



PRESS RELEASE

January 13, 2012

Contact: Supriya Kumar, skumar@worldwatch.org, (+1) 202-452-1999 x510

Youth Deserve Gold Medals for Sustainability

Worldwatch Institute's Nourishing the Planet team highlights medal-worthy examples of youth-centered sustainability efforts from around the globe

Washington, D.C.—Over 1,000 young athletes from 70 nations will compete in the first ever Winter Youth Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria. Not only will they compete for coveted medals, they will cooperate in various hands-on workshops as part of a Culture and Education Program that includes the Youth Olympic Games Sustainability Project.

As we prepare to cheer the young athletes of the Winter Youth Olympics, let us also applaud the young leaders of sustainability efforts across the globe. Dedicating their time and energy to making the world better for themselves and for generations to come, they are not motivated by medals but deserve them nonetheless. Nourishing the Planet would like to honor 10 medal-worthy organizations and their youth-focused sustainability efforts:

1. [Bridges to Understanding](#): Using digital technology and storytelling, Bridges to Understanding seeks to empower young people, promote mutual understanding across cultures, and cultivate a sense of global citizenship among youth. Students who participate are taught how to use cameras and editing software to create stories about their cultures and communities. These stories are shared online with other participating students in Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Guatemala, India, Peru, South Africa, and the United States. While students in Kalleda, India, post videos about local water pollution, they can simultaneously watch videos from Seattle, Washington, about children who are learning to grow corn, squash, and beans using traditional Native American methods.
2. [Care International's Farmers of the Future Initiative \(FOFI\)](#): The FOFI works with children in primary schools in Rwanda, using school gardens to teach kids how to manage natural resources and develop rural enterprises. The project started with 27 pilot schools. Each school re-invested half of the profits from its garden into its own agricultural efforts and gave the other half to support other schools' development of new gardens. After three years, projects have been started in 28 new satellite schools.
3. [China Youth Climate Action Network \(CYCAN\)](#): Seven youth organizations merged in 2007 to become the CYCAN, the first network promoting the involvement of Chinese youth in the

effort to combat climate change. CYCAN raises awareness about climate change, encourages public participation and government action, and connects Chinese youth to similar efforts internationally. Its projects include China Youth Climate Action Day, the International Youth Energy and Climate Change Summit, and the China Youth League to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17). CYCAN reports that youth from over 300 Chinese universities have participated in its events and that roughly 1 million Chinese have taken part in or been affected by one of the network's actions.

4. [Climate Leaders India Network \(CLeaIN\)](#): CLeaIN unites Indian youth with organizations that care about climate change and related environmental concerns. The network works to inspire Indian youth, unleash their leadership potential, and facilitate the movement of green technologies from laboratories to the lives of average Indians. CleaIN's Rural Energy Project introduces rural communities to solar cookers and sun-powered LED lighting systems. The network is also co-sponsoring a WAVE (World Advance Vehicle Expedition) Campaign that is traveling throughout India with five electric cars to create awareness.

5. [Developing Innovations in School Cultivation \(DISC\)](#): Because farming in sub-Saharan Africa is so labor-intensive, many young people have come to view farming as a last-resort occupation. But DISC, partnering with a local chapter of Slow Food International, is working in Uganda to change young people's relationship to agriculture, as well as to promote food sovereignty by teaching youth about local crops such as amaranth, African eggplant, and indigenous maize. Through DISC, teachers and volunteers work with 1,100 school kids in 31 schools to grow, cook, and eat local crops. The lessons learned are then shared by the children with their families, multiplying the impact of the program.

6. [Farmers of the Future \(FOF\)](#): In Niger, FOF believes that subsistence farmers must branch into agribusiness in order to escape poverty. FOF works with children to help cultivate a new generation of agrarians who are open to innovation, market focused, and environmentally conscious. The project started with 50 children, ages 10-14, and includes access to agricultural learning environments such as tree nurseries, drip irrigate vegetable gardens, and animal fattening facilities.

7. [Girl Up](#): The United Nations Foundation sponsors Girl Up, which educates Americans about the challenges faced by young women in other countries and provides them with opportunities to raise funds for those girls in need. Girl Up supports the Berhane Hewan project in Ethiopia (a nation where only 38 percent of girls 15-24 years old are literate and one in five are married before the age of 15) in its efforts to promote literacy, family planning, financial preparation, agricultural training, and household chore improvement.

8. [Peace Child International](#): Using publications, trainings, and lesson-plan sharing, Peace Child works to educate young people in order to empower them to become change-makers. Based in the United Kingdom, Peace Child sponsors projects across the globe. The group's "Be the Change!" program provides small grants to young people to run their own community development projects. The ventures range from installing biodigesters in rural Costa Rica to planting 3,000 high-yield mango trees in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

9. [TakingITGlobal \(TIG\)](#): Combining online social networking and education programs, TIG seeks to provide young people with the information, tools, and networks they need to understand the world's problems and act to address them. TIG knits together 340,000 members and 22,000 non-profits across 13 different languages. It works with educators in over 2,400 schools in 118 countries. Through [TIGweb.org](#), young leaders can network, research background information on issues, access tools such as petitions and toolkits, and publish their ideas and actions on youth media platforms.

10. [UK Youth Climate Coalition \(UKYCC\)](#): This coalition comprises and is owned and run by British youth who are dedicated to a future that is "happy, affordable, clean, and safe." In 2010, UKYCC helped establish the Youth Advisory Panel to their country's Department of Energy and Climate Change and this year sent a youth delegation to the COP17. Throughout the year, UKYCC sponsors trainings and campaigns, including their "Adopt an MP" campaign that encouraged 650 youth to hold their local Members of Parliament (MPs) accountable to their track record on climate change.

###

Notes to Journalists: For more information, please contact Supriya Kumar at skumar@worldwatch.org.

About the Worldwatch Institute:

Worldwatch is an independent research organization based in Washington, D.C. that works on energy, resource, and environmental issues. The Institute's *State of the World* report is published annually in more than 18 languages. For more information, visit www.worldwatch.org.

###