adopting climate-smart agriculture methods, changing the taxation of renewable energy, and including climate change as a subject in the national education curriculum are among the recommendations made by the youth consultation.

Additionally, the NDC Support Programme, in collaboration with the International Labour Organizations (ILO) piloted a project to measure the social and employment impacts of NDC policies in Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Youth representatives have been actively engaged in the process as members of the national taskforce. Both countries have built nationally-owned green jobs assessment models and evaluated socio economic impacts of NDCs and Long Term Strategy (LTS).<sup>10</sup> This helps to guide NDC enhancement and a just transition, while also contributing to informing green recovery efforts – where green jobs can play a leading role.

<sup>10</sup> Measuring the Socioeconomic Impacts of Climate Policies to Guide NDC Enhancement and a Just Transition  
[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed\\_emp/--emp\\_ent/documents/publication/wcms\\_818466.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_emp/--emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_818466.pdf)

#### African youth taking climate action

4,500 African men and women aged 18-24 responding to the statement: 'I am actively working to reduce my carbon footprint'

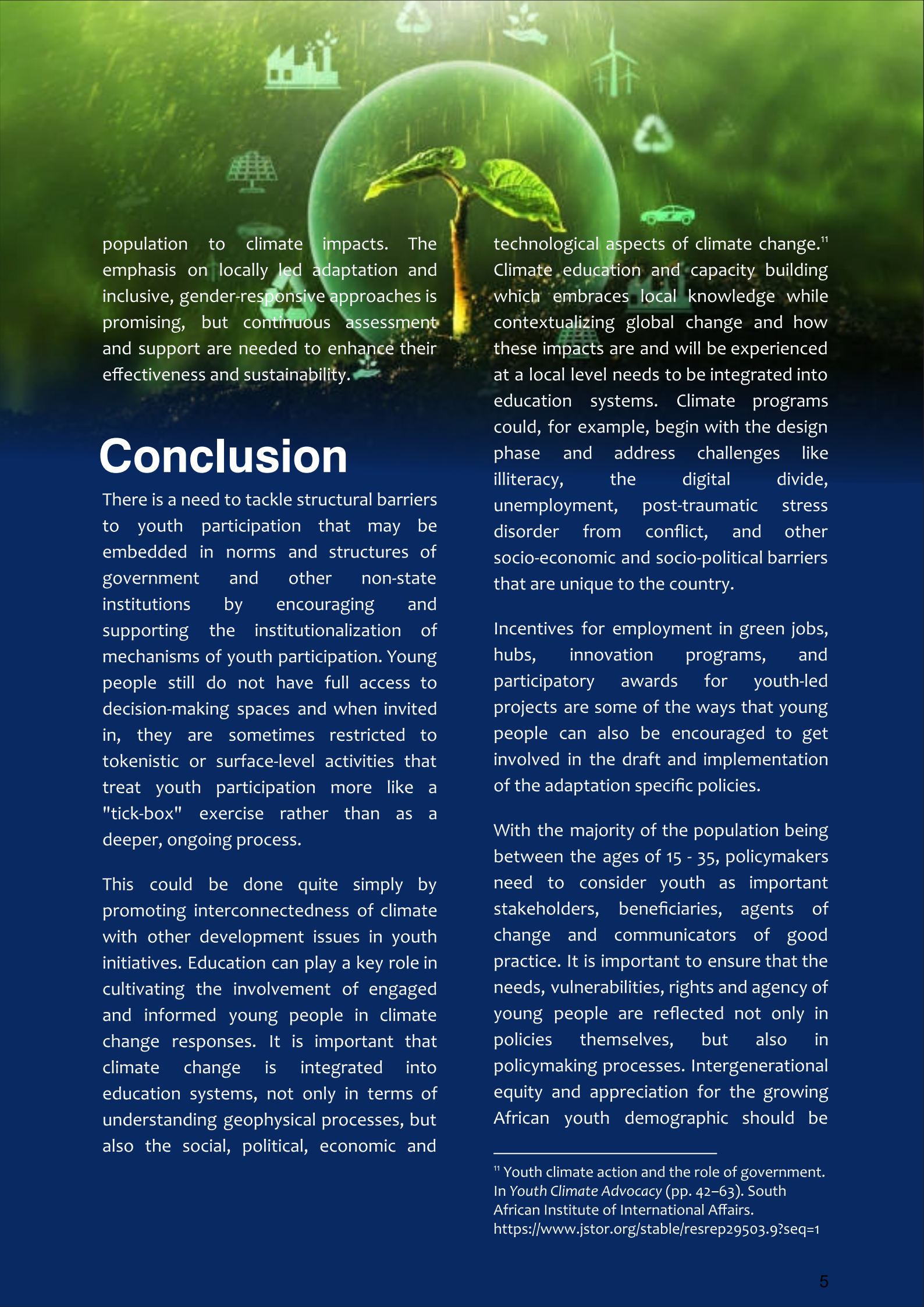


Source: Africa Youth Survey Wave II: Climate Change. Ichikowitz Family Foundation / PSB insights. Oct 2021

**Image: Africa Youth Survey Wave II: Climate Change. Ichikowitz Family Foundation / PSB insights. Oct 2021**

In terms of youth involvement and climate resilience, initiatives such as the Nigerian Youth Climate Coalition (NYCC) and the Protect Our Planet (POP) Movement have also been significant. The NYCC focuses on youth participation and empowerment in climate action through media, policy formulation, education, and outreach projects, while the POP Movement emphasizes climate education and advocacy. These initiatives aim to engage young people in environmental issues and policy formulation at all levels, recognizing their crucial role as future leaders and implementers of climate action. Evaluating their effectiveness, these policies and initiatives have made strides in raising awareness and promoting youth engagement. However, challenges remain in ensuring coherent implementation and addressing the high vulnerability of the





population to climate impacts. The emphasis on locally led adaptation and inclusive, gender-responsive approaches is promising, but continuous assessment and support are needed to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability.

## Conclusion

There is a need to tackle structural barriers to youth participation that may be embedded in norms and structures of government and other non-state institutions by encouraging and supporting the institutionalization of mechanisms of youth participation. Young people still do not have full access to decision-making spaces and when invited in, they are sometimes restricted to tokenistic or surface-level activities that treat youth participation more like a "tick-box" exercise rather than as a deeper, ongoing process.

This could be done quite simply by promoting interconnectedness of climate with other development issues in youth initiatives. Education can play a key role in cultivating the involvement of engaged and informed young people in climate change responses. It is important that climate change is integrated into education systems, not only in terms of understanding geophysical processes, but also the social, political, economic and

technological aspects of climate change.<sup>11</sup> Climate education and capacity building which embraces local knowledge while contextualizing global change and how these impacts are and will be experienced at a local level needs to be integrated into education systems. Climate programs could, for example, begin with the design phase and address challenges like illiteracy, the digital divide, unemployment, post-traumatic stress disorder from conflict, and other socio-economic and socio-political barriers that are unique to the country.

Incentives for employment in green jobs, hubs, innovation programs, and participatory awards for youth-led projects are some of the ways that young people can also be encouraged to get involved in the draft and implementation of the adaptation specific policies.

With the majority of the population being between the ages of 15 - 35, policymakers need to consider youth as important stakeholders, beneficiaries, agents of change and communicators of good practice. It is important to ensure that the needs, vulnerabilities, rights and agency of young people are reflected not only in policies themselves, but also in policymaking processes. Intergenerational equity and appreciation for the growing African youth demographic should be

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<sup>11</sup> Youth climate action and the role of government. In *Youth Climate Advocacy* (pp. 42–63). South African Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29503.9?seq=1>

made more explicit in climate policy and nationally determined contributions. National youth policies should consider climate change and the potential impacts on areas like education, employment and the overall well-being and development of youth in society.

It is not only important to widen the perspective of where young people can participate, but also to support how they choose to participate. Meaningful youth participation describes a broad array of mechanisms of participation and actions that influences policy content, political dynamics, and structures and norms of governmental and non-governmental institutions at multiple levels and across various stages of design/formulation, implementation, monitoring, and accountability. The range of activities in which young people can be asked to engage is expanded by all of these factors.<sup>12</sup>

More research is needed on climate change-related youth participation in policymaking, especially in Africa. Having a clearer understanding and definition of what meaningful engagement looks like is essential for youth and decision-makers alike. Doing so would allow for the development of better practices and consultative processes that would in turn

lead to more effective policy uptake and implementation.

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<sup>12</sup> Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action  
<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf>