

MAY 2025

Planet FORWARD

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF SAFE SPACE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

When the Earth Weeps

The Hidden Cost of Oil –
A Call to Conscience



From the Desk of SHADEF

WHY
SUSTAINABILITY?
BECAUSE THE
FUTURE CAN'T WAIT

INCLUSION AND
SUSTAINABILITY

YOUTH-LED
ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVOCACY

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PLANET FORWARD



Dear Esteemed Readers,

It is with great honor and a deep sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the inaugural edition of Planet Forward, a publication devoted to advancing environmental sustainability, eco-conscious living, and inclusive ecological advocacy.

This first issue represents the beginning of a journey, a commitment to fostering awareness, encouraging innovation, and celebrating the diverse efforts being made to safeguard our environment for future generations.

At a time when environmental challenges continue to grow in complexity and urgency, Planet Forward seeks to serve as both a beacon and a platform for thoughtful reflection, constructive dialogue, and transformative action.

Within these pages, you will find compelling narratives, creative expressions, and inspiring accounts of individuals and communities, particularly young people, who are taking bold steps to protect and restore our planet. Their stories underscore the vital role of education, creativity, inclusion, and collective responsibility in shaping a sustainable future.

When the Earth Weeps

The Hidden Cost of Oil —
A Call to Conscience

"The wealth of oil has not trickled down—it has trickled poison into rivers, fire into the skies, and disease into the lungs of children."

From the Desk of SHADEF

According to Wikipedia, In 1998, a devastating oil spill by Mobil Nigeria unleashed an estimated 40,000 barrels of crude oil into the environment. More than 850 kilometers of coastline were contaminated, and entire fishing communities were left in ruin. According to public records, this was not an isolated incident but a glaring symptom of a system that routinely places profit above people and ecosystems.

Fossil fuel exploitation doesn't just degrade the environment it permeates human bodies and devastates the health and dignity of communities living near oil fields and gas flares.

The Cost of Breathing

In gas-flaring regions, the consequences are not abstract they are lived daily. Residents near flaring sites are 1.75 times more likely to develop hypertension than those in non-flaring areas. In towns like Obrikom and Egbema, over 3,400 respiratory cases were recorded between 2013 and 2023, attributed directly to prolonged exposure to gas flaring.

Even more alarming, scientific studies have linked this exposure to hematological disorders, such as reduced red blood cell counts and hemoglobin levels, elevating the risk of anemia and other serious health complications.



<https://tinyurl.com/nm2v9bub>

“In some oil communities, over 60% of children suffer from respiratory conditions.”

Each gas flare is more than a symbol of industrial might it is a warning cry from the earth, one we have ignored for far too long. For organizations and citizens committed to sustainability and justice, silence is no longer an option.

Oil Wealth, Human Poverty

Nigeria's oil riches have fueled corporate profits, but they have not improved the lives of those who live atop its reserves. Instead of prosperity, communities face poisoned rivers, charred skies, and abandoned promises. In the Niger Delta, the ground is soaked with crude, the air laced with soot, and hope is harder to find than clean water.



picture-alliance/dpa/M. van Dijk

“The wealth of oil has not trickled down—it has trickled poison into rivers, fire into the skies, and disease into the lungs of children.”

Health Is the First Casualty

Imagine waking up to the sound of a child coughing blood. Imagine water so tainted it's dangerous to touch, let alone drink. Imagine cancer becoming a household word. This is the daily reality for countless families in Nigeria's oil-producing regions.

This is not the price of progress; it is the cost of indifference. No economy should thrive at the expense of human life. Health should never be sacrificed for economic gain

A Silent War on the Poor

Oil exploitation has become a silent war waged not with guns, but with pipelines, toxins, and neglect. Executives fly in private jets while villagers trek miles for polluted water. Corporate profits are fiercely protected, while mothers bury children whose lungs collapsed under the weight of poison.



Members of the Nembe community paddle a canoe across Santa Barbara River following the oil spill || Temilade Adelaja/Reuters

“This is not development—it is devastation in disguise.”

The Environment Is Not a Dumping Ground



Reflection in oil polluted river, Nigeria (Credit. Luka Tomac / FoEI)

“Gas flaring releases over 400 million tons of CO₂ globally each year.”

Gas flaring, despite being illegal under Nigerian law, continues unabated. It spews carcinogens and greenhouse gases into the air, contributing to climate change and public health crises. These emissions fuel the heatwaves that kill crops, the floods that destroy homes, and the rising seas that erase communities. The environment is not collateral damage it is the foundation of life.

What the Earth Demands

We are at a crossroads. The Earth has issued its demands, not in words, but in floods, fires, and the toll on human life. The path forward must be bold, just, and immediate:

End Gas Flaring Permanently

No more loopholes. No more delays. The practice is obsolete and indefensible.

Hold Oil Companies Accountable

Polluters must pay. They must fund land restoration, public health systems, and reparations for affected communities.

Invest in Renewable Futures

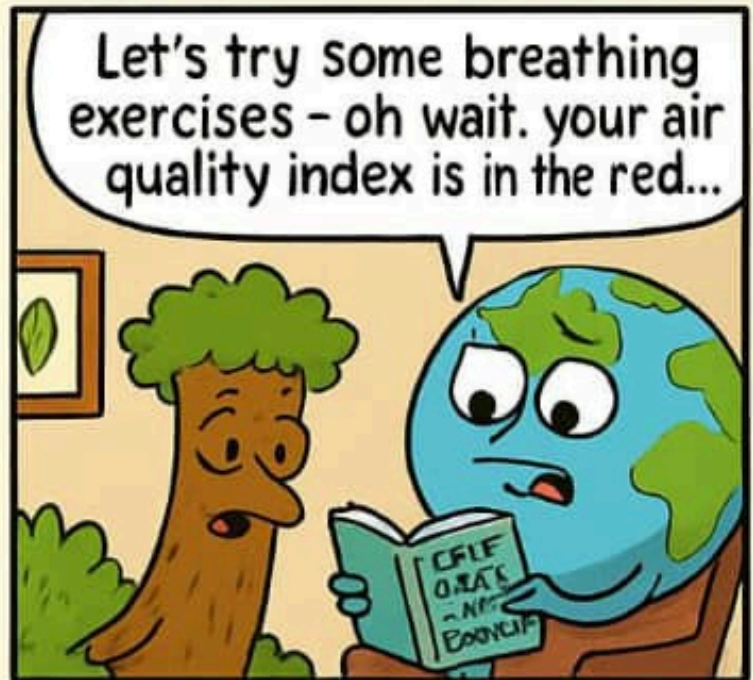
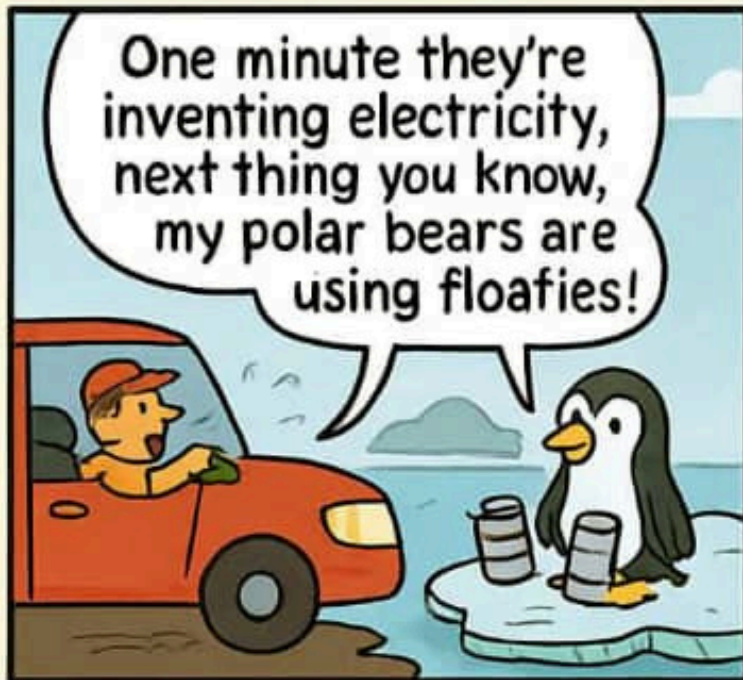
Transition to clean energy now. The technology is here. The excuses must end.

Empower Local Communities

Indigenous and frontline communities must be given a seat at the table, their voices respected, and their rights upheld.

This is more than a climate crisis—it is a justice crisis. It is time to choose conscience over convenience, healing over harm, and a future where no child's breath is taken by profit.

Planet Earth's Therapy Session



WHY SUSTAINABILITY? BECAUSE THE FUTURE CAN'T WAIT



“Sustainability is not just a choice it’s a responsibility to ensure a thriving future for all.”

Every day, our planet sends us a message a silent, urgent cry through rising temperatures, choking air, vanishing species, and waters inching closer to homes. It’s a message we can no longer afford to ignore. As someone deeply engaged with the United Nations and global environmental advocates, I’ve seen both the warning signs and the remarkable power of collective action. One truth stands above all: sustainability is not an option it’s the only way forward.

“The Earth is sending us a message.
The future isn’t waiting and neither should we.”

Sustainability means more than just green living or carbon footprints. It’s a powerful mindset a commitment to live in harmony with nature, to build systems that support people and planet equally, and to ensure that progress doesn’t come at the expense of future generations. It’s about redefining success not by what we consume, but by what we conserve.

Our world is at a turning point. Will we continue down a path of destruction, or will we rise to the challenge and reimagine how we live, build, eat, and grow? Sustainability offers us the tools: renewable energy, circular economies, climate-smart agriculture, green innovations, and policies rooted in equity. It gives voice to the vulnerable and dignity to the Earth we all call home.

Through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the tireless work of eco-champions across the globe, the momentum is building. We're not just advocating for change we're creating it. From boardrooms to classrooms, from policy tables to grassroots communities, the movement is alive and rising.

So, why sustainability? Because clean air is a right, not a luxury. Because nature doesn't need us but we desperately need her. Because the world we pass on must be better, not worse, than the one we inherited.

The time to act is not tomorrow. It's now. The Earth is watching and so are the generations yet to come.

Samila Enweonwu.

YES CLUB SPACE

Welcome to the YES Club Corner, where passion meets action and young minds come together to make a difference!

In this section, we'll be sharing inspiring stories, exciting updates, and

hands-on tips from our YES Club members, who are leading the charge in environmental conservation and sustainability.



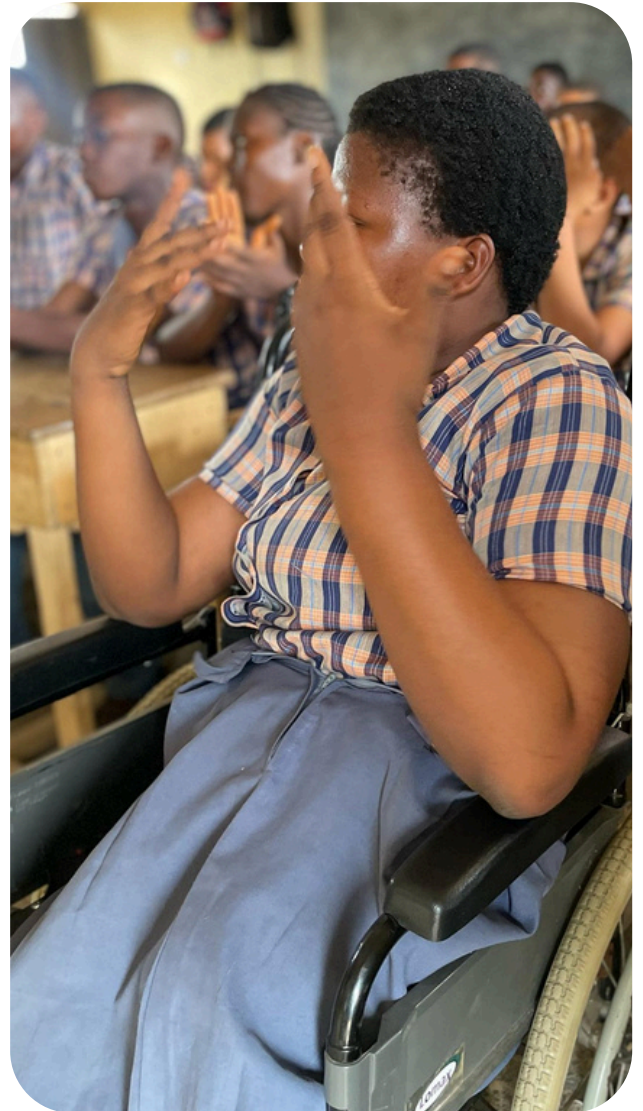
“Empowering Young Eco-Stewards for a Sustainable Future”

From upcycling plastics into innovative creations to tree planting, and from eco-art to sustainable living, our YES Club members are proving that every small action counts, and that together, we can create a brighter, greener future.

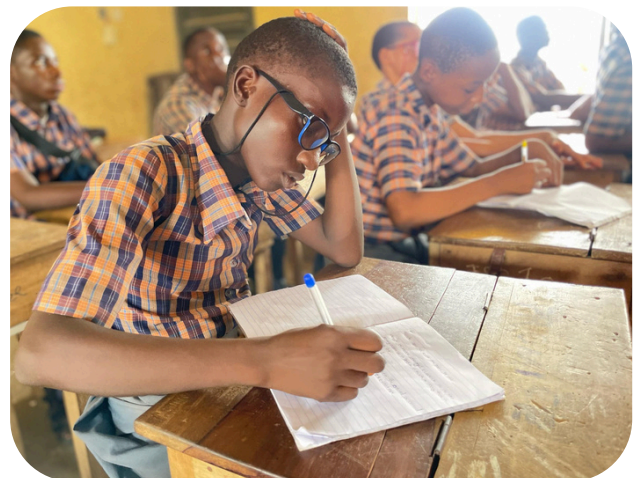
So, join us in celebrating the creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication of our young eco-heroes!

INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTRE, UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE

At SHADEF, we believe that environmental consciousness knows no boundaries. That's why we're dedicated to making sustainability practices accessible to all communities, including those often overlooked. Our visit to the Special Education Centre in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, was a powerful reminder of the impact that inclusive environmental education can have.



The Young Environmentalists (YEs) Club members at the Special Education Centre are the epitome of inclusivity and sustainability. Despite the challenges they face, they're passionate about making a positive impact on their environment. Our interactive upcycling workshop was a testament to their creativity, enthusiasm, and critical thinking.





With the invaluable assistance of Mr. Wisdom Akpan, the sign language interpreter, and the head of the club, we ensured that every student was engaged and empowered throughout the workshop. It was truly inspiring to witness their growth and development as they turned plastic bottles into artistic and functional vases. These students are more than just YEs Club members—they're sustainability champions, ambassadors of inclusivity, and beacons of hope for a greener future. By embracing inclusive environmental education,



we're not only promoting sustainability but also fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among all individuals. Join us in celebrating these incredible students and our shared mission to create a more inclusive, sustainable future for all!

YOUTH-LED ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY: THE YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS CLUB MAKES WAVES IN INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL, UKANA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.

Meet the Young Environmentalists Club at Independence High School, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, a shining example of youth-led environmental advocacy in action. This dedicated group of students is raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices through innovative activities like clean-up drives, recycling campaigns, and workshops on climate change. Their mission? To inspire their peers to adopt eco-friendly habits and nurture future leaders who are conscious of their environmental impact.

From organizing school clean-up initiatives to developing sustainable gardens, these students are taking a hands-on approach to sustainability. They're also promoting eco-friendly practices among their peers, encouraging them to reduce their carbon footprint and adopt environmentally conscious habits. By combining education, activism, and community engagement, the Young Environmentalists Club is creating a ripple effect of positive change that will inspire future generations.



But that's not all. The Young Environmentalists Club has also been making waves with their innovative YES CLUB project, which recently caught the attention of THE MAIL Newspaper. This groundbreaking initiative showcases students collaborating with SHADEF to transform plastic waste into a standard urinary system. Yes, you read that right – plastic waste into a life-changing medical solution!





This project exemplifies how eco-friendly practices can be both fun and impactful, empowering individuals to make small, meaningful changes that add up to make a big difference. By combining creativity, innovation, and sustainability, these students are proving that even the most seemingly insurmountable environmental challenges can be tackled with passion and determination. The impact of the Young Environmentalists Club's initiatives extends far beyond their school community.



Extract from The Mail newspaper, 06th January, 2025

They're inspiring a new generation of sustainability champions, empowering them to become eco-leaders and drive positive change in their own communities. By supporting and amplifying their efforts, we can create a ripple effect of sustainability that will inspire positive change for years to come.

For the full story on this inspiring project, check out THE MAIL newspaper. Join us in celebrating these eco-heroes and inspiring a new generation of sustainability champions!

SOWING THE SEEDS OF SUSTAINABILITY: THE NEXT GENERATION OF ECO-LEADERS

In a world where environmental consciousness is more crucial than ever, the YES Club students are leading the charge. These young leaders are sowing the seeds of sustainability, and their hard work is blooming into impressive eco-friendly initiatives that are making a real difference. With their passion, creativity, and commitment to creating a better future, they're inspiring a new generation of eco-warriors.

Recently, they joined forces with the SHADEF team to brainstorm innovative ways to reduce their carbon footprint and promote environmental awareness.



The SHADEF team's support has been instrumental in empowering the YES Club to take their eco-friendly initiatives to the next level. Together, they're cultivating a culture of sustainability that will inspire positive change for years to come.

With Evelyn Eyo and the SHADEF team providing expert guidance, the students' creativity flourished, yielding impressive eco-friendly initiatives that showcase their critical thinking skills and innovative ideas. From conceptualizing eco-friendly products to developing sustainable practices, these young leaders are thinking outside the box to drive positive change.

From reducing waste to promoting eco-friendly practices, these young leaders are truly making a difference. They're organizing school clean-up initiatives, developing sustainable gardens, and promoting eco-friendly habits among their peers.



Kudos to the YES Club students of independence High School and the SHADEF team for their collaborative efforts to create a greener, brighter future. Their hard work and dedication serve as a shining example of the impact that can be made when passion, creativity, and community come together. As we celebrate their achievements, we're reminded that the future of our planet is in good hands.



As we look to the future, we're excited to see the YES Club's initiatives continue to flourish. With the SHADEF team's guidance and support, these young leaders are poised to make a lasting impact on their community and the world at large. Join us in celebrating these eco-heroes and inspiring a new generation of sustainability champions!



CALL-TO-ACTION

Share your own eco-friendly initiatives and tips in the comments on our Social Media Handles @shadefeco.

Tag a friend who's making a difference in their community! Use the hashtag #EcoHeroes to join the conversation!

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ECO-LEADERS: OUR VISIT TO THE YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS CLUB AT ROYAL CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL, UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE.

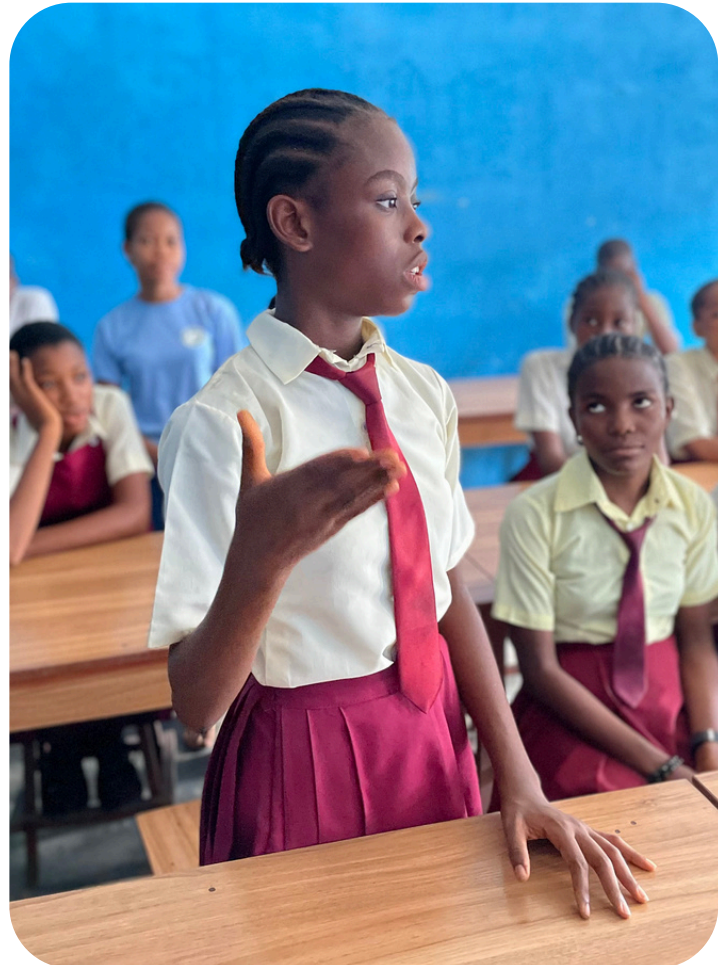
A couple of months ago, our SHADEF team had the privilege of visiting the Young Environmentalists (YEs) Club members at Royal Christian High School in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. We were blown away by the enthusiasm, dedication, and creativity of these bright young minds who are eager to make a difference in their school and community. As we spent time with these inspiring students, we witnessed firsthand their passion for environmental sustainability and their commitment to driving positive change.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to discuss their project plans and timeline, and we were impressed by the thought and effort they've put into their preparations. From conceptualizing innovative solutions to developing strategic plans, these students are taking a comprehensive approach to addressing environmental challenges. With implementation set to begin in the coming weeks, we can't wait to see their ideas come to life and the positive impact it will have on both the school and the broader Uyo community.



The members of the Young Environmentalists (YEs) club at Royal Christian High School did truly cook up something special – a project that will not only inspire their peers but also drive meaningful change in their community. As we looked forward to the project's launch, we were excited to continually share updates and insights into their journey.

This was just the beginning of an exciting journey with the Young Environmentalists Club at Royal Christian High School.



FROM TRASH TO TREASURE:

THE YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS' SCHOOL HIDDEN PROJECT WAS TAKING SHAPE

It's Global Recycling Day and something remarkable was happening at Royal Christian High School! Barely a few weeks after our visit, our Young Environmentalists (YEs) club members were embarking on an ambitious project to transform hundreds of discarded plastic bottles into something stunning and beautiful. This innovative initiative was not only a testament to the students' creativity and dedication but also a shining example of the impact that was being made when passion, sustainability, and community were coming together.



This meticulous planning process was not only honing their critical thinking skills but also preparing them for the exciting transformation process that was ahead. The transformation process was being a remarkable journey, where bottles were being cleaned, labels removed, and bases cut—all while learning about plastic pollution and the importance of upcycling.

For weeks, these dedicated eco-warriors were scouring school grounds and neighborhoods to gather plastic bottles that would otherwise have been ending up littered everywhere. The collection of the bottles was being an eye-opener for them as they were seeing how quickly these single-use plastics were accumulating in their community. This hands-on experience was not only deepening their understanding of plastic pollution but also fueling their determination to make a difference. Under the guidance of SHADEF team members, the students were beginning to sort bottles by size, color, and condition. They were then developing detailed sketches and plans for the project, carefully calculating how many bottles would be needed for each design element.



As they were working tirelessly to bring their vision to life, these young environmental champions were proving that even the most seemingly insurmountable environmental challenges could be tackled with creativity, determination, and community support. The end result was yet to be revealed but it was already a breathtakingly beautiful project that was showcasing the students' creativity, innovation, and commitment to sustainability.



As we celebrated Global Recycling Day 2025, we honored these young environmental champions and all the unsung heroes who were making a difference through sustainable practices. From eco-warriors to community organizers, innovative businesses, and individuals committed to reducing their carbon footprint, we were recognizing and celebrating their contributions to a more sustainable future.



CALL-TO-ACTION

Share your own eco-friendly initiatives and tips to your friends and circle!
Tag a friend who's making a difference in their community, and make sure they get a copy of this magazine

HANDS-ON SUSTAINABILITY: YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS CLUB TRANSFORMS PLASTIC WASTE INTO ART

As the Young Environmentalists (YEs) club members at Royal Christian High School continued onto the final stages of their ambitious upcycling project, excitement kept building! For weeks, these dedicated students had been transforming hundreds of plastic bottles into a stunning SCHOOL SIGNAGE. To commemorate Earth Month, they drove this innovative initiative and it did not only showcase the students' creativity and innovation but also highlighted the importance of sustainability and environmental responsibility.



As the Young Environmentalists Club members entered the final stages of their project, they reflected on the valuable skills they've developed along the way. From teamwork and problem-solving to creativity and critical thinking, this project became a transformative experience that will stay with them for years to come.

As the students refined their techniques and perfected their craft, the SIGNAGE began taking shape. The cutting process, once a challenge, had now become a breeze, with students expertly shaping plastic bottles into intricate letter forms and decorative elements. The painting crew added a pop of color, ensuring the final product will withstand outdoor conditions and make a lasting impression. Working in teams, the students developed a seamless system, with each member bringing their unique skills and strengths to the table. From cutting and shaping to joining and painting, every step of the process was carefully considered to ensure a professional finish. The result is a stunning work of art that not only showcased the students' creativity but also promoted sustainability and environmental awareness.



Designing the signage with recycled material



Visiting the YEs Club Student of Royal Christian High School



Cross section of YEs Club members

YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS UNVEIL STUNNING UPCYCLED SCHOOL SIGNAGE: A TESTAMENT TO CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY

In a moment of pride and celebration, the Young Environmentalists (YEs) club members at Royal Christian High School, UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE, unveiled their stunning upcycled SCHOOL SIGNAGE at the PTA meeting. The SIGNAGE, created entirely from discarded plastic bottles, is a testament to the students' determination, innovation, and environmental consciousness. This remarkable achievement is not only a showcase of the students' creativity and skill but also a powerful lesson in sustainability, perseverance, and the impact young people can have when they combine creativity with environmental purpose.



By working together with SHADEF, the Young Environmentalists Club members have not only created a beautiful work of art but also contributed to a larger movement towards environmental sustainability. The chairman of the PTA urged all parents present to encourage their children to join the YEs club, thereby contributing to eradicating plastic pollution around them.

The intricate signage featured close to 100 plastic bottles, meticulously cut, shaped, and painted in the school's colors. The transformation from trash to treasure is a remarkable achievement, one that showcases the students' creativity, skill, and commitment to sustainability. Each bottle in the signage represents the students' commitment to finding creative ways to address plastic pollution and promote environmental sustainability. "This project has taught us determination and innovation," the YEs club students shared during the presentation. "Each bottle in this sign represents our commitment to finding creative ways to address plastic pollution." The students' words echoed the values of SHADEF, an organization dedicated to creating practical environmental solutions while educating others.



The school principal announced that the signage will serve as a daily reminder of how young minds can turn environmental challenges into opportunities for beauty and innovation. This project has been more than an art installation; it's been a powerful lesson in sustainability, perseverance, and the impact young people can have when they combine creativity with environmental purpose. This achievement is a testament to the power of environmental education and the impact that young people can have when they're empowered with knowledge, skills, and creativity.



SHADEF's Environmental Education Initiative, which has reached over 10 schools across Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, is dedicated to educating and inspiring young minds to become environmental champions. By combining traditional ecological knowledge with modern sustainability science, we're creating environmental stewards who understand both global issues and local solutions. Our workshops empower young minds to see environmental challenges as opportunities for innovation and leadership. By working together with schools and communities, we're creating a movement of young environmental champions who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and creativity to drive positive change.



CALL-TO-ACTION

Want to bring our workshops to schools in your community? Drop a comment or DM us on social media @shadefeco. Together, we're growing the next generation of environmental champions.

Waste Warriors:



The average Nigerian generates about 4.4 pounds of trash per day! However, recycling just one plastic bottle can save enough energy to power a computer for 25 minutes.

MEET THE REAL HEROES: CELEBRATING STUDENT CHAMPIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

At SHADEF, we're proud to join the world in recognizing Global Recycling Day 2025! This year's theme, Recycling Heroes, celebrates those making a difference through sustainable practices.

AND WE'RE THRILLED TO SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON OUR OWN HEROES – THE STUDENTS OF **THE YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS, (YES) CLUB AT INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL, UKANA, ESSIEN UDIM, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.**

THESE ECO-WARRIORS HAVE BEEN WORKING TIRELESSLY TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY AND REDUCE WASTE IN THEIR COMMUNITY. FROM ORGANIZING CLEAN-UP INITIATIVES TO DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS, THEY'RE THE EMBODIMENT OF THE RECYCLING HEROES SPIRIT.

Their dedication, passion, and commitment to creating a better future are truly inspiring.

The YEs Club students are the perfect example of how young people can make a significant impact when given the opportunity. They're not just learning about sustainability they're living. They're the heroes who will shape the future of our planet, and we're honored to support them on their journey.

As we celebrate Global Recycling Day, we honor these student champions of sustainability, along with community organizers, innovative businesses, and individuals making a difference through sustainable practices.



Together, we can preserve our planet for generations to come.

Let's join forces to amplify the impact of these young heroes!

Share your own recycling stories and tips on our website @shadef.org, and let's inspire each other to make a difference.



WHAT AN AMAZING QUARTER IT'S BEEN FOR OUR YES CLUB MEMBERS!

Our members have:

- Upcycled plastics into innovative products
- Planted over 50 trees in our local community
- Created stunning eco-art from recycled materials
- Learned simple changes for sustainable living

We're proud of our members' accomplishments! and let's keep working towards a greener future!



GROWEAT CORNER

GROWEAT CAMPAIGN CELEBRATES FIRST SCHOOL HARVEST: A TESTAMENT TO HANDS-ON LEARNING AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In January 2025, Our Sister organization, The GROWEAT Campaign initiative marked a significant milestone with its first successful harvest across participating schools. Following the planting activities conducted in November 2024, students and the team reconvened to reap the fruits of their labor. This hands-on agricultural education program demonstrated the journey from seed to harvest, providing students with practical experience in food production and agroecological practices.



As a proud partner of the GROWEAT initiative, SHADEF was honored to support this innovative program. Our team was impressed by the students' enthusiasm and dedication to sustainable farming practices. Prior to the harvest, our team visited Aka Community Secondary School in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, to educate the students on the importance of growing their own food. They were briefed on Agroecology, a way of farming that works with nature, not against it.

The harvest event served as a tangible demonstration of the program's success, allowing students to witness the results of their careful planting and maintenance over the past few months. Some of the schools involved in this campaign included Aka Community Secondary School and Adiaha Obong Secondary School. The students were able to harvest sweet corn and bell pepper, with other crops soon to follow.



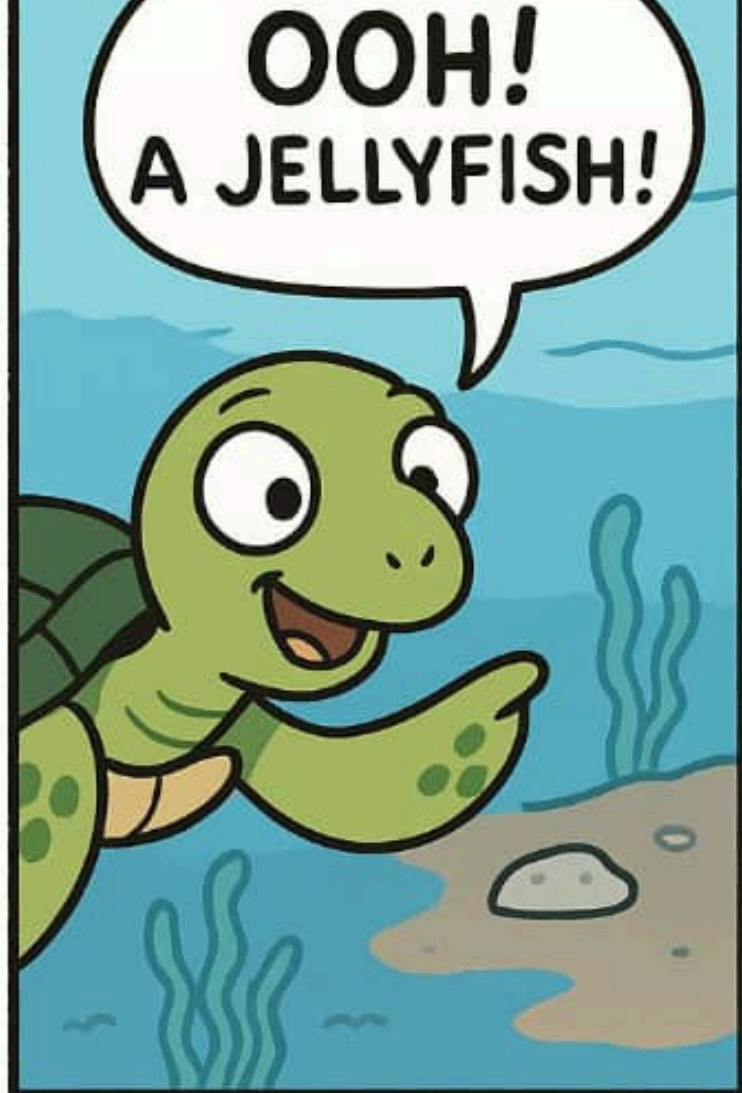
The students were taught that growing their own food gives them the ability to decide what they want, creating a healthy lifestyle. The students were impressed and excited, with the eagerness clearly visible on their faces as they promised to begin their house gardening journey at home. They took out time to share insights on what they've learned and ideas on how to grow their own food. This was a beautiful move, as we looked forward to all that they would achieve in the coming weeks, months, and even years.

GROWEAT CORNER 2025

The GROWEAT Campaign was more than just a project – it was a movement towards creating a sustainable future. By empowering young minds to take action, we were cultivating a new generation of sustainable farmers, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and passion to make a difference.



CALL-TO-ACTION: Remember to plant a seed today, nurture it, and watch it blossom! Share your own experiences with sustainable farming and education on our website @ SHADEF.org



WORLD WATER DAY: A CELEBRATION OF THIS PRECIOUS RESOURCE



Illero Dam // iStock

Appreciating the beauty and importance of water

World Water Day was marked on March 22nd, a day to recognize the vital role water plays in our lives and the lives of all living things. Water is the source of life, and yet, millions of people around the world struggle to access this precious resource. From the majestic oceans that cover over 70% of our planet to the smallest droplets of dew on a leaf, water is essential for human survival, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

This year's theme, "Accelerating Change," highlighted the need for collective action to address the global water crisis. From reducing plastic pollution to promoting sustainable agriculture, every small action counted. As we celebrated World Water Day, we didn't forget that our oceans, rivers, and lakes were all interconnected and faced similar challenges. The ocean, in particular, plays a critical role in regulating the Earth's climate, providing half of the oxygen we breathe, and serving as a source of food for billions of people.



African children collecting water: World Water Day || shutterstock

[“Access to clean water is a fundamental human right”](#)

However, our oceans are under siege from a range of unprecedented and escalating threats, chief among them being plastic pollution, overfishing, and the far-reaching consequences of climate change. Among these, plastic pollution has emerged as a particularly alarming issue. Each year, an estimated 11 million metric tons of plastic waste flow into our oceans—a figure projected to nearly triple by 2040 if no action is taken. This deluge of plastic chokes marine ecosystems, entangles wildlife, and breaks down into microplastics that infiltrate every layer of the food web. From plankton to fish to the seafood on our plates, these microplastics pose a silent yet serious risk to both biodiversity and human health.

As we observed **Global Recycling Day** on March 18th, we were reminded of the crucial role that individual and collective responsibility plays in addressing this crisis. The principles of "reduce, reuse, and recycle" are not just slogans—they are essential strategies in the fight against plastic pollution. By embracing sustainable practices, investing in circular economies, and holding producers accountable for the lifecycle of their products, we can begin to stem the tide and safeguard the health of our oceans for generations to come.

So, what can we do to make a difference?

HERE ARE A FEW SIMPLE ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE:

- Reduce our use of single-use plastics
- Recycle as much as possible
- Use eco-friendly products and packaging
- Support organizations working to protect our oceans and waterways
- Educate ourselves and others about the importance of water conservation



“Collective actions for a brighter future is the way forward”

By working together, we can ensure that everyone has access to clean water and a healthy environment. We can make a difference, one drop at a time!

DID YOU KNOW¿?

Water Wonders :



The Earth's oceans hold about 97% of the planet's water! However, only 2.5% of the Earth's water is freshwater, and most of it is trapped in glaciers and polar ice caps.

Tree-mendous Oxygen :



Trees provide oxygen for us to breathe, but did you know that a single mature tree can produce enough oxygen for 10 people in a year?

DROWNING IN PLASTIC : THE CRISIS WE CAN NO LONGER IGNORE



Extracted from Afrah Umapathy's piece on "Effects of ocean plastics on marine life"

"From the depths of the oceans to the blood in our veins, plastics have breached every frontier. The question is no longer where they are it's what we are willing to do about it."

"Every piece of plastic ever made still lingers somewhere. We are either part of the pollution or part of the solution."



<https://tinyurl.com/yeypv56e>

They found the whale washed ashore, belly bloated, life drained away. Inside its stomach were 40 kilograms of plastic bags, fishing nets, bottle caps; enough to choke the very spirit of the ocean.

This is not a distant tragedy. It is the reality we are creating, every single day.

According to the Cable News Network (CNN), Cognitively normal human brain samples collected at autopsy in early 2024 contained more tiny shards of plastic than samples collected eight years prior, according to a new study. Overall, cadaver brain samples contained seven to 30 times more tiny shards of plastic than their kidneys and liver, said co-lead study author Matthew Campen, Regents' Professor and professor of pharmaceutical sciences at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

"The concentrations we saw in the brain tissue of normal individuals, who had an average age of around 45 or 50 years old, were 4,800 micrograms per gram, or 0.48% by weight," Campen said.

That's the equivalent of an entire standard plastic spoon, Campen said.

"Compared to autopsy brain samples from 2016, that's about 50% higher," he said. "That would mean that our brains today are 99.5% brain and the rest is plastic."

It is possible, however, that current methods of measuring plastics may have over- or underestimated their levels in the body, Campen said: "We're working hard to get to a very precise estimate, which should I think we will have within the next year."



Extracted from Getty Images



That's why on the last Saturday of March we made it cleanup day at Ibeno Beach. It was more than just a community event – it was a call to action.

The Zero Plastic Initiative, organized by the Safe Space Development Foundation (SHADEF) in partnership with the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), brought together individuals, community leaders, and environmental advocates to take action against plastic pollution and promote sustainable practices.



Cleanup exercise at ibeno beach, Nigeria



By cleaning up our beaches and communities, we're not only beautifying our surroundings, but also protecting our environment. Plastic waste harms marine life, contaminates the food chain, and affects human health. By removing trash and debris, we're helping to:

- Reduce marine pollution and protect aquatic life
- Prevent the spread of disease and promote public health
- Conserve natural resources and mitigate climate change
- Foster community engagement and promote environmental awareness

The cleanup day was a reminder of the impact we can have when we come together for a common cause. By working collectively, we can:

- Raise awareness about environmental issues and promote education
- Inspire individual action and community-led initiatives
- Support policy changes and advocacy efforts for environmental protection
- Create a ripple effect of positive change that benefits our planet



Join us in our quest for a cleaner, greener future. Every small action counts, and together, we can make a significant difference!

#CleanUpDay
#ZeroPlasticInitiative
#Sustainability
#EnvironmentalJustice

BUILDING A MOVEMENT:

UYO YOUNG CLIMATE ACTIVISTS HANGOUT 1.0

As we continue on our journey to create a more sustainable future, it's clear that the power to drive change lies in the hands of our young people. The next generation of leaders, innovators, and change-makers are already making their mark, and it's our responsibility to empower and support them. That's why we were thrilled to host the inaugural Uyo Young Climate Activists Hangout, co-hosted with our amazing partners at Bluegreen Initiative!



As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, and sustainability, it's become clear that young people hold the key to driving eco-friendly behaviors and sustainability in their sphere and environment. Our event was designed to empower and inspire young climate activists to take action, share their ideas, and collaborate on projects that promote sustainability.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in thought-provoking discussions, interactive sessions, and eco-friendly activities that highlighted the importance of sustainability in our daily lives. We explored topics such as:



- The impact of climate change on local communities and ecosystems
- The role of youth in driving sustainability and environmental advocacy
- Practical tips and strategies for reducing waste, conserving energy, and promoting eco-friendly behaviors
- Opportunities for collaboration and collective action on sustainability projects

Our event featured compelling speeches from established climate leaders who shared their journeys, challenges, and victories in environmental advocacy. Participants were inspired by their stories and gained valuable insights into the world of sustainability and environmental activism.



Throughout the day, participants had the opportunity to network, share ideas, and form connections with like-minded individuals. We encouraged collaboration, creativity, and innovation, and provided a platform for young climate activists to showcase their projects and initiatives.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participants, guest speakers, volunteers, and our incredible partners at Bluegreen Initiative for making this event possible. Together, we're building a stronger, more connected community of climate advocates ready to create meaningful change.



Stay tuned for updates on future hangouts and opportunities to get involved with SHADEF's ongoing climate education and advocacy initiatives!

#ClimateAction

#YouthActivism

#Sustainability

#SHADEF

#BluegreenInitiative

VOLUNTEERS OF THE QUARTER



Name : **Esther Ubak**

Message On Sustainability :
"Waste isn't waste until you waste it"



Name : **Anietie Timothy**

Message On Sustainability :
"Go Green, Live Clean and Breathe pure"



Name : **Ability Etim**

Message On Sustainability :
"Earth's beauty is our duty; conserve today and preserve tomorrow"



Name : **Abasiama Cyril**

Message On Sustainability :
"Earth is our home, our future, protect it!"

Whose Sky Do You FLY?

When did rivers lose their silver
tongues,
and who taught trees to forget their
names?

What dirges do the glaciers hum as
they drown,
and do the winds mourn, or merely
change?

Whose fingerprints smear the sun's
bright mirror,
whose dreams are sewn into smoke-
thick skies?

Did we ever ask the soil if it wept,
or the oceans if they feared their own
rise?

Can you taste the sorrow braided into
rain,
feel the ache lodged deep in the
marrow of stone?

Which shattered hourglass did we
mistake for a cradle,
and whose silence now do we call our
own?

When the last whale sings to an
empty deep,
will you cup your hands for an echo
of guilt?
Or weave crowns from ash and call it
harvest,
proud of the empires you wilted and
built?



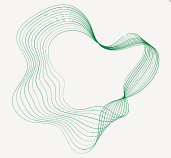
If the earth could speak, would it
curse or forgive?
And if it forgave—would you dare
to believe?

AKWA-UBOK MOSES

YEs Clubber.

**St Louisé Inclusive School, Akwa
Ibom State, Nigeria.**

Work with Us



Join SHADEF in Making a Difference

Are you passionate about community development, storytelling, advocacy, or grassroots impact? Do you have a talent for writing or a heart for volunteering? SHADEF (Safe Space Development Foundation) is calling on dedicated individuals who are eager to make a positive difference in our communities.

At SHADEF, we believe in the power of words and actions to transform lives. Through our programs and initiatives, we champion climate education, youth development, and indigenous cultural preservation.

We are currently seeking:

Volunteer Writers and Content Creators

Craft compelling stories, articles, blog posts, and reports that highlight the work we do and the voices of the communities we serve. Whether you're a journalist, student, creative writer, or simply have a knack for communication, your words can spark real change.

General Volunteers

Join us in our on-the-ground activities, community outreach, events, training programs, research, and more. No matter your background or experience, your time and skills can make a meaningful impact.

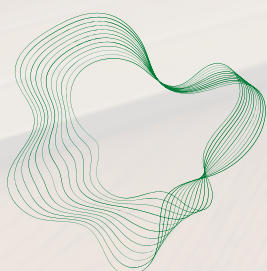
Why Work with SHADEF?

Be part of a mission-driven team

Build valuable skills and gain experience

Network with like-minded change-makers

Help promote positive change in underserved communities



Get Involved

Ready to work with us? Send us an email at info@shadef.org. Let us know how you would like to contribute we would love to hear from you!