

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



YOUTH FOR CLIMATE ACTION

ENGAGING JORDANIAN YOUTH IN CLIMATE-RELATED POLICYMAKING



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Summary

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) brought the world together in a mission towards realizing the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Mitigation and adaptation to protect the environment for future generations were amongst the pressing issues for COP26. Political commitment and efforts to advance youth engagement in the policy-making processes will be key to the success of these efforts. Young activists from YOUNGO, the official Youth Constituency of UNFCCC have united under the Conference of Youth (COY 16) to represent the voice of youth and share their demands to the COP presidency and

other leaders, delivering a statement signed by more than 47,000 young people. While youth have been at the forefront of climate action in many countries, they are still not fully engaged in discussions and climate-related policymaking in Jordan. The COP26 and the global youth statement provide valuable opportunities and compelling examples to improve youth engagement in climate action.

This policy brief looks at Jordanian youth and their engagement in climate change-related policymaking. It puts forth a set of policy recommendations for policymakers, from capacity building to an evaluation of the current climate governance structure.



Introduction

Today's generation of young people will be disproportionately affected by climate change. Children and youth are at a greater risk of climate-linked diseases and are more vulnerable to natural disasters with destructive lifetime effects.

Climate change is an intergenerational problem, and the well-being of future generations depends upon the actions we take todayⁱ. It is no longer a trade-off between present and future consumption, but rather between present consumption and the mere existence of future generations.

Despite these concerns, young people are rarely engaged or addressed in climate action policies, and their potential as agents of change is often overlooked.

It is therefore imperative to consider all climate actions from the lens of intergenerational justice to ensure the sustainable functioning of the planet and its ecosystems. This also raises the issue of balancing the rights and claims of the different generations in all climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts to ensure that they are adequate,

non-discriminatory, and compliant to the rights of future generations and communities.

In Jordan, 63% of the population is under the age of 30ⁱⁱ, making it one of the youngest populations in the world. Projections indicate that youth will constitute the dominant demographic cohort until 2050ⁱⁱⁱ. This augments the urgency for investing in youth and presents an opportunity for them to be at the forefront of climate action and the fight for intergenerational equity.

According to the Peoples' Climate Vote survey^{iv} by the UNDP in 2020, 67%^v of surveyed people in Jordan think that climate change is a global emergency.

This number is one of the highest in the Arab States and higher than the global average (64%) in the 50 countries surveyed. That being said, out of the respondents who think that climate change is a global emergency, 41% did not demand urgent and comprehensive action. This suggests that while many acknowledge the urgency of climate change, they do not necessarily prioritize the climate change agenda.



Climate justice requires that climate action is consistent with existing human rights, agreements, obligations, standards and principles. Those who have contributed the least to climate change unjustly and disproportionately suffer its harms. They must be meaningful participants in and primary beneficiaries of climate action, and they must have access to effective remedies^{vi}



Submission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Jordanian Youth & Climate Change^{xxviii}

Background



Population of Jordan
11,064,994
2022/1/11



Population under 30



100,000 young people start looking for work every year.



Over 2 million students enrolled in schools.



Jordan has one of the youngest populations in the world.

Climate Change Views in Jordan

67%

Of those surveyed in Jordan think climate change is a global emergency: One of the highest percentages in Arab States

64%

Global average who believe climate change is a global emergency.

41%

Didn't demand urgent and comprehensive action.



“Although many acknowledge urgency of climate change, they don't priori either climate change agenda.”

Future

2050

It's expected youth will continue to be dominant demographic cohort until 2050.



Urgency to invest in youth.



Opportunity for youth to lead to climate action and fight for intergenerational equity.

Climate Change in Jordan

The negative impact of climate change threatens Jordan's human development. According to the climate models of Jordan's Third National Communication on climate change, climatic variables are changing significantly and are projected to become more evident. This includes a projected decrease in precipitation by up to 20 per cent by 2055, increased irregularity of seasonal rainfall, intensity of droughts, severity of flood events, and a likely increase in the water deficit up to 30 per cent over the next 20 years.^{vii}

Impacts are expected to vary with more vulnerable parts of the country and population expected to be particularly affected.

An assessment by UNDP Jordan in 2018 reveals that approximately 2.5 million people of the northwest governorates of Ajloun, Irbid, and Jerash are extremely vulnerable to drought due to their high sensitivity and exposure and low adaptive capacity. This may drive displacement towards the capital city of Amman, where more secure water resources are available. As a result, about 15 per cent of the country's farmers may leave their lands or shift their use from agriculture to other uses.^{viii}

Climate vulnerability in Jordan will further exacerbate water shortages by adding pressure on groundwater aquifers where the recharge rates have already exceeded natural

replenishment sustainable levels. This will also aggravate the management of shared water resources with neighboring countries^{ix}, increasing the potential for further destabilization and conflict in the region.^x

An assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2018 shows that poverty and food insecurity is much higher in the rural population. This makes up more than 40 per cent of the population in five governorates of Jordan, namely Mafraq, Jerash, Madaba, Karak, and Maan.^{xi}

While there is no exact data on the climate vulnerability of youth in Jordan, a recent report by

UNICEF on the climate crisis introduces Children's Climate Risk Index and ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate risks. According to the findings, Jordan ranks at 94, with Jordanian children at high risk of exposure to water scarcity followed by air, soil and water pollution.^{xii}

Systematic findings worldwide show that women, indigenous people, children, and youth are more vulnerable to climate change than other groups of the population^{xiii}. The impacts of climate change exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities such as poverty and social exclusion, particularly those related to gender.



Jordan's efforts in combating climate change

Jordan is considered one of the most active countries in the region concerning international climate change efforts despite its minimal contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For example, Jordan was one of the first developing countries to ratify the UNFCCC in 1994, the Kyoto Protocol in 2003, and the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2016.

As a result of the commitment with the UNFCCC, Jordan has submitted three reports on the National Communication on Climate Change, with the first in 1997, the second in 2009, and the third in 2014. Accordingly, Jordan has been consistent in its commitment to climate change through the development and implementation of various national strategies and policies.

In 2013, Jordan developed the most comprehensive national climate change policy in the Middle East, covering the pre-2020 period.

The National Climate Change Policy and Sector Strategic Guidance Framework of 2013-2020 is considered to be the key document for addressing climate change containing measures for adaptation and mitigation^{xiv}. The policy has little reference to youth engagement and empowerment. For instance, while the policy calls for the inclusion of youth's interests as a vulnerable group in adaptation policies and strategies, it makes no reference on how to do this nor does it refer to youth as a key stakeholder in the climate change adaptation process.

The lack of youth engagement extends to the current structure of the national climate

change institutional framework, illustrated in figure 1.

The Ministry of Environment (MoEnv) is the national administrative body for the secretariat of the UNFCCC. This is followed by two bodies for national governance; the Climate Change Directorate (CCD) which is responsible for UNFCCC coordination, and the National Committee on Climate Change (NCCC) which is the highest climate policy coordination body.

The NCCC is also the owner of the key document for climate change and oversees cross-sectorial coordination and decision-making processes concerning climate change. Originally established in 2001, the NCCC was re-formulated in 2019 following the issuance of the climate change bylaw Number 79 for the year 2019.

According to article 4 of the climate change bylaw, the committee consists of representative stakeholders with voting rights that they can exercise to ratify climate change projects. While the committee has 16 members on its board from different government entities, neither the Ministry of Youth nor Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that could represent youth are included^{xv}. This further compromises the representation of youth and their potential as policymakers for climate action.

If the current structure of the NCCC does not strengthen its level of representation, this could risk the systematic overlooking of youth as key stakeholders in the implementation of other climate change policy frameworks.

For example, Jordan has revised its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2021, and although there is no dedicated section on youth engagement, the document contains multiple instances of youth. This could be an opportunity to better advocate for youth inclusion in climate action, but such efforts cannot be optimized without a representative NCCC of youth.

Another opportunity is the recent draft of the first National Climate Change Adaptation Plan of Jordan (NAP) 2021 that supports the efforts of MoEnv to address climate change in the country's development policy framework and calls for youth inclusion in climate action.^{xvi}

In addition, parallel efforts must be made by the Ministry of Youth to acknowledge the urgency of climate change and advance youth participation in climate action.

The lack of efforts to do so has been evident in the key themes of the current national youth strategy 2019-2025^{xvii} that complete-

ly overlook the issue of climate change. In fact, climate change has not been mentioned once in the seventy-two pages document.

It seems that the role of youth and their potential contribution to climate action in Jordan is still limited and not fully understood. While this is partially explained by the limited availability of data on the topic, other factors might be contributing to this. For example, many young people do not believe that the impact of climate change will happen "here" and "now" or what is known as the 'psychological distance'^{xviii} of climate change. Another challenge is the growing disenchantment from the part of youth with mainstream politics which is a significant factor for low levels of engagement among young people.

A nationwide poll of Jordanians^{xix} in 2018 by the International Republican Institute's (IRI) Center reported that 72 per cent of respondents have no confidence in the parliament, and 64 per cent have no confidence in the country's political parties.^{xx}

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

(UNFCCC) entered into force on 21 March 1994 with the ultimate objective of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. 197 countries have ratified the convention, making its membership near-universal^{xxi}. All member states are represented at the Conference of the Parties (COP), where they review the convention's implementation and all other necessary decisions to support effective implementation of the convention.^{xxii}

According to article 3 of the convention, climate change is an intergenerational problem:



"The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Therefore, the UNFCCC strongly recognizes the role of youth as key partners in the fight against climate change and enables their active engagement under its Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda."

The national climate change institutional framework

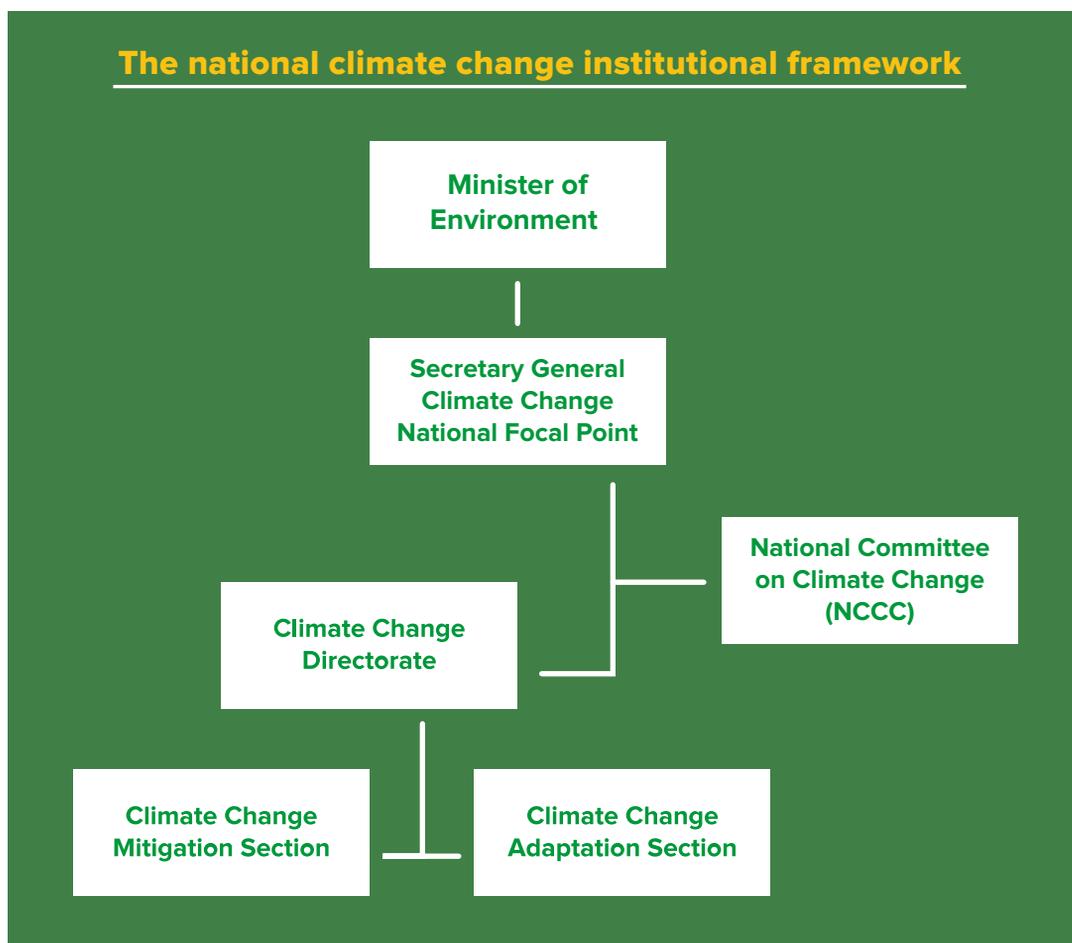


Figure 1

Source: Al-Zu'bi (2016)

The way forward

Awaiting approval by the cabinet, Jordan has updated its national climate change policy to 2030 to serve and guide the implementation of GHGs emission reduction activities.^{xxiii} The document has a better focus on mainstreaming gender, children, and youth in climate change actions and policies than the previous one. However, a lot still needs to be done to transform these attempts into tangible changes.

Youth can offer invaluable contributions through their experiences, life visions, and innovative ideas that help shape the climate change response. Empowering Jordanian youth and investing in their role as policymakers is the way forward.

Some examples showcase youth's willingness to learn more about climate change and engage in climate action, refer to box 3. These efforts must be scaled up and fostered at the national level. Further, the identification of good practices locally and elsewhere will allow the establishment of best practices for future upscaling and enable global youth engagement.

For example, youth currently can engage in the global consultation process to design stronger national action plans through the NDC Partnership and the UNDP's NDC Support Program to develop and review their country's NDCs, refer to box 4. While Jordan has joined the NDC Partnership in 2017 and developed its respective action plan in early 2019, Jordanian youth were not part of the consultation process that included line ministries, national institutions, non-state actors, and development partner members^{xxiv}. NDC consultations present an opportunity for Jordan to advance youth participation in the decision-making of climate policies. To realize this, the legal framework and national policies in Jordan must enable youth engagement in the decision-making process and support climate change capacity for youth. Additionally, supporting the implementation of youth-led climate initiatives can have a great impact on climate action.

Local efforts to go green

Eco-School Program- The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS)^{xxv}

Eco-Schools program is the international award for sustainable schools that is recognized by the United Nations. The program aims to create structural sustainable change within the participating schools and secure this sustainability in the schools' curriculum. The approach is based on 'student-led change'. While the program was first initiated in Amman and Aqaba in 2009 with 15 candidate schools, today the program has expanded to more than 200 schools.

Social Innovation incubators and WASH Innovation Hubs^{xxvi}

UNICEF is investing in youth capacity building through social Innovation incubators and WASH Innovation Hubs. The objective is to train and support young people with their initiatives and ideas for green projects and businesses in Jordan to implement pilot designs, with a focus on the most vulnerable areas such as water. This will contribute to green entrepreneurship and environmental sustainability.

Youth engagement in NDC development ^{xxvii}

In Cambodia, to integrate youth in the NDC update process, line ministries are instructed to integrate youth in their sectoral strategy and respective NDC updates.

In Colombia, the ministry of environment working with the national youth network has established a direct line of communication between the government and youth groups across the country, including in rural areas.

The We Are Tmrw Global Partnership, supported by the Netherlands, focuses on increasing the influence of youth on climate policymaking around the world. The international organization helps local youth networks organize climate dialogues, write the climate youth agenda, and lobby for more climate action.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

“Entrepreneurs can play an important role in developing climate technologies, business models, and services.”

Despite the many gains in Jordan with regards to educational and health attainment, the transition of youth to adulthood has become more difficult due to increased challenges in accessing quality education and opportunities, decent income and secure jobs. Such socio-economic insecurities along with an increased lack of trust in national governments have negatively affected young people’s participation in all forms of institutionalized civic and public participation. Parallel to this, young people today across the globe demonstrate a heightened awareness of inequalities and climate change and their impact on wellbeing, inclusive growth, and intergenerational equity.

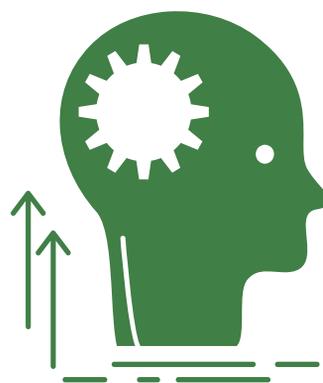
This makes it crucial to empower young people by strengthening their relationship with public institutions and national and local governments and involving them in identifying and designing solutions and policies implementation and monitoring and evaluation at all levels and across all sectors to ensure more responsive and inclusive policy outcomes.

UNDP is committed to empowering youth voices and supporting their engagement in policymaking and helping guide the development of youth inclusive climate change policies. UNDP has initiated youth consultation through Green Generation Foundation and Liwan Youth Space environment activ-

ists to better understand the perceptions of youth’s role in climate action. The consultation shows that young participants feel that the role of youth is not being taken seriously by governmental entities and that youth advocates are not receiving the support they need to expand their work and inspire others to join. They have voiced their concerns about the lack of equal opportunities to engage in climate action and the lack of supportive policies to increase their participation. They are calling for the Jordanian government to enact stronger and clearer policies to support youth in climate action, with some of the following policy recommendations as their top policy demands.

Climate change awareness:

- to encourage youth participation in the decision-making process, young people must be aware of the impacts of climate change and the way they can participate in addressing these impacts.
- Lead initiatives to raise awareness on how having a sustainable environment is a human right and a shared responsibility, focusing on intergenerational dialogues and youth's role in climate action.
- Improve availability of information on climate change topics and make it accessible to all. Especially for youth in remote areas who are more vulnerable to the impacts of CC.
- Provide more informative data that would allow young people to understand gaps in their engagement in climate action and plan the most impactful strategies to increase their participation.
- Remove language barriers to participation by ensuring all national documents, including nationally endorsed documents such as the Second Biennial Update Report published by the UNDP on behalf of MoEnv, which is only available in English, are translated to Arabic. Data in such documents are very valuable and would be beneficial to everyone if accessibility is guaranteed.



Capacity building

- to equip young people with a wide set of skills that are needed to navigate the institutional setup of climate action.
- Engage youth in training and campaigns on the issues of intergenerational equity and climate justice, climate change mitigation and adaptation policies both nationally and globally, and the structure of the policy-making process in climate action.
- Increase follow-up sessions after workshops, consultations, training to improve, develop and reinforce learning attained.
- Support youth exchanges locally and globally, with the objective of engaging and empowering more young people on climate topics.
- Review national curricula and include environmental education across schools and universities to ensure everyone acquires the knowledge and the skills to understand climate change and engage in climate action.
- Empower youth NGOs is the first step to increase their engagement, youth NGOs are not as active or on par with other NGOs due to a lack of expertise and ability to reach donors.

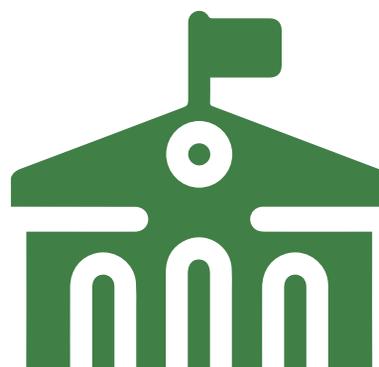


Engage youth in policy-making processes

- to make sure that climate change policies and action plans are inclusive of youth, the government must review the current climate governance structure.
- Strengthen the NCCC level of representation concerning youth and hence the inclusion of the Ministry of Youth on its board is advised.
- Engage young people in the formulation of future NDC and action plans through the NDC partnership.
- Ensure that a multi-sectoral planning and coordination mechanism is in place across all line ministries to ensure active engagement of all sectors and all stakeholders, including CSOs and non-institutionalized people's groups. Youth engagement in policymaking should not only be restricted to climate action which already is an issue that touches many sectors that are albeit suffering from lack of coordination at the national and local levels.

Formalize climate change focal points in all ministries especially the Ministry of Youth

- to position young people at the forefront of climate action and make sure their needs and challenges are addressed.
- Integrate climate change as a thematic area in the National Youth Strategy. The Ministry of Youth has a role in advancing the climate change agenda through the National Youth Strategy by including it under its thematic areas.
- Involve the Ministry of Youth environmental committee in national committees where policymaking takes place to ensure its role is activated and its impact is realized by youth.
- Include environmental committee in parliamentary committees to ensure that environmental considerations take place in all future policymaking. The presence of youth/youth representatives in that committee will reaffirm the role of youth in environmental policymaking at the highest level.
- Identify a single national entity responsible for youth representation in climate action to harmonize and unify scattered efforts across agencies/organizations in representing youth that could otherwise weaken their role in climate action. Lack of coordination at the national and local levels.



Monitor and evaluate climate change mitigation and adaptation policies with a youth lens

- to detect what and when youth components were neglected from the policy-making process, as well as how they can be included in it. This also supports a comprehensive data collection that can better inform policymakers.
- Capitalize and collect good practices on youth and climate action locally and elsewhere to allow the establishment of best practices for future upscaling and enable global youth engagement. This will also allow the use of evidence-based advocacy to overcome the issue of 'psychological distance' of climate change.
- Unlock youth's innovation potential and explore the co-creation of innovative climate technology by young, environmentally- and socially-minded innovators and entrepreneurs that could be scaled up and used in national and local climate action and mitigation plans. Dealing with an issue such as climate change will require socio-economic transformations at all levels, and entrepreneurs have the likelihood of playing a very important role in developing climate technologies, business models, and services that can help communities reduce their GHG emissions and better adapt to climate change. This will entail a focus on strengthening research actions generating localized research and data and linking the knowledge around climate change within governmental entities, NGOs, across universities, and all stakeholders to develop innovation in delivery and collaboration through advocacy and research.



The government must review the current climate governance structure.



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