



**WE ARE FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

COP28 YOUTH DELEGATION

**UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE
CHANGE CONFERENCE**





We Are Family Foundation
COP28 Youth Delegate



JEFFERSON KANGACHA

KENYA, 25, HE/HIM
Languages: English, Swahili
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

JEFFERSON (JEFF) IS A KENYAN AGRICULTURALIST, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ENTHUSIAST AND TECHNOLOGY OPTIMIST.

As a fourth-generation smallholder farmer, Jeff is passionate about how emerging technologies can revolutionize the agri-food systems of developing economies. Currently, he is a fourth-year student and research scholar at Cornell University, where he is pursuing a dual major in International Agriculture and Computing & Information Sciences. As an undergraduate research fellow, Jeff has been exploring how mobile-based platforms and data-driven technologies are facilitating access to farm inputs, micro-finance and agricultural extension services for smallholder farmers in East Africa. Prior to attending Cornell University, Jeff co-founded the Eden Hub — an agribusiness enterprise in controlled environment agriculture. In addition to managing hydroponic production systems, Jeff established a social impact initiative within E-Hub to support lunch programs in local primary schools and curated an apprenticeship program on climate-smart agriculture for high school youth. Outside of social entrepreneurship, Jeff served as a product development consultant for Sanergy Collaborative, where he supported the conceptualization of a digital platform to facilitate the access of smallholder farmers to regenerative farm inputs. Beyond agriculture, Jeff also serves in think tanks to amplify youth movements creating systemic change. As the President of Teennation Africa, he managed a portfolio of campaigns in Kenya and Nigeria to promote the inclusion of youth in political leadership and the development of public policy. Jeff has been recognized as a We Are Family Foundation 2018 Global Teen Leader, a Harvard Social Collaborative Innovation Finalist and a distinguished African Young Leadership Fellow by the Teen General Assembly.

EXPERTISE: DIGITAL AGRICULTURE, FOOD SYSTEMS, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CIRCULAR ECONOMY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





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JEREMIAH THORONKA

SIERRA LEONE, 23, HE/HIM
Languages: Creole, Loko, English
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

JEREMIAH IS AN AWARD-WINNING INNOVATOR, SCHOLAR AND ENTREPRENEUR WITH DEEP EXPERTISE IN ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY.

While growing up in Sierra Leone, Jeremiah witnessed the negative consequences of energy poverty in his country, such as health issues from photochemical smog, insufficient light for students to study and the destruction of forests for firewood, which leads to further problems like flooding and landslides. At 17, Jeremiah developed Optim Energy, an innovative piezoelectric device that harnesses energy from heat, vibrations and weather to create affordable, accessible and clean power. Optim Energy has provided electricity to over 1,500 citizens and 9,000 students across northern Sierra Leone from 2017 to early 2022. Jeremiah is now using a mini solar grid to provide free electricity for locals in Makawo through a sustainable community development framework he has been exploring. In 2021, Jeremiah was recognized as the inaugural laureate of the 2021 Global Student Prize, Africa Youth and Young Innovator of the Year, received the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence in Development Work — Africa and ranked among the Top 100 Most Influential Africans. He was also named a 2019 United Nations Academic Impact and Millennium Campus Network Fellow and invited to present at the 2019 African Leadership University School of Wildlife Conservation Conference. Jeremiah currently advises the Clean Growth Leadership Network, a world-class network of academics, entrepreneurs, professionals and innovators championing solutions for a sustainable net-zero transition, while pursuing a PhD in Social Innovation and Sustainability at the School of Global Studies.

EXPERTISE: INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT, ENERGY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CLIMATE CHANGE, CONSULTING & RESEARCH





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KASHA SEQUOIA SLAVNER

CANADA, 25, SHE/HER
Languages: English
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

KASHA IS AN AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER, SPEAKER AND PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND PEACE.

At 15, Kasha founded The Global Sunrise Project, a positive-impact media organization, which leverages the power of storytelling to create social change through documentary screenings, photography exhibits and educational workshops. Her first feature documentary, The Sunrise Storyteller, has screened at over 61 film festivals internationally, garnering 31 awards including “Best Documentary” at Carmarthen Bay BAFTA Awards Qualifying Film Festival. Her most recent film, 1.5 Degrees of Peace, currently in production, is a character-driven feature documentary exploring how militarization and conflicts are intrinsically linked with the climate crisis. The film follows the unfolding stories of youth in some of the regions most hard-hit by the impact of these intersecting threats. Kasha is an accredited expert with the Women’s Media Centre. Her work has been featured in CTV News, CBC News, Elle Magazine, Thred and National Geographic Learning, among many other publications. In 2019, she was a recipient of the Diana Award, and most recently selected as one of the Wonder Grantees for Sustainability by the Shawn Mendes Foundation. Kasha has also been awarded as a Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies Trailblazer, and is one of 25 youth selected for the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs #Leaders4Tomorrow program.

EXPERTISE: CLIMATE CHANGE PEACE & SECURITY ISSUES, STORYTELLING & FILMMAKING, PUBLIC SPEAKING, EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH





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LAALITYA ACHARYA

USA, 20, SHE/HER

Languages: English, Gujarati, Hindi

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

LAALITYA IS THE FOUNDER OF THE NEREID PROJECT, AN ORGANIZATION WORKING TO END THE WATER CRISIS THROUGH RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND POLICY INITIATIVES.

Laalitya developed the Nereid research/device, which is a novel method to detect microbial contamination in water through artificial intelligence. Nereid enables communities to be safe and aware about the water quality in their area. She is currently implementing the device in her hometown in Ohio, in India and through Engineers Without Borders (EWB). The Nereid Project, the initiative she founded to further raise awareness, also hosts regular Water Summits to facilitate conversation about how we can all end the water crisis, as well as STEM education programming for students in the local community and online. Laalitya also works in legislation to codify the right to water in law in order to ensure that all people have access to safe and clean water. As a student at Columbia University studying biomedical engineering and political science, she is passionate about integrating science and policy together, as seen in her water advocacy. She is a strong believer that, as a globe, we need to bring science-backed initiatives into the real world. Laalitya has already worked extensively in this sphere by working with US Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer on the CHIPS and Science Act, US Congressman Jerry Nadler, Ohio State Representative Rachel Baker and Columbia University Democrats. All of these experiences have solidified her belief that whether it be public health, climate change or more — science and policy must become interwoven.

**EXPERTISE: SCIENCE,
WATER QUALITY, POLICY,
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**





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LAYA POTHUNURI

INDIA, 22, SHE/HER

Languages: English, Telugu, Hindi

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

LAYA IS AN AWARD-WINNING INNOVATOR, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATIONIST, BRIDGE-BUILDING BETWEEN TECHNOLOGICAL PROPOSALS AND PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION.

Laya has been passionate about our planet since the young age of 12, researching urban agricultural methods and strengthening the aquatic mangrove ecosystem near her hometown in India. She developed sustainable solutions such as an exhaust filter to neutralize vehicular emissions, microbial fuel cell to generate electricity and natural clay-based 3D printing inks that are affordable and accessible to everyone. Laya collaborated with the Rowland Institute at Harvard to examine the phenomenon of locust invasion through an engineering lens. She also studied the future of the sustainable pulp and paper industry in a European context with the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership and is currently formulating antibacterial water filters for small-scale vertical farms at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Laya presented her work at events like the 7th Undergraduate Research Academy and Global Young Scientists Summit 2023 and spoke at the occasions of World Food Prize Leadership Summit – Borlaug Dialogue 2020 and Women’s Convening in Asia 2022. Laya’s efforts earned her the following honors: National Child Award for Exceptional Achievements 2016, YONO SBI 20 under 20 ‘Promising Game Changer’, National Geographic Young Explorer 2020 and DARWIN200 Leader.

EXPERTISE: ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH, ENGINEERING, STORYTELLING/PUBLIC SPEAKING, STEM EQUALITY & ADVOCACY





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OLUWASEYI MOEJOH

NIGERIA, 22, SHE/HER
Languages: English
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

OLUWASEYI IS A NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENTALIST AND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC YOUNG EXPLORER, EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS ABOUT CLIMATE ACTION AND HOW TO BUILD THEIR OWN INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

Oluwaseyi and her team at U-Recycle Initiative Africa have impacted over 10,000 young people across Nigeria and Africa. Their projects have been funded by notable entities such as the National Geographic Society, the Government of Canada and the Captain Planet Foundation. Oluwaseyi's impact story has been featured on numerous media outlets worldwide, including CNN. She is also the African Contributing Editor for OH-Wake Magazine — a global youth magazine spotlighting climate stories from a youth perspective. To further amplify African climate stories from the lens of youth, she recently launched the “Our African Climate Story” project, training activists from 14 African countries on effective climate storytelling with support from We Are Family Foundation. Over the last six years, Oluwaseyi has received numerous accolades for her outstanding contributions to environmental protection and youth development, including the 2022 Diana Award, one of the most prestigious accolades a young person can receive for their social action or humanitarian work. She is also a Youth Representative of the Captain Planet Foundation to the United Nations Department of Global Communications, where she advises on strategies to better engage young people on UN agenda issues. She is certified in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the prestigious Lagos Business School. She is currently studying law at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

**EXPERTISE: PROJECT
MANAGEMENT, STORYTELLING,
PUBLIC SPEAKING, PLASTIC
POLLUTION, CLIMATE CHANGE,
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**





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RACHEL PARENT

CANADA, 24, SHE/HER
Languages: English
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

RACHEL IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE, JOURNALIST, AND THE FOUNDER OF KIDS RIGHT TO KNOW (KRTK).

Rachel founded KRTK as a not-for-profit organization in 2012, dedicated to educating youth about healthy eating, the connection between food production, environmental issues and human rights, and the advocacy for food transparency and proper labeling of genetically engineered foods. She has given hundreds of television, radio, magazine and online interviews, including a well-publicized debate about GMO labeling with host Kevin O’Leary on CBC Television. In addition, she is a two-time TEDx presenter. Rachel has been internationally recognized as an environmental speaker and awarded for her work, including the Rob Stewart Youth Eco-Hero Award, Elle Quebec Magazine Woman of the Year, Post City Magazine Toronto Most Inspiring Women of 2017, along with a long list of recognitions and awards. She is the Director of Gen-Earth, an environmental event platform that has created pop-up events and documentary showcases throughout Toronto, including Nathan Phillips Square. Rachel is presently dedicated to the new Kids Right to Know community garden and education program, teaching children and adults alike how to grow their food, reconnect with nature, protect pollinators and provide grown produce to those in need.

EXPERTISE: AGRICULTURE/FOOD SECURITY, YOUTH, JOURNALISM, CLIMATE/ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY, DOCUMENTARY





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RUSSELL REED

USA, 25, HE/HIM
Languages: English
[LinkedIn Profile](#)

RUSSELL IS A QUEER ENVIRONMENTALIST DEDICATED TO FOSTERING A MORE EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT.

Russell is the conservation program manager at Virunga National Park, the oldest and most biodiverse national park in Africa, which was the focus of his honors thesis on the political ecology of mountain gorilla conservation. He is also building a subsidiary enterprise in the United States commercializing conflict- and deforestation-free food products from Congolese farmers to foster peace and economic development around the park. Russell was previously a founding member and Head of Sustainability & Impact at Sway, winner of the Tom Ford Plastic Innovation Prize, where he helped bring a seaweed-based plastic replacement from concept to market entry. He is involved in a number of equity-driven environmental initiatives, including spearheading an Indigenous-led seaweed industry in Colombia with the Sustainable Ocean Alliance and advising glass recycling and coastal restoration efforts in Louisiana. He graduated from Harvard magna cum laude with highest honors in Geography & Development and a secondary field in African Studies & Kiswahili, becoming the university's first geography graduate in over 70 years. He was a John Harvard Scholar, president of the Harvard Political Review, and co-chair of a university-wide queer activist effort. He then received his master's as part of the inaugural Anthropocene Studies cohort at the University of Cambridge, where he was the 2020 Paul Williams Scholar.

EXPERTISE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, CONSERVATION (TERRESTRIAL, MARINE, FRESHWATER), BIOMATERIALS, SUPPLY CHAIN INNOVATION, AGRICULTURE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP





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UMAZI MVURYA

KENYA, 29, SHE/HER

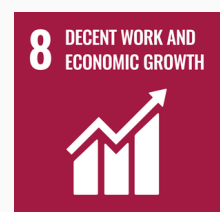
Languages: English, Kiswahili

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

UMAZI IS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIVIST AND THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF KAYA DURUMA, A PROTECTED FOREST SANCTUARY AND HERITAGE SITE ON THE KENYAN COAST.

Umazi's work is inspired by indigenous African sustainability practices and pushes audiences to relate to natural environments outside of the traditional and functional ways that are used to justify their importance for conservational efforts. She aims to shift the dialogue around conservation from something that we have to do to survive the future to something that we want to do because we enjoy how nature makes us feel and understand its influence in our lives outside of known functional roles. Activism has always been integral to Umazi's work. She began the I Am Kenyan Project — a global youth-led peace campaign that used photography and social media to bring over 8 million people globally to unite in response to the threat of violence during the Kenyan 2013 General Elections. Umazi is a TEDxTeen fellow and has been profiled as one of the Top Ten Teens who changed the world by BBC. Her work has been showcased both in person and online at notable exhibitions such as Google Arts and Culture. As the youngest Kaya leader, Umazi is currently championing sustainable utilization model projects within the Kaya, such as oyster farming on Mangrove forest beds as an alternative to lumbering as an economic activity for the Mijikenda community.

**EXPERTISE: CREATIVE ECONOMY,
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC
SPEAKING, GRASSROOTS
MOBILIZATION, DIGITAL MEDIA**





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YASHASVI RAJ

USA, 23, HE/HIM

Languages: English, Kannada

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

YASHASVI IS A PHD STUDENT IN CLIMATE ENGINEERING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, DEDICATED TO EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CLIMATE INNOVATORS AND TO ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS TO HUMANITY'S GREATEST THREAT, ANTHROPOGENIC CLIMATE CHANGE.

Yashasvi's current research focuses on refreezing the Arctic through the development of Marine Cloud Brightening technologies. He hopes to do this by increasing the albedo and light-scattering properties of clouds using only seawater. Previously, as a research assistant at MIT, Yashasvi worked on projects ranging from a suction crawler robot, schlieren imaging setups and a green desalination cogeneration device capable of producing both potable water and clean electricity. For his contributions, he holds several patents and publications in high-impact journals, including Physical Review Letters. Yashasvi was also a founding member of a clean-tech start-up aimed at offsetting emissions related to hydrogen production, transportation and storage. Additionally, he is passionate about expanding access to quality STEM education for disadvantaged and underserved demographics. Through international workshops and establishing a STEM outreach society called Hands-On, Yashasvi has personally facilitated activities for 5,000+ children globally and created accessible curriculum materials reaching many more. He also developed solar-powered and thermoelectric alternatives to kerosene lamps and was invited to speak at the UN's International Day of Peace. Yashasvi was awarded the Most Outstanding Contribution and Changemaker Awards at the University of Edinburgh for his leadership and graduated with a first-class degree in Mechanical Engineering.

EXPERTISE: CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABLE ENGINEERING, OUTREACH





CONTACT



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