

Research Article

# The Role of Youth in the Implementation of Climate Change Policies in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Climate change represents an urgent global crisis that demands immediate and collaborative action. In Indonesia, youth have emerged as crucial stakeholders in the implementation of climate change policies. This study explores the strategic role of young people in advancing climate action, focusing on their engagement through two major non-governmental organizations: WALHI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia) and Greenpeace Indonesia. Adopting a qualitative library research method, the study examines secondary sources, reports, and publications to assess how these organizations empower and mobilize youth in climate advocacy. The findings highlight that youth are not passive observers but active contributors to climate governance. Through educational campaigns, social media activism, public demonstrations, and grassroots initiatives, young individuals raise environmental awareness, promote sustainable practices, and exert social and political pressure on government institutions. Their participation fosters democratic engagement, enhances policy responsiveness, and encourages the inclusion of long-term environmental perspectives in national and regional development agendas. Furthermore, youth play a critical role in bridging scientific knowledge with community-based practices, often initiating innovative and context-sensitive solutions tailored to local environmental challenges. Their digital literacy and ability to build networks across diverse societal sectors amplify their effectiveness in shaping public discourse and influencing policy outcomes. This study concludes that empowering youth is fundamental to achieving meaningful and lasting climate action. Their involvement strengthens both mitigation and adaptation efforts, positioning them as key agents of change who are not only directly impacted by climate change but also committed to securing a more sustainable and just environmental future for Indonesia.

**Keywords:** climate change; Greenpeace Indonesia; policy implementation; WALHI; youth.

## 1. Introduction

Climate change is an urgent global challenge, and Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation, is highly vulnerable to its impacts (Alkhajar & Luthfia, 2018; Alkhajar & Luthfia, 2021; Luthfia & Alkhajar, 2020). Rising sea levels, increased intensity of natural disasters, and shifting seasonal patterns are some of the real threats already being felt. The Indonesian government has committed to addressing these issues through various policies and programs (Luthfia & Alkhajar, 2021). Indonesia has ratified the Paris Agreement and pledged to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 29% through its own efforts and by 41% with international support by 2030, as outlined in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

Various regulations have been issued, such as Law Number 16 of 2016 on the Ratification of the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Presidential Regulation Number 98 of 2021 on the Implementation of Carbon Economic Value. Numerous programs have also been established, including forest and land fire control initiatives, forest and land rehabilitation (RHL), the development of

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renewable energy, adaptation programs in vulnerable sectors, climate villages, and green cities (Luthfia et al., 2021).

In implementing these government policies and programs, the younger generation holds a crucial role (Luthfia & Alkhajar, 2018; Luthfia et al, 2019). Their role goes beyond being future heirs; they act as active agents of change in the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies (Luthfia & Alkhajar, 2020). Young people possess digital power and social media influence, where their voices on these platforms are recognized as capable of exerting significant moral and political pressure on policymakers to take faster and bolder actions in addressing the challenges of climate change (Gaupp & Eker, 2024). They also demonstrate greater openness to creativity and innovation compared to previous generations (Savaneviciene & Statnicke, 2020).

In examining this phenomenon, this study highlights several case examples to reveal the role of youth within selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs), namely WALHI (Indonesian Forum for the Environment) and Greenpeace Indonesia.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **A. Climate Change**

Climate change refers to long-term alterations in temperature patterns, precipitation, and other weather phenomena on Earth. While these changes can be driven by natural factors such as volcanic eruptions and solar variations, human activities have become the primary cause of the accelerated pace of climate change, particularly since the Industrial Revolution (BMKG, 2025). The Earth's average temperature has already risen by approximately 1.2°C since the Industrial Revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and projected to continue increasing if no serious global action is taken. The impacts of climate change threaten human civilization, including shifts in planting seasons and crop failures, an increase in natural disasters, damage to marine ecosystems and coral reefs, among others (United Nations Indonesia, 2024).

### **B. Youth**

In this study, youth are not defined solely by chronological age but also by their sociological and psychological characteristics, as well as their transformative capacity (Johansson & Herz, 2019). Generally, this group includes individuals aged between 15 and 30 years, although this age range may vary slightly depending on the context of specific policies or programs (UNICEF, 2011; United Nations, 2018). Young people are characterized by a high level of environmental awareness, often driven by the reality that they will face the long-term consequences of the climate crisis. They tend to possess innovative and adaptive thinking, along with strong digital skills that enable them to disseminate information, mobilize support, and organize movements efficiently through online platforms (Kende, 2021). Moreover, this generation demonstrates a strong willingness to participate in decision-making processes and demands accountability from leaders and policymakers (O'Brien & Selboe, 2015).

### **C. Policy Implementation**

According to Edwards III, public policy implementation is defined as “what happens after a bill becomes a law, when the bureaucracy attempts to put into effect policy decisions” (Edwards III, 1980, p. 1). He further explains, “Implementation, simply put, is the carrying out of a basic policy decision. It is a process that involves a multitude of decisions, which are generally made by a number of actors, over a period of time, often extending for years after the initial decision” (Edwards III, 1980, pp. 1–2).

In the context of climate change policy implementation, young people are regarded as dynamic actors who are not merely beneficiaries or those affected by the policies, but also initiators, advocates, and implementers of solutions (Luthfia, 2021; 2025). Their role goes beyond passive participation and includes policy advocacy, the development of green innovations, monitoring implementation, and leading mitigation and adaptation actions at the community level (IPCC, 2022). Therefore, defining youth in this context means acknowledging their intrinsic capacity to drive transformative change toward a more sustainable future.

### 3. Research Method

This study employs library research to comprehensively analyze the role of youth in the implementation of climate change policies in Indonesia. Data were collected from various credible secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journals, government agency reports, national policy documents, as well as publications from non-governmental organizations such as WALHI and Greenpeace Indonesia, and relevant academic publications.

The data collection process involved identifying specific keywords, selecting sources based on relevance and credibility, followed by information extraction, comparative analysis, and synthesis of findings. This method aims to build an in-depth understanding based on existing literature, identify patterns of participation, challenges, and the innovative contributions of youth within the context of climate policy in Indonesia.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI) is one of the largest and oldest environmental organizations in Indonesia, established on October 15, 1980. The organization is part of the global network Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), which strengthens its reach and advocacy influence at the international level. Since its inception, WALHI has focused on environmental justice and building public movements for environmental protection (WALHI, 2022b).

The findings of this study reveal several key insights. WALHI consistently emphasizes that young people are the demographic most deeply concerned about the climate crisis. The organization recognizes the strategic role of youth in realizing climate justice and advocating for intergenerational equity (WALHI, 2022a; 2022b). This concern does not remain at the level of anxiety but is manifested through various forms of action.

Their active involvement includes encouraging young people to participate in legal actions, such as climate lawsuits, in response to the worsening climate crisis in Indonesia. This initiative is based on the belief that the impacts of the climate crisis—ranging from rising sea levels and tidal floods to threats to water and food security—have harmed communities, particularly those in coastal areas, and require a serious legal response (WALHI, 2024).

In addition, WALHI has taken the initiative to facilitate the “Youth Consolidation to Restore Indonesia,” which provides a platform for young people to formulate and agree upon environmental issues. The outcomes of these discussions are expected to serve as strong demands for policymakers and ensure that youth proposals are incorporated into the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJP). This illustrates the role of youth in shaping policy agendas and ensuring their voices are represented at the strategic level (WALHI, 2023).

Meanwhile, Greenpeace is a global, independent environmental campaigning organization founded in 1971 in Vancouver, Canada (Greenpeace International, n.d.). Greenpeace began operating effectively in Indonesia in the early 2000s. Its vision is a green and peaceful future, and it actively engages and empowers young people in various campaigns and concrete actions related to climate change. The organization is dedicated to ensuring the Earth's ability to sustain life in all its diversity. Greenpeace does not accept funding from

governments, corporations, or political parties, relying instead on donations from individuals and foundations (Greenpeace Indonesia, n.d.).

The findings of this study reveal several key insights regarding the role of youth in Greenpeace Indonesia. Greenpeace consistently upholds the belief that young people—especially Generation Z—are increasingly becoming a driving force in environmental advocacy (Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2024). Their participation significantly amplifies the urgency of calls for environmental action.

Within Greenpeace, youth engagement is primarily centered on education and awareness-raising. The organization collaborates with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, to inform and inspire young people about the importance of protecting forests and Indigenous communities from the impacts of the climate crisis. Through campaigns such as the “99% Camp” and partnerships with grassroots communities, Greenpeace promotes active youth participation in tangible environmental actions (RRI, 2025).

Moreover, youth involved with Greenpeace are not limited to demonstrative activism. They also take part in community-based initiatives, such as beach clean-up activities and promoting eco-friendly lifestyles through programs like “Zero-Waste Homes” (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2024). These young activists skillfully utilize digital platforms—including X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok—to mobilize support and disseminate messages of change. Their efforts highlight the intersection of sustainable living and political consciousness, underscoring the importance of combining lifestyle shifts with policy advocacy (RRI, 2025).

This youth-driven engagement has proven instrumental in pushing for greener and more sustainable policy outcomes, affirming the strategic value of their involvement in Indonesia’s climate movement.

The findings above indicate that, overall, both WALHI and Greenpeace Indonesia emphasize that the role of youth extends beyond mere participation—they serve as a transformative force in advancing climate change programs and policies. Their vital roles can be categorized into four main areas: (1) Education and awareness-raising; (2) Policy engagement through petitions, policy dialogues, and monitoring and accountability of climate programs; (3) On-the-ground movements and concrete actions; and (4) Driving the green economy.

Youth contributions can be further optimized through support from international organizations, intergenerational collaboration, and enhanced global awareness. To maximize international support, the Indonesian government, along with NGOs such as WALHI and Greenpeace, can take a more proactive role in disseminating information to youth communities about available opportunities—such as grants, trainings, or fellowships (UNEP, 2021). There is also a need to strengthen funding access capacity by training youth in proposal writing, project management, and financial reporting according to international standards. This aligns with findings from UNDP (2020), which note that many youth initiatives fail to secure support due to a lack of administrative capacity.

Moreover, youth efforts will be significantly strengthened through solid collaboration with older generations who possess experience, networks, and resources (O'Brien & Selboe, 2015). Such collaboration can take the form of structured mentoring programs (UNEP, 2021), inclusive policy dialogue forums (IPCC, 2022), and cross-sector partnerships (UNDP, 2020).

## 5. Conclusions

Youth represent a strategic asset, bringing energy, innovation, and fresh perspectives to address the complex challenges of environmental sustainability. As primary heirs of the future, they experience the urgency of the climate crisis firsthand, driving them to be more proactive in demanding and implementing solutions.

Their engagement goes beyond mere awareness; it extends to their power as influencers and mass mobilizers through mastery of digital technology and social media. They have the capacity to disseminate accurate information, organize campaigns, and build grassroots movements that promote behavioral change from the individual to the community level. Digital platforms serve as their arena for advocacy, demanding accountability from policymakers and the industrial sector.

Their mindset serves as a source of fresh, adaptive, and innovative ideas, enabling the development of creative solutions—whether in the form of green technologies, sustainable business models, or effective social approaches for mitigation and adaptation. They actively participate in policy dialogues, provide constructive input, and even initiate on-the-ground environmental projects, ranging from ecosystem rehabilitation to community education. In short, young people are a vital driving force. Without their active participation, innovation, and voices, the implementation of climate change policies in Indonesia will not achieve maximum effectiveness. They are the ones who will ensure that Indonesia's climate commitments are translated into concrete and sustainable actions for a greener future.

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