

# Enhancing Youth Engagement in Climate Change Issues in Azerbaijan

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*“We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change, and we are the last generation that can do something about it.”*

–Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington

Climate change is a central global problem that increasingly demands responses both at national and international levels. Tackling climate issues requires innovation and new approaches. In this regard, youth play an indispensable role as actors of transformation in climate action. Young people are in a unique position to make a difference as their enthusiasm, energy, and creativity are forces for action and positive change.

The Stockholm Environment Institute [warns](#) about the severity of climate change: compared to a child born in 1960, a child born in 2020 is 2.6 times more likely to experience droughts, 2.8 times more exposed to river floods, and a startling 6.8 times more likely to experience heat waves. Given these difficulties, it is essential to involve young people in decisionmaking about the environment and in promoting programs that aim to create a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future.

Hence, encouraging youth involvement in the formulation of policies and agendas should be in the interest of policymakers: doing so could result in the offering of novel concepts and creative solutions to address climate issues, as well as improve accountability and transparency.

This IDD Analytical Policy Brief will overview Azerbaijan’s climate commitments and analyze survey results on how Azerbaijani youth perceive climate change and their own role in tackling the climate crisis. It will highlight the importance of involving youth’s

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positions and opinions in decisionmaking and present policy recommendations on how to promote youth participation and enhance their role in climate change processes.

## *Azerbaijan's Climate Change Commitments*

Azerbaijan zealously has joined global efforts and initiatives dealing with the ramifications of climate change by carrying out policies for the more efficient use of water and encouraging sustainable agriculture. As previous IDD Policy Briefs have [explained](#), the reconstruction effort in Karabakh also emphasizes the use of sustainable technologies and the building of “smart cities” and “smart villages” in order to restore the liberated region’s ecosystem.

Given the country’s [rich potential](#) of onshore renewable capacity and offshore wind potential, it is one of the priority areas for the government to foster green and sustainable practices in energy and to reduce the environmental consequences.

Azerbaijan ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1995. The country acceded to the first global climate change protocol of the Convention, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, in 2000. The Kyoto Protocol limits emissions of greenhouse gasses, which cause global warming.

Azerbaijan later joined the 2015 Paris Agreement, committing itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 35 percent from 1990 levels by 2030 and a 40 percent reduction by 2050. Notably, this target reflects Azerbaijan’s ambitions to contribute to climate goals and its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint.

For that reason, Azerbaijan plans to align its climate change regulations with the highest international standards and create sector-specific guidelines for implementing the Paris Agreement in a variety of industries, especially the energy and agriculture sectors.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has begun its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, although it was anticipated to be in place by 2024, the process has not been finalized yet. According to the Ministry of Ecology, the NAP will concentrate on three areas: water, agriculture, and coastal areas. The Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) that Azerbaijan has established and executed focus on three main areas: energy efficiency in buildings (retrofitting), transportation (introducing hybrid cars and eco-driving), and the oil industry (capturing and using associated gas). The first NAMA initiatives in Azerbaijan were tested with SOCAR, a significant greenhouse gas emitter, and are being contemplated for nationwide and sectoral replication.

The document *Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development (2021)* also covers the application of renewable energy in all sectors

of the economy based on the principles of green energy. This state-driven support for the growth of renewable energy sources in Azerbaijan has been reinforced, and additional synergy for efforts has been created.

In 2021 President Aliyev signed a new renewable energy law (On the Use of Renewable Energy Sources in the Production of Electricity) and the government is currently working on a renewable energy strategy for 2022-2026. The realization of the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania-Hungary Black Sea submarine cable project, which envisages the construction of an underwater cable for the transportation of green electricity underneath the Black Sea, is another important step towards contributing to global efforts.

The latest round of climate talks (COP29) will take place in Baku in November 2024 on the basis of a decision by UN member states in December 2023 (itself predicated on a [deal](#) between Armenia and Azerbaijan for the former to support the latter's candidacy). It will enable the government to demonstrate its commitment to climate action, positioning itself as a leader in the [Silk Road region](#)—and not only in the context of traditional (hydrocarbon-based) energy resources but also in green technologies. In light of being selected to host COP29, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has declared 2024 as the Green World Solidarity Year in Azerbaijan. This decision has been adopted in order to “enhance international solidarity in the global effort against climate change,” the [document](#) said.

Due to the urgency of the climate change issue, these initiatives require undertaking serious measures at the national level with the involvement of all stakeholders. The involvement and engagement of non-state actors were reflected in the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC convention as well. UNFCCC has established a strong mandate for non-state actor participation in climate change policies and programs at all levels. Enshrined in [Article 6](#) of the Convention and reiterated in Article 12 of the [Paris Agreement](#), the role of non-state actors is recognized as critical to ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of climate change governance.

Furthermore, with reference to National Adaptation Plans, the NAP Technical Guidelines (which offer nations direction about the NAP procedure) emphasize the necessity of the need for inclusion of youth as a key stakeholder in the NAP process and contain a paragraph on integrating youth into the NAP process by “collaborating, promoting, facilitating.”

## *What Do Youth Think about Climate Change?*

The recent report published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on young people's knowledge, attitudes, and awareness regarding climate change and global warming in general, as well as their attitudes toward different measures proposed to combat climate change and its negative consequences in Azerbaijan.

Here are some of the results:

- In Azerbaijan, young people do not openly state that they are concerned about climate change. Less than 1 percent of them rank climate change as the nation's top issue right now or as the second most important issue after all.
- When asking questions about climate change awareness, the majority (45 percent) state that there is a global emergency caused by climate change. However, 22 percent of respondents consider that climate change is not a problem, while 28 percent did not have an opinion.
- Gender differences are slight and marginal: men (49 percent) answered "yes" to the emergency question on climate change more often than women (41 percent).
- Young people in Azerbaijan tend to think that the primary cause of climate change is natural causes. Across the nation, 63 percent of people think that some of the reasons for climate change are natural, while 33 percent of young people believe that human-related factors predominate. Subsequent investigation revealed that young people in the capital (85 percent) have a very high belief in the natural causes of climate change, compared to far lower beliefs in other metropolitan (64 percent) and rural (54 percent) areas. In contrast, persons with primary education (62 percent) are less likely than those with higher education (74 percent) to claim that natural processes are the source of climate change.
- Young people in Azerbaijan predominantly report having hope (72 percent) while thinking about global warming and efforts to mitigate it.
- Despite the differences in causes, the majority (61 percent) of respondents back the introduction of preventive and restrictive measures to combat climate change.
- Young people living in the capital, those with higher education, and those with higher living conditions are more enthusiastic about supporting such measures when compared to their peers with different socio-demographic characteristics.
- Overall, young people are optimistic about the future, as 72 percent report experiencing hope and 63 percent feel confident when they hear about efforts to mitigate global warming. However, a considerable number also report being indifferent (51 percent) to such actions.

## Policy Recommendations

Fighting climate change requires active and meaningful participation at all levels and scales, and young people are key drivers for change. Climate risks and vulnerabilities disproportionately affect young people around the world, and projections envisage that climate change will have a greater impact on them. Their growing involvement in climate change initiatives globally demonstrates their transformative impact and action. Youth movements such as [Fridays for Future](#), for example, have had an impact in bringing climate change to the center of the global political debate; and initiatives such as the [Global Youth Biodiversity Network](#) have significantly contributed to the formulation of key policies like the Global Biodiversity Framework. And, of course,

young people can also make a significant impact at the grassroots level, with the idea being that this ultimately affects policymaking.

But none of the above has anything to do with Azerbaijan directly. To engender greater involvement of young people in this country, we recommend the following:

*Firstly*, policymakers should champion increased attention and resources to environmental education programs as an important foundation for engaging young people in Azerbaijan. Even though youth have a general knowledge of climate change, they often lack a nuanced understanding of its impacts on their localities.

Climate change should be integrated into education systems not only in terms of understanding geophysical processes, but also as a way to better come to terms with the social, political, economic, and technological aspects of climate change.

The role of education can be crucial in encouraging young people to become involved and educated in responses to climate change. As the driving force of school education, teachers should be placed at the center of capacity-building programs. Specific programs that focus on building and enhancing the capacity of teachers in climate change education should be carried out by the government.

Relatedly, youth interaction with policymakers and participation at the national level [are closely linked](#) to education and climate change knowledge. In other parts of the world, there is a [strong correlation](#) between leadership and involvement in adaptation initiatives and higher education. On the other hand, lower involvement levels are [frequently associated](#) with lower levels of climate change education. Consequently, curriculum integration of climate adaptation and focused school education initiatives could have a positive impact on youth engagement in Azerbaijan and, in turn, on the policymaking process.

*Secondly*, policymakers need to acknowledge the significance of young people as stakeholders and guarantee that their needs and vulnerabilities are reflected in both the policymaking process and policy outcomes. Youth-inclusive government program development and implementation, along with supportive policy environments, can be key factors in helping young people contribute to the establishment of a climate-resilient society.

More actively involving youth in climate policy debates will help to build the “resilience-awareness” of young people and enhance trust in public institutions, which is (or should be) in the long-term interest of the country. Considering that young people are the most affected group by climate change, they ought to be more involved in the decisions that will affect their futures. To actively involve the youth in policymaking, policymakers can reach out to youth organizations, university clubs, and other youth networks. Strengthening the capacity of young people to support their meaningful participation in climate policy debates and decisionmaking processes is needed.

Furthermore, young people can participate in social and political activities by being provided with various avenues to become involved in the policymaking process. Ensuring they can take part in a national conversation involving climate change is in the public interest.

By providing opportunities to join the national conversation through the highlighting of youth experiences and youth champions, underscoring the dangers of climate inaction, and advocating for the mainstreaming of youth groups and organizations, the climate change message can be further amplified.

*Lastly*, the government can initiate new programs to support youth-led solutions to climate change through grants, venture capital, or in-kind support. It can motivate and financially help young people to come up with innovative products and services for a more sustainable and greener world. In this regard, government- and business-supported incubation centers can play important roles in supporting youth with finance, building partnerships, and technical issues such as registering their start-ups, licensing, and so on.