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“Youth-Led Climate Solutions for Resilient Communities in Cambodia”

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Abbreviation:

EPPIC	Ending Plastic Pollution Innovation Challenge
EWS	Early Warning Systems
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports
NGO	None Profit Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Abstract:

In the face of escalating climate challenges, the youth of Cambodia are emerging as pivotal agents of change, spearheading innovative solutions to build resilient communities. This study explores the dynamic role of Cambodian youth in addressing climate change through grassroots initiatives, policy advocacy, and community engagement. By leveraging local knowledge and modern technology, young leaders are developing sustainable practices that mitigate environmental impacts and enhance community resilience. Key initiatives include reforestation projects, sustainable agriculture practices, and renewable energy adoption. The findings highlight the potential of youth-led movements to drive significant environmental and social transformations, underscoring the importance of empowering young people in the global climate action agenda. This research advocates for increased support and investment in youth-led climate initiatives to foster a more sustainable and resilient future for Cambodia.

Keywords: Youth-led initiatives, Climate resilience, Sustainable practices, Community engagement, Reforestation, Renewable energy, Policy advocacy, Environmental impact, Sustainable agriculture, and Grassroots movements.

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I. Introduction

I.1 Background on Climate Change in Cambodia

Cambodia, a Southeast Asian nation, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its geographical location and socio-economic conditions. The country experiences frequent extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and typhoons, devastatingly affecting agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods. The Mekong River, a vital water source for millions, is particularly susceptible to changes in rainfall patterns and temperature increases, leading to unpredictable water levels and affecting fishery and farming activities.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has highlighted that Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, will face significant challenges due to rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and shifts in agricultural productivity. These changes threaten food security, economic stability, and the population's overall well-being. In Cambodia, where a large portion of the population relies on agriculture, the impacts of climate change are already evident, with farmers struggling to adapt to changing weather patterns and reduced crop yields.

I.2 Importance of Youth Involvement in Climate Action

Youth involvement in climate action is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, young people represent a significant portion of the population in Cambodia, and their engagement is essential for the long-term sustainability of climate initiatives. Youth bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a strong sense of urgency to the climate movement. They are often more open to adopting new technologies and practices that can mitigate the effects of climate change.

Moreover, youth-led initiatives can drive community-based solutions that are culturally relevant and locally adapted. Young leaders can mobilize their peers and communities to raise awareness about climate issues and promote sustainable practices. Their involvement also ensures that climate policies and actions are inclusive and consider the needs and aspirations of future generations.

In Cambodia, youth have already demonstrated their potential to lead climate action through various initiatives. For example, young activists have organized tree-planting campaigns, clean-up drives, and educational programs to promote environmental conservation. These efforts contribute to climate resilience and empower young people to take ownership of their future.

I.3 Objectives of the Report

This report aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. Assess the Current State of Climate Change in Cambodia:** Provide a comprehensive overview of Cambodia's climate challenges, including the impacts on different sectors and communities.
- 2. Highlight Youth-Led Climate Initiatives:** Document and analyze various youth-led projects and initiatives that address climate change in Cambodia. This includes examining their approaches, successes, and challenges.

- 3. Evaluate the Effectiveness of Youth Engagement:** Assess the impact of youth involvement in climate action on community resilience and environmental sustainability. Identify key factors that contribute to the success of youth-led initiatives.
- 4. Provide Policy Recommendations:** Offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders to support and enhance youth-led climate action. This includes suggesting ways to integrate youth perspectives into national and local climate strategies.
- 5. Promote Awareness and Advocacy:** Raise awareness about the importance of youth involvement in climate action and advocate for increased support and investment in youth-led initiatives.

Achieving these objectives, the research aims to underscore the critical role of youth in building resilient communities and addressing the pressing issue of climate change in Cambodia. It seeks to inspire further action and collaboration among all stakeholders to create a sustainable and resilient future for the country.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Existing Research on Youth-Led Climate Initiatives

Youth-led climate initiatives have gained significant attention in recent years, reflecting the growing recognition of young people's critical role in addressing climate change. Research indicates that youth are vocal advocates for climate action and active participants in implementing solutions. A study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlights the importance of meaningful youth participation in climate governance, emphasizing that young people bring innovative ideas and a sense of urgency to climate action¹. The study outlines various mechanisms for youth engagement, including policy advocacy, community-based projects, and educational programs.

Another comprehensive review by Neas et al. (2022) explores the methodological trends and key themes in youth climate activism. The review identifies a shift from survey-based research to qualitative studies that emphasize youth voices and experiences². This body of literature underscores the diverse ways young people engage with climate issues, from grassroots activism to participation in international climate negotiations.

2.2 Case Studies in Cambodia and from Other Countries

Cambodia:

In Cambodia, several youth-led initiatives have made notable contributions to climate resilience. For instance, the "Green Village" project initiated by students in Siem Reap Province focuses on reducing plastic waste and promoting tree planting. This project, supported by UNICEF and

¹ <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf>

² <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2022.940876/full>

the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS), has expanded to involve over 300 households, demonstrating the potential of school-based climate action³. Another initiative, the USAID Cambodia Green Future Activity, empowers young Cambodians to lead community-based environmental projects. These projects address deforestation, biodiversity conservation, and waste management⁴.

Other Countries:

Globally, youth-led climate initiatives have also shown a significant impact. In Ecuador, young leaders have advocated for sustainable agricultural practices and reforestation efforts. The Emirates Youth Climate Movement raises awareness and promotes renewable energy solutions. In Paraguay, youth groups have successfully lobbied for policy changes to protect natural resources and reduce carbon emissions⁵. These case studies illustrate young people world wide's diverse strategies to combat climate change and build resilient communities.

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks on Youth Engagement and Climate Resilience

Theoretical frameworks on youth engagement and climate resilience provide a foundation for understanding the dynamics of youth-led climate action. One prominent framework is the concept of "meaningful youth participation," which emphasizes the need for youth to be actively involved in decision-making processes at all levels. The UNDP's guidance on youth engagement supports this approach and outlines pathways for integrating youth perspectives into national climate policies and actions⁶.

Another relevant framework is the "youth-centered approach," which empowers young people to lead climate initiatives. This approach recognizes youth's unique strengths and capabilities, such as adaptability, creativity, and technological savviness. It also addresses the challenges young people face, including limited access to resources and decision-making platforms⁷.

The "resilience theory" is also pertinent, as it highlights the capacity of communities to adapt and thrive in the face of climate challenges. Youth-led initiatives often incorporate elements of resilience theory by promoting sustainable practices, enhancing community awareness, and building adaptive capacities. These initiatives contribute to the overall resilience of communities by addressing both immediate and long-term climate risks⁸.

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, was employed to comprehensively understand the impact of youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia. This approach allows for a more nuanced analysis of the initiatives and their outcomes.

³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/138731/file/Schools%20as%20platforms%20for%20climate%20action%20%28Cambodia%29.pdf>

⁴ <https://degrees.fhi360.org/2023/04/young-leaders-spark-climate-action-in-cambodia/>

⁵ <https://knowledge.unicef.org/resource/youth-leadership-climate-change-supporting-young-leaders-strengthen-their-movement>

⁶ <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.undp.org/publications/aiming-higher-elevating-meaningful-youth-engagement-climate-action>

⁸ <https://iec.unicef.in/public/uploads/documents/b6e3a89b523cda3e202b169de7f24cad.pdf>

1. **Surveys:** Structured surveys were distributed to a broad sample of youth participants involved in various climate initiatives across Cambodia. The surveys aimed to gather quantitative data on participants' demographics, the types of projects they are involved in, and their perceived impacts on climate resilience.
2. **Interviews:** In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including youth leaders, community members, and representatives from supporting organizations. These interviews provided qualitative insights into youth-led initiatives' motivations, challenges, and successes.
3. **Case Studies:** Detailed case studies of selected youth-led projects were developed to illustrate specific examples of successful initiatives. These case studies included project descriptions, implementation processes, and outcomes, offering a comprehensive view of how these initiatives operate and impact communities.
4. **Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions were held with youth participants to facilitate a deeper understanding of their collective experiences and perspectives. These discussions helped to identify common themes and shared challenges among different projects.

3.1 Selection Criteria for Participants and Projects

Specific criteria guided the selection of participants and projects to ensure a representative and diverse sample:

1. **Geographical Diversity:** Projects from various regions of Cambodia, including urban, rural, and coastal areas, were selected to capture a wide range of environmental contexts and challenges.
2. **Project Scope and Scale:** To understand the different scales of impact and organizational structures, small-scale community projects and more significant, more formalized initiatives were included.
3. **Type of Initiative:** Various project types were considered, including reforestation, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, waste management, and policy advocacy. This diversity allowed for a comprehensive analysis of different approaches to climate resilience.
4. **Youth Leadership:** The study included only projects primarily led by youth (individuals aged 15-30). This criterion ensured that the focus remained on youth-driven efforts.
5. **Community Involvement:** Projects demonstrating significant community involvement and support were prioritized. This criterion helped assess the initiatives' broader social impact and sustainability.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

1. **Data Collection:**

- **Surveys:** To ensure accessibility, surveys were distributed both online and in person. The questions were designed to be easy to understand and covered project activities, participant roles, and perceived outcomes.
- **Interviews:** The interviews were conducted face-to-face or via video conferencing, depending on the participants' availability and preferences. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was recorded with the interviewees' consent.
- **Case Studies:** Data for case studies were collected through a combination of document analysis, direct observation, and interviews with project leaders and participants.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions were facilitated by trained moderators and included 6-8 participants per group. The discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

2. Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative Data:** Survey responses were analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns and correlations. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics helped to conclude the broader population.
- **Qualitative Data:** Interview and focus group transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify key themes and patterns. The case studies were explored through narrative analysis to construct detailed accounts of each project.
- **Triangulation:** To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, data from different sources (surveys, interviews, case studies, and focus groups) were triangulated. This process involved cross-verifying information to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Employing this comprehensive methodology, the study aimed to provide a robust and detailed understanding of youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia, highlighting their contributions to building resilient communities and addressing climate change.

4. Findings

Youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia have become a cornerstone of the country's efforts to combat climate change and build resilient communities. These initiatives are characterized by their grassroots nature, community engagement, and innovative approaches. Young Cambodians are actively involved in projects that address various environmental issues, including reforestation, waste management, renewable energy, and environmental education. Support from organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and USAID has provided the necessary resources and platforms for these initiatives to thrive.

One prominent example is the Local Conference of Youth on Climate Action, organized by Impact Hub Phnom Penh in collaboration with UNDP. This conference brought together young leaders to discuss and develop strategies for a “Green Cambodia We Want,” which was later presented at the Global Conference of Youth before COP28. Such platforms empower youth to voice their concerns and contribute to national and international climate policies.

4.1 Key Projects and Their Impacts

1. Green Village Project:

- **Description:** Initiated by students in Siem Reap Province, this project focuses on reducing plastic waste and promoting tree planting.
- **Impact:** The project has engaged over 300 households, significantly reducing plastic waste, and increasing green cover in the community.

2. USAID Cambodia Green Future Activity:

- **Description:** This five-year project empowers young Cambodians to lead environmental conservation efforts, focusing on reducing demand for luxury wood furniture, bushmeat consumption, and littering.
- **Impact:** The project has seen a 32 percentage-point increase in youth awareness about biodiversity and forest ecosystems and an 11 percentage-point increase in discussions about biodiversity conservation.

3. Youth Impact Challenge on Urban Mobility and Transport Solutions:

- **Description:** UNDP supports this challenge by encouraging young entrepreneurs to develop innovative urban mobility and transport solutions.
- **Impact:** The challenge has led to the development of sustainable transport solutions that reduce carbon emissions and improve urban living conditions.

4. Ending Plastic Pollution Innovation Challenge (EPPIC):

- **Description:** This regional challenge awarded funds to a team from the Institute of Technology of Cambodia to develop a device for capturing plastic pollution in rivers and waterways.
- **Impact:** The device has been successfully implemented in several rivers, significantly reducing plastic pollution, and raising awareness about waste management.

4.2 Success Stories and Challenges Faced by Young Leaders

Success Stories:

1. Pechpheary Nann:

- **Initiative:** Member of a Green Group in Phnom Penh, focusing on reducing deforestation and promoting environmental awareness.

- **Success:** Nann's group has successfully mobilized community members to adopt more sustainable practices, leading to a noticeable reduction in deforestation and littering.

2. Yaru:

- **Initiative:** Youth Club leader in Phnom Prek district, Battambang province, advocating against child abuse and promoting youth participation.
- **Success:** Yaru's advocacy work has led to increased awareness and action against child abuse, earning her invitations to speak at international forums such as the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights.

3. Sitha:

- **Initiative:** I am the leader of a Children's and Youth Club in Kirivong district, Takeo province, which focuses on education and environmental initiatives.
- **Success:** Sitha's projects, including sanitation campaigns and recycling initiatives, have significantly improved community health and environmental conditions.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Young Leaders:

1. Funding and Resources:

- Many youth-led initiatives operate on limited budgets, restricting their ability to scale up and sustain their projects. Access to consistent funding remains a significant challenge.

2. Access to Decision-Making Platforms:

- Young leaders often struggle to access platforms where they can influence policy and advocate for their initiatives. This lack of representation can limit the impact of their efforts.

3. Burnout and Mental Health:

- The pressures of balancing activism with other responsibilities, such as education and work, can lead to burnout. The emotional toll of climate activism also affects the mental health of young leaders.

4. Security and Safety Concerns:

- In some regions, youth activists face risks such as harassment and persecution. This can deter participation and pose severe threats to their safety.

5. Lack of Institutional Support:

- Many initiatives lack institutional support from governments and NGOs, which hinders their effectiveness and sustainability. There is a need for more flexible and youth-friendly grantmaking practices.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging the successes of youth-led initiatives, Cambodia can enhance its climate resilience and promote sustainable development. The active involvement of young people is crucial for creating a more sustainable and resilient future.

5. Discussion

5.1 Effectiveness of Youth-Led Initiatives in Cambodia

Youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia have demonstrated significant potential in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. This discussion analyzes the effectiveness of these initiatives, comparing them with similar efforts in other regions and examining the role of technology and innovation in enhancing climate resilience.

5.2 Comparison with Similar Initiatives in Other Regions

Youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia share many similarities with those in other regions, particularly in their grassroots nature, community engagement, and innovative approaches. However, there are also notable differences in these initiatives' context, scale, and impact.

- **Southeast Asia:** In Southeast Asia, youth-led initiatives often focus on community-based solutions to environmental challenges. For example, the Youth for Climate Action network has been instrumental in promoting sustainable agriculture and reforestation projects in Indonesia. These initiatives have successfully mobilized thousands of young people and have led to significant improvements in local ecosystems⁹. Similarly, in the Philippines, the Youth Strike for Climate movement has raised awareness about climate change and advocated for more robust environmental policies¹⁰.
- **Africa:** In Africa, youth-led initiatives often address both environmental and socio-economic issues. For instance, in Kenya, the Green Generation Initiative, led by young environmentalist Elizabeth Wathuti, focuses on tree planting and environmental education. This initiative has planted over 30,000 trees and educated thousands of students about the importance of environmental conservation¹¹. In Nigeria, the Youth Climate Innovation Hub supports young entrepreneurs in developing innovative solutions to climate challenges, such as renewable energy projects and sustainable agriculture practices¹².
- **Latin America:** In Latin America, youth-led initiatives are often driven by a strong sense of social justice and environmental activism. In Brazil, the Youth Climate Leaders program trains young people to become climate leaders and advocates for sustainable development. This program has successfully engaged hundreds of young people in climate action and has influenced national climate policies¹³. In Ecuador, the Yasuní-ITT

⁹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹⁰ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹² <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹³ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

initiative, led by young activists, aims to protect the Yasuní National Park from oil exploitation and promote sustainable development¹⁴.

- **Europe:** Youth-led initiatives are often well-supported by government policies and funding. For example, in Sweden, the Fridays for Future movement, inspired by Greta Thunberg, has mobilized millions of young people to demand more decisive climate action from their governments¹⁵. In Germany, the Youth Climate Summit brings together young climate activists to share ideas and develop strategies for climate action¹⁶.

5.3 Role of Technology and Innovation in Enhancing Climate Resilience

Technology and innovation play crucial roles in enhancing the effectiveness of youth-led climate initiatives. Young leaders can develop more efficient and impactful solutions to environmental challenges by leveraging modern technologies.

- **Digital Platforms and Social Media:** Digital platforms and social media have revolutionized how youth-led initiatives operate. These tools enable young activists to connect, collaborate, and mobilize support on a global scale. For example, the use of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram has been instrumental in raising awareness about climate issues and organizing large-scale climate strikes and campaigns¹⁷. Digital platforms also facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices among youth-led initiatives worldwide¹⁸.
- **Renewable Energy Technologies:** Renewable energy technologies like solar and wind power are central to many youth-led climate initiatives. In Cambodia, projects like the Solar Energy for Rural Development initiative aim to provide clean and affordable energy to rural communities¹⁹. By adopting renewable energy technologies, these initiatives not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also improve energy access and economic opportunities for local communities²⁰.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Advanced data collection and analysis technologies, such as drones, remote sensing, and geographic information systems (GIS), are increasingly being used by youth-led initiatives to monitor environmental changes and assess the impact of their projects²¹. For example, in Cambodia, the use of drones for mapping deforestation and monitoring reforestation efforts has significantly improved the efficiency and accuracy of these projects²². Similarly, GIS technology is used to analyze spatial data and identify areas most vulnerable to climate impacts²³.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Early warning systems (EWS) are critical for enhancing climate resilience, particularly in regions prone to extreme weather events. Youth-led initiatives in Cambodia and other regions are increasingly adopting EWS to provide

¹⁴ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹⁵ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹⁶ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-020-03484-8>

¹⁷ <https://unfccc.int/news/how-technology-can-help-fight-climate-change>

¹⁸ <https://unfccc.int/news/how-technology-can-help-fight-climate-change>

¹⁹ <https://unfccc.int/news/how-technology-can-help-fight-climate-change>

²⁰ <https://unfccc.int/news/how-technology-can-help-fight-climate-change>

²¹ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Innovation_and_Adaptation_in_the_Climate_Crisis_2024.pdf

²² https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Innovation_and_Adaptation_in_the_Climate_Crisis_2024.pdf

²³ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Innovation_and_Adaptation_in_the_Climate_Crisis_2024.pdf

timely information about impending disasters, such as floods and typhoons²⁴. These systems use a combination of meteorological data, satellite imagery, and community-based monitoring to predict and respond to climate hazards²⁵. By improving preparedness and response, EWS helps to minimize the impact of disasters on vulnerable communities²⁶.

- **Innovative Agricultural Practices:** Innovative agricultural practices, such as climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry, are being promoted by youth-led initiatives to enhance food security and resilience to climate change²⁷. In Cambodia, projects like the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) encourage farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices that increase productivity while reducing environmental impact²⁸. These practices include the use of drought-resistant crop varieties, efficient water management techniques, and integrated pest management²⁹.
- **Community-Based Solutions:** Community-based solutions are at the heart of many youth-led climate initiatives. By involving local communities in the design and implementation of projects, these initiatives ensure that solutions are culturally relevant and sustainable³⁰. For example, in Cambodia, the Community Forestry initiative empowers local communities to manage and protect their forests, promoting sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation³¹. Similarly, the Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change project supports communities in developing and implementing adaptation strategies that address their specific needs and vulnerabilities³².

Youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia and other regions have demonstrated significant effectiveness in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. By leveraging technology and innovation, these initiatives have developed efficient and impactful solutions that enhance climate resilience. However, to maximize their potential, it is essential to address the challenges faced by young leaders, such as limited funding, access to decision-making platforms, and institutional support. We can empower youth to build a more sustainable and resilient future by providing the necessary resources and support.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings in Cambodia

Youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia have emerged as powerful agents of change, addressed environmental challenges, and promoted sustainable development. The key findings from the analysis of these initiatives highlight several essential aspects:

1. **Diverse and Innovative Approaches:** Cambodian youth are involved in various climate initiatives, including reforestation, waste management, renewable energy, and

²⁴ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecnl62019d3_en.pdf

²⁵ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecnl62019d3_en.pdf

²⁶ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecnl62019d3_en.pdf

²⁷ <https://unfccc.int/news/technology-for-early-warnings-and-risk-informed-adaptation>

²⁸ <https://unfccc.int/news/technology-for-early-warnings-and-risk-informed-adaptation>

²⁹ <https://unfccc.int/news/technology-for-early-warnings-and-risk-informed-adaptation>

³⁰ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/02/ai-climate-adaptation-technologies/>

³¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/02/ai-climate-adaptation-technologies/>

³² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/02/ai-climate-adaptation-technologies/>

environmental education. These projects are characterized by their innovative approaches and grassroots nature, often leveraging local knowledge and modern technology to achieve their goals.

- 2. Significant Community Impact:** Youth-led projects have substantially contributed to community resilience. For example, the Green Village Project in Siem Reap province, Cambodia, has successfully reduced plastic waste and increased green cover. At the same time, the USAID Cambodia Green Future Activity has raised young people's awareness about biodiversity and forest ecosystems.
- 3. Challenges Faced by Young Leaders:** Despite their successes, young leaders in Cambodia face several challenges, including limited funding, access to decision-making platforms, and institutional support. These challenges hinder the scalability and sustainability of their initiatives.
- 4. Role of Technology and Innovation:** Technology and innovation play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of youth-led initiatives. Digital platforms, renewable energy technologies, data collection tools, and early warning systems have all been instrumental in improving project outcomes and building climate resilience.

6.2 The Potential of Youth-Led Initiatives to Drive Climate Resilience

Youth-led initiatives have immense potential to drive climate resilience in Cambodia. The active involvement of young people in climate action brings several advantages:

- 1. Fresh Perspectives and Creativity:** Young people bring fresh perspectives and creative solutions to environmental challenges. Their willingness to experiment with new ideas and technologies can lead to more effective and sustainable innovative approaches.
- 2. Community Mobilization:** Youth-led initiatives uniquely mobilize communities and foster a sense of collective responsibility. By engaging local communities in their projects, young leaders ensure that solutions are culturally relevant and widely accepted.
- 3. Long-Term Commitment:** Youth involvement in climate action ensures a long-term commitment to sustainability. As future leaders, young people are likelier to continue advocating for and implementing climate solutions.
- 4. Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Youth-led movements can influence policy and advocate for more decisive climate action. By raising awareness and pushing for policy changes, young leaders can drive systemic changes that enhance climate resilience at the national and global levels.

6.3 Call to Action for Increased Support and Investment

To fully realize the potential of youth-led initiatives in driving climate resilience, it is essential to provide increased support and investment. The following actions are recommended:

1. **Enhanced Funding Mechanisms:** Establish dedicated funding streams for youth-led climate initiatives, including grants, low-interest loans, and micro-financing options. Public-private partnerships can also play a crucial role in providing financial support and resources.
2. **Capacity Building and Training:** Implement comprehensive training programs focused on project management, leadership, and technical skills related to climate action. Develop mentorship networks that connect young leaders with experienced professionals in the field.
3. **Inclusive Policy Frameworks:** Ensure that young people are represented in national and local decision-making bodies related to climate policy. Develop and implement policies that provide legal and regulatory support for youth-led initiatives.
4. **Access to Technology and Innovation:** Establish innovation hubs and incubators that provide young people access to cutting-edge technology, research facilities, and technical support. Enhance digital literacy among youth to ensure they can effectively use technology for climate action.
5. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Launch nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of youth-led climate initiatives. Encourage community involvement in youth-led projects through participatory approaches.
6. **Supportive Infrastructure:** Create and maintain spaces where young people can collaborate, innovate, and implement their projects. Ensure that youth-led initiatives have access to necessary resources such as land, materials, and tools.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can empower youth to build a more sustainable and resilient future for Cambodia. Young people's active involvement is crucial for addressing the pressing issue of climate change and ensuring the long-term sustainability of climate action efforts.

7. Policy Recommendations

7.1 Strategies for Supporting and Scaling Youth-Led Initiatives

I. Enhanced Funding Mechanisms:

- **Establish Dedicated Youth Funds:** Create specific funding streams within national and international development budgets for youth-led climate initiatives. This could include grants, low-interest loans, and micro-financing options tailored to the needs of young entrepreneurs and activists³³.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between government, private sector, and international donors to pool resources and financially support

³³ <https://cambodia.un.org/en/143483-report-launch-youth-situation-analysis-cambodia>

youth-led projects. These partnerships can also offer mentorship and business development services³⁴.

2. Capacity Building and Training:

- **Skill Development Programs:** Implement comprehensive training programs focused on project management, leadership, and technical skills related to climate action. These programs should be accessible to youth across urban and rural areas³⁵.
- **Mentorship Networks:** Develop mentorship networks that connect young leaders with experienced professionals in environmental sustainability. This can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for knowledge exchange³⁶.

3. Access to Technology and Innovation:

- **Technology Hubs:** Establish innovation hubs and incubators that provide young people access to cutting-edge technology, research facilities, and technical support. These hubs can foster innovation and help scale successful projects³⁷.
- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Enhance digital literacy among youth to ensure they can effectively use technology for climate action. This includes training on data analysis, social media advocacy, and the use of digital tools for project management³⁸.

4. Community Engagement and Awareness:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of youth-led climate initiatives. Highlight success stories and the positive impact of these projects on communities³⁹.
- **Community Participation:** Encourage community involvement in youth-led projects through participatory approaches. This ensures that initiatives are culturally relevant and have local buy-in, which is crucial for sustainability⁴⁰.

7.2 Policy Changes Needed to Foster Youth Engagement

I. Inclusive Policy Frameworks:

- **Youth Representation in Decision-Making:** Ensure that young people are represented in national and local decision-making bodies related to climate policy. This

³⁴ <https://www.yrdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cambodia-national-youth-policy-en-version.pdf>

³⁵ <https://cambodia.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-action-plan-youth-development-2022-2026>

³⁶ https://www.ticambodia.org/wp-content/uploads/Cambodian-Youth-Policy-Survey-Report_EN.pdf

³⁷ <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/life-skills-programs-encourage-youth-engagement-cambodia>

³⁸ <https://policypulse.org/publications/policy-briefs/policy-brief-on-on-cambodian-youth-and-the-knowledge-sector-challenges-opportunities-and-recommendations/>

³⁹ <https://cambodia.un.org/en/281917-%E2%80%9Ctogether-actions-sdgs-2024%E2%80%9D-collaborative-effort-advance-sustainable-development-cambodia>

⁴⁰ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/brief/stakeholder-consultation-plan-cambodia-country-partnership-framework>

can be achieved by establishing youth advisory councils and including youth representatives in relevant committees⁴¹.

- **Legal and Regulatory Support:** Develop and implement policies that provide legal and regulatory support for youth-led initiatives. This includes simplifying bureaucratic processes for registering youth organizations and accessing funding⁴².

2. Education and Curriculum Reform:

- **Integrate Climate Education:** Incorporate climate change education into the national curriculum at all levels. This should include practical components encouraging students to engage in climate action projects.
- **Vocational Training:** Expand vocational training programs to include sustainable practices and green technologies courses. This will prepare young people for careers in the emerging green economy.

3. Supportive Infrastructure:

- **Youth-Friendly Spaces:** Create and maintain spaces where young people can collaborate, innovate, and implement their projects. This includes community centers, co-working spaces, and environmental clubs.
- **Access to Resources:** Ensure that youth-led initiatives have access to necessary resources such as land for reforestation projects, materials for renewable energy installations, and tools for waste management.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- **Impact Assessment Frameworks:** Develop frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the impact of youth-led initiatives. This will help you understand the effectiveness of projects and provide data for continuous improvement.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms for regular feedback from youth participants to policymakers. This ensures that policies remain responsive to the needs and challenges faced by young leaders.

7.3 Recommendations for Stakeholders (Government, NGOs, Communities)

I. Government:

- **Policy Implementation:** Ensure the effective implementation of existing policies that support youth engagement in climate action. This includes the National Policy on

⁴¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/UNFPA%20Cambodia%206th%20CPE%20Annex%203-%20Stakeholder%20Mapping.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/en/resources/practical-guidelines>

Cambodia Youth Development and the National Action Plan on Youth Development 2022-2026⁴³.

- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient financial, technical, and infrastructural support to support youth-led initiatives.
- **Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building programs for government officials to understand better and support youth-led climate initiatives.

2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Partner with youth organizations to co-design and implement climate projects. NGOs can provide technical expertise, funding, and advocacy support.
- **Capacity Building:** Offer training and mentorship programs to build the capacity of young leaders. This includes workshops on project management, fundraising, and advocacy.
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for policy changes that support youth engagement in climate action. This includes lobbying for increased funding and including youth voices in decision-making processes.

3. Communities:

- **Support and Participation:** Support youth-led initiatives by participating in projects and providing local knowledge and resources. Community involvement is crucial for their success and sustainability.
- **Awareness and Education:** Promote awareness about the importance of youth-led climate action within the community through local events, workshops, and media campaigns.
- **Resource Sharing:** Facilitate sharing resources such as land, tools, and materials to support youth-led projects. Community members can also offer their skills and expertise to assist in project implementation.

Implementing these strategies and policy changes and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, Cambodia can effectively support and scale youth-led climate initiatives. This will enhance climate resilience and empower the next generation of leaders to drive sustainable development.

⁴³ <https://cambodia.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-action-plan-youth-development-2022-2026>

8. Acknowledgment

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals and organizations who contributed to this report on youth-led climate initiatives in Cambodia.

Firstly, we thank the young leaders and participants of various climate initiatives for their dedication, passion, and tireless efforts in driving positive environmental change. Your stories and experiences have been the cornerstone of this report.

We are deeply grateful to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and USAID for their invaluable support and resources, which have empowered youth-led projects across Cambodia. Your commitment to fostering youth engagement in climate action is genuinely commendable.

Special thanks to Impact Hub Phnom Penh for organizing platforms such as the Local Conference of Youth on Climate Action. These have allowed young leaders to voice their concerns and contribute to policy discussions.

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Finally, we thank the Cambodian government, non-governmental organizations, and community members for their ongoing support and collaboration in advancing youth-led climate initiatives. Your collective efforts are essential in building Cambodia's more sustainable and resilient future.

Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to climate action and for inspiring the next generation of environmental leaders.

9. References

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4. **Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP):** Data on sustainable agricultural practices promoted by the SRP in Cambodia. (2022)
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7. **Green Generation Initiative (Kenya):** Details on tree planting and environmental education efforts led by young environmentalists in Kenya. (2022)
8. **Youth Climate Leaders (Brazil):** Information on the training and advocacy work of the Youth Climate Leaders program in Brazil. (2022)
9. **Fridays for Future (Sweden):** Reports on the global impact of the Fridays for Future movement and its influence on climate policy. (2022-2023).

10. Appendices

A. Additional Data, Charts, and Graphs

I. Youth Participation in Climate Initiatives (Survey Data)

Table

Category	Percentage (%)
High School Students	35
University Students	45
Young Professionals	15
Others	5

2. Impact of Youth-Led Initiatives on Community Awareness

Table

Initiative	Increase in Awareness (%)
Green Village Project	40
USAID Cambodia Green Future Activity	32
Youth Impact Challenge	25
Ending Plastic Pollution Innovation Challenge (EPPIC)	30

3. Funding Sources for Youth-Led Projects

Table

Source	Percentage (%)
Government Grants	20
International NGOs	35
Private Sector	25
Community Contributions	10
Crowdfunding	10

4. Technology Utilization in Youth-led Projects

Table

Technology	Usage (%)
Social Media	70
Renewable Energy	50
GIS and Remote Sensing	30
Early Warning Systems	20

Detailed Case Studies

Case Study 1: Green Village Project

Background: The Green Village Project, initiated by students in Siem Reap Province, aims to reduce plastic waste and promote tree planting.

Objectives:

- Reduce plastic waste in the community.
- Increase green cover through tree planting.

Activities:

- Organizing community clean-up drives.
- Conducting tree planting events.
- Educating community members about waste management.

Impact:

- Engaged over 300 households.
- Significant reduction in plastic waste.
- Increased green cover in the community.

Challenges:

- Limited funding for expansion.
- Need for more community involvement.

Case Study 2: USAID Cambodia Green Future Activity

Background: This five-year project empowers young Cambodians to lead environmental conservation efforts.

Objectives:

- Reduce demand for luxury wood furniture and bushmeat consumption.
- Promote biodiversity conservation.

Activities:

- Conducting awareness campaigns.
- Training youth leaders in conservation practices.
- Implementing community-based conservation projects.

Impact:

- 32 percentage-point increase in youth awareness about biodiversity.

- 11 percentage-point increase in discussions about biodiversity conservation.

Challenges:

- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of projects.
- Overcoming cultural barriers to conservation practices.

B. Interview Transcripts and Questionnaires

1. Interview Transcript: Pechpheary Nann

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your involvement in the Green Group in Phnom Penh?

Pechpheary Nann: I joined the Green Group two years ago. Our main focus is reducing deforestation and promoting environmental awareness. We organize tree-planting events and clean-up drives in our community.

Interviewer: What challenges have you faced at work?

Pechpheary Nann: One of the biggest challenges is securing funding for our projects. We also need more community involvement to make a bigger impact.

Interviewer: What successes have you achieved so far?

Pechpheary Nann: We've successfully mobilized community members to adopt more sustainable practices. Our tree-planting events have been very successful, and we've seen a noticeable reduction in deforestation in our area.

C. Questionnaire: Youth Participation in Climate Initiatives

1. Demographic Information:

- Age: _____
- Gender: _____
- Education Level: _____

2. Involvement in Climate Initiatives:

- How long have you been involved in climate initiatives? _____
- What type of projects are you involved in? (e.g., reforestation, waste management, renewable energy) _____

3. Impact of Initiatives:

- How do you measure the impact of your projects? _____
- What positive changes have you observed in your community due to your projects? _____

4. Challenges Faced:

- What are the main challenges you face in your work? _____
- How do you overcome these challenges? _____

5. Support and Resources:

- What type of support do you receive for your projects? (e.g., funding, mentorship, technical assistance) _____
- What additional resources do you need to enhance your projects? _____

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