

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Mirian Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

Hello, everyone. Welcome to our conversation today. I have the pleasure of welcoming our very, very special guest, Akpezi Ogbuigwe.

Akpezi is talking with us today from Nigeria. Thank you so much, Akpezi, for joining us today. Thank you, Mirian. I'm happy to be here. Now, Akpezi is the chair of the Earth Charter International Council. And for many years, I have actually, even before that, I have been following the wonderful work Akpezi has been doing in the field of education. He is certainly a very inspiring lady. And today we are going to talk about her work experience, about education for sustainable development, environment, education, planetary consciousness, the importance of ethics of care, intergenerational justice, and so on.

So let's start with this conversation. So Akpezi, you have worked for many years as the head of environment education at UNEP in Nairobi. And you continue to be involved since then with UNEP and UNESCO in various education for change process. Can you reflect a little bit on the importance of the role these UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNEP, has in setting up education agendas, especially education agendas for change? Yes. Thank you so much. You know, maybe the first thing I would like to acknowledge is that behind these UN bodies are people.

And most of the people are passionate, sacrificial, and they just want to give the best to the world they belong to. So one of the most significant factors I appreciated about the United Nations is that it provides the platform to get people to keep talking. It provides that platform that keeps people working together and provides a very table platform for intergovernmental, intergenerational, intersectoral discourse, and meeting of the mind on global issues and on common, on our common existence.

So this significant factor, you know, fosters a shared understanding of the challenges as well as facilitates the development of our common goals. The UN agencies like the United Nations Environment Programme and UNESCO, they play a very important role in setting international education agendas on environment and sustainable education. However, the big issue is that translating these agendas into practice requires overcoming several hurdles. One of the key or major hurdles I experienced or identified is this gap between the global aspirations, because when the global goals, you know, you set them and the local realities.

I found several that the global aspirations, the global goals are far, you know, from what you see at the local level. And I feel that an important success criteria lies in translating local realities into global agendas. You know, how do you do that? We have to find a way, if we want to make the global agendas, particularly on education, on the way we teach and what we teach. It should not come from top down. We have to find a way of

transporting or translating the local realities on the ground into global agendas and then go the other way around transmuting these global policies into local actions.

So, it has to start from the local to the global. These and schools can realistically implement. You know, many times the voices of the community of the people at the local level, they are not reckoned with at the decision level. I mean, it's the decision makers that go there, maybe a decision maker that was just appointed a day before the global meeting, you know, with no experience and things like that, a lot of such situation happened. So to close the gap, there needs to be stronger collaboration between governments, NGOs and grassroots organizations and communities that are already working on these issues on the ground.

So many people are working. The voices of the grassroots, the communities must come to the fore, not only come to the fore but have full force at the decision making stage. Maybe I'll just add a little words to this just to tie it up, you know, properly at the decision making stage. We need to contextualize these agendas, you know, adapting them to specific national and local context, you know, while ensuring alignment with the overarching global goals. So additionally, more emphasis should be placed on capacity building, the teachers, you know, ensuring they have the skills, the tools, you know, then accountability, the issue of accountability comes in, monitoring, you know, and the strengthening, you know, of actual implementation of the agendas beyond policy adoption at the national level.

There's also the issue that I think I should escape of the leadership changes in the UN system that might bring about abrupt changes in policy and program directions and redefinition. A new executive director, you know, comes in and wants something differently and to study what is working and just say, okay, no, I have to have my own, you know, my own caption and it brings something new, forgetting that this is the UN. A lot of countries and communities and NGOs and schools and pupils have already adopted this program.

So what you need to do is to build on it, not to just start a new thing. There's a lot of resources going to waste in that process. A lot of publications that have been produced will go to waste, you know, and so on. So we need to be more concessions in program planning at the UN level for education for sustainable development, education that works. Thank you. No, yeah. Thank you so much. Very clear. So, contextualize these agendas is crucial and also be mindful that every time there is a change of leadership, there could be a change of direction.

We have been following this education agenda for change, environment education, education for sustainable development, climate change, education, etc. But for instance, quite often when I'm sharing these important, valuable UNESCO education agendas to a classroom, I often have to engage with students that ask, quite often ask the question, so what's the point of developing all these policies on UN education agendas and setting goals that can't be achieved such as the SDGs? So there is a significant level of despair and lack of hope in the young generation.

What would you say to young people who no longer believe in the national or international agendas designed to tackle major challenges because of course they seem to be unattainable? Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is understandable, Mirian, that young people feel frustrated, especially when progress seems slow or it's just not apparent. But I think the first place to start is focus. I would tell the young people, I said, see, yes, it's where is your focus? If you focus on things that are not working, if you focus on the problems in the world, then you might just get lost somewhere.

But if you focus on yourself, your ability to be the change and to bring about the change, then you'll be hopeful because every day I wake up, I try to see what change I can bring to myself, to the person I am, and to my environment and my area of influence. Then that is on a general level. Let's come back to these international agendas. Yes, they may be imperfect, they may be complete, but then again, they are just roadmaps, providing a shared vision and direction for action at all levels. So there is something everyone can start with.

And that's something I would help the students to look at. You look at this agenda for once. Take your eyes off. Who is not doing what? Look at the goals. Where do you see yourself? Where can you start from? Reducing hunger, for example, you can start with your neighbor. It's a goal that is achievable by almost everybody. You can give something to somebody. So while some goals may take some time to achieve, real progress has been made in some other areas as well. We have had real progress. So if you look wide enough, our world is very big.

We've had progress with the ozone layer. We've had progress with industries, transiting to greener practices. I will share the progress with them, with communities protecting their ecosystems. We've had progress with youths. So much progress with youth-led environment and sustainability movement around the world. And again, I would tell them this. Yes, these are the goals. You can't see anything now. But then the journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step. So it will not be achieved if no step is taken.

And that step might actually be your step. Absolutely, yes. Yes. So let me borrow again from the good old book, the Bible. Yeshua summarizes our task as humans as to love the Creator and love people. So if you love the Creator, you will take care of creation. You will take the responsibility and learn to be creative in a beautiful way as well. And you will strive to treat others as you want them to be treated. It sounds simplistic, you know? But then, and many intellectuals may not like it because it does not come with high-sounding words.

Every day, as a young or older person, I make the best choice for planetary health. And I implement just policies for relating with everyone. We will in no time read the earth of poverty, wars and injustices and pollution in all its ramification. And our lives will thrive. The head chatter, which we'll be talking about later on, puts it like this. We must join together, you know, youth, everyone. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respectful nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.

And then the earth, our earth will thrive. So it's people who bring about change and it's people who distort the best initiatives. So as a youth, I would seek the best I can be in my context. Absolutely. And let my light shine as far as it can shine, like the sun. This way, I might whittle down the unjust systems and possibly gain many disciples myself, you know? So what's the point of developing all these policies and setting goals that seem unattainable? Let me just finalize this segment with the words of Wangari Matai.

She said, human rights are not things that are put on the table for you to enjoy. You know, somebody just puts it there for you and you go and start picking it up. She said, there are things you fight for. And then you enjoy. You fight for it. And then you enjoy it later on. I may just be a dot in this VUCA world, you know, this ambiguous world, complex world, may just be a dot. But I choose to be a purposeful dot. So you, you know, are young people, you may just feel I'm just young, I'm just a dot.

No, no, no, it's what you choose to be that is important. We can start from our own context, each one of us. Yes. Thank you. What is your understanding on what it means education for sustainable development, climate change education, education for responsible consumption, environment education? What is your understanding of them and what are their similarities and maybe differences? I start from the premise because this is I work with environmental education. I work with all with climate change education, with education for sustainable development.

And I work with them because I feel it's just one. I feel they are all an outflow from education, environmental education. Now, let me, let me explain. The best definition or insight to what environmental education is that I have found is that contained in the book meeting by the special lady, Donella H. Meadows, harvesting 100 fold. It was published by UNEP in 1989. And she wrote, she explained, she said environmental education. Remember this is 1989. She said environmental education is the preparation of people for their lives as members of the bio, biofare.

It is learning to understand, appreciate, work with and sustain environmental systems in their totality. That kind of learning that can take place at any level and any degree of specificity, specificity from general public awareness, for example, awareness of what, what are the courses or the courses of air pollution to advance technical training, for example, awareness of what the atmosphere is and what are the cases and the courses and the courses of air pollution to advance technical training, for example, knowledge of how to design anti-pollution devices for cars and smoke staff.

So above all, environmental education is learning to see the whole picture surrounding a specific problem like air pollution, the history, values, perceptions, economics, technologies and natural processes that cause the problem and that suggests actions to cure it. So for me, environmental education includes learning for the sake of pure learning, but it doesn't stop there and that was how I taught it, but it also encompasses very practical purposes. It is the learning of how to manage and improve the relationships between human society and the environment in an integral and sustainable way.

Environmental education means learning how to employ new technologies, increase productivity, avoid environmental disasters, alleviate existing damage, see and utilize

new opportunities, make wise decisions. Environmental education is fundamentally education in problem solving, but problem solving from a philosophical basis of wholism, sustainability enhancement and stewardship. So the goal is not just to solve a problem with a narrow focus that makes some other problem worse, but to solve it thoroughly, not just to solve it for a short time, but permanently, not just to make a correction and restore the statute code, but to make things better.

And I think as we look at this whole context of all the different types of education we have evolved, and I remember Michelangelo, you know, we think we celebrated his birthday, was it this week as well, Michelangelo, he said, nature has always been an important part of how we learn. The simpler the message, the simpler the message and the language, the more everyone from every group can understand and own the message. However, today we have several conflicting agendas from international agencies, teleguiding, global response, every tribe is on.

So we have education for sustainable development. It's about people, it's said to be about people with the knowledge, skills and values needed to build a sustainable future. You had the definition of environmental education by Donella Meadow, it included this part. So it included what we now call education for sustainable development, and that was in 1989. Climate change education, what is it? Climate change explains climate science and equips learners with skills to take climate action. I already taught this as part of my environmental law class in the 90s.

You now have education for responsible consumption, it helps individuals understand the impact of their consumption habits on the planet. This is an essential part of environmental education as we teach it in Africa. But it's really not about the name, and that is where I come from. I don't really busy myself about this distinction, whether it's environmental education, education for responsible consumption, citizenship education, global education, climate change, everything. No, I don't busy myself about that.

It's what do we want? The world wants peace. The world wants justice and equity, and an economic system that enables individuals and communities to thrive equitably, while also sustaining the capacity of the environment to support it for future generations. So bringing these two actions requires experiential learning. No matter what you're teaching, is it environmental education or environmental education for sustainable development or climate change education and so on? It needs critical thinking and problem solving skills.

A good example is a school implementing waste reduction program where students analyze their waste stream, design solutions and advocate for change within the school and the community. Call it whatever name. The students are engaged with the environment and their learning. This integrates environmental education. It's in great education for sustainable development as we know it, and the other types of education. These approaches are crucial because they empower individuals to become informed and responsible citizens.

So I would conclude that they are all important and will become even more wholesome and impactful if we integrate ethics. I know we're going to be talking about this later. Ethics education as represented in the Earth Charter. That way they will all work together to shape a planetary consciousness where people understand their role in protecting the

environment and in making ethical choices. Thank you. Akbezi, from your context in Nigeria, in Africa, from that context, what do you see are the challenges and maybe the opportunities to implement ESD or environment education, climate change education?

Yeah, implementing these educational approaches involve a lot of our faces, a lot of challenges. In my context now in Africa, limited resources, inadequate teacher training, that is a lot because a lot of the teachers. Some of the teacher workshops I run, I just put SDG. SDG. Can anybody tell me what it means? You need to hear the kind of definition. I mean, they will just look for some words for definitely not sustainable development goals or ESD. They don't understand it. But if you look at what they are doing with students, they are actually implementing education for sustainable development.

So we face a lot of challenges, lack of integration of sustainability topics into national curricula. You may not see much of it there. Then the digital divide, you would only see representation of the things we talk about now in the private, expensive private schools. So many regions lack access to quality learning materials on sustainability and very significant lack of political will. Sometimes I know that you have a lot of resources online. But how many people in my country have access to that?

Yeah. And again, there are also significant opportunities, not only challenges. In Nigeria, for example, the growing youth population represents a huge potential for positive change. By investing in quality education, so we have to, that integrates these approaches, we can empower young people to become sustainability champions. And that is happening already. Furthermore, leveraging technology and innovative pedagogical approaches such as e-learning platforms, virtual sustainability labs can enhance learning.

Other opportunities include increasing corporate and government interest in sustainability, cross-border collaboration that brings in indigenous knowledge to the global space and global expertise to local communities. And I'm also involved with a United Nations University regional centers of expertise network program. And that works at the local level. It's very active in Nigeria, I mean, in many places in Nigeria. And they are working with young people and doing great things. And they are teaching in those institutions and among the networks where they operate, they are integrating education for sustainable development into research, into the projects they are carrying out in the community.

And they are bringing in indigenous knowledge, weaving it all together. And in some places, the political class, the government gets involved with them. So there are things springing up. There is more to be done, but there are a lot already growing and giving us a sign that the future is possible. Yes. Yeah. Now, in 2006, you were part of a team that created a publication for educators, for environment educators, for college instructors, et cetera, that was called Environment Education, Ethics and Action.

I'm referring to this because this is a publication that has inspired me and influenced me quite a lot and I value it. I believe it's an invaluable resource as it takes ethics out of the philosophy departments and brings it into streets, villages and everyday life. So of course, I would like to highlight this and would like to ask you if you could give us a gist of that publication and how you see the link between environment education and ethics in an educational setting. Yeah. Thank you so much, Emelian.

I have really been privileged in my work with the United Nations Environment Program to work with magnificent people, illustrious people. That was one of the games. And this book project was with a team of such people. I mean, we had, it was led by Professor Bob Jinklin and Professor Hela Sissitka, Professor Rob DeNovem. I mean, these are great intellectual giants, but also community handsome people, grassroot people, you could see them, they work also with people at the local level. So the workbook, this workbook, it was born from a simple observation that's the environmental challenges are fundamental ethical challenges.

You know, wherever you have challenges, be it not just environmental, climate change challenges, political challenges, behind them, fundamentally, are ethical challenges. And one famous writer was it Gandhi who said that there is enough for everyone on our earth. There's enough for everyone. But you don't have enough for anyone's greed. So you can see behind the problems we have that gave rise to the 17 sustainable development goals, ethical challenges. So the book was created as a practical tool that helps educators move from abstract ethical concepts to concrete daily decisions.

It takes ethics out of the philosophical books and into real life. It helps educators teach students about how everyday choices, what we buy, how we dispose of waste, how we interact with nature, and deeply ethical decisions. It encourages critical thinking and value based decision making, which are crucial for sustainability. For example, a university professor using the workbook might challenge students to analyze the ethical implications of water or food waste. Anyway, then you analyze it and personalize the problem and see how you are connected to it.

And why does this matter? If people don't feel a moral responsibility to act sustainably or justly or they don't feel a moral responsibility to act peacefully or respectfully, policies alone won't change behavior. Goals alone won't change behavior. Another example, when teaching about deforestation, for instance, we can explore the ethical implications of consumption products that contribute to this problem. This connection is crucial for fostering a sense of responsibility and motivating action.

The book contains a lot of examples and stories around this. What makes it unique is its spiral approach. It starts with personal values and then gradually expands to community. So it starts with you. What are your personal values? What is behind the decisions you make? Whether to say hello to your neighbor or not? In the market, when you go to the shops, what do you buy? What are your personal values? Or you don't care? And then you will be able to analyze that and then gradually expand to the community and then global ethical considerations.

Each chapter includes real-world case studies, reflection exercises, and action planning tools drawn from different all the regions in the world. And one of my favorite sections is called Ethics in Action, where we present everyday scenarios like choosing between convenience and environmental impact. And this guide uses through the ethical decision-making process. Again, the link between the work we did and environmental education is crucial. That is the link between environmental education and ethics, or education for sustainable development and ethics.

The link is crucial because environmental issues are never purely technical. Climate change education is not purely technical. They are always value-loading. Am I going to use charcoal or not? Am I going to cut down trees to cook or I would use solar? I mean, so many. It's not just technical, like balancing development needs with environmental protection. A powerful example I've seen is when students in a Nigerian secondary school studied the ethics of wasted disposal. They moved from understanding the environmental impact to questioning consumer culture, to ultimately launching a school-wide recycling program.

And this has led to personalizing the three hours, reducing your consumption, recycling, and so on. This showed how ethical awareness leads to practical action. And that is what the book is about. The book provides you a practical framework for integrating ethics into your life and into environmental education, into education for sustainable development, into governance, into your work, into your lifestyle. And you will find activities and case studies that will help you to exploit this in your context.

It emphasizes the importance of connecting the head, the heart, and the hand. You will see it. There's knowledge, values, plus action. Those three need to work together. You cannot live out values. You cannot live out ethics. And I think we'll be talking more about that. Yeah. Thank you for that. This book is really, the publication is really a valuable resource. I recommend our audience to go and look for it in the Internet. It's translated in various languages, too, in open access. Now, let's talk a little bit about the Earthshatter.

We are looking at the Earthshatter the 25 years since the launch of the Earthshatter and the role the Earthshatter can play, specifically in expanding our planetary consciousness, the ethical care, and the understanding on the importance of intergenerational justice. Now, within this context of education for change and ethics, what role do you think the Earthshatter can play in all of this? Wow. Now, you have come to one of my most favorite books, the Earthshatter. I do like that chapter. And one of the things that I like about it, it's because it answers to the problems I identify at the beginning.

We have talked about the gap between policy and reality and practice. And one of the things I said was that there's a disconnect in policy between what the reality on the ground is and what you finally bring out as the goal. The Earthshatter solves that problem because the Earthshatter originated from the communities, from the grassroots. It was an activity that involved people, common people, all over the world, you know, to come together to find out what's the way, what's missing, what's missing in our quest for sustainable development.

And then the Earthshatter was born. By the time you begin to read it, you'll find that it is more relevant today than ever before. I remember that when I was in the United Nations Environment Program, I walked with the late Wangari Matai to see how UNEP would use the Earthshatter in its environmental education programs and other activities. So it's not just another declaration. It's a living document that provides an ethical framework for addressing our ethical planetary crisis. In education, since we're really talking about education, I say three key roles, you know, for the Earthshatter.

One as a values framework. It's already there. We already have a value framework that was put together by communities from all over the world. They identified the values that bind all of us together, the values of respect, the values of planetary consciousness, the values of responsibilities and so on. And it helps educators and students understand the ethical principles underlying sustainable development, integrate sustainability, social justice and intergenerational responsibility. It can be used to more effectively instill value-based learning, guiding students to think beyond self-interest and consider the well-being of future generations.

It emphasizes the own interconnectedness, particularly resonating with traditional African worldview. So the Earthshatter also, secondly, it can be used as a teaching tool. It should be used in all schools, in universities, in all contexts, in training government officials, in businesses. The chatter's principles can be translated into age-appropriate learning activities. Then the Earthshatter is also very significant as a bridge builder. The chatter helps connect local environmental concerns with global issues, fostering local thinking, that is global awareness, combined with local action.

Just pause a moment to consider what our world would look like if planetary consciousness, ethics and intergenerational justice forms an integral part of our educational system from kindergarten to higher education. Wow. Can you imagine the kind of political and business leaders we would have? Within the past 25 years of its use, we are seeing young people increasingly think in terms of global systems and intergenerational responsibility. The Earthshatter is a powerful tool for transformative learning, shaping not just knowledge, but it shapes attitudes, ethics and a sense of global citizenship.

The chatter provides a framework for channeling this awareness into meaningful action. And a particularly powerful aspect is how it promotes the ethics of care. This isn't just about education for sustainable development. It's about fostering a deep sense of responsibility for the well-being of both current and future generations. In my experience, this resonates strongly with students, businesses, governments and stakeholders who are looking for meaningful ways to engage with environment and global challenges.

Are you looking for a meaningful way to begin to work with the sustainable development goals or meaningful ways to make practical difference? Now Akpezi, take us to Nigeria. Take us to Nigeria and Africa. Can you share with us some examples of current projects or initiatives you are working with or that you know of that's taking place in Nigeria or Africa that aim to promote ESD or sustainability values that you think, okay, here are some good examples? Yeah, they are great examples. I had mentioned some earlier of inspiring initiatives that demonstrate how the Earthshatter's principles and education for sustainable development are being put into action across Africa.

First, you have a lot of you would have heard about the green schools initiative in Kenya and you have the eco school project in Africa. You have them in Kenya, you have in South Africa and I've had the privilege to be involved with them. These programs integrate sustainability into every aspect of school life, from the curricula to operations. Schools have established indigenous tree nurseries, rainwater harvesting systems and student led environmental clubs. What's particularly exciting is how it combines traditional ecological knowledge with modern sustainability practices.

So you are not living your culture, your science behind. You are bringing your science to the table and enriching it with shared knowledge from the global community. In Nigeria, for instance, you have the youth for environmental sustainability program. This one has been very remarkable. It operates in several states, training young people as environmental ambassadors and some of their trainers are graduates from the Earthshatter International. They are fellows. They have attended some of the courses.

These youth leaders then work with their communities on issues like plastic pollution, renewable energy adoption and sustainable agriculture and solar system. What makes this program special is the emphasis on entrepreneurship and values, showing young people how environmental protection can create economic opportunities and give you a fulfilling life. Another noteworthy example is the Climate Smart Agriculture Initiative in Ethiopia, which works with schools and communities to promote sustainable farming practices.

This program beautifully demonstrates how environmental education can directly contribute to food security and climate resilience. I have also been involved a lot with, like I said, the United Nations University regional centers for expertise. We have in Africa over 35 of such networks hosted in universities, in government establishments, in schools, bringing people together to use education, learning to transform their communities. These projects all share a common thread. They all emphasize local ownership.

We can do it. This problem is ours and we can correct it. We can be the solution. It also gives them cultural relevance while addressing global challenges. I think this has been great all over Africa, South Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, all over Africa. We have already examples of thriving projects injected with education for sustainable development and ethics from the Earth Charter. See when we stop to hear these kind of stories, we can really open our eyes and be conscious that there are a lot of good stories happening everywhere.

Thank you for bringing that to us. Now, what from your perspective, what are the key sustainability or social environment or climate challenges you see in Nigeria or in the African context? What are these key challenges and how do you think this could be addressed? Yes, my answer to the question of how can sustainability changes be addressed, whether in Africa or at the global level, has always been get the right people or be the right person. Get the right people and you will get the right answers.

That's why education is so crucial. The right kind of education. Train a responsible and caring generation and you will have a planet that is closer to our dreams than the current, you know, convoluted world we live in. And this is why education for a pro-environment, pro-equitable, pro-just, pro-respect generation is an underlying goal of ESD. So from my perspective, Africa faces several interconnected sustainability challenges. But I also see tremendous opportunities for addressing them through ethical leadership and education.

And not my emphasis. I'm not talking about, I didn't just say through education. Most of the current leaders we have, manning the various countries and establishments in Africa are educated. But what is the ethics? So we need to inject the ethics into education to get the right kind of leadership. The primary challenges that we have, of course, we have climate vulnerability. The same globally in Africa is particularly worrisome, you know,

because we contribute the least to the problem. But we are seeing this through increased droughts, flooding, unpredictable weather patterns.

It's so hot. It's in some places and some places extremely cold. It's affecting agriculture. So it's really a worrisome problem and we need to do something about it. We have problems with resource management. Many regions face challenges with deforestation, water scarcity, and loss of biodiversity. Is it just hunger? No. Or is it ethics? Is it choices? The kind of, the ethics that drive the choices government makes to give all forests, virgin forests to foreign countries to just cut down, you know, what is that?

And that is why ethics, ethics, commitment to the present and the future, it's so important as part of the education that we have, both formal education and informal education, then waste management problems, rapidly growing urban areas are struggling with waste disposal and plastic pollution, energy access. Many communities still lack reliable access to clean energy. Then we have leadership, we have weak leadership structures. So I mean, these are, the problems are there, but then the solutions are also emerging.

I believe these challenges can be addressed through three-pronged approach. First, by fostering ethical leadership through education, you know, and this means integrating environmental ethics and sustainability principles into all levels of education. We need leaders who are ethical and who understand that environmental protection and economic development are not opposing forces, but complementary goals. Second, by empowering local communities, some of the most effective solutions I've seen, they come from these communities who are applying traditional knowledge to modern challenges.

We must respect, give them space and respect their knowledge. For instance, in Northern Nigeria, communities are reviving traditional water conservation practices to address current water scarcity issues, and they are using traditional knowledge, and it has been very effective. You know, thirdly, we also need to invest in our youth population because we have over 60% to 90, 70% of Africans are youth. So we need to target them with education, not just any education, not education minus ethics or values.

No. And that's where the urge to target is very relevant because it is work done. The job is already done. You only need to take it and adapt it to your context. Even future leaders develop both the technical knowledge and moral compass needed to make sustainable decisions. This includes, I mean, understanding concepts like intergenerational justice, what is it, the precautionary principle, indigenous environmental rights, corporate environmental responsibilities, and so on. So in my experience, when environmental education is combined with ethics and values, it creates leaders who don't just understand environmental challenges, but feel a deep personal commitment to addressing them.

And this is very important in the African context, where traditional values often already emphasize environmental stewardship and community responsibility. So I think that the future of sustainability in Africa depends on nurturing leaders who can balance environmental protection with development needs, who understand both global environmental principles and local realities, and who have the ethical foundation to make difficult decisions for the long term good of the communities and the planet. Nigeria and

Africa face numerous sustainability challenges, including climate changing parts, you know, and the ones that have listed.

Addressing these challenges requires integrated approaches that combine all the areas, environmental education, economic, social equity, and everything. But with ethics, we have to foster ethical leadership. It is very, very crucial. And by equipping our future leaders with these strong ethical values and a commitment to sustainability, we can create a more just and sustainable future for all. And we will create a more just and sustainable future for all. Thank you, Mary. Well, thank you so much, Akpezi.

I fully agree with you and thank you for emphasizing the importance of fostering ethical leadership through education in all contexts. While we came to an end of our conversation today, I really want to express my deep appreciation to Akpezi for joining us in our conversation today for our Earth Charter podcast. Thank you so much, Akpezi. Oh, thank you so much, Mirian. Thank you for your commitment to a sustainable world. Thank you.

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