

Youth in Action

EXPERIENCES FROM
THE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Turning
the tide on
marine plastic
pollution

Traditional
knowledge
makes a
comeback

The future
of farming

Time
for action

Message from the GEF and UNDP

Youth are being referred to as the “torchbearers” of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They indeed play a crucial role as key drivers and actors in the implementation of the Agenda as well as the beneficiaries of the actions and policies initiated. Active engagement of youth in global environment and sustainable development efforts is absolutely vital to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies. We hope that the examples of active youth engagement, highlighted in this brochure from the GEF Small Grants Programme, will be an inspiration to all to address today's challenges and transform our society for a better future.



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Director - Nature, Climate and Energy
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Message from the SGP Global Manager

As we collectively address the global climate and nature crises, it is absolutely critical to engage youth as agents of change, creative entrepreneurs and innovators. Through education, science and technology, young people are scaling up their efforts and skills to accelerate concrete actions. Through the support and partnership provided by the GEF Small Grants Programme, youth are acquiring knowledge and skills to build a more sustainable future, while actively engaging in developing a green and blue economy. I am pleased to share some of the great examples of youth innovations and intergenerational efforts on inclusive nature-based solutions through this publication. SGP is committed to continue investing in and working with partners to empower young people to become the future leaders of their communities and beyond.



Yoko Watanabe

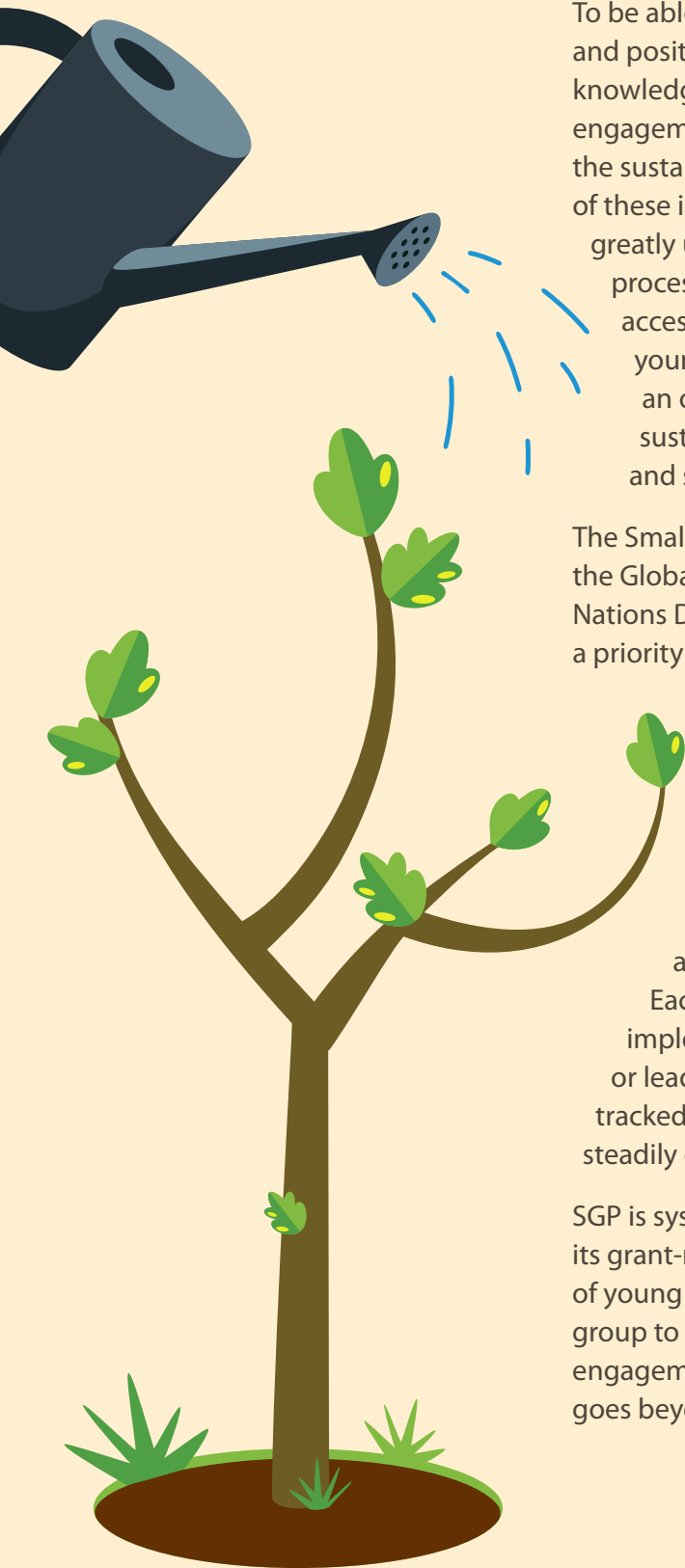
Global Manager,
GEF Small Grants Programme



Greening Farms Through Innovation

Bariq21, a civil society organization supported by SGP, introduced solar-powered irrigation pumps to three pilot farms in a protected wetland area in Algeria, and trained the young generation of farmers how to use and repair them. Bariq21 also taught the farmers how to market their produce and use organic practices, which improved conservation of the delicate local ecosystem.

Youth & SGP



There are currently around 1.2 billion young people (aged 15 to 24 years old) in the world, accounting for about 16 percent of the global population. Young generations have a unique relation to the interlinked planetary challenges of climate change, species extinction and pollution. The most severe impacts of these crises will affect future generations, who will be forced to address the threats and make radical transformations possible.

To be able to face these challenges and become innovators and positive agents of change, youth need the right tools and knowledge. Investments made now in young people and their engagement will dramatically shape the future of societies and the sustainable development agenda. The current levels of these investments are clearly insufficient, with young people greatly underrepresented in decision-making and development processes, often disproportionately unemployed, and lacking access to quality health and education services. Empowering young people to fully develop their potential presents an opportunity to lay the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable future, amplifying both environmental benefits and social co-benefits.

The Small Grants Programme (SGP), a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), recognizes youth as a priority target group that is a key stakeholder for sustainable development, with the potential to play the roles of future leaders and drivers of change. About 40 percent of SGP projects have active youth participation.

More than 73 percent of the SGP National Steering Committees, the primary governance and decision-making body of the programme, have appointed a Youth Focal Point to ensure that the needs and interests of youth are reflected in SGP portfolios.

Each year, about 350 to 500 SGP-supported projects are implemented around the world with youth participation or leadership. The share of these projects in the SGP portfolio tracked through monitoring reports since 2015 has been steadily growing, reaching more than 40 percent.

SGP is systematically working to empower young people through its grant-making process, actively encouraging the participation of young individuals and youth-led organizations to enable this group to make change in their own communities. While active engagement and participation of youth is a key first step, SGP goes beyond that by working with partners to bring youth

voices to the global stage, and making targeted investments to address key youth priorities. Since 2015, SGP has successfully convened an annual Global Youth Video Competition in partnership with the Rio Conventions Secretariats (UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD). The winners are recognized at their Conferences of the Parties to showcase the power of young people in reaching innovative and ambitious solutions to planetary crises.

To address skills and capacity gaps identified by youth stakeholders, SGP has launched a dedicated Innovation Programme on Youth and Climate Change. The programme enables young people to qualify for green jobs, start green enterprises and lead climate actions locally and nationally. With targeted support, young people can acquire skills to restore natural resources, and transition to low-carbon pathways.

The examples in this publication from different countries and contexts illustrate the ingenuity, dedication, and energy of young people. Youth have led innovative initiatives based on treasured ancestral knowledge and practices in Guatemala and Viet Nam; established farms and rural enterprises with renewable energy, agro-ecological and climate-smart technologies in the Dominican Republic, Barbados, Bhutan and Togo; learned to install and maintain renewable energy equipment in Armenia; and built awareness of plastic pollution and advocated for ocean restoration in Seychelles and The Bahamas.

This incredible richness and variety of local solutions championed by youth brings hope and optimism to overcome the climate and nature crisis around the world. It is also increasingly evident that, to pursue a more sustainable future for our planet, society needs to invest in and support young people to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become future leaders in their communities and beyond.

SGP will continue to support youth-led civil society and community organizations globally. Furthermore, in addition to mainstreaming youth empowerment in all relevant projects, SGP will continue to work with youth as key target groups and invest in specific interventions and policy dialogues at the national, regional, and global levels. In partnerships with other development partners, governments and private sector, these initiatives supported by SGP will actively remove barriers to youth participation, support their innovation and creative solutions, and develop their skills and capacity to address the global environmental challenges we face today and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



SGP Samoa



SGP Armenia



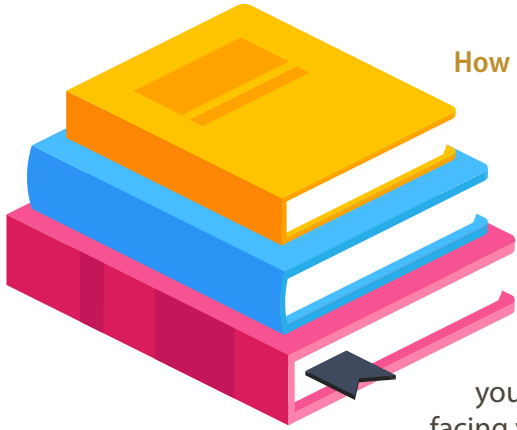
SGP South Africa



SGP



Traditional knowledge makes a comeback



How Indigenous youth are protecting ancestral wisdom to safeguard the future of the planet

Indigenous Peoples have been contributing to nature conservation in diverse and sustainable ways for centuries. As a result, they have built a rich repository of traditional knowledge that can serve as a source of innovation to develop local actions that provide nature- and culture-based solutions for the multiple global crises that the world faces today: climate change, biodiversity loss, and the global pandemic. However, this potential is at risk of being wasted as younger generations of Indigenous Peoples continue to be marginalized, facing various challenges and barriers that lead them away from their traditional cultural practices.

“Nature-based solutions developed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities can play a key role in tackling climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,” says SGP Global Manager Yoko Watanabe. “We are committed to identifying, replicating, and accelerating the dissemination and adoption of scalable local solutions for sustainable development, while contributing to the empowerment and repositioning of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, especially women and youth, from beneficiaries to agents of change.”

In Guatemala, 28-year-old Fabiola Quijivix is a perfect example of how young generations of Indigenous Peoples are rediscovering traditional knowledge and applying it to safeguard the planet’s future. “My goal is to be a key player in the change that our community needs,” she says.

A Mayan-k’iche Indigenous woman, Fabiola lives in the village of Xepache, in the Valley of Palajunoj. Her community is affected by high levels of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy due to the lack of development opportunities. Many young people have been prompted to quit their studies and migrate to the United States. Pollution and other negative effects from the local mining industry are also major problems.

“This has moved me to lead other young people, women and children to get involved in the conservation, restoration and protection of our mountains,” Fabiola says. “According to ancestral practices, humans have a deep connection with the forest and Mother Earth to satisfy their basic needs. I want to help my village transform through good practices and the sustainable use of natural resources.”

Fabiola’s main involvement with neighbouring Indigenous communities is as president of the association of local community tour guides, called Exploring the Valley: “This way, we can rethink the value of biodiversity in the forests and in our communities, finding new job alternatives for young people without affecting the environment while caring for people’s health.”

As the local tourism industry suffered the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic



SGP Guatemala



SGP Viet Nam

in 2020, Fabiola stepped up to coordinate a project supported by SGP through the Global Support Initiative for territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (ICCA-GSI), in partnership with the Global ICCA Consortium, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre, with funding from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

Implemented by the young members of Exploring the Valley, the Heart of the Mountain project seeks to improve the quality of life of the people of the Palajunoj Valley by restoring forests and conserving forest biodiversity in the tourist forest area. It also focuses on protecting traditional knowledge by teaching young people about the use of medicinal plants.

One of its most important achievements was the creation of a nursery where native forest species, including medicinal plants and other shrubs, are grown for transplantation to areas that need to be reforested. The nursery also provides raw plant materials for a group of 60 Mayan-k'iche women who have been trained to produce various artisanal products, such as teas, jams and soaps, which are sold to tourists.

"This has strengthened our community with the production of 51,000 plants, which were used to restore 20 hectares of forest area," notes Fabiola. "It also allowed the creation of 60 family gardens, where Indigenous elders trained groups of women how to use medicinal plants. A manual was created so that everyone can learn how each species can be used to treat different diseases."

SGP has also helped Indigenous youth to use traditional knowledge about medicinal plants to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable development in Viet Nam. It supported the Centre for Research and Development of Ethnomedicinal Plants to implement a project in the community of Nam Dam, located in the Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark. Inhabited by the Dao people, Nam Dam still retains a strong cultural identity and a long tradition of using medicinal herbs for health care.

The project helped the Nam Dam Community



SGP Guatemala

"My dream is to be able to walk below the shadows of the trees that my hands and feet have planted, to breathe the air of those trees, while listening to the birds singing by my side."

– Fabiola Quijivix, president of Exploring the Valley

Cooperative to professionally organize its herbal bath services to tourists, including the production and sale of traditional herbal medicines according to national standards and regulations. It also contributed to the conservation of the genetic diversity of local medicinal plants by training community members to use sustainable collection methods and cultivate species at risk of extinction. Most participants were women between the ages of 18 and 35, and all were from the Dao Cham ethnic group.

The head of the Nam Dam Community Cooperative, Ly Ta Den, says that the number of visitors to the herbal bath services has been increasing since the project started, which is generating more income to the community: "This project is very meaningful to us. It has opened a new window, connecting us with universities and the private sector. Our villagers had many chances to participate in various international and local fairs and exhibitions, where we presented our traditional herbal medicines to the world. It has also helped to sustainably conserve the traditional knowledge of the Dao Cham and it has significantly improved our livelihoods."

Traditional knowledge conservation, Indigenous youth engagement and promotion of Indigenous herbal products through the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are all key elements of SGP's approach in Viet Nam.

Turning the tide on marine plastic pollution

How local NGOs in Seychelles and The Bahamas are working with youth to raise awareness and inspire action

Our oceans are drowning in plastics; this stark realization is all it took for three young women to co-found The Ocean Project Seychelles (TOP), a local NGO set up to tackle issues affecting the state of the marine environment in Seychelles through education, outreach, research and action. A core component of the work carried out by TOP since 2016 is raising awareness to promote positive behaviour change at the individual level, but also at national and policy scales.

For Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like the Seychelles, the ocean and marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves are critical to sustaining life, livelihoods, and economic development. However, plastic pollution and marine litter have become widespread problems affecting islands from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean. This not only threatens the stability of marine ecosystems, but also affects food safety and security, human health, and marine-based tourism, to name a few.

UNEP estimates that at least eight million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean every year, with SIDS being exposed to concentrations of plastic waste greater than their own consumption. In the Seychelles and other SIDS, plastics and litter washing up along coastlines and beaches can have negative impacts on the local tourism and fishing industries, which are often the basis for entire national economies.

In 2018, TOP partnered with SGP on an initiative called Turning the Tide on Marine Debris to expand their plastic awareness and clean-up work to a greater number of islands. Over a two-year period, TOP led 58 beach clean-ups on seven islands, engaged more than 1,100 participants, collected over five tonnes of marine litter and plastics, and established national litter programmes in four island districts. Following the success of the clean-ups, TOP also decided to take an integrated approach to the plastic problem and launched The Last Straw Seychelles, a campaign to secure

“We hope that this work will provoke the public to think about their plastic consumption – and hopefully encourage people to swap disposable and single-use plastic items for reusable alternatives.”

– Natasha Burian, co-founder of TOP

individual and commercial commitments to stop the use and sale of plastic straws, which contributes to reducing the amount of plastic waste entering the environment from local sources. This awareness-raising and advocacy work led by TOP, in partnership with other NGOs and stakeholders, eventually resulted in a complete ban on plastic straws and balloons by the government of Seychelles. More work is currently under way to extend the ban to other forms of plastics and single-use waste.

“Plastic isn’t just destroying the environment ... it’s doing more harm. When people see this plastic art, I want them to see the beauty, but at the same time that something is wrong.”

– Laurent Lalande, 14-year-old student, Plaisance Secondary School

TOP also engaged young school children through film screenings, plastic art projects and beach clean-ups, educating them on the impacts of plastics and marine pollution, while also inspiring them to take action and find solutions. This is a crucial step towards moulding the minds of future generations and exposing them to a world beyond traditional classroom learning. These practical experiences help to strengthen our connection to the natural world and build a sense of environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Through these programmes, students and youth are also able to spread awareness and change behaviour at the household and community level.

Through TOP’s flagship art project, a plastic archway was built in the town centre on Mahé island. It was designed by local artists and engineers and made of single-use plastic and marine litter collected during the beach clean-ups. TOP mobilized local schools, community members, local government agencies and other volunteers to work together on designing and installing the piece.

This message of environmental responsibility also resonates deeply with 18-year-old Kaitlyn Archer, from The Bahamas: “What motivates my friends and me to protect nature is sustaining it for future generations. Nature is often neglected by human beings in today’s world and now its survival is becoming such a vital aspect of life. We have to protect it!”



SGP Seychelles



SGP Bahamas



SGP Seychelles



SGP Seychelles

“We want people to start thinking about what they use on a daily basis and what small changes they can make to reduce the amount of plastic litter ending up in the environment”

– Zara Pardiwalla, co-founder of TOP



SGP Bahamas

Kaitlyn and her peers are participating in a youth-focused project with The Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) aimed at increasing knowledge about marine ecosystems and the threats they face, including plastic pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. The project is funded by SGP and was implemented as part of the Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) programme.

“YRE is an amazing programme because it allows young people to utilize social media in an impactful way, expressing their concerns about the environment and proposing solutions. YRE teaches our youth how to communicate effectively by utilizing a cutting-edge approach to disseminate news” says Allison Longley, National Operator for YRE in The Bahamas

With SGP support, more than 60 students and youth were provided with opportunities to participate in field studies, national awareness competitions and photojournalism classes. The YRE programme allowed many students across the islands to go scuba diving and snorkelling to see coral reefs and experience the underwater marine environment for the first time. Through the programme, students were able to participate in national and international conferences, publish articles on marine issues in national newspapers and conduct interviews with local media. BREEF plans to expand these opportunities to more students on the outer islands and offer more frequent capacity building and training sessions.



SGP Bahamas

“Through YRE’s extensive platform, my peers and I have definitely gained an acute awareness on protecting our ecosystems and the species in our native land,” says Kaitlyn. “I have learnt so much from BREEF – from the significance of coral reefs to the ways I can help promote sustainability and conservation of our environment. These experiences opened new doors for me and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in BREEF events.”

In SIDS like Seychelles and The Bahamas, where every aspect of life is inextricably linked to the health of the ocean and marine ecosystems, organizations like TOP and BREEF are crucial for creating opportunities and enabling environments for youth leaders to speak, act and advocate for more sustainable futures on their islands.



Heart of the Spirit

The 72-foot double-hulled vessel Uto ni Yalo ("Heart of the Spirit") is one of nine traditionally designed sailing canoes being used to revive traditional canoe building, sailing and navigation among youth in Fiji, including active involvement of girls who were historically not engaged in voyages. It also serves to showcase low-carbon, wind-powered ocean transport, supplemented with solar-power generation facilities that runs its twin propulsion system. With SGP support, the Uto Ni Yalo is encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean to promote a sustainable and reciprocal relationship with nature by gathering trash on the remote islands it visits; organizing educational events on the canoe to raise awareness of environmental and cultural conservation; and taking relief supplies to villages after tropical cyclones.

The future of farming



To feed the future, SGP is partnering with civil society to engage new generations – making agriculture sustainable and attractive for young people

In Bhutan, the youth-led Khengrig Namsum Cooperative (KNC) recognized this potential and launched an agroforestry project in the impoverished Zhemgang District, with support from SGP and the Royal Government of Bhutan. KNC's objective was to rehabilitate 93 hectares of land that was abandoned and overgrown for 32 years, while creating livelihood opportunities in agriculture for local youth and curbing migration to urban areas.

"This project allows me to have a meaningful livelihood," says Thinley Wangdi, the founder of KNC. "I've had jobs in the past, but for me working on a farm and being able to support farmers and youth is more meaningful. I aspire to support my local community and work towards the national goal of becoming food self-reliant."

By using a practice known as intercropping to plant banana and bamboo simultaneously on the same area, and installing solar electric fencing to protect the crops from wildlife, KNC turned the degraded patch of land into a profitable venture that eventually became the largest banana farm

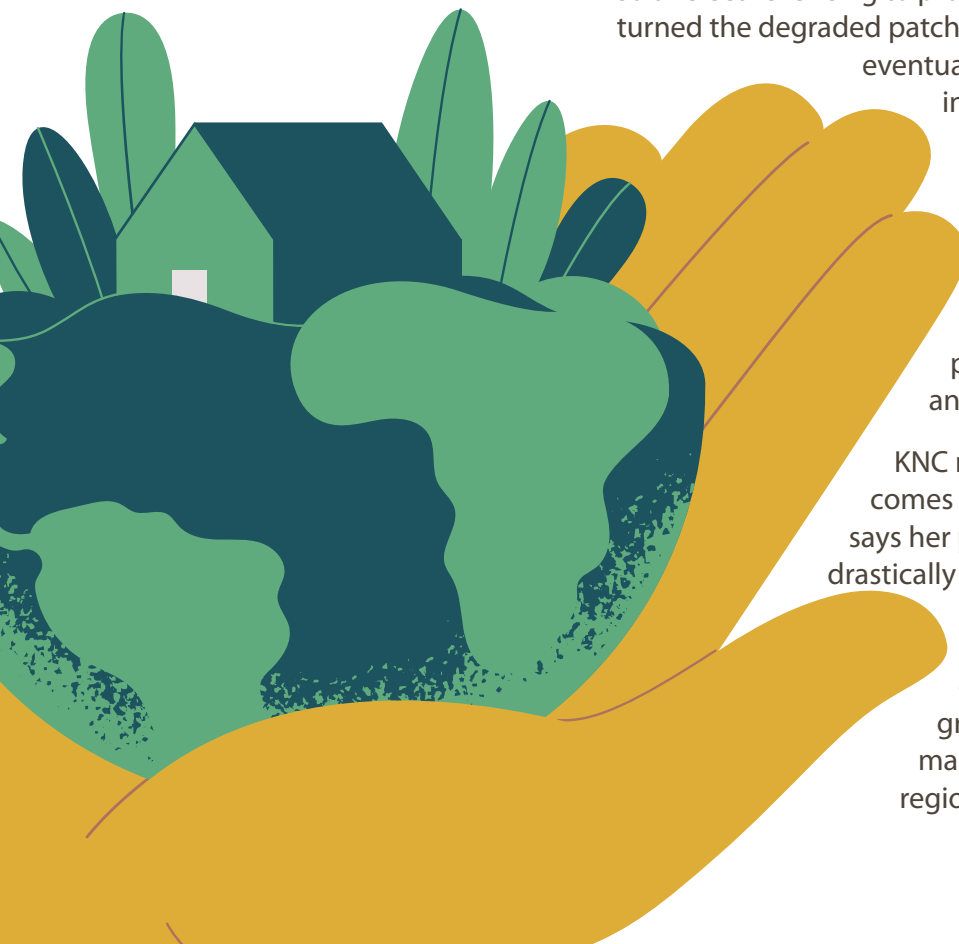
in the country. They also managed to successfully introduce commercial watermelon cultivation to the area.

Local farmers were apprehensive about this novel idea at first, but in 2018 they were able to generate a total income of US\$17,276 by producing 28.1 tonnes of watermelons and 52.8 tonnes of bananas.

KNC member and farmer Tshering Dolkar comes from a farming background, but says her perspective on farming has changed drastically through the project: "We think from a business perspective and are very selective in terms of the type of vegetables, fruits and cereals we grow. We have made connections with markets in the capital city and other regions to promote and sell our products."



SGP Bhutan



The district government has recently decided to scale up and replicate this successful agroforestry approach by leasing two hectares of land to KNC to establish a manufacturing and processing facility to expand watermelon and fruit production. The farm is also a popular learning and demonstration centre and is frequently visited by other farming groups, government officials and donors.

Similarly, in the Caribbean, the Barbados Youth Action Programme (BYAP) is implementing the Value Improvement Project, which is helping 30 marginalized youth to become agriculture-based entrepreneurs, with a focus on climate-smart and organic approaches to agriculture.

“More young people are becoming interested in farming as they realize there is a wide variety of technological components to crop production,” says BYAP project lead Andrina Welch. “This can create many opportunities for youth employment in Barbados. Through this project we are merging known farming techniques with modern technology.” With capacity-building activities, youth participants are learning to develop value-added products from the crops they produce, such as cassava flour and tamarind sauce. They have also learned how to build solar-powered photovoltaic dehydration and organic composting systems.

“BYAP is not only addressing the issues of food security, nutrition, health and wellness, but it is also addressing youth empowerment and creating jobs,” says SGP’s National Coordinator in Barbados, David Bynoe.

In Africa, stopping the youth exodus from rural areas and making agriculture more attractive to younger generations are also the goals of the Togolese NGO Action Réelle sur l’Environnement, l’Enfance et la Jeunesse (AREJ). With SGP support, AREJ implemented a project in the savannahs of northern Togo, one of the poorest parts of the country. A two-pronged approach was used to help young rural entrepreneurs achieve autonomy. First, 30 young couples received technical assistance from AREJ, who distributed goats and pigs for animal farming



SGP Barbados

“This project changed my life by giving me something positive to do. It showed my friends and I that so much is possible if we just try.”

– Royston, 22 years old, BYAP member

and seeds for growing cereals and vegetables, besides helping them to dig water wells and install fences on their farms. Second and most importantly, the young couples received training on how to properly care for the animals and crops. This increased their knowledge and built their capacity, and as a result they managed to quadruple their rice and corn harvests.

“Before we had trouble, the baby goats were getting ill. But now, with the training we have learned everything: how to feed them, how to treat them, and we are making progress”, explains Biakanang Kossak, a local farmer. Another farmer, Lamsa Laré, adds that the pigs have helped them to increase their harvest as they now have manure to fertilize their corn fields.

These initiatives in Bhutan, Barbados and Togo are just a few examples of SGP’s effort to bring innovation, technology and youth into agriculture, while building on the traditional practices and methods that are nested in each culture. By making this key sector attractive to younger generations, SGP aims to provide long-term solutions that can contribute to tackling food insecurity and climate change around the world.

Time for action



Although most people agree that climate change is a global emergency, youth are particularly ready and eager to act now to save the planet and their futures

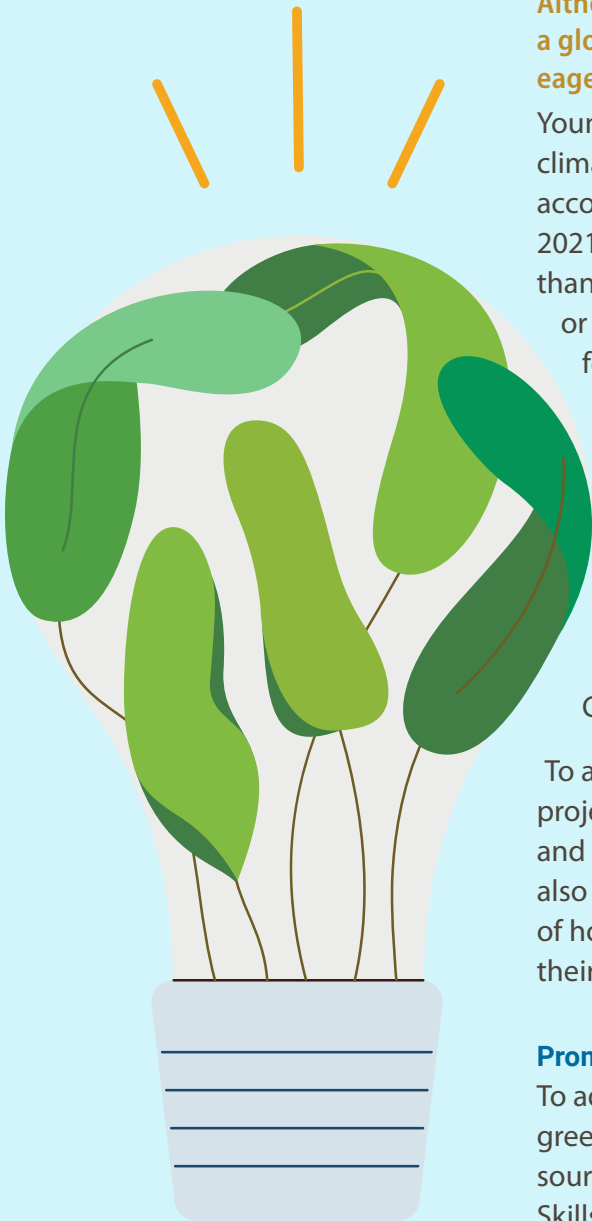
Young people under 18 years old are more convinced that climate change is a global emergency than other age groups, according to the [Peoples' Climate Vote](#) published by UNDP in 2021. Another study by the University of Bath revealed that more than half of young people between 16 and 25 years old are very or extremely worried about climate change, in addition to feeling afraid, sad, anxious, angry, powerless and helpless. Most strikingly, 65 percent of them felt governments were failing younger generations by not taking appropriate action against climate change.

“These studies paint a clear picture that youth urgently need to be equipped with the knowledge and tools required to shape their own future, in order to ensure the wellbeing of the planet as well as their own,” says SGP’s Climate Change Programme Advisor, Angelica Shamerina.

To address this critical need, a key part of SGP’s portfolio of projects targeting young people focuses on building green skills and promoting entrepreneurship to tackle climate change, while also creating sustainable livelihoods. Below are some examples of how these efforts are empowering youth to take matters into their own hands.

Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy in Armenia

To address today’s climate crisis, it is imperative that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions and find clean and renewable sources of energy. In Armenia, SGP is supporting the Green Skills for Youth project, aimed at making clean energy a viable and attractive career path for young generations. Implemented by the NGO Women in Climate and Energy, this initiative created “green squads” of middle-schoolers who were given the opportunity to learn energy assessment techniques from certified energy auditors, pitch ideas on how to make their own school buildings more energy efficient, and participate in the implementation of energy renovations in their schools.



The project also engaged the entire school and ensured the active participation of teachers and the school administration throughout the process.

Ten schools participated in the project and more than 100 students from six regions in Armenia benefitted from awareness-raising and capacity-building activities. Rooftop solar panels were installed in two schools, each with a capacity of 5.46 kilowatts, while schools installed energy efficient windows and LED lightbulbs as part of the project's energy renovation activities.

A Young Energy Specialist Network was established to further inspire youth to take action and share knowledge and experiences among their peers. The Network also provides youth with opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes, ensuring that they contribute to local and national climate change and energy dialogues.

"Armenia has resources for the production of renewable energy, including solar and wind, and not using them would be, in my opinion, unwise," said 14-year-old Aram Aghababyan from Shamlugh village. "Traditional power plants are still being used and they harm nature and the environment. One of my dreams now is to be an energy specialist and to be able to unite the Armenian specialists in that field."

Laura Soghomonyan, 13 years old, lives in the village of Karmirgyugh. She says a lot has changed in her home and school since the project was launched: "Now I understand the value of energy and encourage my family and classmates to do the same."

Breaking the cycle of poverty in the Dominican Republic

On the other side of the world, in the Dominican Republic, SGP has focused on building the skills of young people to allow them to improve their livelihoods and break the cycle of poverty. In the rural community of Sabana Yegua Viejo, most young people have limited skills and do not have a formal job. With support from SGP, the Canada Fund and the IDB Lab (the innovation laboratory of the Inter-American Development Bank Group), the Nature Power Foundation launched a project led by local women to economically empower around 300 vulnerable youth. This was done by creating a sustainable aquaculture microenterprise called La Nueva Esperanza, or The New Hope: a fish farm that operates entirely with clean energy generated by the sun.



SGP Armenia



SGP Armenia



SGP Armenia



SGP Dominican Republic



SGP Dominican Republic

The farm became operational after the project built ponds for tilapia production and installed two solar-powered aerator systems to improve water circulation and filtration. Community members and youth were provided with training that focused on the development of business skills and technical knowledge in aquaculture, and a community cooperative was also established to ensure that the initiative is community owned and managed. “We have become empowered and have made a commitment to move this endeavour forward,” says Alejandrina De La Cruz, president of the fish farm and a community leader. “We have opportunities to grow in our community, which for the first time is powered by energy from the sun and will soon provide clean water and sanitation for homes.”



SGP Dominican Republic

“Thanks to this project, 35 young people have been trained in sustainable rural entrepreneurship with a focus on mitigating the negative effects of climate change on production processes,” added SGP’s National Coordinator in the Dominican Republic, Alberto Sanchez. “This provides them the possibility to improve their living conditions and expand their knowledge and skills, besides offering them a brighter future.”

Strengthening technical and professional knowledge in Mauritius

Often, a lack of skills training and education is the main barrier that prevents youth from securing jobs and engaging in green initiatives. In Mauritius, youth from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds with learning difficulties are given a second chance through a project implemented by the Fédération des Maisons Familiales Rurales, or Federation of Rural Family Homes, with support from SGP. With appropriate training, 250 boys and girls aged 15 to 20 who have been unable to complete formal academic education will get an opportunity to master skills in sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, which are essential to promote their professional and social integration. The curriculum includes sustainable agriculture techniques and biogas production as well as installation, repairing and maintenance of photovoltaic panels.



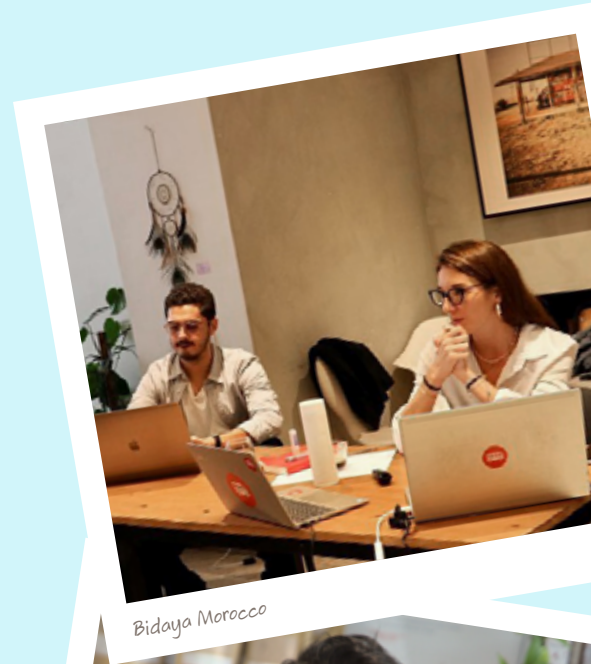
SGP Mauritius

According to SGP’s National Coordinator in Mauritius, Pamela Bapoo-Dundoo, this project leads the way for a new generation of re-skilled young workers in social environmental entrepreneurship: “This training will give them a competitive edge, they will be the ones who will bridge the gap and fill in the jobs to provide green services.”

Tackling gender inequality in Morocco

Another issue that can severely hinder economic opportunities for youth is gender inequality. In Morocco, this aggravates challenges posed by climate change and other environmental issues as women play a major role in the management of natural resources in their communities, which makes them more sensitive to environmental degradation. Bidaya, a local organization that acts as a social green tech business incubator, launched the Women Green'preneur project with support from SGP to address this. The project offered training to 30 aspiring female entrepreneurs with environmental projects. The five-month programme covers everything they need to learn to get their ideas off the ground: from idea conception to defining a business model, through prototyping and testing. One of the start-ups that was born thanks to this initiative is Madame Olympe, the first Moroccan producer of underwear for menstrual hygiene.

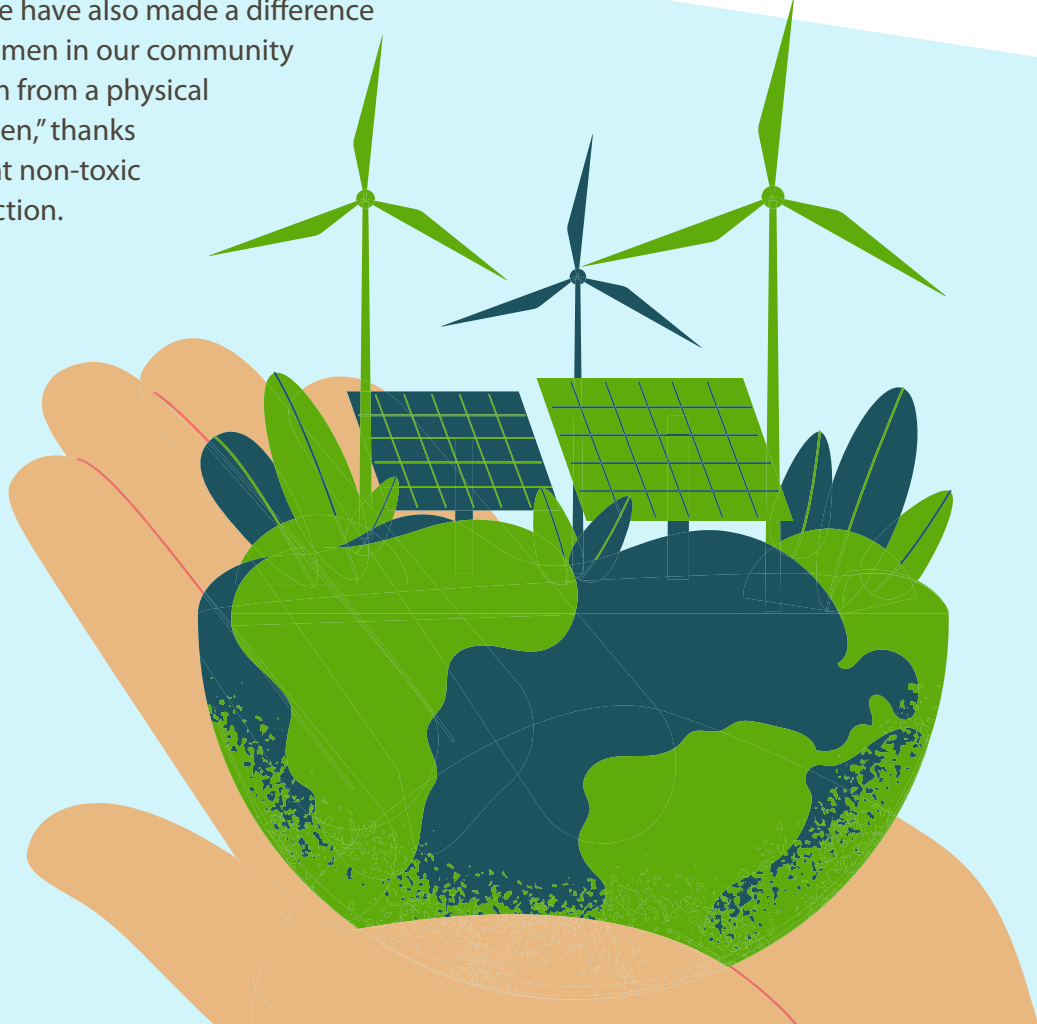
"[Creating] Madame Olympe helped me to get involved, in a concrete way, in subjects that are important to me, and especially to go from ecological awareness to taking concrete action," says founder Yasmine Benhamou. "I think that all the young people from my generation are developing more mature ecological convictions." She adds that "we have also made a difference in the lives of women in our community by relieving them from a physical and mental burden," thanks to the convenient non-toxic menstrual protection.



Bidaya Morocco



Bidaya Morocco



The Small Grants Programme (SGP) is a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Established in 1992, SGP is currently active in 127 countries and promotes community-based innovation, capacity development, and empowerment through sustainable development projects of local civil society organizations with special consideration for indigenous peoples, women, and youth. SGP has supported over 26,000 community-based projects on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management, conservation of international waters, and chemicals and waste management, while generating sustainable livelihoods.



The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit to tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, it has provided more than \$21.7 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$119 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 projects and programs. The GEF is the largest multilateral trust fund focused on enabling developing countries to invest in nature, and supports the implementation of major international environmental conventions including on biodiversity, climate change, chemicals, and desertification. It brings together 184 member governments in addition to civil society, international organizations, and private sector partners. Through its Small Grants Programme, the GEF has provided support to more than 26,000 civil society and community initiatives in 134 countries.



UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations. www.undp.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Ana Paula Canestrelli, Angelica Shamerina, Olga Iakhina, Rissa Edoe and Yoko Watanabe for spearheading the production of this brochure. Special thanks and appreciation to all the SGP National Coordinators, Programme Assistants and grantees-partners who contributed with materials from the field to tell the stories included here.

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COVER PHOTO

SPG Algeria

CITATION

United Nations Development Programme. 2021. Youth in Action- Experiences from the Small Grants Programme. All rights reserved. UNDP, New York.

PUBLISHED

Small Grants Programme
Communities Programme- Nature, Climate, and
Energy, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street, 9th Floor,
New York, NY 10017

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