

10 ways YALI Network members can help address climate change



This is a guest blog post by Kate Berrisford, Founder & Managing Director, Green Africa Directory – Africa’s sustainability network. Visit www.greenafricadirectory.org to learn more.

Climate change affects us all and will continue to do so unless we collectively take actions now to reduce emissions. We are at a pivotal moment in time, where our actions now will have long-lasting impacts. We may also be the last generation that can stop climate change — this provides us with a huge opportunity to transition and transform our world to be more sustainable, resilient, equitable and livable.

While the business sector and government have important roles to play in accelerating action to prevent climate change, there are also many actions we can take on an individual level. Below is a list of 10 ways we can help address climate change. These relate to the sustainable consumption of resources — that is, finding ways of consuming more efficiently and in a less resource-intensive way.

10 things we can do to address climate change:

Green your transport: Consider using the most sustainable forms of transport available, including nonmotorized transport such as walking or cycling; public transport such as trains and buses; and carpooling, ride sharing or car share schemes.

Use sustainable energy: Using sustainable energy in your home helps prevent carbon emissions and has various co-benefits, like saving money. Renewable, clean and efficient energy sources for the home include solar cookers, solar water heaters, solar lights, biogas and clean cookstoves. Be energy-efficient through your choice of home appliances and use of energy.

Support sustainable agriculture and diets: Sustainable agriculture can help mitigate climate change and build food security. Support sustainably produced food (e.g., organic) and consider growing your own food or joining a community food garden. A major contributor to climate change is the meat industry — cut down on meat or eliminate it from your diet to help prevent climate change.

Raise your voice and awareness: Get to know more about how climate change may affect you (including your health, livelihood and children), expand your knowledge by taking the “[Understanding Climate Change](#)” course, and then start conversations with others about climate change to help raise awareness and inspire action. Join local climate-change groups, attend climate events and talks, and engage your local political leaders to take bold, ambitious action on climate change.

Build green: There are many innovative, affordable and sustainable building techniques available across Africa. These include using sandbags, eco-bricks, hemp and straw bale. Retrofit your home to be more sustainable — [My Green Home](#) in South Africa is a practical example of how to do this on a household level.

Plant trees and protect biodiversity: Trees and forests provide carbon sinks and help mitigate climate change, while protecting biodiversity helps sustain vital ecosystem services (which include regulating climate). Plant trees, join or support tree-planting initiatives and events, donate a tree and support local nature-conservation initiatives.

Save water: Help conserve water in your home through using low-flow shower heads and waterless, low-flush or dual-flush toilets; have shorter showers; ensure your garden is water-wise and indigenous; collect and use rainwater; consider grey water recycling; and repair leaky taps.

Protect oceans and coasts: Oceans help reduce climate change by storing large amounts of carbon dioxide, and coastal ecosystems can help minimize the impacts of climate change. Protect healthy oceans by keeping them clean, taking part in beach cleanups and supporting sustainably sourced seafood.

Collaborate and share: There are many ways people collaborate that create opportunities to meet basic needs, while being resource-efficient and cutting down on GHG emissions. Some examples of the new collaborative or sharing economy include co-working, bike sharing, carpooling, crowdfunding and garden sharing.

Support climate innovation: Innovative technologies that will help us mitigate and adapt to climate change are becoming ever important in helping to accelerate climate action. Give your support to climate entrepreneurs and inventors to develop innovative technologies and ideas.

[To protect the planet, we can all do our part](#)

Students pick up non-biodegradable  plastics from the Saint Monica University Campus, Cameroon. (Photo courtesy Gabila Franklin Neba.)

Did you know small changes in your daily routines can make a huge difference to your health, the health of your neighbors and the future of the planet? Choose from among these simple steps and start today.

Join #YALIGoesGreen this month. Learn how to get involved at yali.state.gov/climate.

When you run errands or travel ...

- Walk or ride a bike.
- Take public transportation.

- Organize errands into one trip.
- When driving, accelerate gradually and drive at lower speeds.
- Drive less, particularly on days with unhealthy air.

When you are at home ...

What we do at home makes a big impact on air quality. Consuming less energy helps reduce air pollution, as does choosing sustainable, recyclable products. Limit use of chemicals that contribute to smog.

Did you know that detergents, cleaning compounds, glues, polishes and even cosmetics, perfume and deodorants contribute to smog? Such items contain volatile chemicals that evaporate readily. When the sun shines, they combine with other pollutants to form ozone, a primary component of smog that is bad for our health.

- Turn the lights off when you leave a room.
- Replace energy-hungry incandescent lights with energy-saving [CFLs](#) or [LEDs](#).
- If alternative energy sources such as solar or wind are available, use them.
- Recycle paper, plastic and organic materials.
- Use nonpolluting stoves. Avoid using kerosene to cook, heat or provide light.
- Choose products made from recycled materials or sustainable sources such as bamboo, hemp and coconut fiber.
- Use durable, reusable shopping bags, not disposable plastic bags.
- Paint with a brush instead of a sprayer.
- Store all solvents in airtight containers.
- Eliminate use of toxic chemicals at home; opt for natural substitutes.
- Plant a tree to help purify the air.

When you are at work ...

- Use natural light during the day.
- Work from home if possible.
- If you work in an office, start a recycling program. Print and photocopy on both sides of paper, and only print when necessary.
- Turn off office equipment (i.e., computers, printers and fax machines) after hours.

When you are in your community ...

- Support efforts to “green” the neighborhood.
- Start an environmental program yourself.
- Let your elected representatives know you support action for cleaner air.

Adapted from the California Air Resources Board’s “Simple Solutions to Help Reduce Air Pollution.”

[The Promise of Wind Power](#)

Join #YALIGoesGreen this month. Learn how to get involved at yali.state.gov/climate

Solar, biofuels and hydropower are among the energy sources the United States has been developing aggressively since President Obama began the transition to a [clean energy economy](#) with his [Climate Action Plan](#).

Wind, an energy technology with a long history, is another green power source with great potential. [A new report from the U.S. Energy Department](#) analyzes how the nation might increase its use of [wind power](#).

Many African nations are also investing in wind power, which can, as the U.S. report says, “address key societal challenges such as climate change, air quality and public health, and water scarcity.”

The Lake Turkana Wind Power Project in the north-east of Kenya aims to produce 20 percent of the country’s electricity generating capacity when it comes online in 2016.

Ayitepa Wind Farm the east coast of Ghana and is also slated to come online in 2016 and promises to generate 10 percent of the country’s generating capacity.

Issued in May, the almost-300-page report says the United States has tripled its use of wind power since 2008. Wind supplies 4.5 percent of the nation’s electricity today, and the nation could set a realistic plan to meet 10 percent of the electricity demand in 2020, 20 percent in 2030, and 35 percent in 2050.

If the nation does reach that 2050 target, the report calculates considerable benefits:

- The nation’s total electric bill would be 3 percent lower.
- Greenhouse gas emissions would drop by 14 percent.
- Using less fossil fuel would reduce pollutants such as sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.
- Pollution-related deaths would be reduced by almost 22,000 between 2013 and 2050.
- The use of water would go down 23 percent as the nation became less dependent on fossil-fuel power plants, which use water as a cooling agent.

Beyond these calculable benefits, Wind Vision predicts adoption of more wind power also would put downward price pressure on fossil fuels in energy markets, saving consumers \$280 billion.

So if wind will give electricity for less money with less pollution, maybe wind power should be in your future too.

Telling Your Story Visually on Social Media

Credit: Climate Action Campaign



When you're crafting a message on social media, creating a narrative is important to its success.

Tara McMahan is the digital creative director at Climate Action Campaign, where she focuses on telling the story of climate change and finding innovative ways to convey the detailed science of climate change.

"Given the nature of platforms like Facebook and Twitter," said McMahan, "images and graphics offer an important opportunity to engage the reader in your story."

We asked McMahan to offer the YALI Network her tips for incorporating compelling visuals into online campaigns.

1. Create a mini-campaign "brand" for a set of visuals.

Using consistent fonts, colors and design elements helps drive the overarching message visually.

2. Pick the best approach for telling your story.

Info graphics are helpful for distilling finds in reports, photos are best for highlighting real-life impacts, and quotes and graphics are good for elevating direct stories.

3. Use your resources!

The Internet is full of free and low-cost resources: templates for infographics, free fonts, color palette generators, Creative Commons photos and more.

4. Think of visuals as a companion to your messaging.

For example, visuals can help tell a story about real-world local impacts of a global problem like climate change. It's important to start with a strong message you're looking to convey. Then visuals help give more context so you can craft a story that will really resonate with the viewer.

5. Be creative!

Trying new things is the best way to determine what works with your audience. Test out using two different types of visuals that convey the same story and see which one engages people the most.

Women's Situation Rooms: Women Protecting Women's Voting Rights

Liberians celebrate the inauguration of 
President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.
Liberia's 2011 election was the first to use a
Women's Situation Room. (©AP Images)

While Nigerians went to the polls in March 2015 for what would prove to be [historic elections](#), 40 young people in Abuja, mostly women, answered phones around the clock, fielding calls about outbreaks of violence and voter suppression.

Meanwhile, 300 female [election monitors](#) observed polls in 10 targeted Nigerian states, reporting irregularities back to Abuja. There, a team of eight eminent women from Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal worked with political parties and religious groups to address threats of violence against women voters and women candidates as they happened.

Welcome to the Women's Situation Room. Nigeria's election was the most recent African election to benefit from a four-year-old idea that's been spreading throughout the continent. Originated during the 2011 presidential and legislative elections in Liberia to promote women's leadership development, the Women's Situation Room model has been replicated in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

Participants in Nigeria's Women's 
Situation Room during the March 2015
elections. (Courtesy U.S. Embassy Nigeria)

Studies show that women and children are the most likely to be affected by election violence, including efforts to prevent women from exercising their right to vote. Women's Situation Rooms employ women and youth to ensure access to the polls.

Among the desks in Nigeria's Women's Situation Room was one staffed with police representatives and another with representatives from Nigeria's Independent Electoral Commission, allowing immediate response to outbreaks of violence and incidents of voter exclusion.

"If a situation happens in the field and we want answers from the police — like violence erupted in a certain state while [women] were taking part in the election — we respond by finding the particular arm of government, INEC or police, to tackle the situation. If they're in the room, it's of course easier and faster," Turrie Akerele Ismael, Nigeria's solicitor-general and one of the situation room's eminent women, reported to U.N. Women.

"Women and youth play an active role in sustaining peace before, during and after the elections,"

said Sylvie Ndongmo of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which coordinated the Women's Situation Room for the Nigerian election. When civic groups work with governmental agencies to reduce threats to voters and candidates, said Ndongmo, "the threat of electoral violence becomes an opportunity for promoting sustainable peace and democracy."

[#YALIVotes: "Give Young People the Feeling They're Cared About"](#)

(Kendra Helmer/USAID)



Ako Essan Emile has seen what happens when elections go bad. He was attending a university in Côte d'Ivoire's city of Abidjan when violence broke out in the wake of the disputed 2010 election.

In the years since then, he's thought a lot about what it takes to bring free and fair elections to his country. "Much has to be done to build trust between young people and politicians," Ako said. "YALI Network members in Côte d'Ivoire have started creating a platform for young people to interact with political leaders."

He contrasted his experience as a Mandela Washington Fellow with his experience with politicians at home. "We came to the United States in August and we had the opportunity to talk to President Obama. We'd never had this opportunity in our country."

Ako sees open communication between candidates and the people they hope to represent as an important basis for better elections and better leadership. "Most leaders don't consider young people when making their strategies. They just use young people as bait to attract other young people."

Ako is the managing director of Radio Arc-en-ciel, a community-based station in the urban area of Abobo. In the months leading up to the October election, Radio Arc-en-ciel hosted roundtable discussions to give a voice to one of the country's largest (1.5 million) and least-represented communities and also to inform Abobo's residents.

"One of the key issues is lack of education about the electoral process," Ako said. "No accurate information is given, and if a politician comes into a community he will talk to the population according to his point of view, but not in a balanced way. People can be misled and it can cause conflict."

Ako Essan Emile (right) in the Radio 
Arc-en-ciel studio in September 2015.

(Kendra Helmer/USAID)

In addition to the roundtable radio shows, Radio Arc-en-ciel hosted events that balanced live music with information. “We invited experts to come in and explain the electoral code to the population. If they know the electoral code, they will be able to monitor whether the election is going the right way or the wrong way. If someone doesn’t have accurate information they can feel that fraud is going on, and then one rumor will come out and spark into violence and escalate into bloodshed.”

With elections upcoming in Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger and Uganda, Ako pointed to things that worked well in Côte d’Ivoire in keeping the elections nonviolent and fair. “During our election, young people were on the ground as observers and were reporting live. Some other civil society organizations copied this example, so there were many young people spread around Côte d’Ivoire reporting, which helped to deter any kind of fraud.”

Ako sees responsibility on both sides for improving elections. Leaders must listen to the voters. “Young people should draft their own manifestos (or platforms), give them to the politicians and say, “These are our priorities.”

And voters have to be responsible in how they use their vote. “Sometimes the population is much more passionate about politics than the issues that relate to them directly. In many capital cities, there’s no access to water and electricity, and the roads are in bad condition. Mobilize to address these specific issues. I think more and more we need to select our leaders based on their manifestos and what they put forward, instead of voting for them because they come from our region or because they are the uncle of my brother or something like that.”

[Can we stop climate change? The Paris summit may be the key.](#)

It may sound like the latest film noir movie, but it has nothing to do with a police whodunnit. In America, people often informally use the word “cop” to refer to a police officer. But in this case, [COP21](#) is shorthand for the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To put it simply, COP21 is an upcoming summit that brings countries together to solve the problems of global warming and climate change.

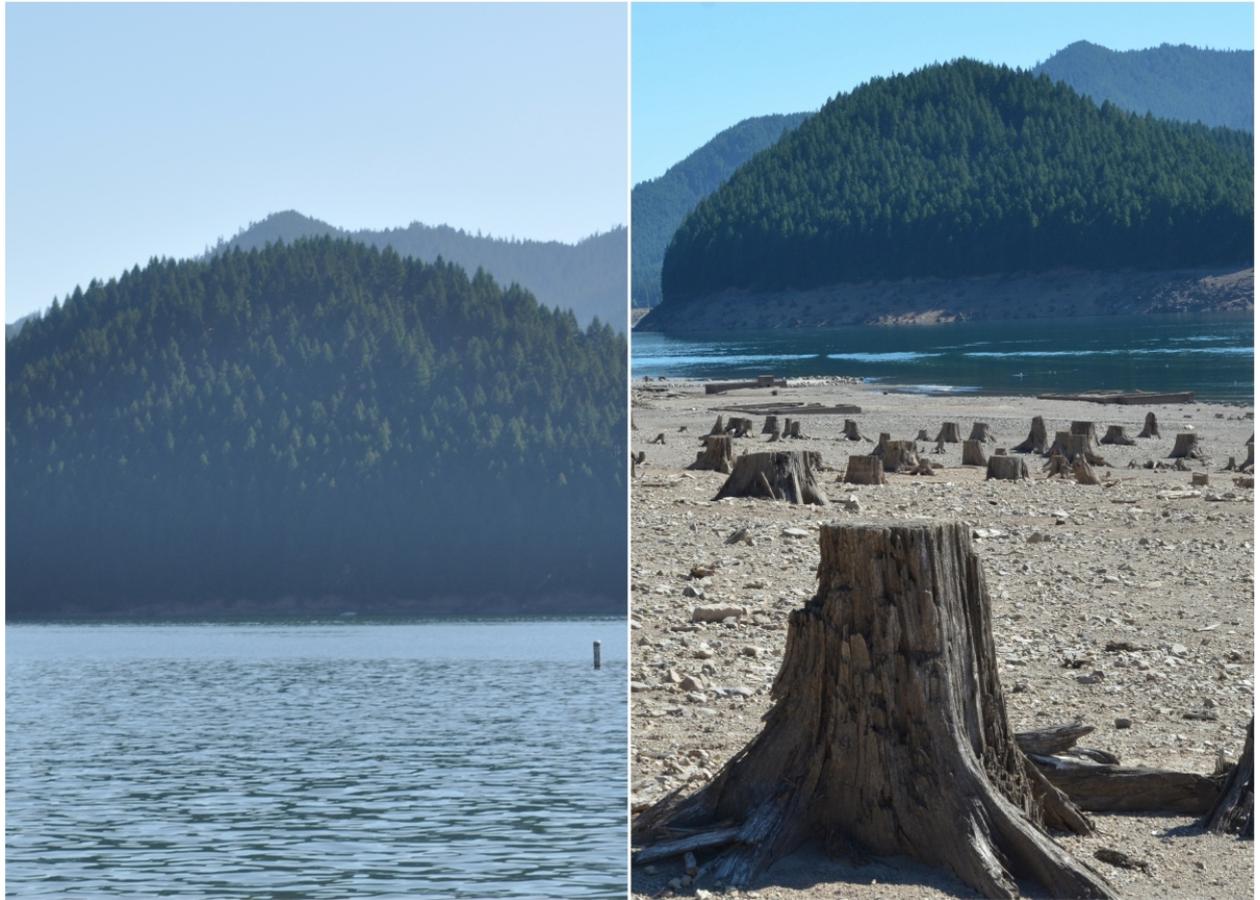
It all began at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where the [UNFCCC](#) was formed to find ways to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere” at low levels to stop further environmental damage. Scientists had found that these emissions from transportation and industry precipitated more rapid climate change — not a good thing.



I love Paris in the winter

COP21 will meet in Paris from November 30 to December 11. It's going to be big. To date, there are 196 parties to the convention, most of whom will attend. There are also nonmember attendees — observer states and nongovernmental organizations. The parties hope to draft a new international agreement, or protocol, on the climate.

To date, at least 150 countries have submitted goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving a low-carbon future through cleaner, more sustainable practices. These goals, called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, will figure in the the discussions among the parties on how to halt the progress of global warming and climate change. Forty-nine African nations have submitted their goals. Ethiopia, for instance, plans to reduce its emissions by 64 percent below projected business-as-usual emissions by 2030.



Climate change is happening faster because of us

[Scientists agree](#) that human activity is largely responsible for the rapid increase in global warming in the past 40 years. There is strong evidence supporting the [seriousness of climate change](#). Drastic changes in weather patterns are occurring: more violent storms, hotter summers and colder winters. If the world continues to warm, sea levels will rise, harming communities located along coastlines. That and drought could create new migration patterns and harm agriculture. Crop yields in some places have diminished in recent years because of [exposure to ozone](#). And warming oceans will affect marine life worldwide in ways that will harm fisheries upon which people depend for food.

Droughts are expected to increase in central and southern Africa, along with unprecedented extremes of heat. Studies predict increased annual precipitation in the Horn of Africa and parts of East Africa that will increase the risk of flooding.



It will not be just a gab fest

COP21 will be about [cleaner air](#), healthier people, stronger economies and keeping island nations from disappearing under the sea. The goal: act now to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. To accomplish that, significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions worldwide will have to be made over the next few decades. ([Carbon dioxide emissions have reached the highest levels this year](#), according to NASA, the U.S. space agency.)



So what can I do if I'm not in Paris?

- Learn as much as you can about the effects of climate change. NASA's [Vital Signs of the Planet](#) website is a great place to start.
 - Improve your understanding of the negotiations, and get to know the [two diplomats](#) (Daniel Reifsnyder of the U.S. and Ahmed Djoghlaif of Algeria) at the center of the agreement.
 - Stay tuned to the U.S. Center at COP21 for live webcasts during the two weeks of the conference.
 - Publish your climate solution on the [Climate Solutions Hub](#).
 - Follow [@FactsOnClimate](#) and [@US_Center](#) on Twitter, and use hashtags [#ActOnClimate](#) and [#AskUSCenter](#) to tweet your views.
 - Contact your government officials and urge them to take action now!
 - Take the YALI Network Online Course "[Understanding Climate Change](#)."
 - Facilitate or participate in a [YALI Learns](#) event on climate change.
-

[#Africa4Her Generates Support for Women and Girls: Olivier Nathacia, South Africa](#)



We asked some of the many YALI Network members who in March made an [#Africa4Her](#) pledge to invest in women and girls in their community how they have fulfilled that pledge. Here is Olivier Nathacia's story.

I have pledged to invest my time, knowledge and the other resources accessible to me to improve and empower the lives of women and girls within my community.

As a young woman residing in South Africa, I noticed that there is a gap regarding support of women's development and growth. Women are still sidelined, especially those residing in less privileged areas.

I also experienced the challenges that most young women and girls come across, especially in the corporate and business arenas. I realized that women are still severely hampered by discrimination, lack of resources and economic opportunities, limited access to decision-making and gender-based violence.

I volunteered because I want to be that ripple of change that will close the gap and become part of a generation that makes a difference — a generation that changes obscure obstacles within society about women and girls through entrepreneurship, public innovation and leadership.

Olivier Nathacia wants to close 

the opportunity gap for women
and girls

I have learned that service is important. More especially when you work with the community, you need to know how to serve people, communicate with them, have time for them, show them that you care. Most of all I learned what it means to be disciplined and be a people's person.

Through volunteering, I learned that leadership is not for the faint-hearted. I have learned what it means to connect and how to build a network that will transform this nation.

Most importantly, I learned that women and girls are strong leaders by nature — they thrive in every situation or circumstance. They vouch for justice, yet they need support in order to achieve whatever they want to accomplish in life. They need a platform to share their knowledge, to network and build each other up.

This experience through #Africa4Her has made me a creative leader and inspired me to continue with the journey I have embarked on.

I can now connect and communicate better. Being amongst women and girls all the time has changed my perception of how women deal and do things from different circumstances of their lives.

Service is important when you work with the community.

On August 28, 2015, we will once again host an event that focuses on young women and girls. The event will be about the importance of exercising and healthy living.

Although it is still hard for me to get all the support I need from government in order to make things happen within my community, I encourage myself to keep going because my passion is assisting young women and girls in every way possible.

More than 1,000 YALI Network members made an [#Africa4Her](#) pledge. They represent 47 countries, and 54 percent of them are men. If you made an [#Africa4Her](#) pledge and would like to share your story, please email us at YALINetwork@state.gov and use the subject line "[#Africa4Her](#)."

[#YALIGoesGreen: Join us!](#)

#YALIGoesGreen is a Network-wide initiative to spur climate change awareness and action. 

Here are a few actions you can take in your community:

- Take and teach [Understanding Climate Change](#).
- Implement green business practices at work, like reducing paper and electricity use.
- Discuss greening daily habits at home, like reducing water or waste.
- Organize a community trash pickup day.
- Host a presentation on climate change in a local school
- Organize a tree planting event and educate participants on the role of forests in addressing climate change.
- Organize an event around ocean protection issues and/or conduct a cleanup event of a local outdoor recreational space, waterway, or beach.
- Talk to local leaders about climate change.
- Host a recycling drive.
- Organize a climate awareness walk.
- Invite experts from local organizations working on environmental issues to speak to your community about climate change.
- Host an environment-themed film screening and discussion.
- Work with a local radio program to host a climate-focused show.

For tips on how to facilitate a #YALIGoesGreen or #YALILearns event visit yali.state.gov/learns.

[Hosting a #YALIGoesGreen event](#)

Want some ideas on how to facilitate and engage and audience during your #YALIGoesGreen event? Download the [event facilitation guide](#) (PDF) with a complete lesson plan to use along with this [PowerPoint presentation](#) (PPTX).

Please remember that all #YALILearns and #YALIGoesGreen events are organized on the basis of educating your community with shared YALI Network resources. **You should never charge a fee for a YALI Network event, and remind others if you see this** occurring.

[Promoting a #YALIGoesGreen event](#)

Facebook Banner:



Profile photo:



Sharable graphics:



[Earth Day 2016 Postcard](#)



More on Climate Change

- [Creating Impact Through #YALILearns in Angola](#)
- [Climate change: Everyone has a role](#)
- [Countering pollution in the air](#)
- [Climate solutions in developing countries](#)
- [YALI Goes Green and Accepts the Earth Day Call to Action](#)
- [April 22, 2016, is a good day for Africa. Here's why:](#)
- [The goal is to plant 7.8 billion trees by 2020. Can you help?](#)
- [Online learning spurs offline climate action](#)

[#YALIGoesGreen Tweets](#)

ENGAGE WITH US:

[Follow @YALINetwork](#)

[#YALICHAT: Wanjira Mathai Connects with the YALI Network on Climate Change](#)

From November 17 to 19, YALI Network Online Course instructor and director of wPOWER hub Wanjira Mathai held a YALICHAT to answer questions from YALI Network members. One of the common themes addressed throughout the chat was how individual citizens can make an impact for good in their communities.

“Raising public awareness about the climate crisis and giving local communities practical actions they can take to mitigate and adapt is crucial — water harvesting, food security, tree planting are but a few,” Mathai says. “Young people should be encouraged to plant trees in school, at home, at church. We want to create a culture of planting trees so that we do it because we know it is important for us. A national tree planting week would be a great idea; ideally, when schools are closed (say around Easter). Public tree planting is great in that it will build solidarity nationwide. Tree planting is an everyday affair: When you are happy, plant a tree!”

One of the main concerns for YALI Network members was the role the government plays in addressing the problem at hand: While citizens of each country can do their part, governments should promote clean energy solutions and encourage industries to do the same.

“What many governments want to believe is that economic growth and clean energy are incompatible,” Mathai says. “They are compatible. In fact, some of the world’s economic leaders are prioritizing clean energy because they know it will be good for people, planet and profit — the triple bottom line.”

Governments are beginning to implement solutions to improve air quality. New Delhi, for example, is creating an organized mass transit system to encourage people to use public transit more frequently.

“I was impressed when I visited New Delhi recently and heard that the government just got tough on emissions,” Mathai says. “Some of the interventions they introduced included public awareness campaigns around health impacts of air pollution and pollution checks to ensure that only road-worthy vehicles are on their roads.”

Network members were particularly interested in deforestation. According to Mathai, at a practical level, destroying forests has short-term benefits but serious long-term consequences.

“We have to begin to see all these impacts from a systems perspective. When we destroy our forests and landscapes, we destroy their ability to support life and replenish rivers and underground aquifers. We are told by the U.N. that we need a forest cover minimum of 10 percent for sustainable development. Most of our countries have decimated our forests with little or no reforestation taking place. The function these forests used to play is stopped, and so the services it provided cease. So floods and famines (which become droughts) have become more frequent.”

In addition to discussing the role the government plays, another concern addressed in the chat centered around the issue of clean water. According to Voice of America’s Straight Talk Africa, 350 million to 600 million people in Africa are projected to be exposed to water stress due to climate

change.

“For most of our countries, restoring the degraded landscapes and riverine forests with indigenous vegetation is an important investment,” Mathai says. “In the meantime, we must work on ways of harvesting water when it rains. We must find ways to harvest the water from our roofs, particularly in agricultural areas where it can be used during the dry season, and also learn techniques for in situ water harvesting. There is a lot we can learn from countries like Israel and projects like we have seen in Ethiopia (watch “Ethiopia Rising”) where terraces, check dams, gabions and many other water harvesting techniques have been employed in addition to tree planting and farmer-managed natural regeneration of trees.”

We protect what we care about. In order for action to be taken, something has to be at stake. Here is some advice straight from Mathai to the YALI Network on how to speak to your community about climate change:

“The best way to explain climate change to others is to engage them in activities that demonstrate what it means and also take them to beautiful places that they might experience environmental beauty. You know the saying: “We protect what we love.”
