GIRLS' ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP
FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

FINAL REPORT

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My generation yea we speaking up, yes
As the sea level rising up, no
My heritage is now under threat like never before
If umi no stanap now then who na beh standup for umi?
[If we don't stand up now then who will stand up for us?]
Source: The Islands Are Calling, 2021

SUMMARY

Girls and young women are at the centre of both climate vulnerability and action. While gender roles, ages and other aspects influence their vulnerability to climate change impacts, they also challenge the circumstances that put them at risk as climate changes, acting in ways large and small to change their communities and policies on many levels. In this process, they receive support from allies, yet continuing to face barriers to get their voices heard.

Little research has documented how exactly they are using tools like social media and other approaches to advocate for climate justice and challenge the "shrinking civic space". This report helps to fill this gap by documenting girls' and young women's role in demanding climate action and justice in Asia and the Pacific. The data and results presented here are a snapshot in time from the viewpoints of 30 girls, young women, and other key stakeholders from three countries in the region. In addition, an online survey, literature review and social media listening exercise helped put their responses in context.

The following are our general high-level findings from this work.

Girls and young women in the climate movement: The presence of young female advocates is increasing in the youth-led climate movement at multiple levels, from personal and local to national and international. Girls and young women in Asia and the Pacific region raise their voices and demonstrate actionable solutions to address environmental challenges in person and online, in different ways. Both online or offline, young female leaders are engaging with diverse stakeholders, demanding policy changes and accountability, implementing on-the-ground changes, and sharing information and raising awareness. They are also calling attention to marginalized social groups who are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Gender equality and social justice are at the heart of their advocacy.

Young female advocates on social media: On social media platforms, narratives around girls and young women in the climate sector in Asia and the Pacific by social media users portray them as fighters, unwelcome civic actors and victims of climate change. A large proportion of sentiments voiced on social media about young women in this space is neutral, but more sentiments are negative than positive in tone. The presence of girls and young women in the climate change space receives more attention during international events, such as the UN climate change conferences of parties. However, attention and content sharing tend to peak for a short period of time.

Young female advocates using social media: Girls and young women in this study actively use social media tools and digital platforms to get their voices heard and complement in-person advocacy. They said that social media helps them stay in touch with each other and larger networks, collaborate, and reach out to the public and fellow advocates beyond their communities. Yet many found that virtual connections cannot replace in-person engagement. Furthermore, they commented that using social media comes with limitations and risks, including online abuse and cyberattacks or cyberbullying.

Strengths and power of young female advocates: Young people in general hold moral authority as the next generation. According to the literature, they are seen as independent,

without institutional backing and as hopeful. Beyond this status, girls and young women in the region have their own individual moral authority: they reported that they are inspired and driven by their personal lived experiences and memories of climate change impacts. Direct experience of the disproportional burdens of climate change on girls and young women acts as a catalyst for their advocacy and inspires them to take the lead in advancing change, according to this research. Girls and young women who remain active in the climate movement in the face of criticism and a lack of support show persistence. They persevere, they said, because they are driven by their beliefs and aspirations. They work to improve their strategies and tactics while they explore different avenues to pursue change.

Advocacy tactics and approaches: Young female advocates play an active role in decision-making within the groups and organizations with which they are involved. They have demonstrated influence over government actors and adult advocates, among others, according to interviews with stakeholders. Several factors influence the experience of girls and young women as activists and leaders in the climate movement in Asia and the Pacific. As a result of shrinking civic spaces, girls and young women have turned to both traditional and emerging spaces to perform acts of advocacy and activism. These platforms expose them to a range of risks and abuses. This includes threats to their physical safety and risk of arrest, as well as adverse impacts on mental health and well-being.

Advocacy experience and challenges: While girls and young women are seen to bring fresh and authentic perspectives to the table, adults may engage with them at a superficial level without a real commitment to change. Climate activism and advocacy can expose girls and young women to adverse impacts on their physical and mental well-being. Deeply rooted gender norms in many places in this region make it difficult for girls and young women to speak out and take part in the civic space. In the process of demanding and implementing changes, young female advocates often have to effectively manage their own time and balance advocacy with other commitments and priorities, including schoolwork. This involves making trade-offs and compromises, as well as finding ways to align these commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments at all levels, including local, national governments and regional bodies, can facilitate an open and inclusive space to enhance the engagement and leadership of girls and young women in Asia and the Pacific. Based on this research, we suggest that they can:

- create and maintain formal mechanisms to encourage young people to participate in policymaking and implementation such as through youth councils in each ministry;
- allocate separate budget and build government officials' capacity to ensure effective engagement of girls and young women in climate-related decision making;
- recognize and tackle barriers that are making it difficult for girls and young women to speak up and engage in the civic space and climate change movement;
- increase public education and awareness about gender and social equality, climate change and disasters, to create a welcoming, open civic space for girls and young women to lead climate movements; and
- mainstream gender equality, climate change and cyber safety education to equip the younger generation with appropriate knowledge and capacity and foster the youth-led climate change movement.

Civil society actors, including non-profit organizations, grassroots groups, and youth-focused organizations, can collaborate and engage with international actors, such as UN bodies, multilateral organizations and intergovernmental organizations, in order to strengthen girls' and young women's capacities in climate change movements, advocacy and activism. These organizations could:

- engage with key decision-makers at the local, national, regional levels and beyond to facilitate policy changes that better recognize girls' and young women's capacity as agents of change;
- engage with diverse civil society actors to advance a more inclusive, open, and safe civic space that welcome girls and young women as leaders and agents of change;

- mobilize and advocate for funding that directly support girls- and young women-led efforts;

- provide financial, material and capacity building support to young female advocates to strengthen their political capabilities and abilities to sustain their civic engagement and activism, including the creation of a regional platform to facilitate learning and exchange among young female advocates; and

- provide resources to girls- and young women-led groups to facilitate and increase meaningful participation of oft-marginalized girls and young women, such as those with disabilities.

While the girls and young women involved in these activities in Asia and the Pacific have acted as leaders and changemakers in their own communities and societies at large, they could also act to ensure equality in their own efforts. Such shifts require girls, young women and their partners to:

- show solidarity with and connect with fellow young female advocates and other existing youth groups working for the same cause in their country and region to share tools, tactics and strategies, along with experiences and challenges, to support one another, including how to balance activism and other commitments or how to address negative criticism from the public;

- provide equal opportunities and access for the participation of diverse young female advocates such as those from rural and remote places, from ethnic groups, those with disability, and those with diverse genders and sexualities in their groups or movements; and

- leverage social media for a wider reach and during high-profile events such as international policy forums as windows of opportunities to amplify their voices and messages on social media.

INTRODUCTION

Girls and young women are on the forefront of both climate vulnerability and climate activism. Research has found that they can be more at risk and yet powerful agents of change, both in reality and perception.

Girls and young women experience unequal impacts of climate hazards and extreme events on their livelihoods, education, health and well-being, in ways specific to their age and gender and other intersecting identities (Boyland & Johnson, 2018). For example, 12.5 million girls may be prevented from completing their schooling each year by 2025 because of climate change, according to Plan International (n.d.).

While they can be more at risk, girls and young women are also makers of and advocates for change. Young people in general are actively engaging in adaptation and mitigation measures – 8 out of 10 girls have engaged in climate action (Plan International, n.d.). They are also spearheading campaigns and movements on climate action (Boyland et al., 2021). They are quick to adapt to and use social media and new digital technologies for social change.

Young people's leadership has the potential to disrupt and transform business as usual and drive us toward inclusive, just and sustainable future, yet they continue to face barriers to engagement. Girls and young women in particular face unequal gender norms and power dynamics; one in three girls and young women say they don't feel confident participating in climate governance processes (Plan International, n.d.).

The increasing scale, scope and impact of youth-led climate movements around the world reminds us of the importance of their voices, power and agency. Yet, little research has documented how girls and young women are challenging the shrinking civic space, using digital platforms and social media to amplify their voices, and advocating for climate justice and social inclusion. This research seeks to fill this gap by documenting girls' and young women's role in demanding climate action and justice in Asia and the Pacific, with local case study examples highlighting lived experiences, knowledge and expertise of young female leaders.

Participants in the research reported here include girls and young women who identify as climate change advocates and are from or currently live in a country in Asia and the Pacific. In this report, "girls and young women" refers to young people between 15 and 24 years old who identify as a girl or woman. We use "young female advocate" to refer to advocates, activists or influencers. "Advocacy" includes leadership and activism.

We may use the phrase young female advocate to indicate someone who is acting independently, as part of, or is the leader of a group, organization, movement or mobilization effort on the topic of climate action, disaster resilience and or sustainable development. These may be actors at any level, including in schools, communities, or sub-national, national, regional or global levels. They may be acting online or offline.

"Climate change movement" is used to refer to efforts in response to climate change. These include actions, projects and interventions to adapt, mitigate or address loss and damage, as well as activism and advocacy to pressure decision-makers and inform policy changes.

II.
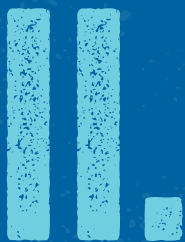
METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

The research methods include a desk review of literature and policies, social listening on Twitter, and an online regional survey targeting young female advocates. We focused on three countries for case studies: Indonesia, Nepal and Solomon Islands. These case studies were built through key informant interviews with young female advocates and representatives of civil society organizations and governments. The three countries were selected to represent the Southeast Asian, South Asian and Pacific sub-regions where Plan International has a presence.

2.1. DESK REVIEW

2.2. ONLINE SURVEY

2.3. SOCIAL LISTENING

2.4. INTERVIEWS

2.5. FRAMEWORK

2.6. LIMITATIONS

2.1.   DESK REVIEW

The desk review of grey and academic literature and policy documents in Asia and the Pacific captured the current state of knowledge and policies in the region and the case study countries. Due to capacity and resource constraints, the desk review was limited to documents and publications in English only.

For academic literature, searches were done on EBSCOhost and Google Scholar; results included journal articles, books and chapters. For grey literature and policy documents, searches were done on Google. Google search was also used to find newspaper, magazine and blog articles written by or about young female advocates themselves. Search strings were developed using keywords in three categories: "climate change" and "young people" and "engagement" (see Annex A for more details on the search terms used).

The desk survey found several gaps: Overall, research remains limited on the role of girls and young women in climate change advocacy and activism in Asia and the Pacific. More attention has been given to the youth-led climate movement, including girls' and young women's participation, in the global North. Furthermore, the literature has also focused more on how girls' activism has been perceived by other actors, including the media. Fewer works have captured girls' experiences and perspectives themselves. We fill these gaps in sections III and IV.

2.2.   ONLINE SURVEY

A survey was designed to capture the overall landscape of girls' and young women's engagement in climate advocacy and activism in Asia and the Pacific region. This includes advocacy objectives and activities, opportunities, barriers and challenges, as well as tools and approaches that they face and use.

The survey was developed in English and translated to Bangla, Bahasa Indonesia, Khmer, Laotian, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese, Tetum and Pijin. It was hosted on QuestionPro and distributed through the networks of Plan International Asia-Pacific, Plan International country offices, and SEI Asia via email, newsletter, social media and other channels. The survey was open from 19 September 2022 to 7 October 2022.

The survey received a total of 218 qualified, complete responses. Of these, 184 respondents were over 18 years old and 34 under 18 years old; they represented 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific region (Figure 1).
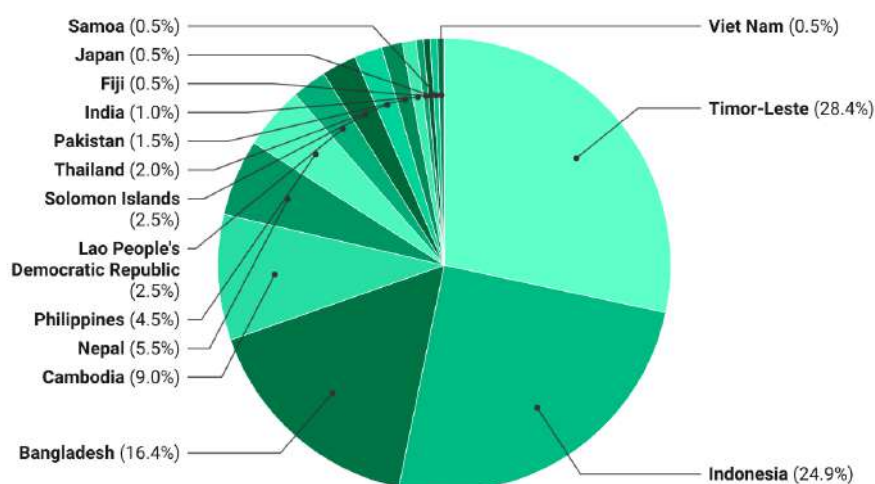
Figure 1. Respondents' country of residence (n=202)

Ten percent of the respondents identify as people with disabilities; 42% identify as members of an Indigenous group or an ethnic minority. Roughly 60% live in an urban area and 30% are rural residents, with the remaining living in semi-urban or semi-rural spaces. The majority of respondents are enrolled in a university (67%). The remainder are in high school (20%), secondary or primary school (5.5%), employed (5%) and unemployed (2.75%).

Half of the respondents have engaged in the climate change movement for less than a year, 36% for 1–2 years, 10% for 3–5 years and only 5% over 5 years. The majority (62%) are independent advocates, while the rest are working or affiliated with other groups or organizations.

2.3.   SOCIAL LISTENING

The social listening method tracks conversations and mentions on social media and online platforms using pre-identified keywords (Pomputius, 2019). Marketing research often uses social listening to better understand customers and glean marketing insights. For this project, we use a social listening tool, Meltwater, to understand the trends in girls' and young women's activism and leadership, including both how they position themselves and how they are talked about online.

Figure 2. Authors' age breakdown

A list of keywords and hashtags forms a search string to capture results from all countries in Asia and the Pacific (59) over a 12-month period beginning in September 2021 (Annex B). Only English keywords were included for the term due to capacity and resource constraints. The research team originally had planned to search four key social media channels, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. However, due to platform policies, only results from Twitter were available for the analysis.

The search yielded around 9000 tweets from 7000 Twitter handles, estimated to reach an audience of around 74 million people. India, Australia, Pakistan, Philippines and Malaysia are the top five countries from where users posted. This prevalence may be due to the high levels of proficiency in English in these countries, as the search was for English-language text.

Figure 3. Authors' gender breakdown

Meltwater inferred from the author bios that half of the post authors are between 18 and 24 years old, and almost 60% self-identified as male. This information is shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively.
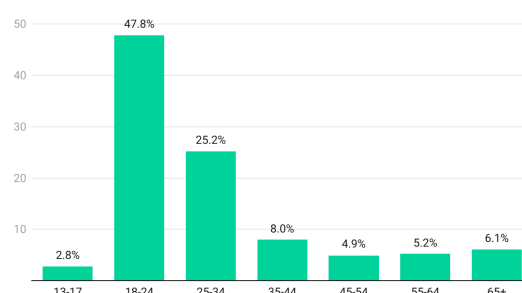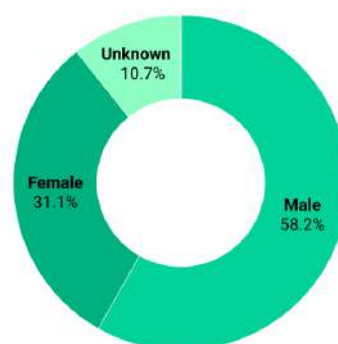
2.4. INTERVIEWS

The team conducted interviews to develop in-depth and nuanced understanding of girls' and young women's engagement in the climate movement in their own words and through their own perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 young female advocates: seven from Indonesia, eight from Nepal, and six from Solomon Islands. The interview was designed to complement the regional survey and unpack the nature of both the advocates' civic engagement and their challenges, opportunities and tactics.

Key informant interviews helped to gain further understanding of girls' and young women's climate engagement, through the perspectives of other stakeholders in the climate change sector, and to triangulate data collected through the survey and in-depth interviews. The key informant interviews were conducted with nine representatives of civil society and the government sector in the same three countries as the semi-structured advocates' interviews, with three from Indonesia, two from Nepal, and four from Solomon Islands.

All interviewees were identified through Plan International country offices' networks. Interviews were carried out in local languages, simultaneously translated (two-ways) by an independent/third party interpreter during the interview, with a few exceptions where participants could understand and speak in English.

Throughout the report, to ensure research participants' anonymity, codes are used to refer to interviews with girls and young women (G) or other stakeholders from either the civil society or government bodies (KII) in Indonesia (ID), Nepal (NP) and Solomon Islands (SI). For instance, NP-G1 refers to an interview with a young female advocate from Nepal while SI-KII2 cites an interview with an adult stakeholder in Solomon Islands. All names (in spotlight stories) are pseudonyms.

2.5. FRAMEWORK

The research draws from existing frameworks and approaches for youth engagement (Boyland et al., 2021). They include the following elements, which are used to guide the analysis (Figure 4).

Social context: *contextualizing girls' and young women's activism socially, historically, economically and politically.*

Substance: *forms, focuses and outcomes of activism.*

Procedure: *duration, depth, inclusivity, continuity, mechanism and support for or of activism.*

Power: *sources of power of girls and young women; the space, voice and audience they craft; and the power dynamics in which they work.*

Agency: *roles of girls and young women and their relationships with adults and allies.*

Figure 4. Research framework

2.6. LIMITATIONS

The methodological approach of this study has limitations. First, English was used as the main language, including in the design, desk review and social listening activities. The online survey was translated from English to 10 languages, and interviewees were able to speak a language they felt most comfortable with. Knowledge and data from people who use many other languages in Asia and the Pacific were not included in this study.

Second, the research sample is not representative of all young female advocates in the region. Participants were recruited through Plan International and SEI. While both organizations have wide networks and extensive engagement with young female advocates and the climate sector, some of the participants had had prior engagement with either organization before, so the sample may have been self-selective.

Third, due to the scope of the project and the amount of data involved, we were not able to clean the data to remove all irrelevant posts that the Meltwater search yielded. Nevertheless, overall, the results are still indicative of the bigger trends on this topic.

The research findings, therefore, must be interpreted carefully considering the limitations listed above. Altogether, the methods used in this project nonetheless can provide insightful snapshots of girls and young women in the climate justice landscape, accounting for multiple perspectives and points of view.

III.
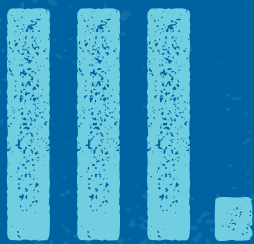
SHRINKING SPACES, LOUDER VOICES:

YOUNG FEMALE ADVOCATES IN THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT

> **"**
>
> *For young people there is now a lot more recognition and respect for the role that we play as advocates and changemakers within our communities. I don't think you would be able to see young people in COPs a couple years ago whereas now you have youth summits and conferences everywhere around the world. I really appreciate that development and as a young person I feel respected in this space, I feel that my opinion is heard, and people want to know what young people have to say about the climate movement."*
>
> *ID-G7*

In the face of the urgency of the climate crisis, recognition of young people's voices and agency is still obviously lacking in civic and decision-making spaces. This section provides an overview of the civic and policy spaces in which young female advocates are acting, and shows their increasing presence and voices in the climate movement despite limited enabling conditions.

3.1.   THE CIVIC SPACE

3.2.   THE POLICY CONTEXT

3.3.   THE YOUTH-LED CLIMATE MOVEMENTS

3.1.   THE CIVIC SPACE

Restrictions continue to permeate the civic spaces in Asia and the Pacific. According to CIVICUS Monitor, a tool that tracks enabling conditions for civic space, in Asia and the Pacific region, civic space is rated as open in eight countries; narrowed, obstructed or repressed in 28 countries; and closed in four countries (Figure 12). Of the eight countries with an open civic space, only one is in Asia and the remaining seven are in the Pacific.

Over the years, CIVICUS Monitor found Australia's civic rating downgraded from open to narrow in 2019 due to threatened freedom of speech, Singapore's from obstructed to repressed in 2021 due to decline in fundamental freedoms, and Solomon Islands' from open to narrow due to restrict laws. The only country with an upgraded rating in 2021 was Mongolia, from obstructed to narrowed, owing to a new law protecting human rights defenders (CIVICUS, 2021).

Among the case studies, as of October 2022, Indonesia and Nepal both have obstructed civic spaces, where "civic space is highly contested by power holders" (CIVICUS Monitor, n.d.). The civic space in Solomon Islands is considered narrowed, i.e. "while the state allows individuals and civil society organisations to exercise their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, violations of these rights also take place" (CIVICUS Monitor, n.d.).
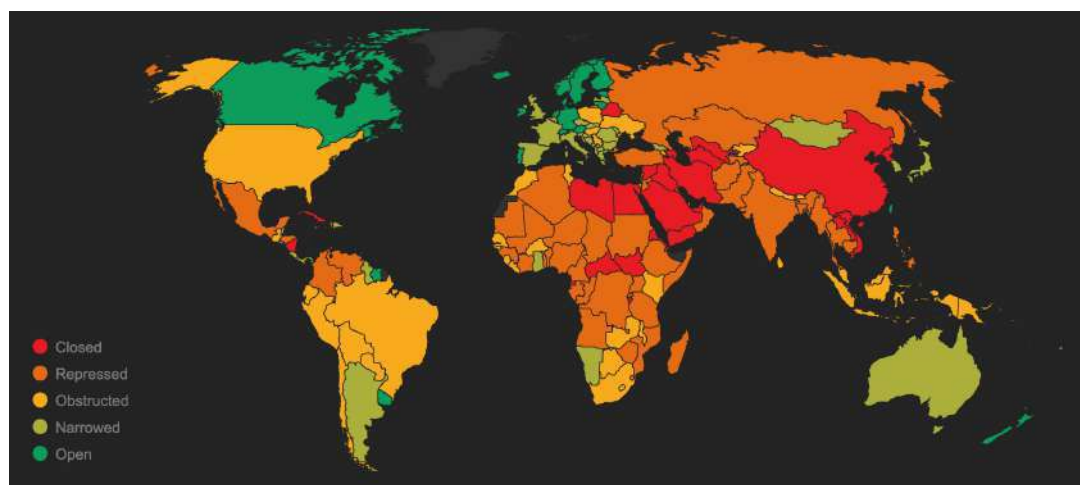
Figure 12. CIVICUS Monitor (2022) National Civic Space Ratings. Available at: www.monitor.civicus.org (Accessed: 2022-10-22).

Geographic factors can further challenge civic freedom. In places where civil society is less active, with fewer like-minded groups or organizing efforts, it can be harder for girls' and young women's activism and advocacy efforts to build momentum (ID-G6). In places with difficult-to-navigate geography or distributed archipelagos, where it is much harder to reach rural areas or small islands, advocates find it challenging to extend their engagement beyond key urban centres (SI-G2, ID-G7).

3.2.   THE POLICY CONTEXT

Reviewing current climate change–related policies, we find limited provisions that facilitate girls' and young women's engagement in climate action and decision-making (Annex E). In Indonesia, Nepal and Solomon Islands, most policies promote the inclusion of children, youth and women, among other vulnerable groups, albeit to varying extents. Some of the reviewed policies, particularly in Nepal and Solomon Islands, recognize the roles that young people can play and support their empowerment and inclusion.

Young people, however, are more often characterized as vulnerable populations rather than agents of change, according to our review. Drivers of marginalization, such as age, gender, disability, class, and ethnicity or race, and how these intersect, are not accounted for. There is little articulation specific to the role of girls and young women in decision-making in these policies.

Gaps also exist between policy and implementation, when it comes to the inclusion of young people in climate action in all three countries (ID-G6, ID-G7, ID-KII1, SI-KII3). A representative from the civil society in Indonesia shared that while policies often mention as a principle the inclusion of youth and other vulnerable groups, they are still left behind in action (ID-KII1). A key challenge for the Indonesian government is to create an official mechanism for young people to express their creativity and ideas rather than just "including them in introductory chapters of policy documents but not the actual action plan, program or intervention" (ID-KII1). Informants from Nepal pointed out that their government can still play a stronger role in implementing equitable inclusion (NP-KII2, NP-G4). Similarly, in Solomon Islands, informants also suggested that there is already a lot of talk and work on raising awareness, but more action needs to be done on the ground (SI-KII3, SI-KII1, SI-G2).

3.3.   THE YOUTH-LED CLIMATE MOVEMENTS

Young people have been forerunners in calling for systemic changes to advance sustainability through activism, litigation, and on-the-ground efforts (Aggarwal et al., 2022). The civic space has increasingly seen girls and young women in particular as advocates of social inclusion and social change.

Historically, girls' and young women's participation in activism is not a new phenomenon. It has, however, recently received increasing attention from powerful institutions, including governments, companies and media. Over the past decade, "girl activists have gone rapidly from being a present but basically unrecognized political force to celebrated cultural figures" (Taft, 2020, p. 2). This shift has opened the space for girls to further expand their civic and political engagement.

In alignment with the global trend, Asia and the Pacific region also see increasing recognition for young female advocates. In Indonesia, Nepal and Solomon Islands, young female advocates and others reported that the role of young people in the climate movement is getting stronger (ID-G1, ID-G3, ID-G7, NP-KII1, SI-KII1, SI-KII2). Interviewees observed that young women and girls are particularly active in climate change and environmental advocacy in their respective countries.

In Indonesia, for instance, interviewees said that young women express their concerns more often, are better heard and recognized, and generally are more present in activism than young men (ID-KII1, ID-G7). In Nepal, girls and young women are reported to be working with local governments and mobilizing in international forums for climate change (NP-G2, NP-KII2). Solomon Islands informants pointed out from their own experience that the number of girls involved in local youth groups has been rising over time and girls are also becoming more active in the community (SI-KII3, SI-KII2). In all three countries, young female advocates who we interviewed find fellow male advocates and leaders supportive and encouraging of their leadership.

IV.

GOING ONLINE:

SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUNG FEMALE ADVOCATES

The previous section shows the larger social and policy context in and against which girls and young women in Asia and the Pacific are acting. To better understand the role of young female climate advocates in the public discourse, this section turns to social media both as a source of information on and a tool used by girls and young women in the climate movements in Asia and the Pacific. We synthesize here findings from the social listening analysis, the desk review and case studies to show both how girls and young women are being portrayed in social media and how they are leveraging such online platforms to further their cause. We also highlight the downsides of social media as a tool for advocacy and network, including limited accessibility and risks.

While the existing literature on girls' activism has focused on the positive configuration of girl activists on traditional media coverage, which is not without its problems (Taft, 2020; Vanner & Dugal, 2020), our findings show the prevalence of negative messaging associated with girls and young women in the context of climate change on social media in the region. This suggests the perception that persists of girls as vulnerable and their movements as illegitimate. Furthermore, while young people are often seen as part of a digitally savvy generation that uses social media to their advantage, the young female advocates in this research have highlighted the challenges and limitations of social media, along with the tactics they have used to cope with such issues.

4.1. ADVOCATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA
4.2. ADVOCATES USING SOCIAL MEDIA

4.1.   ADVOCATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The social listening exercise shows how young female advocates are portrayed on social media, specifically on Twitter, through analyses of sentiments, peak trends and keywords. Posts gathered included both those that talk about girls and young women as well as those by young female advocates themselves. Most are neutral, while there are more negative than positive sentiments. The analysis thus shows a "macro view" of the narratives around young female advocates, which position them as as fighters, as unwelcome civic actors, and as victims of climate change. It also gives clues to when mentions of girls and young women gain more traction and momentum, including during high-profile events and times of public outrage. Whether perceived positively or negatively, the findings suggest that virality on Tweeter, however, does not constitute a sustained movement or discourse online over time.

Sentiments

Sentiment analysis provides insights into how the public feels about a particular topic. The social listening tool Meltwater analyses words, phrases and opinions in posts using natural language processing algorithms. The tool then categorizes the content into positive, negative and neutral sentiments (W., n.d.). Research shows that emotional messages on social media can become more popular (Samuel et al., 2020), although the link between negative or positive sentiments and popularity (or the likelihood of being 'retweeted') varies by context (see Jiménez-Zafra et al., 2021). Sentiment also interacts with content, user's profile and other factors to shape how information travels on these digital platforms (Jenders et al., 2013).

Tweets that mention girls and young women in the context of climate change advocacy with a negative attitude appear to outweigh the more positive ones, even though the majority of Twitter posts are neutral. During the search period, roughly half of the posts were neutral, 30% negative and 20% positive in tone (Figure 5). This result might have been disproportionately influenced by an incident in India that caused public outrage, as explained further below, where negativity was not targeted at girls and young women, but rather at how they were overlooked as a vulnerable group. This suggests that negativity in this research context receives more attention on Twitter and can more easily "go viral" than positivity (Jiménez-Zafra et al., 2021; Tsugawa & Ohsaki, 2017).
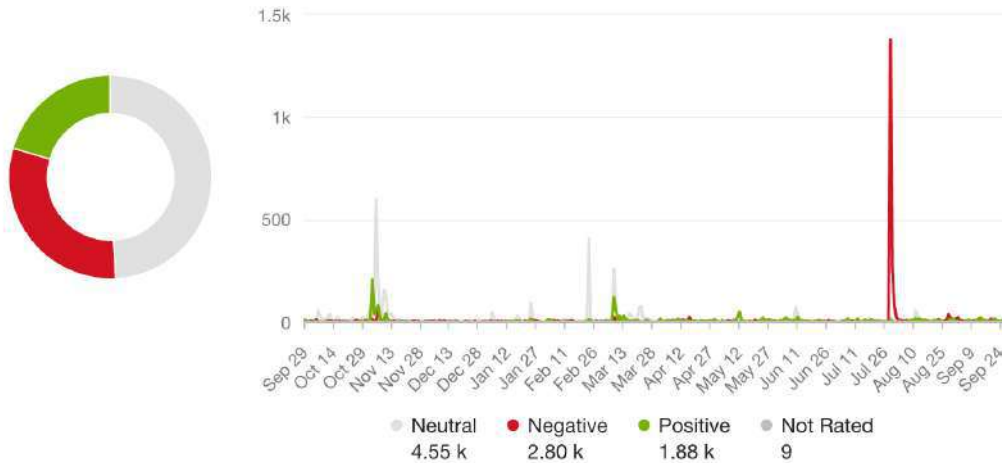
Sentiment Breakdown For Twitter ⓘ

Neutral	Negative	Positive	Not Rated
4.55 k	2.80 k	1.88 k	9

Figure 5. Sentiment breakdown from social listening

Peak trends

Research on the role of social media in democratizing news and information suggests that information can travel via the media to audiences through a top-down, one-way broadcast path; a bottom-up, peer-to-peer viral path; or a hybrid of both. With social media, the broadcasting mechanism still dominates, and bottom-up viral events are rare. Yet during significant public events, when many users are paying attention to the same event, social sharing behaviour can spike and reach wider networks to become viral (Wihbey, 2014).

Our social listening analysis suggests that international events are important windows for advocacy and activism online, particularly at the global level. During the investigation period, 29 September 2021 to 29 September 2022, four significant spikes occurred in terms of the frequency that the search terms were mentioned (Figure 6). These peaks, however, appear short-lived and interests did not seem to sustain over time, similar to research findings on social media in other social movements (for example, see Conover et al., 2013).

The first peak happened from 25 October to 12 November 2021, which coincided with the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in 2021. Another peak took place during the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in March 2022. The most engaged users' content discussed girls' participation in COP26 and women in climate change.
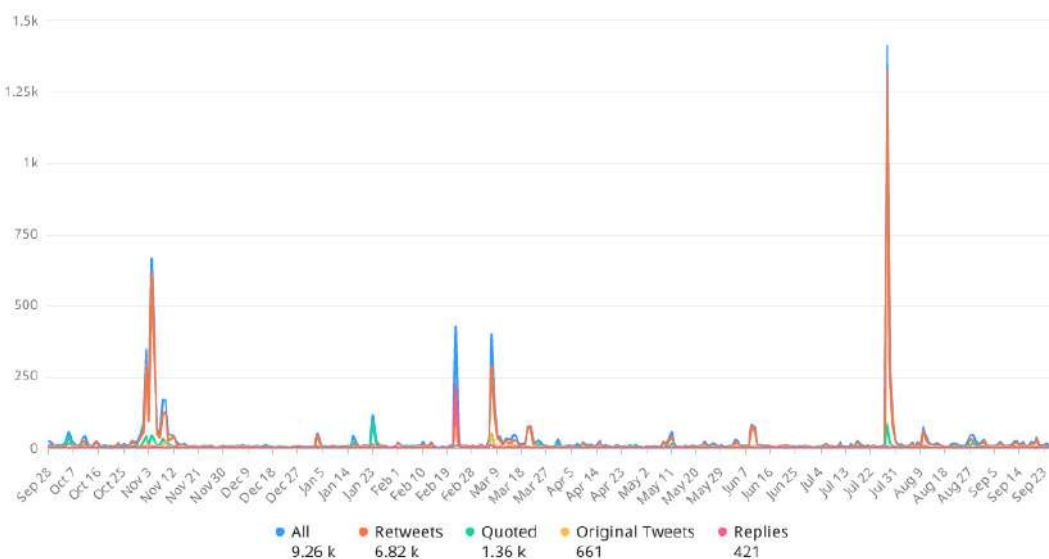

All	Retweets	Quoted	Original Tweets	Replies
9.26 k	6.82 k	1.36 k	661	421

Figure 6. Twitter mentions from social listening

Local or national events or incidents can also trigger public attention. Another peak occurred in February 2022, as Twitter users mainly from South Korea disapproved of a famous Korean entertainment company promoting their non-fungible token (NFT) business rather than supporting girls' activism and leadership.

The largest peak during the investigation period occurred in July 2022. Video footage of girls struggling to get to school because of flooding in Madhya Pradesh went viral. Twitter users in India and Pakistan criticized the Indian government for purchasing luxury aircraft and security personnel for India's Prime Minister, instead of supporting the girls, even though the purchases had been made in previous years (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Most retweeted post with a negative sentiment

Most Retweeted ⓘ

Ashok Swain @ashoswai
Jul 29 · 7:02 AM

A country whose leader has bough two ultra-luxury aircrafts for his foreign travels and keeps 3000 security personnel for his protection, school girls are risking their lives to go to their school in flood waters! MP-India https://t.co/qEmyzjfL9D

453k Reach   4k Retweets

Keywords and Narratives

Meltwater analysis of top keywords by sentiment shows several opposing narratives when it comes to girls and young women in the context of climate change (Figure 8). Social media users across the region recognize or call attention to the vulnerability of girls and young women, as well as to their unique roles as changemakers in societies today.
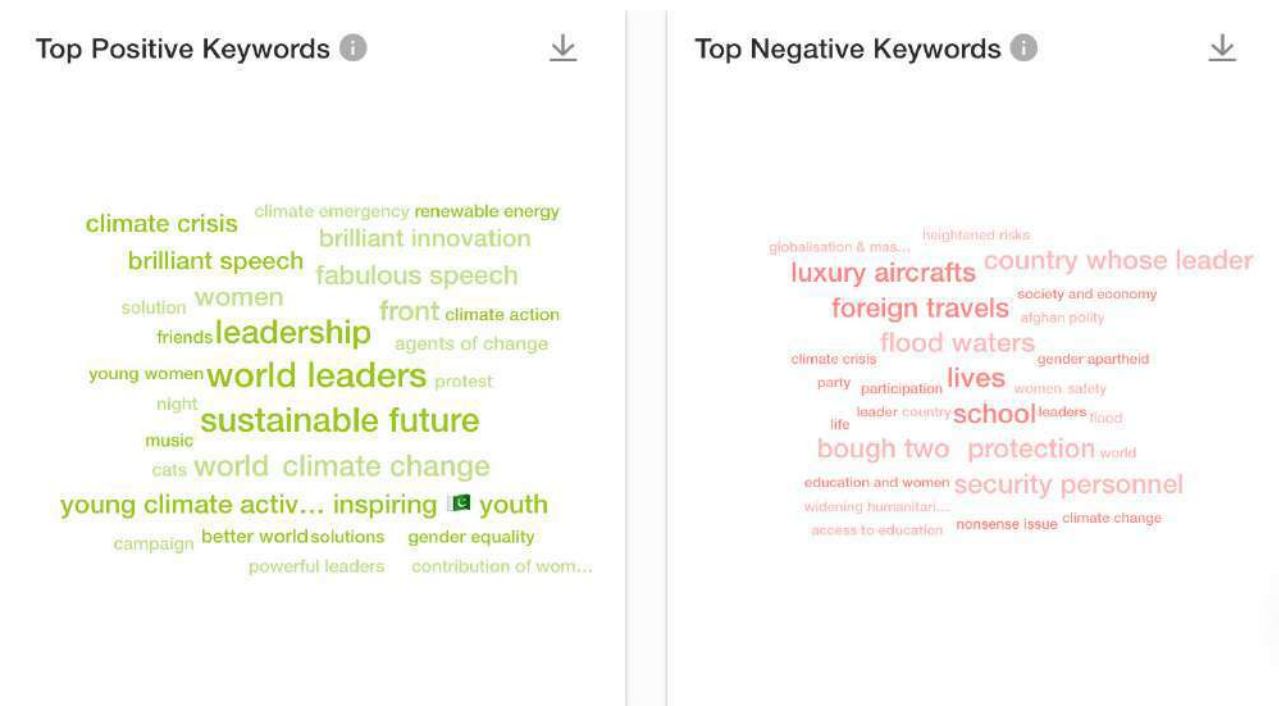
Figure 8. Top keywords by sentiment analysis

On a positive note, the posts celebrate youth and young women as leaders and agents of change for a "sustainable future" and a "better world". They deliver "brilliant" and "fabulous" speeches, organize campaigns and protests, keep world leaders accountable, and promote solutions and actions for a better world, not only addressing the climate crisis but also contributing to gender equality.

On the negative side, users see young female advocates as victims and that girls' and young women's lives are vulnerable to the climate and widening humanitarian crises, heightened

risks, safety and education issues, and gender inequality. As noted above, the top negative keywords also refer to an incident in India where its leaders were criticized for purchasing luxury aircrafts at the expense of investments in reducing vulnerability for girls. At the same time, as advocates and activists, these young female advocates are seen to be raising "nonsense" issues while skipping school and threatening their education.

During the COP26, when mentions of girls and young women peaked, for instance, posts with the highest engagement illustrated both positive and negative attitudes towards girls' and young women's participation. While posts appeared celebrating them as leaders, others expressed suspicion and distrust, or users ridiculed them as young and inexperienced (Figure 9, 10 and 11).

Figure 9, 10 and 11. Top three highest engagement of twitter posts during the COP26 peak (25 October – 12 November 2021) (Source: Meltwater)

4.2. ADVOCATES USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is not only a platform where young female advocates are talked about, but a tool they are actively using. Social media helps girls and young women in this study stay in touch, collaborate and reach out to the public and fellow advocates beyond their communities. Nevertheless, many find that virtual connections cannot replace in-person engagement. Furthermore, using social media comes with limitations and risks, including online abuse and cyberattacks. This section shows the good, the bad and the ugly of using social media for advocacy.

Social media and online platforms are both a tool for and a form of advocacy used by girls and young women in the study. Of the survey respondents, 91% use social media in their activism and advocacy, and most (54%) find it 'highly effective'. When asked to rank the effectiveness of communication methods, they ranked in-person events and gatherings highest, followed by social media and by offline and traditional media.

The most common use of social media is for raising public awareness. Policy advocacy on social media, however, is less common. For survey respondents, Facebook is the most used platform, followed by Instagram and WhatsApp.

The good

> *I use Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. […] I often post activities that I do. The distance between campus and my house is quite close so I walk to campus every day. I don't have a private vehicle, so I always use public transportation. […] I use it and then I post it on my social media. I explain that this form of activity is one of the small steps to reduce the impact of the climate crisis. I always invite my friends by using #noplasticbag, then #krisisiklim, #selamatkanbumi and so on. I always use these hashtags and complement my posts an invitation to others to take part in the movement I am doing. Then on TikTok I usually share it through videos, my vlogs, for example, when I woke up in the morning, I didn't forget to turn off the electricity, unplug, turn off the electricity in my house, things like that I share that are close to my life every day."*
>
> *ID-G2*

Social media platforms help advocates communicate with their own team as well as with wider networks and peers across the region and the world. When these young leaders must balance their activism and advocacy with other commitments, they said that being able to engage online makes it more convenient and time efficient. Social media and online platforms also make connecting with activists abroad easier, particularly when not being able to travel during the Covid-19 pandemic (ID-G7).

Effective advocacy may require reaching a large audience quickly, making social media a plus (ID-G7). It is also easier to reach local communities and encourage their participation in any march, petition or other mobilization through social media (SI-KII3). Youth groups may also be able to catch their government's attention, as the authority can follow conversations on social media (SI-KII1).

Social media also facilitate new forms of advocacy and engagement. By sharing messages daily about mundane activities such as taking public transportation or turning off electric appliances when not in use, social media users can complement their mobilization and advocacy movements with a more mundane approach (NP-G2, NP-G5).

On these online channels, advocates are getting more attention from the public, and thus more young people are motivated and inspired to join forces (Marris, 2019). Furthermore, social media can be more accessible to young advocates, especially where climate activism is perceived as political and thus may not be welcomed or fairly reported by traditional media (Dickie, 2021).

While social media outlets can be a tool for girls and young women to reach their intended audience, they also serve as a source of information and learning for these advocates themselves. Many participants use social media and online channels for educational purposes, including learning about climate science and policy updates. An Indonesian activist interviewed for this work gave the example of the IPCC reports being an important source of information on climate change, but she noted that they often are too technical, long and difficult to digest. She thus refers to social media accounts that simplify and summarize the reports, so that she can better grasp their science- and policy-relevant content (ID-G7).

BOX 1. ONLINE VS. OFFLINE ADVOCACY

Compared to offline advocacy, online engagement tends to be more frequent, often multiple times a day. Online, girls and young women use their own personal and group accounts to share information posted by their own group or others in the network. The simplicity of sharing and resharing on social media makes it easier to amplify their messages, while capitalizing on everyone's own networks. At the same time, online channels allow these messages to reach a broader audience, including people and communities young female advocates would not have met in person. In-person advocacy can be more targeted in terms of audience. When engaging offline, they can reach out to each specific stakeholder for different purposes, such as setting up a meeting with the local government or organizing a learning event at schools. These in-person events tend to be geared to local community audiences, though cannot take place as frequently and instantly as online engagement.

Table 1. Online and offline forms of advocacy

Online	Offline
Social media campaign	Protest and strike
Remote events (workshop, webinar, training, policy dialogue, etc.)	In-person events (workshop, webinar, training, policy dialogue, etc.)
Visual content dissemination (video, photographs, animations, YouTube/TikTok content, etc.)	Visual content display and screening (poster, photography, video, etc.)
Blogging	Theatre, dance, and other performance arts
Op-ed and newspaper article	Door-to-door canvassing
Podcast	Radio

The bad

Social media are not equally accessible to everyone, including both advocates and their target audience. Access requires internet connections and mobile devices. There are people who do not have access to social media, and communities who still rely on radio and traditional media more than social media (SI-KII1, SI-KII3).

Even with access to social media, research participants find in-person engagement not easily replaceable. A young leader from Solomon Islands responded that doing outreach online is much easier than in person, yet offline engagement is more interesting and valuable, as she gets to connect on a personal level with other stakeholders (SI-G2). Similarly, an Indonesian activist said she finds offline meetings a richer experience: "There is a difference when hearing them speak in person, hearing their voice directly into our ears and making eye contacts. Even though social media and the internet have really supported activism, we cannot leave the offline way of doing things behind" (IN-G7).

Others pointed out that with social media, advocates and activists cannot really know whether their messages have reached the right audience the way they do when speaking to a crowd. "In person, you deliver the message, and you know they get the message. But with social media, you have to assume. You don't know," a Solomon advocate said (SI-G5).

The ugly

On social media, the ability to reach thousands of users at once comes with a cost. One of the challenges is criticisms and negative comments, which can come from strangers or even close friends and relatives who are doubtful of a movement or disapproving of girls and young women as activists and advocates (ID-G3, ID-G7). Some people have misunderstood and criticized young female advocates without fully understanding their activities and intentions (ID-G1, NP-G2).

Another trade-off is an overload of negative information, which can influence mental well-being. This is also shown through the social listening results, where negative sentiments seem to attract a lot more engagement on social media.

> *Sometimes with us being on our phones 24/7 […] the amount of bad climate news we see is overwhelming. It is hard to disconnect from that when this is the tool you use for activism. It is hard, but a lot of activists have to find that balance between using social media as a tool to promote activism without it hindering our own capacity as activists."*
>
> *ID-G7*

Yet girls and young women say they are finding ways to cope with or respond to the ugly side of social media. Interviewees often mentioned trying to find a takeaway from the criticisms and moving on with a firm belief in what they are doing.

Furthermore, security risks also stem from the use of social media. Lack of awareness of cyber safety, according to interviewees, can result in young female advocates being hacked and blackmailed. Social media can also be manipulated, leading to the sharing of vulgar or obscene content to go viral (NP-G5). The risk and danger of fake news should not be overlooked, as social media can easy spread confusion between what is real and what is fake (NP-KII2).

V.

FROM DOING TO DEMANDING:
YOUNG FEMALE ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Within the online space and beyond, girls and young women are leading climate movements in their own communities and beyond. This section highlights the increasing presence of young female advocates in the youth-led climate movement at multiple levels, from personal and local to collective and international. It features the links between climate action and social justice that are at the heart of girls' and young women's advocacy, followed by an analysis demonstrating how girls and young women are leading the climate movement, through "doing, sharing, connecting and demanding".

Our analysis shows how girls and young women are navigating the shrinking civic space and finding their own way to advocate not only for climate change but also for other vulnerable and marginalized groups in the society. It also shows the multifaceted nature of their advocacy: from enacting changes in their own communities and calling for others to join hands to demanding policy and structural changes. The work of these young female advocates thus is diverse, both mundane and political, challenging the media narratives that often portray them as heroic, extraordinary individuals (Taft, 2020).

5.1.   LINKING CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

5.2.   ADVOCACY TOOLS, TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

5.1.   LINKING CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Girls and young women are engaged in advocacy not only for climate action but also its link to social justice. Girls and young women in the region raise their voices and demonstrate actionable solutions to address environmental challenges, while calling attention to marginalized social groups who are disproportionally vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Intergenerational and gender justices are at the heart of their advocacy efforts.

The burgeoning youth-led movement has shifted the focus of climate activism to include social justice (Curnow, 2019; Thew et al., 2020). Around the world, young people have mobilized and formed allies with actors working on social justice issues and their intersection with climate change, such as systemic racism, discrimination and mental health crises (Huang & Bent, 2022). Through online channels, young advocates are also connecting people of different socio-economic and political backgrounds for the climate justice movement (Huang & Bent, 2022). In the Pacific, for instance, Māori climate activists deliberately place their advocacy in the context of systemic oppression facing Indigenous peoples, fighting racism and calling for decolonization alongside climate action and policy advocacy (Ritchie, 2021).

At the same time, young female advocates are addressing climate justice head-on, calling attention to power imbalances that shape who is vulnerable and who has a say in the climate policy arena. A Solomon Islands advocate, for instance, shared the story of loss and damage in her country, which, like many other Pacific island countries, contributes the least to the cause of climate change. She calls for the voices of less represented countries to be recognized and supported by the global community (Habu, 2020). A Filipino advocate pointed out that the poor are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, while climate deniers "can't feel it from the comfort of their offices and air-conditioned homes" (Jha, 2019). Klima Action Malaysia, a youth-led climate movement, was founded by a young woman in alliance with Indigenous communities' fight for forest protection and Indigenous rights; the organization is working to decolonize advocacy and shift the climate discourse in Malaysia that is currently dominated by a global North narrative.

According to our survey results in Indonesia, Nepal and Solomon Islands, the most common focus of girls' and young women's engagement in climate change is gender equality, social justice and human rights, followed by climate change awareness and climate action. Others include, climate change adaptation, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, mitigation, climate and disaster justice, and loss and damage (Figure 13).
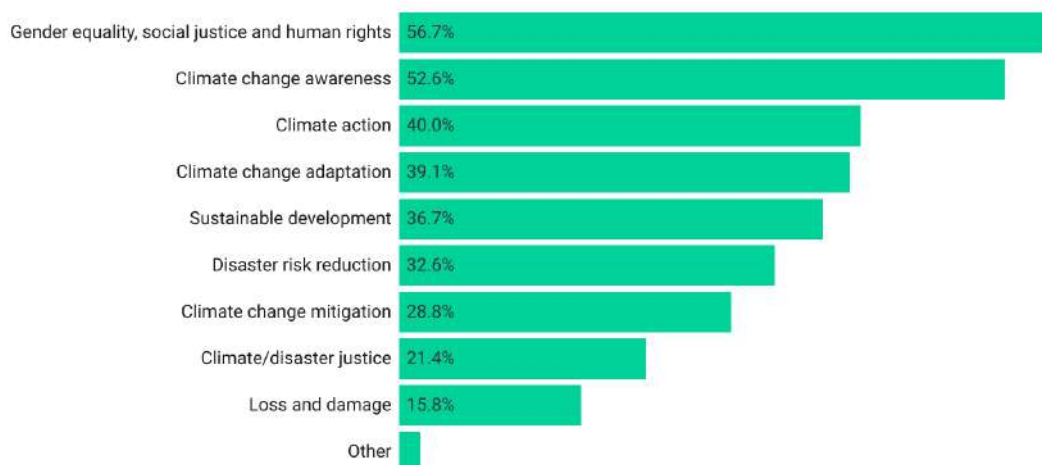
Figure 13. Survey respondents' advocacy focus (n=215)

Intergenerational and gender justice in the context of climate change are at the heart of many girls' and young women's advocacy efforts. When asked if they are advocating with or for any of the vulnerable groups, most survey respondents identified children and youth, followed by women and girls, then poor people. A key focus of many young female advocates is empowering younger generations to become changemakers, through raising awareness, technical training and hands-on activities.

The young female advocates whom we interviewed work with marginalized communities to amplify their voices and concerns; they work alongside people with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, the elderly, LGBTQ+, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Figure 14). They also recognize and address the intimate links between climate change and other social issues, such as human trafficking and child marriage (NP-G1), public health (ID-G7), gender inequality (SI-G1, G2), disaster response (NP-G4), or Indigenous communities defending their land.
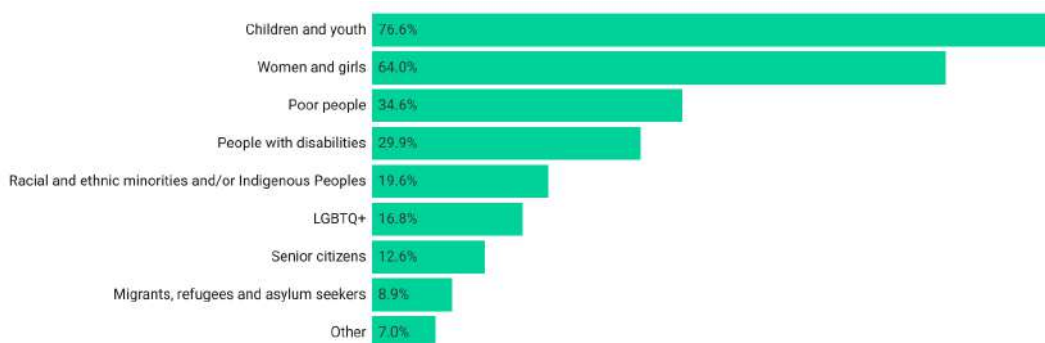
Figure 14. Vulnerable groups survey respondents advocate with or for (n=214)

SPOTLIGHT STORY FROM INDONESIA:
INDIGENOUS IDENTITY, ACTIVISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

"

I grew up being taught that nature and culture are the two most important things to take care of," said Indonesian climate activist Setia (a pseudonym). An Indigenous person from the Dayak tribe, Setia defines activism as making change in her own community to tackle the climate crisis; she adds that "being an activist is about preserving my culture and identity."

Setia's journey in activism began early, as both her parents work in the environment sector, and climate change has always been an everyday conversation in her family. At the age of seven, Setia first joined her mother in a river clean-up. By high school, she had engaged seriously in activism. Currently, Setia coordinates youth empowerment programs to ensure young people in Indonesia can join the climate movement, while also working on planetary health by making sure local and Indigenous communities have access to healthcare without sacrificing land and forest. She is pursuing a degree in health.

For Setia, the desire to be a part of the climate movement was always intertwined with an aspiration to understand her Indigenous roots. Living in harmony with nature is an important part of the Dayak culture and lifestyle and a powerful force of motivation for Setia. In her own community, traditional knowledge are translated into action on an everyday basis, particularly by Indigenous women.

While Setia said she feels successful and is contributing to the climate moment, she also said that the negative, "wicked" nature and complex scale of the climate change question, as well as the dismissal and inaction from adults, can lead to burnout among activists. "It is difficult for young people to disconnect ourselves from the movement every now and then to take a breather and take care of our mental health because it is such a big part of our daily life." Setia commented on her own experience as a young activist going through climate anxiety: "There is a lot of hope in the movement, but there is also anxiety, burnout and overwhelming feelings impeding our capacity to take action."

With a medical background, Setia understands the danger of anxiety on physical health and well-being. She also recognizes that talking about mental health is still a taboo in her own country, and as a result it is difficult for young activists to have this conversation. She calls for more recognition of mental health and climate anxiety, and the creation of both formal spaces and services for young activists to speak about their own experience and informal support network to individual activists, whether from their own family or community.

Source: Interview.

5.2.   ADVOCACY TOOLS, TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

Whether online or offline, young female leaders are advocating for change on multiple fronts simultaneously. Girls and young women are leaders in their own communities and beyond, engaging with diverse stakeholders, demanding policy changes and accountability, implementing on-the-ground changes, and sharing information and raising awareness.

Despite limited civic space and a lack of policy mechanisms for engagement, girls and young women are affecting change in diverse ways and with various focuses. About half of the survey respondents said they are independent activists, while others are affiliated with a group or organization. Their roles in advocacy and activism include group leadership, fundraising, event planning, human resources, strategy development, peer-to-peer education, and monitoring and evaluation. Communication and advocacy are the most common: 23.81% survey respondents identify with this role. Some serve as the youth coordinator of an organization (e.g., ID-G7) or a board member of a girls' network (NP-G4). Others may be involved in advocacy through entrepreneurship (SI-G3) or the arts (NP-G6, SI-G2).

Girls' and young women's advocacy efforts most often target government actors, including regional, national and sub-national policymakers, which altogether account for 33% of all target groups. This is followed by their peers and other young people (23%) and their own community (17%). The target audience also includes civil society actors, private sector actors and media (Figure 15).
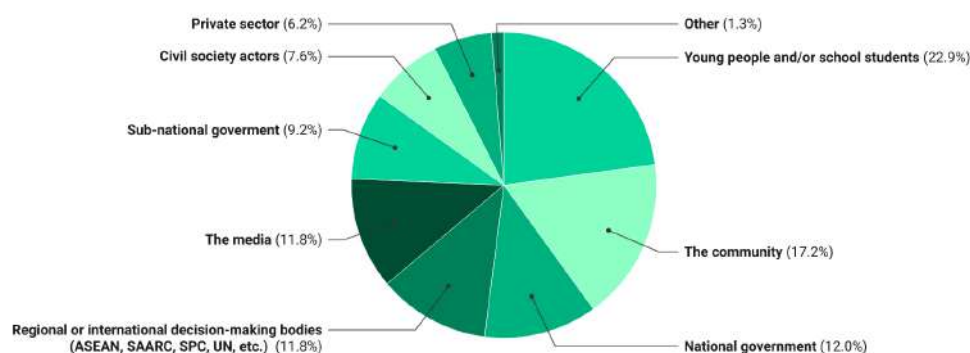
Figure 15. Targets of girls and young women's advocacy (cumulative frequency, n=617)

Leading by doing: Hands-on action plays an important part of girls' and young women's leadership. A prominent Nepalese activist reflected on her activism journey in an interview: "with my participation at COP25, COP26 and SB56 I have concluded that the real changes wont[sic] come from this exclusive conference but from the people, who have been taking actions from the community level" (Sarrafoglu, 2022).

Young female advocates are taking concrete actions, initiating tree planting, waste management, environmental clean-up or reforestation projects, among other activities, particularly in their homes, schools and communities. These not only directly contribute to tackling the environmental and climate crisis, but also create educational value for participants outside the advocacy and activism circles.

Leading by sharing: Sharing knowledge and information is often used to sustain the momentum of young female advocates' movements and advocacy work. They are combining creative, mainstream and online approaches to raise awareness of climate change and climate justice. This includes theatre, drama, films and music, as well as more traditional campaign tools such as posters and door-to-door canvassing. They use social media and digital platforms to organize webinars, workshops and share educational content, to supplement offline engagement. Often, sharing involves translating technical, scientific knowledge into accessible and interactive formats, through social media posts, images, live-streaming and videos.

Leading by connecting: Young female advocates initiate conversations with the government, community members, community leaders, schools, civil society organizations and many other actors to discuss the change they want to see and explore avenues to realize those changes. These include both informal dialogues and activities as well as formal requests, proposals and projects. Many young female advocates are affiliated with several organizations and groups at the same time, where they can connect with larger networks of professionals, experts and fellow advocates working on diverse issues.

Leading by demanding: Young female advocates are raising loud voices in demanding ambitious policy changes and keeping governments and world leaders accountable. They organize and join protests and strikes. Many are bringing international movements to their own country or locality, such as Fridays for Future, or joining climate-related movements led by Indigenous peoples or other vulnerable groups. Others protest solo to demand to be heard. In addition, girls and women are also taking legal actions to demand change, whether by taking cases to the UN International Court of Justice or testifying as community witnesses in climate litigation closer to home.

VI.

PERSONAL STORIES, COLLECTIVE MOVEMENT:

STRENGTHS AND POWER OF YOUNG FEMALE ADVOCATES

Researchers have pointed out that age and generation are a source of power for young activists to demand change (Benigno, 2021; Bent, 2019). Their unique roles in the family, community and society make them changemakers with the potential to influence policies and actions at different levels and with diverse stakeholder groups, including marginalized communities (Cocco-Klein & Mauger, 2018). As young people, they exert moral authority on adults by "speaking truth to power" without being influenced by any institutional or political agendas (Marris, 2019). This leads to new opportunities and space for girls and young women to speak up and voice their concerns.

Our research supports the finding that girls and young women contribute to the climate movement not only through diverse forms and with varied focuses, but also with unique sources of power. They are inspired and driven by their personal, lived experiences and memories of climate change impacts, which become a catalyst for their advocacy and inspire them to take the lead in advancing change. While receiving support and allyship from other actors, challenges remain for young female advocates through which they navigate and overcome with their perseverance.

6.1.   PERSONAL ASPIRATION FOR CHANGE

6.2.   AGENCY AND LEADERSHIP

6.3.   PERSISTENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

6.4.   ALLIANCE AND SUPPORT FROM DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

6.1.   PERSONAL ASPIRATION FOR CHANGE

Young people are bringing climate science and its urgency to the attention of the general public, drawing from their personal lived experiences to carve out a space with their own "autonomous", "authentic" and "distinct" voices (Eide & Kunelius, 2021). The girls and young women interviewed in this study said they were inspired to join the climate movement by direct experiences of the disproportionate impacts of climate crisis and environmental issues on women and girls.

According to our survey findings, among the most common reasons girls and young women participate in the climate movement is that they are concerned about climate change and their future and that they or their community have been affected by climate change and disasters (Figure 16). It reflects a desire for change attached to specific places, people and values. Such experiences motivate girls and young women to create change in their own community.

85% of surveyed advocates indicated that being a girl or a woman motivates them to advocate for climate change and justice. For example, an Indonesian activist shared that when she was in elementary school, her family lived 3 km away from the closest water source. Due to water scarcity, the girls would have to walk and fetch water, while the boys did not. Her concerns for herself and young women under the climate crisis, when water availability will shift, was one motivation for her to engage in activism (ID-G1).

In Nepal, a young leader said she has been inspired by her personal experience of the negative impacts of disasters on women, including education, mental health and sanitary and reproductive health (NP-G4). In Solomon Islands, after seeing first-hand how her own hometown island has been sinking due to sea level rise, a human trafficking and gender equality activist became inspired to expand her activism to include climate change issues (SI-G2).

> *One of the things that made me want to become an environmental activist was that I was concerned about the existence of me and my friends as young people, in particular, as a woman due to the impact of the climate crisis. I was born, raised and grew up [...] where I, as a girl, really felt the impact of the climate crisis. Where I lived, I experienced a shortage of clean water for drinking. During my elementary school days, where I should be playing with my friends as kids and spending time studying, I lost a lot of my time to fetch clean water which was 2-3 km away from my house. Thus, I felt how difficult it was to get clean water. The more I grew up, the more I learn that the clean water problem I used to experience was because it was the impact of the climate crisis and various problems [...] Then, from there, I tried to figure out how I could help my friends in my village to not feel what I felt [...]"*
>
> *ID-G1*

"

I recently went back to my hometown and stayed there for two months. There I witnessed the impact of sea level rise, which is eating our island every day. Our island is getting smaller. It was already small, but with sea level rise it is getting smaller and smaller. We don't talk about climate change at all on the islands, so I would like to use theatre to start the discussion. I want to write plays and songs about sinking islands, to motivate young people to talk more and become more aware of the topic."
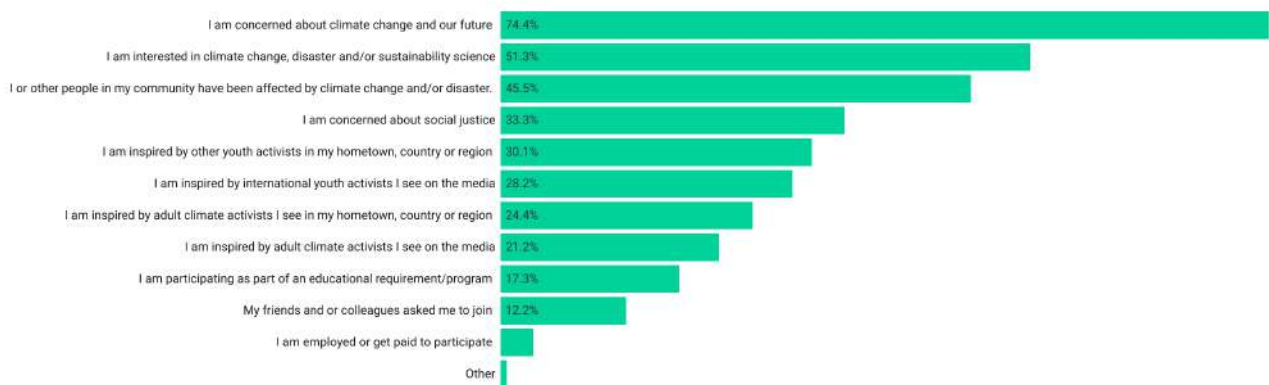
SI-G2

Figure 16. Survey respondents' motivation to participate in the climate change movement (n=156)

6.2. AGENCY AND LEADERSHIP

Girls and young women are taking the initiative and leading change in response to the climate crisis. They play an active role in decision-making within the groups and organizations they are involved with. They have demonstrated influence over government actors and adult advocates, among others.

When asked who leads the movement in which they are involved, 49% of survey respondents, who are young female advocates, indicated that girls and young women are the leaders (Figure 17). The majority (62%) also identify as playing an active role in decision-making within their group (Figure 18).

Young female advocates are also demonstrating agency outside of their groups. For instance, in Indonesia, a girl leader observed waste management issues in her community and learned how it contributed to environmental degradation and climate change (see below). She submitted a clean-up proposal to which the local environment office responded positively (ID-G3). In Nepal, similarly, interviewees recalled instances where girls and young women have approached the municipality to raise an issue and propose a solution, which have been well-received (NP-G1, NP-G2).

"

There are two big programs we are doing now. The first is Sekolah Lestari Lingkungan (Environmentally Sustainable School) and the second Bengkel Sampah (Garbage Garage). [...] When I finished my degree, my mission was to contribute to my community. [...] In my neighbourhood, so many things can be done regarding climate change issues. I was motivated by my own hometown. There was a lot of waste that was burned, and I learned that the Environment Department had issued warnings since 2019 that it was not allowed. [...] So I was motivated to find solutions for climate change and environmental problems

in my neighbourhood. [...] We have been supported by the local government, whether it is the Camat (Subdistrict Head) or the provincial government. [...] When we organized activities a few days ago, the Camat gave us financial support. We have also been invited to official forums to discuss local budgets and future programs. Local development is not independent from environmental and climate change issues, so we were expected to be there to give inputs for future programs on the environment."

ID-G3

Figure 17. Leaders of groups and movements that survey respondents are engaged in (n=110)
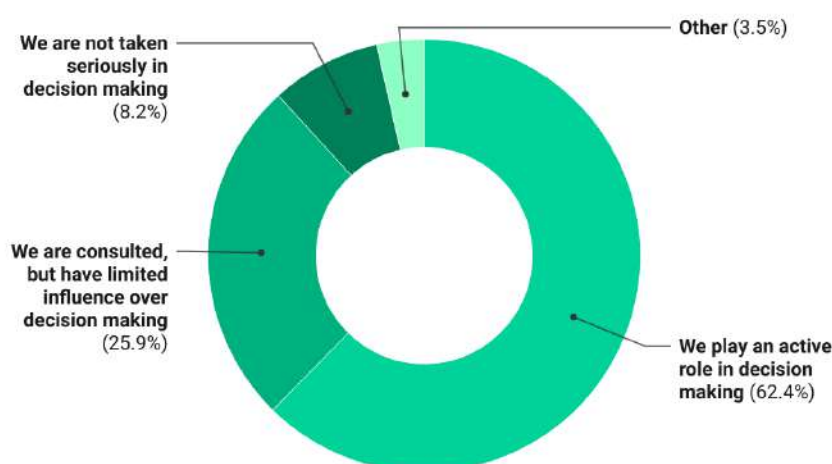
Figure 18. Survey respondents' decision-making role (n=85)

6.3.   PERSISTENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Girls and young women who engage and remain active and successful in the climate change movement often show or claim to need extreme perseverance, particularly in the face of challenges that include doubt and suspicion of their activities and themselves. The young female advocates interviewed noted they had to be persistent, and to reevaluate and respond while planning to keep acting.

Raising awareness of climate change or convincing people and decision-makers to adopt change takes time. In some cases, people challenge girls' and young women's role and legitimacy in advocacy.

In the face of adversity, however, girls and young women persevere in the cause. Whether it is convincing people to act by consistently calling for change, or gathering support from friends and family by demonstrating concrete outcomes of their efforts, they keep at it. Even when receiving negative feedback and suspicious reactions, they are determined to find a lesson, improve themselves and move on (ID-G2, NP-G2, NP-G4, SI-G2).

> **"** Many people do not take us seriously at first. But we must be persistent in our advocacy, repeating messages again and again until it is heard."
>
> *NP-G2*

> **"** Not everything I do, not everything I speak about, and not everything I make had to be accepted by everyone. I learned to accept that as an evaluation and try to do better next time."
>
> *ID-G2*

Being persistent also involves being creative and flexible in finding and using different avenues for advocacy. Realizing that change is difficult when there is little awareness in the community of climate change, one young advocate said she would take advantage of other speaking opportunities to integrate climate change messages, to promote gradual shifts in understanding over time (ID-G2). Other advocates said they combine personal actions with social media communication, alongside campaigns and intervention projects, showing how everyday actions matter and how they themselves continued to act every day.

> **"** As a student, I take advantage of my opportunities to be able to contribute to the community and campus organizations. [...] I have the opportunities to speak in many different platforms, so I socialize this [climate change] topic by mentioning the issue of climate crisis on such occasions."
>
> *ID-G2*

6.4.   ALLIANCE AND SUPPORT FROM DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

Despite positive examples, the space for girls' and young women's agency remains limited. Survey respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which they feel that civil society actors, governments and communities support the youth climate movement. On average, respondents who were young female advocates said that they feel most welcomed by civil society actors, which received an average score of 4.05, followed by the community, 3.93, and government actors, 3.62. When it comes to whether these actors are responsive to their demands, girls and young women surveyed expressed lower confidence: Government actors received an average score of 3.52, and civil society actors, 3.77.

In terms of allies, most survey respondents feel empowered and supported when working with female leaders and politicians (73%). However, a smaller group (52%) personally know female leaders and politicians who work on climate change and justice in their region. Furthermore, close to three-quarters of survey respondents said they find it necessary to engage boys and men as allies in their advocacy. The movement by young female advocates thus can be supported by connecting them to adult female leaders whom they can trust and with whom they can gain confidence, as well as boys and men, as supportive allies to join forces in their advocacy.

SPOTLIGHT STORY FROM SOLOMON ISLANDS: FROM GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS TO LOCAL ACTIONS

Cynthia Houniuhi grew up with the ocean. The time she spent playing, learning and bonding with her community surrounded by the ocean shapes who she is today (Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, 2019).

Like many other Solomon Islanders, the sea plays a big part in her everyday life. As she grew up, Houniuhi said she came to realize that future generations, because of climate change, will not be able to enjoy the same experience she had. This recognition, along with her passion for social justice, drove her to pursue a law degree in environmental law. She became a founding member and president of the Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC).

The organization brought together young people from every Pacific Island country to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice to protect the rights of current and future generations from climate change impacts. Using their legal background and advocacy skills, PISFCC's campaign calling Pacific Island Forum Leaders to seek an advisory opinion from the UN court has received endorsements and support from numerous stakeholders and positive response from the Pacific Islands Forum. The PISFCC is also a founding partner for the World's Youth for Climate Justice, a youth-led global movement calling for the court's advisory opinion at the international level (PISFCC, n.d.-b).

Besides campaigning for the advisory opinion, PISFCC is also committed to educating and activating activism in young people. Their activities include photo contests, art competitions, educational programming, music videos, field visits, and social media campaigns showcasing climate change experiences (PISFCC, n.d.-a).

Source: Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, 2019.

VII.

"BUT IT DID NOT PREVENT ME FROM JOINING…":
THE ADVOCACY PROCESS AND CHALLENGES

Several factors influence the experience of girls and young women as activists and leaders in the climate movement. These include the challenges of a shrinking civic space, of not being taken seriously due to their age and gender identities, of being misrepresented, and of balancing schoolwork and civic engagement.

7.1.   IMPACTS ON WELL-BEING AND SAFETY

7.2.   NOT BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY

7.3.   GENDER NORMS AND INEQUALITY

7.4.   MISREPRESENTATION

7.5.   BALANCING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER PRIORITIES

7.1.   IMPACTS ON WELL-BEING AND SAFETY

As a result of a shrinking civic space, advocacy and activism expose girls and young women to a range of risks and abuses. These include threats to their physical safety, risk of arrests, and adverse impacts on mental health and well-being.

For a Nepalese activist working to address climate change, human trafficking and child marriage, for instance, there have been serious threats of murders and acid attacks, from people accusing her and her group of obstructing marriage and cultural practices (NP-G1). Elsewhere, climate activists have been arrested for sharing information about farmers' protests (Bhattarai, 2021).

Engagement in activism and advocacy also comes with constant worries and concerns. Young female advocates said they have a sense of insecurity and concern when they work alongside a men-dominated group (ID-G7) or when they travel late at night by themselves (NP-G1). An Indonesian activist recounted a recent experience supporting an Indigenous forest-based community in a protest against the construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal (ID-G2):

> *My friends and I participated in this case recently about the construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal in Bali, which is proposed to be located precisely in the mangrove forest. If the terminal is built there, the lives of the Indigenous peoples will be disrupted, and the ecosystem they have maintained will just disappear. [...] We were invited to participate in a street action together with the community to openly refuse the construction of the LNG terminal. When I went to the streets, I felt worried that what I was doing would have an impact on my education. Maybe the police would be there or maybe there was a riot and I would be arrested by the authorities. I would be held accountable, I would be reported to the campus, then they would call my parents, and so on. I was very worried about that, but it did not prevent me from joining the movement with the Indigenous community."*
>
> *ID-G2*

Furthermore, for young advocates, participating in the climate movement has become a big part of their life. Yet constantly working on climate change and justice issues can be emotionally exhausting and overwhelming; climate anxiety is a big risk among advocates (Box 2). This comes from the negativity associated with the impacts of climate change and disasters on lives and their own futures, the inequality facing vulnerable groups, and the disappointment of unfulfilled promises of adults (ID-G7).

Environmental degradation and climate change can impact people's health and well-being, as these threats trigger fear for the future (Clayton, 2020; Crandon et al., 2022). Several terms describe this effect, including eco-anxiety, climate anxiety, solastalgia, climate grief and eco-guilt. Climate anxiety, for instance, refers to "how humans perceive, fear and dread the impacts of climate change" (Crandon et al., 2022, p. 123), while solastalgia describes the distress caused by environmental changes and impacts on people's homes (Albrecht, 2005; Albrecht et al., 2007). For young people, the risk of anxiety and other impacts on well-being of climate change is high (Burke et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020).

Anxiety, however, can be either adaptive or maladaptive (Crandon et al., 2022). Climate anxiety can lead to positive responses, i.e. taking action to mitigate or respond to climate change impacts, but it can also cause impairment. The immediate environment, community and society surrounding young people and how they respond to climate change can exacerbate or mitigate climate anxiety. Young people's relationships with their families, school colleagues and teachers, and communities can determine the support, hope and empowerment they feel. Similarly, how climate change is framed in the media, young people's cultural or spiritual background, and their attachment to nature and places also inform whether their response may be adaptive or maladaptive (Crandon et al., 2022).

Technology and social media play an important role. Access to resources and like-minded advocates can help young people manage climate anxiety, but an overload of negative images and information about climate change, reinforced by the tendency for internet users to be isolated in bubbles shaped by their existing concerns, can trigger despair and helplessness (Crandon et al., 2022).

7.2. NOT BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY

With the increasing presence and recognition of young people in civic spaces and climate movements, being young can be both a source of power and a challenge for girls and young women when participating in advocacy, according to this research. Girls and young women are seen to bring fresh and authentic perspectives to the table, with the potential to enact change due to their unique positions in society. At the same time, adults may engage with them at a superficial level without a real commitment to change.

Indeed, over a quarter of survey respondents indicated that they are consulted but have limited influence over decision-making within the groups or movement with which they are involved. Girls and young women as such are still struggling to be recognized in many contexts, without the ability to influence key decisions that affect them.

Their legitimacy is also challenged by tokenism and youth-washing. Youth-washing happens when youth participation is used to show a commitment to and inclusion of future generations without these generations' meaningful engagement or recognition and without responses to their opinions. Politicians and corporations are misappropriating the youth-led climate movement without making real change or taking meaningful action, and therefore without benefits to either young people or climate change prevention, adaptation or mitigation (Wong, 2020).

Tokenism remains common in decision-making processes, for example in cases where young people are invited to speak at policy events but "the room is half empty" or there is no follow-up to their remarks (ID-G7). One interviewee said that activists always must second-guess the purpose of an invitation: "when I am invited to speak, am I really invited to share my opinions or is it for show?" (ID-G7).

These young leaders, however, often are critical of the space to which they have been invited and are keen to make sure that their audiences take their opinions seriously. To navigate such power dynamics, one respondent's strategy is to find opportunities "behind the camera" to ensure the discussion is not just for publicity and to partner up with youth-led organizations that are on the same page about meaningful participation, rather than participating in or being an accessory to youth-washing.

7.3.   GENDER NORMS AND INEQUALITY

Despite the increasing engagement of girls and young women in civic spaces, as well as the growing attention they have garnered, barriers remain that limit their activism. Deeply rooted gender norms in many places make it difficult for girls and young women to speak out and take part in the local civic space. Beyond the limited space in activism and advocacy for girls and young women challenges include a lack of access to education, resources and opportunities to become leaders and activists, and negative response from the community due to gendered bias hindering their impacts (Box 3).

Research also has highlighted how media attention has been portraying young female advocates and shaping their discourse. Girl activists are often portrayed through the image of "girl power", hope, optimism, heroism and harmlessness (Taft, 2020). Mainstream media often associate their engagement with innocence, becoming adults, competence and individual heroism (Raby & Sheppard, 2021). Girls are also positioned in a discourse of exceptionality and extraordinariness (Vanner & Dugal, 2020).

While these observations reflect the increasing agency of girls in the civic space, such conceptualizations of girl leaders and advocates shift the focus of their movements away from the call for collective action and distract from the root causes of inequality (Taft, 2020; Vanner & Dugal, 2020). Such media coverage indirectly or directly dismiss girls and young women by turning advocacy movements into individuals and by failing to recognize interlocking inequalities that shape their advocacy (Raby & Sheppard, 2021). Such portrayals also downplay intergenerational solidarity and reinforce the power hierarchy between adults and children (Raby & Sheppard, 2021).

BOX 3. GENDER NORMS LIMITING GIRLS' AND YOUNG WOMEN'S ADVOCACY

In Indonesia, boys and men still have more access than girls and women to opportunities, education, jobs, food and so on, according to one interviewee (ID-G1). Comparing her experience and observation in international policy forums, another Indonesian activist has found less recognition for girls' and young women's activist in Indonesia than at the global level, even though the situation is changing (ID-G7). Many find it difficult to talk about gender equality, which is still a taboo topic in Indonesia, where women are seen as a second-class citizens. In remote communities, the hierarchy between men and women is even harder to change (ID-G7).

In Nepal, women are still restricted in the way they dress, move around, talk and act. Girls and young women find it more difficult to be taken seriously or given priority in a patriarchal society where boys and men are treated differently (NP-G1, NP-G2, NP-G4, NP-G6). In certain cases, people are sceptical of the climate change or other related environmental movements. They disapprove of girls leaving the house and spending time outside, while boys who join the same activities may get more attention and are able to have more impacts (NP-G6). While "equal opportunities" do exist as promised in policies, Nepal needs more efforts to ensure equal access to assets and resources to empower girls and young women in affecting change, according to one stakeholder (NP-KII2).

In Solomon Islands, men are more vocal and active in the public sphere, while women often do not have the space to speak out on sensitive issues or participate in activism (SI-KII1). Women's space is restricted to the domestic sphere. For girls and young women, activities such as climbing mountains for reforestation or walking around the neighbourhood to collect recyclables are frowned upon (SI-G6, SI-G4). One stakeholder noted that gender norms are a challenge for young female advocates: "It is not equal. It is not normal seeing women taking up leadership roles and involving in these spaces. […] Women face discrimination when taking up leadership roles" (SI-KII2).

7.4.   MISREPRESENTATION

Girls and young women in countries of the global South often are misrepresented, lack representation, and experience greater power imbalances compared to those in the global North. For instance, girls in the global South are often portrayed as being saved by girls in the global North, which erases from the picture systemic problems and deeply rooted colonial legacies (Huang & Bent, 2022). Furthermore, cases where girls and young women in the Asia and Pacific region started to engage in advocacy and activism prior to activism in the global North, but were only recognized when Greta Thunberg, who started her activism in Sweden, received coverage by global media (Banerji, 2020; Okutsu, 2021).

After being called "Greta of India", one Indian activist said that such comparisons erase unique stories and movements in different countries. "Developing nations are the most vulnerable to climate change. The world and the media need to focus equally (on) all climate activists of the world," she said in an interview (Banerji, 2020).

7.5.   BALANCING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER PRIORITIES

In the process of demanding and implementing changes, young female advocates often have to effectively manage their own time and balance advocacy with other commitments and priorities, including schoolwork. This involves making trade-offs and compromises, as well as finding ways to align these commitments.

Most survey respondents and interviewees who participated in this research are students, and many are participating in climate movements in a voluntary capacity and in their limited spare time. They are often spending time after school or on weekends to meet with their peers and implement activities (SI-G1, SI-G2), or they use lunch breaks to work on project proposals and campaign designs (ID-G2). The difficulty of trying to balance activism and studies was often brought up by interviewees (ID-G1, ID-G2, ID-G7, NP-G1, NP-G5).

>   **"**
>
>   *So far, I've tried to balance everything. But still, when I want to achieve something, there must be something that I sacrifice. [...] Because this is my passion, [...] even though I sacrifice some things, this makes me feel that I can learn more and contribute to the climate crisis."*
>   *ID-G2*

As a strategy, an Indonesian advocate said she tries not to compartmentalize activism and study as two different things. Activism is part of her study and daily life. She sees what she is doing at school as supporting and complementary to her activism, and vice versa (ID-G7). Another said she finds family support to play a key role in helping to cope with this challenge (SI-G1). However, in some cases, teachers and parents can be unhappy and unsupportive because they think civic engagement may hamper or affect their studies, according to another interviewee (NP-G5).

SPOTLIGHT STORY FROM NEPAL:
ACTIVISM AS A JOURNEY

At the age of four, Nima (a pseudonym) was kidnapped and rescued from human trafficking. The traumatic incident has had a lasting impact on herself and her family, she told us. Feelings of anxiety and pain that they went through on that fateful day left a deep mark. Nima became motivated to fight for a world where every girl is safe and empowered.

Her journey as an advocate and activist, however, had a rocky beginning. Expressing her views to people in authority was always a challenge. She was seen as just a child and her opinions dismissed and overlooked. Not only was it difficult to get her voice heard; financial resources were limited. She received little support from the community and authority.

But Nima was determined to enact change. Realizing that she was not taken seriously because of her age, she started practicing public speaking and pitching ideas to show confidence and skills. She used pocket money to self-fund advocacy activities and also fundraised by going door-to-door and doing performances.

Today, Nima actively raises her voice on issues and challenges faced by vulnerable people in her own communities, including youth, women and farmers. She is a young activist working on human trafficking, child marriage, and sexual and reproductive health. Through social media and online channels, Nima is exploring new and creative ways, such as poetry, to communicate and raise awareness on such important social issues.

However, she shares: "Sometimes social media is also a risk, especially for girls and women especially as they may get hate comments on their activism. Similarly, the misinformation and disinformation has been a risk for girls to do proper activism online and offline."

Increasingly, she said she also realizes the interconnected nature of these issues with the topics of disaster and climate change. Their impacts are influencing girls' lives and well-being in her own community and deepening the pre-existing inequalities and risks they face. She is working to bring the concerns of vulnerable groups to people in Nepal's local authorities and runs a campaign to provide support to people during disasters.

Source: Interview.

VIII CONCLUSION

> *The term 'climate justice' itself is a beautiful hope for me and every time I utter this word from my mouth I am reminded of all the people who lie at the forefront of battling with the harsh impacts of climate change every day [...] Climate justice for me, is simple: all the living beings having their rights to live in a fair and liveable environment. Climate change must be recognized as an intergenerational and human right issue. To achieve climate justice, the climate crisis must be addressed with urgent actions and unprecedented transformation in the way the system runs now." (Sarrafoglu, 2022)*

This research explored three key aspects of how girls and young women lead climate action in Asia and the Pacific: (a) enablers and barriers, (b) tactics, tools and approaches, and (c) engagement in decision-making spaces. Through a combination of desk review, social listening, online survey and in-depth interviews, this research has highlighted the capacity, agency and power of young female advocates to act within the climate change movement in a shrinking civic space.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: Our research results confirm that social media and online platforms, current policy frameworks, and civil society are both enablers and barriers for girls' and young women's climate advocacy. On the one hand, social media and online platforms allow them to connect with each other and the public easily; current policies promote inclusion and young people empowerment; and civil society actors and decision-makers increasingly support young female advocates. On the other hand, interviewees said girls and young women acting in this space face risks from online abuse and misinformation, limitations in policy action plans and implementation, and negative impacts of a shrinking civic space, as well as deeply rooted gender norms and age discrimination.

TACTICS, TOOLS AND APPROACHES: The young female advocates we spoke to in three countries in Asia and the Pacific region are driven by personal motivation and the climate impacts they experienced as young girls. Their advocacy addresses social issues that influence climate vulnerability, such as gender inequality, human trafficking and marginalization. Their movements place social justice at their heart, while supporting and working with other marginalized groups. Girls and young women demonstrate leadership by taking action, sharing knowledge and stories to call for behavioural changes, creating networks and demanding policy changes.

DECISION MAKING: Furthermore, girls and young women actively seek out engagement opportunities in proposing and implementing actionable solutions with their local governments, and with global policy fora. According to our desk research and interviews, the mechanisms to include young people in formal decision-making spaces, however, are still missing. Thus, fewer girls and young women from the research are able to play an active part in decision-making processes.

Overall, the research shows the nature of climate advocacy led by girls and young women. It ranges from everyday actions and consistent communication to enact small changes to project implementation and organizing efforts to demand more critical policy changes. It also shows girls and young women's advocacy as a process, which is built up from their own personal lived experience and motivation, faced with challenges and pushbacks due to their age and gender, and subject to misrepresentation and dismissal due to their identity. It is also a process in which they are constantly learning how to navigate the civic and decision-making spaces, how to manage competing priorities including schoolwork, and how to leverage social media and digital technology and cope with their limitations and criticisms.

IX.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations stem from our research, relying on the literature reviewed, interviews with young female advocates in Asia and the Pacific, stakeholders in governance and civic society, and more. We suggest these actions for government actors, civil society, and young advocates themselves, to support young female advocates' efforts in the climate and social justice space.

9.1.   FOR GOVERNMENT ACTORS

9.2.   FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

9.3.   FOR YOUNG ADVOCATES

9.1. FOR GOVERNMENT ACTORS

Governments at all levels, including local, national and regional bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Pacific Community (formerly the South Pacific Commission and still known as the SPC), can facilitate an open and inclusive space to enhance the engagement and leadership of girls and young women in the climate movements, through the following:

» **Create and maintain formal mechanisms to encourage young people to participate in public affairs and decision-making processes.** Climate change policies need to recognize young people as active agents of change, and include mechanisms for their participation in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, for instance by creating youth steering or advisory committee at relevant ministries and departments. These mechanisms should recognize barriers to participation of diverse girls and young women compared to boys and young men; they could instead actively recruit girls and young women to policymaking and other processes and make available resources so that they can participate. Resources should also be allocated, e.g. to building capacity for government officers, to ensure girls' and young women's contributions are considered and acted upon.

» **Provide an enabling environment to facilitate the engagement of diverse girls and young women in climate action, including mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and disaster risk reduction, including financial resources.** This includes informal channels for girls and young women to discuss local issues and propose solutions. For example, the development of the General Comment No. 26 on Children's Right and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change recognizes girls and young women as agents of change, and create an inviting space for them to actively participate in the drafting process.

» **Work with the ministry of education and civil society actors as well as the media sector to support efforts to increase climate change, disaster and gender equality education and awareness for all to create a welcoming, open civic space for girls- and young women-led climate movements.** Mainstream gender equality, climate change and cyber safety education to equip the younger generation with appropriate knowledge and capacity to foster the youth-led climate change movement.

» **Improve internet access for all,** including girls and women and their target audience, and improve digital infrastructures and their safety, particularly in rural, remote areas.

9.2. FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Civil society actors, including non-profit organizations, grassroots groups, and youth-focused

organizations such as Plan International, can collaborate and engage with international actors, such as UN bodies and intergovernmental organizations, in order to strengthen girls' and young women's capacities in the climate change movement and for advocacy. They can:

- **Engage with key decision-makers at the local, national, regional levels and beyond to facilitate policy changes that better recognize girls' and young women's capacity as agents of change, by**
    - » Advocating for formal and informal mechanisms where young people – boys and girls alike – can raise their voices and ideas on all matters, including climate change and other social justice issues, and ensuring that in these spaces their opinions are respected and acted upon.
    - » Advocating for girls and young women and their movements to be recognized as legitimate actors/forces in the civic and decision-making spaces.
    - » Facilitating and strengthening the relationship between young female advocates with decision-makers at all levels to help the voice of young leaders reach the right audience.
    - » Facilitating the engagement of young female advocates in regional decision-making processes and policy forums, such as by inviting them to meetings and conferences with organizations like ASEAN, SAARC or SPC.

- **Engage with diverse civil society actors to advance a more inclusive, open and safe civic space that welcome girls and young women as leaders and agents of change, by**
    - » Strengthening public awareness on children's rights to participation and other relevant international policies on girls and young women's participation, gender equality and the power and capacity of girls and young women, and challenging context-specific gender norms and discrimination that are hindering girls' and young women's civic engagement. Communication efforts using diverse tools, audience specific.
    - » Strengthening public awareness on youth-led movements and the power and capacity of young people as changemakers, and challenging context-specific age discrimination that is hindering young people's civic engagement.
    - » Providing opportunities targeting men and boys to support the advocacy and leadership of girls and young women.
    - » Collaborating with international, regional and local networks and organizations that work on human rights, activism, social justice and similar issues, to amplify girls' and young women's voices and provide them with a safe and supportive networks.
    - » Leveraging high-profile events to promote girls' and young women's efforts at the regional and global levels.
    - » Monitoring the civic space both online and offline and offering risk analysis and mitigation planning to ensure a safe environment for young female advocates.

- **Provide support to young female advocates to strengthen their political capabilities and abilities to sustain their civic engagement and activism, by**
    - » Extending financial support directly to girls and young women and their groups or movements, connecting them to potential funders, and strengthening their fundraising capacities.
    - » Providing support services and connecting young people to appropriate networks to address the risks that girls and young women face in activism and advocacy, including mental health, safety and cyber safety support services.
    - » Providing age-appropriate training on online and offline activism, advocacy and leadership skills.
    - » Providing support to help girls and young women achieve balance between activism and advocacy and schoolwork, by providing soft skill training (e.g., time management) or advocating for educational institutions to recognize the educational values of their advocacy (e.g., accepting credits for students' involvement in

advocacy and activism).

» Creating and advocating for more safe spaces, at school, in the form of youth clubs, or in the community, for young people to get involved and practice advocacy and activism.

» Facilitating networking and exchange opportunities at the regional level to connect activists and advocates across the region, through online and/or offline platforms where young female advocates themselves have a space to share experiences, stories, tactics, tools and strategies to advance their own efforts and seek out support when needed, including emotional, physical, human, social and material support. Facilitate mentoring sessions and intergenrational dialogues between more experienced advocates and girls and young women who are newer to the movement.

» Providing support to help girls- and young women-led groups ensure the accommodation and inclusive mechanisms that enable girls and young women with disabilities and other oft-marginalized groups to be able to participate and engage in all different advocacy activities.

9.3.   FOR YOUNG ADVOCATES

Young people are already leaders and changemakers in their own communities and society at large. They can continue their efforts to create change and realize their visions for the future. At the same time, deliberate efforts are needed to ensure that young people, particularly girls and young women, have access to the right resources to maximize the impacts of their advocacy while minimizing risks. Young female advocates can:

• **Show solidarity with and connect with fellow young female advocates in their country and region** to share tools, tactics and strategies, along with experiences and challenges to support one another, including how to balance activism and other commitments, or how to address negative criticisms from the public. This could take the form of a regional network of young female advocates for climate justice, where advocates can network and collaborate while sharing and documenting best practices more systematically.

• **Seek and share information and training** on

» how to use digital and online platforms effectively and safely for activism and advocacy

» how to recognize and address mental health impacts of activism and civic engagement for themselves and their peers

» how to participate in and lead campaigns and advocacy efforts effectively and safely

• **Provide equal opportunities and access for the participation of young female advocates from rural and remote places in their groups or movements**

• **Recognize and actively challenge structural barriers** that are making it difficult for girls and young women to speak up and engage in the civic space and climate change movement

• **Leverage social media for a wider reach and high-profile events** such as international policy forums as windows of opportunities to amplify their voices and messages on social media.

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ANNEX A: SEARCH KEYWORDS FOR LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate change	Young people	Engagement
Climate crisis	Youth	Leader/leadership
Climate emergency	Child*/children	Involvement
Global warming	Boy*	Activism
Global heating	Girl*	Participation
Extreme temperature	Adolescent*	Consultation
Drought*	Kid*	Justice
Flood*	Student*	Co-production
Storm*	Teenager*/teen*	Co-creation
Heat wave*		Equity
Heat*		
Heat exposure		
Hurricane*		
Typhoon*		

ANNEX B: SPECIFICATION FOR MELTWATER SEARCH

Platform: Meltwater

Duration: 29 September 2021 (12.00 AM) - 29 September 2022 (12.00 AM)

Language: English

Locations: Asia and the Pacific (59 countries)

Sources: Twitter

Search keywords

((disaster OR "Natural disaster" OR "Natural hazard" OR "Emergency response" OR "Humanitarian crisis" OR "Disaster response" OR "Disaster preparedness" OR "Disaster prevention" OR "Disaster mitigation" OR "Disaster risk reduction" OR "Disaster resilience" OR "Disaster education" OR "Early warning system" OR "Sendai framework" OR sfdrr OR flood OR drought OR typhoon OR "Tropical storm" OR cyclone OR hurricane OR earthquake OR tsunami OR landslide OR famine OR "Climate change" OR "Heat wave" OR "Extreme temperature" OR "Climate crisis" OR "Climate emergency" OR "Global warming" OR "Global heating" OR "Climate action" OR "Climate adaptation" OR "Climate mitigation" OR "Loss and damage" OR "Climate resilience" OR "Climate vulnerability" OR cop26 OR cop27 OR "Climate negotiations" OR "Paris Agreement" OR "Nationally Determined Contribution" OR ndc OR "Carbon emissions" OR "CO2 emissions" OR "Greenhouse gas emissions" OR "Renewable energy" OR "Clean fuel" OR "Green energy" OR "Just transition" OR "Sustainable development" OR sustainability OR "Sustainable Development Goals" OR sdg)

AND ("girls" OR "girl" OR "Young woman" OR "Young women" OR "Young female")

AND (activis* OR advoca* OR participat* OR leader* OR "Fridays for Future" OR "School strike for climate" OR "Climate strike" OR "Climate justice" OR "Climate equity" OR campaign* OR champion* OR warrior* OR movement* OR mobilis* OR mobiliz* OR organiz* OR organis* OR fight* OR defend* OR changemaker* OR protest* OR #youth4climate OR #schoolstrike OR #climatestrike OR #fridaysforfuture))

ANNEX C: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Question (Questions marked with * are mandatory)	Answer
Section 1: About you	
1. Age*	
2. Do you identify as a person with disability?*	Multiple choice a. Yes b. No c. Prefer not to say
3. Do you identify as a member of an Indigenous group or an ethnic minority?*	Multiple choice a. Yes b. No c. Prefer not to say
4. Where do you live?*	Multiple choice a. Urban area b. Rural area c. Other (e.g., semi-urban or semi-rural area)
5. Country of residence	TEXT
6. Educational/employment status	Multiple choice a. Enrolled in a primary/secondary school b. Enrolled in a high school c. Enrolled in a university/college/higher education d. Not enrolled in school; employed or having own business e. Not enrolled in school; unemployed
Section 2: Climate change advocacy	
7. How long have you been participating in climate change-related activities ?	Multiple choice a. Less than a year b. 1-2 years c. 3-5 years d. Over 5 years
8. Are you an independent advocate?	Multiple choice – if yes, skip to q13 a. Yes, I am not working or affiliated with any group or organization b. No
9. List the climate-related groups, movements and mobilizations you are working or associated with (e.g. a job or voluntary work)	TEXT
10. Who leads the above group or movement? (the group you are most active in, if you are with more than one group)	Select all that apply a. Men over 25 years old b. Women over 25 years old c. Girls and youth/young women (aged up to 24 years old) d. Boys and youth/young men (aged up to 24 years old) e. Other
11. How would you describe the role of girls and young women like you in decision making in the group?	Multiple choice a. We play an active role in decision making b. We are consulted, but have limited influence over decision making c. We are not taken seriously in decision making d. Other

Question (Questions marked with * are mandatory)	Answer

12. Your key role in the above group(s) or movement(s)	Select all that apply
	  a. Group leader
	  b. Communication and advocacy
	  c. Fundraising
	  d. Event planning
	  e. Human resources
	  f. Strategy development
	  g. Other - text

13. What are the main focuses/causes for your advocacy?	Select all that apply
	  a. Climate action
	  b. Climate change adaptation
	  c. Climate change mitigation
	  d. Loss and damage
	  e. Climate change awareness
	  f. Climate/disaster justice
	  g. Disaster risk reduction
	  h. Sustainable development
	  i. Gender equality, social justice and/or human rights
	  j. Other

14. Do you and/or your team advocate with or for any of the following vulnerable communities?	Select all that apply
	  a. Children and youth
	  b. Women and girls
	  c. LGBTQ+
	  d. People with disabilities
	  e. Racial and ethnic minorities and/or Indigenous Peoples
	  f. Senior citizens
	  g. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
	  h. Poor people
	  i. Other

15. What actors, groups or institutions is your advocacy aimed at influencing?	Select all that apply
	  a. Regional or international decision-making bodies (ASEAN, SAARC, SPC, UN, etc.)
	  b. National government
	  c. Sub-national government
	  d. The community
	  e. Civil society actors
	  f. Private sector
	  g. Young people and/or school students
	  h. The media
	  i. Other

Section 3: Motivations, challenges and support	

Question (Questions marked with * are mandatory)	Answer
16. What motivated you to take part in climate change issues and advocacy?	Select all that apply a. I or other people in my community have been affected by climate change and/or disaster. b. I am concerned about climate change and our future c. I am concerned about social justice d. I am interested in climate change, disaster and/or sustainability science e. I am participating as part of an educational requirement/ program f. My friends and or colleagues asked me to join g. I am inspired by other youth activists in my hometown, country or region h. I am inspired by international youth activists I see on the media i. I am inspired by adult climate activists I see on the media j. I am inspired by adult climate activists I see in my hometown, country or region k. I am employed or get paid to participate l. Other
17. What challenges do you face in your advocacy?	Select top 3 a. Limited financial resources b. Limited human resources c. Limited time for activism d. Limiting civic space e. Limited support and recognition because of my age f. Limited support and recognition because of my gender g. Inaction and empty promises from decision makers h. Limited knowledge, capacities and skills i. Limited interests from people around me j. Limited awareness from people around me k. Safety concerns l. Other
18. Which of the following skills do you think are important but missing in your advocacy?	Select top 3 a. Knowledge about climate change or disaster sciences b. Knowledge about social justice c. Understanding of climate change or disaster policies d. Understanding of climate change or disaster decision making process e. Communication skills f. Lobbying and advocacy skills g. Project management skills h. Human resource management skills i. Fundraising, budgeting and financial management skills j. Critical thinking skills k. Strategy development skills l. Monitoring and evaluation skills m. Event planning skills n. Other
19. Which of the following policy-making processes are you and/or your group engaged in?	Select all that apply a. Issue identification b. Agenda setting c. Public consultation d. Policy design and formulation e. Policy implementation f. Monitoring and evaluation g. Other

Question (Questions marked with * are mandatory)	Answer
20. do you agree with the following statements?	Totally disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Totally agree Youth-led climate movements in my area/locality are welcomed and encouraged by the public (e.g., my teachers, peers, colleagues, families, and neighbours, etc.)
21.	Youth-led climate movements in my area/locality are welcomed and encouraged by the government.
22.	Youth-led climate movements in my area/locality are welcomed and encouraged by civil society actors (e.g., non-profit organizations, other movements, etc.)
23.	Government actors in the climate change sector are responsive (listen to, recognize, respect, act on, etc.) to young people's opinions and activism in my area/locality.
24.	Civil society actors in the climate change sector are responsive (listen to, recognize, respect, act on, etc.) to young people's opinions and activism in my area/locality.
25.	I am satisfied with mainstream media's coverage of women and girls in climate activism in my area/locality.
	Being a girl/woman is a challenge in my civic engagement.
26.	Being a girl/woman motivates be to advocate for climate change and justice.
27.	As climate advocates, boys and young men receive more attention and have more influence than girls and women.
28.	I find it necessary to engage boys and men as allies in my advocacy.
29.	I am know personally female leaders, policy makers and politicians working on climate change and justice in my country or region.
30.	I feel supported and empowered when working with female leaders and politicians.
31.	I feel confident that I can reach out to female leaders, policy makers and politicians working on climate change and justice when I need their help.
Section 4: Digital communications and social media	
32. Which of the following channels or platforms do you use the most for your advocacy? Select top 3	a. Online newspapers, magazines, forums b. Social media (facebook, twitter, tiktok, youtube, Instagram, etc.) c. Offline/traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper…) d. In-person events or gathering e. Online events or gathering f. Official political channels (public hearing, policy dialogue, etc.) Other

Question (Questions marked with * are mandatory)	Answer
33. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the effectiveness of the channels or platforms for your advocacy?	Totally disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Totally agree a. Online newspapers, magazines, forums b. Social media (facebook, twitter, tiktok, youtube, Instagram, etc.) c. Offline/traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper…) d. In-person events or gathering e. Online events or gathering f. Official political channels (public hearing, policy dialogue, etc.)
34. How do you use social media in your advocacy?	Select all that apply a. I do not use social media b. I do not use social media, but plan to do so in the future c. For keeping in touch and connecting with other team members d. For recruiting and connecting with other groups, activists, youth leaders, etc. e. For increasing public awareness f. For policy advocacy g. Other
35. Which of the following channels do you use the most for your advocacy?	Select all that apply a. Facebook b. LinkedIn c. Twitter d. Instagram e. Tiktok f. Youtube g. Line h. Whatsapp i. Messenger j. Telegram k. WeChat l. Slack m. Snapchat n. Other
36. how would you rate the effectiveness of the above social media and communication tools for your advocacy?	Not effective at all Not very effective Neutral Somewhat effective Highly effective

ANNEX D: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Key informant interviews with girls and young women

Opening questions

1. Can you tell us about the climate movement/group you are involved in? (are you an independent activist, or member of a group? If part of a group, who are the other members? If independent, are there any other activists or groups that you partner with?)

2. Can you tell us how you became a climate activist? What motivated you, or why? Can you talk about the role of gender and or climate justice in your activism?

Civic space

1. Can you tell us about the climate movement in your country?

2. Can you tell us about youth activism in your country?

3. How has your projects/initiatives been received? By the government? By the public? What do you think drives such responses?

4. What worries/concerns you the most about participating in the climate change movement in your country? (e.g., safety, school/work, impact, relationship with family and friends, blacklash, adults support, etc.)

Allies and enablers

1. As a young female activist, what do you think of the role of men and boys in climate justice? Do you engage with them (and how)?

2. As a young female activist, who do you most often work with in your mobilization? (is it CSO, NGO, CBO, INGO, UN or others?) Who do you find most supportive? What are the types of supports that you seek for? Who do you find most strategic to work alongside? How do you reach out and stay connected to those supporters? How can they support you better?

3. Do you feel supported or empowered by the presence of female politicians or government officials?

4. What resources or support do you find most helpful for your activism? Which one is accessible, which is not? How child- or youth-friendly are these resources? How do they address your needs as a young woman or girl?

Tools, tactics and approaches

1. Can you tell us about your experience in climate activism as a young person? How does being a woman influence your experience? What other factors influence your experience? How do you take advantage of or overcome these issues?

2. Do you use online channels or social media for your movement? Can you tell us more about it? What are the challenges of online/digital activism? What are the benefits?

3. Can you tell us about your engagement in the political space? Do you target directly to policymakers or though other supporting agencies in your activism? What is working and what is not?

4. How do you seek out or engage with like-minded activists?

Key informant interviews with CSOs and government representatives

Opening questions

1. Can you tell us about your work? Which organization are you with and what is your mandate?

2. Do you work with children and young people? If yes, can you tell us more about your work with girls and young women specifically?

Climate activism

1. How familiar are you with climate movement or activities led by young women and girls in your country and/or area? Can you tell us more about such movements? How did you get to know about them? Can you tell us about the role of social media and digital communication in climate activism?

2. What impacts do you think these groups are achieving? On whom? At which level of governance? Any observed policy impacts?

3. How have you and your organisation supported (or plan to support in the future) girls-led climate activism? If so, what kind of support do you think is most helpful or needed? How should they address girls and young women's unique needs and capacities?

Girls' activism and leadership

1. In your opinion and observation, what distinguishes women and girls' activism from their peers, i.e. men and boys?

2. What do you think about girls and young women engaging in the climate change movement?

3. What do you think are the enablers to their movement?

4. What do you think are the challenges and barriers they face?

5. What do you think is the role of social media and digital communication in their movement? What are the advantages and disadvantageous of these online channels?

6. What do you think are the potential to increase the impacts of girls' activism in your country and/or area?

Closing

1. Do you have any final comment or reflection on the existing civic space for young women and girls as civic leaders?

2. Do you have any questions for us?

ANNEX E: YOUNG PEOPLE IN CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES IN INDONESIA, NEPAL AND SOLOMON ISLANDS

Indonesia's climate change policies have few references to the inclusion of young people and to gender equality. The country's Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (2022) mentions the development and implementation of mechanisms for community participation, considering gender equality, vulnerable groups including children, and intergenerational needs. However, neither the policy nor its National Adaptation Plan articulates any other concerns regarding children and young people and their role.

In Nepal, the 2019 National Climate Change Policy contains language meant to enhance the capacity of and address concerns of all vulnerable groups. It emphasized mobilizing youth for human resources for raising awareness and climate change research. The policy, as well as Nepal's National Adaptation Plan, suggested the creation of Youth Volunteer Committees at the local level for climate-induced disaster management. Nepal's Nationally Determined Contribution promotes the leadership, participation and negotiation capacity of women, Indigenous peoples and young people in climate change forums. It highlights their involvement in all stages of policy planning and implementation, including "specific programs with dedicated resources to ensure full, equal and meaningful participation" of these groups.

In Solomon Islands, gender equality and young people's inclusion are highlighted as key priorities and principles of climate policies. Its 2021 Nationally Determined Contribution lists as a key focus gender consideration in disaster and climate action, along with the inclusion of women and young people in capacity building for vulnerable groups. Similarly, the country's National Climate Change Policy (2012–2017) refers to gender equity and the involvement of children, young people and people with special needs under its guiding principles. It highlights the need to involve young people and women in policy implementation. These policies, however, do not articulate any further detail how such priorities and principles can be implemented. Solomon Islands' policy in the country's National Adaptation Programmes of Action (2008) is the only one in this review to state that the government consulted with youth groups and women in the policy formulation processes. The policy also recognizes the role of youth and women in raising community awareness.