Global Climate Action: Learning from Small Islands & Indigenous Peoples

Learning Guide: Ages 14+

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Purpose: This module invites learners to **explore the urgent challenge of climate action and recognize their role in shaping a more sustainable and resilient world.** It offers a three-part learning journey featuring essential background information, interactive activities, and guided reflection to deepen understanding of global climate challenges and solutions. Grounded in research-based inquiry and dialogue with world leaders and changemakers from Small Island States and Indigenous Communities, this module equips learners to think systemically and act meaningfully in the face of the climate crisis.

Learners will

- Understand key concepts of climate change including the role of fossil fuels, feedback loops, and climate resilience.
- Explore systems, institutions, and stakeholders that drive and address climate change.
- Reflect on global and local drivers of climate change, including industrial activity and burning of fossil fuels.
- Generate ideas for youth-led action that contribute to climate mitigation and resilience building.

This image captures the powerful spirit of youth rising for climate action. Surrounded by different signs, a sea of young voices comes together, lifting a giant globe above their heads , a symbol of shared responsibility and hope. The energy is electric, filled with urgency and purpose, as this generation demands that leaders listen, act, and protect the planet they will inherit. It's not just a protest, it's a global movement for justice, courage, and change.

"Climate change is moving faster than we are, but we don't give up because we know that climate action is the only path."

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Acknowledgements
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How to Use This Module

This module is a flexible learning journey through three phases:

DISCOVER
Step into the topic and explore what's at stake

CONNECT
Engage with global voices and shared experiences

TRANSFORM
Reflect deeply, imagine alternatives, and take steps toward change

Each component can be done in class or as homework. Time estimates are suggestions only, adaptable to diverse contexts and students' needs.

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See What's At Stake

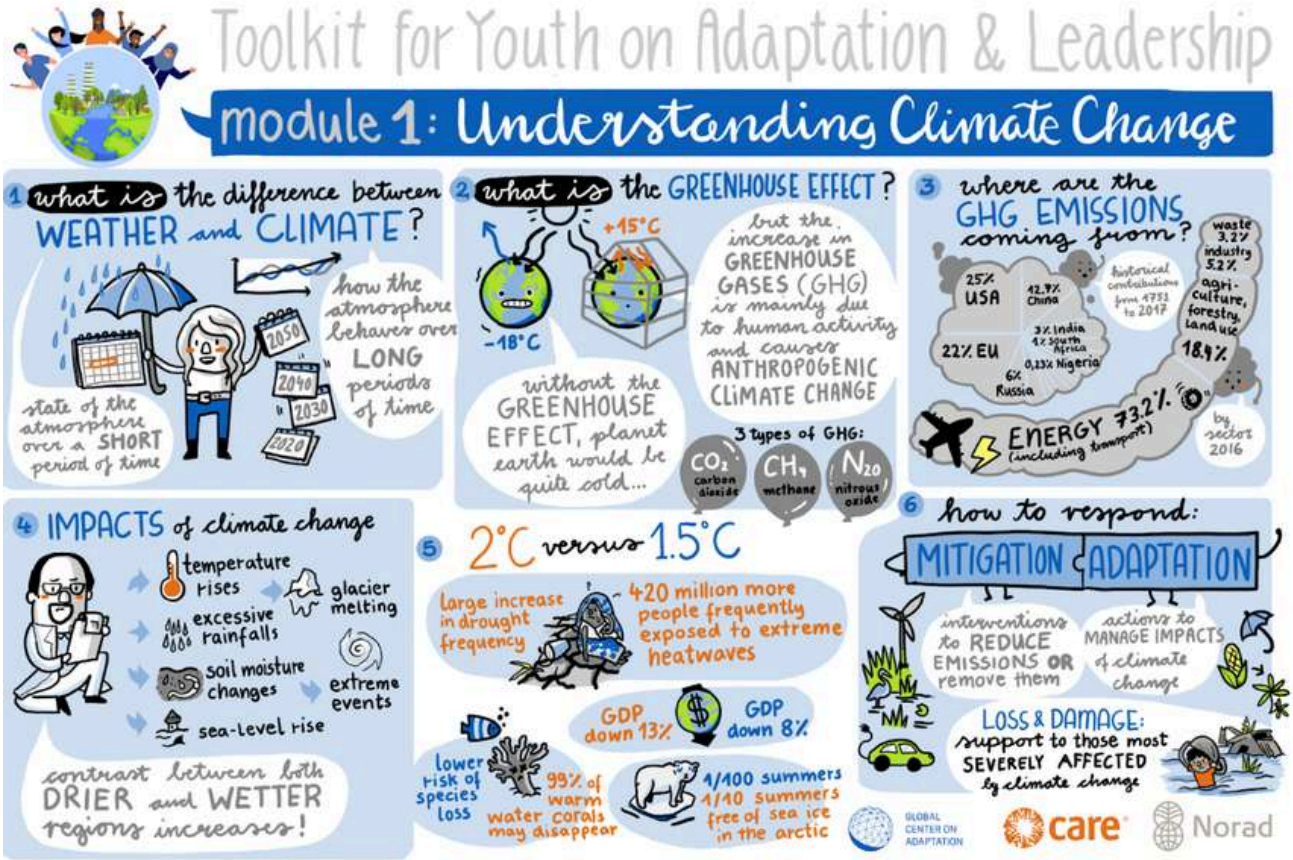
Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing our world today. As young people, understanding this phenomenon is crucial, not only because it will shape our common future, but also because we have the power to drive meaningful change.

This background section provides an overview of climate change, its connection to our daily life, myths and misconceptions, and actionable steps we can take.

Learners will begin to understand what climate change is, how it impacts each and every one of us, and finally how to initiate meaningful change in their own communities.

What is Climate Change?

Climate change refers to long-term alterations in temperature and typical weather patterns on Earth. While these changes can occur naturally, since the 1800s, human activities have been the primary drivers, especially through the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. This process releases greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere, trapping heat and leading to global warming.



Source: Global Center for Adaptation

How Does Climate Change Affect Us?

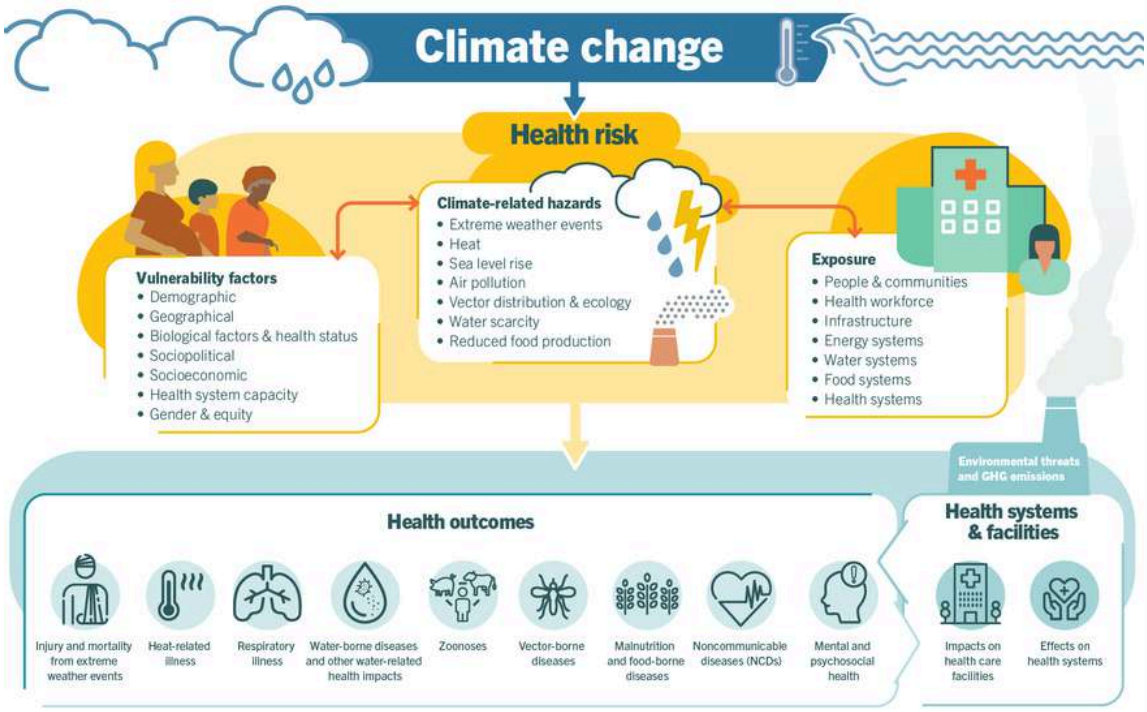
Even if climate change feels abstract, its impacts are real and affect everyone. Here are some examples:

- **Health Impacts**: Climate change poses serious health risks, especially for vulnerable populations. Rising temperatures worsen air pollution, increasing respiratory diseases like asthma. Heatwaves can cause dehydration and heatstroke. Warmer climates accelerate the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue. Beyond physical health, climate-related disasters and displacement contribute to mental health issues including anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

- **Extreme Weather Events**: Climate change intensifies natural disasters, making hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires more frequent and severe. These events destroy homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods, displacing families and entire communities. Extreme weather events cause long-term social and economic instability.

- **Food and Water Security**: Climate change threatens food production and clean water access. Shifts in rainfall patterns and droughts reduce crop yields, leading to food shortages and rising prices, disproportionately affecting low-income communities. Warmer temperatures alter crop growth cycles, making farming harder. Water scarcity is a critical issue, as droughts deplete freshwater sources, while floods increase water contamination and the spread of waterborne diseases. Limited access to safe drinking water affects hygiene and overall health, creating a cycle of vulnerability.

- **Economic Challenges**: Extreme weather damages infrastructure, homes, and businesses, leading to financial instability and job losses. Disruptions in food and water supplies drive up costs, making basic necessities less affordable. Many industries, from transportation to energy, struggle to adapt. Governments spend heavily on disaster recovery and climate adaptation, diverting funds from education, healthcare, and social services.



Source: WHO

Common Myths and Misconceptions - Debunked

Despite overwhelming scientific consensus, misinformation about climate change persists. Here are some common myths and the facts that debunk them. By understanding and challenging these myths, you can help spread accurate information and encourage informed climate action.

MYTH **"Climate change is just a natural cycle"**

FACT While the Earth's climate has changed over millions of years due to natural factors, the current rate of warming is unprecedented. Scientific evidence shows that human activities, particularly burning fossil fuels and deforestation, are the primary drivers of the rapid temperature increase observed in the past century. (IPCC)

MYTH **"If it's cold outside, climate change isn't real"**

FACT Climate and weather are not the same. Weather refers to short-term atmospheric conditions, while climate is the long-term trend. A cold winter day doesn't contradict global warming, as rising global temperatures lead to more extreme and unpredictable weather patterns, including severe snowstorms and cold spells. (WMO)

MYTH **"The planet has always warmed and cooled, so we don't need to worry"**

FACT Past climate changes occurred over thousands or even millions of years, giving ecosystems time to adapt. Today's warming is happening much faster, leading to extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and biodiversity loss at a rate that ecosystems and human societies struggle to handle. (UNEP)

MYTH **"Reducing carbon emissions will hurt the economy"**

FACT Investing in renewable energy and sustainable practices creates jobs and stimulates economic growth. The costs of inaction – such as disaster recovery, health impacts, and infrastructure damage – are far greater than the cost of transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Green industries are among the fastest-growing sectors worldwide. (ILO)

MYTH **"Individual actions don't matter because big companies and governments are the real problem"**

FACT While systemic change is essential, individual actions collectively make a huge impact. Consumer choices influence industries, and young people have successfully pressured governments and corporations to adopt climate-friendly policies. Every step, from reducing waste to advocating for policies, contributes to the fight against climate change. (UNFCCC)

Discussion:

- Which of these ideas do you hear most often in your community or the media?
- Why do these myths persist, and how might they shape people's views of environmental sustainability?
- What real-world examples — local or global — show individuals and youth challenging these assumptions through action or dialogue?

DISCOVER **CONNECT** **TRANSFORM**

Watch this video to see how young people around the world are taking bold action for the climate and proving that collective voices can spark real change.

CLICK HERE

Watch this video to hear a powerful call to action from a Sudanese climate and peace activist who outlines four concrete solutions bridging the gap between conflict, climate change, and community resilience.

CLICK HERE

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Explore Key Concepts

Carbon Footprint: This is the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted by an individual, organization, or activity. Reducing one's carbon footprint means adopting sustainable practices like using renewable energy, minimizing waste, and choosing low-carbon transportation. But perhaps it's time to move beyond just reducing harm – and instead, rethink the footprint as a Green Handprint: A focus on positive contributions such as restoring ecosystems, supporting sustainable innovations, and advocating for systemic change.

Climate vs. Weather: Weather is the atmospheric conditions at a specific time and location, including temperature, humidity, wind, and precipitation. This changes frequently and impacts areas far from its origin. Climate is the average weather patterns in a region over an extended period, typically 30 years or more. This is the long-term state of the atmosphere and is influenced by human activity.

Climate Change vs. Global Warming: Global warming is the rise in Earth's average surface temperature due to increasing levels of greenhouse gases. It results in more frequent and intense heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires. Climate change is the long-term alterations in temperature, precipitation, and other climate patterns. It encompasses global warming as well as changes in extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss.

Climate Crisis: This refers to the severe impacts of climate change, including extreme weather, ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, and human displacement. The crisis threatens ecosystems, food security, economic stability, and global peace.

Climate Justice: This is a framework that emphasizes fairness in addressing climate change. It recognizes that those least responsible for climate change, such as low-income countries and marginalized communities, often face the most severe impacts. Climate justice calls for equitable policies and financial support to vulnerable populations.

Climate Mitigation and Adaptation: Mitigation are actions aimed at reducing GHG emissions or enhancing carbon sinks to prevent further climate change. Strategies include transitioning to renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and reforestation. Adaptation are measures to minimize the impacts of climate change, such as improving infrastructure resilience, developing drought-resistant crops, and implementing early warning systems for extreme weather events.

Climate Resilience: This is the ability of societies and ecosystems to anticipate, prepare for, and recover from climate impacts. Resilience involves disaster preparedness, sustainable resource management, and equitable social policies.

Feedback Loops and Tipping Points: Feedback loops are self-reinforcing processes that accelerate climate change. For example, Arctic ice melt reduces the Earth's reflectivity, leading to further warming. Tipping points are critical thresholds beyond which climate changes become irreversible. Examples include the collapse of ice sheets and the thawing of permafrost, which releases methane and accelerates warming.

Fossil Fuels: Non-renewable energy source that releases carbon into the air when combusted. These fuels occur naturally in the earth's crust, and include natural resources such as oil, coal, and natural gas. Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs): Greenhouse Gas Emissions are gases that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Major GHGs include carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O). Burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial activities have significantly increased the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere, driving climate change.

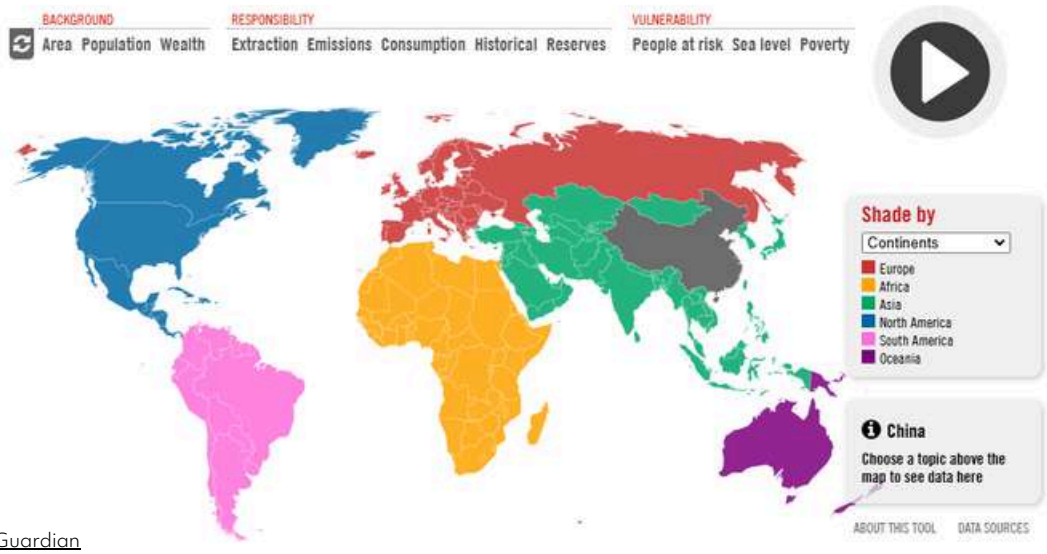
Intergovernmental Climate Frameworks:

- **UNFCCC** (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change): An international treaty established in 1992 to combat climate change.
- **Paris Agreement**: A legally binding agreement adopted in 2015 to limit global warming to below 2°C, with an aspiration to stay within 1.5°C.
- **COP** (Conference of the Parties): The annual UN climate summit where countries negotiate climate action plans and policies.

Nature-Based Solutions: Strategies that use natural ecosystems to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Examples: restoring wetlands to prevent flooding, conserving mangroves to protect coastlines, and promoting regenerative agriculture to improve soil health.
Loss and Damage: These are the economic and non-economic losses caused by climate change, particularly in vulnerable communities. These include infrastructure destruction, biodiversity loss, cultural heritage erosion, and forced migration.

Net Zero and Decarbonization: Net zero means achieving a balance between GHG emissions and removals, primarily through carbon sinks such as forests and technological solutions. Decarbonization means reducing emissions by transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy, improving industrial efficiency, and adopting sustainable land use practices.

Carbon Map Infographic: Visualizing Climate Inequality



Source: The Guardian

The Carbon Map, created by Kiln (a collaboration between Guardian writer Duncan Clark and developer Robin Houston), offers a striking visual of carbon emissions and climate impacts. It reveals how emissions, population growth, and climate vulnerability intersect, highlighting that the poorest nations – least responsible for emissions – face the most severe consequences.

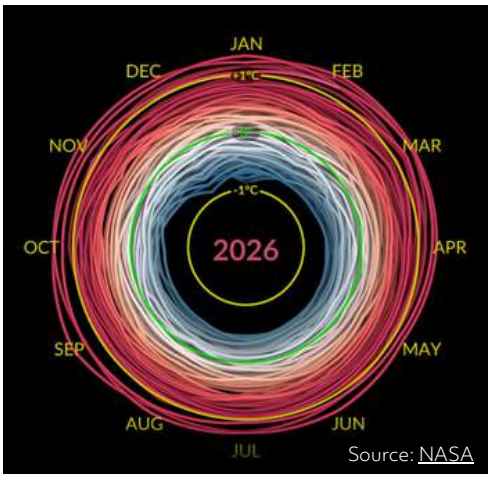
Where Are We Headed?
Every Fraction of a Degree Matters

Without urgent action, global temperatures could rise by more than 3°C this century, with some regions warming even more (UNEP). The most vulnerable communities are already bearing the brunt of these changes, facing rising sea levels, extreme weather, and food insecurity.

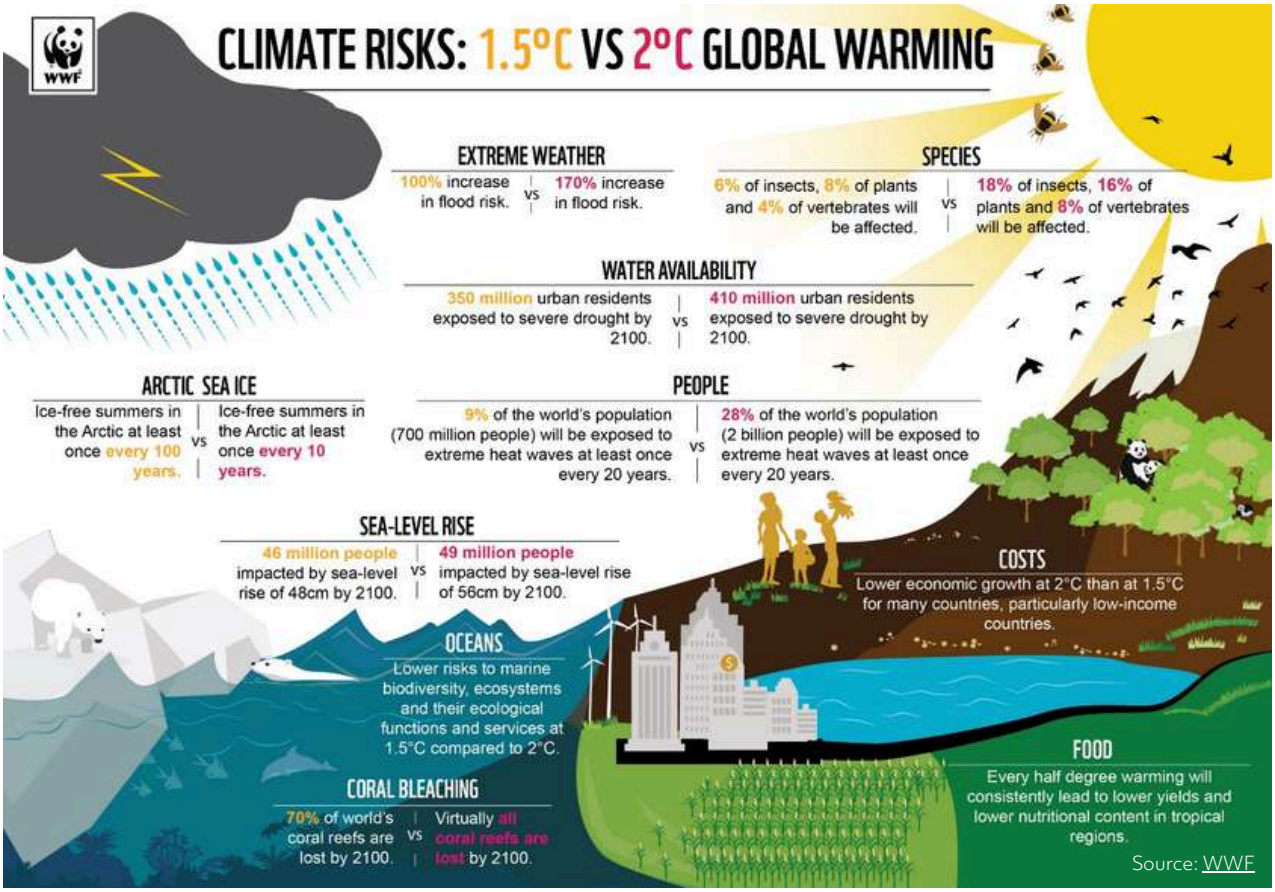
The climate spiral is an animated graphic showing the steady rise in global temperatures. Popularized in 2016 by climate scientist Ed Hawkins, it illustrates the acceleration of global warming from 1880 to today.

Currently, the world is on the edge of surpassing 1.5°C of warming (NASA) – a critical threshold that could make many small island nations uninhabitable or even cause them to disappear entirely due to rising seas. Staying below this limit is essential to preventing irreversible damage to ecosystems, economies, and communities.

THE 1.5°C TIPPING POINT: A CLIMATE CROSSROADS



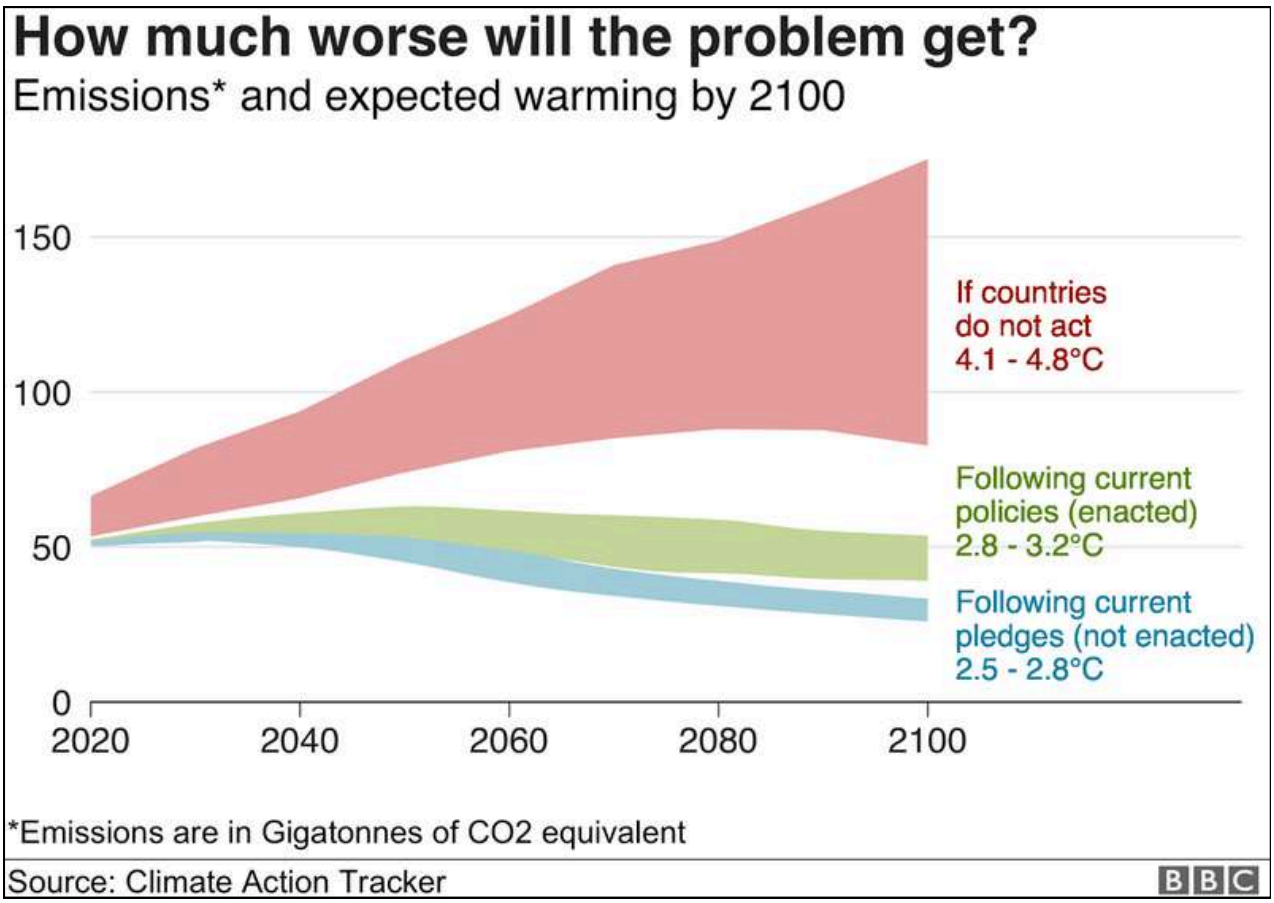
WHY DOES EVERY FRACTION OF A DEGREE MATTER?



Understand the Stakeholders & Systems

To address climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in Paris on 12 December 2015. In the agreement, all countries agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and given the grave risks, to strive to limit global temperature rise to only 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Implementation of the Paris Agreement is essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and provides a roadmap for climate actions that will reduce emissions and build climate resilience. However, we are currently not on track to meet climate change targets. If we add up all the promises to cut emissions made by countries that are party to the Paris climate agreement, the world would still warm by more than 3°C by the end of this century.



What Needs to Happen?

To effectively combat climate change and align with the Paris Agreement goals, the following actions are essential:

Strengthening National Commitments and Policies

- Countries must update and strengthen their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to align with the 1.5°C target. This includes implementing ambitious policies across sectors such as energy, industry, transport, and agriculture. (IPCC)
- Eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels is crucial to encourage the transition to renewable energy sources. (IPCC)

Accelerating the Global Energy Transition

- Significant investments in renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydropower are necessary to replace fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (IPCC)
- Establishing carbon pricing and taxes can reflect the true cost of emissions and incentivize emission reductions. (IPCC)

Transforming Agriculture, Land Use, and Food Systems

- Implementing climate-smart farming practices and reducing food waste can significantly lower emissions from the agriculture sector. (IPCC)
- Conserving and restoring forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems to enhance carbon sequestration and biodiversity. (UNEP)

Strengthening Adaptation and Climate Resilience

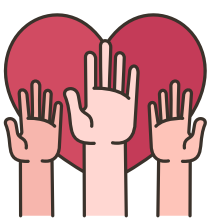
- Building infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather events is vital for reducing vulnerability to climate impacts. (IPCC)
- Providing adaptation funding and early warning systems helps communities prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters. (UNHCR)

Mobilizing Financial Resources and Enhancing Global Cooperation

- High-income countries need to honor their pledge to provide $100 billion annually to support low-income and climate vulnerable countries in their climate efforts. (IPCC)
- Encouraging investments from both private and public sectors is essential to fund the transition to a low-carbon economy. (IPCC)

Encouraging Individual and Collective Action

- Individuals can contribute by adopting sustainable practices, such as using clean energy, reducing waste, and choosing sustainable transportation options. (IPCC)
- Public support for robust climate policies and holding leaders accountable are crucial for driving systemic change. (IPCC)



DISCOVER CONNECT TRANSFORM

Key Stakeholders for Climate Action

Climate action does not happen through one actor or one decision. It requires governments to set policy, scientists to generate evidence, businesses to change practice, and communities to hold everyone accountable. No single stakeholder can succeed without the others — and no stakeholder is off the hook.

GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY MAKERS

Set laws and policies that cut emissions, accelerate the transition to clean energy, and deliver on international commitments like the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Effective leadership ensures accountable institutions and just climate transitions.

INDUSTRY & THE PRIVATE SECTOR

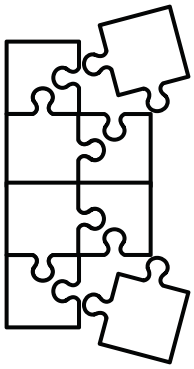
Producers bear primary responsibility for the emissions embedded in what they make, from extraction to disposal. The fossil fuel industry in particular has actively obstructed climate action for decades. But businesses across sectors can also be part of the solution by investing in renewable energy, setting science-based emissions targets, and embedding genuine accountability into supply chains — not greenwashing.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Bodies like the United Nations and the African Union coordinate global climate efforts, support developing nations with finance and technology, and hold member states accountable through shared frameworks and reporting mechanisms like the UNFCCC.

SCIENTISTS & RESEARCHERS

Generate the evidence base that drives climate policy, public understanding, and innovation. Bodies like the IPCC translate complex climate data into actionable guidance. Without rigorous independent science, informed decision-making on emissions, tipping points, and adaptation is impossible.



COMMUNITIES

Frontline communities — often the least responsible for emissions — bear the heaviest burden of climate impacts. Indigenous and local communities hold invaluable ecological knowledge that is increasingly recognized as essential to effective climate adaptation and land protection.

CIVIL SOCIETY & NGOS

Monitor governments and corporations, campaign for stronger climate protections, and give voice to communities most affected by climate breakdown — often those who contributed least to it.

YOUTH & THE GENERAL PUBLIC

From school climate strikes to local renewable energy campaigns, young people are driving systemic change and building the coalitions needed to protect the planet they will inherit. The general public sustains this momentum through everyday choices and civic participation.

DONORS & PHILANTHROPY

Donors and philanthropic actors, including international agencies, foundations, and local benefactors, provide critical funding for climate education, clean energy access, and community resilience initiatives.

MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY

Shape public opinion and amplify climate action, but can also spread misinformation. AI and digital tools offer new possibilities for monitoring emissions, tracking deforestation, and coordinating global climate response.

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Dive into the Research

Learners are encouraged to partake in guided research and activities to explore the topic. Research can be completed independently in a computer lab, as a homework assignment, by talking to community members, visiting a library, or as a classroom, club or community activity.

This research worksheet will help you explore the topic in your country and community by analyzing policies, trends, and challenges. Answer each question using reliable data and sources. Reflect on the findings and connect them to global challenges. Be ready to discuss or present your research.

Learner Research Worksheet: Investigate Your COUNTRY and Community	
Name:	
Country:	
Local Community:	
Research Questions:	
1. Climate Policies & Commitments • What are the main climate policies and commitments in your country? Is your country part of the Paris Agreement or other international climate agreements? • What are the national targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions? Are they on track? Does your government provide funding or incentives for renewable energy, sustainable transport, or climate adaptation?	

2. Renewable Energy & Sustainability • What percentage of your country's energy comes from renewable sources (solar, wind, hydro, etc.)? • Has your country increased or decreased its reliance on fossil fuels in the past decade? • What are the biggest barriers to transitioning to a fully renewable energy system?	
3. Climate Justice & Vulnerability • Which communities in your country are most vulnerable to climate change? Why? • How does climate change impact rural vs. urban populations? Are certain groups (e.g., women, indigenous people, low-income communities) more affected? • Are there any climate justice movements or youth-led initiatives advocating for solutions?	
4. Education & Awareness on Climate Change • Is climate change part of the school curriculum in your country? • Are there youth organizations or programs that educate students about sustainability? • How can schools improve environmental education and encourage climate action?	
5. Climate Action & Everyday Solutions • How is waste managed and recycled in your country? What percentage of waste is recycled or composted? • What are some local efforts to reduce carbon emissions (e.g., tree-planting projects, public transportation initiatives)? • What actions can individuals and schools take to lower their carbon footprint and create a green handprint of care?	

DISCOVER CONNECT TRANSFORM

ACTIVITY 2

This worksheet will help you assess how your school or community is promoting climate action and identify areas for improvement. Use this as a guide to observe, ask questions, and take notes on practices in your school or neighbourhood.

Learner Research Worksheet: Investigate Your SCHOOL or Community		
Investigate	Yes, No, Unsure	Notes and Observations
Does your school have a climate action plan or sustainability initiatives in place?		
Are renewable energy sources (solar panels, wind turbines) used at your school?		
Does your school actively promote energy conservation (e.g., turning off lights, efficient heating/cooling)?		
Is there a recycling or waste management program in place? If so, how effective is it?		
Does your school encourage students and staff to use sustainable transportation (walking, biking, public transport, carpooling)?		
Are there green spaces (gardens, trees, or natural areas) within the school environment? Efforts for nature restoration?		

Are there discussions or lessons on climate change and sustainability in your classrooms? In which subjects?		
Are there student-led eco-clubs or environmental groups that promote climate action?		
Does your cafeteria offer plant-based meal options or locally sourced food? How is food waste dealt with?		
How much single-use plastic is used in the school (e.g., water bottles, packaging)?		
Has your school/community experienced climate-related impacts (e.g., extreme weather, floods, heatwaves)? If so, how has it responded?		
Taking Action: How can you work with classmates, teachers, or local organizations to bring real change to your community? List at least three steps you can take to make a difference.		

ACTIVITY 3

In this activity, learners will explore how young people are at the forefront of climate action advocacy through social mobilization and activism, pushing for changes in policies and local and global policies. They will investigate a youth-led movement or organization, consider its impact, and reflect on how similar strategies could be applied in their own communities to promote SDG 13.

Examples of Youth-Led Movements:

- **Fridays for Future**: A youth-led environmental activism and community action movement. They take action through global strike movements, and provide resources to empower youth to organize their own movements.
- **Earth Uprising**: An international nonprofit organization that focuses on educating youth for the climate movement and empowering local, grassroots level change. The organization is led by the Global Leadership council- a democratically elected group of 18-24 from all around the world.
- **Climate Cardinals**: They aim to translate climate information to different languages to break barriers and make climate education more accessible. The Climate Cardinals connect youth and non-English speaking communities to global networks.
- **African Climate Alliance**: Youth advocating for Afrocentric climate justice through community efforts to address systemic environmental justice issues. They focus on education, advocacy, and empowering youth through their ambassador program.
- **Add a local youth movement or initiative or choose one that resonates with you.**

Research / Discussion Questions

- What is the mission or goal of the youth-led movement you chose?
- What strategies or actions do the youth use to create change (e.g., protests, social media campaigns, community projects)?
- Who are the key actors or partners involved in supporting the movement?
- What impact has the movement had locally, nationally, or globally?
- How could similar actions be applied in your own community to address local issues?

© Earth Uprising

Go Further

You can find additional reading and useful resources to further build on the ideas and contents provided in this guide and to engage in a process of transformation and empowerment.

Courses & Publications

- Global Schools Program | Leccion acción por el Clima (available in SPA)
- Global Schools Program | Schools for SDG7 Project - Information on Clean Energy and Green Skills
- SDSN Youth | SDG Literacy Toolkit Climate Action

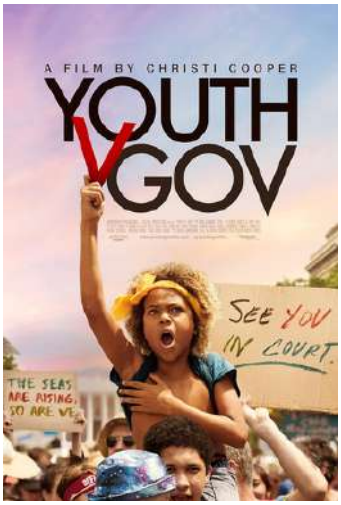
Websites & Multimedia

- United Nations | SDG 13 (available in EN, FR, SPA, AR, CH, RU)
- Our World in Data | Climate Change
- SubjectToClimate | Teacher Designed Lesson Plans for All Ages/Subjects
- Generation Global | The Ultimate Dialogue Adventure
- TED-Ed: Video bank for teachers and students
- The UN´s Lazy Person´s Guide to Saving the World

Documentaries & Films

Films about climate change and taking action on the ground level.

LINK TO FILM



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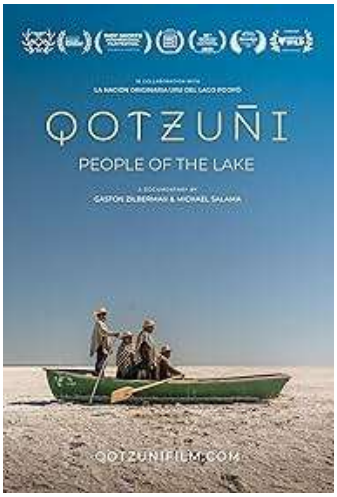

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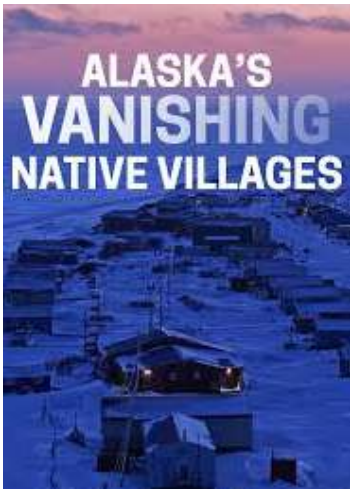

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Meet the Speakers

SIMON KOFE

Minister of Transport, Energy, Communications & Innovation, Government of Tuvalu

The Honorable Simon Kofe, a Member of Parliament in Tuvalu, serves as the Minister of Transport, Energy, Communication, and Innovation. A lawyer by profession, he previously held the role of Minister for Justice, Communication, and Foreign Affairs, emerging as a visionary leader committed to climate justice and the rights of small island nations. His 2021 COP26 speech, delivered knee-deep in rising waters, became a global symbol of climate urgency and led to his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Simon has been instrumental in positioning Tuvalu as a leader in climate resilience and digital sovereignty, playing a key role in the creation of Tuvalu's "Digital Nation" to preserve its governance, culture, and identity. His efforts have influenced global discussions on statehood, securing recognition of Tuvalu's sovereignty even without physical territory.

YURSHELL RODRIGUEZ

Environmental Engineer & Climate Activist, Raizal Community, Colombia

Yurshell Rodríguez is an environmental engineer, climate activist, and researcher from the Afro-Caribbean Raizal ethnic group, native to Colombia's San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina Islands – home to the third-largest coral reef. A dedicated advocate for environmental justice, she was a plaintiff in Latin America's first climate lawsuit, which successfully held the Colombian government accountable for deforestation in the Amazon. She has represented climate-vulnerable communities at COP25, COP26, and COP27, amplifying the voices of island nations. As Coordinator of the Residency Program at If Not Us Then Who, she leads external communications and supports Indigenous-led climate action. She is also involved in the Sea Land and Culture Foundation, working to preserve Raizal culture and ecosystems. Passionate about conservation from a young age, Yurshell continues to fight for climate justice and Indigenous rights on the global stage.

Watch the Dialogue

In this segment, learners are invited to watch UN at Your Doorstep, a global dialogue that connects United Nations leaders with youth changemakers driving local action for global impact. The discussion offers new perspectives on how young people and international institutions can work together to address today's most urgent challenges from climate resilience to social equity and sustainable development.

By engaging with this dialogue, learners will gain inspiration and a deeper understanding of how global goals translate into community-level solutions. Learners gain insight on youth led movements in their communities, systems that enable or constrain their action, and how to incite sustainable and actionable change.

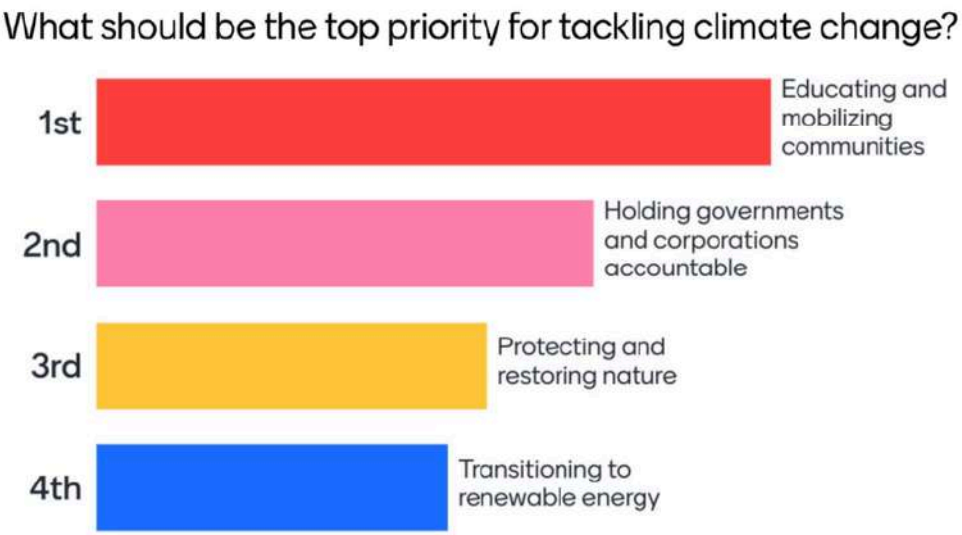
Learners are encouraged to watch together as a class or as homework, and to use it for discussion, reflection, and concrete action toward climate resilient societies.

Explore the Insights

Participants shared what climate action means to them — their responses form this word cloud, where size reflects frequency. Hope, future, sustainability, and community rose to the top. **Ask your students to choose 2–3 words that resonate most with them and write a short reflection: why these words, and what do they reveal about how they understand climate action?**

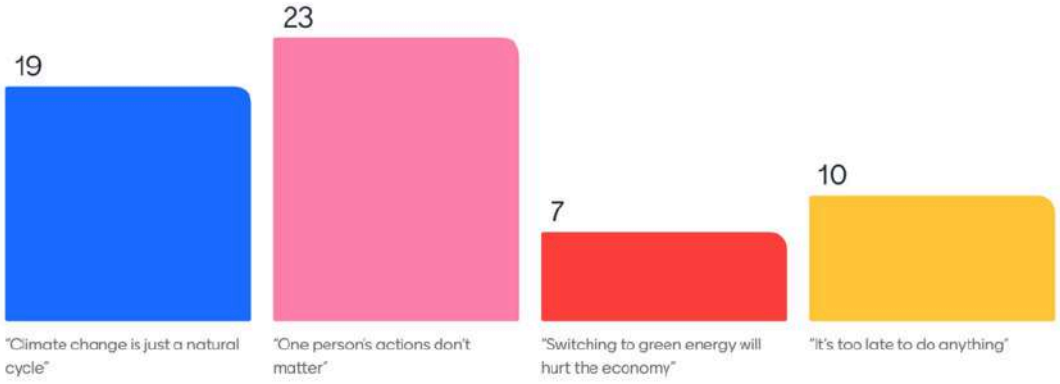
The polls below capture where participants stood on some of the big questions in sustainability. **Read the results and consider: how do these compare to what you think?**

Poll 1

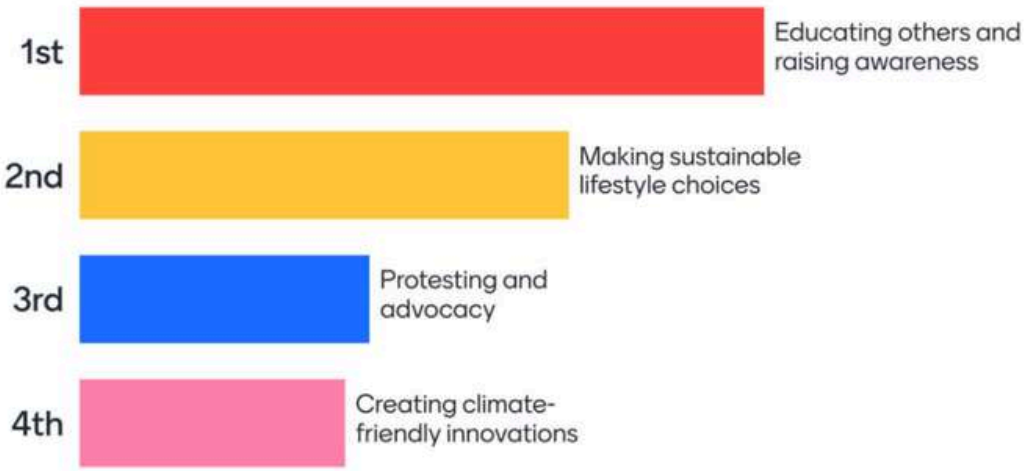


Poll 2 What's the biggest climate impact you've noticed in your area?

Poll 3 Which of these common climate myths do you still hear the most?



Poll 4 What's the most powerful way young people can drive climate action?



Participants were asked the question "**How can youth be a main driver of global-scale change for the climate?**" Some of the responses are displayed below.

"Youth are the future of our planet. They can raise awareness about climate issues using social media campaigns & community initiatives, influencing general public opinion and public action."

"Educate themselves and others to spread awareness and inspire all to do their part in combatting the negative impacts of climate change."

"Seek out partnerships between schools and dedicated organizations working to protect the local environment."

"Education, activism, and dialogue amongst youth is key to drive global change. Empowered youth can restructure environmental policy and framework"

"Youth can work to engage and make considerable impact by establishing alliances to work together with different levels of the government."

"Be politically active, vote, and support local grassroots groups. Contact local government officials and policymakers."

"Find your passion first. Educate yourself and collaborate with others to amplify your work for a greater impact."

DISCOVER | CONNECT | TRANSFORM

Reflect on the Dialogue

ACTIVITY

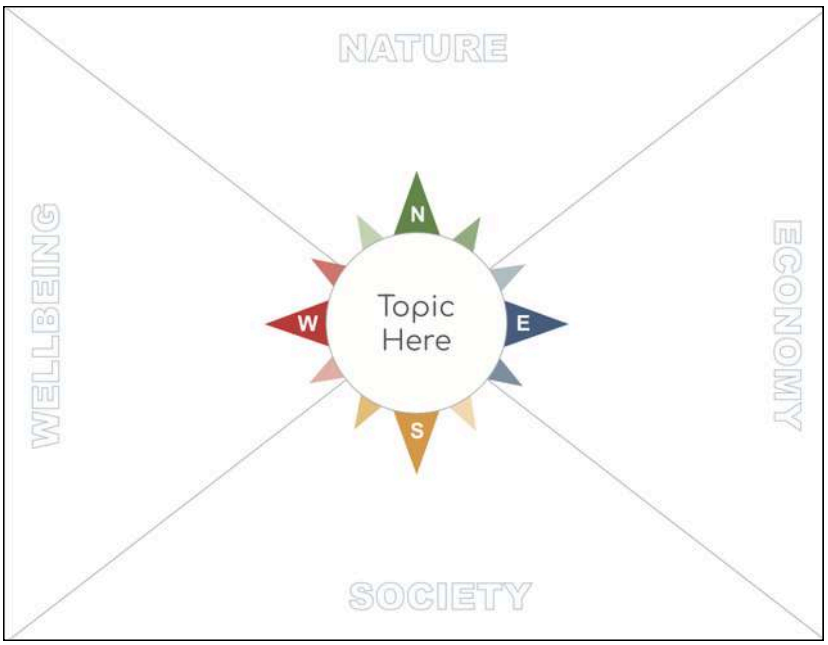
In this activity, learners use the **Sustainability Compass** as a reflection and conversation tool to examine interconnected aspects, diverse perspectives, and cause and effect relationships.

Goal: To help learners reflect critically on the shared dialogue.

Tool: Using the **Sustainability Compass**, students reflect on information gathered from four perspectives — Nature, Economy, Society, and Wellbeing — to think analytically and explore complexity. This can be used to create a shared understanding or definition of a concept or topic.

Example Cards:

Climate Change	Global Warming
Feedback Loops	Fossil Fuels
Climate Justice	Climate Mitigation
Climate Resilience	Carbon Footprint
Nature-Based Solutions	Net Zero
Resource Extraction	Ecosystems
Individual Health	Natural Beauty
Sustainable Production and Consumption	Innovation



Classroom Process

- Gather important information, concepts, quotes, observations, questions, and/or thoughts. Write each idea on it's own card or sticky note.
- Sort the cards on the compass. If this is collaborative work, it might be helpful to place one card at a time and discuss. Using the Compass as a conversation tool to support visible thinking.
- Discuss relationships that you notice between elements. Draw arrows to show the connections between ideas.
- Have a look at the systems map you created. What do you notice?

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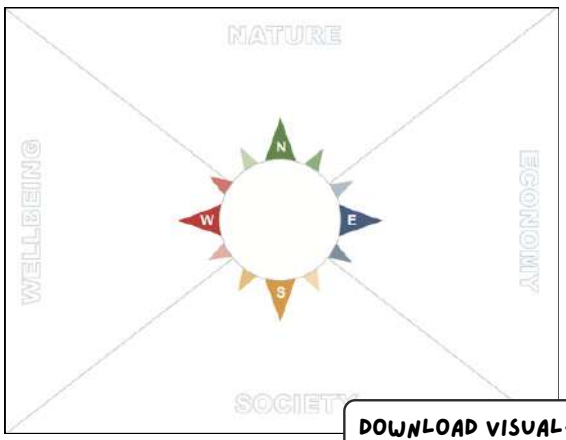
ACTIVITY

Trace the Patterns

In this activity, learners use the **Sustainability Compass** as a tool to research, investigate, and analyze current issues and events.

Goal: To support learners research issues and events.

Tool: Use the **Sustainability Compass** as a research tool to analyze a current event, news story, image, short story, or news clip focused on a climate change issue that you care about.



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Classroom Process

- Decide on an article, story, image, or event that you'd like to research.
- Each small group or individual take the perspective of one Compass point.
- Dig deeper: Brainstorm research questions from your unique Compass point. Fill your own Compass point with information gathered.
- Think Big Picture: Have a look at the information gathered. Draw arrows to show the cause & effect connections between ideas. Feel free to draw arrows within and between Sustainability Compass points.
- Have a look at the systems map you created. What do you notice?

ACTIVITY 1

Go Below the Surface

In this activity, learners use the **Systems Iceberg** as a tool to discover what's happening below what's visible - helping us surface deeper levels of understanding, and identify where meaningful change can happen.

Goal: Learners will analyse a scenario to explore negative & positive peace within a school context and visualize systems that drive behavior from different levels.

Tool: The Systems Iceberg helps us evaluate an issue or event by examining the root causes, underlying structures, and mental models that can trigger it. Supporting learners in developing new perspectives and effective solutions.

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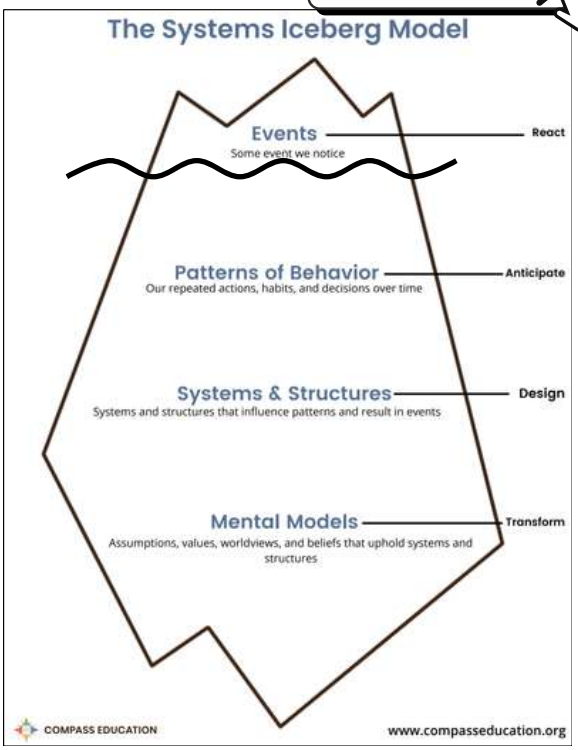


Example Cards:

Climate Change	Global Warming
Feedback Loops	Fossil Fuels
Climate Justice	Climate Mitigation
Climate Resilience	Carbon Footprint
Nature-Based Solutions	Net Zero
Resource Extraction	Ecosystems
Individual Health	Natural Beauty
Sustainable Production and Consumption	Innovation

Classroom Process

- Read the Case Studies & place the sorting cards within the levels of the Iceberg where you feel they best belong. Take time to discuss and share perspectives. Feel free to create your own cards to add.
- Have a look at your Iceberg analysis. Where do you feel the students might have the most leverage to create sustainable (long-lasting) change? Why?
- What actions and habits might help them sustain positive change?

DISCOVER CONNECT TRANSFORM

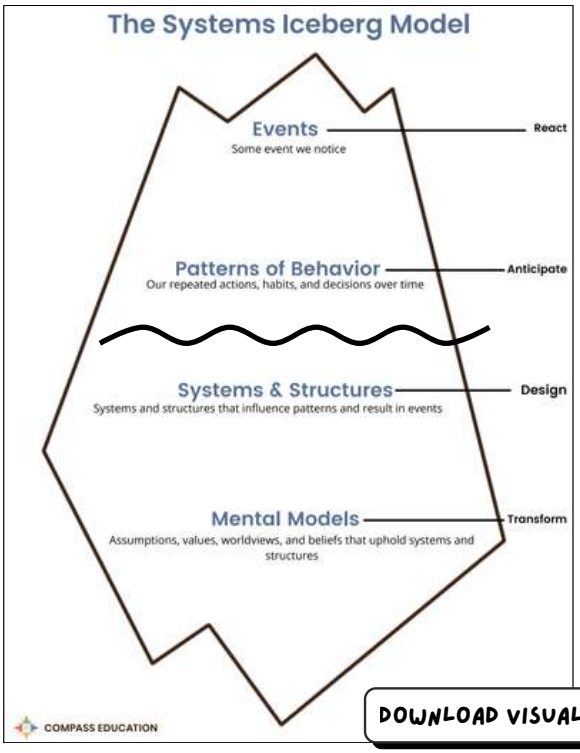
ACTIVITY 2

In this activity, learners use the **Systems Iceberg** as a tool to discover what's happening below what's visible. This helps us surface deeper levels of understanding and identify where we can create meaningful change.

Goal: Support learners to visualize systems that drive events from different levels.

Tool: The Systems Iceberg helps us evaluate an issue or event by examining the root causes, underlying structures, and mental models that can trigger it, supporting learners in developing new perspectives and effective solutions.

- **Events** → What's visible. Symptoms we see. (e.g., a peaceful protest).
- **Patterns** → Trends over time (e.g. increasing youth engagement in issues, use of social media).
- **Systems & Structures** → Systems that reinforce patterns (e.g. access to clean water).
- **Mental Models** → Ways of thinking, beliefs, or assumptions (e.g.,"It's my responsibility to speak out and take action" or "We are all in this together").



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Example:

- Local environmental activism
  - "The environment impacts human health."
  - "I can impact the quality of the environment in my community."
  - "My actions impact the local environment."

Youth Climate Activism

WATCH THE VIDEO

WATCH THE VIDEO

Classroom Process

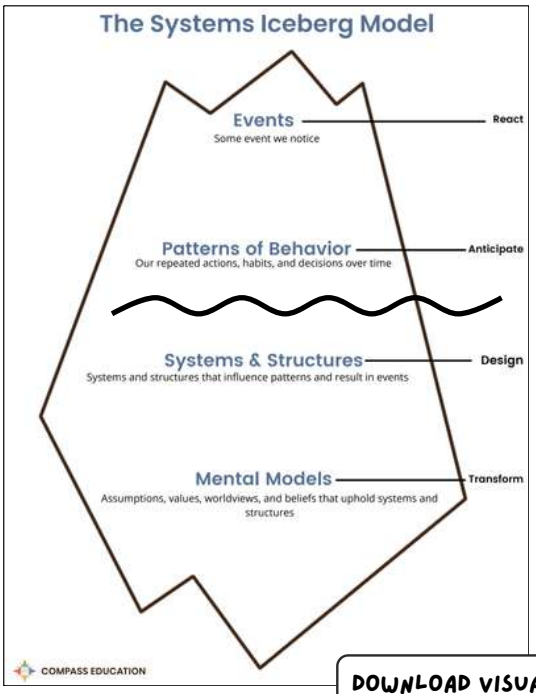
- Identify an event or issue you'd like to investigate, and/or might like to take action for positive change within your own context.
- Using the resources gathered, place identified drivers within the levels of the Iceberg where you feel they best belong. Take time to discuss and share perspectives.
- Have a look at your Iceberg analysis. Where do you feel you have leverage to create change within your own relationships, groups, schools, and/or communities? Influencing change at any level below the "water" can have an important impact. What actions could you take to create change at multiple levels?

ACTIVITY 3

"What mindsets, beliefs, values could we hold in our community if we believe it's important to address environmental sustainability?" In this activity, learners use the **Systems Iceberg** as a tool to thoughtfully and intentionally create meaningful change and maximize positive impact.

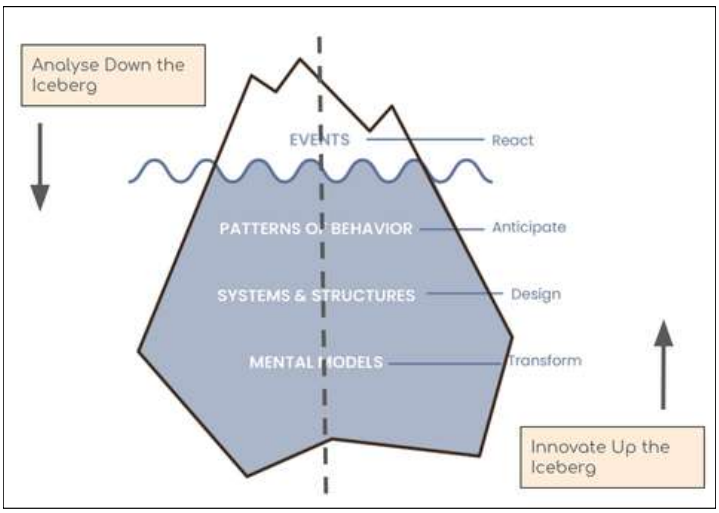
Goal: Support learners to identify areas in which they can take meaningful action to create positive change.

Tool: The Systems Iceberg supports learners in investigating the depth of an issue and identifying meaningful and actionable solutions.



DOWNLOAD VISUAL

Down the Iceberg to Analyze an Issue or Event, Up the Iceberg to Innovate for Positive Change



Classroom Process

- Identify an event or issue you'd like to investigate, and/or might like to take action for positive change within your own context.
- Analyze the issue/event by going down the Iceberg.
- Consider: As we deepen our understanding we can work our way up the iceberg to innovate new ideas, sustainable solutions, and identify opportunities & actions we can take ourselves to create & influence positive change.
- Discuss: If mental models or structures changed, how would patterns and events shift?
- Reflect: Which level(s) of the iceberg do you think you have the greatest power to impact? How does that change across different contexts?
- Share: "Every sustainable action you take – whether it's using less plastic, voting in elections, or speaking up for the environment helps create a safer, more resilient world for us all." - What is something you think all youth should know about taking action for environmental sustainability?

Take Action

This section includes ideas for action and a global social media challenge you can participate in.

The United Nations recognizes youth as crucial contributors to climate action, emphasizing their role in advancing solutions through education, science, and technology. Youth-led movements, such as Fridays for Future, have mobilized millions worldwide, demanding urgent climate action from governments. At the same time, young entrepreneurs are developing clean technologies, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable businesses that drive systemic change.

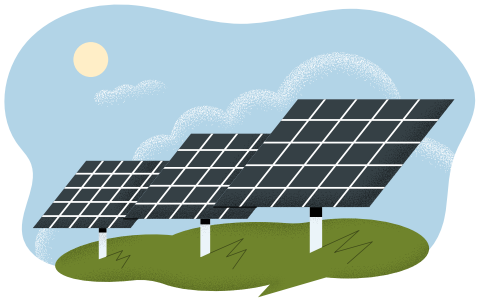
Taking Action: Steps You Can Implement

1. **Educate Yourself and Others**: Knowledge is power. Stay informed about climate science and policies. Share information within your community to raise awareness.
2. **Adopt Sustainable Lifestyles**: Be the change that you want to see.
   - Reduce electricity use by turning off lights and unplugging devices when not in use. Advocate for renewable energy sources in your community.
   - Opt for public transport, cycling, or walking to reduce carbon emissions.
   - Consider reducing meat consumption, especially beef, as livestock farming contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Embrace plant-based meals and support local produce.
   - See more ideas for action in SubjectToClimate's Earth Month Calendar.
3. **Participate in Climate Movements**: Join or support organizations like Fridays for Future, which mobilize students globally to demand climate action from leaders. Collective action creates a critical mass that amplifies voices, pressures policymakers, and accelerates systemic change.
4. **Engage in Policy Advocacy**: Use your voice to influence policy. Participate in local government meetings, support climate-friendly policies, and encourage leaders to uphold the Paris Agreement and SDGs. Use social media to spread awareness, sign petitions, and push corporations to commit to net-zero emissions.
5. **Innovate and Lead**: Develop or support technological solutions to reduce emissions. Young entrepreneurs are developing carbon capture technologies, sustainable packaging, and AI-driven climate solutions. Consider launching eco-startups, community-led projects, or scientific innovations to support a low-carbon economy.
6. **Build Resilient Communities**: Participate in reforestation projects, community gardens, and clean-ups. Support initiatives that prepare communities for climate disasters, such as early warning systems or flood-resistant infrastructure.

DISCOVER CONNECT TRANSFORM

Current and Future Opportunities for Youth

FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A RISING DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS



The transition to a green economy is creating millions of new jobs worldwide, with demand soaring for sustainability expertise. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that a shift to sustainable energy, agriculture, and infrastructure could generate 24 million new jobs by 2030 (ILO). These are just some of the top emerging **green careers**:

- **Renewable Energy Engineers**: Develop solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects.
- **Sustainability Consultants**: Guide businesses and governments toward low-carbon operations.
- **Climate Data Analysts**: Use AI and big data to predict climate impacts.
- **Urban Planners**: Design sustainable cities with transit, green spaces, and eco-friendly buildings.
- **Environmental Lawyers & Policy Experts**: Push for stronger climate laws and accountability.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES EMPOWERING YOUTH

The United Nations has established platforms to amplify youth voices in climate action, providing opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making, drive policy changes, and lead climate solutions at local and global levels:

- **UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change** – Provides young leaders with direct input into UN climate strategies. (UN)
- **UNFCCC's Youth Constituency (YOUNGO)** – Represents youth in international climate negotiations and COP summits. (UNFCCC)
- **UNESCO's Youth Climate Action Network (YOUCAN)** – Focuses on climate education, leadership training, and grassroots mobilization. (UNESCO)
- **United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)** – the MGCY is active at various international summits, and youth focal points address specific SDGs, many of them related to the environmental goals. (UNMGCY)

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Social Media Challenge #OurVoiceOurPower

Task: In small groups, create a simple social media campaign on a global issue linked to the SDGs.

Goal: Decide what your post aims to do, e.g. raise awareness, share a solution, or showcase an action.

Platform & Permissions: Post from a school/club/NGO account if possible (or a dedicated class account). Choose an age-appropriate platform and follow school/parent consent rules.

Tagging: Tag "Ages of Globalization" and "Global Schools Program". Use #UNatYourDoorstep and #OurVoiceOurPower.

Quality & Safety: Be respectful, fact-based, and visually clear.
Timeline: The campaign runs until June 2026.

No social media? Share internally via your class blog, posters, video reels shown in class, or exchange with a partner classroom.

THE MOST-LIKED POSTS WILL BE AMPLIFIED

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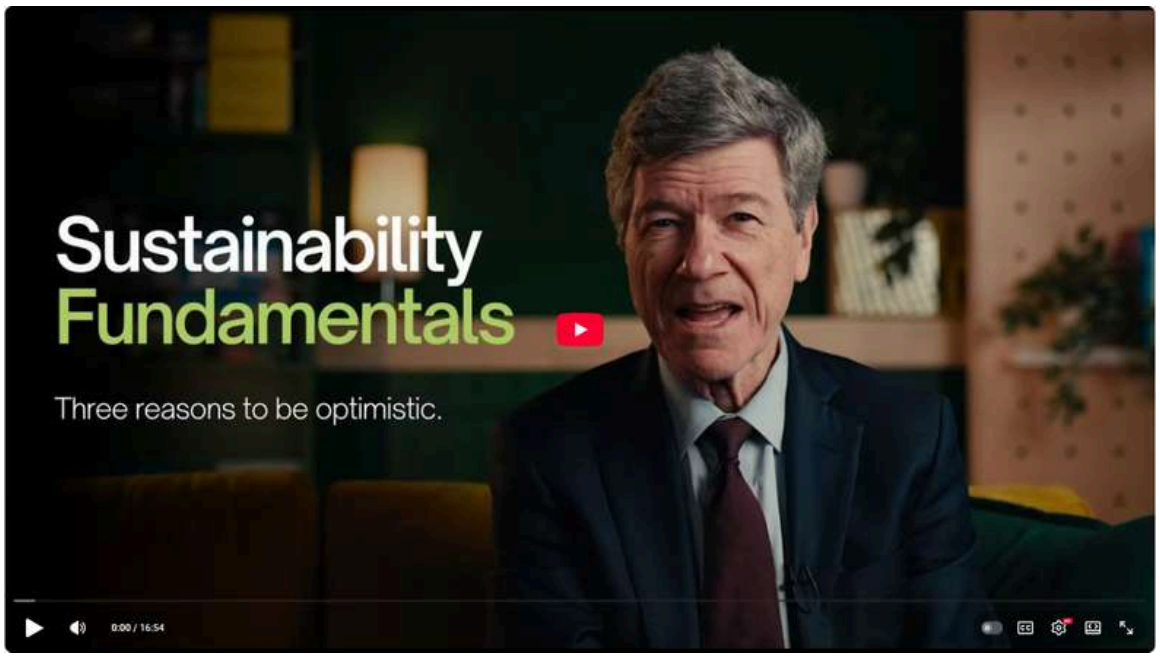

Watch this video by Professor Jeffrey Sachs to understand the importance of the SDGs, why they offer hope for the future, and how we can all take action to achieve them.

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Social Media Challenge Planning Template

DOWNLOAD THE TEMPLATE!

Form a Team & Choose Your Topic

Working in small groups is ideal for brainstorming and building on each other's ideas. Take a look at the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), pick an issue/SDG(s) you are passionate about, propose a solution or share information, solutions and actions. Research and discuss it with your peers, educator(s), and families. Understand different perspectives and think about what message(s) you want to share using research, facts, and statistics.

Set Your Goals

Think about what you want to accomplish with your post(s). Do you aim to:

- Raise awareness about an issue?
- Share your thoughts or solutions?
- Encourage others to take action or share their own perspectives?

Choose Your Platform

Ask your instructor if you can use your school's/club/community/NGO social media account(s) or if you can create a dedicated account for your post(s). Will you be using Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, or Facebook? Make sure you know how to navigate the platforms effectively and safely.

Creating Your Content

Length & Format: What type of content are you creating (e.g., a short video, a photo series, a written post)? Keep your message positive, respectful, and impactful. Aim to inspire and connect with others.
Visuals: Create eye-catching visuals, e.g. by creating a free https://www.canva.com/ account. Whether it's a photo, a graphic, or a video, make sure it supports your message.
Hashtags & Tags: Use the campaign's official hashtags: #OurVoiceOurPower for the #SDGs and your unique hashtag(s). Don't forget to tag the official accounts @Ages of Globalisation (LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram) and @Global Schools Program (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter).

Posting Your Content

Are you posting from your school/club/community/NGO account or your personal account? Make sure your post's privacy settings are appropriate. Discuss with your teacher or parents if you're unsure.

Engage with Others

Engage with other posts in the campaign by liking, commenting, or re-sharing them. Show support, ask questions, and start conversations!
Keep track of how your post is doing. Respond to comments and thank people for their support.

Reflect on Your Experience

After posting, think about the impact of your contribution. How did it make you feel? What did you learn? Share your experience with others. What worked well? What could you improve next time?

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Reflect & Review

In this section, we offer suggestions to review and assess learners' understanding and engagement with the topic and the activities in this module. The focus is on evaluating grasp of background information, participation in activities, and the ability to propose actionable, youth-led solutions. We also encourage educators to celebrate learners' accomplishments and growth.

Guiding Questions

- **Background Understanding:** Did learners demonstrate a clear understanding of key climate change concepts (e.g., greenhouse gases, climate justice, SDG 13)?
- **Research Accuracy:** Are the responses in the Learner Research Worksheet accurate and reflective of a deep understanding of local and global climate action efforts? Did students use credible sources such as UNEP, IPCC, or NASA?
- **Community Insight:** Did learners effectively investigate their school's or community's approach to sustainability? Assess the quality of their observations and recommendations for climate action.
- **Discussion Participation:** How actively did students participate in climate discussions and debates? Look for engagement, depth of reflection, and critical thinking in post-dialogue conversations.
- **Activity Engagement:** Did students effectively use climate analysis tools (e.g., Sustainability Compass, Systems Iceberg) to propose solutions? Assess how well they connected climate action to human rights, justice, and SDGs.

- **Social Media Challenge:** Evaluate the creativity, relevance, and impact of students' climate action social media posts. Did they clearly express their thoughts, propose solutions, and use campaign hashtags appropriately?

DISCOVER CONNECT TRANSFORM

Ideas for Assessment Methods

Quizzes

- What is SDG 13, and why is it important?
- What are the main causes of climate change?
- What does the term "net-zero" mean?
- Which sectors produce the most carbon emissions?
- What is the climate justice movement, and why does it matter?
- Name three renewable energy sources.
- What is the Paris Agreement, and what are its goals?
- How does climate change affect vulnerable communities?
- How has your country been impacted by extreme weather events?

Presentations & Group Discussion

- Have learners present findings from their Country or School/Community research and facilitate discussion:
  - "Why climate education should be mandatory in all schools."
  - "Governments should ban fossil fuels immediately."
  - "How technology is the key to solving climate change."
  - "Why meat consumption should be drastically reduced to lower carbon emissions."

Activity Reports on Systems Tools

- Review learners' Compass/Iceberg mapping. Assess clarity of cause–effect pathways, quality of evidence, identification of leverage points.

Reflection Essays

- What are three major causes of climate change, and how can we address them?
- How does climate change disproportionately impact low-income communities?
- What role do young people play in climate action?
- If you were a government leader, what climate policies would you implement?
- Explain how climate change affects biodiversity. Provide examples.
- How do climate disasters impact economies, and what solutions exist to build resilience?

Self-Assessment & Peer Feedback

Invite short reflections and pair with a simple peer rubric focusing on accuracy, empathy, systems thinking, and feasibility of actions.

- One belief I changed about peace and security is…
- One practice our school could adopt to build positive peace is…
- One partnership we need (and why) is…

Social Media Campaign Impact

- Track engagement. Consider clarity of message, ethical framing, accuracy, constructive tone, and clear call to action.

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