“Let us acknowledge and celebrate what youth can do to build a safe, more just world. Let us strengthen our efforts to include young people in policies, programmes and decision-making processes that benefit their futures and ours.”

Ban Ki Moon
Introduction

The Earth Charter—an inclusive ethical framework that recognizes the interdependency of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace—articulates a global vision and values for sustainability.

As those whose lives will be most deeply affected by our current unsustainable practices, young people are emerging as critical leaders in the paradigm shift that is required to build more just and sustainable societies. Although many young people are raising their voices and looking for ways to address the socio-environmental challenges of our time, most youth are disengaged with processes of social change or feel disempowered to do so. Those who possess a strong sense of justice, the openness and courage for change are seeking opportunities to connect, to learn and to work towards social transformation.

Recognizing the power and importance of youth in building a more just, sustainable and peaceful world, Earth Charter International (ECI) has been engaging, motivating, training, and empowering young people from all regions of the world to get involved in processes of social transformation. In this context, for over 10 years, it has been offering online and in-person training programmes and opportunities for young people to enhance their leadership capacity and skills to be effective and ethical agents of change towards sustainability.

Background

Since 2000 ECI has been engaging, training, and empowering young people to grow as sustainability leaders and to use the Earth Charter to guide their personal and professional lives. ECI has offered numerous workshops, webinars, and online courses in English and Spanish, training thousands of youth in sustainability and engaging them with the Earth Charter. These have provided an entry point for youth to acquire knowledge about sustainability, global cooperation and ethics as well as experience working in multi-cultural settings.

Furthermore, ECI has organized international youth fora and exchanges. For example, the Euro-Arab Youth Sustainability Leadership Forum, organized in partnership with Shift, an Egyptian youth organization, which brought together European and Arab youth from 17 different countries. ECI has also collaborated with UNESCO between 2017 and 2018 in developing a training-resource material on education for sustainable development for young people and co-facilitated the training workshops on this in Latin America and Asia as a key partner of the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development.

This work is undertaken under the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development, which develops education programmes in the areas of sustainability, ethics and education. More information on Earth Charter Education Programmes can be found by clicking here.
Rationale

A new kind of leadership is needed that seeks the common good and embraces the vision of the well-being of Earth and of humanity instead of personal interest or success only. This new leadership understands and internalizes the values and principles set forth in the Earth Charter. Young people should be the leaders of the further sustainable development. Through the Youth Programme, ECI supports also the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which urges youth inclusion into decision-making processes and enabling youth for meaningful participation in peace processes for sustainable peace.

Most conventional education programmes are not addressing this important aspect. Cultivate and nurture ethical leadership in young people from all professional fields is of ultimate importance if humanity is to move away from unethical and unsustainable practices that are negatively affecting the lives of many.

Programme Objective

The Earth Charter Young Leaders programme aims to help young people become ethical and effective leaders in the transition towards a more sustainable and peaceful world. ECI programme inspires and engages young people by helping develop and enhance their knowledge and capacity. In current time, ECI reaches approximately 200 young people per year. To generate bigger impacts, ECI is looking for sponsorships to reach to a number of 500 young people per year.

Two Earth Charter guiding principles for the ECI’s youth programme are:

- "Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development.”
  Earth Charter, Principle 14b

- "Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfil their essential role in creating sustainable societies.”
  Earth Charter, Principle 12c

Programme Activities

ECI accomplishes this objective through the following activities:

1) Online Course

The Leadership, Sustainability and Ethics programme, involves a ten-week online course designed for young people, 18-30 years old, offered with the purpose to enhance their knowledge, values and skills to become sustainability leaders. The course explores the concepts of sustainability, eco literacy, systems thinking, leadership, global ethics, the Earth Charter, and dilemmas in decision-making. It invites participants to engage through an online platform, social media, and local actions to amplify their knowledge and skills in these critical areas. The course has a practical focus to enable participants to take their learning
about these topics and apply it in their communities as Earth Charter-inspired action projects.

2) Earth Charter Young Leaders Programme

Upon completing the course, participants receive a certificate and an invitation to continue to be engaged for a year by participating in the Earth Charter Young Leaders Programme. This is an opportunity to continue to exercise their leadership role in their local community and to stay connected to the global EC Youth Network.

3) Webinars

ECI organizes periodical webinars as a space for ongoing learning and opportunities for youth, from around the world, to be engaged and expand their knowledge on sustainability-related topics, gain skills and learn from taking part in multi-cultural dialogues and sharing.

4) Communication and Networking

The Earth Charter Youth Network, which includes the Earth Charter Young Leaders, offers a space for an extended group of youth from across the globe to connect, share experiences, collaborate when possible and inspire one another to carry on implementing sustainability projects aligned with the Earth Charter. ECI nurtures and amplifies the EC Youth Network so that young people can strengthen their collective power.

ECI provides and facilitates online communication channels, with the help of social media, to foster community building, share resource materials and create space for active engagement. Through the website, ECI keeps youth informed of educational opportunities, captures stories of young people implementing the Earth Charter in their communities and showcases good practices.

Young Leaders Benefits

- Young Leaders that take part in this Programme benefit by:
- Deepening their knowledge on sustainability and thinking in a broader context.
- Receiving guidance for their local projects to address sustainability with a special emphasis on ethical leadership.
- Networking with other Earth Charter Young Leaders from around the world and the Earth Charter International team.
- Working with a multi-cultural and multi-national team on collaborative projects.
- Expanding networks through work with ECI partners and affiliates.
- Learning to organize and facilitate workshops and webinars.
- Gaining skills and confidence in organizing and leading local community projects and in articulating participatory processes.
- Getting their stories published on the official ECI website and through social media.
- Improving their writing/editing/video skills.
- Published profile, with a photo and biography, on the ECI website to strengthen experiences, credentials, and projects.

Examples of Young Leaders in Action can be found on page 5.
Collaborative Projects

ECI collaborates with partner organizations through different kinds of projects, some examples are:

- **York University in Canada and Avans University of Applied Science in the Netherlands** have incorporated the online LSE programme as part of their semester courses, meaning that their students enroll in the LSE online course.

- **Mapting - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Earth Charter App:**

  ECI has been collaborating with Soka Gakkai International in the development, launch and management of Mapting, a social media application to also engage youth in showcasing their local activities addressing the SDGs. The app allows users to learn about what others are doing and provides the opportunity to connect with people around the world working on the same SDG. This technological resource can reach large numbers of young people across the globe and serves as an educational and motivational tool.

- **Retreats on the Inner Dimensions of Climate Change:**

  Between 2016 and 2017, ECI collaborated with the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) and the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) in organizing a series of retreats for young people to come together to gain a deeper understanding of the climate situation and reflect on the spiritual element of climate action.

ECI will continue to collaborate with key strategic organizations to build synergies and amplify the scope of the Earth Charter.

EC Youth Leaders in Action – Examples

**Mohammed Ba-Aoum (Saudi Arabia)**

Mohammed has been an Earth Charter Young Leader since 2016. He is currently a Ph.D. student in Industrial & Systems Engineering (ISE) at Virginia Tech State University. He designed a model for integrating sustainable development concepts in engineering education to prepare future engineers who will be well informed in technical areas and socially responsible. In January 2019, Mohammed attended the International Earth Charter Education Conference in Costa Rica where he presented his work on incorporating education for sustainable development into engineering education.

**Babajide Oluwase (Nigeria)**

Babajide joined the Earth Charter Young Leaders Network in October 2017. He is the Founder of RenewDrive, an innovation-driven enterprise that develops and distributes clean and affordable energy solutions as well as EcoChamps, an initiative that creates awareness and provides young people with requisite knowledge and skills to conserve the environment. By designing project platforms and resources, he aims to inspire other young change makers to achieve outcomes that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Babajide also published a book on climate change titled, “The Young Climate Heroes.” His efforts have improved the wellbeing of hundreds of people across Nigerian communities. Recently, Babajide co-facilitated the Earth Charter Leadership, Sustainability, and Ethics programme in English.
Ana Karen Proa Rebollo (Mexico)

Ana Karen, 23, has been an active Earth Charter Young Leader since 2017. As an ECYL, Karen has facilitated workshops for children, teenagers, and Scouts focused on the Earth Charter in Monterrey, Mexico. She also had the opportunity to participate in the UNESCO NGO Forum on Youth and their Social Impact in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2017. In addition, Karen has participated in online conferences where she has presented the Earth Charter principles and the connection to topics such as peace and the SDGs. Karen has co-facilitated three offerings of the Earth Charter Leadership, Sustainability, and Ethics programme in Spanish. Currently, Karen is interning at Earth Charter International as part of her master’s programme in Conflict Resolution, Peace, and Development from the University for Peace. Karen’s research as an ECI intern is vital for the implementation of a Climate Park project in Costa Rica.