

Capacity Building for Youth in Climate Change

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Introduction

The Government of Kenya recognizes the threat that climate change poses to the environment. In this regard, the government developed various climate change response policies, strategies and action plans to deal with the impact of climate change. However, individual, institutional and societal capacities for youth climate action remain weak, although youth are the ones who will bear the future costs related to climate change.¹ These capacity gaps are attributed to inadequate skills in financial management, communication, negotiation, proposal writing, research and policy formulation. Without adequate capacities among the youth, it will be difficult to reap the benefits of the youth dividend as it relates to climate change action.

Capacity building is instrumental to the global response to climate change. Since youth constitute 60% (aged between 18 and 25) in Africa, their lifestyles, patterns of consumption and production are fundamental to enhancing resilience to the effects of climate change.² The youth constitute an essential resource worth investing in regarding climate change matters.³ Donors have been supporting partner countries in developing climate-related capacity but retaining such capacity at country and local levels has been a challenge, due to a variety of structural barriers and inadequate programming.

Addressing Skills Gaps for Youth in Climate Action

For the youth in climate action organizations to play their role effectively, it is necessary to address the following skills gaps.

(i) Financial management skills

Financial management skills among youth-led organizations in climate change are weak. Inadequate capacity in financial management can lead to various youth organizations shutting down or

mismanaging donor funds. Capacity building around financial management focuses on imparting skills in accounting, audit systems, financial modelling, budget and forecast analysis. Such skills are crucial for the success of youth-led organizations.⁴ With proper financial management skills, youth in climate action can run their organizations and projects effectively when they get funding.

Several initiatives to impart financial management skills have been put in place, such as those that have been developed by UNEP and the Kenya National Cleaner Production Centre. UNEP has been offering online courses on climate change risks and opportunities for the finance sector since 2007, which are tailor made for industries in the financial sector due to the understanding of the risks imposed by climate change. The UNEP Financial Initiative with the support of Climate Action Fund, the Latin American Development Bank and Eco-Business Fund online course on “Climate Change: Risks and Opportunities for the Finance Sector” aim to offer support to financial institutions as they assess climate-related financial disclosures (TCFD). The course targets executives and middle management staff of banks and financial regulators from both developed and developing countries. However, the course does not focus on youth.

The Kenya National Cleaner Production Centre provides training in environmental impact assessment and auditing. The course focuses on managing, projecting, analysis and reporting environmental impacts of a project. The fee that is charged for the course on environmental impact and audit courses is about Ksh 46,400, which is expensive for the youth.⁵

The Kenya National Treasury has a programme titled Climate Finance Training Programme. The programme has so far conducted 20 Training on Trainers (ToT) workshops on climate finance. So far, 330 national officers and 138 county government officers have been trained.⁶ However, the training

focuses mainly on national and county officers and not on youth in climate action.

Despite the above interventions by UNEP, the Kenya National Cleaner Production Centre, and the National Treasury need to build skills in financial management, youth in climate action still lack skills in financial management, which poses a risk on how they manage their organizations. Most of these institutions providing training on financial management focus on national and county officers and not on youths. Further, the available courses offered are expensive for youth in climate change, which discourages them from registering.

(ii) Communication and negotiation skills

Youth in climate action have inadequate skills in communication and negotiation. Communication drives engagement to help close the climate commitment gap that exists in government, and across public and private sectors. This will help them to inform and influence decision- and policy-making, integrate climate action across a range of industries, NGOs/NPOs and levels of government, and engage and motivate local communities towards stronger action.

In a bid to build capacity in communication skills, the University of the West of England, United Kingdom, has developed a youth climate communications toolkit for young climate activists to be more effective with their own campaigning, and empowering young people to voice their concerns. The toolkit enables the users to speak to and engage with diverse audiences that may not otherwise take part in physical engagements.⁷ With the advancement of technology, the toolkit can be an asset for youth in developed countries and those in the developing countries. Although this is a good initiative, youth in rural areas in developing countries might not fully benefit from the toolkit due to Internet challenges.

To build capacity for youth in climate change in Kenya, the Climate Change Act 2016 provides for the development of an inter-generational awareness plan, the development of a public awareness engagement strategy (by integration of climate change in education curriculum), and the development of a gender and inter-generational awareness plan⁸. However, introducing climate change into the curriculum is not enough, since youth in climate change face various capacity building needs including negotiation skills, leadership skills and communications skills. The County Government of Mombasa is implementing the Governors' Young Leaders' Programme (GYLP). It has a vision to mentor youthful leaders between 20 and 35 years to create opportunities for them to articulate their thinking and planning towards solving the current and future challenges. Under the programme, a new project called "GYLP can talk" was developed in October 2022. The project serves

as a platform for young leaders to sharpen their communication skills and it will run for the next 12 months.

Youths in climate action have inadequate negotiation skills. At COP25, only 25% of negotiators were under 35, despite this age group making up 56% of the world's population.⁹ Negotiation skills help youth and youth organizations build better relationships by providing long-term quality solutions. A successful negotiation entails a give and take with a win-win solution where a concession is made, which that means less to one but more to the other party. These are skills youth should be built with in negotiating partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders.

To build the negotiation capacity of youth, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa conducted an online 3-week course on climate change negotiations for Young Africans negotiators, whose aim was to develop the capacity of African youth in the UNFCCC climate change negotiation to enable them engage in global climate dialogue to provide solutions required to tackle climate change.¹⁰ Despite being a free online course, young negotiators in areas with limited Internet connectivity could not access the course.

The Indepth Research Institute in Kenya offers courses on communication and negotiation skills,¹¹ which build capacities but most of them target corporate institutions and the cost of the courses is also high, inhibiting most youth from taking part in such trainings. From the interventions in capacity building on communication and negotiation skills among the youth in climate change, courses focusing on building individual and institutional communications and negotiation skills are limited.

(iii) Research and policy formulation skills

Youth in climate action have limited skills to undertake research and formulate evidence-based policies on climate issues. Understanding research promotes rational decision making on issues among youth in climate change. Youth-led organizations who are members of the Youth Directorate, for instance, do not have a department that deals with research.

There are several interventions to enhance research and policy formulation among the youth. In Zimbabwe, the London School of Hygiene in collaboration with Tropical Medicine and Zimbabwe Bio Medical Research Institute started a youth research academy in 2019. The research academy conducts a 4-month research training programme for youth aged 18-24. The youth are trained on how to undertake research and how to write a research project. So far, 41 young people have benefited from the programme between 2019 and 2021.¹²

To improve research skills for youth in Kenya, the International Training Centre for Environmental

Research offers training courses in environmental sciences, vegetation science and data management, especially for postgraduate students.¹³ The programme, however, focuses on postgraduate students and requires a training fee that is expensive for youth to enhance research. In Kenya, the National Forest Programme 2016-2030 provides for training of participants on how to undertake forestry research.¹⁴ In October 2022, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) organized a retreat to build the capacity of youth in climate action in research and policy formulation skills. The Institute also conducts a Young Professional Programme, which builds the capacity of young persons in research and policy making processes. The Kenya Project Organization conducts a youth empowerment programme where youth are taught matters relating to project research skills and data management.

The capacity to undertake research and develop policies among the youth is important in understanding issues related to climate change. The Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019 identifies several areas where capacity building for youth involved in environmental management will be undertaken. These areas include green processes and technology, waste management, and general environmental conservation and management. Capacity building sessions will be delivered through training and sensitization of youth both at the individual and group levels on ways of collecting and managing waste. The youth will also be trained on how to take advantage of the blue economy as a way of livelihood as they conserve the environment. Further, the youth will be capacity built on disaster management for them to participate in awareness creation, prevention, management and recovery. The policy provides for youth sensitization on potential disasters due to poor environmental management. The policy provides a valuable capacity building programme, which will empower the youths in climate action to take preventive measures to avert climate crisis. It is important to note that the policy does not provide capacity building in research.

Despite these interventions by different organizations, youth in climate action still lack skills in research and in policy formulation. Most of the institutions do not focus on climate change action while those that focus on the environment require the youth to pay training fees, which is very expensive. In addition, research and policy formulation training programmes done in Kenya involve fewer youths in climate action, and most of the training programmes are mainly focused on government institutions.

(iv) Skills in proposal writing

Proposal writing is a skill that is yet to be developed among youth-led organizations. This is a challenge especially when applying for grants. A clearly articulated proposal is more likely to be funded than

a proposal of lower quality.¹⁵ The Urban Youth Fund, a programme under the UN offers grant programmes to developing countries. Every year, more than 8,000 youth-led organizations apply to get the grants but only 30 organizations are accepted yearly. This depicts an extremely competitive process whereby there is only a 0.375% chance of success. One of the requirements for the grant is to have an outstanding proposal. Youths need to be empowered on aspects such as project and budget management. One of the weak areas is how to frame the problem. Some proposals have no clear structure put in place and this makes it difficult for review. The donor can question the commitment of the project. There is also the aspect of a budget not being substantiated by the narrative. Some budgets might look inflated or inaccurate.¹⁶

The ability to write good proposals is a major determinant of the success of fundraising. In Kenya, one of the initiatives that offers training solutions in grant proposal writing is the Kenya Projects Organization (KENPRO). It offers training solutions to youth groups, non-governmental organizations, self-help groups, women groups, among others. KENPRO has a particular grant proposal writing format that is precise and covers the following sections: the proposal contact details (title, location of the project), background, project description, aims and objectives, inputs, activities and outputs, assumptions and constraints, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability and the budget. These skills are important in ensuring that the output of grant proposals is polished, thus increasing the chances of grant awards.¹⁷ Upskill Development Institute has a course that trains managers, programme/project coordinators and other project staff whose roles involve developing proposals for fundraising and report writing for their organization. It equips them with skills to ensure they write and present successful proposals.¹⁸ However, the training costs a fortune (on site fee US\$ 1,000 and US\$ 600 online fee) for five days only, and the project focuses on institutional capacity building.

(v) Access to information

Youth in rural areas have inadequate access to information when it comes to climate change. In view of this limitation, the Kenya Climate Change Knowledge Portal was established in conformity with the National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022).¹⁹ It was established by the Climate Change Directorate (CCD). The portal links climate change actors across various sectors and their initiatives by providing a platform to address issues relating to climate change. The portal acts as a one stop repository for climate change documents in Kenya. The repository holds policy documents, blogs, newsletters and publications. However, there is insufficient Internet infrastructure within the rural

areas to access the portal. Evidence from the 2019 census report indicates that only 13.7% of Kenyans in the rural areas have access to the Internet while in urban areas 42.5% have access to the Internet.²⁰

Recommendations/Policy Implications

- (i) Provide capacity building programmes in financial management for youth-led organizations in climate change.
- (ii) Provide capacity building programmes in communication and negotiation skills for youth in climate change action.
- (iii) Provide capacity building programmes in research and policy formulation skills in relation to climate change.
- (iv) Provide training in proposal writing skills for youths in climate change action.
- (v) Enhance ICT infrastructure in rural and remote areas to enable dissemination and access to information on climate change by rural youth.

Endnotes

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KIPPRA Policy Briefs are aimed at a wide dissemination of the Institute's policy research findings. The findings are expected to stimulate discussion and also build capacity in the public policy making process in Kenya.

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