



The Pan-African Climate Education (PACE) Network

Our Theory of Problem

Climate change and environmental risks are already a lived reality for students everywhere, especially in Africa. From droughts, floods, and heatwaves to acute water scarcity, these impacts are already disrupting students' health, education, and wellbeing. These challenges are often felt most deeply in disadvantaged communities, where climate impacts worsen existing inequalities and disrupt livelihoods. **The scale of this vulnerability is particularly stark across Africa: UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index places 39 of the 49 African countries assessed in the "high" or "extremely high" risk categories for children.**

Children and youth see these impacts affecting their present and future, and they are increasingly worried about worsening climate conditions. A [2021 global study](#) published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* found that 59% of young people were very or extremely worried about climate change, while 75% said they thought the future was frightening. These concerns can lead to complex feelings ranging from sadness, anxiety, and anger to powerlessness and helplessness. At the same time, young people across Africa are not yet consistently equipped with the knowledge and skills to understand and respond to these challenges: **average climate change literacy across African countries is only around 37%.**

It is therefore critical that we equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to not only understand the challenges they face, but also see themselves as part of the solution. Climate change education can help young people connect what they are learning to the realities around them, build their agency, and take meaningful action to address the challenges in their schools and communities. **This is particularly urgent given the scale of Africa's young population: by 2050, the continent is projected to be home to nearly 1 billion young people, representing around 40% of the world's youth.** This represents not only an urgent need, but an enormous opportunity to equip a generation to shape more resilient schools, communities, and societies.

While education systems around the world have made important progress in recognizing the role of education in responding to climate change, there are still significant gaps. [UNESCO's evaluation framework](#) shows that 64% of countries have advanced national Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) policies and 61% have integrated ESD into national curricula. However, translating these ambitions into teacher readiness remains a severe hurdle. A [2021 UNESCO global survey](#) showed that while 95% of teachers believe climate change should be taught, fewer than 40% feel confident teaching it. This confidence gap reflects deeper challenges in how educators are supported. Climate change education is still not holistically embedded in many teacher education and training programmes, resulting in professional development that is often short-term and episodic rather than continuous and integrated into teachers' practice.

As a result, teachers often lack the ongoing support they need to confidently integrate climate change education into their teaching and learning. While many generic climate education resources are available for teachers to draw on, contextualized resources that reflect local

curricula, realities, and challenges remain limited. **Beyond access to resources and training, educators also need sustained opportunities to learn with and from peers, share what is working in their contexts, and adapt approaches to the realities of their students and communities. Without these forms of ongoing support, practical tools, localized resources, and professional development, teachers are left without the means to bridge the gap between climate knowledge and meaningful action.**

The Pan-African Climate Education (PACE) Network was created to address these capacity bottlenecks as a dynamic **community of practice**. Founded in 2023 by African Teach For All network alumni, PACE brings educators across Africa together to learn from one another, share resources and solutions, and strengthen their practice. Through regular community calls, peer mentorship, collaborative resource sharing, and cross-border engagement, PACE supports educators in turning abstract climate science into practical, action-oriented learning grounded in local realities. **By connecting educators facing similar challenges across contexts, PACE provides the ongoing peer support needed to strengthen practice, adapt solutions, and move climate education from theory to action—enabling young people to build agency, lead solutions, and strengthen resilience across African schools and communities.**