



# WAAS-UNOG e-CONFERENCE ON STRATEGIES FOR **TRANSFORMATIVE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

*Youth Leadership Development for SDGs and Climate Action in the  
context of COVID-19*

**GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**  
**In the 21st Century**



## **Youth Leadership Development for SDGs and Climate Action in the context of COVID-19**

on June 16th at 5:30 am - 7:00 am CET

Join the workshop during the upcoming e-conference on  
Global Leadership in the 21st century

**Strategies for Transformative Global Leadership**

<https://bit.ly/GL21POP>



Link to register for the specific session: <https://bit.ly/GL21YOUTH>

COVID-19 has created waves, and the electronic medium taking the place of face-to-face interaction in the absence of physical proximity is just one among the innumerable ways humans are trying to adapt to the uncertainty of the times. COVID-19 may have halted the proceedings of the 2020 Conference of the Parties, hindering the process of global negotiation and action towards reducing emission levels, but the pandemic did pivot the anthropocentric dialogue and reinstate focus on climate action, coexistence with nature, social and economic equity and human rights. It revealed mankind's evident fragility and vulnerability, necessitating that society develop not just resilience, but to move beyond merely building resilience towards a state of **"anti-fragility"**. There is a need for a strong, good leadership led by youth, and working towards youth leadership development for SDGs and Climate Action envisions this way forward.

This e-workshop aimed to give young leaders an opportunity to collectively develop transformative strategies that can be implemented to address challenges to youth climate leadership, specifically under the COVID-19 situation. The participants were encouraged to analyze how COVID-19 can be an opportunity for effective leadership and progression of SDGs.

**Workshop Methodology:** This participatory workshop was organized and facilitated by youth from different parts of the world, primarily engaging young participants to develop catalytic and transformative strategies for youth leadership in the line of climate action and sustainable development. There were 45 participants from different

countries including Canada, México, Japan, USA, India, Austria, Nigeria, and Italy among others. The participants were divided into three groups with each group addressing a particular question with regard to youth leadership.

**1. "The quality and impact of leadership depend on the values and knowledge on which they are based." How can young people improve the capacity to think for themselves, develop the skills to communicate, organize, and become role-models in motivating their communities to become effective climate leaders under COVID-19 situation?**

The group discussed the importance of awareness building and youth-initiated actions which will inspire and motivate others to take actions. Education and self-motivation can create resilient leaders who will serve as role models to the rest of the society. Community initiatives with high spirits and leadership will also create a new social order in a post-COVID-19 situation. In order to create this new order, social connections, cross-learning through sharing of projects, and listening to each other are absolutely imperative. Therefore, a smarter, greener and sustainable future can only be built with strong local networks and collaborations which are constantly complementing and listening to each other.

**Transformative action:** Educate and build capacity of youth, so that they may initiate and lead community-level initiatives through local synergies and cross-learning, and in the process, become role models in inspiring others to act.

***“Sharing projects and ideas, seeing what people have done and are doing at home, we can try them ourselves to protect our environment.”***

*- Leonie Wisowaty, 16-year-old FXB Climate Advocate, Austria*

***“In order to inspire others, we need to first keep ourselves well-informed, motivated and active. We should look forward to sharing our passion and vocation to others. We need to take initiative and show the way.”***

*– Raul Levy, 16-year-old grassroots leader, México*

## **2. How can opportunities be created for young leaders during COVID-19 situation to work alongside global stakeholders, involved in governance and policy making?**

Grassroots organizations have been actively involved in a number of initiatives despite the pandemic lockdown. Actions like these at the local level cause a ripple effect influencing human actions and behaviors. In order to strengthen these actions, strong governance and communication networks, and stakeholder participation will be required, and conversations need to be facilitated between adults, youth, scientists, and global leaders in a common language. Petitions and efforts to spread awareness via

online platforms may be important tools for advocacy with global stakeholders and governments. Furthermore, there is a need for environmental education starting from an early age through experiential learning, fostering youth leadership, and actions supported by one-on-one mentorship and training programs.

**Transformative action:** Youth to influence policy through a variety of channels, including through strengthened multisectoral and intergenerational communication networks. Experiential learning, youth mentorship, and training programs will be key.

***“We have a challenge in the use of technical language between stakeholders and youth. We need to find a middle ground between adults, youth, scientists and other stakeholders.”***

*– Camila González, 16-year-old activist, México*

***“Use technology as a tool to introduce our actions to governments, civil society and enterprises.”***

*– Fernando Castro, 24-year-old grassroots activist, México*

***“If we each make individual movements, it is not going to lead to anything, we should use platforms like POP Movement and WAAS to talk to the world, and getting all the activists to work together”***

*Susana Delgado, 20-year-old activist, México*

### **3. How can we work together as changemakers to achieve powerful leadership worldwide during COVID-19?**

Use of social media for sharing solutions can spur a global movement against any challenge. Environmental education and utilization of social media platforms for activism to share ideas and solutions are some of the key measures that can be taken. It is important to be truly inclusive in one’s inclusive approach towards leadership. Communities which do not have access to social media or the internet need to identify a local leaders to mobilize and implement structural interventions. Indigenous knowledge about climate action must be

brought to the forefront in conversations about sustainability and climate action. Environmental learning on these lines should be incorporated universally in school curriculums to create awareness amongst students at a young age. This will catalyze action for climate mitigation by students in many forms including through the usage of cycles as a form of transportation, or planting of trees to improve air quality.

**Transformative action:** True inclusivity in our inclusive approach is essential. Education and media platforms are powerful tools to share knowledge, catalyze local action, and spur a global movement.

***“During this pandemic, what we have seen is that everyone is motivated. This is the best time to prepare our plans and work to be a leader to protect our planet.”***

*– Komal Mittal, 25-year-old Youth Mentor, India*

***“Finding ways to re-engage all in an inclusive manner is vital to move forward post COVID-19”***

*– Zam Liam, USA*

***“Creating awareness is important, but doing it in a way that people understand, feel connected and relate with will really make a difference”***

*- Geetika Paul, Software Engineer, India*

#### **KEY OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP:**

1. Institutionalizing environmental education, specifically experiential learning, youth mentorship, and training programs on behavior change and climate action efforts starting from school.
2. Youth engaging in grassroots actions, taking the initiative to collaborate with other youth and local communities to share knowledge and projects, will cause a ripple effect engaging the rest of society, as youth action creates a groundswell.
3. Opportunities to be created for inclusive action and strong connections between different stakeholders, specifically bringing in knowledge of the indigenous communities.
4. Participants had the chance to collectively generate different strategies, evaluate them for action plans to take them forward, and apply them for an effective leadership and progression of SDGs under the COVID-19 situation.