



Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) Leadership Team 2016 – 2018

Network Coordinator

Ms. Karuna Rana (28, Mauritius)



Karuna is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH), the first regional, youth-led organization aimed at advancing sustainable development across Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Africa and Asia. Her extensive 7-year experience in the environmental and youth development area spans across grassroots actions, advocacy, and reducing the ecological footprint of organizations - within non-profits, corporations and inter-governmental organizations alike. Through prior roles such as UNEP Tunza Youth Advisor for Africa and Organising Partner for SIDS for the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Karuna has lobbied Governments and coordinated the participation of young people at the Rio+20 Summit, the African Union, the 3rd International Conference on SIDS and most recently COP21. In addition to her role within SYAH, Karuna is the outgoing Curator of the Port Louis Hub of the Global Shapers Community. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Chemical and Environmental Engineering and has co-authored UNEP's publication entitled 'Global Environment Outlook-5 for Youth'. She also received the Queen's Young Leader Award in 2015 – an Award which recognizes the exceptional work done by young people of the Commonwealth.

Steering Committee Members

Steering Committee member responsible for Projects, Events & Competitions

Mr. Adrian Watson (27, Jamaica)



Adrian is a Jamaican Youth Leader and Advocate who holds a Bachelor's of Science in Geography and Zoology from the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. Passionate for social, traditional entrepreneurship, environment, agriculture, disaster risk management and climate change, he has played a leadership role in a number of organizations. He is the current National Coordinator of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network Jamaica Chapter. Under his watch he has strived fuel the interest and increase environmental awareness, conservation and sustainable environmental use with experience in Urban Planning. Adrian is the former General Legal Counsel in 2015, Ambassador and Director for the Individual Area of Opportunity in 2014 for Junior Chamber International Kingston Jamaica. Adrian has played and Advisory role to the Seaview Gardens Youth Council and Block Coordinator to the Seaview Gardens Community Development Committee. Adrian has won several awards inclusive of Exceptional Youth Leadership Award 2015 from JaREEACH Project Phase I USAID / ACDI VOCA for his work in youth empowerment and climate change advocacy, Outstanding and Dedicated Service as Legal Counsel in 2015 from Junior Chamber International Kingston and Seaview Gardens New Testament Church Outstanding Worker 2010 and 2014.

Steering Committee member responsible for Policy & Advocacy

Ms. Anoka Primrose Abeyrathne (25, Sri Lanka)



Anoka is an environmentalist, social entrepreneur and an aspiring lawyer passionate about sustainability. She is the first Sri Lankan Asia-Pacific Representative to UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board, the first female Sri Lankan New Champion of the World Economic Forum 2015, featured in the 25 List of Most Influential and Powerful Young Persons of the World 2012 by Huffington Post. The youngest female recipient of the Commonwealth Youth Award for Development Anoka is a founding member of the World Economic Forum Global Shaper in Sri Lanka and an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society. Anoka made history as the youngest female Keynote Speaker of the Youth Leaders Forum during the 2015 Regional Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in India. As a British Council International Climate Champion, Anoka's sustainability efforts through the post-Tsunami project "Growin' Money" led to over 40,000 replanted Mangroves and a designer craft social enterprise supporting over 5000 villagers in four countries with over 20000 volunteers. Anoka holds a LLB(Hons) from the University of London and will be graduating from the University of Colombo for her Masters degree in Development. She believes in providing access to education through entrepreneurial skills building for better community based sustainable urban development. She is also a contributor to various platforms such as TEDx, and others.

Steering Committee member responsible for Communication & Public Relations

Mr. Israel Bionyi (24, Cameroon)



Israel is a freelance reporter, communications specialist and environmental blogger who is passionate about the planet and in particular writing about climate change, water, energy, forests and wildlife conservation. He founded the blog 'The Wink Writes' and contributes to Fairplanet magazine and Cameroon's Standard Tribune. He is also the Assistant Editor for the Society for Conservation Biology's African Conservation Telegraph and became a member of the International League of Conservation Writers in 2014. Holding a master of arts in organisational communication, he began advocating for climate change in 2013 when he became a UNEP Tunza Youth Ambassador to Cameroon. He has also volunteered/worked with WWF and IUCN, and has inspired many young people in Cameroon on issues of climate change. In 2015, he organised an environmental writing competition for rural secondary schools in Cameroon, which highlighted the importance of agriculture. He won the Haller prize for development journalism in 2015 and became a climate and energy fellow for the Earth Journalism Network in May this year, when he also won the World Vision for Education and Development award in Cameroon for excellence in promoting rural education.

Steering Committee member responsible for Partnerships Engagement

Mr. Stefan Knights (26, Guyana)



Stefan is a national of Guyana, an Environmental Lawyer and Commonwealth Scholar reading for an Master of Sciences in Sustainable Development at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. He is a member of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network and he also served as a UNEP Youth Advisor (2013/15). Stefan has represented his organisation at several key meetings, and recently participated to the International Parliamentary Conference on Sustainability, Energy and Development in London. He is an amiable and approachable person who loves facilitating partnerships and friendships, and has played key advocacy role in enabling youth participation into environmental sustainability and climate change related projects and global campaigns, in his country and internationally.

Steering Committee member responsible for Participation & Grassroots Engagement

Mr. Takpah Bonarventure Kwame (24, Ghana)



Bonarventure (Bona) is a Ghanaian citizen holding a Bachelor degree in agriculture from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and technology. He, as a Co-founder and Director of Environment Watch 360, a volunteer based organisation in Ghana which seeks to foster harmonious living with the environment through care and proper management of environmental resources, shows much commitment, passion and knowledge on thematic areas which are covered by the organisation. Through his good interpersonal, persuasive and lobbying skills, the organisation has been successful in organising educative out-reaches to create awareness on environmental issues and how to contribute to its mitigation ,also involvement in the tree planting and clean up exercises. Before co-founding Environment Watch 360, Bonarventure became an organiser during his undergraduate studies for

Agro-Mindset, an organisation which focuses on encouraging young people to be involved in agri-businesses. Bona's passion and dedication enable him to present creative ideas towards mitigating the climate change threat, which are evident in his level of commitment and versatility in his daily life.

Regional Coordinators

Regional Coordinator for the Africa & Europe region

Mr. Kassim Gawusu-Toure (29, Ghana)



Kassim is from Ghana where he works as a social entrepreneur and a climate change activist. He holds a Master's degree in climate change and sustainable development from the University of Ghana. Besides his academic qualifications, he has participated in a number of international training programs and conferences and he was part of the Ghanaian delegation to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) as an official youth delegate. Among the professional trainings he has received includes Forest certification and Sustainable forest management from both Sweden and Peru, Environmental management and Diplomatic practice and Development Policies. Kassim is the founder of Greener Impact International, a youth-led NGO in consultative status with the UN ECOSOC and also in observer status with the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC). In Ghana, he has worked as the conservation education officer for the Ghana Wildlife Society and also as the National Coordinator of the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC), a youth-led network on climate change in Africa.

Regional Coordinator for the Asia region

Mr. Abhinav Bajpal (26, India)



A citizen of India, Abhinav has completed his graduation there in Computer Engineering from Delhi University in 2010. Then he joined a telecom MNC as a software engineer and has worked with the company for three years. In his free time, he became interested to engage in other activities than only software engineering as he always thought there is more to do than just that. Abhinav's heart was always for the people and nature around him, hence he decided to listen to his heart and quit his job in the software sector. He later joined Greenpeace India as a Campaign fundraiser. During over two years, he excelled his public speaking skills and knowledge in various global problems, including in climate change. He shared his message to around 10,000 people and inspired them to take action against global warming. In 2015, he got to

know about relationship among climate-change, species extinction, water and food shortage, and livestock. He became vegan as his way to take personal action, and started raising awareness about these issues in his country while collaborating with the Federation of Indian Animal Protection.

Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean & the Americas region

Ms. Leanna Kalicharan (25, Guyana)



Leanna is a Biologist from Guyana, and have earned her Bachelor of Sciences with honours from the University of Guyana in 2013 as the best graduating student in the programme. She is presently reading for her Master degree in Sciences (MSc) focusing on Natural Resources and Environmental Management, and specialising in Coastal and Marine Resource Management at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill campus. Her research work which will be focused on determining fisheries by-catch composition will be commencing in June this year, and will ultimately contribute to improving the management of fisheries by-catch in Guyana. Leanna is highly interested in biodiversity conservation, particularly, fishery resources, in addition to her interest about climate change. She has worked with researchers from the University of Guyana, Shedd Aquarium, Yale University, the World Wildlife Fund – Guianas, and Global Wildlife Conservation, to contribute to the conservation of freshwater fishery and reptilian resources of Guyana. In addition, she is an active member of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) since June, 2014, and is closely working with CYEN national chapters of Guyana and Barbados to promote climate change action, environmental and biological conservation, and youth integration in sustainable development related issues.

Regional Coordinator for the Pacific region

Ms. Arianne Kassman (26, Papua New Guinea)



Arianne currently works for Transparency International in Papua New Guinea as their Youth Integrity Program Coordinator, a role she has played for nearly five years now. She got involved in climate change when she attended the Global Powershift in Istanbul in 2013 organised by 350.org. After returning home, she led the establishment of 350.org PNG, and since then she has coordinated this organization on a voluntary role. Arianne has organized local climate trainings for youth, spoken at many events on climate change both in her country and abroad, including at the release of the Encyclical by the Pope on Climate Change in April 2015 in Rome where she represented 350.org. She also spoke at a Press Conference at Radio Vatican, and presented a paper on the Specific implications of climate change for women, adolescents, children and person with Disability in relation to women, children and adolescents at the regional ministerial consultation on Strengthening Climate Change Resilience through Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) in Fiji in October 2015. Besides her participation to events, she also conducted local advocacy work with young people in her country, and was invited as a panellist to the Pacific Climate Change Conference at Victoria University in New Zealand where she presented her work on a panel titled "Where to from here? Political Challenges and Possibilities".