

Research

Regional Report

South Asia Research on Perceptions of Young People on Climate Change and Action

Part of

The Climate Connection

In partnership with



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The interpretations offered in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the British Council, its officers or those individuals who contributed to the research.

Lead author: Mohsen Gul

Contributing authors: Roomi Aziz (quantitative lead), Sauleha Kamal (qualitative lead), Arooma Naqvi, Waleed Shahid (research associates) and Muhammad Abdullah Arshad (M&E Co-ordinator) as well as Izzah Meyer (British Council)

Visual author: Rabia Zain (Splotch Creations)

Reviewers: Harriet Thew, Adam Sharpe, Judy N Muthuri, and Maria Jesus Iraola, as well as Dr Maryam Rab and Catherine Sinclair-Jones

The British Council has prepared this publication ahead of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021, also known as COP26. This report collates youth narratives from across South Asia and aims to stimulate discussion with young people around effective engagement on climate action, helping to shape sustainable change which will deliver lasting impact.

List of abbreviations

COP	Conferences of Parties
COP12	The 2006 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP19	The 2013 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP25	The 2019 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP26	The 2021 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Covid-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
FGD	Focus group discussion
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GLOF	Glacial lake outburst flood
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
KII	Key informant interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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*Disclaimer – These are imaginary characters, and do not bear any resemblance in appearance and narrative to any one real person

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Foreword

The British Council engages with young people, the youth workforce and youth networks through our work in English, Education and the Arts. With a presence in more than 100 countries and connections with more than 790 million people, we create opportunities for dialogue between these young people with global leaders, policymakers, scientists, educators and artists. In so doing, we support the creation of new skills and knowledge, and creative and innovative solutions, mobilising the current and next generation of climate leaders to support transformational change on the ground.

Since young people are a core audience of the British Council and are also likely to be the most affected by climate-related challenges in the future, it is critical to acknowledge the voices heard through this regional research report and engage young people in addressing and finding solutions to climate challenges. With climate emerging as a common language spoken by all young people across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, there is an opportunity for the British Council to mainstream agency and insights of diverse young people (especially those from marginalised and vulnerable communities) into policy engagement processes and climate governance structures and support them to play a leading role in climate action around the globe.

This research builds on this existing need to develop a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, challenges and readiness of youth in South Asia (particularly in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to tackle climate vulnerability and develop road maps to address these looming threats. There remain systemic barriers to meaningful youth engagement in all four countries, especially for those from marginalised and vulnerable communities. The research highlighted the gaps in current engagement and readiness for climate action across diverse youth groups in the region.

The burden of responsibility lies on the leaders and policymakers to provide access to knowledge and skills, and meaningful engagement opportunities, for all young people to co-develop and sustain climate solutions, and act as anchors for collective climate stewardship across the region and in their respective countries and communities. This could be done through arts and culture, education and the English language, and build on the agency, ideas, innovation and real youth-led change fostered through national and regional climate connections.



How to read this report

The report is divided into four main sections: regional context, research design, country snapshots and regional findings. Additional features have been built across the report to help enhance the reader's experience and understanding of the scope and breadth of climate issues for young people in the region:

Characters*

Eight imaginary characters have been introduced in the report to contextualise the research findings. The aim is to illustrate the experiences and concerns of youth through the voices of characters from across the region. This is meant to help readers better understand the regional scope of climate change challenges and action.

*Disclaimer – These are imaginary characters, and do not bear any resemblance in appearance and narrative to any one real person.

Spotlight box

Spotlight boxes have been placed throughout the report to share field stories, narratives and additional notes to help the reader fully contextualise the climate and development related issues and opportunities for young people in the region.

Look out for the Spotlight icon.



Report structure

The research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, challenges and readiness of youth in South Asia, more specifically in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, around climate vulnerability and their action plan for the looming threats. The emerging themes from the quantitative and qualitative data collected across all four countries have been discussed under these broader sections:

• climate challenges affecting young people (with particular focus on vulnerable youth groups)

• youth engagement challenges and opportunities for local government and other stakeholders/networks

• skills requirements for youth to become climate leaders of the future (particularly women and girls and those from rural areas)

• potential tools/mediums for youth to create awareness on climate action

• civil society role for sensitisation and engagement of communities, especially young people

• challenges for effective youth engagement for climate action

• opportunities that exist for youth to take climate action

• fluency in the English language and climate activism.

The findings and recommendations are presented for all key stakeholders, including the policymakers, civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations, academia, private sector organisations, youth practitioners and young leaders themselves (particularly from marginalised youth groups) including but not limited to the transgender people, youth with disabilities, ethnic/religious minorities and indigenous youth.

Executive summary

Home to 1.8 billion of the world's population, South Asia makes up a significant portion of the global poor – of the estimated 736 million extreme poor worldwide, 216 million or 29 per cent live in South Asia – making countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka some of the most susceptible to climatic challenges. Two noticeable barriers to effective interventions on climate change within the region are gaps in knowledge regarding the social, psychological, economic and political impacts of climate change and the appropriate capacity of stakeholders to intervene.

This research approaches everyday understandings and perceptions of climate-related issues faced by young people as a cultural phenomenon, whereby culture is embedded in action and communication. The climate change perceptions and action determine those practices and shape climate understandings based on the locally, grounded and culturally rich experiences in each country.

The research builds on this existing need to develop a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes and readiness of young people in South Asia, specifically in the countries mentioned above, around climate vulnerability and their action plan around looming threats. In addition, based on the analysis, the research makes recommendations for effective engagement with young people around climate action and collects youth narratives from South Asia to inform thinking and practice in the run-up to COP26 and beyond. The research engaged more than 5,261 respondents aged 18–25 through a quantitative survey and employed 44 focus group discussions with interviews were held with 84 participants

from diverse professional backgrounds ranging from education, government, civil society organisations (CSO), non-governmental organisations (NGO), international non-governmental organisations (INGO) and community service to youth groups and volunteering sectors.

Regional overview

While nine out of ten young people in Bangladesh think that climate change will be the biggest risk to their countries in coming years, only seven out of ten in urban Pakistan and Sri Lanka, hold the same view. The research further identified poverty and unemployment as other priority issues faced by young people. This trend is classic for developing economies such as the participating research countries where the environment-poverty paradox exists, and environmental protection is perceived to be a luxury. The linkage of poverty, environment and livelihoods needs to be made more explicit. Nowhere is the overlap between the poverty and environment agendas more starkly illustrated than in climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In recent years, through lived experiences in high climate risk scenarios and global push around climate action, young people have started to engage proactively with these environmental concerns, recognising the connection to their job prospects and quality of life. With a narrow focus on climate literacy and environmental education across the region, most young people have little understanding of climate change as a multi-faceted issue and require further information to contextualise the scope and severity of climate change as a priority concern for them.

There remain systemic barriers to meaningful youth engagement in all four countries, but the widest gaps exist for the already vulnerable and marginalised youth groups. The research highlights the level of perceived engagement and readiness for climate action by youth groups in the region. The gap is most significant for rural transgender youth from Bangladesh. Pakistan rural women and girls, and rural transgender youth have the lower level of perceived preparedness to tackle with climate challenges. On average, men and boys have higher engagement and participation towards climate action activities than women and girls. In line with the 'leave no one behind' promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a clear need to ensure equality of access in climate change action and leadership, especially when more than 80 per cent of young people in the region are unaware of COP26 and their possible role in informing it.

Afghanistan

More than half of the participants identified poor people and communities from mountains as the population segments most affected by climate change. Nearly 86 per cent of the participants thought that their communities were now more climate-vulnerable in the wake of Covid-19, while more than 90 per cent of the youth expressed their desire to build their community's resilience following the impact of Covid-19.

Bangladesh

Nine out of ten participants from Bangladesh agreed that climate change would be the biggest threat to their country in the coming years. One-fifth of the participants marked persons with disabilities as the group most affected by climate change, closely followed by women and girls. Only 18.6 per cent of the participants had access to affordable capacity-building resources on climate action, while 46.7 per cent had no access.

Sri Lanka

One out of five youth respondents from Sri Lanka have been observing climate-related changes in their communities for over five years, but seven out of ten youth had never participated in any climate change awareness or mitigation activity. They do, however, believe they can play an important role in building climate resilience.

Pakistan

In urban areas, almost a third of the participants have been observing climate challenges in the last three to four years, compared to a third of rural participants having observed these changes for more than five years, which indicates that climate change is seen to have affected urban areas more recently. Urban women and girls are twice as likely as urban men and boys to have experienced climate-related incidents. Urban transgender youth are three times more likely than urban men and boys to have experience these changes.

¹ https://data.worldbank.org/country/8S

² https://worldbank.github.io/SARMD_guidelines/poverty-measures.html

Key recommendations

A cultural relations approach to climate change, which considers the priorities and needs of diverse socio-economic youth groups, provides a useful way for policymakers and civil society actors to identify ways to build climate change resilience and recognise the pivotal role of young people in shaping change in their countries and communities. This could be done through arts and culture, education and the English language, and build on the agency, ideas, innovation and authentic youth-led change fostered through national and regional climate connections.

The recommendations for holistic youth engagement for climate action in South Asia at regional and national levels are presented for all stakeholders, including policymakers, CSOs/NGOs, academics, private sector organisations, youth practitioners and young leaders themselves, particularly those from marginalised youth groups (including but not limited to transgender youth, young persons with disabilities, ethnic/religious minorities, and indigenous youth).

Policymakers and national governments to

 include all youth groups – especially those who are often left out of the mainstream such as gender minorities, young people with disabilities, refugees, ethnic minorities and more – in climate action to make it more relevant, sustainable and effective

2. remove systemic barriers such as access to institutions, lack of resources, hierarchical social culture, corruption and politicisation of youth organisations, to meaningfully engage youth in climate action.

Youth activists, NGOs, CSOs and media to

1. work closely with multi-level government institutions to get access to necessary resources and support.

2. collaborate to leverage fundraising, networking, resource-sharing, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainable impact opportunities.

3. ensure inclusivity: reach out to youth living in remote areas, youth with disabilities, third-gender youth, women, youth from indigenous communities (there is a sizeable minority of diverse indigenous communities in Bangladesh; a very small community of indigenous Vedda people in Sri Lanka; and some minority tribal peoples in Balochistan, Sindh, FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan) etc.

4. influence local and national policies to become both climate-friendly and youth-friendly.

5. gather support for youth climate activists and change-makers from respective communities to protect them from the attack by anti-climate interest groups and political/extremist interventions.

6. encourage youth creativity and innovation for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

7. create more inclusive and safe spaces where:

• youth are not afraid to speak out about climate change

 climate change is acknowledged as a global, national and community-level issue and mitigation and adaptation measures are for the greater good and in the interest of all

• youth have opportunities for innovation, dialogue and volunteer action.

• ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of youth climate action initiatives through cross-sectoral support

• expand internet access, particularly in rural areas, to help and support the cause of climate awareness and activism

Civil society organisations and academia to

1. teach the language of climate change and effective climate action to harness youth momentum. Youth currently lack the knowledge of how to engage in effective climate action and lack the language to encourage climate action among their peers and communities. Easy access to local and global literature and resources around climate science, climate action and resilience building can help remedy that.

2. develop platforms and structures for climate literacy and climate action preparedness. Young people are willing to learn but either are unaware of or lack access to platforms that would effectively enhance their knowledge and skills for climate action. Establishing global, regional and national platforms for knowledge sharing and skills building between young climate activists and change agents can better prepare youth for effective climate action.

3. build on traditional/indigenous knowledge of young people to tackle climate change.

4. encourage UK–South Asia and South–South co-operation for evidence on youth climate action.

Climate/youth advocacy organisations and young people to

1. use youth-friendly media and tools for climate action engagement. For instance, a regional transmedia advocacy campaign should be launched in multiple and international languages to enhance awareness around climate change and the role diverse youth groups, particularly vulnerable high-risk groups, can play in leading climate action at the policy and practice level in their communities, and on a wider stage. At the national level, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of communication platforms that exist beyond traditional and social media (including family and community members) and identify innovative programme ideas that could support climate change interventions.



Demographics and insights

Gender divide **Overall picture** Country wise gender divide Afghanistan male 49% female 51% male 50% Pakistan female 50% Other 1% male 49% female 49% Bangladesh Other 2% male 49% female 49% other 1% Sri Lanka male 54% female 45% Other 1%



 highest participation by individuals with higher secondary in Afghanistan 33%
Bangladesh 39% and Sri Lanka 54%

 rural highest participation by individuals with high school to higher secondary education.

 urban highest participation by individuals with higher secondary and graduation level of education

Occupation

Employement status

employed, 23%	unemployed, 58%
students	30%
private employee	13%
businessperson	9%
daily wager	6%
government employee	4%
other	11%

Participants' level of English (self-reported)				
Level of proficiency	Percent	Area type	Highest education	Country
Beginner	31%	rural: 18% urban:12%	primary and below	Afghanistan: 15% Pakistan:10% Bangladesh: 5% Sri Lanka: 2%
Elementary	37%	rural: 19% urban:18%	higher secondary	Bangladesh: 15% Pakistan: 9% Afghanistan: 7% Sri Lanka: 6%
Intermediate	26%	rural: 11% urban:15%	higher secondary	Bangladesh: 11% Sri Lanka: 9% Pakistan: 5% Afghanistan: 2%
Advanced	6%	rural: 2% urban: 4%	graduation	Sri Lanka: 3% Bangladesh: 2% Pakistan: 1%

English is necessary for communicating ideas and influencing others

yes, 77%		no, 23%		
Effective tools/activities for climate action				
Most reliable sources for getting inform climate change	nation on M	Most effective activity to influence the political decision making on climate issues		
Parents and peers 26%	F	Public campaign	42%	
TV 24%	V	/oting in elections	19%	
Social media and internet 20%	S	Showcasing community ed impact projects	18%	
Educational institute 18%	E	Engagement of political representatives	18%	
Newspaper 12%	J	loining a political party	3%	



Regional context

According to Save the Children (Chan, Leung and Pulmano, 2020, p. 7), 'young people in Asia and the Pacific are no strangers to the negative impact of the Climate Crisis. Many have witnessed the effects of the climate crisis first-hand. Over 77 per cent of children and youth reported having noticed more climate-related disasters locally in the last two years; 23 per cent reported experiencing extreme temperature, while 30 per cent experienced floods or more intense rains.' A decrease in economic opportunities is also reported as a visible impact of climate change.

Home to 1.8 billion of the world's population, South Asia makes up a significant portion of the global poor – of the estimated 736 million extreme poor worldwide, 216 million (29 per cent) live in South Asia – making countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka some of the most susceptible to climatic challenges. Two noticeable barriers to effective interventions on climate change within the region are gaps in knowledge regarding the social, psychological, economic and political impacts of climate change and the appropriate capacity of stakeholders to intervene.

A climate fund update in 2017 highlights that the four countries mentioned above receive a mere 32 per cent share of the global funds available to meet these challenges. This disproportionate allocation further jeopardises the future of young people in the region. According to the World Bank, in the past decade alone, roughly 700 million people in the South Asia region have been affected by climate change-related disasters causing damages worth US\$149.27 billion (Fallesen et al., 2019). By 2030, the World Bank estimates that climate change could push 62 million South Asians below the extreme poverty line (World Bank, 2020).

The effects of climate change are worse for the 300 million young people in the region (one-fifth of the total population), putting countries such as Pakistan, which has one of the largest youth populations in the world, at even greater risk. Given this sizable youth population, young people will be most affected by these challenges in the coming years. They will need education, information and training to be positively engaged in public awareness and participate in disaster mitigation to deal with climate-related challenges. As the next generation assume the roles of leaders, policymakers and decision-makers in the coming years, it is critical to engage them in action against climate change and the development of more equitable and climate-resilient societies.

To mitigate climate-related disasters and accomplish goals set out in the SDGs, particularly Goal 13: Climate Action, and the Paris Agreement, which reaffirms intergenerational equity as a guiding principle shaping climate change, there is a need for youth-centric global, regional and local level interventions to address the threats.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the youngest and fastest growing countries in the world. Estimates in 2014 place more than 60 per cent of the population below 25 years of age (Das Gupta et al., 2014). As young people are the largest demographic in the country, they should be actively involved in addressing Afghanistan's urgent climate change needs and priorities. It is also important to recognise that youth, as a category, cuts across ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, class and other socio-cultural lines. Thus, increasing the involvement and engagement of youth on climate change governance has widespread

³ https://data.worldbank.org/country/8S

⁴ https://worldbank.github.io/SARMD_guidelines/poverty-measures.html

benefits for disseminating information. It is also crucial for raising awareness across a diverse group of stakeholders and helping build nationwide adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change. However, in terms of climate action, a deeper analysis of climate impact, vulnerability and opportunities would be needed to highlight the impact on marginalised populations including women and girls and the transformative role this segment of population could play in issues related to climate change.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, despite contributing a mere 0.41 per cent of global emissions. It ranks seventh out of 181 countries in the Climate Risk Index (Eckstein et al., 2020), indicating a high level of vulnerability to more frequent or more severe climatic events. At the same time, when examining the effects of climate change in Bangladesh, it is essential to consider the impact on the young generation of Bangladeshi people which according to the United Nations Population Fund, 27.9 per cent are 10–24 years old (UNFPA, 2021).

In a report written on behalf of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2019), it was suggested that climate change is a vital issue for the children of Bangladesh not only because they are one of the affected groups at present, but also because their future - and their children's future – will be transformed by the actions taken now to address climate change. The same report showed that climate risks confronting children are diverse, ranging from natural disasters, such as cyclones and extreme temperatures, to psychological wellbeing and nutritional intake. Furthermore, the National Youth Policy 2017 acknowledges that youth affected by 'calamities and youth contracting communicable diseases require additional attention in empowerment, education, sustainable development and so on. Considering that climate change will disproportionately affect vulnerable youth groups, such as women, transgender

people, youth with disabilities, rural-based youth and illiterate/unskilled youth, further research is needed to understand what specific measures can be taken to address this issue.

Pakistan

Pakistan is the fifth most populous and one of the youngest countries in the world. Currently, it has the largest generation of young people ever recorded in national history; 68 per cent of Pakistanis are below the age of 30, and 27 per cent are aged between 15 and 29 (Najam and Bari, 2017). Since young people form the biggest segment of society, they can play a significant role as agents of change in the development of the country and in tackling climate change.

The conundrum of the youth bulge is that the right actions and policies could transform it into an enabler of economic and human development; however, inaction has the potential to unleash a vicious cycle of low growth and low human development. Pakistan's demographic dividend window is predicted to close in 2045, overlapping with the timelines of predicted climate change scenarios for 2050, indicating irreversible damage. Pakistan's working-age population includes approximately 3.5 million unemployed people. Every year, for the next five years, an additional 1.4 million or more people of working age will join the labour force. As we move forward, a green transition could create millions of jobs to address the massive unemployment faced by young people in the country.

Climate change impacts can have a detrimental effect on the lives, education and mental health of young people, with a disproportionately higher impact on women and girls. The 2010 floods in Pakistan affected more than 2.8 million children below the age of five, with under-five mortality rates much higher in flood-affected areas than the national average (Memon and Sharjeel, 2015). A study by Plan International after the 2010 super floods in Pakistan revealed that 73 per cent of school-going children aged 10 to 19 displayed high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, with displaced girls most likely to be affected by trauma (Morrissey et al., 2016). Extreme episodes of natural disasters such as floods and droughts also cause a significant decline in school attendance, especially for girls. It is critical for Pakistan to adopt a climate compatible development pathway by employing young people through pertinent opportunities enabling the transformation of the youth bulge into a youth dividend.

Sri Lanka

Climate change is one of the most important issues affecting young people today, especially in developing countries such as Sri Lanka that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, have a large youth population and rely on natural resources for large parts of their economy. Young people are among the most vulnerable and exposed groups in society and depend on successful adaptation to shield them from climate-related losses and damages, including economic and non-economic impacts such as those on nutrition, education, physical and mental health, livelihoods, social cohesion and natural ecosystems.

Sri Lanka has a strong education system and one of the highest literacy rates in the region. However, large parts of its population are still rural, dependent on agriculture and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Besides climate change, they face challenges in finding employment, and many lack the right kind of education or training to meet the demand of the existing labour market (UNDP, GEF/SGP, 2016). Young people in Sri Lanka often lack appropriate access to information, finance and capacities to start their own businesses or address the challenges of sustainable development and climate change.

To solve climate-related issues and adapt to the increasingly frequent and intense impacts of climate change, it is pivotal to strengthen youth engagement and empower young people to participate in processes on different levels. It is important to ensure that their voices are heard and that they are part of the decision-making processes related to climate change adaptation actions, as well as beneficiaries of adaptation processes at the national and global level.

The research builds on this existing need to develop a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes and readiness of young people in South Asia, specifically in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka around climate vulnerability and their action plan around looming threats. In addition, based on the analysis, the research makes recommendations for effective engagement with young people around climate action and collects youth narratives from South Asia to inform thinking and practice in the run-up to COP26 and beyond.



Climate change and cultural relations

As a cultural relations organisation, the British Council applies a cultural perspective to climate change, recognising the links between culture and climate, whereby natural phenomena both impact and are affected by culture (Kothari and Arnall, 2019). Climate change has entered into public discourse in ways that are highly politicised and contested, and which support individual, collective and institutional responses (Brace and Geoghegan, 2011). Such knowledge and practice are culturally situated, making climate change a new reality for most population groups, particularly young people who are faced with an increasingly complex set of challenges around their environmental and cultural contexts.

According to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Massey, 2020), recognising the importance of culture in sustainable development means exploring the connections between culture and the environment. Culture influences our understanding of the environment and our relationship with it on a deep level. Concern for the welfare of future generations is already explicitly environmental; it should also be cultural. Integrating more culturally focused contributions into the creation and deliberation of climate change scenarios would make climate change solutions more inclusive and accessible. Understanding climate change in its cultural form provides space for more creative ways of acting on and thinking about uncertain futures (Tyszczuk and Smith, 2018).

This research approaches everyday understandings and perceptions of climate-related issues faced by young people as a cultural phenomenon, whereby culture is embedded in action and communication. The climate change perceptions and action determine those practices and shape climate understandings based on the locally grounded and culturally rich experiences in each country.

A cultural relations approach to climate change, which considers the priorities and needs of diverse socio-economic youth groups, provides a useful way for policymakers and civil society actors to identify ways to build climate change resilience and recognise the pivotal role of young people in shaping change in their countries and communities. This could be done through arts and culture, education and the English language, and build on the agency, ideas, innovation and authentic youth-led change fostered through national and regional climate connections.



Research design

For this study, the research team employed a mixed-methods approach for collecting data, and its application was based on the local context of each country. The quantitative data collection incorporated surveys using stratified sampling techniques, whereas the qualitative data collection featured focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). Participants of the quantitative portion of the study for each country were young people aged between 18 and 25 years (except for Afghanistan where the survey sample age was extended to 35 to capture the experience of diverse groups facing youth transitions at a later stage), while young people between 26 and 34 years old featured as participants for FGDs.

To facilitate the in-depth understanding of climate change and youth participation in climate change advocacy and mitigation, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were administered using semi-structured interviews. The focal respondents for this exercise were people with professional backgrounds in the education, government, CSO, NGO/INGO, community service, youth groups and volunteering sectors.

As this research study focuses on young people, each country gives fair representation to all segments falling under this scope, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, disability status and language. Of the country's population sample, 50 per cent were women, and a percentage of the selected sample was allocated for young people with disabilities, while surveys and semi-structured interview questions were translated into local languages to elicit a natural response.

The following section specifies the methodology employed in each country.

Case methodology and study design

Afghanistan

The research covered five provinces of Afghanistan: Nangarhar, Badghis, Samangan, Kandahar and Kabul. Each of the provinces was randomly selected from each zone (Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern and Central) within the country. This methodology was selected in order to project fair regional climate change volatility due to surface elevation, distance from the sea, the influence of the Hindu Kush mountains, the Himalayan range and community resilience present in Afghanistan. While selecting the communities, secure and relatively insecure districts were identified, and the safer districts and communities chosen to ensure the safety and wellbeing of on-field staff. These factors, coupled with existing challenges people face in the context of climate change perception and its mitigation, were underpinned with a country analysis of the literature review in the research inception phase.

The country data collection for Afghanistan comprised a quantitative survey of 1,160 young people aged between 18 and 35 years, 12 KIIs of participants belonging to the environment/climate sector, and five FGDs of youth groups and community workers. Of the total surveys, 2 per cent (22 surveys) were allotted to people with disabilities. While reaching out to disadvantaged participants was a challenge, community leaders offered valuable support which made this outreach possible.

For the fieldwork, 20 on-field staff (ten men and ten women) were recruited and trained. The training staff was coached to administer

data collection tools: awareness of the study's objectives, ethical considerations, participant selection techniques and techniques for an interview; and facilitate FGDs, consent forms, respondent anonymity and data recording. One of the challenges the Afghanistan team encountered was training the interviewers to maintain the course of interview guestions to be stringently in line with the climate change phenomenon and prevent the implicit emergence of anything pertaining to war ramifications that might have caused an emotive response from participants. This issue was addressed during the training process of the data collection team, who were made aware of these ethical issues and advised on how to address them.

Expert enumerators reviewed the translated transcripts acquired through semi-structured interviews and field surveys, recordings were heard carefully, and unaccepted work reported before finalising the final data report. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation assistants ensured that the interviews were authentic by carrying out surprise visits and calls.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh used a mixed methodology with various stakeholders for data collection, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative section of the study involved direct one-on-one surveys with young people (between 18 and 25 years old) across Bangladesh, representing various locations, occupations and genders. A total of 1,600 surveys were carried out in the quantitative leg through physical means (pen and paper method) to give a statistically significant representation for the critical segments with a 95 per cent confidence level and five per cent margin of error.

The qualitative section of the study involved two methods, FGDs and KIIs, to obtain information from youth segments, policymakers and climate leaders from both the public and private sectors. A total of 15 Focus Group Discussions were held with youth participants (aged 26-35) representing various occupations, gend er, and locations. Additionally, a total of 15 KIIs were conducted with policymakers and climate leaders from the public, private and academic spheres. All KIIs and FGDs were recorded, transcribed and analysed for thematic contents through the analysis framework in accordance with the British Council's ethical guidelines.

Pakistan

A mixed methodology was used for primary data collection, involving both qualitative and quantitative elements. Under the quantitative component, a multi-stage, geographically clustered sampling design was put in place to gather survey data from young people aged between 18 and 25 representing various locations, genders and occupation. A total of 1,151 responses were collected through face-to-face interactions with respondents on an android-based application. The survey was conducted in both urban and rural areas, where up to three districts were selected in each region based on their geography, socio-economic disparity and climate vulnerability.

FGDs and KIIs were used in the quantitative section of the survey to gain an in-depth knowledge of climate action and youth activism within the region. A total of 14 FGDs were conducted in seven separate regions, with both male and female youth participants recruited through snowball sampling and a recruitment guestionnaire. A total of 32 KIIs were conducted with policymakers, youth practitioners and climate leaders from the public, private and academic spheres. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling, and one-on-one interviews were held with the respondents to gather an understanding of the role of young people and other key stakeholders in leading climate action within the region. All KIIs and FGDs were recorded, transcribed and analysed for thematic content under the analysis framework.

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan research design featured a representative sample of 1,350 participants for the quantitative part in which each province (limited to Western, Central, Southern, North-Western, Sabaragamuwa, Eastern, North-Central, UVA and Northern) was given fair representation based on population distribution by gender (50/50), ethnic division, occupation and an allocated two per cent quota for respondents with disabilities. Particularly for the qualitative portion, ten FGDs were administered with young people (between 26 and 35 years old) belonging to policy, climate change, academia and private sectors. Simultaneously, the KIIs involved 25 participants belonging to areas such as environmental protection and preservation. government, development, agriculture, fisheries, energy, corporate and media. In the Sri Lankan context, these FGDs and KIIs proved to be pivotal in gaining insights into the latest developments at national policy. think tank and civil society levels.

Due to Covid-19, all regional research co-ordinators and interviewers were trained via online sessions, with guiding documents and weekly monitoring calls to assure the quality and reliability of the entire process. During data collection, services of the National Youth Services Council were taken to magnify the data collection process and certify the accuracy and pertinence of data. Like other country research teams, the Sri Lankan team was also uncompromising on quality assurance aspects for the merit of data and its systematic inclusion in the country report. While following a strict ethical code of conduct during the data collection phase, data protection and authenticity were ensured using participant consent forms, encrypted storage devices and an anonymity option. Technical experts were taken on board for feedback and quality review of the research findings.



Data analysis

Data acquired from the survey questionnaires was analysed through statistical software (MS Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 20.0) to include standard descriptive statistics including frequencies and means. Comparisons of key groups such as gender, age, location (urban/rural) and regional indicators were undertaken. Moreover, the exported quantitative data to SPSS 20.0 was cleaned in its raw form, and any discrepancies pertaining to possible errors were assessed.

All qualitative data was translated by expert enumerators of each country using audio files to ensure precise translation of responses into English. Qualitative data acquired from KIIs and FGDs was analysed in relation to major themes identified within the preliminary research (i.e. the country literature reviews). The KIIs and FGDs were analysed through disaggregating data by gender, age group, location (urban/rural) and comparing the commonalities and key terms derived from the data to what the preliminary research suggested using NVivo qualitative analysis software.

The overall research process is summarised as follows:



Country snapshot

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Afghanistan snapshot

Demographics



Almost **one-fifth** of the youth participantsfrom Afghanistan had had no schooling (12 per cent of females versus three per cent of males).

Almost half of the participants were currently unemployed while one-fifth were studying. For almost 28 per cent of the respondents, the main breadwinner was a daily wager.



Two per cent of the respondents had a disability and **39** per cent lived in rural areas.

Key challenges for young people



More than 53 per cent of youth considered poverty and unemployment as the top two most important issues for youth today, with lack of access to information highlighted as the third most important issue (21 per cent)



For the participants in Afghanistan, the most common climate challenges observed were depletion of freshwater resources (34 per cent), followed by decreased livestock productivity at 16 per cent



Almost **36** per cent of youth had been observing climate-related challenges in their communities for more than five years



Nine out of ten participants agreed that climate change will be the biggest threat to Afghanistan in the future



More than **half** of the participants identified poor people and mountain communities as the population segments likely to be most affected by climate change



Nearly 41 per cent of the participants had experienced a climate-posed incident

Youth preparedness for climate action



Nine out of **ten** Afghan young people agreed that they were worried about the effects of climate change.



More than 92 per cent of participants felt that young people today play a critical role in addressing climate-related challenges



Nine out of ten strongly believed that acquiring knowledge and informing others on climate change is a public responsibility



More than **82** per cent agreed that they had access to information about events and developments on climate change in their local communities

Youth readiness for climate action



Nine out of **ten** Afghan young people felt they can play the role of an awareness agent on climate change within their communities.



Almost **80** per cent of youth felt that they were taking practical steps to protect their community, peers and family from climate-related changes



Almost **82** per cent of the respondents had never participated in any climate change awareness or mitigation activity



Males were more likely to have participated in any climate change mitigation activity (**28** per cent), compared to females (**11**per cent).



More than **73** per cent felt that they had spoken about the threat of climate change within their communities

Youth engagement opportunities





Rural youth were more likely to think this way (**67** per cent) compared to urban youth (**54** per cent).

3

Urban males were less likely to agree with the view that the government prioritises climate change (**45** per cent) compared to rural males (**66** per cent).



Youth in rural areas were less likely to be engaged in community development activities (**52** per cent) compared to urban youth (**72** per cent).

5

Seven out of **ten** young people felt able to use digital technology to create awareness and educate and influence peers on climate-posed threats.

Youth engagement challenges

Almost **45** per cent of youth identified a lack of or no access to knowledge resources and youth engagement opportunities by civil society organisations as the key challenge restricting their participation in climate action

Sources of information



common and reliable source of climate-related information.



More than **37** per cent of Afghan youth considered Facebook as the most reliable digital medium for climate-related information (**36** per cent), closely followed by television news at 33 per cent.

Youth in Afghanistan were at least **twice** as likely to hear about climate-change-related information from friends than youth in any other country.



Only eight per cent of

resources, while 69 per

cent had no access.

participants had access to

affordable capacity-building

Females were more likely to rely on television for climate-related information (**14** per cent) than males (**four** per cent).



Almost **88** per cent of participants agreed to social media being a good source of information on climate change and related issues.

Youth rely more on Facebook than on digital newspapers (**37** per cent

versus 32 per cent).

English language and climate activism



Nine out of **ten** participants considered English useful in communicating ideas and influencing others

Nine out of **ten** urban females in Afghanistan considered English useful

Bangladesh snapshot

Demographics



All youth participants had some level of schooling, with a quarter having at least primary school education, and four out of ten having secondary or higher education.



Of the respondents, 39 per cent were students, 21 per cent unemployed and 41 per cent employed.



Four per cent had a disability, **two** per cent were transgender and **six** per cent belonged to indigenous groups.



Transgender youth in urban areas were more likely to have primary level education than transgender youth in rural areas. All of the rural transgender respondents were unemployed.

Key challenges for young people



More than **42** per cent of youth considered poverty and unemployment as the top **two** most important issues for youth today, with access to education highlighted as the **third** most important issue.



The most common climate change challenges observed were floods, cited by almost **38** per cent of participants, followed by disturbed rainfall patterns at **13** per cent.



Four out of ten young people reported observing climate challenges in their communities for more than five years.



Nine out of ten participants agreed that climate change will be the biggest threat to Bangladesh in the future.



20 per cent of the participants identified persons with disabilities as the group most affected by climate change, closely followed by women and girls (16 per cent).



Almost **75** per cent of Bangladeshi youth had experienced a climate-posed incident, with almost 68 per cent having experienced floods, and 23 per cent storms and cyclones.

Youth preparedness for climate action



More than **94** per cent of rural youth, and **88** per cent of urban youth, were not familiar with the SDGs.



More than **91** per cent of the participants did not have any knowledge of **COP26**, but they expressed eagerness to learn about climate issues.



One in **ten** participants felt that young people today play a critical role in addressing climate-related challenges, and that acquiring knowledge about climate change and informing others is a public responsibility.

Youth readiness for climate action



Almost **36** per cent of youth identified education, campaigning and activism, and policy level changes as critical to positively tackling climate change.



More than half of the respondents have spoken about climate issues at one point or other in their personal lives.



Bangladeshi youth in urban areas (**25** per cent) are more likely to have attended any climate change related awareness session than youth in rural areas (**17** per cent).



Urban males are more likely to have participated in climate action (**34** per cent) compared to urban females (**15** per cent) or rural males (**15** per cent).

Youth engagement opportunities

Almost **80** per cent of the young participants believed that the government thinks of climate change as a serious and urgent challenge.



Only **19** per cent of the participants had access to affordable capacity-building resources on climate action, while **47** per cent had no access.

Youth engagement challenges

Almost **28** per cent of participants from Bangladesh ranked lack of or no youth engagement opportunities by the government as the biggest challenge towards ensuring youth participation in climate action.



More than **three-quarters** of youth were able to use digital technology to create awareness, educate and influence on climate-posted threats.

Youth preparedness for climate action



Television emerged as the most common and reliable source of information, cited by more than **31** per cent of participants.



Urban males are more likely to rely on Facebook (**31** per cent) than rural males were (**20** per cent).



Nine out of **ten y**oung people agreed to social media being a good source of information on climate change and related issues, while **eight** out of **ten** believed that their opinion on climate issues will matter.



More than **half** of the Bangladeshi youth considered television news as the most reliable digital medium (**53** per cent), followed by Facebook (**23** per cent) and YouTube (eight per cent).

Youth preparedness for climate action



Almost **50** per cent of respondents rated themselves at elementary level, followed by a **third** ranking themselves as intermediate, in their English language skills.

Eight out of **ten** participants considered English as a useful tool in communicating ideas and influencing others.



Sri Lanka snapshot

Demographics



All youth participants had some level of schooling, with one per cent having primary school education and **99** per cent having secondary or higher education.



Of the respondents, **43** per cent were students, **41** per cent employed and **16** per cent unemployed.



The base represented one per cent with disabilities, one per cent belonging to transgender groups and **52** per cent living in rural areas.

Key challenges for young people



Six out of **ten** young people in rural Sri Lanka thought that climate change will be the biggest risk to their countries in the future. **Seven** out of **ten** in urban areas hold the same view.



More than **65** per cent of youth considered poverty and unemployment as the top **two** most critical issues for youth today, with the pandemic highlighted as the **third**.

For Sri Lankan youth, the most commonly occurring climate change issue is disturbed rainfall pattern (**26** per cent), followed by depletion of freshwater resources (**17** per cent) and decreased agricultural productivity (**17** per cent).



More than **one-fifth** of the participants identified young people as the group most affected by climate change.



One in five youth had been observing climate-related changes in their communities for more than **five** years.



Seven out of **ten** young people had experienced some form of climate-posed incident, for example **one-third** reported having experienced floods.

Youth preparedness for climate action



More than **47** per cent of rural youth and **41** per cent of urban youth are familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals.



Almost **40** per cent of participants did not have any knowledge about **COP26**.



More than **78** per cent of participants felt that young people today play a critical role in addressing climate-related challenges.



More than **68** per cent felt that they have learnt enough about local climate change threats, while **85** per cent expressed their eagerness to know more about climate issues.



More than **68** per cent of youth believed that they could assist in immediate relief in the case of climate-posed incidents.

Youth readiness for climate action



More than half of the youth from Sri Lanka identified education, campaigning and activism, and policy level changes as critical to positively tackling climate change.



Seven out of **ten** youth believed they can play the role of an awareness agent on climate change.



Almost **70** per cent felt that they were taking practical steps to protect their communities.



Over **86** per cent of youth strongly believed that acquiring knowledge and informing others on climate change is a public responsibility.



Six out of **ten** participants agreed that they could access information about events and developments on climate change in their local communities.



More than **77** per cent expressed their desire to build their communities' resilience.



Over **65** per cent of the participants stated that they were engaged in community development activities such as environment cleaning, road planning and business development.

Youth engagement opportunities

When probed, almost **53** per cent of the young participants believed that the government considers climate change to be a serious and urgent challenge.



Eight out of **ten** youth felt able to use digital technology to create awareness and education on climate-posed threats.

Youth engagement challenges

Urban females were much less likely to believe that the government is prioritising climate change (**44** per cent) when compared to rural females (**60** per cent). More than **24** per cent of youth considered lack of or no access to knowledge resources as the biggest challenge, followed by lack of or no youth engagement opportunities offered by the government at **22** per cent.



Fewer than **ten** per cent of the participants had access to affordable capacity-building resources on climate action, while **63** per cent had no access.

Sources of information



One in five Sri Lankan youth cited television as the most common reliable source of information about climate change, followed by newspapers at **19** per cent and social media at **17** per cent.



Almost **74** per cent agreed to social media being a good source of information on climate change and related issues.

Four out of ten considered television news as the most reliable digital medium, followed by Facebook (**17** per cent) and Twitter (**14** per cent).



Facebook was considered by **16** per cent of youth to be the least reliable source of information.

English language and climate activism

Easy access to English learning resources was reported by **73** per cent of youth.

Urban youth were **six** times more likely than rural youth to rate themselves as having advanced English language skills (**25** per cent versus **six** per cent).

Nine out of ten participants considered English useful in communicating ideas as well as influencing others.
Pakistan snapshot

Demographics



A majority of participants had some level of education, with **78** per cent having secondary or higher education and only **nine** per cent having had no more than primary school education. **13** per cent reported having no schooling.



Of the respondents, **16** per cent were students, **23** per cent unemployed and **60** per cent employed.

Four per cent had a disability and **one** per cent were transgender. **61** per cent belonged to rural areas.

Key challenges for young people



More than **73** per cent of youth considered poverty and unemployment to be the top **two** most important issues for youth today, with quality healthcare highlighted as the **third** most important.



While males highlighted quality healthcare as the **third** most important issue in both urban and rural areas, females highlighted climate change as the third most important issue.



Seven out of **ten** participants agreed that climate change will be the biggest threat to Pakistan in the future.



The most common climate change challenges observed by Pakistani youth were depletion of freshwater resources (**25** per cent), followed by air pollution (**11** per cent) and disturbed rainfall patterns (**nine** per cent).



In urban areas, almost a **third** of the participants had observed climate challenges in the last **three** to **four** years, compared to a **third** of rural participants having observed these changes for more than **five** years now, indicating more recent climate changes in the urban areas.



Seven out of **ten** participants believed that **Covid-19** has increased their communities' vulnerability towards climate threats.

Youth preparedness for climate action



More than **85** per cent of rural and **79** per cent of urban youth were not familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals.



More than **91** per cent of participants did not have any knowledge of **COP26**.



More than **13** per cent felt that their opinion on climate change will not matter, while **68** per cent believed that it will.



Eight out of **ten** participants believed that acquiring knowledge on climate change and informing others is a public responsibility.



More than **78** per cent felt that they have learned enough about local climate change threats.



70 per cent of participants expressed their eagerness to learn about climate issues.

Youth readiness for climate action

communities, peers and friends



More than **90** per cent of respondents from Pakistan have never participated in any climate change awareness or mitigation activity.

More than **65** per cent felt that they had spoken about the threat of climate change within their communities, and almost **60** per cent felt that they are



taking practical steps to protect their communities, peers and friends. Almost **60%** of Pakistani felt that they are taking practical steps to protect their



Urban females were more likely to be to participating in climate action (**62** per cent) than rural females (**51** per cent).

Three-quarters of Pakistani youth expressed their desire to build their communities' resilience.



Of urban females, **56** per cent were engaged in community development activities compared to **36** per cent of rural females.



More than **58** per cent of youth believed that they could provide immediate relief in case of a climate-posed incident.



More than **73** per cent expressed their ability to play the role of an awareness agent.

In rural areas, **77** per cent of males and **57** per cent of females believed that they can be change agents in their communities, whereas **86** per cent of urban males and **80** per cent of urban females believed they can be change agents.

Youth engagement opportunities

Of the young participants, **64** per cent believed that the government thinks of climate change as a serious and urgent challenge.



Youth felt that their participation in climate action can support the government with its climate initiatives.

Youth angagement challenges

Almost **one-third** of participants from Pakistan ranked lack of or no access to knowledge resources as the biggest climate-related challenge.



Lack of education on climate change in educational institutions was felt by **39** per cent of transgender, **30** per cent of female and **29** per cent of male participants to be restricting youth participation in climate action.

3

The insufficient role of the media in creating awareness was reported as a barrier to mitigating climate risks by **15** per cent of participants.

Sources of information



Television emerged as the most common and reliable source of information on climate change, cited by more than **27** per cent of participants, closely followed by social media (**25** per cent).



In rural areas **29** per cent of females cited their parents as the most common source of information, compared to urban areas where a similar proportion of females cited social media as the most common source of information instead.



One in **four** Pakistani youth considered television news as the most reliable digital medium, closely followed by Facebook (**24** per cent) and YouTube (**19** per cent).

Three out of **four** participants agreed to social media being a good source of information.



Females in urban areas considered Twitter as the next most reliable digital medium (**22** per cent) after television news.

English language and climate activism

Seven out of **ten** participants considered English useful in communicating ideas and influencing others.



English was thought to be a useful tool for awareness and advocacy by **83** per cent of urban and **56** per cent of rural participants.



Females in rural areas were less likely to consider English useful (52 per cent) than males (61 per cent).

Regional findings and discussion







The word cloud identifies the most frequently used words across the transcripts from all four countries. The recurrence of 'climate change', 'people' and 'youth' suggest a people-centric approach and an understanding of the need to work on this issue. Other recurring words, 'think', 'need', 'work', 'society' and 'government', reinforce this sentiment and emphasise the need for co-operation. Finally, the other words which appeared suggest the need for further analysis of existing work on climate action, as well as suggestions for increasing youth participation need for further analysis of existing work on climate action, as well as suggestions for increasing youth participation. A multi-pronged data analysis framework was employed with a focus on:

• COP26 policy and rhetoric on climate action and community engagement including on young people

• emerging climate risks and challenges for youth action identified by young people participating across all four countries

• popular discourse and narratives on youth climate action and opportunities for meaningful youth engagement emerging from across the region.

Country-level thematic analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data was undertaken, and the following common emerging themes were identified across the region:

• climate challenges affecting young people (with particular focus on vulnerable youth groups)

 youth engagement challenges and opportunities for local government and other stakeholders/networks

• skills requirements for youth to become climate leaders of the future (particularly women and girls)

- potential tools/mediums for youth to create awareness on climate action
- civil society role for sensitisation and engagement of communities, especially young people
- challenges for effective youth engagement for climate action
- opportunities that exist for youth to take climate action

I. Climate challenges affecting young people

Regional overview

The participants were asked if they thought that climate change would be a significant risk to their country in the coming years. While nine out of ten young people in Afghanistan and Bangladesh agreed with this statement, seven out of ten in urban Pakistan and Sri Lanka, held the same view. Transgender youth in Sri Lanka were even less likely to think that climate change could be the biggest national risk (see Figure 1).





Young people were asked about the most commonly occurring climate change issues in their communities. Almost 18 per cent identified depletion of freshwater resources, followed by floods at 12.3 per cent. However, the youth in Bangladesh have marked floods as the most commonly occurring issue, whereas Sri Lankan youth identified rainfall patterns. Urban youth were 1.6 times more likely to have observed depletion of freshwater resources, whereas rural youth were twice as likely as their urban counterparts to see decreased agricultural productivity (see Table 1).

Table 1: Most commonly occurring climate change issues

		Decreased livestock productivity	Depletion of freshwater resources	Decreased agriculture productivity	Disturbed rainfall patterns	Dry seasons (frequent/severe)	Increased drought	Loss of forest covers	Flood	Extreme heat/heatwaves	Glacial lake outburst flooding	Air pollution/smog	Other (urban flooding, storms/ cyclones, coastal erosion, increased ice/glacial melting etc.)
Overall	Total	9.3%	17.5%	11.0%	13.0%	6.2%	4.7%	3.6%	12.3%	4.4%	2.7%	3.8%	3.4%
	Females	8.2%	17.1%	9.6%	12.6%	6.2%	4.0%	2.8%	12.7%	5.0%	4.5%	4.2%	3.6%
Gender	Males	10.4%	18.0%	12.2%	13.7%	6.0%	5.4%	4.2%	11.7%	3.8%	1.0%	3.4%	3.3%
	Transgender persons	8.5%	16.9%	15.3%	3.5%	10.2%	5.2%	6.7%	16.9%	3.4%	0.0%	5.0%	1.7%
	Afghanistan	15.9%	34.2%	11.6%	6.8%	1.5%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Country	Pakistan	7.0%	25.0%	7.8%	8.8%	3.6%	3.9%	5.6%	0.0%	15.6%	0.0%	15.8%	5.9%
	Bangladesh	3.7%	0.0%	9.3%	12.6%	8.0%	5.7%	3.7%	37.9%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%
	Sri Lanka	13.5%	17.2%	16.7%	26.3%	12.0%	4.1%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	0.0%	1.7%
	Urban	8.0%	20.5%	8.9%	14.3%	6.9%	4.2%	3.6%	9.8%	4.1%	2.7%	3.2%	2.5%
Residence	Rural	10.7%	14.6%	13.0%	11.8%	5.5%	5.2%	3.5%	14.7%	4.6%	2.7%	4.4%	4.3%

Noticeable variations between countries emerged once the less commonly occurring climate change issues were removed. Young people in Pakistan highlighted air pollution and smog as a commonly observed climate change issue, whereas extreme heat/heatwaves were emphasised by young people in Afghanistan and Pakistan (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Most commonly occurring climate change issues

The participants were also asked how long they had been observing these climate change issues in their communities. More than a third of the participants had been observing these issues for more than five years (see Figure 3).





When asked about the communities they considered to be most affected by climate change, persons with disabilities were most likely to be indicated (15.2 per cent), closely followed by poor people (14.7 per cent) and young people (13.7 per cent). Young people residing in rural areas are 1.5 times more likely than urban youth to think that women and girls will be affected the most by climate change, while urban youth are 1.6 times more likely than rural youth to think that poor will be affected the most. An overwhelming majority of Afghan youth thought that the poor would be affected the most (52 per cent), whereas, in Sri Lanka, youth identified young people to be most affected (see Table 2).

Table 2: Segments of population affected by climate change

		Women and girls	Persones with disabilities	Children	Young people in schools	Young people as whole	Poor	Adult men and women	Older men/women	Others
Overall	Total	12.6%	15.2%	2.5%	9.9%	13.7%	14.7%	13.9%	4.5%	9.9%
	Females	12.7%	15.2%	2.8%	11.4%	11.4%	15.9%	13.9%	3.8%	9.7%
Gender	Males	12.4%	15.1%	2.1%	8.5%	16.2%	13.8%	13.5%	5.2%	10.3%
	Transgender persons	17.0%	16.98%	6.8%	10.1%	6.8%	1.7%	23.8%	8.5%	3.4%
	Afghanistan	5.7%	5.5%	0.0%	2.1%	13.0%	57.9%	7.0%	0.0%	14.6%
Country	Pakistan	21.3%	17.7%	1.2%	18.2%	12.4%	0.0%	25.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Country	Bangladesh	15.5%	21.2%	6.8%	10.3%	10.9%	7.3%	7.1%	14.0%	0.0%
	Sri Lanka	5.6%	14.0%	0.0%	8.5%	20.9%	0.0%	18.4%	0.0%	32.5%
Residence	Urban	9.9%	12.3%	3.6%	9.5%	14.9%	18.2%	13.0%	4.3%	11.5%
	Rural	15.3%	18.0%	1.4%	10.4%	12.6%	11.1%	14.7%	4.8%	8.4%/

The youth were also asked about their direct experiences of climate change. More than half of the young participants had experienced at least one climate-related incident, with eight out of ten having experienced this in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Experiencing a climate-posed incident

Those who had experienced at least one incident (56.8 per cent of young people) were asked about the types of climate-related incidents they had experienced.

Of the 3,309 young people who had experienced such an incident, 35.7 per cent mentioned floods, followed by 17 per cent mentioning excessive rain/snowfall and 15 per cent identifying decreased water sources. No notable differences were observed between males and females or between urban and rural youth. However, young people in Afghanistan are more likely to have experienced decreased water sources and glacial lake melting than young people in other countries. Similarly, four out of ten young people from Pakistan have experienced excessive rain/snowfall, followed by a severe dry season (16.8 per cent) (see Table 3).

Table 3: Experiencing climate-posed incidents

		Flood	Excessive Rain/Snowfall	Glacial lake bursting	Drought	Severe dry season	Decreased water sources	Infectious diseases	Storms / cyclones	Earthquake	Others
Overall	Total	35.7%	17.0%	4.6%	6.9%	8.1%	15.0%	0.1%	8.6%	0.8%	3.1%
	Females	34.8%	18.5%	4.4%	6.9%	9.0%	15.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.5%	2.7%
Gender	Males	36.0%	15.3%	4.9%	7.1%	7.3%	15.4%	0.3%	8.9%	1.1%	3.6%
	Transgender persons	56.4%	25.5%	0.0%	1.8%	3.6%	3.6%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Afghanistan	12.9%	0.6%	20.0%	1.4%	2.8%	62.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Country	Pakistan	11.6%	41.1%	6.7%	13.8%	16.8%	9.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Country	Bangladesh	52.9%	15.7%	0.0%	4.9%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	18.5%	1.7%	2.7%
	Sri Lanka	33.8%	18.3%	0.0%	11.6%	16.7%	10.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.7%
Residence	Urban	34.0%	16.6%	6.3%	7.1%	8.8%	17.2%	0.3%	5.1%	1.3%	3.4%
	Rural	37.2%	17.4%	3.2%	6.8%	7.5%	13.2%	0.0%	11.5%	0.4%	2.9%/

It is interesting to note that while almost 57 per cent of the young people have experienced a climate-posed incident, and 83 per cent perceive climate change to the biggest threat to their countries in coming times, barely five per cent highlight climate change as a priority issue for the youth of today (see Figure 5). Across countries, Pakistani youth are least likely to have experienced a climate-related incident (only 23.5 per cent compared to 73 per cent in Bangladesh, 70 per cent in Sri Lanka and 56 per cent in Afghanistan), but the most likely to highlight climate change as a top priority issue concerning the youth today (12 per cent).





In addition to climate change, participants were asked to identify other issues which were important to them. Unemployment and poverty were the highest priorities, selected by the majority in every country and age group. Nearly 32 per cent of young people highlighted unemployment as the highest priority issue, followed by poverty with access to education in third place (see Table 4).

Table 4: Greatest challenges facing young people today

		Unemployment	Poverty	Access to education	Pandemics	Climate change	Armed conflicts	Political polarisation	Other, including inequalities, extremism and terrorism, cyber-security, Facebook, fake news, quality healthcare etc.
Overall	Total	31.9%	24.8%	12.8%	6.1%	4.8%	4.3%	2.8%	12.3%
	Females	30.2%	26.0%	13.5%	5.5%	6.7%	3.2%	2.6%	12.1%
Gender	Males	33.6%	23.8%	12.3%	6.4%	2.9%	5.5%	3.0%	12.1%
	Transgender persons	27.2%	16.8%	6.8%	13.6%	3.3%	1.8%	3.4%	27.0%
	Afghanistan	32.0%	20.8%	21.7%	0.3%	2.1%	15.9%	0.3%	6.1%
Country	Pakistan	38.7%	33.7%	4.9%	2.0%	12.1%	1.7%	1.5%	5.2%
Country	Bangladesh	24.1%	18.3%	16.5%	10.0%	0.9%	0.0%	4.9%	25.3%
	Sri Lanka	36.0%	29.4%	5.8%	11.5%	5.6%	0.7%	3.9%	7.1%
Residence	Urban	30.6%	23.3%	12.2%	7.3%	4.4%	5.0%	3.1%	14.2%
	Rural	33.1%	26.3%	13.5%	4.9%	5.3%	3.6%	2.5%	10.3%

This trend is typical for developing economies such as the participating research countries where the environment–poverty paradox exists, and environmental protection is mostly considered as 'luxury' (Martinez-Alier, 1995) by most population groups where the income levels remain medium-low. The connection between poverty, environment and employment needs to be made more explicit. Nowhere is the overlap between the poverty and environment agendas more starkly illustrated than in climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic (Paul, 2021).

Poverty is a major underlying driver of disaster risk, and the poorest countries and people experience a disproportionate share of damage and loss of life attributed to climate change. Warmer temperatures, rising sea levels, extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change affect every country, with the severest impacts mainly hitting least developed countries and small island developing states. Extreme weather patterns – resulting in prolonged drought and floods – exacerbate existing inequities. Disasters kill 130 people for every one million people in low-income countries compared to 18 per one million in high-income countries. The World Bank estimates climate change will drive 68 million to 135 million people into poverty by 2030, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – the regions where most of the global poor are concentrated (World Bank, 2021a).

Similarly, climate change and other forms of environmental degradation have already caused net negative impacts on jobs and work productivity, and this is expected to become more pronounced in the coming decades (ILO, 2018). Temperature increases can, for example, make heat stress more widespread, thus reducing the total amount of work hours. The effects of climate change also have specific implications for women and for the challenge of achieving gender equality in the workforce. Differences in social and economic roles and responsibilities exacerbate the vulnerability of youth groups who are entering the labour market between now and 2050 because of their demographic bulge, all of whom tend to have lower access to resources for climate change adaptation, including land, credit, agricultural inputs, the support of decision-making bodies, technology, social insurance and training. For most of these individuals working in the informal economy and in small enterprises, it is especially difficult to recover from the effects of environmental disasters.

With a narrow focus on climate literacy and environmental education across the region, most young people have little understanding of climate change as a multi-faceted issue and require more information to contextualise the scope and severity of climate change. To allow a more in-depth analysis, both poverty and unemployment have been removed from the graph below. Youth in Bangladesh highlight education as a priority issue. For youth in Afghanistan, women and girls highlight access to education as the priority issue, whereas men and boys select armed conflicts. In Pakistan, women and girls highlighted climate change as a priority issue in both urban and rural areas. whereas men and boys opt for access to education. Sri Lankan youth are the most preoccupied about pandemics after poverty and unemployment (see Figure 6).





Afghanistan

While the country's precarious economic position was seen as a major concern, followed by food security, most challenges for young people due to climate change emerged around food insecurity. Food insecurity was attributed to the looming threat of climate change-related natural disasters (these included droughts, flooding and uneven rainfall). Specialists noted that the country's climate is dry and semi-arid, and the median raining level is 2050mm. Climate change has led to untimely ice melting, and the authorities have not been able to save the water. Climate change has wreaked havoc on the lives of Afghan youth as it has led to droughts that have dried up employment aspects in agriculture in the villages. As a result, young people have been forced to emigrate in search of livelihoods.

A young technical specialist who works on food production said that the food production industry largely relied on fossil fuels to manufacture food because they are both cheap and able to provide high temperatures. The specialist noted that a move entirely away from fossil fuels would threaten food security and, therefore, only a move towards refined fossil fuels (which are less harmful to the environment) is possible. A youth representative from a rural background reiterated the urban youth's concerns about droughts. He noted that most young people around him are farmers who can only continue their work with a steady supply of water. Unfortunately, he said, places in Kandahar and Mianko do not

have dams that could save agriculture in times of short rainfall. Similarly, an urban civil society representative noted that Afghans primarily subsist on wheat, which is why disruption of rains due to climate change would lead to widespread drought and famine.

Education proved to be a problem for food security as well. A young government employee pointed to a disparity in policy when it came to agriculture: while the government, civil society and the private sector had worked to build capacity for production in villages, they had done so without providing training to village residents which would allow these practices to become sustainable. There are now situations in which significant resource has been spent on building greenhouses with the assumption that this would allow villagers to grow food all year round; in many cases, the villagers did not know how to use greenhouses and were using them to store cows. A government official noted that young people did not have an adequate understanding of climate change and had cut down trees in Paktia, Kunar and Badghis for fuel and money. He stressed the importance of creating alternative sources of income for young people and cited a successful project run by local organisations which worked with young people in the field to make solar heaters and another one that trained rural women to sew and sell masks during the Covid-19 pandemic and provided them with raw materials. This allowed these women to earn money while isolating themselves indoors.





Spotlight I: Meet *Najiba from Afghanistan

Najiba is 22 years old. She and her family had to leave their village in 2020 since their land became unhabitable due to long-term drought. She is now internally displaced and has been residing in a refugee camp. She does not have access to a proper tent to sleep in and can barely afford food for her two children. Her husband will do any daily labour he can but there's little work going.

In a youth focus group discussion featuring specialists, community influencers and NGO workers, interviewees expressed great concern for droughts. They noted that Climate Change has ravaged the livelihood of farmers and the production of food in the country because the agricultural country is particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of droughts, which have been more frequent in recent years. They noted that young people in the different provinces (not the business hubs of Kabul, Mazar and Herat) felt the brunt of climate change the most because youth are employed in agriculture in these provinces. They felt that climate-related migration was inevitable for the youth of Afghanistan unless the adverse effects could be mitigated. They noted that, already, a study from 2018 had shown that more than two million migrants had migrated to Western Afghanistan from these provinces. In most cases, these migrants attributed their migration to climate change due to which they had lost their animals, wheat and other food sources. As an alternative, it could prove useful to provide young people with the tools to grow high-value crops and adapt without migration.

*Disclaimer – this is an imaginary character and does not bear any resemblance in appearance and narrative to any one real person.

Preventing droughts, building dams and facilitating agriculture emerged as clear priorities for all interviewees. Participants felt that there were two main climate-related problems that adversely affected human health: the real-time impact of air pollution and the long-term effects of economic adversity arising from climate-change-related loss of income and forced migration.

Young interviewees overwhelmingly noted that young people formed much of the workforce in the country, and young people were the breadwinners for most households. The adverse effects of climate change on employment opportunities and on health would, therefore, affect the whole of society.

A young man from a rural area noted that Afghan youth were particularly vulnerable as they have been exposed to different types of explosives due to the war, which has damaged the health of a lot of young people. Furthermore, he noted, the lack of water in rural areas has led to young people migrating to urban areas, which are now overpopulated and unable to support their populations.

In FGDs, young people cited shorter life spans, breathing issues, land destruction, flooding and food security as the main impacts of climate change on Afghan youth. Environment specialists also spoke about the mental health consequences of climate change on young people growing up during it and the possibility of genetic abnormalities arising in babies due to pollution.

The negative health consequences of climate change were mostly thought to be an issue for people living in the cities because of industrial waste and lack of forest cover. People living in Kabul, Herat and Mazar were said to be most vulnerable to air pollution. The bad air quality in cities such as Kabul was said to have caused breathing issues for a lot of people. There was widespread understanding of air pollution as a time-sensitive problem. The interviewees attributed air pollution to factories and the use of machinery. They suggested building factories further away from densely populated areas.

There was widespread understanding across the interviews that burning cheap fuels such as coal, especially without the use of filters, damaged the environment. However, interviewees said it would prove difficult to convince people to switch to cleaner energy sources because of the higher cost of clean energy and the compromised state of the country's economy.

Most interviewees acknowledged that the youth would not be as badly hit as the more vulnerable elderly and children, both groups with compromised immunity. Nearly all interviewees expressed concern for the 'most vulnerable group', the poor, who survived on physical labour alone and were unable to afford to migrate anywhere in case of climate-change-related destruction.

There was debate about the gendered effects of climate change. While some felt that women's health would disproportionately suffer due to climate change, others did not. For those who thought women were vulnerable, concerns revolved around the perception that women have weaker immune systems (this was not substantiated) as well as maternal health and transmission of diseases from mother to child and vice versa. Those who felt that men would be worse hit by climate change than women attributed this to the idea that women tend to 'stay indoors', something that protects them from exposure to air pollution.

Bangladesh

Most challenges for the youth and concern around climate change in Bangladesh centred on preventing them and helping people recover from. As such, participants across all sectors, age groups and residence statuses were aware of the connection between climate change and natural disasters. While flooding dominated the discussions in FGDs and KIIs, participants also spoke about cyclones, storms, droughts and landslides. There was a clear sense that flooding had intensified in recent years.

In KIIs, government officials and policymakers understood the linkages between river erosion, changing rainfall patterns and flooding, and understood them as anthropogenic problems. They expressed concerns about what climate change would mean for Bangladesh, given that it was the seventh most affected country according to the Climate Risk Index. Much of the population lives in coastal areas – 'nearly 70 million people in our country live in the 19 districts in coastal communities', according to one official and river basins, which means that rising sea levels over the next 50 years could cause a major migration crisis, destruction of habitat and loss of agricultural systems.

Flooding and cyclones proved to be the biggest threats because of this, and officials worried that all people would not have access to flood shelters.

Youth representatives and other young people recounted personal experiences with the consequences of river erosion in such districts as Barisal, Sunamganj and Netrokona, and places such as Badda and Sarargul in the Dhaka district. They noted how floods had become more and more destructive and 'violent' year after year. Some linked this increase in intensity to deforestation in places such as the Sundarbans. Youth noted that all areas had been hit by climate-change-related natural disasters, with low-lying regions suffering from floods and other places from earthquakes. They spoke about increased flooding, heavy rain and water pollution in rural areas and air pollution from industrial activity in urban areas. Young people appeared most concerned about the economic fallout of natural disasters. Some spoke about floods causing 'a loss of 78 per cent in [the] paddy season', while others talked about the destruction of fish farms. More still were concerned about fruit and vegetable prices in the wake of the loss of arable land.

A young small business owner was concerned about not being able to sell sweaters in winter because of increasingly warm winters.



Similarly, young people were concerned about food insecurity, with natural disasters and destruction of fish farms and crops contributing to lower levels of economic activity. Some had noted instances of malnutrition in pregnant women and babies because of a lack of access to proper nutrition and contamination of food from fertilisers. Finally, many noted the loss of clean drinking water because of poor drainage systems and sanitation coupled with heavy rains and flooding.

Most concerns around human health in the FGDs and KIIs were expressed in the context of natural disasters. Government officials and experts, for instance, expressed concern about people with disabilities not being able to access flood shelters while young people spoke at length about health concerns for pregnant women, children and the elderly in the face of food insecurity due to climate change. While many worried about the long-term consequences of air and water pollution due to industrial activities, there was an overwhelming sense that climate change had made floods and rains more deadly in recent years and that natural disasters were more life-threatening now than they had previously been.

Respondents felt that underserved populations would be most affected by climate change. These include persons with disabilities, women, children, the elderly and those living under the poverty line. Youth groups felt that women would suffer more than men due to climate change because of safety and hygiene issues in the case of natural disasters. Maternal and baby health was a primary concern, with one participant talking about infant deaths at birth and maternal deaths because of salinity and 'a disease named Eclampsia Preeclampsia', referencing two pregnancy-related high blood pressure disorders.





Spotlight II: Meet Shathi from Bangladesh

Shathi (23) belongs to Kurigram (the most poverty-stricken district in Bangladesh). She lives with her family in Chilmari (a fishing port town) where her family relies on subsistence fishing for their livelihood. She has disabilities and depends upon her family for basic care and is at high risk if a climate disaster occurs.

Recently, a climate action project named LoGIC funded by UNDP and jointly managed by the UNDP and the Local Government of Bangladesh has been initiated to address the impact of climate change in Kurigram. The initial fund has been utilised in



developing infrastructural capacity such as constructing road, planting trees along the roadside and building box culverts to help proper drainage of water.

The youth community in Chilmari, Kurigram, are found to be positively channelised and mobilised under the guidance of the local government representative and a renowned youth influencer. Together, they have managed to involve the youth of Chilmari to engage in activities including the renovation of the local playing field and engaging youth in healthy entertainments, such as sports and cultural activities, and to mobilise them in relief work after a disaster takes place.

According to the chairman of Chilmari, local youth are moderately aware and active. They can be mobilised and utilised properly to their full potential once they are trained to develop the necessary skills and presented with opportunities to engage in social, cultural, educational, sports and awareness-raising programmes. The local government office actively seeks opportunities to mobilise the youth force in development activities and has already utilised the youth force to collect information on people who need help in the locality, such as those who are eligible for old-age allowance, widow allowance and disability allowance as a part of the Social Security Force/government office.

Pakistan

FGD participants named floods, droughts, extreme cold, heavy rainfall, snowfall and melting glaciers as major natural disasters that disrupted the livelihoods of young people all over the country. Many connected the increased incidence of more severe natural disasters to deforestation. explaining why so much earlier discussion was devoted to tree planting. It was largely thought that food insecurity had increased because of the economic consequences of climate change rendering people unable to earn money. They were of the opinion that poor people in rural areas would be most vulnerable to climate change because they relied on natural resources for their income. Many young people worked in the agricultural sector. In the event of floods, cattle were known to be lost and houses destroyed. If their houses survive, they are confined to their homes for many days because of the dangers outside and are unable to go out and earn a living.

There were disastrous signs of disrupted ecosystems as well: owing to droughts in rural areas, many farmers were experiencing low yields of crops. New pests had also emerged to attack crops in agricultural lands, around the same time as many native animals were dying out as a result of climate change. It was largely felt that while air pollution was a problem in urban areas, urban places fared better in natural disasters because they had facilities in cities, unlike rural areas. Rich people also had the option to move to other cities or countries in the event of natural disasters.

Participants were generally aware of the work of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in managing natural disaster fallout. However, in Muzaffarabad, participants spoke about how it was only the army that carried out rescue efforts in Kashmir. Young men in the FGDs in Kashmore recalled how the 2010 flood 'was because of climate change'. They attributed

the flooding to uneven rainfalls because of changing weather patterns. They recalled that trees would previously break the flow of flood water, but, following deforestation, flood water now flows into cities as well. As a result, employed people cannot get to their jobs and lose them, becoming unable to afford food. Young men elsewhere spoke about how young people running households had seen their livelihoods affected by uneven rainfalls and colder winter temperatures. In Gilgit-Baltistan, melting glaciers led to frequent roadblocks and landslides, which meant that people could not get to work or earn money for days.

In the KIIs, experts noted that Pakistan is among the ten countries most affected by climate change. They noted the high loss of lives and losses in agriculture and livestock in farming communities and sea water intrusion in the coastal areas. The rapid melting of glaciers, meanwhile, has led to the loss of lives due to avalanches and lake outbursts (glacial lake outburst floods). Here, too, poor people were considered vulnerable because of a shortage of resources and loss of livelihood due to the destruction of agricultural fields. People living near coastal areas or riverbanks were thought to be most vulnerable because of the threat to life in the event of flooding and high tides. They noted the serious threat of melting glaciers in Gilgit-Baltistan, where there are 4,000–5,000 glaciers, and people have begun experiencing floods and unexpected rainfall trends due to the impact of climate change on glaciers. Ghizer River and Shigar River were also water bodies that contributed to flooding because of overflow. In the cities, communities suffered because of flooding, drops in the water table and heatwaves. People in the north were turning to tourism to make a living instead, but it was felt that the government was not investing in eco-tourism. However, it was felt that cities at least had resources for climate adaptation.

Subject specialists saw climate change as an intergenerational problem that will cut across various sectors and many different aspects of life. They noted that things were expected to worsen in the near future. Government officials were aware of the challenges. They said that Pakistan's topography was such that a range of natural disasters occurred in the country, from flooding and landslides to earthquakes and droughts. An Environmental Protection Agency official spoke about the outsized impact on highland and low-lying areas. For example, in the low-lying lands of Balochistan, droughts have become frequent in all districts, with precipitation drastically down. Meanwhile, agricultural areas in South Punjab were experiencing a sharp decline in crop yield. Officials noted that this was all particularly challenging because Pakistan has an agriculture-based economy that would not be able to withstand the damage to the farming industry caused by climate change.

Across the FGDs and Klls, it was felt that two categories were responsible for the incidence of human health issues due to climate change in Pakistan: economic hardship and air pollution.

In the FGDs, participants focused on these two categories. Due to increased economic hardship because of loss of agricultural

livelihood, inability to get to jobs in the wake of natural disasters and destruction of property, more and more families were pushed further into poverty. This meant that resources became scarce, and many people were not able to afford food, leading to malnutrition. Women and girls were more likely to suffer malnutrition because of the way food is portioned in households in patriarchal societies. Maternal and infant health was endangered because of this, with many babies being born premature and experiencing major health issues.

Many expressed concerns for the health of women and children in rural areas. With the scarcity of water, young women in remote areas had been forced to go further and further to fetch water, something that was physically taxing and led to health issues. Participants suggested they be made aware of easier ways to access water. At the same time, it was noted that unemployment had also led to an increased incidence of mental health issues for households.

In urban areas, climate change was said to be life-threatening for all people. Air pollution was a major concern, and many spoke about rising smog levels leading to more and more toddlers experiencing allergies or developing asthma. Meanwhile, older people were increasingly unable to remain mobile.



Young people, meanwhile, suffered from eye infections due to factory smoke, and many kids were unable to go to school because of respiratory issues. Those working in brick kilns, were 🕥 constantly at risk of respiratory illness. Water-borne illness was also a major concern due to contamination of water sources. All this had also led to an increased incidence of depression and anxiety among the youth.



Spotlight III: Meet Ruby from Pakistan

Ruby (24) identifies as transgender woman and has been advocating for the rights of transgender youth in her local community in Lahore. She participated in the climate strike last year advocating for provision of basic facilities to poor transgender people, especially during heatwaves and smog, as they are disproportionately affected by these climate-related events.

Heat is identified as the next big inequality issue for poor and vulnerable youth groups including transgender people, who are mostly poor and take to the streets to earn their



livelihoods through begging or roadside work. They are at a disproportionately high risk of prolonged exposure to deadly heatwaves and the associated risks to human health and wellbeing. In the Pakistan country-level research, one of the transgender participants revealed that some of her friends died in the last heatwave because they were having to beg barefoot under the sun to survive.

In the absence of social protection measures and lack of evidence to highlight issues of gender minority groups across the region, there remains a need to identify transgender-specific climate-related issues, and their relation to existing socio-economic inequalities in society. This would create a space for better policy and programme.

Sri Lanka

In the FGDs and KIIs, participants spoke about an increase in multiple natural disasters due to climate change; these were beginning to affect young people's lives across the country. They cited experiences with intense droughts, flooding, tsunamis, extreme temperatures, high tides and landslides. These participants were concerned about the high economic impact of natural disasters in Sri Lanka.

Participants and interviewees both spoke at length about farming losses due to natural disasters, which was leading to increasing economic hardship as well as food insecurity. While agricultural activities in many places had been suspended due to droughts, many others were unable to cultivate their produce because of flooding, particularly rain-fed crops such as maize, green gram and any crop which required small tank-based cultivation. Fisheries, too, suffered closure. A FGD participant spoke about a friend whose family who had turned to prawn farming after being forced out of agriculture by climate change issues. The friend had since had to abandon prawn farming too due to the changing environment and has taken a job as a labourer in Colombo. Others spoke about increased migration into Benthara by families coming from fisheries and farms. They lamented how there was 'no mechanism for small scale fisheries to get

to know about weather warnings or updates, and they keep losing their fish harvest daily affecting their livelihoods'.

The increased incidence of extreme temperatures had also had an impact on other industries. Much of the construction industry faced disruption because of heavy heat and high rain, which meant that daily wage construction workers had lost their livelihoods. In 2008, the Jaffna District had to postpone student exams due to a severe storm (Storm Nisha). Meanwhile, in November and December 2020, Nivar and Purevi storms in Jaffna and Mullaithivu caused losses in farming and livestock. In Moratuwa, people spoke of extreme heat and tsunamis, which had led to the destruction of housing.

In FGDs, young people believed that the most vulnerable members of society were the first to experience the negative effects of climate change, particularly those living under the poverty line and people with disabilities. It was felt that these groups would suffer because they had access to fewer resources in the event of natural disasters (such as tsunamis and floods) and had livelihoods which would particularly be susceptible to floods, drought or salination of land. Most concerns around human health revolved around malnutrition due to loss of agriculture and livelihood and unsafe working conditions.

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Youth in Moratuwa, for example, after losing work in carpentry because of frequent tornadoes, had been forced into day labourer jobs. Here, burning saw dust had led to increased cases of asthma and other pulmonary diseases.

In interviews, experts and officials warned about an increased incidence of water-borne diseases because of flooding and other natural disasters. It was felt that, if things were to continue as they were, children would experience severe health problems caused by a lack of sanitation.



Spotlight IV: Meet Ayaan and Chameera from Sri Lanka

Ayaan (29) and Chameera (27) live in the Kattankudy area in Batticaloa (which has been affected by a 30-year armed conflict and the 2004 tsunami). Ayaan lost most of his family during the tsunami. He is now the sole breadwinner and has been badly affected by the job cuts caused by Covid-19 and floods in January 2021. He is willing to emigrate from Batticaloa because of frequent floods.

When climate stresses coincide with economic or social pressures, the potential for forced migration from rural areas increases significantly.

When rural families attempt to address environmental stress by having a member of their family migrate to the city, however, this has a dramatic effect on gender dynamics and the role of women in the household.

Chameera may experience more autonomy and have greater decision-making power because she becomes de facto household head after her husband migrates. Ayaan's emigration, however, might also exacerbate her precarious financial position in a rural community. It is essential that decision makers and wider agencies understand the intersectional challenges such as these which are posed by climate-induced migration.

II. Youth engagement challenges and opportunities for local government and other stakeholders/networks to play their part in tackling climate challenges

Regional overview

Young participants were asked about the effectiveness of different tools to positively tackle climate change. Broadly speaking, over one third of young people selected a fairly even combination of education, campaigning/activism and policy-level changes. In Afghanistan, almost half of the participants chose education as the most effective tool (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: Tools to positively tackle climate change

Participants were then asked which activities they thought would be the most effective in influencing political decision-making on climate change. The majority chose voting, contacting a local political representative and showcasing the success of community-led impact projects as the most effective tools (18.6 per cent each). While no obvious differences were seen between urban and rural youth or between females and males, there were large differences between countries. Afghan youth perceive voting as the most effective tool (38.7 per cent), unlike in Sri Lanka, where showcasing the success of community-led impact projects was the more popular option (34.4 per cent). Bangladeshi participants also perceived participating in campaigns as an influential factor, whereas voting in elections was the preferred option for young in Afghanistan and Pakistan (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Activities perceived as most effective in influencing political decision-making for climate change



The perceived activities were also reviewed across cross-cutting population groups in the study. Afghan youth, regardless of their gender or area of residence, consider voting in elections as the most effective tool to influence climate-related political decision-making. While rural Pakistani youth are also of the same view, those in urban areas said that participating in public protests would be more effective. Sri Lankan youth considered the success of community-led projects to have the greatest influence on political decisions around climate change, regardless of their gender or area of residence (see Table 5).

Table 5: Activities	perceived as most	t effective in	influencing	political o	lecision-making
for climate change	3				

			Voting in elections	Contacting a local political representative	Taking an active part in a campaign	Signing a petition	Taking part in a public protest	Joining a political party	Showcasing the success of community-led impact projects
		Afg	35%	21%	8%	1%	2%	1%	3%
	Durrel	Pak	26%	15%	14%	7%	18%	8%	13%
	Rurai	Ban	6.2%	30.2%	25.7%	9.2%	6.4%	0.5%	21.8%
Females		Sri	10%	12.4%	14.7%	16.1%	11%	0.4%	35.4%
		Afg	46%	15%	9%	2%	3%	3%	4%
	Unban	Pak	19%	16%	14%	8%	22%	8%	13%
	Orban	Ban	4.7%	17.5%	16.7%	11.2%	23.7%	1.7%	24.4%
		Sri	13.4%	12.5%	17.5%	12%	8%	0.5%	36.1%
		Afg	42%	12%	16%	6%	6%	2%	5%
	Rural	Pak	20%	20%	12%	8%	26%	8%	7%
		Ban	8.1%	23.6%	24.1%	7.1%	6.6%	1.5%	28.9%
Males		Sri	11.5%	14.5%	14.5%	10.4%	17.3%	3.2%	28.6%
Hures		Afg	32%	12%	11%	5%	7%	2%	10%
	Urbon	Pak	15%	25%	10%	10%	26%	4%	10%
	Orban	Ban	5.8%	21.8%	21.6%	8.8%	16.5%	3.3%	22.3%
		Sri	15.8%	12%	14%	10.1%	9.3%	1.5%	37.3%
Transath		Pak	20%		40%	20%			20%
	Rural	Ban	10%	40%	0%	30%	20%	0%	0%
		Sri	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%
Trans youth		Pak	15%				38%	8%	38%
	Urban	Ban	0%	17.4%	47.8%	4.3%	21.7%	0%	8.7%
		Sri	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	75%/

The participants were also asked about their perception of whether their government considers climate change to be an urgent issue. More than 65 per cent of young people support this statement. Women and girls are slightly more likely to agree with this than men and boys (68 per cent and 62 per cent respectively), a difference which is closely mirrored by urban (69 per cent) and rural (61 per cent) youth. Transgender young people were sceptical about how seriously governments across countries were taking climate change as an issue (fewer than fifty per cent). There are also differences at country level: a noticeable majority (** per cent) of Bangladeshi youth believe that the government considers climate change to be an urgent issue, followed in descending order by Pakistanis (64.2 per cent), Afghanis (58 per cent) and Sri Lankans (53 per cent). (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Does the government consider climate change to be an urgent issue?

Afghanistan

There was a definite sense that interviewees were aware of organisations working for the youth and climate but expressed the sentiment that these places were lacking in funds and facilities and unable to do meaningful work.

There was wide awareness of the government agency and its role. Interviews reported awareness of the government agency's involvement in waste management, work against air pollution and monitoring vehicle fuel quality. They reported having signed up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), ratified the Kyoto Protocol and conducted activities towards achieving the goals of the UNFCCC. A stakeholder reported that national reports for the UNFCCC were prepared and determined Afghanistan's national priorities climate change. As a result, it had received financial assistance from the UN body. Interviews reported awareness of the agency's involvement in issues like waste management, work against air pollution and monitoring vehicle fuel quality along with the government stakeholders. They were also aware of agency's co-ordination with United Nations (UN) agencies. While

success in spreading awareness of climate change, they attributed its lack of success in taking action against climate change to illegal deforestation, smuggling and lack of water storage facilities.

A government official noted that international conferences provided an opportunity for Afghanistan to include young people as representatives. He quoted the example of the annual Conference of the Parties, observing that this type of forum involved not only government officials but young people, media and academic representatives as well in order to have a diversity of views around climate change. In Afghanistan, the agency official shared that a variety of public awareness campaigns had been held involving school and university visits, television spots and discussions, especially regarding environmental pollution. After a survey of small businesses in Kabul city, the agency found that some businesses were relying on wood or coal for fuel and helped them switch to gas and installed filter systems. They also educated business owners about waste and water management.

Officials praised the contributions of global organisations in increasing public awareness, with plans to develop a large-scale project on awareness raising. This initiative would help to create green schools and train teachers and students about the environment.

Young people living in urban areas had more access than those in rural areas. Government officials, experts, academics, NGO officials and youth representatives agreed that there were multiple avenues for awareness about climate change in the cities, and youth in the cities had a sound understanding of environmental issues. Young people living in remote areas had been unable to participate in the local and external programmes available in major cities. Rural education did not include climate-related awareness, unlike education in cities. It was suggested that the government, NGOs and the private sector needed to conduct workshops, seminars and training to create climate change awareness in villages and wider rural settings. Furthermore, officials felt that there was a need to train Afghan climate specialists who could then create awareness and a vision about the environment for the larger public. The civil society organisations and relevant bodies assured that they were committed to the work but needed financial and logistical support.

Government officials and other experts spoke about programmes that help stakeholders develop concepts and prepare funding proposals and programmes targeted at reducing greenhouse gases. They reported that most of their development budget was invested in activities to raise public awareness.

An official told us that while the Afghanistan's greenhouse gas diffusion rate was relatively low (0.08 per cent), it was still drafting policy with the adverse effects of climate change in mind. As such, a biannual report focused on greenhouse gas reduction is prepared and sent to the UNFCCC. The officials underlined the importance of multilateral engagement and continued financial support from the UN in preparing policies and plans for Afghanistan's climate future.

Participants across urban and rural areas and all age groups overwhelmingly understood the role of different bodies and praised the awareness raising activities. Young people from urban areas appeared particularly knowledgeable about the country's climate strategy, with one young person quoting government plans to create pistachio forests and hydropower dams. However, young people also voiced frustration with the slow implementation of climate-related projects, citing security concerns and budgetary constraints as the main roadblocks (both of which were also mentioned by government officials). One government official who works with young people recognised this frustration about the lack of sustainability of government projects amongst young people. He felt that plantation projects, such as the pistachio forest, created jobs for young people in the short term but would not provide sustainable employment; after five years, young people hired to plant trees would be left without a job or additional skills. This suggests that there is a need to diversify skills connected to environmental jobs: if young people were given the tools to not only plant trees but also produce specialised goods from natural resources such as pistachios, they would be able to earn a living in the long term. Young participants were eager to work in climate-related roles. However, they said that this would only happen when the government takes their perspectives into consideration when crafting policies and creates provisions for job creation as well. They suggested that there should be mechanisms whereby youth groups (especially in remote areas) draft plans and pass them on to civil society, which could then be shared with the government. Agriculture was another potential area for job creation. Young people felt that graduates of the environmental science departments could provide useful insights if hired into the agricultural sector. An urban male youth representative said there had not yet been a targeted campaign to include young people in climate action from the government. A senior policy specialist expressed concern that young people could not be brought to the policymaking table

because 'most of them are illiterate'. However, the same policy specialist conceded that the government was including young people wherever it could, including through the appointment of the young leaders to key positions

Relatedly, there was great concern around climate-related education. An urban NGO official said that 'most Afghans do not know about climate change', adding that the relevant government bodies needed to work with the climate related agencies to include climate change in the curriculum.

Meanwhile, youth representatives expressed great concern about future water shortages due to climate change, especially because Afghanistan is landlocked and does not have many dams. Some participants praised the government for its role in supporting the youth and creating awareness but said more needed to be done, particularly in remote areas. Here, they expressed the need for a programme that trains young people to implement their work in these spaces.

They also noted that climate change would adversely affect young people by creating more pressure to emigrate, something that could damage their financial stability. It was recognised, however, that despite being especially vulnerable to climate being young people could also play an instrumental role in addressing climate change if they were properly educated, mobilised and empowered.

The biggest policy challenges observed were the weak economy and the challenging security situation. Officials and youth groups felt that addressing these twin issues would also help in the fight against climate change. As Afghanistan is primarily an agricultural country, water shortages would soon create severe economic issues.

A youth representative from a rural area noted that the absence of dams would trigger an economic crisis for the local people.

Bangladesh

The participants demonstrated an understanding of climate change and its consequences. Most interviewees, from youth representatives to community influencers, understood that climate change was directly caused by human activity. They were also aware of the consequences of climate change, paying specific attention to its role in causing floods, which were widely seen as a major problem for Bangladesh, and could connect the increasing frequency of floods and cyclones to abrupt changes in the climate owing to human activities including industrialisation, reliance on fossil fuels, improper waste management and unchecked population growth.

Young women in an FGD for women and girls, predicted that countries such as Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka would drown as a result of melting ice caps and rising sea levels. Some showed concern over the fact that melting ice caps would also release disease-carrying microbes into the environment and many were concerned about air pollution, primarily in Dhaka. Findings suggest that youth participants were aware of the positive change that could be brought about through activism but felt that their role was limited to raising awareness about climate change.

Meanwhile, participants involved in climate-related activity seemed to deal only with controlling damage (e.g. through rescue efforts after flooding and plastic clean-up campaigns) instead of attempting to institute policy and action towards prevention. Participants also felt that government and NGO work around the climate was limited to 'keeping our environments clean' and planting trees. Community influencers in urban spaces expressed support for grassroots campaigns such as a university student-led initiative to collect bottles from a swamp, a canal digging activity in Barishal and UNICEF-led training on climate change but did not place much faith in long-term results. Rural community influencers mentioned initiatives focused on relief activities, such as the establishment of solar power systems in 175 houses in Char and the distribution of 800 blankets to people in the community. This influencer credited the role of private donors and the UN in backing his work and providing support in the wake of the flooding. At the same time, participants clearly stated that teaching families and children good practices at home would be the best way to achieve sustainable results.

Finally, many participants quoted the idea that Bangladesh would be partly submerged due to rising sea levels by 2050. Therefore, climate change was largely perceived as a future problem, not a current one, and there was less urgency in climate action. This was a little different in rural areas where youth from places such as Barisal, Sathkira and Kurigam had witnessed severe flooding and rapidly changing climate patterns.

There was an overarching understanding among respondents that the government was not doing enough to address climate change. Participants felt that the general public lacked awareness, which many attributed to a lack of government action, including the absence of laws against plastic waste and other environmental concerns. While many reported NGOs working to deal with the fallout of climate change (e.g. flooding, droughts and extreme storms), NGOs did not have enough resources to adequately cover all areas. Here, they felt the Department of Environment could do more to support; however, some cited corruption in the government as a reason for slow progress. Another young FGD participant felt that the Department of Environment needed to unite all social organisations working on climate change and give them 'proper guidelines' and support. Other participants mentioned the need for the government to incorporate climate change into its education policies. There seemed to be some resources in the pipeline, with several participants referencing 'Bangladesh and Global Studies', a free textbook that the government was issuing, which included a chapter dedicated to climate change.

While participants acknowledged the need for more work on climate-related policy, they did not offer solutions beyond creating more awareness and creating more tree planting drives. Some did express worries over rising unemployment due to climate change in the future and people losing their homes owing to river erosion and flooding. There was a clear disconnect between government and expert understanding of policymaking around climate change in Bangladesh and youth and activist understanding, which suggests major gaps in communication.

In KIIs, government officials reported detailed plans about climate change. They understood that Bangladesh could not control climate change mitigation alone as it produces an insignificant amount of carbon emissions compared to the rest of the world, with per capita greenhouse gas emission at about 70 million metric tons per year. They were also aware of the fact that if climate change mitigation was left to NGOs, it would not prove sustainable. Officials expressed frustration at how developed countries had not agreed to dedicate two per cent of their GDPs to climate change action during COP25. They felt that unless countries such as the United States played

their part, rising economies such as India and China would not comply. They spoke at length about how the government was 'one of the most vocal governments' about climate change and mentioned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had been appointed Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, a partnership of 48 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. They spoke about how Bangladesh supported the Manila-Paris Declaration and demanded that the UN set the goal of limiting global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. They added that Bangladesh's NDC had already committed to an unconditional emissions reduction of five per cent below usual emissions by 2030 and planned to raise the figure to 15 per cent with adequate international support. While Bangladeshi officials stated that Bangladesh was ready to play its part, this contribution would be limited unless other countries were willing to collaborate as part of a wider initiative.

As such, government policy in the country is focused on adaptation strategies and local resource management. An official reported that the government had already invested over US\$10 billion on climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Many spoke about projects to develop infrastructure (including bridges and roads), plant ten million trees in the country and construct hundreds of new cyclone shelters and river embankments.

Officials also talked about official strategy. Here, they mentioned a climate change strategy and action plan developed in 2009, under which efforts had been made to eradicate poverty, ensure food security and create more employment opportunities for young people. They also mentioned that more than 500 projects were initiated under the Climate Change Trust Fund, but that these ran into difficulties when multiple donors who had committed funds were unable to release them. An official also spoke about the National Adaptation Programme of Action. There was great concern around loss of forest cover due to housing projects, industrialisation and tourism with efforts to coordinate a response hampered by a lack of centralised ownership: some forests were the responsibility of the Forest Department, others owned by the Upazila administration and the rest owned by the inhabitants. As a result of this, forests near Dhaka and the Shalban in Gazipur had been destroyed. There was also concern over the continued use of fossil fuels and dredging of riverbeds because of sand-lifting hangs and a lack of district administration oversight.

Officials were aware that not enough had been done to inform and involve young people in these initiatives and seemed determined to change this approach in the future. They suggested that young people could be mobilised to help protect forests, watch over rivers and create awareness about alternative energy sources. It was also suggested that the government use its climate and Delta funds to facilitate and finance youth innovations for climate change adaptation. There was also a desire to include local governments in climate change mitigation efforts and create rural youth platforms, since it was felt that the rural population bore the brunt of climate change in Bangladesh. Finally, officials spoke about the new South Asian Regional Office of the Global Centre on Adaptation, which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had launched along with former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The Global Centre on Adaptation is set to form a youth adaptation network through which Bangladeshi youth will be able to work with their global counterparts to hold countries that produce the most greenhouse gas emissions to account (as per the Paris Agreement on Climate Change from 2015). The government also looked forward to sending a youth delegation to the Youth COP in Milan in September 2021 to be held ahead of COP26 in November 2021.



Spotlight V: Meet Rokan from Bangladesh

Rokan is an undergraduate student from Barisal who is a coordinator of an education development society and works as a part-time worker for Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) as well. Through initiatives of TIB, he gets to work on projects related to climate finance and governance. Rokan is also passionate about debating and has participated in national and international debate competitions. Now he trains underprivileged children to develop and improve their communication skills. While maintaining his excellent academic results, he has also been active in development work and has participated in various extracurricular activities and social work.

Rokan has always wanted to contribute to his community by helping others. In 2019, he opened 'Gachher Bazar', the first online tree-selling platform in Barisal. He knows from experience that generating funds for social work is difficult, especially when it comes to project like fundraising for tree planting - people want to help at first but do not always commit to action. His goal was to help other social organisations who aim to plant trees in different areas. Through his online shop, Rokan sells seeds, trees, soil, fertiliser and other products related to planting. He uses the profit he makes from this online shop to create a fund for tree planting in the local area and to help other social organisations.

Rokan has already donated free trees to some youth groups and organisations who are involved with tree planting projects in Barisal. There is another initiative in Barisal founded by youths called 'Brikkher Feriwala'; this initiative plants trees in different districts for free. Rokan contributes to the funding of that initiative, too. Rokan believes that national tree planting helps educate young people about climate change and how even small acts can make a big difference.

Pakistan

Young people in the FGDs appeared to be well-informed about the importance of both education and climate action. However, they did not cite specific information about climate change advocacy, suggesting that climate action is not widespread. While there was an understanding that there were organisations working on climate change, few could name them. Many cited the need to plant more trees, suggesting that this was a climate-related activity that had gained traction. Apart from tree planting, participants showed concern about air pollution, cleanliness, waste management and wildlife preservation.

Young people felt that young people could assist government initiatives against climate change and be involved in reforestation, clean-up drives and initiatives against air pollution. They suggested multiple ways in which to spread awareness about climate change. These included enlisting the help of imams and other community leaders. While some felt that heads of indigenous areas in Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could also be enlisted to help, others felt that involving 'feudalists' was unnecessary, and it would be more productive to reach people directly.

Like young women, young men understood the importance of education in impressing the importance of climate action upon young people. They also added that education was important for climate change awareness as well as to develop critical thinking ability. Many felt there was a need for the government to organise more awareness campaigns and disseminate more information about climate change. They thought that young people could also be engaged in ongoing campaigns such as Clean and Green Pakistan. In the KIIs, there was a strong sense that the government had not done enough to involve young people in climate action activities and create awareness on the subject of climate change, in contrast to the wide range of work carried out in this area by civil society actors.

Non-profit representatives expressed the need to include climate change in curricula in order to reach young people. In Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), interviewees were aware of effective campaigns on youth and climate change by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), such as the WWF-funded solar water pumps and drip irrigation systems, and the Reducing Risks and Vulnerabilities from Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in Northern Pakistan project – which was actively engaging youth and providing internships – and a UNDP-funded project on climate and agriculture. They also spoke about how every village in GB had conservation committees that worked with the government on the government-led projects Billion Tree Tsunami and Clean and Green Pakistan. In Quetta, an NGO representative spoke about an online community, Quetta Online, that organised clean-up drives with little resources, using hashtags such as #cleanguetta on social media. In Hunza, informants spoke about multiple youth organisations working on climate change, naming the Haramush Development Organisation and the Karakorum Area Development Organization (KADO). Cloth bags are used in Karachi, and community influencers spoke about plastic clean-up drives and cycling events. They also mentioned companies that were working on climate-related products, including Eco-Pak for environmental-friendly packaging and Trashit.pk for waste management. An NGO founder was optimistic about climate-centric start-ups and gave the example of a young woman who was working on manufacturing biodegradable sanitary napkins.
An environmental lawyer spoke about a climate strike held in more than 40 cities in Pakistan in September 2019, which involved a network of young people who connected with each other against climate change. He felt the global discourse on climate change was so Eurocentric that there was not enough information or awareness about the effects of climate change on South Asia specifically. Community influencers and academics, meanwhile, spoke about the need to focus on awareness programmes specific to the region, including programmes to educate farmers about changing weather patterns and adaptation techniques.

In the FGDs, young people suggested that the government needed to develop clear policies on climate change, placing restrictions on industrial waste-related pollution, deforestation and vehicles emitting pollutants. They felt that education policy needed to centre climate change as a subject in schools. Many also suggested the government plan activities around tree planting, sanitation and environmental clean-up. Outside of big cities, most participants did not appear to be aware of the government-led projects already underway. A group of young women in Lahore, however, spoke about the government's Billion Tree Tsunami project at length, criticising it for not reaching enough people because the government had not invested in campaigns and had encouraged the planting of Eucalyptus trees, which consume a lot of water, suggesting that the government invest in fruit trees instead. Youth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), however, seemed both aware of and satisfied with government policy and action on climate change.

While many young people were aware of youth organisations and student groups working on climate change, they felt that the government had not made attempts to include them in policy discussions and suggested that the Ministry of Climate Change appoint a youth council. There was much concern about the government not having created a climate change mitigation policy.

Across the KIIs, the consensus was that while the government had worked on creating policies, it struggled with implementation. This theme emerged across interviews with both government officials and subject specialists. Various community influencers, NGO representatives and subject specialists praised the Climate Action Plan (2012), the National Climate Change Policy and the Climate Implementation Framework. They also spoke about the crucial roles of the National Disaster Management Authority, the Ministry of Climate Change and the Environmental Protection Agency. However, it was noted that there seemed to be an absence of effective regional and provincial policies.

The main problem appeared to be with enforcement and industry compliance with the policy. A subject specialist, who works with the government, said that government policy is available on a range of climate issues, but the strategy and action plan are missing. He also added that the legislative structure needs environmental inclusion at the provincial level. Meanwhile, an **Environmental Protection Agency official** noted that policies exist, but the lack of coordination between different departments of the government and between the public and private sector makes the implementation challenging. He said there was a need to consult young people and add their recommendations to the plans. Another Environmental Protection Agency official suggested that the government hire young people with specialist knowledge to create youth-focused opportunities and improve policy implementation.

All subject specialists appreciated the climate policy but spoke about gaps in implementation. One specialist noted that 'the government is trying' and that there were good policies and guidelines that needed to be implemented. A government official in KP noted that implementation was not efficient even though the policymaking specialists were very efficient. He suggested that this may be because of misalignment between the federal and provincial governments. He noted how the KP federal and provincial governments were aligned, which explained why there had been progression on climate action in KP.

An environmental lawyer pointed out that Pakistan's climate policy was initially written 15 years ago by foreign consultants the government hired. He felt that, since then, many local experts had emerged, and it would make sense to revise the policy with their Pakistan-specific insights in mind. A community influencer suggested that women and persons with disabilities should be involved in the policymaking process, and their comments be used to make policies more inclusive. An international development consultant similarly noted that women, minorities and persons with disabilities are not reflected in the current climate change policy and said that the National Climate Change Policy is undergoing a revision process to address this.



Sri Lanka

Participants devoted most of their discussions to climate action taking place in Sri Lanka. Across the FGDs and KIIs, participants were aware of climate change and convinced of the need to act against it. Discussions were promising in that young people, government officials, researchers and other community influencers were agreed on the organisations that were leading work on climate change and youth involvement in Sri Lanka. Differences appeared as we examined the degree to which they perceived action as successful and in the suggestions that they made for improvement. In the FGDs with young people, a need to address work at the grassroots level and create more awareness programmes and activities emerged. While there was a significant amount of policy-related activity around climate change, it would be hard to develop sustainable impact unless initiatives were brought to the general population.

Along with the need for more grassroots action, education around climate change was thought to be lacking. Young people felt that educational institutes needed to be involved in educating students on climate change. Multiple participants voiced the need to develop climate awareness resources to teach in schools.

A participant also suggested including indigenous knowledge (from the minority Vedda community, for instance) in school curricula because they had observed young people planting 'wrong plants in wrong places'.

Traditional knowledge, including that held by indigenous peoples and other communities and groups (e.g., Vedda community), can form the basis of a balanced, sustainable interaction between culture and natural ecosystems. Nature and culture have evolved alongside one another and form a constantly evolving balance and this knowledge can provide relevant, innovative responses to the challenges raised by climate change. In addition, many individuals and groups around the region are carrying out informal practices in social and cultural innovation, which seek to create a new balance between environmental preservation, citizen participation, social inclusion and contemporary creativity, which needs to be further encouraged.

Across the KIIs with key stakeholders and the FGDs with young people, many named the same organisations leading work on climate change and youth, with most mentioning SLYCAN Trust and praising their work. Other organisations thought to be working effectively in this area included the UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme, the Youth Climate Action Network, Rotaract Clubs, Lions Clubs, Global Shapers, the Integrated Development Association (IDEA), Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform, Global Sustainability Solutions, Janathakshan, National Cleaner Production Centre, Young Zoologists' Association of Sri Lanka (YZA) (working on educating the young on wildlife conservation and environment), Butterfly Conservation Group, Young Biologists' Association (YBA) and various university groups.

Government officials from the Ministry of Environment noted that there was a need to involve youth organisations in climate change action through government-private sector partnerships. As such, there were plans for a national-level CSO forum on climate action along with the National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts readiness implementation, which could be further developed to have a youth arm. However, there was first a need to establish provincial-level structures such as the climate cell and unit before the focus could be shifted to youth forums. Both private sector representatives and government officials felt that the private sector could do

more to sustain climate action by working directly with young people. Here, they spoke about increasing corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects on plastic reduction, beach clean-ups and tree planting drives, and including young people in the process. Interviewees agreed that young people had creative and innovative ideas which would benefit the projects. Community influencers, meanwhile, expressed the sentiment that most work on the climate was undertaken by non-profits because the government was not doing enough, and the private sector did not understand what needed to be done.

While young people were aware of government and academic work on policy, they were not aware of the specifics of climate change policy. They showed little interest in policy and wanted more action on the ground. A young community influencer said that young people were aware that the SLYCAN Trust and the United Nations Environment Programme were 'working on [the] policy level', but there was a need to create a more transparent climate action network to accommodate all organisations working on climate action.

Meanwhile, community influencers and young people highlighted the importance of creating education policies that would require schools to include climate change in the syllabus. While FGD participants were aware of research on climate change in the country, they said that the government had not made climate data widely accessible. Therefore, farmers, who were most affected by climate-change-related droughts and heavy rains, did not have the right information to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change.

Meanwhile, community influencers and young people highlighted the importance of creating education policies that would require schools to include climate change in the syllabus. While FGD participants were aware of research on climate change in the country, they said that the government had not made climate data widely accessible. Therefore, farmers, who were most affected by climate-change-related droughts and heavy rains, did not have the right information to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. volunteers, UNICEF, UNFCCC, UNDP and youth clubs were all working on increasing youth participation. A researcher mentioned his 2016 survey on youth in climate action in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Human Development Report. They were getting youth engaged in risk transfer. Others spoke about Sri Lankan Youth Delegates (e.g. Dilina Panduwawala, delegate for 2015/2016) and UN Youth Envoy and Reforest Sri Lanka representatives as notable youth figures working on climate change.



III. Skills requirements for young people to become climate leaders of the future

Regional overview

A knowledge and access gap index was developed to compare the deviations across different youth factions in the four countries.

Youth knowledge and access index

A composite score was developed to determine the current knowledge and access of the youth participants. They were asked whether they felt they had learnt enough about climate issues locally, were aware of Covid-19 and wanted to build their communities' resilience towards climate threats, had access to affordable capacity-building resources and information on events and developments on climate change, and were capable of using technology for awareness and influence. There were two other questions in consideration to include in this score, namely their knowledge about SDGs and COP26, but due to dismal scores across the board, these two questions have not been included in the final score. The score was calculated by simple averaging of the selected parameters. Overall, 61.7 per cent of the youth feel that they have enough knowledge and access to information. There was a notable difference between countries, with Afghanistan scoring 67.1 compared to 60.4 for Sri Lanka and 58.5 for Bangladesh (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: Knowledge and access gap

The score was further split into 'accessing the knowledge' and 'access to knowledge' separately (see Figure 11). Knowledge about SDGs and COP26 was also included in the knowledge score. Overall, youth scored 48.1 on knowledge and 42 on access. This gap was largest in Afghanistan, with an overall knowledge score of 63.5 but an access score of only 44.7. Afghan men and boys in rural areas scored the highest on access (49) compared to rural men and boys in Sri Lanka at 35. Sri Lankan rural women and girls scored the least on access (37) compared to their Pakistani urban counterparts (47).





The access and knowledge scores were then compared to current engagement scores (see Section VII). Men and boys scored higher on engagement than women and girls (6.29 versus 5.34), despite having almost the same scores on knowledge and access. Overall, little difference was observed between urban and rural youth on the three parameters. Afghanistan, however, scored highest on knowledge and engagement, while Bangladesh scored the lowest (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: Knowledge, access and engagement scores

Afghanistan

FGD participants noted that fluency in English, innovation and creativity were all critical skills for climate leaders. They felt that these skills would allow young people to access more knowledge and thus have a greater impact. According to one participant:

'If we want to be selected as leaders for climate change activities in the future, we need to learn and search about climate change. We can face any kind of climate change problem at any time, so we will know about its varieties and will be easily able to work on it and avoid the disadvantages. We may be able to use the skills or the support of the government to avoid the negative impacts of climate change in the future.'

Most felt that community work (with government support) and greater access to education would be crucial to creating more climate leaders. Experts in the KIIs also largely felt that education (including technical education on specific subjects such as agriculture and English language training) was important in building youth capacity. An official advised the youth to 'increase their technical skills. Innovation and creativity can also be the basic skills to innovate the programmes for the reduction of climate change effects' and pointed them towards polytechnic universities. They also felt that policymakers should support more projects to improve 'the youth's technical capacities'. An activist noted that young people did not have enough climate-specific information, and it was critical to arrange training to impart knowledge on things such as what kind of trees to plant and where.

Finally, many participants noted that young people did not have access to enough facilities and that improving educational infrastructure would help prepare them to become climate leaders.

Bangladesh

FGD participants noted that the key skills required for young people to navigate climate change were the ability to apply knowledge, good communication and strong management and leadership skills. Here, they felt that young people who were equipped with critical thinking skills were better positioned to know how to deal with climate mitigation and to inspire others to climate action. Many said that it was important for experts to hold seminars and conferences to pass on key Bangladesh-specific information about climate change to young people. They thought that it was important for schools to train students in leadership skills so that those students could go on to lead movements such as movements against climate change. Participants across the FGDs underlined the importance of good communication skills (including the ability to converse in both English and Bangla). Participants did not necessarily differentiate skillsets by gender, with young women in a youth FGD going so far as to say that 'climate change affects everyone the same regardless of their gender'.

Meanwhile, experts in the KIIs highlighted the importance of digital skills and communication skills. They felt that in order for young people to be able to play a role in climate action, they had to be trained in digital skills and 'they must develop their communication skills' along with their leadership and technical skills. Some felt the quality of education needed to be improved so that young people would 'be able to read and critically think about these issues'. Others added that digital skills needed to be improved beyond maintaining social media accounts because 'our youth needs to be able to use the vast data source, communicate with the international community on climate issues etc.'

Pakistan

In FGDs with young people, it emerged that they thought it was important for climate leaders to have management. community-building and communication skills. Most underlined the importance of education and suggested that useful skills could be developed through education, which needed to be more widespread. They also thought that it would be helpful for young climate leaders to develop good stress management skills to deal with the rigours of their work and computer skills to speed up work and the ability to reach people. Participants were divided on the usefulness of English fluency as a skill for climate leaders, with some suggesting it was important while others deemed it 'unnecessary'.

In the KIIs, multiple experts suggested that communication and confidence were key skills for climate leaders. Academics and NGO representatives said these skills could be acquired through education and training and expressed a willingness to hold more training for young people. One NGO representative felt that specific technical skills were important, including 'GIS [Geographic Information System Mapping], health and safety skills, alternative energy skills and remote sensing'. This representative suggested that if there were people in villages trained to install solar panels, for instance, they could teach young people these skills locally. A World Bank consultant felt that 'the youth need to acquire technical training and sharpen their entrepreneurial skills' so that they could then 'invest in low carbon businesses, start-ups or SMEs'. It was thought that the British Council could help organise training on these topics and also scale up English language teaching activities in rural areas. Finally, there was the feeling that while young people were acquiring skills in the country, there was a dearth of job

opportunities for them, which proved challenging. Interestingly, a green transition is anticipated to increase available job opportunities, which could potentially benefit millions of young people, demonstrating a clear link between greener policies and more employment opportunities to benefit communities.

Sri Lanka

FGD participants felt that the most important skills for young climate leaders were leadership skills, research skills, analytical skills, decision-making skills and communication skills. They felt that climate leaders needed all of these skills to effectively lead climate action and inspire others. Some also noted that funding organisations had an outsized focus on 'skilful proposal writing' instead of 'the impact of the project or ground reality', which should be corrected. Overall, soft skills emerged as the most important in climate leaders, with the ability to build and maintain 'good relationships, partnerships and networks among the public, private and civil societies' emerging as an important skill.

In the KIIs, most interviewees emphasised attitude over skills, with NGO representatives saying that there were 'no special skills needed, it's a matter of passion'. Many felt that young people looking to be climate leaders needed a sound understanding of climate change, good leadership qualities and excellent communication skills. These were important baseline skills, according to both CSR and NGO representatives, because climate leaders need to work with multiple stakeholders. However, they felt that specialist skills were not a baseline requirement, rather something that passionate young people would develop if they cared enough about their work in climate action.



IV. Potential tools/mediums youth can utilise to create awareness on climate action

Regional overview

Young people were asked about the most common and reliable sources of climate change-related information. Overall, television appears as the most common source of climate-change-related information (21.8 per cent), closely followed by social media (20.1 per cent). Women and girls are 1.4 times more likely than men and boys to hear about it from their parents. There are some interesting variations across countries, with parents being the most common source of information for the youth in Afghanistan and school/college/university books being the second most common source for youth in Bangladesh, after television. Youth in Afghanistan are also at least twice more likely to hear about climate change-related information from friends than young people in any other country (see Figure 13).



Figure 13: Most common source of climate change-related information

Parents were the most common source of information for women and girls in rural Afghanistan and Pakistan, as opposed to television for women and girls in rural Bangladesh and social media in rural Sri Lanka. For women and girls in urban Afghanistan, parents are the most common source of information, compared to a preference for social media in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and television for Bangladesh. For Afghan and Sri Lankan men and boys, social media is the most common source of information, whereas for Pakistani and Bangladeshi males it is television (see Table 6).

Table 6: The most common source of climate-change-related information

			Parents	School/ college/ university lectures	School/ college/ university books	Friends	Social gatherings	Social media	Newspapers	Television	Internet
		Afg	35%	4%	0%	9%	2%	16%	3%	15%	2%
	Dural	Pak	29%	6%	2%	9%	6%	22%	3%	21%	2%
	Rurai	Ban	3%	8%	33%	2%	2%	8%	10%	31%	3%
Fomaloc		Sri	11%	10%	5%	3%	2%	37%	12%	15%	5%
remaies	Urban	Afg	37%	11%	0%	10%	5%	15%	4%	13%	2%
		Pak	19%	6%	3%	4%	6%	29%	6%	17%	9%
		Ban	6%	6%	20%	4%	2%	9%	18%	31%	4%
		Sri	16%	17%	3%	4%	1%	31%	10%	Instrument 15% 21% 31% 15% 13% 17% 31% 13% 17% 31% 17% 36% 17% 5% 27% 26% 15% 60% 50% 0%	5%
	Dunal	Afg	11%	17%	0%	21%	4%	31%	3%	4%	0%
		Pak	8%	5%	1%	8%	3%	26%	1%	38%	10%
	Rurai	Ban	3%	12%	19%	2%	1%	7%	15%	36%	5%
Males		Sri	11%	0%	2%	5%	4%	35%	11%	17%	5%
Hures		Afg	21%	24%	0%	22%	3%	18%	4%	5%	1%
	Urbon	Pak	7%	5%	6%	8%	2%	24%	3%	27%	18%
	UIDall	Ban	3%	6%	22%	4%	1%	9%	21%	26%	7%
		Sri	11%	11%	4%	6%	2%	33%	13%	15%	7%
		Pak				20%	20%		0%	60%	
	Rural	Ban	10%	0%	0%	10%	0%	10%	20%	50%	0%
Trans youth		Sri	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%
mans youth		Pak				8%		31%		54%	8%
	Urban	Ban	9%	9%	0%	4%	0%	9%	13%	48%	9%
		Sri	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0% /

The youth were also asked about the most reliable, common source of information. Television is not only the most common source of information but also the most reliable (24 per cent), followed by social media (14.5 per cent). Interestingly, while social media was the most common source of information for Sri Lanka (34.6 per cent), it is comparatively much less reliable (17 per cent). Newspapers may not be the most common source of information but are certainly considered more reliable (see Figure 14).



Figure 14: Most reliable source of information on climate change



Young people were asked about the digital medium they relied on the most for accurate information on climate change. 6% considered digital newspapers to be the most reliable medium, while 25% opted for Facebook. Youth in Afghanistan rely more on Facebook than on digital newspapers (36.5 versus 32.8 per cent), while Sri Lankan youth rely the least on Facebook (16 per cent). Youth in Sri Lanka are two times more likely than Pakistani youth and six times more likely than Afghan or Bangladeshi youth to rely on Twitter. Interestingly, YouTube is a much more popular go-to source for Pakistani youth (19 per cent) than for those in any of the other countries (Afghanistan 4.1, Sri Lanka 7.6 and Bangladesh 8.4 per cent). There are few differences across gender or area of residence (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Most reliable digital medium for accurate information on climate change – summary



Television and Facebook were then removed to review what else might be considered a reliable digital medium. Pakistani youth relied on WhatsApp and YouTube, while those in Sri Lanka preferred Twitter, with Bangladeshi youth opting for digital newspapers (see Table 7).

Table 7: Most reliable (digital medium for	r accurate in	formation or	ı climate
change – detailed				

			Facebook and TV news	Twitter	WhatsApp	Snapchat	YouTube	Digital newspapers	Blogposts
		Afg	63%	0%	2%	0%	1%	2%	0%
	Bural	Pak	49%	9%	16%	1%	15%	6%	2%
	Kurai	Ban	79%	3%	2%	0%	4%	9%	0%
Fomalos		Sri	63%	17%	5%	0%	6%	8%	1%
Females	Urben	Afg	69%	7%	4%	1%	4%	5%	0%
		Pak	47%	9%	13%	1%	18%	8%	3%
	Urban	Ban	75%	2%	1%	0%	11%	8%	0%
		Sri	61%	10%	10%	0%	9%	8%	0%
	Dunal	Afg	74%	4%	3%	0%	3%	4%	1%
		Pak	50%	8%	13%	1%	21%	5%	1%
	Rurai	Ban	73%	3%	1%	0%	9%	8%	0%
Males		Sri	61%	13%	12%	0%	8%	4%	1%
		Afg	71%	4%	3%	1%	7%	3%	1%
	Urban	Pak	47%	5%	16%	2%	21%	5%	4%
	Urbaii	Ban	77%	2%	2%	0%	10%	5%	0%
		Sri	54%	15%	9%	4%	8%	7%	3%
		Pak	66%	0%	7%	0%	20%	7%	0%
	Rural	Ban	70%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Trans youth		Sri	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%
Trans youth		Pak	48%	0%	3%	0%	33%	13%	3%
	Urban	Ban	91%	4%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
		Sri	75%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0% /



Afghanistan

Interviewees believed that education was important in creating awareness about climate change. Here, they thought schools and universities could play an important role. They also felt that social media and religious places (especially mosques) could play a key role in disseminating information. They felt that young people could be mobilised for awareness activities in rural areas where agricultural activities were mostly undertaken and where it was important to maintain green spaces and shift to clean energy sources (away from coal and wood and towards solar energy).

A senior policy specialist emphasised the need for community organising, saying that young people 'must voluntarily create some groups in rural communities to work with people in planting trees, prohibiting wasting of water and burning materials that harm the environment'.

Some suggested that farmers be made aware of the effects of climate change and crop yields, using public figures. Multiple approaches were in practice for creating awareness including theatre. Government supported climate sensitising training to religious leaders, using Islamic teachings to highlight the importance of caring for the environment. They also felt climate specialists should be brought in to conduct training. Television and other mass media were thought to provide opportunities for environmental awareness advertisements, particularly for water conservation. Targeted events, including campaigns for the planting of seedlings in the spring, had proved useful for awareness, according to the interviewees, but the actual impact was variable as the seedlings were not always protected after planting.





Spotlight VI: Meet *Qamar from Afghanistan

Qamar is 19 years old. He is an emerging social media influencer who mostly engages with his peers through Instagram and TikTok. He has recently started a mass campaign called 'Change for Climate', asking his fans to post commitments and activities for climate change action across Afghanistan.

The last few decades have seen a rise in public figures and pop culture products focused on raising awareness on climate change through effective digital campaigns. At the same time, social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have provided an



opportunity for the general public to discuss and share opinions instantly with vast cross-border networks. This phenomenon is considered to be a new form of soft power which can provide input into the discussion on climate change and possibly affect the current international political mechanisms.

Green teen memes can help save the planet on social media and on digital campfires like TikTok, which has more than 800 million users, many of whom are young people. Millennials and Generation Z are increasingly engaging with environmental issues by creating and sharing memes on social media. The hashtags 'moss', 'biodiversity' and 'native biodiversity' have 84.3 million, 12.6 million and nearly 800,000 views respectively on TikTok (Guardian, 2020).

Educators have also been using biodiversity memes to get their messages across in the classroom and lecture halls, while environmental organisations have been attempting to inspire younger audiences on social media, which can ensure the accuracy of information shared

*Disclaimer – This is an imaginary character, and does not bear any resemblance in appearance and narrative to any one real person

Bangladesh

It emerged in the FGDs that most young people gleaned most of their information through media consumption, particularly global media, with many naming international magazines, YouTube and the Discovery Channel. This meant that there was limited awareness of climate action in Bangladesh (beyond one-off grassroots campaigns in which some of the participants had been involved) and consequences for Bangladesh (beyond flooding). This suggests that the most effective tools to spread information about climate change are digital media, especially YouTube. Creating contact on platforms such as these would be a good way to reach young people in Bangladesh. If international media can be utilised to spread awareness, these efforts are likely to reach young people effectively.

Area experts in Bangladesh also suggested similar solutions. One noted that multiple media techniques, including 'utilis[ing] social media' and creating 'different television programmes as well, essay writing competitions (so kids will study this topic) etc.' would prove effective. Some saw conferences as a useful tool, with one citing their experiences at COP12 and COP19 where they saw 'some of the Bangladeshi young people such as university students are really attending these kinds of programmes through voluntary organisations'. This suggested that there was interest in climate change, and more students should participate in conferences, either virtually or in person.

Pakistan

Many FGD participants thought campaigns on social media, Zoom events and competitions for students would be effective as well. Multiple participants expressed the need to communicate information in local languages to reach more people. Students felt that student events were a really effective way to create awareness:

'They can arrange some fellowships on different topics related to climate change. This way, they will have a particular representation of university-level students. Secondly, they can arrange different competitions digitally, like story submission or some innovative idea submission. There is this example that people from LUMS [Lahore University of Management Sciences] go to physics stalls, schools and universities and take a microscope there to create awareness about it. We can break the stereotypes and use different types of such new tools to make science and environment less alien and bridge the gap.'

Interviewees and participants further suggested that social media and television campaigns had proved effective, with one interviewee citing the example of a successful Facebook group, Green Islamabad, run by development sector practitioners. They also expressed the need to involve religious leaders to give training at religious schools and provide information in Friday sermons, emphasising the importance of the environment in Islam. Most felt that the NGOs and civil society actors could expand their roles to establishing educational programmes at the local council level, distribute booklets and conduct awareness sessions in rural areas. One participant complained that NGOs do not do much more than 'just planting trees', while another felt that civil society placed an outsized focus on poverty, education and health but failed to link these to climate change. They also said awareness campaigns should be in Urdu as most people in the country were not fluent in English.

Sri Lanka

Multiple participants felt that technology needed to be integrated into climate action in Sri Lanka to ensure that young people were fully engaged. They suggested awareness efforts be expanded on social media platforms ('Social media is a good platform to educate people in a simple way not only about climate change but also solutions to mitigate climate change impacts', said one, while another added that a 'very powerful medium is social media. The posters and handouts culture have [been] abandoned now'). This was a sentiment that government officials and other key stakeholders shared with young people. However, it was noted that digital initiatives would only work with sustained engagement, as one-off programmatic approaches had not been successful in digital spaces.

The best tools to create awareness were identified as:

- social media
- blogs
- community engagement
- traditional media: newspapers, television and radio



V. Civil society role for sensitisation and engagement of communities, especially young people, for climate risk mitigation

Regional overview

Participants were asked about their participation in awareness sessions and mitigation activities around climate change. Overall, almost four-fifths of the youth have never participated in any awareness session or activity around climate change. Interesting variations were observed in different demographic groups. Men and boys are almost twice as likely to have participated in any awareness session as women and girls, and three times as likely to have participated in a mitigation activity. Within countries, youth participation rates are lowest in Pakistan, whereas in Sri Lanka, almost 31 per cent of youth have participated in such sessions. Interestingly, young people in rural areas are 1.6 times more likely to have participated in similar sessions than those in urban areas (see Table 8).

Table 8: Youth participation in climate risk mitigation activities

		Participated in any awareness session on climate change	Participated in any mitigation activity for climate change
Overall	Total	19.3%	18.8%
	Females	8.2%	5.7%
Gender	Males	13.1%	14.8%
	Transgender persons	9.1%	7.3%
	Afghanistan	18.0%	19.0%
Country	Pakistan	10.2%	8.6%
Country	Bangladesh	20.2%	18.2%
	Sri Lanka	30.6%	31.8%
Part I and	Urban	22.5%	23.3%
Residence	Rural	16.2%	14.2%

Young people participating in these sessions were then asked about the organisers of these sessions. In Afghanistan, women and girls are more likely to attend sessions by civil society organisations, whereas men and boys are more likely to attend sessions organised by government bodies and participate in local community activities. In far flung areas of Pakistan, NGOs, while in major cities, government agencies, are more likely to organise these sessions. In Bangladesh, most of these activities are organised by local communities and CSOs. In rural Sri Lanka, the government is the key organiser whereas, in urban Sri Lanka, it is the NGOs and local community spaces where such activities are arranged (see Table 9).

Table 9: Youth	participation	in climate	risk m	nitigation	activities	segregated
by organisers ⁵	i					

		Awa	reness sessior	IS	Mitigation activities			
			By a government body	By an NGO/ non-profit	By local community / CSO	By a government body	By an NGO/ non-profit	By local community / CSO
		Afg	40%	50%	10%	33%	50%	17%
	Dunial	Pak	25%	50%	38%	17%	33%	33%
	Rurai	Ban	27%	35%	42%	37%	25%	40%
Formalian		Sri	43%	29%	28%	44%	26%	31%
remaies	Urban	Afg	53%	18%	29%	50%	21%	29%
		Pak	50%	31%	19%	50%	42%	17%
		Ban	17%	43%	43%	10%	41%	50%
		Sri	46%	24%	30%	46%	18%	35%
		Afg	44%	33%	22%	31%	31%	38%
	Durrel	Pak	25%	50%	38%	13%	63%	25%
	Rurai	Ban	22%	32%	46%	16%	19%	65%
Males		Sri	45%	27%	27%	39%	28%	32%
		Afg	53%	42%	5%	30%	33%	37%
	Urban	Pak	8%	42%	50%	18%	36%	45%
	orbait	Ban	20%	40%	45%	21%	42%	39%
		Sri	0%	59%	41%	38%	37%	24%

Afghanistan

The key stakeholders agreed that one organisation or government body cannot manage the crisis and stressed the need for 'the cooperation of our stakeholders, people, and civil society'. 'It would be great if civil society institutions invest in youth and support them in this area,'. It was felt that youth and civil society could play a significant role in working against climate change and improve public understanding of climate change and its effects. Both national and global networks can be set up to create space for youth.

Stakeholders also suggested that there should be mechanisms whereby youth groups (especially in remote areas) draft plans and pass them on to civil society, which then shares them with the government. Meanwhile, others felt that civil society could play a critical role in spreading awareness about climate change.

⁵ Breakdown of participating transgender youth not included by demographics as total n was 17 only.

Bangladesh

While participants did not provide much information about the role of civil society in the FGDs, KII interviewees did discuss civil society at length, especially the role that civil society was already playing in the country. An NGO representative spoke about the cutting-edge research civil society members had undertaken, noting that 'it took the government a good ten years to realise what they can do'. They also spoke about how civil society led much of the action on climate change, making sure climate justice was on the government's agenda and involving the Prime Minister in climate-related conversations. Other key stakeholder noted that civil society was closer to the grassroots, and they could more effectively reach the general population, provide leadership and disseminate key information to motivate and educate young people. Many said that civil society (including researchers, activists, journalists and educators) could effectively address 'the knowledge gap' around climate change.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, young people in the FGDs and key stakeholders in the KIIs were all familiar with the role of civil society. Some suggested that civil society actors could expand their roles to establish educational programmes at the local council level, distribute booklets and conduct awareness sessions in rural areas. One participant complained that NGOs do not do much more than 'just planting trees', while another felt that civil society placed an disproportionate emphasis on poverty, education and health but failed to link these to climate change. They also said awareness campaigns should be in Urdu as most people in the country were not fluent in English.

Youth discussions suggested that civil society 'can help in research and data collection so that we have a proper plan at the local level and we have consultations on that particular aspect', while experts and community influencers suggested they play multiple roles. They noted that civil society actors could play a crucial role in raising awareness around climate change and educating communities. They felt that stronger collaboration between the government and NGOs could lead to expanded mobilisation and awareness programmes to provide young people with support on climate action.



In the KIIs, there was an overarching sentiment that the government had not done enough to involve young people in climate action activities and create awareness on the subject of climate change but that there had been a lot of work in the areas initiated by civil society. Here, an NGO representative stated that:

Civil society plays a great role in the execution of any project because civil society influences the government and non-government organisations. Civil society works with the grass root community in the society. For example, afforestation is done by civil society. In civil society, a lot of organisations work, which include women organisations, conservation committees etc. These all organisations make civil society effective. Civil society has indigenous knowledge. For government and non-government organisations, it is impossible to run their projects successfully without the help of civil society. For example, if we want to work on deforestation, we can only efficiently if there is civil society involved, and if WWF wants to establish solar water lifting pumps, drip irrigation system etc., we contact the conservation committees first. So, civil society has a great role in tackling climate change.

Interestingly, most of the awareness that community influencers and civil society actors suggested tended to be around tree planting and sanitation projects. They showed little knowledge of the government work underway in these areas, suggesting a communication gap between the government and the larger public. This reinforced the suggestion that there was not enough collaboration between the government and civil society, and that they needed to work together on climate change.

Sri Lanka

In FGDs, participants felt that civil society should provide key support to young people working on climate change: 'they should act as a support system to the youths and grassroots level workers. First, [we] need a network which carries all organisation. And fundraising for a project is the main toughest task. So the civil societies need to advocate for them to fundraise.' This was thought to be critical because young people were passionate about the environment but often lacked the expertise and connections to be able to financially sustain climate action without external help.

In the KIIs, experts noted that civil society should 'offer more chances to youth-led lorganisations. The knowledge on climate

risk mitigation and adaptation should be generalised at the community level by these organisations.' A government official mentioned that CSOs had been taken on as partners in projects such as the Green Climate Fund-supported project in the Dry Zone, and NGOs were working on increasing youth participation in climate action.

Finally, a climate consultant noted that civil society offered the most effective avenue for youth engagement as it had the greatest access to the grassroots level, whereas political divisions, gaps in appropriate social mobilisation strategies and conflicts in priorities might not allow government mechanisms to reach the grassroots effectively.

VI. Challenges for effective youth engagement for climate action

Regional overview

Youth participants were asked if they faced challenges in engaging effectively in climate action. They were asked to rank the top challenges across the following categories: access to knowledge resources, tutoring, media's role, opportunities by the government, CSOs and NGOs, and local practices in place at the community level. Overall, more than a quarter of the youth participants indicated that less or no access to climate-related knowledge resources was the greatest challenge, followed by less or no tutoring at educational institutions. For transgender young people as well as urban youth, fewer or no opportunities for engagement by the government were ranked as the biggest challenge. There were some differences observed in the ranking across countries. For Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, youth ranked a lack of engagement opportunities from the government's platform as the key challenge. There was a general consensus across all groups that the lack of local practices or opportunities from CSOs or NGOs was not a significant challenge. The youth in Bangladesh also did not think that the role of media was insufficient, unlike other countries (see Table 10).

Table 10: The proportion of youth ranking challenges confronted in engagingeffectively for climate action

		Less or no access to knowledge resources	Less or no tutoring at educational institutes	Insufficient role of media in creating awareness	Less or no youth engagement opportunities offered by govt	Less or no youth engagement opportunities offered by CSO/NGOs	Less or no local practices in place at the community level to engage youth for climate action
Overall	Total	26.1%	22.7%	11.2%	22.1%	9.8%	8.0%
	Females	29.6%	23.5%	12.1%	23.4%	11.7%	8.9%
Gender	Males	28.2%	26.9%	12.8%	25.2%	10.0%	8.9%
	Transgender persons	32.8%	18.3%	12.8%	34.6%	5.4%	1.8%
	Afghanistan	22.3%	20.2%	13.4%	23.1%	9.4%	11.6%
Country	Pakistan	31.5%	29.1%	14.9%	13.9%	5.6%	4.7%
Country	Bangladesh	26.3%	21.2%	6.5%	27.8%	14.3%	3.9%
	Sri Lanka	24.0%	20.4%	11.9%	21.5%	7.8%	14.4%
	Urban	24.6%	21.0%	12.1%	26.1%	8.9%	7.4%
Residence	Rural	27.7%	24.4%	10.4%	18.1%	10.5%	8.5%

When viewed for the 20 population groups, urban men and boys in Bangladesh and urban young people in Afghanistan ranked lack of engagement opportunities through government platforms as the biggest challenge in their effective engagement. On the other hand, urban men and boys in Pakistan and rural women and girls in Bangladesh identified a lack of climate-change-related tutoring in educational institutes as the greatest challenge (see Figure 16).





As visible in Table 11, less or no access to knowledge resources has emerged as the key challenge across the board in the effective engagement of youth in climate-change-related activities.

Table 11: The biggest challenge confronted by the youth in effective engagement for climate action

			Less or no access to knowledge resources	Less or no tutoring at e ducational institutes	Less or no youth e ngagement opportunities offered by govt
		Afg	31%	19%	18%
		Pak	33%	28%	11%
	Rurai	Ban	23%	25%	23%
Fomoloo		Sri	26%	17%	21%
remaies		Afg	18%	16%	27%
	Universit	Pak	33%	25%	15%
	Urban	Ban	31%	18%	30%
			23%	25%	23%
	Rural	Afg	32%	24%	16%
		Pak	30%	30%	14%
		Ban	25%	27%	22%
Males		Sri	24%	21%	19%
marco		Afg	15%	23%	27%
	Urbon	Pak	29%	35%	16%
	Urban	Ban	26%	16%	36%
		Sri	23%	20%	23%
		Pak	20%	20%	20%
	Rural	Ban	40%	20%	40%
Trans youth		Sri	25%	0%	25%
Trails youth		Pak	54%	8%	31%
	Urban	Ban	17%	17%	35%
		Sri	25%	50%	25% /



Afghanistan

The primary challenge young people reported in Afghanistan was that of security. They noted that even when youth were motivated, they were unable to participate in climate action or even prioritise it because of pervasive security challenges in the country. Secondly, there was limited access to education, and most young people did not have access to information about climate change – something that may be connected to poor internet access and literacy.

Officials saw challenges around youth participation caused by a range of factors including a lack of awareness among young people, an absence of Afghan experts working in the environment sector and the absence of proper research facilities for young people.

These views were in agreement with those expressed by young people in the FGDs. Young people increasingly felt that their generation was more vulnerable to climate change, and they were aware of their role in spreading awareness about climate-friendly activities. There was the sense that participants tried to incorporate climate advocacy in their own lives and took personal responsibility, with younger participants trying not to use plastic bags, asking their families to 'use gas or electricity instead of coal', trying to start recycling programmes, planting trees and leading awareness campaigns (spreading awareness in their own communities through flyer distribution and working directly with people). Young participants showed awareness of the climate (some had even studied environmental law or pursued similar subjects) but had an outsized focus on air pollution. However, young people showed great concern about the economic fragility of their generation and believed the government could incentivise young people's contribution to the fight against climate change by hiring young people for awareness work in the cities and more remote regions. With these jobs, they believed they could both earn a living to support their families and help protect the environment. They also felt that international organisations could help by creating more opportunities for climate training and creating scholarships that would enable Afghan youth to gain the required knowledge and training to further their careers and the country's progress.

There was a clear sense of a rural–urban divide in terms of awareness.

Government officials, experts, academics, NGO officials and youth representatives agreed that there were adequate resources to support awareness about climate change in the cities, that youth in the cities had a good understanding of the environment and they were in a position to play a positive role. They recognised, however, that this was not the case for young people living in remote areas who had been unable to participate in the local and external programmes available in major cities. Their education also did not focus on climate-related awareness. It was suggested that the government, NGOs and the private sector must attract international funding to implement projects and conduct workshops, seminars and training to create climate change awareness in the villages.

Bangladesh

Where young people expressed a willingness to create widespread awareness about climate change, they reported being held back by a lack of financial, political and institutional support. One FGD participant who was passionate about climate change talked about the challenges they faced, including the lack of infrastructural and financial support: 'So yes, a platform is necessary. Secondly, I need to be paid a sum because I need to be compensated for my time and effort that I put into my social work. That way, I can easily carry-on serving people'.

A Ministry of Disaster Management official pointed towards both financial resources and a lack of specialised knowledge:

'A youth in a rural area may want to engage in cultivation or fish farming, but he will not have that opportunity due to Climate Change's negative impact. He does not have the technical knowledge either, and as a result, he cannot avail the opportunity to rehabilitate himself in that area and change the situation. He does not have the money to invest as well. Maybe he is getting the training but does not have the capital to invest.'

A Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change official conceded that there were multiple disconnected efforts that needed to be consolidated:

'There are other college-based, university-based [and] community-based activities led by youth in different areas of Bangladesh. Both scouts and girl guides are also engaged in these activities. But I think the youth of Bangladesh needs one big platform where they can share their ideas and learnings.').

All this suggests that most challenges are logistical in nature and could be resolved with concerted efforts and financial support.

There was also the sense that preparation for climate change was less focused on prevention and more focused on mitigating fallout.

In an FGD for men and boys, participants expressed concerns over the inevitability of food insecurity, air pollution and migration due to climate change. When pressed for responses, most revolved around a need to adapt to the new world. Youth activists and representatives bemoaned the lack of youth-oriented institutions in Bangladesh. One climate and youth activist talked about how 'there are a Youth Parliament and a Youth Council in the UK' but no equivalent in Bangladesh. To address this gap, this activist set up a Network of Climate Justice to work with the government on youth and climate change but reported a lack of mainstream and societal support for climate-related activities in the country, attributing this lack to the local culture not valuing volunteerism.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, there was a great awareness of the fact that youth constituted a majority of the population, and because of this there was great concern around the financial challenges the youth faced because of rampant unemployment. Many, including experts, noted that young people were passionate about climate change, and many had even gained specialised knowledge butlacked employment opportunities. 'There

is lack of opportunities; young people study subjects related to climate action but there are fewer opportunities and funds in the climate sector. There are a very limited number of platforms for youth engagement in climate action.' Young women across the country spoke about the need for more education around climate change and expressed the opinion that the youth would participate in climate action if there was more education.

Youth also felt that rampant poverty and unemployment contributed to young people being unable to participate in climate action.

Furthermore, there was evidence of a knowledge gap between the government and young people where the government mentioned opportunities for young people to participate in climate action, but young people and other non-governmental actors were unaware of these opportunities. Others noted that environmental issues were not highlighted in school curricula, and 'NGOs, government organisations do not tell or involve the youth or community about the specific climate issues'.

Sri Lanka

Young people felt that Sri Lankan youth were generally passionate about taking action against climate change but lacked the requisite knowledge and support. They noted that the government and NGOs had made efforts to collect data on climate change, but this data was not generally accessible, so young activists could not see it. Many pointed towards the 'absence of a strategic national platform/plan for the youth to get engaged - to get them gradually accustomed, allowing a transition to the process of climate action starting from schools. Meanwhile, some expressed frustration with politicians taking credit for youth-led work. They felt this pushed out a lot of early-stage climate activists from the industry. Finally, they noted that fundraising proved challenging for young climate activists.

There was the sense that enough work had not been done to include the youth in climate-change-related work, especially policymaking. A participant noted that this FGD was 'the first-ever discussion focusing youth on climate change in this area [Benthara] ever' and 'there [was] no mechanism to educate them in Galle'. It was also noted that there were not enough discussions on the subject among youth in Medirigiriya, and there was an urgent need to create bilingual knowledge-sharing platforms to educate young people there on climate change and ways in which to adapt farming technology. In Sinhala, it was felt that knowledge on climate change was only available in English, and it was mostly too technical for the general population, so it needed to be made available in Sinhalese.



Finally, young people felt that efforts needed to focus on G developing the capacity of young people around the country because 'youth will listen to youth'.

VII. Opportunities that exist for young people to take part in action around climate change

Regional overview

To understand the current levels of engagement and keenness of taking part in action around climate change of the 20 population groups, two composite scores were developed, as elaborated below.

Youth current engagement score

A composite score was developed to understand the current engagement level of the young participants across countries and genders. All the young participants were asked whether they felt they had spoken about the threat of climate change within their community, whether they were taking practical steps to protect their community from climate change, and whether they were currently engaged in community development activities. Since these responses were collected against a Likert scale, the top two favourable responses were clubbed for tabulation. Being engaged in community development activities was given twice the weight of the other two parameters in the composite score. The scores were plotted from one to ten (ten being the highest and one being the lowest).

Overall, 64 per cent of the youth feel that they have spoken about the threat of

climate change within their communities, 59.3 per cent feel that they are taking practical steps to protect their community, and 54 per cent are already engaged in community development activities. Little difference was observed between rural and urban youth along with these parameters. However, more men and boys feel that they have taken practical steps to protect their communities than women and girls (63.5 per cent and 55.6 per cent respectively). They are also much more engaged than women and girls (61.1 per cent versus 47.1 per cent). Transgender youth's participation is lower by almost 50 per cent across all three parameters. Within countries, interesting variations were observed, with Afghanistan leading engagement, followed by Sri Lanka, Pakistan and then Bangladesh (see Table 11).

		Feeling that they have spoken about the threat of climate change within their community	Feeling that they are taking practical steps to protect their community/ peers/family	Being engaged in community development activities	Total
Overall	Total	64.0%	59.3%	54.0%	5039
	Females	63.2%	55.6%	47.1%	2471
Gender	Males	65.3%	63.5%	61.1%	2509
	Transgender persons	42.5%	31.9%	38.9%	59
	Afghanistan	78.7%	79.3%	63.9%	1193
Country	Pakistan	65.0%	59.6%	49.5%	1215
Country	Bangladesh	53.0%	39.7%	43.1%	1631
	Sri Lanka	63.1%	66.9%	65.2%	1000
	Urban	62.1%	59.9%	56.5%	2508
Residence	Rural	65.8%	58.6%	51.5%	2531 /

Table 12: How engaged are youth in climate-change-related activities?

Youth readiness/eagerness score

In order to develop an estimate of the current readiness and eagerness of young participants, another score was calculated for youth readiness. The participants' worries about the effects of climate change; the belief that their opinion regarding climate change matters and that young people can play a critical role towards addressing climate change; their eagerness to learn about climate issues; and their agreement to

being an agent for awareness on climate action were collated for the score. Their concern about climate change effects, their belief in climate change being a public responsibility and their eagerness to know was given twice the weight, while their agreement towards becoming a change agent was given thrice the weight. The scores were plotted from one to ten (ten being the highest and one being the lowest).



Overall, 82.2 per cent of the youth are worried about the effects of climate issues, 79 per cent feel that people's opinion will matter, and 85 per cent feel that young people play a critical role. Almost 87 per cent consider informing others on climate change a public responsibility and are eager to know more about it. Eight out of ten youth stated their ability to play the role of an awareness agent on climate change. Overall, there were not many differences

in opinions between urban and rural youth, except for the willingness of urban youth to play the role of awareness agent, which is higher than that of rural youth (83.6 per cent and 71.6 per cent respectively). Not many notable differences were seen between genders. Again, Afghanistan's youth appear to be the most prepared to engage in climate action related activities, followed by Bangladeshi youth (see Table 12).

		Being worried about the effects of the climate issue	Feeling that people's opinions on climate will matter	Feeling that young people play a critical role in addressing climate change	The idea that acquiring knowledge and informing others on climate change a public responsibility	Feeling that they are eager to know about climate issues	Being able to play the role of an awareness agent on climate change
Overall	Total	82.2%	79.3%	85.3%	87.1%	86.6%	79.1%
	Females	80.9%	78.1%	86.0%	86.0%	87.0%	77.0%
Gender	Males	83.7%	80.9%	88.2%	88.2%	86.6%	81.5%
	Transgender persons	76.3%	57.8%	84.8%	84.8%	71.1%	62.4%
	Afghanistan	89.7%	89.8%	91.1%	91.1%	96.5%	89.5%
Country	Pakistan	73.8%	68.4%	80.2%	80.2%	73.6%	72.9%
Country	Bangladesh	81.8%	80.2%	90.0%	90.0%	90.1%	80.6%
	Sri Lanka	84.3%	78.3%	86.0%	86.0%	85.0%	71.6%
Decidence	Urban	82.8%	80.7%	87.2%	87.2%	86.3%	83.6%
Residence	Rural	81.7%	77.8%	87.1%	87.1%	86.9%	74.5%

Table 13: How ready are youth to engage in climate action activities?



Understanding current engagement and eagerness to engage

The youth engagement and readiness scores were plotted against the population groups as seen below in the dumbbell plot (Figure 17). The blue dots indicate readiness scores, and green dots indicate engagement scores.

Figure 17: Population groups, readiness and current engagement (self-reported) in climate action activities



The graph visually depicts the self-reported engagement and readiness gap for the population groups, largest for Bangladeshi rural transgender youth and least for Afghan urban men and boys. The gap also gives us an idea of the current engagement levels of transgender young people in the study countries, as well as their readiness to be engaged in climate action related activities. Pakistan rural women and girls and rural transgender young people have the lowest readiness scores (6.3 and 5.6).

While men and boys and women and girls had close readiness scores (8.4 and 8.2), the former had a higher average engagement score on climate action activities (8.4 versus 5.3). Youth in Bangladesh had the lowest engagement score (4.5 versus 5.6 for Pakistan; 6.5 for Sri Lanka; and 7.2 for Afghanistan). Youth in Afghanistan had the highest readiness score (9.1 versus 7.4 for Pakistan; 8 for Sri Lanka; and 8.5 for Bangladesh) (see Figure 18).



Figure 18: Readiness and engagement scores – gender, country and residence

The importance of formal and informal education in supporting young people's understanding of climate change challenges was highlighted by different stakeholders. These had the capacity to equip young people with the skills they needed to mitigate the risks posed by climate change. Young people are willing to engage in training to raise their awareness and develop/sharpen their skills for climate action, but most of them are not aware of platforms that would allow them to enhance knowledge and develop necessary hard and soft skills. There is a need to develop more platforms and structures for climate action. Young people are willing to learn but either are unaware of or lack access to platforms that would effectively enhance their knowledge and skills for climate action. Global, regional and national platforms should be established for knowledge sharing and skills building between young climate activists and change agents, supporting the embedding of climate literacy in educational curricula (SDG 4.7 on education for sustainable development and SDG 13.3 on climate literacy).

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, it was felt that opportunities were lacking, particularly in rural areas. Civil society activists noted that 'most young people are suffering from a shortage of employment opportunities. Therefore, they are trying to leave Afghanistan.' While there had been volunteer action on climate change, large-scale movements had not emerged due to a lack of opportunities.

It was felt that the youth could be effectively engaged in climate action if there were sufficient job opportunities in the sector. A civil society member contended that 'the only source that can provide more job opportunities for people is agriculture. Therefore, the government must prioritise the agriculture sector. Moreover, people who are working in this sector must be professional. Therefore, the most eligible people are those who are graduated from environmental departments as they are professionals and know what is good for the environment.' It was promising to see Ministry of Agriculture talked about creating more job opportunities for the youth.

Officials said that they had made a concerted effort to involve the youth in policymaking: 'in case of employment opportunity, I can assure you that there are lots of opportunities in the project that we attract from the climate change financial mechanisms, but they just need to improve their technical capacity'. Another official noted that 'yes, there are opportunities, but not enough'.

Bangladesh

Bangladeshi youth noted that there was a lack of opportunities to participate in climate action because of financial constraints. They noted that even when young people participated in climate action, their projects faltered because of a lack of financial support. It was generally suggested that the government had not created opportunities around climate change, and climate action was primarily led by the non-profit and private sectors. The following projects were mentioned in this context:

• 'ICCCAD is trying to disseminate climate change knowledge among youth, helping them understand the relation between SDG 13 (climate action) with SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities)'

• 'EMB has started a new programme called FGD Bangladesh. FGD 13 was on climate change, but unfortunately, I could not be a part of it. The whole research project will be on climate change. That is a great place to get theoretical knowledge'

• 'EYD has taken the biggest initiative taken in Barisal, joined by 28 youth organisations. They are all going to fight climate change together.'

In addition to these, other opportunities for participation included international conferences organised by international development organisations, which some participants mentioned attending.

Pakistan

Across the country, government representatives spoke of various projects on climate change that the government had undertaken. The main projects were:

• Clean Green Pakistan. The project focuses on five components: plantation, solid waste management, liquid waste management, total sanitation and safe drinking water. It also includes the Clean Green Champions Programme, which specifically targets youth and encourages citizens to participate in climate action.

• Green Stimulus and 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project. After the outbreak of Covid-19, the government is creating green jobs and employment opportunities for around 65,000 youth through various climate-related projects, including the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project, an action plan to plant 10 billion new trees across the country.

• The Scaling-up of GLOF risk reduction in Northern Pakistan (GLOF-II) project. This project is actively engaging youth and providing employment opportunities to youth through internships. Officials at the Ministry of Climate Change, particularly, mentioned a plan to include climate-related education in school curricula. They also emphasised that inclusion and promotion of the youth were an active mandate of the government in initiatives such as Clean Green Pakistan and the Prime Minister's Green Stimulus Programme. They spoke about increasing awareness of climate change among the youth in the formulation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans and integrating youth engagement into climate action.

Government officials noted that the Ministry of Climate Change had 'conducted various studies, research and surveys aimed at unlocking ideas for enhancing youth participation in the formulation and implementation of Pakistan's NDCs' and would work on mobilising youth.

Finally, development organisations provided opportunities to work on climate change, at least in the urban areas. A participant mentioned a UNDP-funded project on climate and agriculture to increase the facilities in the agricultural sector (only 0.1–0.2 per cent of land in Gilgit-Baltistan is cultivated) as well as opportunities in the Agha Khan Agency of Habitat and Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority.





Spotlight VII: Meet Faisal from Pakistan

Faisal (30) is a local teacher in Gilgit who has launched a climate education programme for school and college students in his area. He is campaigning using classroom material and has also requested that the district government help him launch a radio show in Urdu and Balti languages on this.

When conversations surrounding climate change issues become heavy, the one mantra that remains with adults is always 'youth give me hope'. No matter how severe climate predictions are, adults are often always looking to youth to take action on climate change and to be the leaders this planet has been waiting for. That places the



burden of responsibility of 'doing climate action' on young people. But education programmes such as those planned by Faisal can help push for intergenerational equity and combined action to combat climate change and adapt local and indigenous solutions.

The greatest defence in the fight against climate change is 'climate literacy for all'. There is a need to develop formal and non-formal education programmes through media, networking and partnerships at all levels, particularly at local and national levels. There is also a need to encourage innovative teaching and learning approaches to integrate climate change education in civic engagement and community mobilisation structures.
Sri Lanka

While there were multiple small organisations organising climate action in Sri Lanka, opportunities for continued engagement proved lacking. The head of a research facility noted that 'there are limited opportunities for the youth only, in some NGOs there is some work being done. Entrepreneurial ventures must also be promoted.' CSR and NGO representatives, meanwhile, suggested that youth apply to organisations 'like UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization]' which would have funds for climate action and, in this way, help international organisations to 'invest and bring their funds' to Sri Lanka.

Private sector representatives noted that there were growing opportunities to participate in climate action through the private sector. An energy consultant, for example, spoke of opportunities in renewable energy deployment (e.g., installing solar panels). A climate consultant spoke enthusiastically about the shifting landscape: 'Climate change had created new employment/business opportunities for the youth. Smart agriculture, organic farming and marketing, circularity and value chain approaches are some examples. The potential to integrate ICTs [information and communication technologies] into climate action is another option.'

Therefore, it appeared that participating in climate action through the private sector was feasible in Sri Lanka.



VIII. Fluency in the English language and climate activism

Regional overview

The young participants were asked to share their perception of the utility of English in communicating ideas and influencing others. Overall, eight out of ten young people considered English as useful in communicating ideas as well as influencing others, while only half of the youth has access to quality learning resources for English. Urban youth are 1.4 times more likely to have access to quality learning resources. Nine out of ten Afghan youth perceive English as useful, but only four out of ten have access to quality resources. All the genders equally consider the English language to be useful. However, six out of ten men and boys have access to quality learning resources, as opposed to half of the women and girls and transgender youth who participated (see Table 13).

Table 14: How do youth perceive the usefulness of English?

		No. of participants who find English useful to communicate ideas and influence others out of 10	no. of participants who find access to quality English learning resources easy out of 10	Total respondent
Overall	Total	8	6	5,039
Gender	Females	8	5	2,261
	Males	8	6	2,240
	Transgender persons	8	5	55
Country	Afghanistan	9	4	1,193
	Pakistan	7	4	1,215
	Bangladesh	8	7	1,631
	Sri Lanka	9	7	1,000
Residence	Urban	9	7	2,508
	Rural	8	5	2,531

When compared across the 20 population factions, only half of the Pakistani rural women and girls consider English useful. Nine out of ten urban women and girls in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan consider English useful, compared to only half of the rural women and girls in Pakistan. Less than half of the Afghan and Pakistani rural women and girls have access to quality learning

resources, compared to women and girls in Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, where at least seven out of ten have access to quality resources. At least seven out of ten of the men in boys in all the countries (except rural Pakistan) consider English useful, and at least half or more have access to quality learning resources (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Perceived usefulness of English to communicate skills and influence, and access to quality learning resources



Within countries, a similar proportion of young people consider English useful to communicate ideas and influence others. However, in Bangladesh, two out of three young people have access to quality English learning resources, versus only one out of three young people in Pakistan. A larger proportion of urban youth believes in the usefulness of the English language when compared to rural youth (84.9 versus 76.3 per cent) to having access to more quality learning resources (59.3 versus 44.7 per cent).

The Paris Agreement, Article 12, refers to the need for countries to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognising the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under the Agreement. We need to teach the language of climate change and effective climate action to harness youth momentum to address the climate emergency. Young people seemed overwhelmed by the scale of climate issues. They lack the knowledge of how to take effective climate action and the language to encourage climate action among their peers and communities. Young people should be provided with easy access to local and global literature and resources around climate science, climate action and resilience building. Communication, creative problem-solving and active citizenship skills should be key learning priorities so that young people can effectively communicate their concerns and subsequent actions to their peers, families, communities and leaders with one voice and in one language.

Afghanistan

In the FGDs, it was generally felt that fluency in English would make 'climate activism more effective' because 'the English language is an international language. We can use the skills and opinions of the people from different parts of the world.' Participants also felt that speaking English would allow young people to use Google to gain more information even though local languages, should be used to 'give people awareness'.

The role of English in spreading climate-related knowledge was noted in many conversations. While participants felt that education in English provided a good solution as English-speaking youth could access larger amounts of information through the internet and disseminate knowledge through social media, they thought it was also important to create training in local languages in order to reach and educate more people. This was especially important in rural areas where education was not as widespread, and youth trusted their elders who spoke in local languages.

Urban interviewees had heard of the British Council and were aware of its English-teaching activities; rural interviewees showed little to no awareness. Those urban interviewees who did have an understanding of the British Council's activities expressed gratitude for its work in education and the teaching of English. These interviewees felt that the ability to understand English increased their access to resources about climate change and better equipped them to lead the fight against it in Afghanistan. Both older and younger participants advised the British Council to establish more centres across the country. especially in rural areas, in order to provide more Afghans with opportunities.

Bangladesh

Participants agreed that fluency in English was an important tool for accessing climate-related information. One noted that 'You need to know both English and the local language. If you do not know English, you will not be able to send your report to the organisation you work for, nor can you spread the results of your research', while others talked about being able to access international information if they spoke English. Many associated the British Council with teaching English. Participants most readily associated the British Council with its work around the English language, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and education. Here, the British Council's work was thought to be critical because Bangladeshi participants felt that fluency in English was a key skill in the workplace. They also thought that most information about climate change was in English, and access to the language meant access to resources about climate change.

Young men and women were keen to work with the British Council and felt it needed to involve more volunteers, enlist experienced field facilitators and create more skills training programmes in order to expand its role, with one participant asking 'if British Council can create some animations, or publish some books, in easy language, since the literature on climate change is full of jargons, then... The websites are accessible to the youth'. Youth participants were very likely to have participated in activities, seminars and conferences arranged by the British Council on a range of issues and mostly connected to English language teaching, learning and testing, and youth-specific training programmes. This was true of both young men and women.

In the KIIs, policymakers and NGO/government officials were also aware of the importance of the availability of climate-related knowledge in English. They were aware of the British Council and its role, but only one spoke about its role in climate change mitigation. This participant was aware of the British Council's global activities in mobilising people around climate change because he had worked with the British Council in Dhaka. Others were aware of its work on education but not on climate change. KII interviewees also felt that fluency in English and local languages were both important for climate leaders and activists.

Pakistan

Young people in Pakistan were divided on the importance of English fluency in climate action. While some thought speaking English was a useful skill in climate-related work, others thought that it was either unnecessary or even detrimental to their work. One young urban man in Kashmore noted that English was 'just a language' and climate leaders needed to have gualities beyond speaking English, while another said that English was 'not necessary for leadership' as communicating with the larger society in their own local languages would be more effective. Young people in Charsadda expressed similar sentiments, saying that 'life skills' and 'knowledge about climate change' were important but English language fluency was 'not very important'. In Peshawar, young participants noted that 'The English language is not important, but there is no harm in learning it [and climate leaders] need to develop empathy, loyalty, patriotism and they need creative ideas for country's development.'

However, young men and women in Gilgit both felt that climate leaders needed to be fluent in the English language 'so that they will be able to represent their community everywhere, as well as [be] aware [of] their own community" but added that, more than that, climate leaders needed to be honest and able to empathise with their community. Participants in Gilgit also wanted the British Council to expand its climate-related activities in the region and felt that fluency in English would help them understand knowledge disseminated by the British Council. Some young participants in Lahore noted that 'much of the knowledge is available on YouTube etc. in the English language. If you have better English, you can better understand climate change. Our own knowledge and research is very less', which is why English was a useful skill for climate leaders looking to enhance their knowledge. Other participants in Lahore felt that there was no relationship between English and climate change, so fluency in English was irrelevant to climate action.

Finally, in Quetta, young men and women noted that speaking English while doing community work alienated the audience, making people either 'uncomfortable' or hostile. They said that 'people don't understand English', and climate action will be 'effective if people will be provided with climate impacts material in their local languages'. Furthermore, they suggested that following certain incidents (e.g., the fake vaccination campaign orchestrated in Abbottabad in order to trace Osama bin Laden) (BBC, 2011), people had become suspicious of foreigners and 'if we speak English, people will think we are foreigners. People here do not believe in the activities of foreign countries, so they won't participate actively.' Another participant even spoke of people fearing harm upon hearing English.

Sri Lanka

Most participants and interviewees did not volunteer information in response to a question about the role of English in spreading information about climate change. Those that did choose to answer it largely felt that English was a helpful tool in getting access to more information about climate change and connecting with international resources, but information about climate change in Sri Lanka needed to be made available in local languages as well. Many felt that supplying information in Sinhalese and Tamil around the country would improve outcomes and reach more people.



Key recommendations

A cultural relations approach to climate change, which considers the priorities and needs of diverse socio-economic youth groups, provides a useful way for policymakers and civil society actors to identify ways to build climate change resilience and recognise the pivotal role of young people in shaping change in their countries and communities. This could be done through arts and culture, education and the English language, and build on the agency, ideas, innovation and authentic youth-led change fostered through national and regional climate connections.

The recommendations for holistic youth engagement for climate action in South Asia at regional and national levels are presented for all stakeholders, including policymakers, CSOs/NGOs, academics, private sector organisations, youth practitioners and young leaders themselves, particularly those from marginalised youth groups (including but not limited to transgender youth, youth with disabilities, ethnic/religious minorities and indigenous youth).

Policymakers and national governments

1. No climate action without the inclusion of all youth groups. Youth-led climate action will be more relevant, sustainable and effective when the full spectrum of young people are included. There is a need to mainstream 'unheard youth voices': impoverished young people, gender minorities, young people with disabilities, refugees, ethnic minorities and others in the policy and climate action landscape.

2. Remove systemic barriers around meaningful youth engagement in climate

action. There are multiple barriers that youth face while engaging in climate action, including access to institutions, lack of resources, hierarchical social culture, corruption and politicisation of youth organisations. Most national governments are in the process of including young people in climate resilience-building policy and programme design. Youth activists, NGOs, CSOs and media need to be effectively engaged to meaningfully integrate youth involvement in climate action and allocate necessary resources for this. They should:

• Work closely with multi-level government institutions to get access to necessary resources and support.

• Collaborate to leverage fundraising, networking, resource-sharing, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainable impact opportunities.

• Ensure inclusivity: reach out to youth living in remote areas, youth with disabilities, third-gender youth, women, youth from indigenous communities (there is a sizeable minority of diverse indigenous communities in Bangladesh; a very small community of indigenous Vedda people in Sri Lanka; and some minority tribal peoples in Balochistan, Sindh, FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan) etc.

• Influence local and national policies to become both climate-friendly and youth-friendly.

• Gather support for youth climate activists and change-makers from respective communities to protect them from the attack by anti-climate interest groups and political/extremist interventions.

• Encourage youth creativity and innovation for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3. Create more inclusive, safe spaces to encourage climate action. Many of the

respondents in the region said that they were hesitant to speak out on climate issues because they were afraid of influential interest groups. This could be because of cultural dynamics around respect and fragile accountability mechanisms. Youth climate activists and volunteers note that it is difficult for them to gain the support of bureaucrats, local government and law-enforcement agencies, who are often not fully aware of climate change and its impact. As such, it would be useful to raise awareness around climate change among bureaucrats, local leaders and police, in parallel with awareness raising among young people.

It is important to work towards a future where:

• youth are not afraid to speak out about climate change

 climate change is acknowledged as a global, national and community-level issue and mitigation and adaptation measures are for the greater good and in the interest of all

• youth have opportunities for innovation, dialogue and volunteer action.

4. Build back 'greener' in the

post-Covid-19 world. There is a need to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of youth climate action initiatives that require cross-sectoral support. Development partners and NGOs suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates how collective efforts of government, development partners, NGOs, CSOs and volunteers are much more effective than solitary efforts by one organisation or one group of individuals. The involvement of youth in climate action must involve multiple partner organisations and individuals across the region.

5. Ensure that all young people have

internet access. Young people across the region emphasise the importance of the internet in giving them access to information about climate change and giving them tools such as social media), which enable them to organise climate action. Expanding internet access, particularly in rural areas, would help the cause of climate awareness and activism.

Civil society organisations and academia

6. Teach the language of climate change and effective climate action to

harness youth momentum. Article 12 of the Paris Agreement refers to the need for countries to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information. We need to teach the language of climate change and effective climate action to harness youth momentum to address the climate emergency. Youth perceive the climate problem as too big for them to handle by themselves. They lack the knowledge of how to engage in effective climate action and lack the language to encourage climate action among their peers and communities. Young people should be provided with easy access to local and global literature and resources around climate science, climate action and resilience building. Communication, creative problem-solving and active citizenship skills should be learning priorities so that young people can effectively articulate their concerns and subsequent actions to their peers, families, communities and leaders with one voice.

7. Develop platforms and structures for climate literacy and climate action

preparedness. Young people are willing to engage in training to raise their awareness and sharpen their skills for climate action. but most of them are not aware of platforms that would allow them to enhance knowledge and develop the necessary skills. There is a need to develop more platforms and structures for climate action. Young people are willing to learn but either are unaware of or lack access to platforms that would effectively enhance their knowledge and skills for climate action. Global, regional and national platforms should be established for knowledge sharing and skills building between young climate activists and change agents, ensuring that climate literacy is embedded into the curriculum (SDG 4.7 on education for sustainable development and SDG 13.3 on climate literacy).

Building on the findings of the research report, there is a need to further assess the linkage between education, language and youth climate action at the national and grassroots levels. This would help educators and policymakers to contextualise recommendations around how climate education and English language can be tools for social justice not only at the global level but also within each country.

8. Build on traditional/indigenous knowledge of young people to tackle climate change. Traditional knowledge, including that held by indigenous peoples and other communities and groups, can form the basis of a sustainable interaction between culture and natural ecosystems. Nature and culture have evolved alongside one another and form a constantly evolving balance; this knowledge can provide relevant, innovative responses to the challenges raised by climate change. In addition, many individuals and groups around the region are carrying out informal practices in social and cultural innovation. which seek to enable a new balance between environmental preservation, citizen participation, social inclusion and contemporary creativity, which needs to be further utilised for community-led climate action.

9. Encourage UK–South Asia and South–South co-operation for evidence

on youth climate action. Results gathered from these conversations can be used to advocate for a UK–South Asia dialogue on youth involvement, particularly for those whose voices are unheard within the climate change discourse. Further, importance is given to local knowledge and knowledge-sharing methods within the research, which highlights the significance of nature-based and local solutions to the climate emergency for vulnerable countries across the globe.

All the participating countries seem to be lacking in terms of adequate climate action policies; vastly different cultures, attitudes and historical trajectories all further complicate the understanding of climate change for the local youth populations. Furthermore, translating technical knowledge into widely accessible formats requires scientific expertise, technological equipment, political influence, economic interests, mass media engagement and cultural reception. Essentially, a significant number of resources and co-operation are needed to encourage youth involvement in climate change action and decision-making processes, particularly design and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National

Adaptation Plans. These need knowledge sharing, research development and advocacy between and among regions to build and sustain a global youth-led climate action momentum. The research has high potential to scale up British Council programme design at the national level in the four countries surveyed, and knowledge sharing at the regional level, and accelerate South–South and UK–South Asia co-operation for research and evidence generation for youth climate action at the global level.

Climate/youth advocacy organisations and young people

10. Use youth-friendly media and tools for climate action engagement. There is a need to use youth-friendly media and tools for climate action engagement. A regional transmedia advocacy campaign should be launched in multiple and international languages to enhance awareness around climate change and the role diverse youth groups, particularly vulnerable high-risk groups, can play in leading climate action at the policy and practice level in their communities, and on a wider stage. At the national level, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of communication platforms that exist beyond traditional and social media (including family and community members) and identify innovative programme ideas that could support climate change interventions.

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Annex: Data Quality Assurance report

By Muhammad Abdullah Arshad (M&E Co-ordinator)

Introduction

The Data Quality and Assurance (DQA) report presents and provides an assessment of the field sampling techniques used for the research study on young people's perceptions of climate change and action in South Asia. The study was conducted in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, following similar methods, which are explained below.

Methods

Data from all four countries was collected and analysed for the final report. The data was collected using the following tools: the survey, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) in all four countries. The use of mixed methods allowed for data collection from people belonging to different backgrounds. The field teams in all countries faced some obstacles during data collection, but mitigation measures were adopted to overcome the issues. The margin of error for each country was variable, with most ranging between three and five per cent.

To ensure that data collected from all four countries could be analysed together, samples were observed and categorised from all countries into demographics, age groups, gender identity and professions. The five major components of data quality assurance, i.e. validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity, were made an integral part of the data collection and sampling process. The validity of data was examined through the consistency observed in the data analysis. The reliability of data was measured by maintaining consistent records of the data in the raw form. Considering timeliness, the KII, FGD and survey results were stored with a record of when they were conducted and analysed to ensure that they were compliant with the proposed timeline. Furthermore, precision was ensured through quality checks at each level and calculation of the confidence level for data collected. Each country had a process for data assessment, and, in case of any issues, samples were recollected. Lastly, the integrity of data was maintained through regular examination processes, which included cataloguing, processing, error-checking and guality assurance. Well-trained research teams collected the data under the supervision of trained experts to maintain data integrity and quality.

Afghanistan

Quality assurance of Afghanistan data was performed by the quality assurance team at three points: before collecting data, during the data collection process and after the data was collected. The data collected for Afghanistan has a confidence level of 95 per cent, with a margin error of three per cent. A total of 1,631 surveys, 27 Klls and 27 FGDs were conducted while maintaining the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for data collection. The staff was trained in data sampling and collection under the supervision of the QA assistant. Moreover, all protocols were followed to ensure the health of staff and participants considering Covid-19.

Furthermore, efficient communication through technology made the data collection process more efficient. Peer and translation reviews were conducted at every interval to ensure the accuracy and quality of data. In addition to this, asystematic examination of field staff was also performed to maintain data quality. All data collected during the research process was recorded, and there were random follow-ups to maintain accuracy and reliability. Data collection locations were monitored through GPS and time stamps to maintain a record of the timeliness as determined in the data collection SOPs. Lastly, the data was examined to highlight abnormalities and any abnormalities identified were normalised through a pre-determined method. Reviewed and quality-assured data was then forwarded for data analysis.

Bangladesh

For Bangladesh, the following methods were employed to ensure data quality: A single point of co-ordination was utilised alongside regular documentation and recording during the sampling and research process to reduce the chance of error. Approval of field research and data collection was made compulsory in conjunction with supervision at every level of the data gathering process. Moreover, all safety measures were followed during data collection due to Covid-19 safety guidelines. Each stage was followed by a review, to make sure there were no discrepancies. In case of discrepancies, the process was repeated.

The data collected is a national representation of Bangladesh with a 95 per cent confidence level and a five per cent margin of error. Data was sampled to include geographically diverse respondents of various education levels, genders and income levels. A random assessment was performed to monitor the data for the quantitative and qualitative data. The data was collected, reviewed and analysed by four teams, namely the data collection team, the data entry team, the DQA team and the data analysis team. Raw data was collected by the data collection team and forwarded to the data entry team, where it was documented for further processing. The documented data was then sent to the DQA team, which utilised randomly selected samples to identify errors. In case of any errors, the case was sent back to the data collection team to redo. Documented and reviewed data was forwarded for analysis to the fourth team. Throughout the process, the data was only accessible to the teams handling it to ensure data quality and confidentiality.

Pakistan

Pakistan's research team established DQA at the ground level to avoid any biases. Moreover, quality measures for both qualitative and quantitative research were taken simultaneously. The data collection was performed by a research team that was trained prior through general guidelines and specific instructions. A total of 1,215 surveys, 22 KIIs and 15 FGDs were conducted by the data collection team.

To ensure the quality of data collected through the survey, a pre-tested version of the survey tool was utilised to measure the reliability. Research teams were equipped to collect data through mobile phones in the form of voice recordings and Android-based surveys. Collected data was examined to ensure all processes outlined in the data quality checklist were followed. The examined data was then processed to achieve the confidence level and reduce the margin of error. Processed and examined data was then forwarded to an in-house team to be analysed and formulated into a data evaluation report. Throughout the process of collecting, processing, examining and analysing data, the files were stored in two parallel locations to ensure confidentiality and security. Lastly, the research team faced a few hurdles during data collection because of Covid-19 restrictions. However, all government-mandated guidelines were followed to ensure data was collected in a safe environment.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka followed an ongoing DQA process, i.e. consistent quality checks were performed during data collection and analysis. Before data collection, sampling was done to ensure responses from different ethnicities, age groups, genders and geographical locations to reach the confidence level of 95 per cent. A total of three teams were involved in the process: the data collection team, the co-ordination team and the analysis team. All teams were trained and supervised by technical experts to maintain data quality.

A total of 1,350 surveys, 25 KIIs and 10 FGDs were conducted within a certain time frame to ensure timeliness. The data collection team recorded all data in written form, which was then checked for ambiguity by the co-ordination team. In case of any issues, data was sent back to the collection team so it could be re-collected. The co-ordination team also scrutinised the data to minimise the margin of error. Reviewed and quality-assured data was then sent forward for analysis. Throughout the process, data was stored and shared through password-protected documents to ensure all information was kept confidential.

Lastly, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the data collection team faced issues such as travel and time constraints. Throughout the process, strict adherence to the Covid-19 guidelines was observed.

Comments

Data from all four countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) was analysed in light of the data quality assurance procedure following all five standards of validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity. The five points were an integral part of the data sampling and collection process. Throughout the process data was monitored, and each step was followed by several quality checks. Each country faced a few obstacles during data collection; however, these obstacles were mitigated through scrutiny and adherence to sample targets. For cases where collecting more data samples was not possible, an alternative sampling method was utilised under the guidance of the British Council.

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