

Reclaiming Our Future

YOUTH RESILIENCE
ON A PLANET IN CRISIS





This study was produced by the Africa Policy Research Institute (APRI) – a Berlin-based independent, non-partisan African Think Tank researching key policy issues affecting the continent, and in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organisations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work.

APRI does not take institutional positions on public policy issues. The views expressed in publications are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of APRI, its staff or its board.

The boundaries, colors, denominations and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of APRI concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

Many thanks to our authors whose full profiles you find in the appendix. Special thanks to Hannah Lang (Research Fellow, APRI), Diana Rudic (Research and Editing Support, APRI), Klara Funke (Consultant at APRI) and Dr. Olumide Abimbola (Executive Director, APRI), for their time and effort invested in writing and editing this report.

Many thanks to Soapbox for the design of this report and the corresponding project website and podcast, and to Joy Richu for the illustrations.

The authors would also like to acknowledge Simoa Nangle (Executive Assistant, APRI), Micaela Rosadio Cayllahua (Data Fellow and Project Coordinator) and Vincent Reich (Communications Officer) for their invaluable support and peer review.

This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution license 4.0 (CC BY-NC 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>. This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt and build upon the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.

Attribution:

Please cite the work as follows:

Africa Policy Research Institute. (2024). Reclaiming Our Future: Youth Resilience on a Planet in Crisis. APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.59184/rp023.006>

Contents

- 1 Acknowledgments
- 5 Foreword

INTRODUCTION

- 8 A Collaborative Piece of Writing
- 13 What to Expect
- 15 How to Define Resilience

ANECDOTES, CLIMATE REALITIES AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH

- 18 Resilience and the Soil
- 27 Resilience and One Health
- 35 Resilience and Tech
- 42 Resilience and the Mind
- 53 Resilience in Activism

SUMMARY

- 60 The Powerful Art to Drive Change

APPENDIX

- 67 How the Report Came Together
- 70 Contributors

Acknowledgments

The implementation of this project on young people's stories of resilience in the face of the diverse challenges posed by the climate crisis, including this report, our podcast series and the platform we created based on those products, would not have been possible without our trusted contributors and partners.

Firstly, the research team of APRI would like to thank the 17 young people who agreed to participate in this project, share their experiences, advice and ideas, and bring this report to life. They contributed not only their stories, but also repeatedly their time, insight and perspective when it came to drafting and finalising the report. The outcome is a testament to their expertise and spirit of collaboration.

APRI would like to warmly thank the Mastercard Foundation for a wonderful partnership and their continuous support, flexibility and openness to new ways of doing research. The exchanges we had throughout the entire project timeline were invaluable. We are beyond grateful for their advice, feedback and help in getting this project across the finish line.

APRI thanks Soapbox for making this report, and the accompanying website and podcast come to life so beautifully under their creative leadership.

In addition, APRI is grateful for the support of the organisations supporting our efforts in getting in touch with a diverse group of young Africans, opening their networks to us and connecting us with the

inspiring youth we were lucky enough to collaborate with for this report. These include the African Youth Network for Leadership & Development, with a special thanks to David Osabutey for his tireless efforts in ensuring a smooth and successful interviewing process and Maria Aguilar of the Race to Resilience (RtR) Campaign.¹

Finally, APRI thanks their project team and consultants for putting their heart and soul into this project – their enthusiasm has been a testament to the nature of this project. APRI would like to specially thank Hannah Lang, Diana Rudic, Klara Funke and Olumide Abimbola for their invaluable contributions and tireless efforts in drafting, researching and synthesizing the content of this report. Thank you to Theodore Best for final editing.

For this report, APRI researchers implemented a mixed-method approach to produce a collaborative and inclusive piece of writing. The team conducted interviews with 17 young people (between 18–35 years of age) of various climate-related professions and backgrounds, hailing from eight African countries. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using qualitative data analysis software. The recurring themes produced by the code catalog then guided the chapters and direction of the report, ultimately creating a co-conceptual approach to understanding youth climate resiliency. In this way, the narrative structure provided by the interviewees was complemented by empirical and theoretical research conducted by APRI. Four of the interviewees, listed as co-authors in the appendix, as well as the team from the Mastercard Foundation, assisted in reviewing and editing the first draft of the report. The details of this report's methodology are expanded upon in greater depth in the dedicated 'How the Report Came Together' section at the end of this report. Comprehensive biographies of the interviewees listed below can also be found in the appendix.

1 Launched in 2021, the Race to Resilience (RtR) campaign puts people and nature first in its mission to build a resilient world. With the ambitious goal of increasing the resilience of four billion people by 2030, the campaign brings together a diverse range of efforts led by non-state actors – including cities, regions, businesses and non-governmental organisations. With 34 partners and 647 members, including 86 cities in Cities Race to Resilience and 78 regions, RtR has pledged to support 3.17 billion people. Already, concrete resilience actions are underway, benefiting 1.87 billion individuals across 164 countries.

We are immensely grateful for their support and input which shaped and guided the content of this report:

Abdul-Hakeem Issah (Ghana), founder of GW Legacy Farms and Administrative Director at Ghana Soybeans Farmers and Aggregators Association.

Betty Osei Bonsu (Ghana), Uganda Country Manager at GAYO, founder of B.ISA and circular economy enthusiast.

Ebenezer S. Morlia (Liberia), current STEM student and climate activist, actively serving as a member in the Youth Advisory Panel of the UN in Liberia and as a Youth Envoy of HISA.

Elias Bascoro (Mozambique), research assistant at UNICEF focused on climate, reproductive health, migration and food security.

Esther Lovia Dankyi (Ghana), environmental science graduate and current Field Officer at OFI, working on community outreach and farmer engagement.

Fiona Mugambi (Kenya), engineer and Policy & Partnerships Lead at Octavia Carbon, working on carbon capture technology.

Francis Appiah Adu-Amankwah (Ghana), PhD student and specialist in postharvest management and youth development.

Fuseini Fahim (Ghana), Development Planning Officer in the Lambussie District Assembly and a Desk Officer for the Ghana Productive Safety Net Project.

Given Patrick Mwakatungila (Tanzania), Communications and Advocacy Officer at CCI and member of the DARAJA project, working on early warning information systems.

Haruna Abdul Rashad (Ghana), expert and community trainer in climate risk management in the village communities of northern Ghana.

Kassim Juma Mohammed (Kenya), marine conservation expert and Project Coordinator at Mikoko Pamoja Carbon Offset Project, working on mangrove conservation and marine ecosystems.

Martha Oyanta Daniel (Nigeria), legal practitioner, founder of Advocacy for Children's Initiative and State Officer at BudgIT Foundation Gombe, passionate for human rights and gender equality.

Michael Yao Etsri (Ghana), education professional and teacher, organising seminars and workshops on climate change awareness for communities.

Mohildin Bushra (Sudan), electronics engineer, Communications Officer at SUDTT and COP28 Youth Delegate, currently pursuing higher education in sustainable development.

Richard Matey (Ghana), coordinator at Youth Climate Council Ghana, Climate Lead at GAYO, campaigner for ECA Watch Africa and active member of multiple government planning committees.

Scholar Dike (Nigeria), Public & International Affairs graduate, Public Relations Practitioner, founder of Scholar Dike Consulting Company and NGO collaborator.

Shaibu Mohammed (Ghana), local youth leader, passionate advocate for youth education and founder of Better Dream Foundation.

Foreword

Doing justice to the stories of African youth's lived realities, individual pathways and hurdles is no easy task.

In fact, we would go as far as to say it is impossible. The only way to make the impossible possible – in the case of this report and its accompanying products, but also as an overarching lesson for projects centred around young people – is quite literally to let go of the writing pen. Embracing co-ownership of this project's steering wheel throughout its entire process, from data collection to final launch, has been an equally instructive and enriching experience. While the outcome is something we are deeply proud of and hope to build on in the months and years to come, the past months of constant exchange and learning with the young people involved in this report have been the true gift.

This project has its roots in the biggest challenge of our generation – the climate crisis threatening to cause upheaval in every part of the world and for every aspect of daily life. As we watch the irreversible impacts of this crisis unfold, some truths are making themselves known to us: The African continent, while having historically contributed almost nothing to carbon emissions, is disproportionately affected by their impact on our biospheres, weather and environment. Young people are amongst the most vulnerable to these changes, often battling marginalisation, exclusion from decision-making spaces and intersectional discrimination all at once. But we also know that youth are at the forefront of climate activism, locally-led climate action and awareness campaigns. They are working tirelessly to help their communities adapt to and prepare for changing conditions and looming difficulties, all while doing their best to mitigate the damage which is already being inflicted on them.

The young people who made this report come to life tell stories from all areas of life: from the tough realities of farming collectives and the efforts of community-led mangrove reforestation, to educational workshops for young women and girls, to technological innovations including carbon capture and creative ideas for repurposing and recycling that you might have never heard of before. These stories are a testament as much to the young people's industrious and creative minds as they are to the hardship they are facing on their respective paths. The weapon with which they are tackling these challenges, fostering it in their surroundings and practicing it against all odds, is their interpretation of resilience. Resilience has many faces. Exploring the ways in which it gets expressed by African youth across the continent as they combat the climate crisis has been a real privilege and a fascinating journey for us and our teams. We hope you enjoy the tales in this report as much as we did when we first got to hear them.

Our deepest gratitude goes out to the 17 young African people we got to work with for this report. They have shaped its content and altered the outcome of this project in ways we could have not foreseen, and could not cherish more.

We are hoping that the lecture of this report will guide readers further to the online platform we have created. We encourage you to engage with it and to contribute to it. Resilience is only as strong as the networks we create.

Olumide Abimbola

(APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute)

Introduction



A Collaborative Piece of Writing

*‘Wote faako a, na wote w’ade3 so.’
You do not succeed if you stay put.²*

Constantly moving forward, not asking for permission and testing limits: these are notions which emerge from the nexus of climate action, resilience and the drive of young people; notions which inspire millions of people ‘not to stay put’, which are discussed at conferences and forums for a reason and which have the power to instill hope even against unimaginable losses. But away from global stages and meeting agendas, these movements draw their power from individual stories of perseverance against all odds. These are stories of loss and recovery, of mutual inspiration and of community support.

We have made it our mission to shed light on some of these stories and amplify the voices of young people across the African continent – a region where, due to its climate vulnerability and specific challenges for youth, the daily show of resilience becomes especially striking. While this report is a collaborative work of tales, lessons learned and advice passed on between young people, it is important to grasp the contexts within which these stories are being told.

The impacts of the climate crisis are felt all around the world, but Africa is facing particularly catastrophic effects. Despite being among

2 This proverb is originally written in Asante/Twi, a Niger-Congo language with up to 8 million speakers in Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, and Togo and was translated by Esther Lovia Dankyi.

the lowest emitters of global greenhouse gasses, African countries find themselves bearing the brunt of climate change. The human-induced warming of the planet is increasing the frequency and severity of weather events such as floods, storms, landslides, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires,³ which are in turn leading to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, water shortages, reduced food production, increased spread of vector-borne diseases and increased mortality rates; already thousands of lives across the African continent are being lost annually due to climate change.^{4,5}

The severity of these impacts is further exacerbated by Africa's comparatively low adaptive capacities.⁶ Among the United Nations' 46 recognised 'Least Developed Countries'⁷ (LDCs), 33 are African nations.⁸ Most countries in Africa are grappling with some combination of high poverty rates, political instability, incidents of violent conflict, social inequalities, energy insecurity and limited healthcare and educational infrastructure. All of these make it difficult for African states to absorb and respond to the shocks from climate change. Of course, the shocks, when they do come, compound the issue. Additionally, these effects are likely to be understated due to gaps in research arising from developmental, financial and infrastructural barriers. These limit climate researchers' capacities for adequate data coverage/availability, prediction

3 WMO. (2023). Africa suffers disproportionately from climate change. World Meteorological Organization.

4 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

5 Haines, A., Kovats, R. S., Campbell-Lendrum, D. & Corvalan, C. (2006). Climate change and human health: Impacts, vulnerability, and mitigation. The Lancet, 367(9528), 2101–2109.

6 Azour, J. & Selassie, A. A. (2023). Africa's Fragile States Are Greatest Climate Change Casualties. IMF Blog | International Monetary Fund.

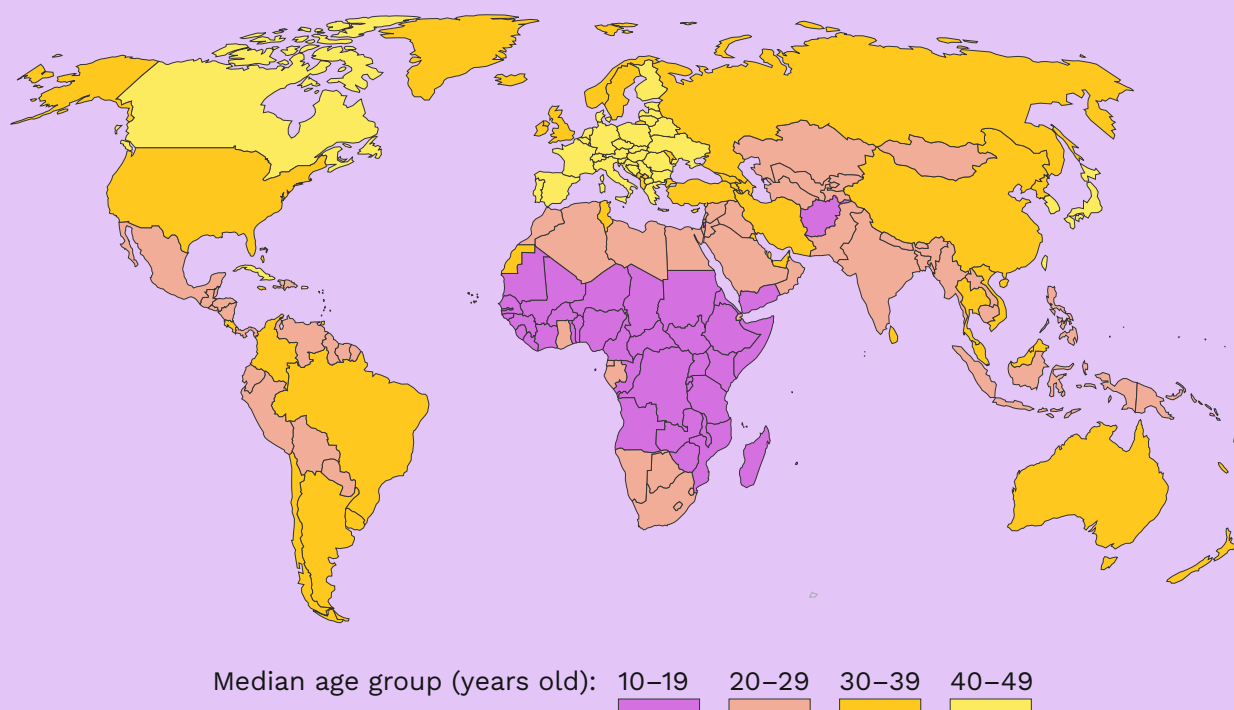
7 It is worth noting that the term 'Least Developed Countries' creates a problematic hierarchy that is rooted in Eurocentric perceptions of development and progress. It obscures the ongoing impacts of colonialism and thereby reproduces global power inequalities stemming from colonial legacies, as these countries' socio-economic and political realities are still shaped and impacted by their colonial history. Therefore, the term is referred to in quotation marks in order to highlight the contentious indication the term bears. For more reasoning behind this decision, please refer to the following publication: Barros Leal Farias, D. (2024). Unpacking the 'developing' country classification: origins and hierarchies. Review of International Political Economy, 31(2), 651–673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2023.2246975>.

8 UNDESA. (2023). Least Developed Countries at a Glance. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

accuracy, and digitisation and dissemination of information.⁹ In short, Africa is in an extremely vulnerable position in the ongoing climate crisis.

At the same time, Africa is also home to both the youngest and most rapidly growing population in the world. Currently, more than 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 35,¹⁰ the median age in Africa is 19, and approximately one-quarter of the world's 15–24-year-olds live in Africa, a fraction that is expected to increase to over one-third of the world's population by 2050.¹¹ While these numbers indicate many areas of progress, including increased life expectancies, lower infant mortality, and better nutrition,¹² today's and tomorrow's youth are on track to inherit an increasingly deteriorating climate.

THE MEDIAN AGE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT IS 19



Data source: UN, World Population Prospects (2024)

- 9 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.
- 10 Mucho, S., Ansaram, K. & Gulugulu, E. (2023). African Youth Needs for Climate Action Report. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- 11 Walsh, D. (2023). The World Is Becoming More African. The New York Times.
- 12 *ibid.*

African youth are being raised within the context of political, social, economic and infrastructural vulnerabilities which limit their adaptive capacities. These young people are left with many obstacles impeding their potential, creating an environment of danger and desperation. Despite this, young people across the continent have demonstrated their resilience in the face of climate change through their own personal means of adaptation, creative problem-solving, community involvement and engagement with efforts to achieve climate justice. Studies show that a significant portion of African youth demonstrate some understanding of the climate crisis and are getting involved in climate justice efforts.¹³ Their imperative role in shaping continental and global climate agendas is being recognised by leading forums such as the 2023 African Youth Climate Summit.¹⁴

APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute partnered with the Mastercard Foundation to spotlight African youth voices in the fight against climate change and examine young people’s displays of resilience. In recognising that African youth are well-poised to lead future efforts on climate change adaptation and mitigation, we aim to explore the role resilience plays in African youth’s response to the climate crisis. To breathe life into these concepts and statistics, we have set out to uncover and amplify the names and stories of some of those living amidst and contending with Africa’s changing climate, shifting demographic landscape and developmental advancements and setbacks.

It is important to recognise that, contrary to how it is framed in climate talks and data sets, Africa is not a monolith. It is a vast and diverse continent comprising varied geographical landscapes, socio-political situations, cultures and peoples. We strove to honour this diversity through our selection of interviewees and the unique narratives that they have shared.

The following report engages with prominent literature on the effects of the climate crisis in Africa, resilience and youth engagement.

13 Mucho, S., Ansaram, K. & Gulugulu, E. (2023). African Youth Needs for Climate Action Report. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

14 Africa Youth Assembly. (2023). Nairobi Declaration, 1st–3rd September, 2023. Africa Climate Summit. Nairobi, Kenya.

Crucially, it is guided by a series of personal and qualitative interviews with 17 young people of varying ages (between 18 and 35), occupations and locations across the continent. These stories serve to humanise the effects of the climate crisis through a more intimate engagement with the on-the-ground realities of those most affected by its impacts. They also inform hope and action on the part of stakeholders, policymakers and young people everywhere.

What to Expect

This report begins with a broad definition and explanation of our understanding of resilience, particularly within the intersection of African youth and climate change. From there, we integrate our interviewees' responses and experiences with resilience among the following subsections of climate change effects:

- 1 **Resilience and the Soil**, shedding light on the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on the agricultural sector, one of Africa's most crucial economic sectors for a growing young population looking for employment.
- 2 **Resilience and One Health**, highlighting the present challenges in healthcare literacy and infrastructure across Africa, the intersection of climate and health, and how healthcare workers are navigating climate-related hazards.
- 3 **Resilience and Tech**, looking at how technology spans sectors broadening the interactions between youth and their environments, technological and digital innovation, and the transition towards more energy efficiency.
- 4 **Resilience and the Mind**, discussing the transformative potential of education in both the fight against climate change and in catalysing social change, the relationship between education and the community, and the need for a more integrated approach in introducing climate-based curricula across sectors.
- 5 **Resilience in Activism**, reviewing local and community-oriented action, grassroots movements and international solidarity networks.

These sections are punctuated by mini-chapters that briefly cover prominent cross-cutting issues, or themes that transcend the categorisations presented here and which are built around certain

anecdotes shared by the interviewees. These cross-cutting issues include gender and intersectionality, vulnerability, data gaps, social negotiations and funding.

Finally, the summary chapter ‘The Powerful Art to Drive Change’ concludes with the main take-aways of the report, followed by an appendix explaining our methodological approach and how the report came together, the questionnaire, and the review procedures.

How to Define Resilience

This report is centred around the concept of resilience and its real-life manifestations and applications. To provide a point of departure for the ensuing discussions, we will first break down the concept of resilience, drawing on the Mastercard Foundation's Resilience Framework and working definition of the term. We will then build on the framework with additional theories of resilience.

The Mastercard Foundation's Resilience Framework consists of three levels: surviving, coping and thriving. These capacities are mutually reinforcing and exist at multiple levels spanning the individual, the family, the community and the system.¹⁵

- **Survive:** Centred around the ability to survive shocks through absorptive capacity, and demonstrated through the actions of anticipating, preparing and beginning to recover from shocks and stresses.
- **Cope:** Characterised by maintaining standards of living and quality of life through adaptive capacity, such as making necessary changes to sustain operations, incorporating incremental adjustments and ultimately reducing the impact of shocks.
- **Thrive:** Necessitates the ability to succeed and grow through transformative capacity and requires fundamental change to build back stronger by creating more flexibility against future shocks and risks. Can also involve efforts to initiate and/or support systemic

15 TANGO International. (2023). Review of the Mastercard Foundation's Investments in the COVID-19 Recovery and Resiliency Program (CRRP): Global Report. Produced by TANGO International in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation [Unpublished].

change aimed at ensuring a system-wide capacity to withstand future stresses.^{16,17}

Further building upon our understanding of resilience, we look to African scholarship for greater insight and contextualization of the term. It is important to recognise that resilience is not a static concept but rather a dynamic one that requires transdisciplinary collaboration for better understanding.¹⁸ Resilience, therefore, is often influenced by contextual factors such as culture, societal challenges and social processes among individuals, families and communities.¹⁹ Borrowing from the field of psychology, we can conceptualise a multisystemic understanding of resilience that takes into consideration multiple protective and promotive factors across biological, psychological, social and environmental systems.²⁰

Analysing the qualitative interview data, we contextualised resilience among youth populations in Africa. Choosing a mixed-methods approach, we reviewed academic literature and reports and weaved in those results while allowing more space for a critical and nuanced portrayal of the youth with whom we collaborated for this report. In line with our commitment to preserving the voices of the young people, we did not impose rigid definitions of resilience but rather let our interviewees define or describe it as they felt appropriate. The expansion of this concept here is provided for the reader's benefit, pertaining as it does to the analysis and discussion surrounding youth resilience in the face of the climate crisis playing out on the African continent. Thus, this report is not just a product of collaborative youth effort, but also provides insight into a co-conceptualising approach to better understand the dimensions, expressions and limitations of resilience in African communities.

16 TANGO International. (2018). Methodological Guide: A Guide for Calculating Resilience Capacity. Produced by TANGO International as part of the Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) Associate Award.

17 For further information on the definition framework, please refer to Figure 1 in the appendix.

18 Theron, L. C. & Theron, A. M. C. (2010). A critical review of studies of South African youth resilience, 1990–2008. *S Afr J Sci.*;106(7/8), Art. #252, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/sajs.v106i7/8.252.

19 *ibid.*

20 Ungar, M., Theron, L., Murphy, K., & Jefferies, P. (2021, 12 Jan). Researching Multisystemic Resilience: A Sample Methodology. *Front. Psychol., Sec. Developmental Psychology*. Volume 11 – 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.607994>.



Anecdotes, Climate Realities and Supporting Research

Resilience and the Soil

‘When you visit some of the cocoa farmers and their farms, you notice that most of the cocoa trees have gone dry [...] That tells me clearly that we are sitting on a time bomb where everything is going to vanish someday if we do not take care of it.’



That is how Francis Adu-Amankwah, a young Ghanaian entrepreneur in the agricultural sector, described the start of his workday. Through his firm, *Agrifork Postharvest Solutions*, he is working to assist smallholder farmers in his community to minimise food losses and food waste and to ensure consumer safety. As an expert on the physiological specificities of crops, he tells stories of visiting farming sites in Northern Ghana and experiencing constant shocks when faced with the relentless impacts of the climate crisis in the region. Francis was confronted with the reality he describes in the quote above while visiting a plot in Assin Fosu as part of an initiative to give back to society by passing onto farmers some of the knowledge he had acquired from his studies of food service technology.

Francis says his ultimate goal is to open a training centre where farmers can learn basic forms of harvest processing, for instance with food dehydrators, to optimise storage. Francis is trying to foster resilience amongst farmers by letting knowledge circulate, and by sharing it with as many people as possible.

Agriculture plays a particularly large role in African economies. The International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that 55–62% of the Sub-Saharan workforce is employed within the agricultural sector.²¹ This means a substantial portion of the African population relies on a heavily climate-exposed sector for their livelihoods. Additionally, 95% of cropland is rainfed, making the agricultural sector extremely vulnerable to the whims of the climate.²² Increased temperatures are leading to reduced rainfall, more frequent and prolonged droughts, and other extreme weather events. These are in turn eroding natural resources, harming soil conditions, lowering agricultural productivity, reducing income growth, increasing food insecurity and hunger, worsening inequality and poverty, and weakening societal safety nets, all of which are felt particularly strongly among already marginalised groups, such as poor and female-headed households.^{23,24}

These phenomena were repeatedly confirmed by first-hand experiences of youth engaged in or exposed to the agricultural sector: **Elias Bascoro**, a recent graduate in geography from Maputo, Mozambique, who specialised in demographic development, highlights the disastrous effects of altered rainfall patterns, increased pests and diseases, the degradation of arable land, and extreme weather events like floods – especially for countries with a long, exposed coastline like Mozambique – on food security.

Fuseini Fahim, Development Planning Officer at the Lambussie District Assembly in the Upper West Region of Ghana, says the fact that 70% of the population in his district are farmers motivated him to learn about environmental protection and the links between climate change and sustainable agricultural practice.

21 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 Perez, C., Jones, E. M., Kristjanson, P., Cramer, L., Thornton, P. K., Förch, W. & Barahona, C. (2015). *How resilient are farming households and communities to a changing climate in Africa? A gender-based perspective*. ScienceDirect. Volume 34, pages 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.06.003>.

‘We have a climate change emergency and we need women to quickly understand that things have changed and [...] how they can apply [different] forms of farming.’



Martha Oyanta Daniel emphasises when talking about how crucial it is to be able to quickly respond and adapt to the changing environment in which people are trying to sustain their livelihoods. This holds especially true for women and girls.

Martha, a young Nigerian who is a legal practitioner by training, has made it her mission to advocate for women and girls amid rising food costs, climate emergencies, and deforestation. She has started her own organisation at the nexus of these issues in order to educate women in her community on diverse ways of sustaining themselves in times of need. These include backyard gardening, greenhouse farming, growing one’s own vegetables and learning about the benefits of smart composting. Exercising resilience, she says, also means daring to wander off the beaten path of traditional farming and discovering new forms of food production. *‘You don’t have to travel miles to the next farm’*, Martha notes. Instead, she encourages women to grow crops where they are.

However, in carrying out their admirable missions, Martha and her colleagues encounter many cultural and socioeconomic obstacles rooted in gender inequality. Gender disparities are exposed among populations’ available coping mechanisms to agricultural shocks. While both men and women are heavily employed in the agricultural sector, men are much more likely to own land, possess cash or bank accounts, have access to improved technologies and equipment, and benefit from training opportunities.²⁵ Women most often cultivate land that is either owned or inherited by their husbands or that belongs to the community.²⁶ These

²⁵ ibid.

²⁶ ibid.

differences in access and opportunity mean that women are more reliant on local networks for support, forging their resiliency by making use of small-scale bonding social capital at the community level through informal connections to family, friends and neighbors.²⁷ Men, on the other hand, are more able and more likely to scale up beyond the locality to utilise their social capital, leverage connections with people in power and operate through more formal institutions.²⁸ Martha's plea thus resonates with this situation of intensifying inequalities.

Sensitization on Gender Based Violence during the sixteen days of activism supported by Education as a Vaccine. [Photo provided by Martha Oyanta Daniel]



Adaptive capacities of Africa's agricultural sectors are of course exacerbated by conflict. Martha's stories, though they are accounts of empowerment and mutual support, are also stories of internal conflicts, clashes and fear of kidnapping. Living in the shadow of conflict makes it difficult for communities to receive government intervention, reliable financial assistance or deliveries of humanitarian aid, in addition to being subjected to short- or long-term bouts of displacement which make proper agricultural upkeep even more difficult to achieve and maintain.²⁹ On top of that, the increased scarcity of food, water, land and pastures is leading to increased and intensified instances of violent

27 ibid.

28 ibid.

29 Azour, J. & Selassie, A. A. (2023). Africa's Fragile States Are Greatest Climate Change Casualties. IMF Blog | International Monetary Fund.

conflict in farmer and herder groups, both amongst themselves and against state and rebel groups.³⁰

The extended effects of the climate crisis on the agricultural sector bring to the surface what Carlos Perez and co-authors identified as some of the most ‘critical components of resilience: learning, new knowledge creation and governance; flexibility to experiment and adopt new practices; and capacity for deliberation, analysis, and risk management.’³¹

Many farmers across Africa, amongst them an ever-growing young work-force,³² have already implemented necessary changes to cope with some of the agricultural shocks brought about by climate change. These include but are not limited to: adjusting their crop choices, planting times and planting locations; diversifying crop varieties to reduce risk of failure from environmental conditions and pest outbreaks; implementing agroecological and conservation-oriented agricultural practices; prioritising irrigation development/efficiency to better combat water scarcity and rainfall dependency; seeking additional income sources to offset reduced yields or losses; and improving community resilience via strengthened natural, financial, human and social capital.³³ Strengthening capacity-building efforts to drive climate-smart agriculture, sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration and disaster risk reduction thus has to be at the heart of locally-led adaptation strategies.³⁴

Of course, as already mentioned, there exist many unequal barriers to adaptation, particularly around costs, access to technologies and information/knowledge-sharing. For example, smallholder farmers are generally far less equipped than large-scale agricultural operators to

30 von Soest, C. (2020). A Heated Debate: Climate Change and Conflict in Africa. German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA). GIGA Focus, Africa, Number 2, ISSN 1862–3603.

31 Perez, C., Jones, E. M., Kristjanson, P., Cramer, L., Thornton, P. K., Förch, W. & Barahona, C. (2015). How resilient are farming households and communities to a changing climate in Africa? A gender-based perspective. ScienceDirect. Volume 34, pages 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.06.003>.

32 Deutsche Gesellschaft für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). (2020). Job Creation for Africa’s Youth: Are There Pathways in Agricultural Value Chains? Sector Project Agricultural Trade, Agribusiness, Agricultural Finance | Policy Brief 06.

33 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

34 Africa Policy Research Institute. (2024). Local Solutions, Global Impact: Climate Adaptation in West Africa. p.20. <https://afripoli.org/local-solutions-global-impact-climate-adaptation-in-west-africa#>.

absorb and respond to climate shocks, often having to make do with limited resources to address immediate shocks and stressors in the short-term instead of having the appropriate resources, infrastructure and information to be able to pursue longer-term and sustainable adaptations.³⁵ As such, their resilience mechanisms are still largely bound to short-term survival strategies, with limited means and opportunities for implementing more anticipatory and larger-scale adaptations.³⁶

Abdul-Hakeem Issah, a young farmer in Northern Ghana and founder of Legacy Farms, states that funding is a major obstacle to implementing promising and direly needed projects.

‘In the past three years, we have designed a dry season vegetable farming technique for women, and are unable to implement this plan due to lack of funding. The women are still engaged in cutting down trees for fuel, due to the lack of economic activities in the dry season. If we were able to implement this, we would be able to considerably reduce the number of trees cut [...].’



Africa’s growing young population is being raised against this background of intersecting social, political, and environmental vulnerabilities threatening their largest sector. In the digital age, however, youth are finding new ways to connect, share stories, access information and build networks of solidarity across agricultural landscapes. For example, La Via Campesina (‘The International Peasants’ Movement’) is a global farmers’ movement centred around food sovereignty, environmental and climate justice, farmers’ rights, and international solidarity.³⁷

35 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

36 TANGO International. 2018. Methodological Guide: A Guide for Calculating Resilience Capacity. Produced by TANGO International as part of the Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) Associate Award.

37 La Via Campesina Homepage: <https://viacampesina.org/en>.

Heavily involving youth voices, they strive to create lasting solutions and systemic changes. These transformative approaches include themes like land accessibility for younger and future generations, publicly funded agroecological research, recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous knowledges, robust social and environmental regulations and an emphasis on labor rights.³⁸

Meanwhile, African youth are venturing into new areas, exploring new terrains and pushing the boundaries of what was thought possible. To them, being resilient also means being inventive, creative and daring. Realising the disproportionate vulnerability of youth, and especially young women, in his community, Kassim Juma decided to kick off new projects which would increase their agency and decision-making capacity. The project coordinator at Mikoko Pamoja,³⁹ a small-scale carbon offset project for mangrove reforestation in Gazi Bay, Kenya, tells us that his organisation is now focusing on how to engage youth in practices like seaweed farming, beekeeping and soapmaking. This enables them to generate their own income and foster both autonomy and adaptability while helping with issues of conservation in the area. Kassim asserts:

‘When we involve the youth in decision-making and [...] in project activities, I think we are going to do something that is constructive.’



38 La Via Campesina. (2023, 16 Dec). 5th International Assembly of the Youth Articulation of La Via Campesina – Final Declaration. La Via Campesina / International Peasants' Movement.

39 A name which translates to 'Mangroves Together' from Kiswahili.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY

‘Resilience to me would be a female. Because when you talk about women, you’re looking at a gender that can withstand, adapt to situations and recover from challenges. Promoting gender equity is not just a matter of social justice, but a bedrock for a sustainable environment. Resilience to me is the ability to withstand adversities and emerge even stronger, and this is what women have shown over the years.’

Betty Osei Bonsu, Uganda Country Manager at GAYO, Ghana

Betty’s powerful quote breaks down the patriarchal power structures that inhibit climate resilience. It is an undeniable reality that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change: The evidence is seen in the impacts on their livelihood, health and security,⁴⁰ vulnerabilities which were mentioned repeatedly in the conversations held for this report. Women’s livelihoods across Africa are very climate-dependent, with African women being heavily involved in the agricultural sector and making up most of the continent’s smallholder farmers; yet, institutionalised gender inequalities often prohibit women’s access to land rights, bank accounts and emergency savings, further limiting their adaptive capacities.⁴¹ With barriers to education and financial independence, women are often relegated to caregiving roles or informal labour and are distanced from social

safety nets and resources as well as timely and trustworthy information.

This makes it all the more difficult for them to anticipate, respond to and recover from climate shocks.⁴² Women are then forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms to survive – for example: sacrificing their own meals and nutrition in favour of their families; forgoing educational/professional opportunities; risking their safety to travel greater distances to collect food, water and firewood; and engaging in practices like child marriage to ensure some kind of security for their girls’ futures.⁴³ Moreover, gendered power structures impede the spaces in which women operate in their activism.⁴⁴ In addition to doing the utmost to transform their communities, women also face gender discrimination in their work,

40 UN Women. (2022). How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected. www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected

41 Ensor, M. O. (2023). Intersectional gender equity must inform efforts to enhance climate security in Africa. ISS African Futures.

42 UNICEF. (2022). WORKING WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS TO CENTRE GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE: An Advocacy Brief from Eastern and Southern Africa ahead of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund.

43 *ibid.*

44 Badri, B. & Tripp, A. M. (2017). African Influences on Global Women’s Rights: An Overview. In Badri, B. & Tripp, A. M. (Eds) *Women’s Activism in Africa*. Oxford: Zed Books.

which often crystallises in skepticism and lack of belief in their ability to lead and implement projects in their communities.

In unapologetically advocating for women's rights and demonstrating extraordinary strength, young women like Betty and many others are moving mountains towards intersectional climate justice. As Betty explains, climate justice and social justice are inherently intertwined, so that improving climate resiliency necessarily involves women's empowerment. African women are already on the frontlines of climate change and are often the first to respond in times of crisis. Their proximity to the environment has also afforded them first-hand knowledge and experience with skills like harvesting and storing water, preserving and rationing food, and managing land and natural resources. Women throughout the continent are also demonstrating creative adaptation strategies such as converting agricultural waste into environmentally friendly cooking fuel or learning to harness solar power for energy.^{45,46}

Providing women with more resources, support, education and opportunities both improves their individual livelihoods and has uplifting effects on the entire community's adaptive capacity. The tremendous resilience demonstrated by African women, coupled with a universal commitment to their empowerment, helps create this 'bedrock for a sustainable environment'.

45 ibid.

46 Ensor, M. O. (2023). Intersectional gender equity must inform efforts to enhance climate security in Africa. ISS African Futures.

Resilience and One Health

The climate crisis and emerging health hazards are two pressing challenges which are inseparable both in their causes and their effects on planetary and human life. This crucial recognition led to the creation of the 'One Health' approach by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC): a transdisciplinary conceptualisation of health that considers the interlinkages between humans, animals, plants and the environment.⁴⁷ Despite these intrinsic connections, climate and health often compete for the same pots of funding, while research and execution efforts largely remain in their respective silos without sufficient collaboration between climate experts and health professionals.⁴⁸ Only recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives and worsened already tough situations.⁴⁹ However, it is not only from the pandemic that we became aware of how intertwined planetary and human health are.⁵⁰ Although the global scope of COVID-19 might have brought the issue to the attention of international forums and policy-makers, the African continent is finally being recognized for exemplifying the historical interconnectedness of climate hazards and health risks. Because of this, experts have amplified African voices demanding a new public health order.⁵¹

- 47 Africa CDC. (2018). One Health Programme. <https://africacdc.org/programme/surveillance-disease-intelligence/one-health>.
- 48 Overland, I., Sagbakken, H. F., Isataeva, A., Kolodzinskaia, G., Simpson, N. P., Trisos, C. & Vakulchuk, R. (2022). Funding flows for climate change research on Africa: where do they come from and where do they go? *Climate and Development*, 14:8, 705–724.
- 49 Mastercard Foundation. (2022). Hope Rising: Resilience in the Face of Disruption. Youth Voices Report Series.
- 50 Jowell, A. & Barry, M. (2020). COVID-19: A Matter of Planetary, not Only National Health. *Am J Trop Med Hyg*. 2020 Jul; 103(1):31–32. doi: 10.4269/ajtmh.20–0419. Epub 2020 May 16.
- 51 Ndembi, N., Aluso, A., Habtemariam, M. K., et al. (2024). African leadership is critical in responding to public health threats. *Nat Commun* 15, 877. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-45220-3>.

Locally-driven strategies for climate adaptation have been developed in order to protect communities from future climate hazards. For instance, in the northern Senegalese village of Widou Thiengoly, communities have been working to mitigate the health impacts of heat waves.⁵² Key points that keep coming up include the need for more investment in climate-smart architecture and infrastructure, comprehensive access to health care, including emergency medical services, and capacity-building amongst local community members. The latter can include measures such as specialised training, supporting the set-up of data- and information-sharing systems, or substantial funding for community-led initiatives such as reforestation.

‘if [they] are dealing with climate change [...], they are also looking at health risks, and risk analysis with regard to those’



States **Ebenezer Morlia**, a medical student in Liberia. He gives the example of malaria as one of these rising health risks that should be factored in during community decision-making. **Elias Bascoro**, who has been working as a community activist in his home province of Manica, Mozambique, for many years, equally highlights that diseases such as malaria and dengue fever are exacerbated by climate change and pose real health risks to African youth and their communities. **Martha Oyanta Daniel** in Nigeria confirms that one thing she fears most for her community are health emergencies arising from the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis. She talks about water-borne diseases and sanitary issues, asking herself how the people around her are expected to cope.

However, analysis of health systems’ preparedness in African countries has become a key resource when trying to assess African countries’

52 Sy, I. (2022). Climate Change Adaptation in Senegal: Strategies, Initiatives, and Practices. Working Paper No. 2. APRI: Berlin, Germany. <https://afripoli.org/climate-change-adaptation-in-senegal-strategies-initiatives-and-practices>.

vulnerability to the climate crisis. For instance, in a cross-sectional study in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia and Kenya, most respondents reported that health problems caused by climate change were common, and health professionals perceived their resources of medical equipment, infrastructure, emergency response and technology as insufficient to mitigate their populations' vulnerability.⁵³

The IPCC's reports⁵⁴ confirm the enormous impact of climate change on Africans' health, with youth, women and people affected by poverty bearing the brunt.⁵⁵ While climate change of course remains a global problem, and will thus pose health threats to populations worldwide, Sub-Saharan countries shoulder three times the health risk.⁵⁶

'They [climate change and health] are intertwined and relate to the bigger picture', Ebenezer states while talking about the multiple threats to already fragile public health systems arising from the climate crisis.

African youth do not stay passive in the face of these converging crises.

In fact, they are rising to the challenge. In numerous instances, young people told stories of resilience via joint activities and projects, and increasing agency for and empowering community members, highlighting the importance of community-led adaptation.

Richard Matey, Climate Lead at the Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO), stresses that climate issues are multi-dimensional: In one of their projects promoting menstrual hygiene, they are tackling period poverty by working to provide clean and safe water in arid regions of northern Ghana. This endeavor resulted in the creation of an Adaptation Resource Center where the organisation provides skills training, such as teaching community members how to produce reusable sanitary

- 53 Opoku, S. K., Filho, W. L., Hubert, F., Adejumo, O. (2021). Climate Change and Health Preparedness in Africa: Analysing Trends in Six African Countries. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 18, no. 9: 4672. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094672>.
- 54 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.
- 55 Brousse, O., Georganos, S., Demuzere, M., Vanhuyse, S., Wouters, H., Wolff, E., Linard, C., van Lipzig, N. P. M. & Dujardin, S. (2018). Using local climate zones in Sub-Saharan Africa to tackle urban health issues. Urban Clim. 2019;27:227–242. doi: 10.1016/j.uclim.2018.12.004.
- 56 Byass, P. (2009). Climate change and population health in Africa: Where are the scientists? Glob. Health Action. 2009;2:2065. doi: 10.3402/gha.v2i0.2065.

pads. **Kassim Juma** in Mombasa, Kenya, states that the revenue generated by his region's mangrove reforestation campaign has helped the community to increase investments in supporting health services, water and sanitation.

Despite the incredible outcomes of these efforts for the young people's respective communities, the interviewees also highlighted the issue of activists' mental health and burn-out when discussing the limitations of practicing resilience.⁵⁷

'You know, it's not a sprint. It's a marathon we're running. So, for this marathon, where do we get the tools to actually fight every single day?'



Fiona Mugambi, an electrical engineer who works with the climate tech startup Octavia Carbon, poses the crucial question above as she reflects on the issue of mental health.

Young people around the globe are disproportionately exposed to mental health threats, and in Sub-Saharan countries, poor mental health literacy, stigma and weak care capacities within the community exacerbate the issue.⁵⁸ Limitations of exercising resilience manifest where youth are forced to rely too much on their capacity to be and stay resilient in order to overcome challenges. According to **Elias Bascoro**, this can result in an immense emotional toll, burdening individuals with burnout, stress and fatigue, therefore impeding their ability to embody consistent strength and leadership for their communities and themselves in the face of constant adversity. Interactive, youth-led platforms, linkages between education and health facilities and capacity-building

57 Chen, C. W. & Gorski, P. C. (2015). Burnout in social justice and human rights activists: Symptoms, causes and implications. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 7(3), 366–390. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huv011>.

58 Kutcher, S., Perkins, K., Gilberds, H., Udedi, M., Ubuguyu, O., Njau, T., Chapota, R. & Hashish, M. (2019). Creating Evidence-Based Youth Mental Health Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Description of the Integrated Approach to Addressing the Issue of Youth Depression in Malawi and Tanzania. *Front. Psychiatry* 10:542. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2019.00542.

to better identify, diagnose and treat mental health issues among youth, especially activist youth, is thus crucial.⁵⁹ Michael Yao Etsri, a youth educator in Ghana adds:

'It is easier to feel discouraged than to feel encouraged and to put in all your best [effort] to come out with something beneficial to society. So, lack of motivation is one [limitation for resilience].'



Martha Oyanta Daniel elaborated on these feelings of discouragement by highlighting the intersectional dimensions of resilience and describing how she encourages the young girls:

'You have to build resilience. You'll be called names. You'll be bullied. You might not have resources. The weather will not always be favorable for you. But have an unbroken spirit. Keep that drive, just keep the fire burning, irrespective of what comes your way. If you feel like crying when you are hit hard, cry!'



She keeps saying: *'[...] Don't deny any reality. There are times that it gets so overwhelming that you get broken. Despite that, after you finish crying, rise up, clean your face, move on, continue, [...]'*. While acknowledging the substantial challenges to practicing resilience, especially for young women, Martha reiterates that *'it is not the vision that is dead'*.

According to her, it is about being strategic and realistic, watching out for and nurturing each other while keeping your eyes on the prize. This is not to romanticise resilience nor trivialise the tremendous structural challenges African youth are facing. It is to highlight that mutual care and encouragement can start at the individual and group level despite a lack of institutional support. This is especially true among marginalised communities. In fact, the prevalence of these interpersonally-based support networks can be understood as a form of resilience against systemic and institutional deficiencies.

Mohildin and some of the delegates during COP28. [Photo provided by Mohildin Bushra]



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

‘As for my own climate journey, I would say it began in 2014 when I realised how much the sea level rise across the eastern coast of Ghana had taken away from communities and also affected my grandfather’s home. Their house got submerged in the sea.

And so I got passionate about understanding what actually caused it. So, upon asking people and doing some investigations, I got to know about climate change and that this is a result of it. That’s how I started my journey and I got very passionate about how we can address this problem, how we cannot have other people’s homes submerged next. Because for me, I felt like my family was able to relocate and then build another house and be okay, but I kept on asking myself: what about the other people who do not have the financial means to buy a new home or relocate, what if something like that happens to them? They’ve lost properties. They’ve lost a lot of things. How do they rebuild their life? How do they start all over again?’

Richard Matey, Climate Lead at GAYO, Ghana

Climate vulnerability is dynamic and multidimensional, even within a given community, and it will only evolve in unforeseeable and exponential dimensions in the future. Like many other interviewees, Richard’s experience with climate change has been deeply personal. At the same time, when Richard wonders how those less fortunate than himself could recover from a climate disaster, he is bringing into question a major indicator of vulnerability: class.

Not only are low-income and poverty-affected people more likely to have a more difficult time footing the upfront recovery costs of climate-related shocks, they are also more affected by various environmental injustices that put them at greater risk in the first place.

For example, those with fewer means are more likely to reside in locations that have greater exposure to climate impacts or possess higher risk and to have to construct their homes with cheaper materials that are poorly suited to withstand climate impacts. They are also

less likely to have access to early warning and evacuation systems, insurance or disaster relief funds, and the ability to relocate.⁶⁰

Of course, class intersects with many other factors that impact vulnerability, such as age, gender, education, health and even elements like culture or ethnicity, all of which can have mutually reinforcing effects, leading to vicious cycles of vulnerability. This ties back to the importance of an intersectional analysis of resilience practices. As explained by UN Special Rapporteur E. Tendayi Achiume, these intimate encounters with the climate crisis are heavily concentrated in ‘global “sacrifice zones” – regions rendered dangerous and even uninhabitable due to environmental degradation – [which] are in effect, “racial and ethnic sacrifice zones”’.⁶¹ Having a more nuanced understanding of the variability of vulnerability is crucial in forming an effective and sustainable approach to fighting climate change in an equitable, just and inclusive way. This will help to progressively close these divides for younger generations rather than reproduce the cycles of vulnerability and widen the gaps further.⁶²

60 Thomas, K., Hardy, R. D., Lazrus, H., Mendez, M., Orlove, B., Rivera-Collazo, I., Roberts, J. T., Rockman, M., Warner, B. P. & Winthrop, R. (2019). Explaining differential vulnerability to climate change: A social science review. Wiley Interdiscip Rev Clim Change; 10(2):e565. DOI: 10.1002/wcc.565.

61 Tendayi Achiume, E. (2022). The global climate crisis is a racial justice crisis: UN expert. OHCHR.

62 Thomas, K. A. & Warner, B. P. (2019). Weaponizing vulnerability to climate change. Global Environmental Change, Volume 57, 101928, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2019.101928>.

Resilience and Tech

‘So, the information comes from the Tanzanian Meteorological Agency. [...] They send this information to the Centers of Community Initiatives. And at CCI, we send this information to the community. The community leaders prepare a short weather information, a message in a simple language. [...] And when they are done generating this information [...], one of the team members from CCI confirms that information. If it’s right, you can tell them that they can send it on to other members.’



Given Patrick Mwakatungila, a member of the DARAJA project, explains her work on early warning information systems.

Methods of fast, simple and effective data dissemination are crucial for communities to become more resilient to hazards such as extreme weather events, high temperatures and sudden changes in their local climate. The issue of data gaps or inaccessible data was repeatedly mentioned by African youth as an obstacle to their efforts to foster awareness and preparedness in their communities. These gaps are a result of scientific gaps, insufficient access to data, gaps in forecasting

and modeling, and a lack of investment in local capacity building, knowledge management and communication.⁶³

The last point is being addressed by young people like Given. She is working with DARAJA, an organisation which aims to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities through better access to and use of weather and climate information. The organisation cooperates with informal settlement communities, national meteorological services, community development organisations and a wide range of other public and private stakeholders.⁶⁴ Within the scope of their programmes, the young people are implementing community projects in municipalities of Dar es Salaam to increase access and understanding of climate-related data and information.⁶⁵

Community members from Kombo settlement accessing weather information through a notice board (chalkboard) every five days in a settlement. [Photo provided by Given Patrick Mwakatungila]



63 Lamptey, B., Sahabi Abed, S., Gudoshava, M., Mutemi, J., Bopape, M. J., Adefisan, E. A., Igri, M. P., Seidou Sanda, I., Ndiaye, O., Parker, D. J., Dougill, A. J., Fink, A. H., Knippertz, P., Woolnough, S. & Kolstad, E. W. (2024). Challenges and ways forward for sustainable weather and climate services in Africa. *Nat Commun*, 15(1):2664. doi: 10.1038/s41467-024-46742-6.

64 Sen, S. (2022). A network of tents in Khartoum’s urban island: community flood management in action. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. www.preventionweb.net/quick/75632.

65 CDKN. (2024). Flood warnings shared via SMS and chalkboards in Dar es Salaam. Climate & Development Knowledge Network. <https://cdkn.org/story/flood-warnings-shared-sms-and-chalkboards-dar-es-salaam>.

Given explains how, working specifically with the communities in informal settlements, they utilise simple technology like SMS notifications and break down weather information to simple, accessible language in order to help people to formulate preventive strategies of mitigation and adaptation.

They provide training to ‘community forecast teams’ – disaster committees composed of different community members like students, professionals, religious leaders, or even boda boda riders (motorcycle drivers) who are in charge of translating and dispersing the climate information. By actively engaging these disaster committees, they were able to constantly reassess the effectiveness of their methods:

‘During the project, we were able to discuss and come up with some alternatives that will now be used to facilitate the dissemination of the information to the community’.

The importance of digital access for community resilience and the success of local preparedness and adaptability cannot be overstated. For young people, awareness of world issues such as the impacts of climate change, activism, education, finding information and communicating with friends, family and the community in emergencies, are amongst the benefits of increased access to digital technology.⁶⁶ However, on average, African youth – particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa – are the most disconnected geographic region in the world.^{67,68} Although internet access on the continent is growing rapidly, if unevenly,⁶⁹ as of 2021, only 36% of the overall Sub-Saharan African

66 Gunnlaugsson, G., Whitehead, T. A., Baboudóttir, F. N., Baldé, A., Jandi, Z., Boiro, H. & Einarsdóttir, J. (2020). Use of Digital Technology among Adolescents Attending Schools in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 17(23):8937. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17238937.

67 World Bank. (2020). *Individuals using the Internet (% of population)*. [Line graph & dataset].

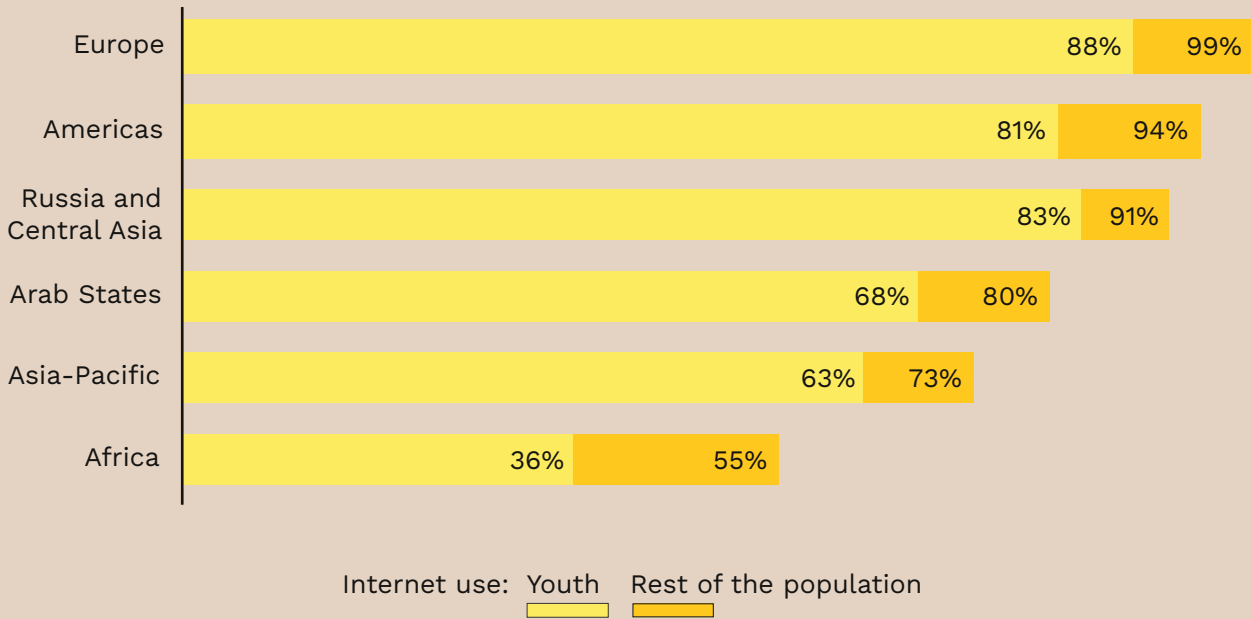
68 Other groups like ‘UN “LDCs”, ‘heavily indebted poor countries’ and ‘low income countries’ carried even lower aggregate rates of internet connectivity than Sub-Saharan Africa, but they are comprised of international states that include both African and non-African countries and therefore do not represent a contiguous geographical grouping.

69 ICT. (2019). *Measuring Digital Development. Facts and Figures 2019*. International Telecommunication Union; Geneva, Switzerland. p.13.

population was online.⁷⁰ This digital divide mirrors the economic hardship. In addition to a stark contrast between regions of the world, we are observing an increasing global gender gap in internet usage.⁷¹

In sum, technology can be a tool for resilience, but, as **Elias Bascoro** notes, many African youth lack access to reliable internet connectivity, hindering their ability to access information and resources. In addition, the global digital network as well as tools such as digital payment systems have become increasingly complex and far-reaching.⁷² Thus, as **Richard Matey** outlines, when faced with challenges it becomes all the more important to create robust and diverse networks linking individuals and institutions for efficient collaboration. Richard highlights that this is achieved by *‘reaching people across the board’*.

AFRICAN YOUTH ARE LESS CONNECTED THAN THEIR PEERS



Source: Caribou Digital, Youth in Digital Africa

70 World Bank. (2020). Individuals using the Internet (% of population). [Line graph & dataset].

71 ICT. (2019). Measuring Digital Development. Facts and Figures 2019. International Telecommunication Union; Geneva, Switzerland. p. 13.

72 BFA & Mastercard Foundation. (2019). Digital Commerce and Youth Employment in Africa. https://mastercardfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BFA_Digital-Commerce-White-Paper_FINAL_Feb-2019-aoda.pdf.

He goes on to say:

'You find the ones that can provide technical assistance, others for knowledge and capacity-building and others for materials and logistical resources that can support people.'



Examples of projects in practice, such as the one illustrated by Given above, showcase the multiple benefits of burden-sharing and teamwork.

As soon as information is available, its dissemination poses a different challenge. **Fiona Mugambi** from Octavia Carbon tells of how her organisation, which is working to make the technology of direct air carbon capture tangible for wider communities and policymakers, goes about educating community members:

'Obviously, you're not going to use the super technical terms. Instead of using adsorption and desorption, [...] you say capture phase and release phase, simply analogies. Analogies which you know [the community] can relate to very well.'



Since carbon capture is a new technology, one needs to be prepared for a considerable lack of understanding and trust. Hence, Fiona encourages industry associations to support educational programmes around Direct Air Carbon Capture, to sensitise people and ultimately promote progressive policies from the bottom up, starting at the grassroots. At the same time, the interviewees explained how they themselves are using technology in their day-to-day for capacity building, acquiring crucial know-how and educating themselves via formats such as podcasts.

Technology is much more than digital connectivity. It encompasses the ways in which people develop tools and strategies to communicate and interact with their environments. One of the most striking illustrations of this is **Betty Osei Bonsu**'s story: Betty, who has risen to become GAYO's Uganda Country Manager, grew up in a small Ghanaian community where, from a young age, she was confronted with the need for creative ways of managing waste. Her invention was to utilise palm kernel shells. These are waste products from kernel, which is a fruit-bearing tree in Africa. Palm kernel fruit is used to produce palm kernel oil for food, cosmetics and industrial applications, palm kernel cake for animal feed, and biofuel, highlighting its versatility across multiple sectors. Most of the time, that discarded waste just becomes landfill. *'And thus, I utilised those palm kernel shells and converted them to charcoal briquettes, turning them into fuel for marginalised homes within communities'*, explains Betty.

'I identified the problem of cutting down trees, deforestation, and I decided we should provide a cost-efficient alternative cooking fuel for women in communities. Fuel that has less smoke, less pollutants. And so I took that waste to the laboratory, converted it, and changed it into charcoal briquette. That project has contributed massively to where I am today. That was where my journey started.'



A technological epiphany inspired by her own background and history was the spark that ignited Betty's career. When looking at how technologies touch African youth, the examples range from meteorological forecasting, demographic projections and economic modeling, to food service technology and carbon removal. The potential is huge, but the challenges for sustainable use and equitable access are arguably just as big.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: DATA GAPS

‘Getting valuable data was a big challenge for us. Often, the data is there, but in certain areas and places, it’s not disseminated. And the access to it requires a lot of hurdles to jump and a lot of doors to open. [...] This is the first thing you go through for every single project that you try to do in Sudan: Is there data and can the data be accessed?’

Mohildin Bushra, Electronics Engineer & Climate Activist, Sudan

Access to knowledge forms the basis of change. It is essential for all climate mitigation, adaptation and transformation. On the flipside, data gaps have led to some significant setbacks. Data gaps are convergent with issues of research gaps, funding gaps, technological gaps, infrastructural gaps and more. Many African countries lack the capacity to collect comprehensive data on biodiversity, socioeconomic conditions and climate projection metrics.⁷³ Additionally, research agendas continue to be largely shaped by Global North perspectives and funding agencies, and even when African voices are included, the most vulnerable low-income countries and populations are still often not represented. This limits what kind of data is even being sourced in the first place and creates massive blindspots. As for information that does come into published existence, there are many barriers to access – not only regarding internet connectivity and language capacities, but also

with paywalls and timeliness.⁷⁴ Without precise and correct data, it is impossible for people like Mohildin to receive the needed support for projects and make sure that it targets the right structures, thus creating additional difficulties in breaking the cycle. Adopting innovative research methodologies and joining forces with other research platforms has proven most useful. Increased collaboration, knowledge exchange and co-production would help pave the way for more sustainable developments and narrow the gaps.⁷⁵ The young people in this report repeatedly pointed out how crucial it was to form ties with like-minded institutions and individuals, collectively bridging the gap in order to get the needed information. More concerted efforts to equip more African youth with necessary data, skills and opportunities, along with centring African leadership in research and project development, would be key to combating these divides and spearheading sustainable, innovative and resilient solutions.⁷⁶

73 Trisos, C. H., et al. (2022). Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK & New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285–1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.

74 *ibid.*

75 Lamptey, B., Sahabi Abed, S., Gudoshava, M., Mutemi, J., Bopape, M. J., Adefisan, E. A., Igri, M. P., Seidou Sanda, I., Ndiaye, O., Parker, D. J., Dougill, A. J., Fink, A. H., Knippertz, P., Woolnough, S., Kolstad, E. W. (2024). Challenges and ways forward for sustainable weather and climate services in Africa. *Nat Commun*, 15(1):2664. doi: 10.1038/s41467-024-46742-6.

76 *ibid.*

Resilience and the Mind

Education lies at the heart of liberation, empowerment and progress.

It is through proper investment in youth education that meaningful change can be made in society, be it in reducing inequalities, fostering tolerance, building skills and critical thinking, or providing a foundation for living in healthy and sustainable ways.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, the youngest continent in the world is also facing the greatest obstacles in providing quality education for its youth. Less than half of schools in Sub-Saharan Africa even have access to clean drinking water, electricity, computers and the internet.⁷⁸ This presents a major barrier to resilience-building across the continent. For many young Africans, this lack of access to education fuels a greater lack of awareness about climate change and stifles communities' abilities to adopt sustainable adaptation measures. In addition, this perceived lack of adaptive capacity translates into a significant hurdle for fostering targeted climate-resilient practices day-to-day. Mohildin laments that:

'the idea of inclusivity and access to education is important for youth in African contexts, especially. And not having that access is a hindrance for youth to [...] be resilient. You don't know what you're going to be resilient against and you do not know what you can expect. Having an anticipatory cognitive mindset is a great asset to have as a young person.'



77 UN. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals, The 17 Goals, 4. Quality Education. United Nations.

78 *ibid.*

His statements ring true when considered against the backdrop of a Sudan reeling from destroyed infrastructure, resources and networks, including in the educational sector. It is thanks to initiatives which mobilised youth in their communities that education support and books still reach children in times of war and crisis, Mohildin says.

Even among schools that do make an effort to engage students in eco-initiatives, studies have shown that adaptation and resilience efforts are not prioritised as much as mitigation.⁷⁹ This echoes a larger sentiment that the primary adaptive capacities of African countries are often limited to surviving or, at best, coping with emergencies. **Martha Oyanta Daniel** highlights this constant state of responding to emergencies with the following story:

‘We have a climate emergency and we need women to quickly understand that things have changed and how to apply greenhouse forms of farming. You can use the back of your house. [...] You can also maximise compost waste instead of using chemical fertiliser. You can make compost. [...] When it’s time for farming, I don’t have to start struggling for manure, that is another form of adaptation for me’.



While emergency responses can evolve into long-term resilience strategies, they are often stuck in this vicious cycle of mere reaction. This trend can be seen beyond the specter of youth education and in higher education and professional spheres, as well. Frontline emergency workers who are often the first to respond in climate-related crises – particularly in healthcare – often receive limited knowledge and training on handling the impacts of climate events. This burdens

79 Singh, S. & Shah, J. (2022). Case Studies on Adaptation and Climate Resilience in Schools and Educational Settings. Global Center on Adaptation.

low-skilled personnel with the responsibility of tending to the immediate effects of these impacts.⁸⁰ Across agrarian communities, this lack of knowledge leads to the perpetuation of unintentionally harmful environmental effects. As observed by Fuseini Fahim in his role as a Ghanaian Development Planning Officer, farmers often fall victim to incorrect chemical application techniques and improper disposal of chemical containers.

When it comes to improving individual and community resilience and well-being in the face of climate change, there is a growing need for climate curricula practice, research and policy to be better integrated across multiple professional sectors and educational levels.⁸¹ Most of the African youth interviewed stressed the importance of being able to connect the dots and contextualise individual experiences within the bigger picture of the climate crisis.

Elias Bascoro highlights how education has provided him with the ability to grasp the interconnectedness of human and natural systems. Francis Adu-Amankwah sees the knowledge gap on climate change and climate-related impacts on everyday life in his community as one of the main hurdles to getting in touch with other youth around him. Haruna Abdul Rashad describes the obstacles faced due to an enormous language barrier in Tamale, northern Ghana, where he is struggling to find community leaders to make crucial knowledge more accessible.

African youth across the continent are using multiple ways to tackle these issues. It is widely acknowledged that educating women and girls is one of the best ways to achieve climate-resilient communities and reduce vulnerability to death and injury from climate-related events.⁸²

80 Opoku, S. K., Filho W. L., Hubert F. & Adejumo O. (2021). Climate Change and Health Preparedness in Africa: Analysing Trends in Six African Countries. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 18, no. 9: 4672. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph1809467>.

81 ibid.

82 Anderson, A. (2010). Combating Climate Change Through Quality Education. The Brookings Institution, Global Economy and Development at Brookings.

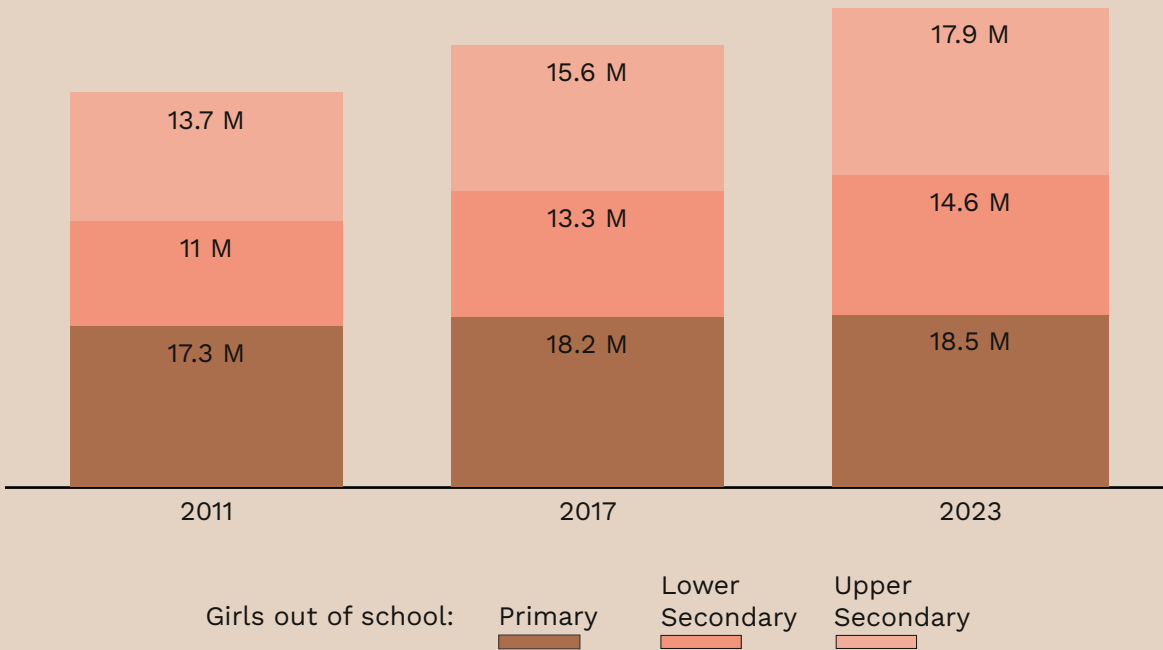
Martha is right on target with her work in Nigeria:

‘[...] you need a lot of resilience. And that is basically what my work is focused on. We educate women, push for education, gender advocacy, women’s rights. I preach women’s rights unapologetically, to school the girls, the group of women, and, in fact, my most recent message now is climate change adaptation.’



While gender gaps in education are decreasing on a global level, recent data also shows that the raw number of youths who are not in school in Sub-Saharan Africa is increasing, particularly in low income, fragile or conflict-affected states. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, with only a minority of girls across the region completing secondary education.⁸³

NUMBER OF GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL (SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)



Source: UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, Interactive Dataset (6-year intervals)

83 Kattan, R. B. & Khan, M. M. (2023). Closing the gap: Tackling the remaining disparities in girls’ education and women’s labor market participation. Education for Global Development & World Bank Blogs.

Climate change again threatens educational resilience by forcing more girls out of school. Since women and girls are also disproportionately responsible for household chores and caregiving, climate-induced disruptions in the household and community tend to demand more of their immediate attention and energy and can have a multiplier effect on girls' access to education, making girls less likely to enroll, attend, remain or perform well in school.⁸⁴ In short, surviving and coping with climate change often means sacrificing women's and girls' education and opportunities first.

Effective youth resilience-building requires a multifactorial and interdisciplinary approach with many linkages between the individual, the family unit and the community.⁸⁵ Educational institutes become crucial centres of knowledge, guidance, participation, dialogue and implementation. Schools can equip students with the information and experience needed to demonstrate climate leadership, carry out eco-initiatives outside the classroom and replicate what they have learned in the home and community.⁸⁶ There is also room for intergenerational and community-wide collaboration within the school ecosystem, with schools acting as an intermediary between the global breadth of knowledge-sharing and the local contexts of lived experiences and grounded action.

When talking about the implementation of DARAJA's projects in informal settlements in Tanzania, **Given Patrick Mwakatungila** continues to stress the importance of community engagement. In her eyes, there is no success without involving community stakeholders from the very beginning of the implementation phase.

84 Chigwanda, E. (2016). A Framework for Building Resilience to Climate Change through Girls' Education Programming. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.

85 Theron, L. C. & Theron, A. M. C. (2010). A critical review of studies of South African youth resilience, 1990–2008. S Afr J Sci.;106(7/8), Art. #252, 8 pages. DOI: 10.4102/sajs.v106i7/8.252.

86 Singh, S. & Shah, J. (2022). Case Studies on Adaptation and Climate Resilience in Schools and Educational Settings. Global Center on Adaptation.

‘[...] it has helped to solve some problems or challenges. But also, we use collaboration for sustainability. [...] in this community mobilisation, in this co-production approach.’



This shows the importance of not only education, but also sustainable capacity-building.

Quality education with integrated climate curriculum and adaptation initiatives can provide youth with an understanding and appreciation of the environment along with the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue climate-resilient and alternative livelihoods within their community.⁸⁷ This would empower African youth to fulfil their potential in leading climate initiatives both locally and globally.

There are several examples of successful school-led, community-oriented eco-initiatives that improve students' climate literacy and resilience.⁸⁸ In Madagascar's Ifanadiana Municipality, a region that lacks nutritional variety, suffers from flooding and has limited local knowledge on vegetable farming, the local Antafotenia Primary School has engaged students in resilient farming practices by hosting a vegetable farming competition. Each class receives a small plot of land that is tended to and cultivated by students throughout the growing season. The harvest is then either sold or used to make community meals.

In Nairobi, Kenya, residents are grappling with two extremes: flooding during the rainy seasons and water scarcity during the dry months. The students of St. Michael's Holy Unit Academy saw an opportunity and began a water harvesting initiative. They installed water tanks on the school's rooftops to collect rainwater and store it for use by the community during the dry season.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ The following examples over the next three paragraphs all come from this report: Singh, S. & Shah, J. (2022). *Case Studies on Adaptation and Climate Resilience in Schools and Educational Settings*. Global Center on Adaptation.

Students of the all-girls school Loreto College in Curepipe, Mauritius, also took the initiative to address their town's issues with food security and waste management. They participated in educational outings to local farms to better their scientific, social, ecological and environmental skills and understanding. This helped to inform their subsequent 'Zero Waste Campaign' and their student-led organic 'aquaponics' system, combining aquaculture and hydroponics to produce fish and vegetables for their community.

These examples showcase the positive externalities that come from climate-integrated educational approaches that help uplift the community, be it through increased sustainability, better nutrition, more sources of income or just strengthened adaptive capacities in general. They also show the persistent need for greater investment in education as well as a restructuring of educational curricula to better incorporate climate change awareness and solutions, both across the continent and beyond.

In addition to formal educational support, African youth also highlight the immense benefit of face-to-face discussions and mentorship initiatives. Many of the young people interviewed, especially women, mentioned they got to where they are today thanks to a mentoring figure in their life who accompanied and encouraged them along their path. Michael Yao Etsri says he uses both 'indirect' and 'direct' mentorship: 'Indirect' in the sense of drawing inspiration from people's public profiles, publications and activism, and 'direct' in engaging in conversations with mentors:



'I go to them, we discuss on social issues, the environment, sustainability and climate.'

Shaibu Mohammed talks about the importance of mentors in empowering young people's ambitions and aiding them in networking. Martha Oyanta Daniel tells us how effectively advice can be shared between women and girls through one-to-one mentorship. And Scholar Dike recounts that she would have never dared to envision the life she

is currently living without the inspiration, encouragement and investment that she drew from her mentor. Education, in all its forms, is powerful.

It came as no surprise that storytelling was a recurring notion and an asset that African youth relied on heavily to convey knowledge, experience and advice. Traditional ways of storytelling, especially in West African communities, fared without any form of writing for millennia while ensuring the preservation of knowledge, legends and whole belief systems.⁸⁹ It becomes all the more interesting to examine how digitalisation and storytelling converge in recent times – for example, through initiatives to document, transcribe, store and disseminate oral traditions, stories and practices through digital archival bodies.⁹⁰

Immersive storytelling in particular leads to increased engagement and interest in the information being shared, and protecting these practices with the help of technological innovations both honors cultural heritages and promotes inter- and cross-cultural exchanges.⁹¹

Indeed, research on how technologies can serve the intrinsic nature of storytelling has become a topic of attention.⁹² Coincidentally, Betty Osei Bonsu delivered the perfect example of what a successful symbiosis could look like. She built ‘B. Inspired with Stories from Africa’, a storytelling platform, from personal experience.

‘From my engagement in the communities, I identified the problem of miscommunication and the inability of communities to tell their own story.’



- 89 Bakare, A., Ciancarini, P., Farina, M., Farina, M., Kruglov, A., Okonicha, O., Smirnova, M. & Succi, G. (2023). Learning from West African storytellers. *Front. Comput. Sci.* 5:1183602. doi: 10.3389/fcomp.2023.1183602.
- 90 Ajani, Y. A., Oladokun, B. D., Olarongbe, S. A., Amaechi, M. N., Rabi, N. & Bashorun, M. T. (2024). Revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems via Digital Media Technologies for Sustainability of Indigenous Languages. *De Gruyter*, 53(1): 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pdte-2023-0051>.
- 91 For more on technologically integrative storytelling approaches in African communities, see: Marsden, G., Ladeira, I., Reitmaier, T., Bidwell, N. & Blake, E. (2010). Digital Storytelling in Africa. *International Journal of Computing*. 9. 257–265. 10.47839/ijc.9.3.719.
- 92 Marsden, G., Ladeira, I., Reitmaier, T., Bidwell, N. & Blake, E. (2010). Digital Storytelling in Africa. *International Journal of Computing*. 9. 257–265. 10.47839/ijc.9.3.719.

'And thus, I created this platform called "Be Inspired", with stories from Africa, where stories of resilience and vulnerability are told. Stories of resilience, not vulnerability, stories of innovation, of capabilities, stories that will inspire communities or inspire people to do more or to be better. [...] Influenced by my background and life journey, I said, I'm going to use my story to tell people that it is okay to be vulnerable. It is okay, but let us not dwell on the vulnerability. Let's go towards resilience.'

Storytellers leading by example are undoubtedly an outstanding asset of African youth tackling the challenge of community and inter-generational education. The significance of storytelling is deeper than entertainment and even heritage; it is also a legitimate form of knowledge production that deserves proper recognition.

Betty Osei Bonsu (Host)
interviewing a social
entrepreneur (Hairphanie).
[Photo provided by Betty
Osei Bonsu]



Yet, it can still be a difficult task to navigate diverse knowledges and interpretations of climate-related phenomena and combat existing fears, skepticism and doubts. In the face of the overwhelming scale of the climate crisis and these intersecting struggles, it is understandably hard to feel as though one has the ability to make an impact. One story which illustrates this challenge was given to us by **Haruna Abdul Rashad**:

'I remember last time I went to one community here in the northern part, [...] So they ask me: "Hey, what brings you to us?" I say, "I'm here to educate you about climate change." They said, "We cannot stop cutting down the trees because we use those trees for charcoal. We use it for a living". [...] and I'm just laughing [...] I said, "no, we can still do something small about it. Even when you cut a tree, you will replace one. Where you cut one, we can replace two".'



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: NEGOTIATING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VALUES

‘So [with] the problem of community resistance, what we did is that we did a lot of community consultation and awareness-raising. Whereby we did a lot of community meetings, consultation meetings with the village elders so that we could educate the community on the importance of conserving mangroves. [We said] when we conserve mangroves, we are going to have a lot of fish. We are going to have a lot of timber. We are going to overcome the problem of erosion. So, we also told them that, as long as we’re going to conserve, we are going to generate an income. It took a while for them to accept this but over time, they came to fully accept our project.’

Kassim Juma, Project Coordinator at Mikoko Pamoja, Kenya

What ties the narratives of this report together is a universal feeling for family and community. A sense of belonging is the main motivation behind driving change and is seen as a key resource in exercising climate resilience.

The cultural heritage of African youth teaches key values and guides their solidarity. Sometimes, however, societal norms also need to be sensitively factored in when it comes to community mobilisation and acceptance. This not only pertains to a resistance towards mitigation measures, as Kassim reflects.

It is also mentioned in the context of who is deemed to be in charge of a community, who can make decisions and who can take action.

Youth, as many of those interviewed report, are often not seen as belonging to that group and instead get pushed outside of the decision-making realm. This stubborn age bias is not just harmful for young, aspiring people, but also leaves a lot of community potential untapped.⁹³ Kassim shows us that through targeted participatory and engaging processes, a consensus among all can be reached.

93 Friedman, H. A. (2021, October 26). ‘Kids these days’: Why youth-directed ageism is an issue for everyone. Institute for Public Health, Washington University in St. Louis. <https://publichealth.wustl.edu/kids-these-days-why-youth-directed-ageism-is-an-issue-for-everyone>.

Resilience in Activism



‘Wote faako a, na wote w’ade3 so.’

This Asante (Ghana) saying translates into “You do not succeed if you stay put”. This powerful quote by environmentalist **Esther Lovia Dankyi** expresses how she feels about the limitations of African youth exercising resilience: In her opinion, innovative solutions to climate change will not simply arise from resilience but must be obtained through action. Driven by her appetite for change and an urge to do something practical about the exacerbating impacts of climate change in her environment, she took the initiative to work with Ghana’s Environmental Protection Agency, monitoring and mapping cocoa farming in the country and learning about ways to improve compliance with sustainability standards. Activism necessarily relies on such passion, emotion and energy to mobilise. Passionate for education, **Scholar Dike** decided to embark on a similar journey in her home country of Nigeria. She states that her main motivation was the empathy she felt for people’s stories. She decided to trust that this empathy would be mutual, providing a supportive environment for the development of her activism. *‘I didn’t understand what I was doing’*, Scholar says.

‘I just thought if that [not knowing what exactly you’re doing] is what all those people think, then I should be fine here.’



In retrospect, everything seems to make sense, like an organic journey that was meant to be. *'[...] the things we did for the communities, like sharing relief materials, I think everything is beginning to speak to me, telling me to do more things.'*

Other youth were speaking about experiencing the same ripple effects from getting involved in activism for the first time. **Ebenezer Morlia** remembers being appointed to represent Liberian youth at the Global Youth Convention in Cape Town and discovering the world of climate change activism and intervention like opening the door to a completely new realm of youth cooperation.

The first ever “Keep Your Promise Campaign”, a campaign sponsored by the PACJA to remind world leaders on their promise made at the Paris Agreement, organised by Ebenezer Morlia. [Photo provided by Ebenezer Morlia]



A seminar **Michael Yao Etsri** organised for the people of his community led to various activities tidying up their environment, cleaning the gutters and allowing him to give a talk at a local primary school soon after. The vital role of youth activism in driving social and environmental change, especially in recent-day societies, is undeniable, but also historically rooted.⁹⁴

94 Shah, M. A., & Khan, Z. (2023). The Role of Youth Activism in Facilitating Social Change: A Catalyst for transformation in the Contemporary Era. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(4), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.575688089>.

Activists across sectors are consistently challenging societal norms, monitoring and holding institutions and policy-makers accountable, and pushing for more inclusive and progressive legislation. Situating their leadership and potential exclusively in the future would be a grave mistake – they are already changing the world and the lived realities of their communities at this very moment. From protests to policy, youth are at the forefront of climate action despite having contributed least to what their futures are threatened by.⁹⁵ Although they are disproportionately affected by climate change – with the WHO estimating they will suffer about 80% of all climate-related health hazards⁹⁶ – youth remain largely excluded from decision and policy-making processes.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) itself recognises the immense potential of the continent's youth's creativity, energy and innovation.⁹⁸

Despite the undeniable potential of youth and this optimistic turn in rhetoric, in practice, the policymaking landscape often remains unforgiving and demotivating. **Shaibu Mohammed** – who started his own NGO, Better Dream Foundation, specifically aimed at uplifting and encouraging youth activism in Ghana – discusses how demoralising it can be when young activists are not taken seriously, are shut down by higher-ups, or do not achieve their intended results.

‘They don’t really want to go back and advocate again. They know that [...] their voices are not being heard. Even if they [try again], it will be the same result.’



- 95 Roberts, I. (2023). Rising Voices: The African Youth's Fight for a Sustainable Future. APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute. <https://afripoli.org/rising-voices-the-african-youths-fight-for-a-sustainable-future>.
- 96 McMichael, A. (2014). Climate change and children: Health risks of abatement inaction, health gains from action. *Children* 1, no. 2: 99–106.
- 97 Benkenstein, A., Chevallier, R., Kosciulek, D., Lebea, D. & Worth, K. (2020). Introduction: Youth climate leadership in Africa. In *Youth Climate Advocacy* (pp. 10–17). South African Institute of International Affairs. www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29503.7
- 98 African Union. (2013). Agenda 2063: The Africa we want (Popular version). https://au.int/en/Agenda2063/popular_version.

So how can more of these doors open for African youth, and how can those who have already succeeded in pushing them open enable others to walk through them? **Mohildin Bushra**, Sudanese youth delegate to the COP28 and Communications Officer at the Sudan Urban Development Think Tank (SUDTT), recounts the formative and deeply moving experience of participating in a programme aiming to introduce youth from marginalised countries and communities into high-level climate policy processes. He traces this opportunity back to the growing awareness for the importance of including young people in these forums within both domestic and international institutions.

‘After it [the programme] was over, it was on the last day of COP, we had a little meeting with the delegates and the coordinators and it was quite emotional. You form ties with these people. We kind of wished it wouldn’t stop, we wished it would continue. Because every single one of these 100 young people is a good person, an incredible person.’



The strong network they built showed in future collaborations – Mohildin had to conduct an interview with an entrepreneur within the scope of his degree, and he tells us he instantly thought of one of the other participants, a female farmer from Zambia who is breaking down barriers around the stigmatisation of women in the agricultural sector. Examples like this one showcase how, when given the opportunity, young people empower and amplify each other’s voices.

All the while, hindrances such as lack of access, funding and age and gender-related biases prevent such stories from evolving in youth networks. **Structural issues, often linked to intersectional discrimination and oppression based on gender, age or religion, strategically keep youth out of decision-making arenas and thus impede them from realising their and their communities’ potential.**

In addition, youth often experience stigmatisation and backlash from authorities as well as skepticism from their immediate environment – be it family, friends or community.⁹⁹

Betty Osei Bonsu's story is, again, a wonderful example of how resilience can grow in places one would not expect. Thinking back to her childhood, she encouraged us to *'imagine a little child [...] at the age of five, dreaming of standing at the world's top stage to speak to people. And at the same time imagine that particular child in a very rural and deprived community with no option for prosperity or even the opportunity to hope or dream for something better than that particular environment. And that was myself, but still I had the dream. I grew up in a community where wisdom was just a stone's throw away'*.

Realising that she was surrounded by wisdom and potential, even in an apparently discouraging environment, sharpened her vision of how she could transform this potential into the pathway of success she is currently on. Growing up surrounded by first-hand experiences of creative ways to manage waste sensitised her for practical applications of circular economy.

'If you do not have the luxury to simply discard, you find ways to recycle. And that is my background. From that small childhood scene on, I kept dreaming.'



It might be that Betty is pointing to one of the most crucial assets for practicing resilience here: the capacity to keep dreaming, against all odds.

99 Shah, M. A., & Khan, Z. (2023). The Role of Youth Activism in Facilitating Social Change: A Catalyst for Transformation in the Contemporary Era. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(4), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.575688089>.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: PLATFORMS AND FUNDING

‘There are a lot of youth with creative and innovative ideas but lack the financial, moral and structural skills, or the aid to bring such ideas to life.’

Esther Lovia Dankyi, Field Officer at OFI [Olam Food Ingredients], Ghana

Despite being able to count on each other, institutional and financial barriers that youth activists face in their day-to-day work can put a spoke in their wheel.¹⁰⁰ Many struggle with securing reliable, long-term and sufficient funding for their projects. This is not just because of complex administrative and bureaucratic hurdles. Reaching platforms and important stakeholders can also be a huge challenge. Indeed, obtaining access to platforms, advocating for a cause and gaining visibility, especially outside of one’s own community, can be a major challenge. Sadly, these barriers often come at the expense of activists themselves. Many have confessed working for little to no salary at times, or even investing their own savings, and reaching the limits of their mental health.¹⁰¹

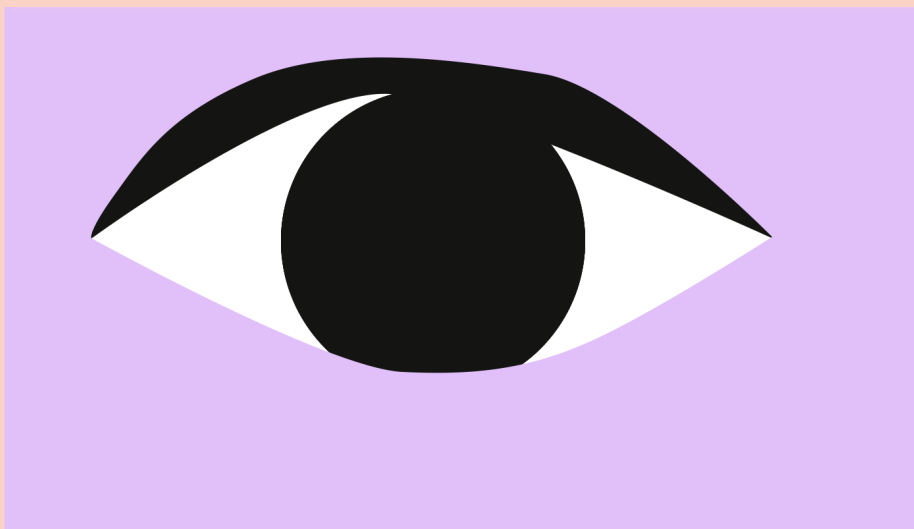
Although many of our interviewees have found innovative and creative ways to advocate for their causes and take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way, structural barriers continue to jeopardise important projects that are so desperately needed. Institutional racism in the climate sphere continues to systematically exclude BIPOC or limit their room for maneuver even when navigating key organisations for climate policy such as the United Nations.¹⁰² In global climate governance and financing, Global South perspectives are both underrepresented and underprivileged, partly due to the drastically hindered access to climate funding and grants.¹⁰³ In a world moved by money, resilience – and African resilience in particular – is more often than not still expected to draw from nothing but thin air.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Cundy, A. (2019, June 6). Young activists work hard to make a living. Financial Times. www.ft.com/content/f371a500-6ff9-11e9-bbfb-5c68069fbd15.

¹⁰² Abimbola, O., Aikins, J. K., Makhesi-Wilkinson, T. & Roberts, E. (2021). Racism and Climate (In)justice. Heinrich Böll-Stiftung.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*



Summary



The Powerful Art to Drive Change

As a narrative-driven piece of collaborative research with African youth from across the continent, this report's mission is to amplify youth voices and co-conceptualise the term of resilience beyond the definitions provided by scholarship. We thus conclude with providing some of the rich answers of interviewees when asked what exactly resilience, practiced in their day-to-day life, means to them. Throughout the data collection for the report, the term was continuously enriched by the inspiring stories they chose to share.

It is stunning to recognise that every person interviewed has a similar, yet uniquely personal, understanding of resilience. One of the interviewees' most dominant narratives defines resilience as a unique set of skills and characteristics, and a holistic perspective on life. This narrative defines resilience as the ability to fight for and reach your goal despite any obstacle that comes in your way. It rejects passivity in the face of oppressive factors around you.

'It's surviving or getting through it and developing ways in which you can't cross the line, [...] not just being a victim but actually standing up and fighting,' Fiona powerfully explains. Echoing similar sentiments, for Michael Yao Etsri resilience *'[...] is to focus on your passion irrespective of the adversities or the factors that are hindering you from achieving your passion or your goals.'*

The sense of staying true to the goals that one's mind is set to and staying true to oneself is also shared by Martha: *'Despite the challenges [...] having an unbroken spirit and working against the odds.'* For many, this capability ultimately means to grow from experiences.

According to Richard Matey, *'resilience is about coming out strong to the challenges that are around you and ensuring that these challenges do not determine your pathway or how your life is supposed to be'*.

For some, this idea of resilience translates into a very practical approach of flexibility and adaptability in their projects. Adaptation to a new environment concretely means changing the way systems are built, their capacities and infrastructures.

In Kassim Juma's words, resilience is *'the ability of how communities or individuals are prepared to overcome impacts associated with climate change'*. This way, he points out, his mangrove conservation project will also serve as a barrier to mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise.

Elias Bascoro reiterates this, stating that *'Resilience [...] involves building adaptive capacity, fostering robust infrastructure, promoting sustainable practices and enhancing social cohesion to withstand and recover from climate-related disturbances, such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise and temperature fluctuations'*.

To mention only a few examples that follow a similar track of thought, Given Patrick Mwakatungila talks about the different measures to reduce the negative impact of more frequent flooding events in her area. These include cleaning of drainage systems, planting trees and using sandbags. The community of Abdul-Hakeem Issah had to diversify their agricultural production following a soya export ban. For Ebenezer S. Morlia, adaptation meant navigating different versions of activism, including universal goals or different budgetary environments.

Scholar Dike shares her experiences of day-to-day life becoming heavily disrupted after losing a family member. While young people like Betty and Kassim talk about overcoming challenges in implementing their projects in their local community, others talk about hindrances on a larger scale through, for instance, scientific gaps, or even war and conflict.

These accounts already indicate that understandings of resilience are not made of thin air; they stem from very real and personal experiences. African youth exercise resilience in the face of challenges on every scale,

be it individual and personal hindrances, community-level obstacles, or even nation-wide or global issues.

Wonderfully, some of the youth interpret this perception of resilience through the lens of people or groups of people they identify with or look up to. *'Resilience to me would be a female. Because when you talk about [women], you're looking at gender equity [...] not just as a matter of social justice, but as a bedrock upon which a sustainable environment rests. [...] One of the resources that have made me resilient today is my mother. One way or the other, [she] just inspired me to be where I am today'*, Betty declares passionately.

Considering the many obstacles that women face trying to reach their goals, this definition of resilience resonates even more deeply. Mohildin feels similarly empowered thinking about the young community in his country: *'I define resilience as Sudanese youth, for a reason'*, he says, explaining that those that fought against the oppressive regime in Sudan were mainly young people, exactly those people that *'felt like they had no chance in the future. [...] So, what you need to do is try to fight for your rights. [...] After the revolution was successful, there was this hope that young people had in trying to change every single aspect about their lives and trying to improve upon their communities. [...] They finally see that there's a future that they can build'*. Mohildin's sense of community, seeing such a large majority of people with incredibly uncertain outlooks fight for their future and foster community solidarity, continues to be a source of inspiration for him. Haruna Abdul-Rashad's words: *'For me, resilience is to talk about stories in Africa'*, beautifully weaves together these strikingly similar narratives from different contexts.

As Mohildin and Betty highlight, a feeling of community can be a source of inspiration, but it can also be a target motivation for activism. Many realise the large-scale impact of climate change by seeing their community significantly affected and identifying this reality not as an isolated issue, but as a series of events which devastate many lives.

Scholar Dike reveals that her journey in climate action started a few years ago when she witnessed floods in her friends' and relatives' houses and them losing their possessions. This wake-up call to the

dire consequences of the climate crisis pushed her to do more: *‘So everything makes sense to me now actually, the things we did for the communities, sharing relief materials, I think everything is beginning to speak to me, telling me to do more things’.*

In similar stories, Richard Matey explains that he interrogated people about climate change and sea-level rise after seeing his own family’s house submerged in the ocean, and Francis Adu-Amankwah recalls visits to cocoa farmers who had lost their main source of income due to climate change. Out of these experiences rises a desire to help their community: *‘So it all started from being passionate about wanting to find answers and also to help others who are in vulnerable positions as a result of the impact of climate change’*, says Richard, summarising the universal feeling of empathy.

Importantly, everyone is to be included in this process, as Shaibu Mohammed points out: *‘We don’t want to leave anyone behind. No, we are bringing everyone’*. Or, to say it in Betty’s words: *‘Guys, I’m here, I’m your fellow African. Let’s make this work’*.

As soon as people acknowledge that climate change does not stop at borders, fences or mountains, they realise that it is necessary to join forces in order to manage the multiple impacts of its crisis. In realising that they share similar problems, many rely on their community as a source of resilience. Networking represents one of the most essential resources: *‘One of the things that I believe are necessary in order to achieve something is to build a great network’*, Ebenezer states. Elias Bascoro adds that *‘[m]any African communities are tightly knit, fostering a sense of belonging and support. These networks provide emotional, social and sometimes even financial support during times of crisis’*. On her part, Fiona Mugambi highlights the relevance of international partnerships, especially when it comes to finding innovative technological solutions to the challenges posed by climate change.

The experiences shared by the youth show that exercising resilience can achieve limitless results. As long as one does not give up, there is hope. Fairly, however, some consider larger external obstacles that might limit the impact of one’s actions, such as *‘systemic factors contributing*

to challenges, such as structural inequalities, systemic injustices and socio-economic disparities', as noted by Elias Bascoro, or in Given Patrick Mwakatungila's words: *'It's global and systematic challenges. Many contemporary challenges, like pandemics, global economic crisis, like environmental degradation'*. Other examples of these challenges include lack of political will, as averred by Fuseini Fahim, or harmful government policies as pointed out by Adul-Hakeem Issah and Kassim Juma. Richard Matey cites climate injustice while Betty Osei Bonsu refers to personal losses. For Fiona Mugambi, hunger and war are major obstacles. Equally important are personal limitations like mental health or lack of self-confidence. Thanks to Fiona, however, we are provided with one essential reminder when we navigate these limitations: *'The one thing we should not [do is] give up. We should not lose hope'*. Therefore, the following will provide some ideas for change based on the interviewees' needs and demands.

The interviewed youth also point out that individual actions cannot achieve pivotal transformation without targeting the structures and root causes that shape reality. After all, Elias Bascoro highlights, *'resilience aids individuals or communities in withstanding immediate crises, [but] it may not comprehensively address underlying causes or forestall future challenges'*. One must never lose sight of the big picture and must strive to create a holistic and systemic framework to address global contemporary challenges.

The youth interviewed pointed to two imperatives to push the boundaries of what is possible. Because, as many of our conversation partners highlight, Africa's youth are its biggest resource: *'Young people today also have the energy, which for me is a key resource. They are vibrant and they're able to bring the different voices together'*, Richard Matey stresses. By adding *'It's such a powerful art to drive change, to bring the decision-makers or those with power together'*, he reflects upon the first important area of change: decision-making processes. According to Kassim Juma, *'if you involve the youth in some of the issues, like in decision-making, they have a voice in some of that which would help to overcome the issue of climate change impacts'*. Having a say in the creation of policies and measures which shape their future is a major step to guarantee structural and sustainable changes.

Concurrently, fostering international cooperation is judged essential as people recognise global responsibility in the struggle against climate change. *‘These are challenges that require international cooperation to address effectively. Building resilience at this local-national level is maybe insufficient’*, Given Patrick Mwakatungila remarks. At the same time, we know that sustainable capacity building and adaptation can only be achieved when comprehensive international frameworks and locally-led action on the national and community level meaningfully intertwine. This means that, sometimes, global cooperation can also pose challenges to local advances as it might distort actual needs and resources by trying to homogenise climate change policies. As Betty Osei Bonsu urges, *‘resilience must be complemented with proactive policy measures, and if you don’t have those in your country, it becomes very difficult’*.

It thus comes down to young people’s ability to operate in a functioning framework where their ambitious actions are not just allowed, but supported and encouraged by robust governance, trust and recognition. Enhancing the capacities and resources of youth, equipping them with what they need to catalyse their motivation and actions for change, is the key message voiced by these African youth in the context of climate change resilience in practice.

Appendix



How the Report Came Together

This report is a product of a research by APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, conducted over the duration of 10 months in 2024. The report draws from both qualitative and quantitative data and aims at co-theorising and co-conceptualising key themes of the report, such as ‘resilience’, ‘adaptability’ and ‘preparedness’, in collaboration with the interviewees. To that end, the interviewed youth were also partly involved in the editing and review process.

In total, APRI’s interviewing team conducted interviews with 17 young people between 18 and 35 hailing from and representing eight African countries – Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Those countries were not deliberately chosen, but are a result of a transcontinental search for young interview partners from diverse backgrounds and professions, relying on youth networks and organisations. Most interviews were conducted via video call and lasted between one and two hours. When it was not possible to meet online due to connectivity issues or time constraints, we gave the interviewees the option to send in written responses or vocal notes. Both types of interviews used the same questionnaire which can be found in the report’s appendix. The online interviews were recorded and transcribed. The responses were uploaded to and analysed and coded in the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The code catalog then informed the structure and chapters of the report.

Four of the interviewees reviewed the coding catalog and first draft of the report with regard to accuracy, associations, patterns and narratives. They made comments and edited sections of the report and are thus listed as main authors. The report’s success was largely due to their

invaluable feedback and contributions and APRI and the Mastercard Foundation thank them for their support.

In addition to the interview process, the report carefully reviews more than 60 documents related to African youth, climate change, resilience, climate adaptation, health, agriculture, education and other relevant topics and their respective intersections.

In order to ensure fair compensation for the interviewees' time and expertise – especially given that youth are often not compensated and acknowledged for their participation and resources – we offered USD 50/hour for each interview as well as USD 50/hour for the time invested in the review process.

While an effort was certainly made to include diverse and underrepresented voices in this report, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations present in the methodology and subsequent report production. First, the needs and structure of this report necessarily favoured people with a reliable internet connection as well as some form of an online presence or international network, as those factors strongly determined whether or not one could participate in or even be considered and/or recommended for the report. Similarly, another barrier to participation in this report was English fluency, as English-speakers of course represent only a minority of the entire African population. When considering the profiles of our 17 interviewees, women are underrepresented in comparison to men (by a ratio of nearly 1:2), and voices from 'LDCs' (which constitute 33 of Africa's 54 recognised countries) are also underrepresented in this report. It is important to note the impacts of these various social and structural inequalities and therefore regard this report not as a fully comprehensive and conclusive overview of youth climate resiliency, but instead as a starting point for these discussions.

Below is the questionnaire that the interviewee answered:

- Could you please tell us a little more about your background? How does it tie in with climate?
- Over the past years, what obstacles have you faced in your work and projects? How did you cope with them?
- What does the concept of resilience mean to you? How do you practice it in your day-to-day life?
- What networks and resources do you rely on to foster resilience, both inside and outside your community?
- In your opinion, what are the specific resources of African youth when it comes to practicing resilience? What are the specific challenges (also with regard to the climate crisis)?
- What are the limitations of resilience? Are there things that cannot be achieved only via resilience?

Contributors

OLUMIDE ABIMBOLA

Main Author



Olumide Abimbola is a political economist and Director of Africa Policy Research Institute APRI, a Berlin-based African think tank. His areas of focus include trade policy, regional integration, natural resources management, and industrial development.

ELIAS BASCORO

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Elias Bascoro is a research assistant at UNICEF, focusing on migration, HIV/AIDS, food security, reproductive health, climate change, fertility, and nuptiality. His educational background is in geography, aiding him in understanding and analyzing the interconnectedness of natural and human systems. Passionate about driving positive change, Elias aims to inform policies and interventions to enhance livelihoods and well-being and has spent the past decade being involved in grassroots community.

FRANCIS ADU-AMANKWAH

Main Author, Interviewee, Editor



Francis Adu-Amankwah is a postharvest management and youth development specialist from Koforidua, Ghana. He is a PhD student in Food and Postharvest Technology at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Francis is a professional trainer, freelancer, and service provider in postharvest management, with a passion for research and youth development.

BETTY OSEI BONSU

Main Author, Interviewee, Editor, Podcast Guest



Betty Osei Bonsu is a Ghanaian circular economy enthusiast, currently serving as the Uganda Country Manager for the Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO). She leads sustainable community projects, advocates for climate policies, and empowers youth through green job initiatives and waste management solutions. Betty is also the founder of B.ISA (B. Inspired with Stories from Africa), a platform promoting community values and environmental stewardship through storytelling.

MOHILDIN BUSHRA

Main Author, Interviewee, Editor, Podcast Guest



Mohildin Bushra Abdulkarim Jubara is an electronics engineer from Sudan. Passionate about climate change and environmental activism, he served as a Project Coordinator within the Ministry of Transport, orchestrating sustainability initiatives. He currently serves as a Communications and Media Officer at the Sudan Urban Development Think Tank (SUDTT). He was also an International Youth Climate Delegate at COP28, and he is pursuing higher education in sustainable development. Currently, Mohildin is working on a project for heritage-empowered action for resilience in Tuti Island.

ESTHER LOVIA DANKYI

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Esther Lovia Dankyi is a passionate and performance driven Field Officer from Ghana. With an educational background in environmental science, she now works with Odo Serwaa Foundation and OFI, where she focuses on community outreach and farmer engagements.

SCHOLAR DIKE

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Scholar Dike is a bilingual (English & French) Public Relations Practitioner and founder of Scholar Dike Consulting Company. Her experience in human relations and interactions with young people cultivated her deep humanitarian compassion, as evidenced by her active involvement in community service initiatives, and collaborations with NGOs to bring positive change to Nigeria and Africa. She is a graduate of Mass Communication and has a Master's degree in Public and International Affairs.

MARTHA OYANTA DANIEL

Contributing Author, Interviewee, Podcast Guest



Martha Oyanta Daniel is a legal practitioner based in Gombe State, Nigeria. She is currently a State Officer at BudgIT Foundation Gombe, and is the founder of the Advocacy For Children's Initiative. She is especially interested in human rights, gender, and policy advocacy.

FUSEINI FAHIM

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Fuseini Fahim comes from Wa in the Upper West Region of Ghana and works at both the Lambussie District Assembly as a Senior Development Planning Officer and the Ghana Productive Safety Net Project as a Desk Officer. He has a BA in Integrated Development Studies and a Limited Specialization in Environment and Resource Management Studies as well as an MSC in Public Policy and Management from the University of Cape Coast.

KLARA FUNKE

Main Author, Interviewer



Klara Funke is a researcher on the nexus between environment, conflict, and human rights. She is currently studying a Master of Global Change Management at the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development. Previously, she has worked in the Europe & Central Asia division of Human Rights Watch as a research assistant and associate. She has worked with APRI as a consultant supporting the data collection, research and drafting of this report.

ABDUL-HAKEEM ISSAH

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Abdul-Hakeem Issah is the founder of GW Legacy Farms and Administrative Director at Ghana Soybeans Farmers and Aggregators Association.

KASSIM JUMA

Contributing Author, Interviewee, Podcast Guest



Mohammed Kassim Juma is the Project Coordinator of the Mikoko Pamoja Carbon Offset Project in Gazi Bay, Kenya. With a background in Coastal and Marine Resource Management, his passion lies in the conservation of mangroves. Born and raised in Gazi, he actively engages in various initiatives such as coral reef restoration, plastic collection, and research on water parameters in seagrass areas. His dedication to preserving marine resources and his community-oriented approach drive his efforts to conserve these vital ecosystems. His leadership has led to global recognition, including the UN Person of the Year Award.

HANNAH LANG

Main Author, Interviewer, Researcher, Editor



Hannah Lang is a Research Fellow in APRI's Executive Director's Office. She holds an M.Sc. in Critical Geography from UCD Ireland and a French Master's in Mediterranean Studies. Her research and work revolve around urban-rural development and planning, with a passion for creative data visualization and cartography.

RICHARD MATEY

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Richard Matey is a young researcher, environmentalist and sustainable development professional with 7+ years of experience in Ghana's environment, renewable energy, fossil fuel finance and climate change initiatives. He is skilled in environmental solutions and biomass technologies with specialties in clean cookstoves and process characterisation of energy use in small and medium-scale agro-processing enterprises. He is also one of the lead campaigners of ECA Watch Africa. He is currently the Youth Climate Council Ghana coordinator and the Climate Lead for the Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO). He has served on several environmental committees at the national level, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and National Designated Authority Technical Advisory Committee (NDA TAC) at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.

SHAIBU MOHAMMED

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Shaibu Mohammed is an ambitious youth leader from Ghana with a passion for philanthropy and altruism. He founded Better Dream Foundation, an NGO focused on youth education and empowerment. He is a Youth MP in Pusiga, Deputy Group Leader in the Youth Leadership Parliament, and Youth Minister of Education and Majority Chief Whip for the Northern Bloc of Youth Model Parliament and the Youth Empowerment Consortium. He is also involved in Ghana Youth for UNESCO and the Nkhangfi Scholarship Foundation, with interests in entrepreneurship, education, journalism, and international affairs.

EBENEZER S. MORLIA

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Ebenezer S. Morlia is a student and climate activist, researcher, student leader, and a global change-maker. He's spent years involved in climate change mitigation, intervention, and resilience and has led several research projects. He is pursuing a BSc in Biology and Chemistry at the African Methodist Episcopal University in Monrovia, Liberia. He has participated in several international conferences and is a member of the Youth Advisory Panel of the UN in Liberia as well as a Youth Envoy of the Headway Institute for Strategic Alliance (HISA). He also works as the Deputy Executive Director at Environmental Care Liberia.

FIONA MUGAMBI

Main Author, Interviewee



Fiona Mugambi is the Policy and Partnerships Lead at Octavia Carbon in Nairobi, Kenya and is passionate about innovation and efficiency. She was also previously the Lead Electrical Engineer at Octavia. She uses her profound understanding of contemporary technical challenges to drive operational excellence and establish strategic partnerships. Fiona oversees Octavia's engagement with government stakeholders, the community, and industry players in the carbon removal space.

She also leads the development of internal processes, policies, and structures within Octavia.

GIVEN PATRICK MWAKATUNGILA

Contributing Author, Interviewee, Podcast Guest



Given Patrick Mwakatungila is a Communications and Advocacy Officer at Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI) in Tanzania. Her work is deeply rooted in her passion for climate change, risk, and resilience, focusing particularly on vulnerable communities living in informal settlements. Through her involvement with DARAJA Project, she is helping to enhance early warning information systems in these vulnerable communities to reduce the severe impacts of weather and climate change.

HARUNA ABDUL RASHAD

Contributing Author, Interviewee, Podcast Guest



Haruna Abdul Rashad is from Tamale-Ghana and works on climate risk management in village communities in Northern Ghana. He holds a first degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. He is a youth leader with a passion for capacity building and youth and community development.

DIANA RUDIC

Main Author, Researcher, Editor



Diana Rudic is working at APRI supporting the research, writing, and editing of this report. She is currently finishing her Master's in Global Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. She also holds Bachelor's degrees in Economics, Political Science, and Psychology. Her research interests include globalization and inequality, borderlands and hybridity, and heterodox economic theories.

MICHAEL YAO ETSRI

Contributing Author, Interviewee



Michael Yao Etsri is an education professional and teacher, organizing seminars and workshops on climate change awareness for communities.

'Wote faako a, na wote w'ade3 so.'
You do not succeed if you stay put.