



## THREE INSIGHTS

# HOW CAN WE SCALE YOUTH ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE?

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We would like to thank the following lead discussants and members of the Business Fights Poverty community for their participation:

**Dina El-Mofty**, Entrepreneur and Angel Investor, Egypt, and Founder, **INJAZ Egypt**; **Farah Emara**, Co-Founder, **FreshSource Global**; **Jane Nelson**, Director, Corporate Responsibility Initiative, **Harvard Kennedy School**; **Morten Enggaard Rasmussen**, EVP People, Sustainability & Brand, **Novozymes**; **Tara Shine**, Chief Executive Officer, **Change by Degrees**; **Marta Vânia Uetela**, Founder, **BioMec**, **Mozambique**

Hosted with the **Corporate Responsibility Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School, Change by Degrees, and INJAZ Egypt**

***Young people are driving societal transformation, and it is their future that's in the crosshairs of climate change. This workshop explored practical solutions for supporting young entrepreneurs in helping vulnerable people adapt to and mitigate the risks of a rapidly warming world. Speakers showcased innovative ideas that get to the core of climate injustice and discussed how experienced business leaders can help youth-led enterprises succeed.***

Participants agreed that engagement at an early age is key and that those in positions of power must be willing to take risks on young talent. Participants voiced a clear desire for intergenerational support and collaboration.

### **INSIGHT 1: EARLY ENGAGEMENT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE THEIR OWN FUTURE**

As Tara Shine, Chief Executive Officer of Change by Degrees, expressed, "all jobs are climate jobs in the future. You can work on climate change and be a force for good no matter what your passion is."

To prepare this future workforce, speakers strongly felt that lessons around climate change, climate justice, and

entrepreneurship should be interwoven throughout all levels of education. "You shouldn't be able to graduate from school without having had some program and experiential learning in entrepreneurship, sustainability and climate," said Jane Nelson, Director of the Corporate Responsibility Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School.

***Urge young people to continue to challenge the current monopoly on ways of thinking.***

**Amarachi Nwuneli, Youth Activist,  
African Food Change Makers**

Dina El-Mofty, Entrepreneur, Angel Investor, and Founder of INJAZ Egypt, has worked with almost a million young people across schools and universities and has seen the power of youth to innovate, create their own solutions, and scale them up. “[We need to] start raising awareness from primary and middle school on the importance of coming up with solutions,” said Dina. “[We need to] engage our young people—who are really the changemakers of tomorrow—in this discussion.” She went on to describe some of the inspiring initiatives coming out of young startups in Egypt, from novel sustainable energy solutions to e-waste recycling companies.

Workshop participants agreed that young people need to own the solutions to climate change. “If youth are given solutions already planned, they do not feel engaged,” said Oluoch Brenda, Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Associate at The Youth Cafe.

Fortunately, climate change is creeping up the education agenda in some countries. Tara shared how climate is now part of the leaving certificate process in Ireland. “This gives people the opportunity to start learning about climate change from a young age,” said Tara. “They see that they can be part of the solution, and this gives them agency in the face of something really scary.”

### **INSIGHT 2: BUSINESSES AND INVESTORS NEED TO TAKE RISKS ON YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS, PROPERLY SUPPORTING THEM IN THE PROCESS**

Young people will not be inspired to innovate or have the confidence to pioneer bold climate justice solutions if investors are not willing to match their ambition.

Farah Emara, Co-Founder of FreshSource Global, is a clear example of how a young entrepreneur can drive significant change and bring about value for people, planet, and investors. Since launching in 2019, FreshSource Global has scaled to around 100 employees who are working with policymakers and companies to tackle food loss and food security. “It’s a trillion-dollar problem around the world,” she explained. Fortunately, there are investors who understand the business

***We can’t talk about climate change and the green transition, all these kinds of things, without mentioning young people as somebody that’s part of this transformation.***

**Marta Vânia Uetela, Founder,  
BioMec, Mozambique**

case for tackling food waste. “Now there are a lot of new innovative startups and innovative financial lenders that would—and do—put money in agriculture,” she said.

But there still seems to be an investment gap when it comes to supporting young entrepreneurs who are championing climate justice solutions. “We have to get organisations and corporations to take risks in investing in young people and their enterprises,” said Tara. “We need to make supports readily available to young entrepreneurs so that they can test their ideas and be allowed to fail, but also be allowed to flourish.”

Innovation platforms could encourage donor agencies like the World Bank to support young entrepreneurs by providing business development services, mentorship programmes, and access to markets. But these support systems need to be comprehensive and holistic, and not just offer a patchwork of disconnected offerings.

One important consideration for any company is where young people are needed. Agriculture, for example, is a field that is not necessarily attractive to young people and retention is low, but it is an essential sector. Farm Africa is looking at how digital tech can ease production and increase productivity, making agriculture a more attractive career.

### **INSIGHT 3: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY TO CHAMPIONING YOUNG PEOPLE’S IDEAS**

At COP27, Tara saw a reframing of climate change as an intergenerational question,

and also saw increased collaboration between generations around finding a solution. As Jane pointed out, the UN is one of the few spaces where youth have a meaningful seat at the table in global decision-making processes. Even some major multinationals are starting to incorporate the perspectives of young people into their ESG strategies. Unilever, for example, has a “youth advisory council” that advises their board.

Despite these progressive examples, workshop participants felt that older generations often use “realism” to undercut the optimism of young entrepreneurs. “Any of us who are hopeful, optimistic, and creative about the future share the same challenge, which is people put us down with realism,” shared Tara. “That realism always seems to trump our optimism and our creativity.”

Morten Enggaard Rasmussen, EVP People, Sustainability & Brand at Novozymes, called on young people to stay strong in the face of these supposed reality checks. “We should

not let realism kill the dream,” he said. “The true energy here, and the notion of what is really good for the world, will prevail if we all come together and really push hard.” Morten explained how he welcomes and works with young voices to avoid the “group think” that often happens in big companies, and he talked about how reverse mentoring in major multinationals can topple traditional top-down approaches to learning.

Ultimately, participants were encouraged to stay true to themselves and to never lose their youthful spirits, even when they become part of the “older generation”. This, in turn, fosters continued intergenerational collaboration. “Hold on to your youngness forever, our youthfulness,” said Iman Bashir, Research Consultant, School of International Futures (SOIF) and NGFP Africa Network Member. “Make sure your thoughts and ideas are always out of the box. And when you get into the position to make decisions, make the decisions you would have wanted to make when you were younger.”

### RESOURCES SHARED:

- **INITIATIVE:** [Ashoka Young Changemakers](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [Green Generation Initiative](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [Hand in Hand and Eastern Africa](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [INJAZ Egypt, part of INJAZ Al-Arab](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [TECA: Launching Fintech Ventures for Climate Resilience](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [Themar AgriTech Accelerator Program](#)
- **REPORT:** [Advancing Inclusive Finance with Young People: Futuremakers 2022 Insights](#). Futuremakers by Standard Chartered, with Business Fights Poverty and Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge.
- **REPORT:** [Futuremakers Forum Discussion Series: Driving Enterprise and Employment with Young People](#). Business Fights Poverty in association with Standard Chartered.