

# Empowering Youth for a Pollution-Free Asia-Pacific

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# The Air Pollution Reality

## A Major Health & Climate Threat

- Air pollution is responsible for millions of premature deaths globally, with the Asia–Pacific region bearing the highest burden.
- About 4 million of the 7 million global annual deaths from air pollution occur in the Asia–Pacific.
- Over 90% of the region’s 2.5 billion people are exposed to pollution levels posing major health risks.

## Regional Trends

- Despite improvements in East Asia, South and Southeast Asia still face severe seasonal pollution driven by agricultural burning and weather conditions.
- Asia–Pacific records some of the world’s highest PM2.5 levels, especially in high-density urban and industrial areas.

## Sources

- [UNEP \(2019\). \*Air Pollution in Asia and the Pacific: Science-Based Solutions.\*](#)
- [UNEP \(2024\). \*How Asian Countries Could Save Lives by Tackling Air Pollution.\*](#)
- [UNEP \(2024\). \*Restoring Clean Air – Asia and the Pacific.\*](#)
- [UN ESCAP \(2025\). \*Air Quality Status and Trends in the Asia-Pacific Region.\*](#)

# Why Youth is important?

## Most Affected and Mobilized

- 500M children in East Asia and the Pacific live in areas with unhealthy air.
- Air pollution causes over 100+ child deaths/day linked to air pollution in the region.
- Children face lifelong impacts, including impaired lung development and reduced cognitive growth.
- Youth are emerging as powerful advocates for clean air, driving environmental action with energy, innovation, and digital leadership.

## Why Youth Leadership Matters *(UNEP/EA.7/Res.6)*

- Youth participation must be full, meaningful, and inclusive — not symbolic.
  - UNEA acknowledges youth as agents of change in innovation, education, policy advocacy, and community action.
  - Environmental crises disproportionately affect youth, impacting their well-being and future development.
  - Access to data, tools, and platforms enables youth to contribute evidence-based solutions.
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- [UNICEF \(2025\) \*Silent Killer: Air Pollution and Children in East Asia and the Pacific.\*](#)
  - [UN News \(2025\), \*Toxic Air Threatens Children's Lives Across East Asia and the Pacific.\*](#)

# Youth Leadership in Action Across Asia-Pacific

## 1. Child-Centred Clean Air Solutions (UNEP & UNICEF, 2021)

- Offering 20 Practical measures tailored to children and youth in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Supports child- and youth-led clean-air actions.
- Emphasizes children's fundamental right to breathe clean air and equips youth to drive community-level interventions and local policy dialogues.

## 2. Youth Advocacy & Leadership in the Region

- Youth from the Children & Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG) actively influence regional and global clean-air conversations.
- Youth advocates are also calling for integrated, science-based governance and greater coherence across multilateral agreements to strengthen environmental action.

## 3. UNEA Youth Environmental Assembly

- The largest global youth gathering hosted by UNEP, and is the official youth forum feeding into the UN Environment Assembly.

# Youth Roles in UNEA Resolution 7/6

## 1. Youth as Policy Partners

- UNEA Resolution 7/6 invites Member States to ensure full, effective, meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in environmental processes at all levels.
- It emphasizes creating safe, inclusive and enabling environments for youth participation.

## 2. Youth as Knowledge Contributors

- UNEA Resolution 7/6 encourages Member States to integrate environmental education and sustainability competencies into national education systems.

## 3. Youth as Educators and Innovators

- UNEA Resolution 7/6 recognizes youth as agents of change through education, innovation, community engagement, and policy advocacy.
- It also recognizes the Youth Environment Assembly as the principal youth platform under the Environment Assembly.

(UNEP/EA.7/Res.6, adopted 12 December 2025)

# Towards a Pollution-Free Planet

## A pillar of the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2026-2029

- Reduce pollution in air, soil, and water, improving environmental quality and public health.
- Help countries identify and address major polluting sectors; engage whole-of-society participation.
- UNEP works strategically with children and youth as key partners to identify innovative clean-air solutions.

## Key activities include:

- Strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks
- Improving access to scientific and pollution data
- Promoting sustainable consumption and production
- Supporting technologies and solutions for cleaner, low-pollution systems
- Capacity-building, science-policy engagement, and technology transfer

[Full strategy available at UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2026-2029](#)

# Summary

- Air pollution remains a **major challenge**, with children and young people among the most affected
- Young people are not only recipients of support – they are **essential drivers** of environmental action, including efforts to reduce air pollution
- **UNEP's Mid-term Strategy(2026-2029)** strengthens intergenerational cooperation to deliver sustainable, long-term solutions
- **Empowering youth** is vital to accelerating progress toward a **Pollution-Free Planet**

