



Analytical Brief on Climate Ambition and Sustainability Action

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Session Brief for WSDF 2020

Youthquake and the POP Movement

Tapping into the potential of youth for a sustainable future

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Key Questions >>>

- What are the spheres where youth can contribute in addition to social media activism, public demonstrations and school activities?
- What kind of mentorship and support do youth require from different stakeholders such as policy makers, politicians, research and academia, business leaders, and other members of the civil society?
- In what ways can youth overcome the challenges and impediments that they usually face in their sustainability efforts?
- What is the rationale behind the essentiality of youth-led movements?

The new norm of youth leadership

One grounded solution that is universally agreed upon by activists and reformers who combat the teeming problems of today, is the championing of youth leadership. Empowering youth and trusting them to lead has come to be viewed as an option for the road ahead as the world ventures to evolve a new narrative of sustainable development which is sensitive to protecting the global commons and the earth's ecosystems.

As the year of 2019 witnessed millennials across the globe use the power of social media, take to the streets and engage in vigorous activism for reasons not limited to any single cause, political leaders and the world took notice and gained a new perspective on the inspirational and resourceful power of politically, socially and environmentally informed

young people. In an age of social consciousness where youth live in, grow amidst and draw from socially and politically charged environments, the involvement of young people that goes beyond self-interest has become the new normal.

From leading grassroots initiatives to driving political action, young people in the likes of Boyan Slat and Greta Thunberg are involved in meaningful action. Countless young individuals across the world are doing remarkable work as they engage in many social initiatives, whilst balancing the responsibilities of education, work and personal life.

Derestricting the idea of a movement

Despite the huge popularity and momentum the environmental movement of today has garnered,

one cannot fail to notice the increasing reductionist approach to broad, deep-meaning concepts like sustainability and climate action. More often than not, these terms get reduced to defining stand-alone initiatives that does not take into account the multiple lifestyle-oriented factors that is essential for a long-term environmental impact. Even as strikes, social media activism and engagement in initiatives through schools, universities and NGOs have been the areas of forte for youth in recent times, it is vital to move beyond this significant, yet limiting scope of engagement in order to fully leverage their potential in building an assured future. As Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Ban Ki-moon puts it, “They (youth) are adaptable and can quickly make low-carbon lifestyles and career choices a part of their daily lives. Youth should therefore be given a chance to take an active part in the decision-making of local, national and global levels. They can actively support initiatives that will lead to the passage of far-reaching legislation” (UNSG 2008). Therefore, treading newer spheres and working amongst multiple stakeholders through defined roles having a holistic and change-driven motive would be essential to ensure that the global movement for environment doesn’t get narrowed or contained as something that thrives merely under public hype and pop culture.

Mentorship and support

Youth leadership can only be enabled when their involvement and activism is supported, encouraged and mentored by different stakeholders in society including politicians, government officials, business leaders, academics and members of the civil society. Establishing this relationship will be a step towards a comprehensive approach to tackling issues at hand and will also go a long way in eventually transforming the development process. When given adequate support and motivation, young people unhesitatingly take the lead, drive innovation and ground level action, wielding their knowledge of academia coupled with exposure to their immediate environmental reality. They possess the passion and calibre to

utilize the myriad of opportunities and grow through every available platform to lead in the fight against climate change. It is important that one understands this to be continuous process requiring substantial guidance and support from different members of society. By way of moving forward, one ought to first identify and assess the kind of needs youth have that can be fulfilled by other members of the community.

Navigating the challenges

Even though youth are considered to be more versatile when compared to the rest of the population, it does not substantiate the fact that they have it easy in life. Having grown up in an era of political and social turmoil, they encounter more risk factors in every step of their life than the previous generation ever did. They face all the challenges of a young person as they juggle between personal and student life, and by engaging in independent initiatives, additionally deal with social, financial, and logistic impediments that require greater responsiveness. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the root causes of the multifarious challenges, in order to systematically address them so that these factors do not put a damper on their greater potential.

Why building a youth-led movement is essential?

The impacts of climate change which is bound to intensify in the coming decades puts the survival of the coming generations at risk, and as their future as a population is threatened, the need for youth of today to come forward and spear transformative change stands significant. Aside from this inevitability, what really commands a youth-led movement is their unmatched potential and drive that can break inertia of any kind when it comes to driving progress. Having the ability to impact every stakeholder in society, young people have been influencing those around their spheres including parents, teachers, and communities to take transformative action. By collectivizing these individual efforts in a ground-up global movement, youth can really engage and steer society as a

whole towards an environmentally desirable progress.

The POP Movement

The Protect Our Planet (POP) Movement strives for the kind of movement with primary focus on youth leading multi-sectoral action inspired by knowledge. Functioning with the belief that youth leading climate actions at the ground level is the ideal way in building and propagating a sustained environment movement, the POP Movement aims at initiating youth-led community efforts to combat environmental degradation through implementing innovative solutions and adopting sustainable lifestyles. A best example representative of what this movement can achieve is POP - Germany whose activities in a school named “Julius-Stursberg-Gymnasium” have been considered a microcosmic prototype of the ideally conceived global reality.

Apart from stimulating the ever-growing scale of youth-led actions around the world through mentorship, advocacy, partnerships, and awareness and capacity building workshops, the organization also works toward creating diversity-friendly

platforms like POP Festivals where stakeholders from all the sectors and sections of society including ones from the lowest rung of the social and economic ladder assemble to share their ideas of innovation and futuristic solutions to combat the threatening issues of the environment.

As of 2019, the POP Movement has connected with more than one million people around the world, partnered with 260 educational institutions both governmental and non-governmental organizations. POP presently works in over 25 countries promoting and propelling innumerable youth-groups toward a sustained sustainable behaviour in protecting the planet.

According to late Dr. R.K. Pachauri, Founder and Chief Mentor of the POP Movement, “In order to ensure that governments have the motivation, the ambition, and the pressure to make commitments that would really ensure that the impacts of climate change in the future and the risks associated with them are minimized and to a large extent eliminated beyond a certain period, we need action at the grassroots level. And to bring about that actions at the grassroots, what better section of the society than the youth of the world?” (Pachauri 2017).

Questions

With the above rationale, the following questions become relevant:

- What are the spheres where youth can contribute in addition to social media activism, public demonstrations and school activities?
- What kind of mentorship and support do youth require from different stakeholders such as policy makers, politicians, research and academia, business leaders, and other members of the civil society?
- In what ways can youth overcome the challenges and impediments that they usually face in their sustainability efforts?
- What is the rationale behind the essentiality of youth-led movements?

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Analytical Brief on Climate Ambition and Sustainability Action

The brief series, brought out jointly by the World Sustainable Development Forum and the Protect our Planet Movement, seeks to highlight a topical issue relevant to the realization of the sustainable development goals and ambitious climate actions. This brief is to feed into the discussions of the Second World Sustainable Development Forum to be organized in Durango, Mexico (5-7 March, 2020).

About WSDF

The World Sustainable Development Forum (WSDF) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated separately in Europe, Norway and the U.S. Its North American arm WSDF-NA, headquartered in Washington, DC carries 501c3 tax exempt status. WSDF is a global initiative to promote and mobilize global action for effective implementation of both the Paris agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly. WSDF's relevance and role lies in acting as a facilitator for helping with implementation of actions required under these two sets of agreements.

About POP Movement

Protect our Planet (POP) Movement believes that the impacts of climate change will not affect a single country but the planet, in its entirety. POP believes that the power of the youth of the world will unite and to address this challenge. POP believes that the time to act is now and that knowledge is the true currency of changing the future.



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