

## Youth Response to Climate Change in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study

Mohammad Faisal Akber<sup>1</sup>

Md. Burhan Uddin<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** Climate change has evolved into an issue of concern worldwide since the 1970s. Bangladesh is the most affected country, having multi-dimensional environmental challenges as a result of climate change. From 2000 to 2019, climate change cost Bangladesh \$3.72 billion and caused 185 climate catastrophes. The impact of climate change and environmental hazards is directly caused by the actions of youth in their daily lives. As a result of the demographic dividend, Bangladesh has seen an increase in the working-age population since 2007, with youth constituting one-third of the total population and having the potential to fuel economic growth at the forefront. This paper investigates the role of youth in environmental conservation and prospective exploration in a dynamic and more vigilant manner, particularly in the context of Bangladesh. Thematic analysis (TA) is used to find the specific connections between youth role-playing areas, and content analysis (CA) is used to look into the potential areas. One of the best ways to conserve the environment from the effects of climate change is to empower youth. More specifically, youth have four distinct areas for activism, advocacy, and campaigning. These areas are environmental movement, community development, utility and consumption management, and capacity building in Bangladesh. Lastly, the study adds some suggestive propositions as a possible way to get the engagement of more youth in Bangladesh to protect the environment from climate change.

**Keywords:** Youth, Climate Change, Environmental Conservation

### Introduction

*My generation has largely failed until now to preserve both justices in the world and to preserve the planet. It is your generation that must make us be accountable to make sure that we don't betray*

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Development Studies, Daffodil International University  
E-mail: faisalakber.ds@diu.edu.bd

<sup>2</sup>Department of Development Studies, Daffodil International University  
E-mail: burhan.ds@diu.edu.bd

*the future of humankind. - António Guterres (Nations, 2019), Secretary-General, United Nations.*

Long-term changes in natural order and environmental patterns are known as "climate change," and it is a global phenomenon. Hence, environmental degradation has become a crucial issue in the contemporary world (Jahan, 2008). The cumulative impact of climate change is increasing the degree to which it is not possible to predict the future. There is now no longer any doubt about who will inherit the Earth. Despite being vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, today's youth are also well-positioned to explore comprehensive solutions. These people are the most efficient stakeholders to encounter the complications of climate change. They are coming together to show how concerned they are and how much they want to and can do to speed up action on climate change, especially through education, research, innovation, and actions. There are now 1.8 billion individuals, the biggest youth population ever, between the ages of 10 and 24, living around the globe as there is a growing realization among youth of the urgency of addressing the climate problem to achieve sustainable development. Since 2007, Bangladesh has seen an increase in the working-age population. The potential to take advantage of this frame of time is predicted to begin to close around the year 2040. Hence, youth constitute one-third of total population, also, now there are more people who are working-age than non-working-age (>15 and >64) that could help to boost the economy, especially if youth are in the lead (Matin et al., 2018). There is potential for significant economic growth if this period of time and the youth regime are handled wisely, not only for sustainable development but also as a model-benchmark for environmental resilience and climate change adaptation. Opportunities exist for countries in the global south like Bangladesh to handle climate change concerns, notwithstanding the difficulties discussed thus far. This study on the ground of youth's role in climate change response and environmental conservation has very rarely been addressed regarding academic parlance. The majority of the population, as well as the most vigilant action-takers, are ignored in policy formulation and implementation. This study focuses on the potential implications which are not outlined in the present scenario of climate adaptation strategies and even in management policies. It means that the ways of intervention of youth in climate change and environmental conservation will be explored through a

rigorous investigation of unit analysis by the environment-climate nexus, particularly analyzing issues of Bangladesh.

### **Conceptual Context: Youth and Climate Change in “Global” Scenario**

The “global” concept comprises local, international, multinational, and global approaches (Svensson, 2001) and climate change has become a global phenomenon combining global with local characteristics (Gupta, Van Der Leeuw, & De Moel, 2007). Thus, climate change is a concern at a local, regional, and global level and it is newly termed as a “global” problem.

“Youth” is generally defined as the period from the age when mandatory schooling ends through age 24 (Martin, 2009). The United Nations (UN) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) defined youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24, but the Commonwealth Administration includes those between the ages of 15 and 29 in this category. The official definition of "youth" in Bangladesh is anyone between the ages of 18 and 35 (Biswas, 2017). But the BBS's statistics on young people only cover the years 15-29. In 2016, there were over 52 million young people in Bangladesh or more than 33 percent of the total population (ur Rahman & Hossen, 2019).

Climate change is a long-standing modification in a state's usual meteorological patterns, such as temperature, rainfall, and windiness. It implies the predicted range of conditions in many regions will change over the upcoming several decades. According to the UN, Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas (Nations, 2022). Climate change is the changes in temperature that intensified floods, droughts, cyclones, and storm surges, and salt intrusion and these changes already impacting Bangladesh's inhabitants, ecosystems, and infrastructure (Huq, 2001). The impacts of climate change are almost ubiquitous, cumulatively in every sector, in every environmental issues and nearly every country including ocean and land geography (S. Ahmed & Khan, 2022). Deviating from global perspectives, regional implications of climate change impacts particularly in the Asian region are considered to be worse and locally in some countries particularly where the rural livelihoods have a strong dependency on the environment are the worst sufferer (Arouri, Nguyen, & Youssef, 2015). Youth

and climate change are connected very closely and it understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence (Youth, 2013). Youth can get involved in protecting the environment in many ways and places, from local activism and taking part in environmental conservation projects for making policy and they will need to take on new forms of advocacy and action to help the planet. Environmental hazards come up because of the effects of multiple human actions and uses of natural resources as like deforestation, air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution etc. Youth have special responsibilities and worries about the planet as this generation has a wider-horizon which to experience the repercussions of the ongoing environmental pollution. Participatory slants to climate change must be planned by working synergistically with climate-vulnerable groups, including youth and practitioners to address the social, and ecological effects of the climate catastrophe and root-causes of injustice (Gasparri et al., 2022). So, youth response and engagement in these addressed issues will create a culture of transformation not only in daily consumptions but also in a changing activity pattern. From local to global culture of environmental awareness will generate a role model of youth and this significant action-oriented transformations are needed to move global society toward sustainability require youth to engage in environmental conservation (Riemer et al., 2016).

### **Literature Review**

Climate change has evolved into an issue of concern for all, whether they are categorized as developed, developing, or underdeveloped; all are victims of climate change. In the context of the developed world, Cloughton (2021) worked on global youth activism on climate change response, particularly in the developed world. The author promulgated that young people from developed countries have joined environmental groups and started their own, both local and worldwide, as when 16-year-old Greta Thunberg started a school strike for climate change by sitting outside the Swedish Parliament in August 2018. While she started this alone, she was quickly joined by others, and it ultimately became Fridays for Future, a worldwide youth movement. In addition, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), founded in 2006, is now Australia's biggest youth-run organization, and "Build a movement of young people driving solutions to the climate catastrophe" is its goal, using

youth creativity, enthusiasm, and invention to drive social change (Hilder & Collin, 2022). A similar study of secondary school students in Greece revealed that students were aware of ways to reduce carbon emissions, such as reducing personal transportation, utilizing renewable energy, and planting trees, but were less aware of the indirect effects of meat production and material consumption (Malandrakis, Boyes, & Stanisstreet, 2011).

In underdeveloped countries, climate change-related youth responses are accumulating a little in the academic sphere. We identified very little literature reviewing teenage climate action in Eastern and Central Africa. On the contrary, there is a growing body of work on climate activism in countries with greater per capita wealth (Schwartz et al., 2022). Since 2019, young climate action has taken center stage. Young women in Uganda have organized Fridays for future school strikes and collected plastic trash from streets and rivers to effect immediate change (Mugeere, Barford, & Magimbi, 2021). In South Sudan, UNICEF's "Youth LEAD Project" targets youth. This project targets 12 disadvantaged populations in three South Sudanese states: Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Eastern Equatoria, one urban and one rural (Ensor, 2013). Youth LEAD promotes great education, life skills, health care, clean water and food security, sustainable livelihoods, participatory governance, and peace promotion among local youth. The University of Juba's Center for Peace and Development Studies and the government's Peace and Reconciliation Commission provide youth-focused programs (Sesay, Bakhit, & Crowell, 2022).

As a developing nation, Bangladesh has a large population packed into a relatively small territory, fast and haphazard urbanization, growing urban inequality, food and nutrient poverty, and poor resistance to climate change. Together, these factors pose serious risks to the nation's ability to provide enough nutrition in the coming days. Mondal (2019) revealed that the monsoon season may begin earlier or end later due to the rising temperatures and rainfall, or the average daily rainfall totals may rise. Bangladesh is a developing nation that was formerly mostly engaged in rice farming. Many parts of society, as well as economic and social institutions, are made more susceptible to drastic changes in climate and rising seas as a result of the modernization process, which entails the introduction of new technologies and the reorganization of old ones.

The socio-economic belongings of climate change consequently ascend from interactions in climate-society and how these in touch of both natural and accomplished surroundings (Ericksen, Ahmad, & Chowdhury, 1993). Youth can have big role reducing these existing threat occurring by climate change as Mojid (2020) explored that Climate change will intensify many present issues including natural disasters. The average temperature will rise 1.0 to 1.4°C between 2046 and 2065 and 1.0 to 3.7°C between 2081 and 2100. Future rainfall may become more erratic. Droughts will be worst in the west and drought-prone areas. Cyclonic storm surges may intensify. Coastal sea-level rise is anticipated to be 0.2-1.0 m in 2100, with a trend of 6-20 mm year<sup>-1</sup>. Together, the rising sea level and cyclonic storm flows will make coastal flooding worse and more widespread. Climate change will affect human, ecological, and socioeconomic systems. Global leaders are under pressure to respond to Bangladesh's changing environment (A. U. Ahmed, Alam, & Rahman, 1999). In this case, the role of youth is to open up a new way for the government to use its resources, specifically the blue economy as this improves climate change resilience (Sarker, Ara Hussain, Assaduzzaman, & Failler, 2019). The output of the industrial production, extraction and gas, development, provider, and related industries went down less than that of the agricultural sector. This shows that agrarian employment and household income went down (S. S. Hossain, Delin, & Mingying, 2022). Talukdar, Akter, and Mia (2022) concluded the need for youth-focused policies to acknowledge young resilience by spreading proactive approaches to increase youth participation in making the state resilient in the twenty-first century. Stapleton (2019) suggested that framing climate change education through intergenerational climate justice may inspire youth in technologically advanced, rich countries to become organized, climate-engaged persons. Borojevic, Petrovic, and Vuk (2014) worked on Youth and Environmental Education for Sustainable Development by providing frameworks for recognizing the necessity for young people's environmental education, which affects society's sustainable development. The author concluded that youth should participate in environmental conversations on economic, social, and environmental concerns since youth engagement in environmental conservation is insufficient. Zohra (2010) aims to answer the question that what do today's youth propose to preserve their homeland from climate-caused increasing sea levels in the next decades? The Environmental Movement is one of the greatest choices since it raises public awareness,