



Cool Kids Saving a Hot Planet

Journey of Youth for Climate India 2020 to 2022



Dear readers,

Three years of completion of a youth-led climate action group is more significant than one might think. It subverts many of the current structures which are in place, not just the ones which discriminate on the basis of age, but also which discriminate against Social Movement actors and organisations.

Three years without any funding support for even our core team means that we have sustained and grown even in a pandemic based sheerly on the team's motivation, urge to change the status quo and concern about socio-environmental issues. The stories of all those who have come together to make these glorious three years happen are marked by a sense of injustice; injustice towards our communities and the environment that we are embedded in; along with a sense of hope for a better future, which is in itself derived from the warm community that we have built over the last three years.

When we have to show our accounts for legal and administrative purposes, we do not know how to account for the numerous times people have come forward to offer their resources- not just their money and time, their offices, their books, their networks and platforms. We are grateful for this support and faith you put in us.

We started off as a small group of college kids (like most big SMOs started out) and we never imagined that in a matter of three years we would be able to achieve all that we have been able to and influence and connect with as many young people as we have had the privilege of associating with.

We have our very own climate justice library, of the youth, by the youth and for the youth. We have a dynamic clean-air based campaign which is looking to expand all over India! We are also launching our newsletter, and translaor's network in the coming months. All in all, it's cause for celebration all around. This also means that we will require your support more than ever before. The next three years will be fundamental to the trajectory of Youth For Climate India as we hope to absorb some wonderful young people from the climate movement into full-time, paid roles, undertake more grassroots organising and diversify on the basis of socio-political factors.

Educate, Agitate, Organise!

Warmly,
Core team
Srijani, Yashna, Gauri, Aakanksha & Vijay
Youth For Climate India

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Introducing Youth For Climate India

Youth For Climate India is a youth-led climate action group educating, empowering, and mobilizing young people across India to make climate justice a priority for people and politics with a vision to build a sustainable, equitable and inclusive India.

The group formed in Jan 2020, when Supriya and Rachit who was studying Geography at Delhi University realized how concerning the issue of climate change is- and how little our governments are doing about it. Before starting YFCI, they attended a couple of school strikes for climate and noticed an inconsistency in youth climate strikes. In the process, they met Vijay who is documentary filmmaker and was documenting climate strikes since they began in India. They were concerned about the state of youth organizing on climate issues and decided to do something about it- and in 2020, three of them started Youth For Climate India with an aim to bring consistency in climate strikes- and strengthen the climate movement in India.

They started educating and organizing college campuses through movie screenings, music performances, open meetings, etc- & since then YFCI's focus has been on making the climate movement more accessible for young people throughout India either by creating entry points, removing language barriers or through upskilling.

In the past three years, our team has grown from 3 members to 30 members and our community has grown to 12000+ people out of which 3000+ support our on-ground actions in 100+ cities/towns (on page 16 of this report you'll find complete list of these cities and towns)

**In the past three years,
our team has grown
from 3 members to 30
member.**



Three Years of YFC Impact in Numbers

- **200+ events & actions organized**/supported (60% of which are on-ground)
- **80+ organizations & collectives partnered** with (43 regional, 28 national, 9 international)
- 30+ celebrities have supported our campaigns (which includes Adil Hussain, Ankita Konwar, Ankur Tewari, Anushka Manchanda, Bhumi, Pednakar, Dia Mirza, Dolly Singh, Eeshna Kutty, Geetika Vidya, Konkana Sen Sharma, Milind Soman, Monica Dogra, Rajashree Deshpande, Shashank Arora, Shraddha Srinath, Sneha Khanwalkar, Vijay Verma, Zoya Akhtar)

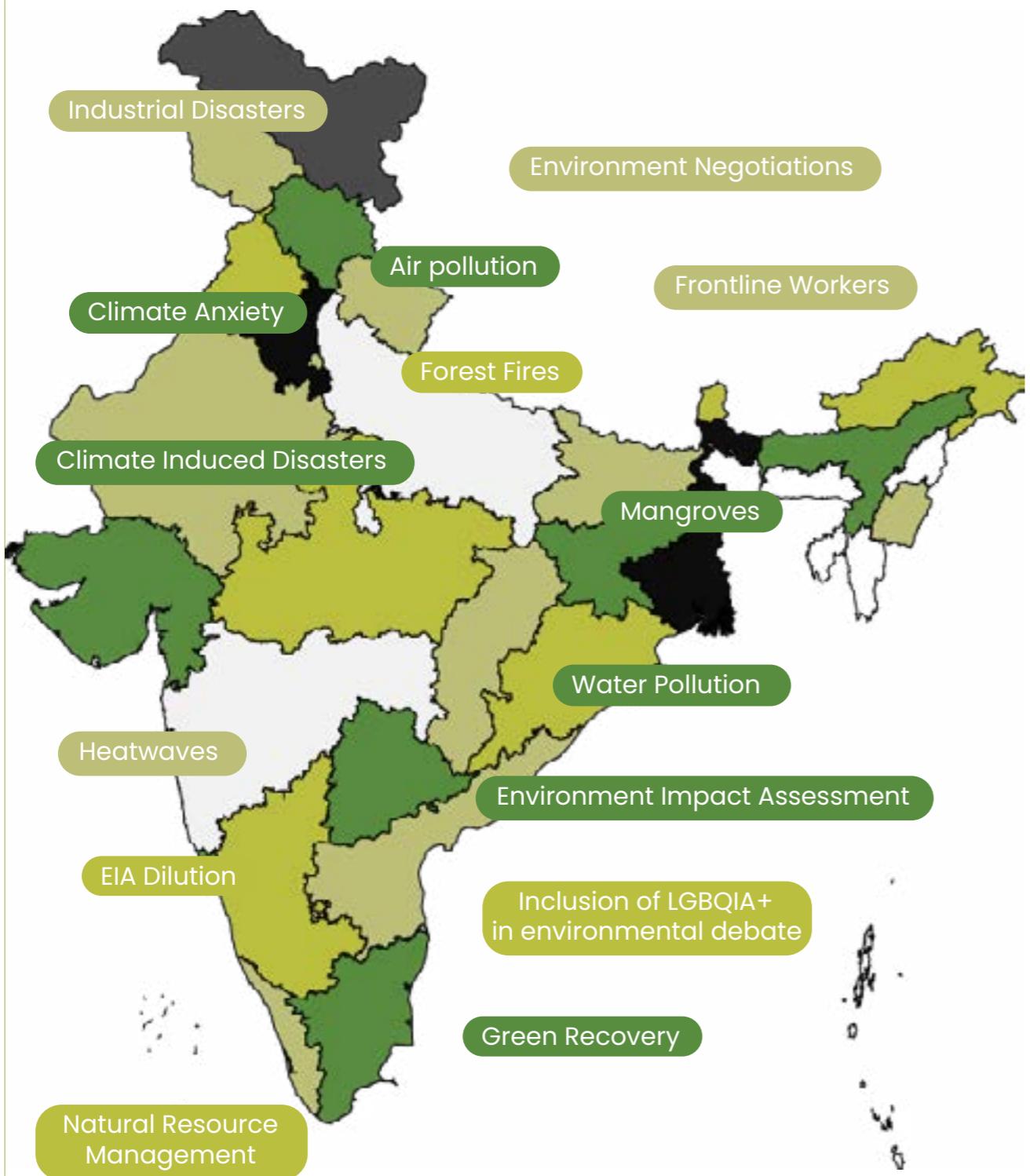


- **150+ young people trained** (in building and sustaining team, campaign development, civic participation, climate communication, democratic decision making, legal rights, media relations, organising grassroots communities, self and community care, storytelling)
- **Team grew from 3 members to 30 members** (all under 35 years)



Where are we & what issues have we dealt with?

- **12000+ community members** in 100+ cities and towns
- **3000+ people educated** on topics listed below



Featured Campaigns and projects

Campus Organising

Our group started with campus organizing in colleges, where we engaged different cultural (music, drama, art) societies to use their art to bring people's attention to the climate crisis. We have also engaged at college festivals to advance the conversation around climate justice and make it more appealing to the youth.



Major Campaigns during COVID

EIA campaign

On March 23, 2020, India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued the draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification. This was a proposed amendment to a 2006 draft that would easily give industries environmental clearance to go ahead with projects, even in eco-sensitive zones, by diluting the scope of public participation and expecting violators to self-report their violations. The draft was released in the public domain and the ministry had sought views and comments from all stakeholders.

Our campaign asked the MoEFCC to take back the proposed amendments and scrap the proposed draft. For the same, we've used the following strategies to get public support and send 17 lakh objections through email:

- **Webinars:** To break down the technicalities of the law, our team has curated a webinar on proposed amendments and conducted sessions with college clubs and societies, and in total, we educated nearly 800 students.
- **Offline Engagement:** We've conducted outreach events, discussions, and demonstrations in 7 cities throughout India which helped us take conversations about proposed amendments with people who don't have much access to online mediums, being the only group at that time to hold offline community discussions.
- **Mobilising celebrity voices:** We leveraged the comment sections of celebrities on Instagram, with ~40 of us dropping comments about EIA within a stipulated time on their recent posts urging them and their followers to support the movement. This tactic led to popular actors, musicians, and directors, including Konkona Sensharma, Bhumi Pednekar, Zoya Akhtar, Milind Soman, Dia Mirza, Vijay Varma, and Dolly Singh, and 25 others taking up the issue.



At Youth For Climate India, we felt the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 as much as any other institution in the country. Our team members fell sick, many losing their loved ones and struggling to secure basic medical supplies during that time. As we found ourselves amidst such a helpless and dreadful situation our team had to make a decision on what a youth group like ours should be doing during this time. We collectively decided that our responsibility as part of civil society is to highlight the structural issues which were exposed due to the second wave of the pandemic. Our team has spent six months and worked on:

- **Magazine titled COVISPIRACY:** The magazine also explored the inaccessibility and inequality of India's vaccination drive, the country's medical infrastructure, the digital divide and deepened inequalities brought by the pandemic, and the experience of frontline workers.
- **Knowledge Sessions:** We wanted more people to know about the linkages between a pandemic, a healthcare crisis, and climate change. We held a series of seminars and discussions on vaccine policy, health workers' rights, and public healthcare infrastructure.
- **Amplifying Asha Workers' Mobilisation:** We were also involved in aiding and amplifying ASHA workers' mobilization demands during this time, who were severely overworked and underpaid. We raised questions regarding the dignity of labor, especially women's labor during such distressing times.

COP26 at Glasgow (November 2021): One of our team members, Srijani Datta attended the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference which took place in Scotland. During and before COP we share information specifically on the youth's demands, and India's stand on key environmental negotiations, and helped make COP-related information accessible and understandable for the youth. The outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Pact and views on key issues relevant to India were shared by us after the conference with our community members on social media and in a community meet-up.

Local Conference of Youth at Gujarat (September 2022): Our team member, Srijani Datta was invited to take a session on Adaptation and Loss and Damage to help build the knowledge and capacity of youth participants at LCOY. During the 3-day conference, the participants drafted policy recommendations in the sectors of climate finance, agriculture, water, education, governance, and entrepreneurship for the Indian government.

Government of Delhi: Our team frequently engages with the Delhi government on key environmental issues such as access to and preservation of green patches, making the city more cyclable, demanding the introduction of more buses on new routes, and discussing heat action plans in place to prevent heat-related deaths. We lobby and directly engage with advisors and bureaucrats under the Environment Ministry of the Delhi government.

On 15th March 2022, we opened a climate justice library at South Ex, New Delhi with an aim to make climate literacy available to our community members and the general public. In the past, we organized reading circles to engage people from various fields in discussions related to the environment. We eventually decided to open a community library to make climate justice-related literature more accessible. We believe improving people's access to such resources greatly improves their involvement in and understanding of environmental issues. The library currently has around 500+ books on topics such as air pollution, water pollution, politics of environmental conservation, ecology, energy, and many others.



Coaching and Training

Workshops: In 2021, we held many workshops (Hindi+Eng) teaching young people from rural and urban areas key skills in climate communications, advocacy, team-building, social media campaigning, building leadership, and organizing their communities.

Young Changemakers Bootcamp: We organized our flagship training Bootcamp (6-days) in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand for young people who want to harness the collective power of their community to advocate for positive social change- this Bootcamp brought people from across India to explore & practice the concept of social power and how it can drive truly transformational change. They have learned practical skills in group-centered leadership, telling their and their community's stories, developing campaigns, and using digital tools in campaigning.



Clean air campaign

According to the World Air Quality Report of 2019 compiled by IQAir Air Visual, 21 Indian cities feature among the world's 30 most polluted cities- and since then these cities have been featured in the list of cities with the worst AQI year after year. However, the media and civil society often remain focused on the impact of air pollution in Delhi, the national capital. We have a strong community of 8000+ young people spread across India, and while interacting with them we realized the extent to which the issues of the other cities are sidelined. Therefore, we decided to launch a long-term campaign called 'Clean Air Cohort' to build people's power in Faridabad, Moradabad, and Lucknow. We launched a campaign in these places because of their marginalization in the policy and social movement discourse related to air pollution. On September 7, we launched our campaign with a campaign video. Our campaign in its first leg includes:

- **Charcha for Clean Air:** We are currently in the phase of organizing 'Vayu Pradhsuhan Charchas' or open meetings in these cities to understand broadly what issues people are facing and want to take action on. These meetings are also helping us meet grassroots collectives, organizations, and people who want to actively advocate for healthier cities. We have held one charcha in each city so far.
- **Perception Survey:** We are producing reports of these three cities, including a perception survey that seeks to capture citizens' concerns regarding air pollution in their city, local sources of air pollution, and the socio-economic and health impacts. We would release these reports in town halls where local administration and local citizens would be present to discuss common issues.
- **Photo and Video Story:** We are also producing photo and video stories from these cities which capture the disproportionate impact of air pollution on various socio-economic groups. We will put up photo exhibitions across these cities to engage the public.



Our Community (team, community, partners)

Core Leadership

YFC's core leadership team of 6 people with an average age of 21 yrs

Yashna Dhuria

I have told the story of how I joined the climate movement and YFC many many times but one thing that never changes is the feeling of nostalgia and empowerment I get. So here we go again...After giving my 12th board exam, my climate anxiety only increased but I finally decided that I was going to do something about it. A friend shared a poster about a chalk art event for the climate strike in CP, Delhi and I knew I had to attend.

After reaching the venue I saw a tall man with a bag of chalks. That man was Vijay and that's how I met him, the event went great. Lots of people gathered once we started drawing near the metro station. Later I found out some very exciting news: a Global Climate Strike was going to happen in a few days. I promised Vijay I'd be there with Mishthi, my best friend.

I made posters and placards with Mishthi for the upcoming protest. With all the enthusiasm the day of the protest came, I faced a roadblock: my parent forbid me from going. They were weary of me attending a public protest. Mishthi pleaded my parents alongside me but they wouldn't budge. I know if I didn't go I would regret it for the rest of my life. I looked at Mishthi and said, "If you really wanna do this just do as I say." I grabbed her and the placards and said "No matter what happens don't look back". Then we ran from the house with my mother screaming behind us. But we didn't stop until we reached the metro station. We went to the protest and it was a beautiful and powerful view for me to see everyone there marching and chanting together. I found Vijay and said "I told you I'd make it." And that's how my journey with YFC began!

After that, I learned about social movements and grew in every sphere of life more than I could ever learn from any prestigious college or elsewhere. Seeing my growth at YFC, my parents saw that this wasn't just an act of rebellion but an honest act toward something I feel strongly about.



Gauri Singh

Confused, directionless, and emotional- these three words perfectly describe the state of my mind, at the onset of the pandemic. With everything going around in the news and other social forums, having the desire to just get out of bed was a contest of its own. And then one day, I started wondering about the bigger picture in all of this. To further my horizon of understanding, I started researching about the environment and how climate change plays an enormous role in it. And the reality of the situation, came as a big blow. The inaction of global powers, faulty agreements, and straight-up denial of the phenomenon by a lot of influential figures, gave me a sense of the gravity of climate change. That's when YFC entered my life.

When I first joined, my experience with activism was zero. Two years at YFC turned me into a completely new person. From being a spectator in our meetings to becoming more comfortable with putting forth my opinions and ideas, I've grown immensely. The guidance, support, mentorship, transparency, and positive reinforcement that runs deeply within Youth For Climate India at an organizational level is unlike anything that I've experienced. But more than anything, it's YFC's willingness to be open to providing opportunities to everyone. One of the most brilliant things we've managed to do is create an amazing network consisting of cohorts and groups coming from all walks of life. This has helped me be more mindful of other people's experiences and understand how they might view the same thing differently. The pandemic took away the two most formative years of my school experience, but it did not stunt my personal growth because YFC gave me that environment.



For that, and everything else, YFC is the reason I am what I am today. From confused, directionless, and emotional to conscious, sensitized, and headstrong.

Developing leaders who develop leaders



Gauri
communications and outreach with educational non-profits began for Climate Education. Newsletter editors appointed and work kicked off!

Srijani
Gauri's support, Gauri began supported and developed more young leaders.

Yashna
Coordinated YFC's Clean Air Campaign in Faridabad and trained more young leaders to take the campaign forward.

Developing Leaders

Gauri
Kickstarted dialogue around the importance of Climate Education - formed a team that worked on identifying gaps in curriculums. Created different teams for different grades. Continued to work on newsletter and appointing editors for different roles.

Srijani
April 2021
Supported Research Team
nominated Gauri to co-lead research team

Yashna
Dec 2021
Launched library with team, taught them communication skills

Leading

Gauri
July 2021
Started co-leading the learning and training team along with Srijani, became the lead of the newsletter team.

Srijani
April 2021
Lead of research team consisting of 15 people

Yashna
Dec 2021
Co-lead of Communication Team



Gauri
Participated in several campaigns and panel discussions in turn took on more responsibilities

Srijani
March 2021
Helped organise strikes in over 10 cities, helped draft local demands, and strategize art actions/cycle rallies/movie screenings.

Yashna
Sept 2021
Helped organize climate strikes in over 5 cities, coordinating with the local organizers and worked on content for environment day by collaborating with children and artists.

Performing

Gauri
Member of the learning and training team. Build skill of research for campaigning & comms

Srijani
Sept 2020
Effective communication with volunteers, form local groups & assist organising on ground actions

Yashna
June 2021
Organised online panels & cohorted discussion on how climate is an LGTBQIA+ issue.

Learnings

Gauri
Sept 2020
Joined YFC via open community call

Srijani
April 2020
Was onboarded to help with Insta Live on intersections of climate change, health, genders, etc

Yashna
March 2021
Attended chalk art and climate strike in Dehi.
The event was organised by Srijani

Joined



Working Team & Community

Working Team: We have a working team (which supports the core team) of 18 people with an average age of 20 years. You can find more details about our working team on our website.

Community: We have a community of 12,000+ young people from different parts of India- 3000+ of them actively support our on-ground actions in more than 100+ cities/towns of India.



Partners

80+ organizations & collectives partnered with (43 regional, 28 national, 9 international)

- Advocacy: Polluters Out, Climate Students Movement, Greenpeace India, Let India Breathe, Save Aravalli, Greengang Faridabad, SafaiSena
- Knowledge Sharing and Event Partnerships: Project 19, Greenpeace India, Vikalp Sangam, Parivartan NGO, RHA Moradabad, Earth Day Network, Climate Science
- Resource Sharing: Greenpeace India, Parivartan NGO, RHA Moradabad, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Centre for Financial Accountability, Council on Energy Environment and Water, Centre for Science and Environment, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy
- Training: Vikalp Sangam, Climate Front Jammu, Safai Sena, IGSSS, Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan, Video Volunteers



IGSSS
India-Global Social Service Society



Guiding framework

Strategy & Structure

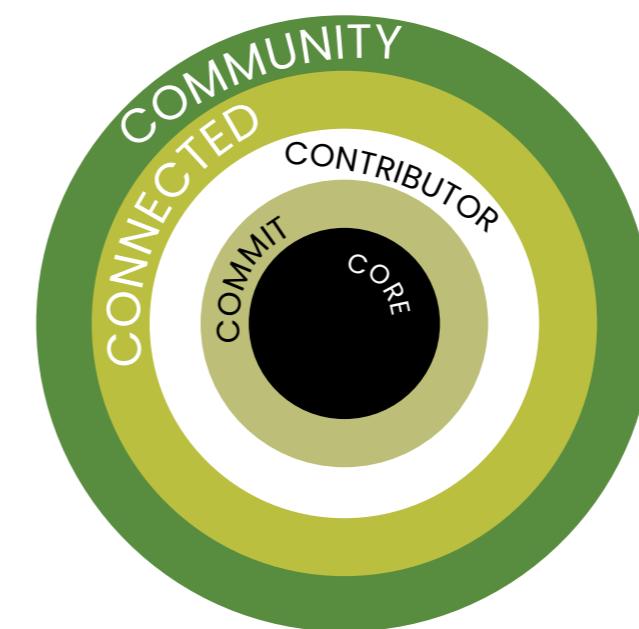
YFCI is different because:

- **We meaningfully involve youth at every level** – YFCI is led by young people, making us one of India's few examples of an entirely youth-run organization in the environmental space.
- **We achieve a lot with little** – with a budget considerably downsized to larger environment groups, we create campaigns that are professional in their execution and far-reaching in impact.
- We're **innovative and fresh**
- **We are efficient and responsive:** We keep our organization free of hierarchical bureaucracy so we can be nimble, active, and responsive in a socio-political environment that is constantly changing.
- **Sustained growth and impact:** In the current socio-political and economic environment, youth groups have been unable to sustain themselves because of a lack of committed leadership, funding, ecosystem support, and networks. YFCI has consistently worked towards overcoming these barriers.
- **Post-pandemic recovery:** Even throughout the pandemic, we were one of the only youth-led organizations that were consistently producing knowledge, connecting and supporting local groups, and conducting training. This is also why, we were able to come out of the pandemic stronger than many well-established adult organizations starting a climate library of our own in 2022, and launching our first offline campaign on air pollution.



We aim to educate, empower and mobilize 3.5% of India's population to take an active role in society and as well as democratic processes- to build a sustainable and equitable India. We utilize a hybrid model of organizing that integrates

- **Circles of Commitment** a model for thinking about the different levels of engagement of people involved in the movement; what kinds of things people at each level can do, and what support they need to do those things.
 - **Community** (people we are trying to reach)
 - **Connected** (people who are connected)
 - **Contributors** (who are contributing)
 - **Committed** (supports core to organize contributors)
 - **Core** (essential to function)
- **Ladders of Engagement** how people can move from one level to another help us effectively and gradually guide a supporter into becoming a leader keeping below figure (circle of commitment) in mind, the goal of YFCI is to move people from the outer circle (low commitment) to the inner circle (high commitment).
- **Snowflake team structure:** While engaging masses, it's important to grow in a sustainable and scalable way- which is offered by the snowflake team structure which ensures a sustainable number of relationships, clearly defined roles, and capacity for exponential growth.+ to prevent YFC from fizzling out like other youth groups, we adopted this model. Prevents burnout!



Culture & Principles

YFCI welcomes everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, physical or psychological functions, and socioeconomic or academic background, and does not tolerate any form of harassment, discrimination, or violence. We strive for sustainable engagement by respecting each individual's respective level of engagement, energy, and time.

The decision-making processes are based on transparent and democratic practices. And here are a few principles we follow in leadership development.

- **Everybody has leadership potential.** Anybody who supports the campaign might be interested in getting actively involved. Anybody who gets involved once has the potential to take on more.
- **People who care about these issues need to be motivated to act upon their concerns.** Most people don't know what they can do to make a difference or how their actions will help. You need to communicate that there are solutions as well as problems.
- **People need opportunities to take on more responsibility.** It is hard for a new member to know what next step to take. You need to develop a leadership ladder ("Ladder of Engagement") for each person that will give them opportunities to continue to learn and grow.
- **People stay involved for three reasons:** 1) they are learning something valuable, 2) they see that their efforts are making a difference, and/or 3) they are part of a meaningful community. If you are not offering at least one of these at any point, you are not going to retain them.
- **People want to learn and they need to be challenged to do so.** Once somebody masters a basic task, they should be given something more difficult to tackle - either training other people to do the basic task or dealing with a more challenging situation.
- **People take on more responsibility because they feel needed.** If you need people to do more, you need to let them know that. If they are the person to do the job, they need to know that you're counting on them. After each activity or event, you should be discussing their next activity.

- **People develop as leaders because somebody takes the time to give them meaningful feedback and to build their confidence.**

Once a task has been completed, don't just assign another. Talk about how it went, what could have gone better, which pieces went well, how they felt about the experience, etc.

- **People stay for the long term because they feel like a part of a community.** Develop a group culture that is fun, welcoming, and inclusive, and that encourages people to get to know each other.

- **It takes active intention to develop leaders in a justice-oriented way.** It can be tempting to just let things happen and let those who are taking initiative (e.g. are most vocal, most available, most knowledgeable) become the leaders. But privilege and oppression make it such that those who are most inclined to take initiative tend to be financially well-off, well-educated, and also often cis, straight, or men. If we don't actively work to recognize and uplift people who need to be leaders, we risk recreating homogenous and privileged spaces that will not ultimately be able to achieve our goals of justice.



Learnings in the past three years

Shortfalls of having a full volunteer-run staff

- Currently, **we have an extensive network of volunteers. However, we lack the dedicated full-time staff** required to fully engage and build leadership among these volunteers.
- **Loss of human resources:** After we invest for years/months into youth leaders, we are unable to absorb them professionally. Hence, they join other organizations where they are able to find paid roles.
- **Administrative and legal work takes up a lot of time for the youth leaders,** who are then forced to dedicate time towards more technical aspects of running an organization instead of campaigning.
- Since most of our core team and committed team members are school/college students, they go on cyclical breaks for their examinations which leads to **frequent and uncoordinated breaks in our work.**

Inclusion & Diversity

- In **February 2020**, we opened up our volunteer registration forms and **received 120 registrations** within 6 hours from people from about 30-40 districts all over India. We didn't anticipate such a response because most of our pre-existing volunteers hailed from Delhi NCR, Mumbai, and Bangalore. This change was witnessed because this time we did not recruit through our networks, rather we directly gave an open call for volunteers on our Instagram.
- Therefore, we believe there are many other everyday practices that we need to shift to **build linguistic, ability, regional, caste, religious, and gender inclusivity.** For example, we started a language network in 2021, to help translate our informative posts into different languages. Unfortunately, we were unable to sustain it. Similarly, while campaigning in Moradabad we realized that we had to ensure the safety of our women and Muslim campaigners, while also helping them build their leadership in a socio-political context that is not very supportive of them.

Policies for safety, well-being and resilience

- We need **policies for the safety, well-being of our team members and need to build resilience into our communities.** Many of our young volunteers engage with a large population spread across the country, and sometimes they face harassment/bullying, we need policies and training to help deal with such situations.
- While campaigning, building community power can be an emotionally taxing job, where we need **community care practices to be instituted.**
- **Conflict resolution mechanisms** need to be instituted in spaces populated by not just the staff but also an extensive network of volunteers.





Donate:

www.youthforclimateindia.org/donate

Join the movement:

[www.youthforclimateindia.org/
get-involved](http://www.youthforclimateindia.org/get-involved)

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