Scaling Global South Climate Solutions | Climate Champions Program

Africa; Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Ethiopia and MENA; Lebanon, Jordan

Trains young people across Africa and the Middle East as Climate Champions who design and lead local climate action projects with their communities.

Partners

Partners: DOT partners with 40+ local Community-Based Organizations, local governments and other NGOs to mobilize and implement Climate Champion engagement and climate action projects. Including delivering a learning experience to 20 local partner organizations within the DOT Network, equipping them with the skills, tools, and capacity needed to scale the DOT Climate Program within their communities.

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Challenge

There remains a critical gap in climate education and locally led solutions among youth and citizens in climate-vulnerable regions
within DOT's network. Communities across Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are among the most affected: the impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods, heatwaves, and extreme weather events, disproportionately hit developing countries across Africa, while MENA, despite contributing the least to global emissions, faces summer temperatures projected to rise by up to 4°C by the end of the century.
This gap widened in 2025 as global funding priorities shifted away from climate action and the Global South, reducing resources for communities facing the greatest risks, making local knowledge and locally led solutions more critical than ever.
Young people play a critical role in advancing climate innovation, adaptation, and sustainable practices. In sub-Saharan Africa, where 70% of the population is under 30, youth face the greatest exposure to climate impacts while holding potential to drive change. At the same time, advances in climate science, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence are reshaping how climate risks are assessed and addressed — yet young people in climate-vulnerable communities often lack access to these tools, data, and skills. Gaps in climate literacy, learning resources, and institutional support limit their ability to act at scale.
Strengthening the capacity of local partner organizations is equally essential: local partners enable communities to mobilize financial resources, natural assets, human capital, and social networks. The World Bank estimates that Locally Led Climate Action approaches could benefit more than 100 million people by 2030 by strengthening institutions and local agency.

Solution

DOT's approach, empowering young people to lead and design solutions to the challenges facing their communities, represents a powerful tool for systems change. Rooted in the belief that young women and men, given adequate support, can dismantle social barriers and transform societies, the Climate program trains young people as Climate Champions who go on to drive climate awareness and adaptation in their own communities.

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Communities are at the heart of both design and implementation. Members select the climate action projects that address their specific priorities, which are then led by a PAR (Participatory Action Research) Working Group, a team of intergenerational local leaders who guide the project from planning through delivery. Through targeted training, participants build the skills to address challenges such as deforestation, water pollution, coastal erosion, and plastic waste, restoring ecosystems, reducing pollution, and strengthening adaptive practices for immediate local impact and long-term resilience.

What makes this approach distinct and replicable is shifting the power of decision and delivery to local communities, increasing buy-in and ownership so projects continue after launch, each one shaped to its community's own priorities, whether waste, reforestation, recycling, or flood prevention. DOT has also built a Participatory Action Research Toolkit that Climate Champions can reuse to launch further projects, and has equipped 20 local youth-led partner organizations with the methodology and support to run the DOT Climate Program independently.

Anyone can take our free virtual course to learn how they too can lead localized, responsive climate action: https://learn.dotrust.org/mod/page/view.php?id=2728

Impact

Across two years of implementation, DOT has engaged 162 Climate champions who've reached 5,070 community members, launched over 90 Community Climate Action projects benefitting more than 9,800 people directly and 69,000+ indirectly, reached 4,656 virtual learners across 60 countries, and worked with 459 youth social innovators to scale their climate initiatives.

These outcomes take different forms in each community. In Nairobi's Kibera informal settlement, Climate Champion Dan, with his PAR working group, and 50 youth volunteers, organized a massive clean-up, and cleared more than two tons of garbage and trained 300 households on how to better manage and sort their waste. Soon after the clean-up, they hatched a plan to create a permanent organization to oversee the development of a waste sorting hub, where people could bring their garbage to be recycled, converted into fertilizer, or safely disposed of.

In the Konso Zone of southern Ethiopia, Climate Champion Tariku, and his PAR working group in the village of Gocha, planted seedlings to restore some of the area's lost tree cover in collaboration with local farmers living at the edge of the forest. Chebli and Israa, Climate Champions in Lebanon, developed a plan to build a community rainwater tank to store rainwater during winter for use in the dry summer months. Another community created communal composting bins to divert food waste and make organic fertilizer.

Climate Champions Ayham and Yara, built a public garden in ordan, painting old tires in bright colors and turning them into planters for trees and rose bushes. The Green Spaces garden they created is used by local youth to plan other climate projects, and the local government has asked the group to set up more gardens. Husna, mobilized more than 80 people aged 18 to 74 to help plant 6,250 mangrove plants to build greater coastal resilience here in Zanzibar. As well as local residents, volunteers included government officials: The fishing officer from the Ministry of Blue Economy, the forest officer from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, Natural Resources and Livestock plus representatives from the Department of Climate Change at the First Vice President Office and other NGOs.