



LIVING PLANET REPORT 2024

YOUTH EDITION

BY YOUNG PEOPLE, FOR YOUNG PEOPLE





Acknowledgements

Young Contributors

We would like to acknowledge our young contributors for their participation in the focus group discussions held for the development and designing of the Living Planet Report 2024 – Youth Edition. Our young contributors included, Ana, P. G. P (Paraguay), Aurvi, J (Singapore), Loaira, T. R. M (Ecuador), Syna, G (Kenya), Roshen, G-N (Malaysia), Angie, V. R. S (Colombia), Sreejith, A. J (India), Siena, R (United Kingdom), Emma, W (United Kingdom), Jasmine, M. L (Zambia), William, L (United Kingdom), Adil, A (Pakistan), Roshan, B. F (Pakistan), Hiba, I (Pakistan), Muhammad, M (Pakistan), Miriam, P (Austria), Sharon, R (Tanzania), Eman, D (Pakistan), Warisha, F (Pakistan), Affan, K (Pakistan), Zainab, W (Pakistan), Alizeh, A (Pakistan), Maryam, B (Pakistan), and Sarah, M (Pakistan).

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Design Credits: Human Design Studios (Pakistan)

Special Mentions

Thanks to Syeda Natasha Islam (WWF-Pakistan) for co-facilitating the focus group discussions. We are also thankful to Rabia Tahir (WWF-Pakistan), Taseer Ali Mirza (WWF-Pakistan), Ahsan Tariq (WWF-Pakistan), and Wajeeha (WWF-Pakistan) for their advisory role in the designing of the Living Planet Report 2024 - Youth Edition. Also, a special thanks to the network offices colleagues for their continued support.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION TO THE LIVING PLANET REPORT - YOUTH EDITION

Like the Living Planet Report, which describes the state of wildlife and the planet's health, the Living Planet Report - Youth Edition is published every two years. The Youth Edition breaks down key messaging and scientific facts from the main Living Planet Report and presents them in an age-appropriate and engaging way for young readers and changemakers - just like you! The Living Planet Report 2024 - Youth Edition will help you understand the causes of our planet's declining health and the impacts of this on both the environment and people. In addition, the Youth Edition will also provide you with ideas and inspiration to use your voice and transform ideas into action. So, let's explore how we can help bring our world back to life.

How we define "Youth"

While there are many definitions of youth, in this case, we consider youth 11-17 years old.

Sneak peek into 2024 Living Planet Report Youth Edition: What is new?

The Living Planet Report 2024 - Youth Edition has been co-created by young people.

24 young contributors

representing
12 countries and

04 regions



The young contributors have shared their perspectives, ideas, and community stories in this edition. They have also suggested practical steps that young people, and adults alike, could follow for a healthier planet. This edition not only provides valuable information but also illustrates how each of us can make a meaningful impact.



SECTION II

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Earth is home to an estimated **8.7 million** known species of plants and animals¹. Imagine how much that would grow if we could also estimate the number of microorganisms! What's shocking? Less than **25%** of these species are fully described, highlighting that a lot of effort is still needed to understand the diversity of life shaping our planet. "**Biodiversity**" refers to the variety of species - including plants, animals, microorganisms, and their genetic makeup - present in an ecosystem. Species work in balance, maintaining the health of our ecosystems.

Our planet is around **4.6 billion years** old. The first life form appeared about **3.7 billion years** ago. Since then, all life forms have been shaping our planet. Everything we need to survive - food, water, clean air, and the right temperature - comes from nature. This happens because all living things work in balance with the non-living parts of nature (such as soil, air, and water). This interaction creates ecosystems that are like the planet's support systems, providing everything required for survival.



Ecosystem services are all the things that these 'support systems' do for both people and the planet

The Diverse Ecosystem Services



What is the Living Planet Index?

The Living Planet Index is a tool used by global experts to track the health of our planet and its ecosystems. It monitors the change in population size of thousands of vertebrate species (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes) and helps experts understand the causes of change in population trends (both increase and decrease), to take necessary actions, and develop policies for the conservation of species and habitats.

The Living Planet Index 2024 covers the period from 1970 to 2020 and includes data on **34,836** populations of **5,495** vertebrate species.

The Living Planet Index 2024

Globally, we are putting a lot of burden on natural resources, especially biodiversity.

The Living Planet Index (LPI) 2024 indicates a **73%** decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations between **1970 and 2020**.

A major drop is reported for the population sizes of freshwater species - **85%**.

This represents how our actions such as overuse of water and pollution are negatively impacting lakes and rivers. While ocean and land-dwelling species have also experienced declines, these have been less steep compared to other habitats but are still hugely worrying. However, the Living Planet Index (LPI) shows positive trends for certain monitored species. For instance, the European bison population grew from **0 to 6,800** between **1950 and 2020**, thanks to large-scale breeding programs and the relocation of bison to protected areas. This demonstrates that when concerted efforts are made to protect and restore nature, recovery is possible.

SECTION III

UNDERSTANDING BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Our planet's ecosystems are incredibly interconnected, but human activities are putting that balance under increasing pressure. The changes humans have made to the planet are already being felt everywhere and will have long-lasting effects, many of which are irreversible. As a result, we are endangering our ways of life and putting the future of generations to come at serious risk.



Drivers of Change



Habitat Loss/ Degradation

This happens when the places where animals and plants live get damaged or destroyed. This could be because of farming, cutting down trees, building roads, homes, or mining. For example, when forests are chopped down, many animals lose their homes, making it hard for them to survive and so, reducing their numbers.



Overexploitation

This means taking too much from nature. It can be hunting animals faster than they can reproduce, or fishing more than the ocean can handle. Sometimes animals get caught by mistake, like sea turtles in fishing nets, and that harms the ecosystem too.



Pollution

Pollution is when harmful material, like plastic or chemicals, gets into nature. It can make air, water, or soil unsuitable for animals and plants to survive. For example, oil spills in the ocean harm fish, birds, and the whole food chain.



Climate Change

Our planet has warmed significantly since people started using machines and burning fossil fuels (a time called 'The Industrial Revolution'). Even a small change in temperature can be a big deal for animals, plants, and humans. For example, coral reefs—sometimes called 'underwater rainforests'—are very sensitive to temperature changes. If the planet warms up by just 1.5°C, most of these colourful reefs will die. This would be a huge problem because many sea creatures rely on coral reefs for their homes and food. This is just one example, but climate change is already having a big impact on our planet's amazing natural world as well as how we live.



Invasive Species

When species move to new areas, they can carry diseases that weren't there before. Humans can also spread diseases across the globe. When animals are stressed by things like climate change or habitat loss, they can get sick more easily.



Disease

Sometimes animals or plants from one part of the world are accidentally or intentionally introduced to another area. These newcomers, known as invasive species, can disrupt the ecosystem by outcompeting native species for food or habitat, often driving them out or causing their decline.

Tipping Points: What are they and why do they matter?

Tipping points are the large-scale points of no return in our fight for the planet. Imagine blowing up a balloon – as you blow a balloon inflates and gets bigger until, at its tipping point, it bursts. It is the same with nature.

As we continue to mistreat our Earth, the damage builds up, until it becomes irreversible, and the line is crossed. A few examples of tipping points include coral bleaching in the Australian Great Barrier Reef, making coastal communities more vulnerable to climate change, and the loss of more than 3.8 billion trees in North American pine forest resulting from drought, forest fire, and invasion of pine bark beetles. This is why it is so important that we understand these tipping points and take measures to stop them before it is too late.

The good news is that tipping points are not only negative. Positive tipping points can be a useful set of guidelines to follow in building a sustainable, healthy planet. To do this we need changes in our national policies, energy and food systems, and even our cultures. By making sure we don't cross these breaking points, we can align with natural systems and collaborate with them to drive positive change.



Spotlight on the tipping points of global importance

Forest: Amazon Rainforest

Amazon Rainforest is home to **10%** of Earth's terrestrial (on-land) biodiversity, **10%** of all known fish species, and **47 million people**. It is one of the greatest carbon reservoirs, that stores **250 to 300 billion tons of carbon**. Deforestation and forest disturbances as a result of land-use change are shifting the rainforest from being a carbon reservoir to becoming a carbon emitter. If a tipping point is reached, the rainforest could lose its ability to maintain its carbon and instead transition to becoming a highly degraded type of landscape and releasing tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This would further result in reduced rainfall, increased events of forest fire, loss of wildlife species, global food supplies, and cultural heritage.

Did you know?

A tipping point could be reached if just **20–25%** of the Amazon rainforest were destroyed – and an estimated **14–17%** has already been deforested - this shows the need for urgent, collective action across the world to address the factors driving deforestation.

Frozen World: Melting of Greenland and West Antarctic Ice Sheet

The **cryosphere** includes all the frozen parts of our planet, like ice sheets and permafrost. If the ice sheets in **Greenland** and **West Antarctica melt**, it could cause sea levels to rise by many meters, leading to flooding in coastal areas and affecting millions of people. Meanwhile, thawing permafrost releases trapped gases like carbon dioxide and methane, which can make global warming worse. These changes could have serious impacts, making it essential to act now to prevent these tipping points and protect our planet's future.



Ocean: The circulation of water from North to South (and back), within the Atlantic Ocean

The **subpolar gyre** is like a giant water current in the ocean near Greenland that helps keep weather patterns steady in places like **Europe and North America**. It is connected to an even bigger ocean current system called the **Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)**, which circulates warm water between the tropics and the colder areas within the Atlantic Ocean.

If these currents slow down or stop—a tipping point—big changes could happen. Europe might get much colder very quickly, while tropical areas might get drier, and sea levels could rise, putting coastal cities at risk. This would cause serious changes to the climate, impacting both people and wildlife. It is one of the tipping points scientists worry about if we don't take action to protect the environment.

SECTION IV

THE WORLD'S PLAN FOR A BETTER AND HEALTHIER PLANET

While the situation we are facing is serious and great challenges exist, we have the power in our hands to change course and restore the balance. Imagine a world where everyone has clean water, the climate is stable, and nature thrives with all its amazing diversity. That is the vision behind the global goals set by nations around the world. These goals are like a big, shared plan to make the planet a better place for all of us, now and in the future.

At the heart of this plan is the United Nations **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. In simple terms, Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development consists of seventeen goals which are called the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. These goals are focused on addressing all major issues our planet is currently facing such as poverty, inequality, poor education, climate change, loss of species and habitats, etc. The agenda, therefore, provides a roadmap for governments but also for businesses and individuals - to make the right efforts to build a fairer and better future.

To address climate change specifically, the **Paris Agreement** plays a crucial role. Adopted in 2015, the Paris Agreement binds the signatory countries to make efforts to reduce global carbon emissions. The agreement aims to limit the rise in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels, while striving to keep it under 1.5 degrees. So far, 195 Parties - countries or blocs (for example the European Union) - have signed up to the agreement and a few have gone further by committing to become 'carbon neutral'. This is achieved when the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere equals the amount being removed so the net amount becomes zero.

Additionally, to tackle the challenge of preserving the rich biodiversity on Earth, 196 Parties have agreed on a big plan called the **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**. This framework supports efforts to protect species and natural habitats, which are essential for maintaining the balance of our planet's ecosystems. One of its targets is to protect 30% of the world's land, freshwater, and oceans by 2030. The GBF is to biodiversity what the Paris Agreement is to climate change.

Progress on these goals has been slower than hoped, and there is an urgent need for stronger action to meet these targets and avoid serious environmental and social consequences.





SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The smart actions that can solve environmental problems without causing harm to people and the planet are called sustainable solutions. As the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change grow stronger with each passing moment, adopting sustainable solutions has become more important than ever before. This is crucial to keep our actions aligned with the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development.

We now know that the planet is facing some serious challenges, like climate change, deforestation, and the loss of a precious variety of life. It is like the Earth is crying out for help because of the way we have been treating it. But the cool part is that nature itself can be our ally in fixing the problems at hand! This is where “nature-based solutions” come into play. These approaches not only help restore and protect the Earth but also safeguard us in the process. For example, to help combat climate change, we can protect and restore forests, which absorb harmful carbon from the atmosphere. Concerned about floods? Rivers and wetlands act like natural sponges, absorbing excess water and mangroves can form natural flood defences. However, it’s important to remember that while nature-based solutions are powerful, they aren’t enough on their own. We also need to rethink our consumption habits, transform food and energy production, and make significant changes in business practices and governance to truly protect both people and the planet.

We need to make big changes to repair the damage we've already done. We need to change how we live and how businesses operate. This means transforming our ways of living to build a better future.

But how can this be achieved? Well, there are methods which could be helpful.

INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION

Inclusive conservation means making sure everyone is involved in **protecting our planet**, especially people who are often left out. This includes young people, women, indigenous people, and local communities. It's about **working together** to protect Earth's natural resources.

What is needed?

Listening to the wisdom and experiences of local communities and **including different viewpoints** to create better solutions.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION

The food system includes all the steps food takes to reach you, starting from when a seed is planted. Right now, our global food system accounts for **70% of water use and 27% of all greenhouse gas emissions, threatening 86% of species** at risk of extinction. We cannot achieve a sustainable future unless we make big positive changes in how our food system works.

What is needed?

Changes to diet choices, reduced food waste and loss, fair payments and support for farmers, and adoption of environment-friendly agricultural practices such as using natural fertilizers and pest control methods.

Did you know?

An estimated **30–40% of all food produced is never eaten**.

CHOOSING GREEN ENERGY

The energy sector is one of the leading drivers of climate change, with the burning of fossil fuels accounting for **70%** of global greenhouse gas emissions. This results in warmer temperatures and increases indoor pollution. By shifting to alternate or renewable energy production sources such as **solar and wind**, we can lower the speed with which our planet is warming up.

What is needed?

Increased investment, construction, and access to renewable energy solutions.

CREATING A GREEN ECONOMY

Moving finance away from **environmentally damaging** practices (such as the extraction of coal, oil, and gas) and towards environmentally friendly and restorative practices, such as **renewable energy, reforestation land and supporting farming practices** that help to restore the healthy balance of the soil.



SECTION V

ACT FOR OUR PLANET: OUR TIME IS NOW

Why should young people be involved in conservation efforts?

Young people between 11 and 17 make up around **11.5%** of the world's population³. While our generation is not the cause of the challenges our planet faces today, we will feel the impacts and can play a role in tackling climate change and nature loss. To focus our efforts towards building a healthier planet, we need to be educated and informed, for we will soon be the decision-makers of an ever-approaching future.

Our involvement in conservation efforts is key to a sustainable future because we bring unique perspectives and innovative ideas to tackle the challenges we face. When we encounter problems, we speak up and support change whether that be in our habits, homes, or government policies. We need to understand the current state of the environment and what the future may hold so that we can learn from the lessons from the past and work with all generations to bring our world back to life.

Understanding the perspectives of young people

As part of the Youth Edition's creation, we spoke to young people across the world about how they feel about climate change and how it is impacting them. Many reported feelings of fear, concern, and guilt - with some stating they are living with eco-anxiety. According to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the education of 40 million children is affected annually due to climate-related disasters.

Two of our young contributors shared how they feel about the impacts of climate change.

"As a birdwatcher, I am deeply saddened by the effects of climate change. Witnessing the rapid decline of bird and animal populations while feeling powerless to help affects my mental health."

Sreejith/15/ India



"I feel anxious and concerned about the future of our planet and species. Instead of uniting to combat climate change, we are tragically divided by conflict, preventing us from addressing this urgent crisis."

William/16/United Kingdom



YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK OUT ON 2030 AGENDA

The road to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is important for building a sustainable future. To understand what young people think about the state of the planet by 2030, we reached out to our young contributors. They shared their vision and actions that need to be taken to achieve that mission. The vision for a better future - as seen through young people's lens - serves as a reminder for us that the actions we take today will shape the future so we must act to fight climate change and nature loss to protect the future of ourselves and our future generations.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE BY 2030



"By 2030, I hope that collectively, we will have managed to **preserve natural spaces** and rewild those that have been previously constructed on. I envision a world that is transitioning quickly, or is already **carbon neutral**, to mitigate global warming, and that societies are adapting to become more sustainable, by using renewable energies and changing their diet habits for a **more sustainable impact**."

Emma/15/United Kingdom

"I envision a future where our planet has **zero carbon emissions** and nature is **restored** to its original state. I am hopeful that current technological advancements will positively impact the natural world. However, I am deeply concerned about the present state of the world and fear that **without immediate action**, we may lose our connection with nature altogether."

Syna/14/Kenya

"It doesn't matter if you are doing small things, as long as you are **making an effort**, trying your best, it counts! I imagine countries making progress on their **path to zero waste**. I imagine a world where we all come hand in hand no matter our differences to **work together** for the greater good."

Aurvi/12/Singapore

"I envision a living planet as a greener one, with people living in peace with the nature and respects it as their top priority because they have understood that it is the most important thing **they need to survive**. I also think with good practices we will be able to **restore our planet** to a healthier state."

Loaira/13/Ecuador

How are young people using their voice and taking action for change? Dive into the world of young changemakers!

As young people, we are aware of issues that were previously often overlooked, including injustice and climate change. We are more informed and have the resources and knowledge to drive change from anywhere, whether that be from our homes, or in communities across the world.

We are making our voices heard from local movements to representation at international forums. Our activism is leading to changes in policies, the inclusion of underrepresented groups in decision-making, and is changing social attitudes toward us. We mobilise like-minded people to spread awareness about various issues and lead movements to declare to the authorities the changes we wish to implement.

"I am the founder of Sharon Ringo Foundation, which is leading a massive reforestation effort in East Africa, with the goal of planting 10 million trees. So far, the Foundation has planted over 53,500 trees in Tanzania. I am also raising awareness about climate change, environmental justice, and sustainable tourism through my books "The Big Five" and "My Voice to the World," which is a collection of my top 100 speeches delivered at international platforms like the United Nations Environmental Assembly and COP27. My message to young people is, you are the future leaders, and the choices you make today will shape the world we live in tomorrow."

- Sharon, Tanzania.

Quoting another example,

"At the age of 16 years, I joined the International Youth Team of the WWF project Eat4Change, a programme aiming to engage citizens on the topic of a sustainable diet and its impacts on the environment and social wellbeing. Since then, I have been raising awareness, among young people and adults alike, about sustainable diets in an effort to reduce food waste, promote healthier lifestyles, and build a better planet."

Miriam, Austria.

There are many ways we take action, from changing our habits, and protesting lawfully on the streets, to developing solutions to address the challenges we raise our voices for. We are innovative and persistent, finding solutions to problems, despite the difficulty. For instance, there are young people involved in building their own start-ups and business ideas with a mission to introduce sustainable products and services in the market. This can solve so many complex problems, such as improving access to quality education and developing renewable energy solutions.

"Small actions can have a big impact! I started my climate activism journey when I was 7 years old. I observed deforestation and nature loss in my community, which made me concerned and led to the idea of starting Earth Warriorz, an initiative focused on raising awareness about climate change. It is a climate education online platform for children under 16 years old. It teaches them about causes, impacts, and the role they can play in combating climate change. The stories featured on the platform are available in multiple languages."

- Eman, Pakistan.

The potential of ourselves, when explored in-depth, is limitless. We matter—and we have shown the world just how powerful we are.

WHAT CAN YOU(TH) DO FOR THE PLANET?

START WITH YOUR PERSONAL HABITS

Changing our lifestyle can have a huge impact on our planet. By adopting eco-friendly habits, you can help lighten the load on our natural resources. Natural resources are already limited as we are consuming more than nature can replenish them. That is why we must take a closer look at our habits and see how we can improve them for a healthier future. Here are a few practices you can adopt, and encourage others to follow (you probably know some of these, but it is good to keep them in mind):

-  Turn off unnecessary lights and unplug electronic appliances when they are not in use.
-  Turn off the water when it is not in use and ask the legal guardian to fix any leaks.
-  Reuse items whenever you can, and shop second-hand when possible.
-  When traveling, respect the local environment and wildlife.
-  Avoid littering and minimize the use of single-use plastics.
-  Encourage the use of leftover food to make new dishes or simply compost them to provide nutrients to the soil.

PROMOTE GREEN PRACTICES AT SCHOOL

School gives young people an opportunity to interact with a large group of people of different age groups, family backgrounds, and social status. Therefore, a school can be a powerful institution to spread the word and help young people, and adults alike, adopt environment-friendly practices. A few things you can try doing at schools to become a change-maker include:

-  Look for an existing environment club and join it to participate in its activities. In case you don't find one, talk to your class teacher about it to learn the process of setting up an environment club.
-  If your school has recycling bins installed, see if the waste is being properly disposed of. If you observe someone using it improperly (for example throwing leftover food in the bin labeled for plastics), educate them.
-  Get approval from your school to display posters at the school that educate students and school staff about different environmental topics such as water conservation, impacts of plastic on the environment and health, benefits of protecting green spaces/school gardens, etc.
-  Talk to a teacher about starting a school garden growing food.
-  Create a wildlife-friendly area that encourages more wildlife to flourish. Plant more trees, shrubs, and flowers: ask

your teacher to take some lessons outside rather than remaining in the classroom.

Bring nature into your classroom with nature inspired art displays or simply grow more plants indoors.

Turn your plan into action - with a clear roadmap and responsibilities outlined in the implementation plan, roll out your project, and monitor its progress against what you planned to do.

LEAD FROM THE FRONT! EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

It is never too late to build your own community garden or start composting at the community level. Once you know what environmental issue you want to tackle, you can start a project of your own (with the support of your legal guardian). Follow the steps:

-  Identify the environmental challenge you want to address (littering, food waste, etc.).
-  To understand the cause of the challenge, gather information through interviews or focus groups (at community-level). Start small and get help from all of your family members and friends. Make sure you have your parent/guardian's permission and their support to help you do this safely.
-  Based on your findings, educate the local community about the causes of the environmental challenge your community is facing and seek ideas to find solutions.
-  Write all the solutions and highlight those which are proposed by the majority.
-  Get connected with people who can help you develop an implementation plan defining the resources required, responsibilities, timelines, activities, and milestones. Make sure you have your parent/guardian's permission and their support to help you do this safely.

UTILIZE THE POWER OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The use of digital media can help you in making your impact count. With the help of your legal guardian, register for free online courses or webinars that help you gain more knowledge about environmental issues and introduce you to the tools which help you develop solutions for the identified issues.

Additionally, you can raise your voice for change and spread awareness by creating videos, or posters with a call-to-action approach and share the great work you have been up to. Get the content posted on your guardian's social media platforms (or your own, if you have one and are of appropriate age for your country) and ask them to support you in your cause.

LEARNING RESOURCES

“There can be no greater legacy than giving young people the tools they need to save our planet.”

-Sir David Attenborough

Ready to make a difference? Explore the resources below to learn more about climate change and biodiversity!

Educate Yourself	Earth Hour	https://wwf.org.nz/earth-hour
	Practice Green Lifestyle	https://wwf.panda.org/act/live_green/
	Understanding Climate Change	https://wwfadapt.org/
	Wildlife and Climate Change	https://wwfadapt.org/
	5 Ways to Help Our Wellbeing with Nature	https://tinyurl.com/wwfwellbeing
	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	https://tinyurl.com/AgendaSDGs
	Sustainable Development Goals	https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/
	Paris Agreement	https://tinyurl.com/ParisAgreement15
	Global Biodiversity Framework	https://www.cbd.int/gbf
Tools to Explore	Explorable Globe	https://www.ourplanet.com/en/explorables-globe/
	Create your own sustainable diet	https://planetbaseddiets.panda.org/impacts-action-calculator
	Find Your Inner Animal	https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/fyia
	Measure your personal footprint	https://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en
	Our Planet Lab	https://tinyurl.com/ourplanetlab
	Travel Better	https://travelbetter.panda.org/
	Seek by iNaturalist	https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app
Get Inspired	Biodiversity and Lifestyles Guidebook	https://www.cbd.int/cepa/doc/youthxchange.pdf
	How to Become a Climate Hero	https://tinyurl.com/wwfclimatehero
	Youth and the Environment	https://tinyurl.com/youth-and-environment

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