

Toolkit for Youth on Adaptation & Leadership



MODULE 5

DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS FOR
YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ADAPTATION



GLOBAL
CENTER ON
ADAPTATION



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WELCOME TO THE TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH ON ADAPTATION & LEADERSHIP!

Who is this toolkit for?

Climate change is reshaping the world young people have inherited and they will bear the costs in the coming decades. However, young people are often excluded from taking on leadership roles and engaging in decision-making activities related to climate change adaptation. This Toolkit for Youth on Adaptation & Leadership equips young people with the knowledge and skills to engage in climate adaptation policy, advocacy and action. This toolkit uses the terms “youth” and “young people” to refer to people between 15 and 35 years old.

What you will learn

The toolkit covers essential materials and offers practical guidance for how you, as a young person, can take part in adaptation policy processes, lead advocacy campaigns, and approach adaptation with an entrepreneurial mindset. It provides tools for designing and implementing your own climate change adaptation actions so that you can be part of the solution to the climate crisis.



The “Toolkit for Youth on Adaptation & Leadership” is a project under the Global Center on Adaptation Youth Leadership Program, developed by the CARE Climate Justice Center with the financial support of Norad. It came together with input from young people who, like you, are concerned about the impacts of climate change and have faced challenges when advocating and taking adaptation action.

How to use the toolkit

The toolkit includes eight modules:



1 Understanding climate change



2 The basics of vulnerability and climate change adaptation



3 Vulnerable groups and climate adaptation planning



4 Learning from youth-led climate adaptation solutions: African case studies



5 Developing soft skills for youth leadership in adaptation



6 Engaging in climate adaptation policies: local, national, and international



7 Designing and implementing your adaptation advocacy strategy



8 Designing your adaptation action

Each module contains four sections:



Warm Up is the place to start. This provides an overview of the module's key concepts, based on the latest research and best practices. It highlights tools you can use to apply what you have learned, and develop your leadership skills.



Heat Wave will deepen your understanding. Find links to supporting scientific research, important publications, and tools for exploring and applying key concepts.



Bright spark is the place to get inspired. Read case studies, watch videos, and listen to podcasts about young climate leaders to get fired up for your own climate change actions!



Cool Down is your last stop. Here, you have space to test your knowledge (with a short quiz) and consider how you can apply what you have learned to your own climate action.

MODULE 5

DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ADAPTATION

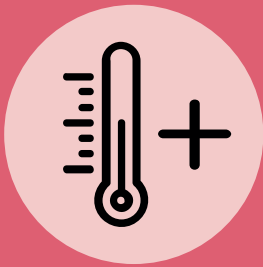


This module will equip you with important skills necessary to become an effective youth leader in adaptation. It includes success stories of effective youth leaders to inspire you.

What will I learn?

By the end of the module, you will:

- Have gained an understanding of what it means to be a leader.
- Have gained knowledge about the essential characteristics of young leaders in the climate adaptation space.
- Have deepened your knowledge of essential leadership skills, including facilitating groups negotiating agreements, and developing an effective “elevator pitch.”



Warm Up

What is leadership?

In a complex and ever-changing world, what is leadership? How is it defined? And what are some of the qualities of an effective leader? Before discussing what leadership is, it's helpful to understand what it is not. According to Kevin Kruse, CEO of coaching platform LEADx, leadership has nothing to do with seniority or one's position within a hierarchy. Leadership has nothing to do with titles or personal attributes, and leadership is not management.¹



***Your actions matter.
No action or voice is
too small to make a
difference.***

Vanessa Nakate,
climate justice activist
and leader.

Vanessa Nakate, Founder of Rise
Up Climate Movement, Uganda.
Credit: World Economic
Forum/Manuel Lopez.



Rather, as Figure 1 shows, leadership involves:

- Social influence to ensure that the work of others contributes toward achieving a defined goal.
- Taking risks and challenging the status quo to achieve specific outcomes.
- Accomplishing a goal through the direction of human assistants.
- Influencing other people to follow.

In all these definitions, you can see that a leader works with others toward a desired goal or outcome.

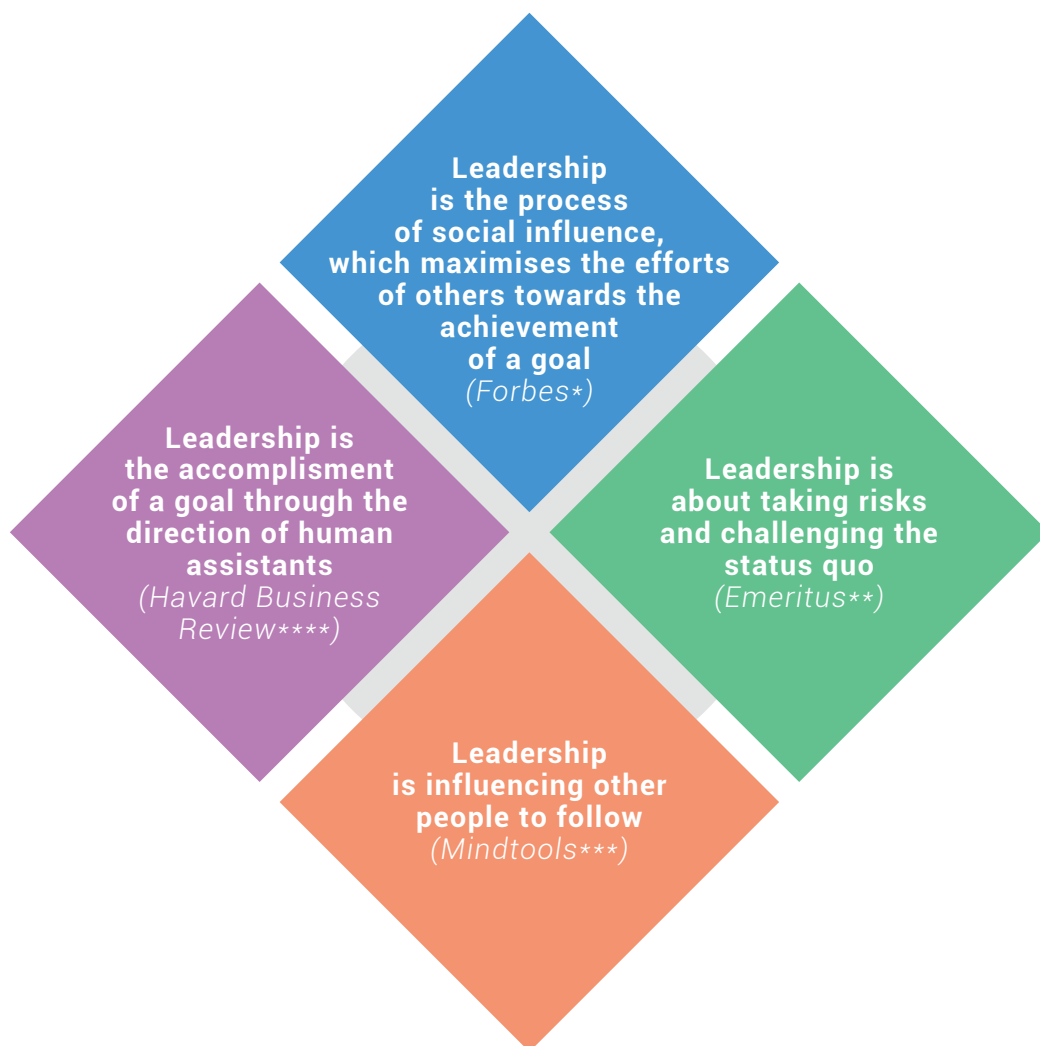


Figure 1: The different definitions of leadership. Sources: Kruse (2013)², Emeritus (2022)³, Prentice (2004)⁴ and MindTools (no date).⁵

10 characteristics of a good leader

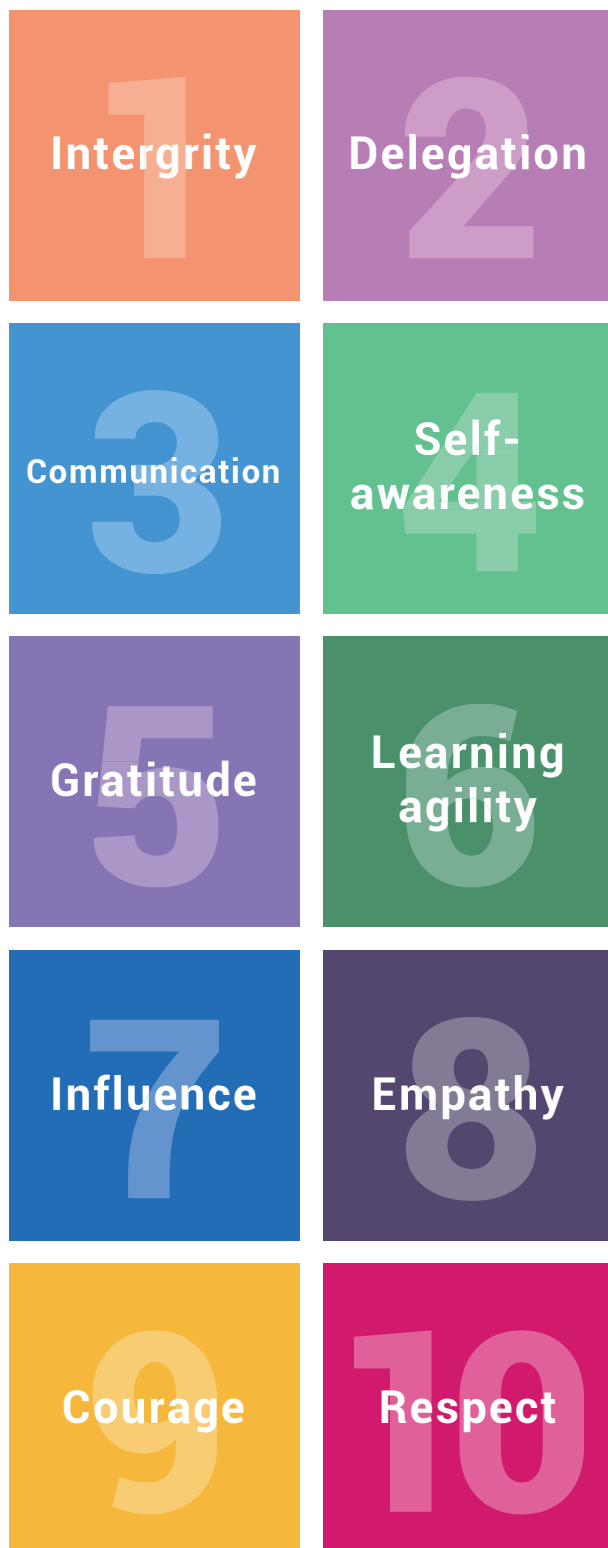


Figure 2: The 10 characteristics of a good leader.
Source: Center for Good Leadership, no date.⁶

What characteristics make a good leader?

The climate crisis requires innovative leaders to shape an agenda that will lead to sustainable, fair and lasting solutions. But what are the qualities of a good leader? Figure 2 shows 10 key characteristics that make a good leader. We unpack each below.

- 1 Integrity** means being honest and having strong moral principles. Leaders need to be guided by strong moral principles. This enables others to trust them.
- 2 Delegation** means entrusting responsibilities to others in your team. A good leader should trust their team members to complete tasks and deliver results. Delegating is one of the core responsibilities of a leader. The end goal is to free yourself up, to enable others to grow, facilitate teamwork and provide autonomy, thus leading to better decision making.
- 3 Communication** is essential. The best leaders are skilled communicators who can express themselves and pass on information to others effectively. A good leader must be able to listen to, and communicate with, a wide range of people across roles, geographies, social identities, and more. Communication is vital for young climate changemakers to enable them to put forward convincing arguments and speeches, advocate for policy changes, and convince people to get on board with their ideas for positive change.
- 4 Self-awareness** involves the ability to look at yourself and reflect on your way of interacting with the world and the people within it. The better you understand yourself, and recognize your strengths and weaknesses, the more effective you can be as a leader.
- 5 Gratitude** can make you a better leader. This involves expressing your appreciation for the work of your colleagues. Being thankful can lead to higher self-esteem, reduced depression and anxiety, and better sleep. However, few people regularly say thank you, even though most employees say they'd be willing to work harder in an environment where they feel appreciated.
- 6 Learning agility** is about knowing how to learn on the job. It enables you to learn something new in one place and then apply what you've learned elsewhere in a different situation. If you're a "quick study" or can excel in unfamiliar circumstances, you might already be learning agile. Great leaders are great learners.
- 7 Influence** is an important trait for inspiring, effective leaders. Influence is quite different from manipulation, and it needs to be done authentically and transparently. It requires emotional intelligence and trust.
- 8 Empathy** correlates with emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. By exhibiting more inclusive leadership and empathetic behaviors, good leaders set themselves up for success.
- 9 Courage** is a key trait of good leaders since it can be hard to speak up, especially in relation to sensitive topics such as climate change. Rather than avoiding challenging conversations and topics, having courage enables leaders to step up and move things in the right direction.
- 10 Respect** can be shown in many ways. Treating people with respect is one of the most important things a leader can do. It will ease tensions and conflict, create trust and improve effectiveness. Respectfulness starts with seeking to understand the experiences of others.

Box 1: Applying CARE's Gender Equality Framework to leadership

As you learned in Module 3, CARE's Gender Equality Framework supports climate adaptation approaches that strengthen the capacity of women, girls and other vulnerable groups. The Framework can also be helpful for developing your leadership skills.

Ultimately, the Framework is about empowering yourself and others. To be an effective leader you need to pay attention to each of its three components (shown in Figure 3).

- **Agency:** to build your agency as a leader you can equip yourself with the skills and knowledge required to lead.
- **Relations:** as a leader, you need to be able to relate to people, communicate clearly, delegate tasks and inspire others in your team. You also need to build your network.
- **Structure:** as a leader, you need to influence those people and structures around you that can support your leadership, creating an enabling environment for meeting your goals. This connects to the work of climate change adaptation advocacy (the focus of Module 7).

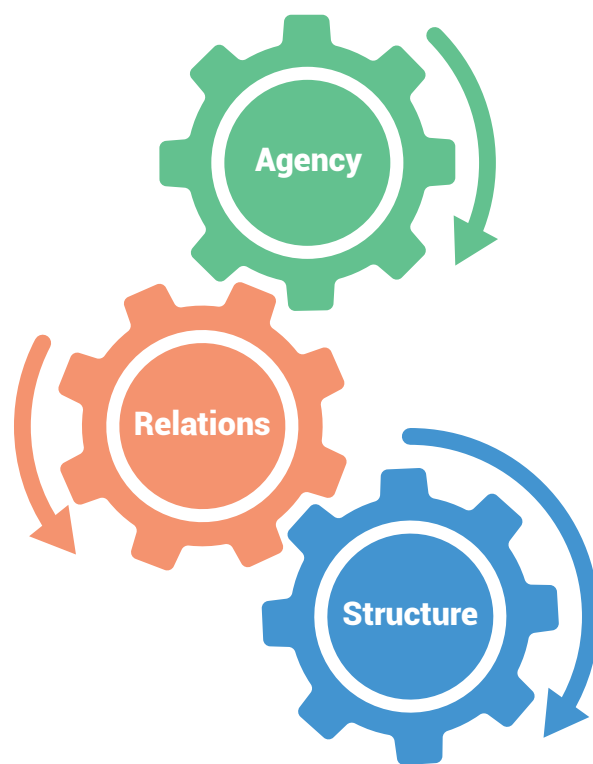


Figure 3: CARE's Gender Equality Framework also applies to building leadership skills. Source: CARE.

Develop your leadership skills

In this section, we highlight activities for developing your leadership ability, along with key leadership skills – facilitation, negotiation and communication.

Activities to bring out your leadership abilities

Draw your leadership dreams into reality

Many of us have big dreams for our lives and who we want to be in the world. But it can be easy to put these off for another time or be sabotaged by doubting voices. If you have ambitions of being a climate change adaptation leader you need to make your vision a reality.

A good first step is to “draw your dreams into reality,” a strategy used by [Patti Dobrowolski](#), a change agent and business consultant. You don't need to be an artist for this. Just get hold of a paper and pen and start scribbling. To draw your vision for your future:

1. Draw your current state (where you are in your life currently).
2. Draw your desired new reality as a leader (where you want to be in future).
3. Identify the steps you need to take to get from where you are to where you want to be.

TIP: Watch [the video](#) where Dobrowolski explains how to do this, allowing your creativity to shape your future vision. Doing so will provide you with a “roadmap for change,” a way to work toward your ambitions of becoming a young climate leader.

Identify what you can learn from other leaders

One way to build your leadership skills is to apply what other great leaders are doing to motivate their teams and drive action. Look around at the people you admire as leaders. These could be leaders in your community, or at your work or school. They could be national or international figures, such as climate change advocates or inspirational businesspeople.

Identify three to five people you think are great leaders. For each person, ask yourself:

- What makes them a good leader?
- Which of the 10 characteristics of a good leader (featured earlier in this module) do they embody?
- What can you learn from them about leadership and apply in your own life?

Find opportunities to volunteer and support climate change adaptation

Working as a volunteer can teach you valuable leadership skills. If you can get involved in local climate change initiatives, you can also build your knowledge of the sector.

- If you have already done some volunteering work, write down your experiences and consider what leadership skills you have built through them.
- Consider ways you could volunteer in climate change adaptation initiatives and what leadership skills you could build through doing so. Choose volunteer opportunities that give you a chance to lead and work with other young people.



Community members and volunteers grow an educational garden in Morocco. Photo Credit: CARE Morocco.

Learn to facilitate a group

As a youth leader, you may need to facilitate groups. For example, you may be asked to facilitate a discussion and/or training session about climate adaptation for other young people.

To be an effective facilitator you need to:

- Have **sufficient expertise** on the topic under discussion and be able to think on your feet.
- Be a **good communicator**. This means that you can pass on accurate information to the audience, in ways the audience can understand, and respond to different types of questions when asked.
- Be **organized** and structure a dialogue or training session so that all activities can be completed in the time allotted.
- Apply an **analytical mindset** so that you have a good understanding of the audience's learning needs and different ways of meeting them.
- Be **innovative and a lifelong learner** so you can update your content and delivery to meet your audience's needs.
- Be a **good listener and observer** so that you can make people feel included and heard.
- Be a **self-evaluator**, which involves welcoming feedback and assessing your performance.
- Be **highly adaptable** so that you can deal with unexpected challenges that arise during the facilitation process.⁹



Facilitating participatory training on gender and agriculture in Burundi. Source: Irene Nduwayezu/CARE

Learn to negotiate

As a leader, you will need to negotiate with fellow young people and other members of society. Negotiation skills enable you to achieve your goals while ensuring that you are respectful of other people's needs and beliefs.

There are numerous situations where you may need to negotiate as a climate adaptation leader. For example, when speaking to your local government representative about adaptation solutions you want to see implemented, or when speaking to a local non-governmental organization about funding for a project that engages youth in your community on climate change.

To negotiate effectively, follow the steps below:

Step 1: Prepare for the negotiation

- Make sure you take the time to prepare for your negotiation.
- Research the person you are negotiating with and learn about the history and context of the negotiation.
- Devise your negotiation strategy (what you aim to achieve, allowing for some movement and reaching agreement, and how you will approach the negotiation).
- Prepare your case (how you will present and substantiate your arguments).
- Plan your tactics (timing, the appropriate means of communication, location).



A member of the African Group of Negotiators at a meeting in Nairobi in 2016. Source: S.Kilungu/CCAFS

Step 2: Open the negotiation

This requires that you first set the scene, for example through personal introductions, highlighting the purpose of the meeting and making sure that everyone has access to the background information relating to the topic or problem being discussed.

Do: listen well; ask open questions; check that you clearly understand the other person's position; summarize; withhold judgement.

Don't: interrupt; immediately put down the other person's position; reveal all your negotiating currency, answer questions too specifically.

Step 3: Conduct the negotiation

Here you explore the options and positions that are available for solving the problem. You can present the different ways the problem under negotiation can be resolved, carefully citing the information and sources you have consulted. You should guide the conversation to find a common understanding of a solution while also identifying sticking points (areas where there are disagreements).

Do: focus on the topic or problem, not the person; concentrate on issues, not positions, even if the gap between the positions seems large; listen for common ground and possible sticking points; ask probing and clarifying questions; listen for what is not being said; observe the other person's body language to pick up any contradictions in what is being said; summarize and check understanding; make notes where relevant.

Don't: interrupt; talk too much or allow the other person to talk too much; be tempted to present counter arguments; start to become entrenched in your position; think in terms of "right" and "wrong" – it is more helpful to think in terms of difference.

Step 4: Move toward agreement

Now you can direct the negotiation towards coming to an agreement. This is where you identify concessions – issues or demands that you are willing to forego or offer – while also identifying your contribution to the proposed solution.

Do: aim for a win/win outcome; summarize as you proceed; be open about your motives; give reasons before making a proposal or a decision; anticipate counterarguments; ask questions; keep focused on the central theme; gain concessions; build on common ground; pitch any other offers at the right level depending on the context.

Don't: make threats or use sarcasm; use irritating phrases such as "I'm sure you'll want to accept my extremely generous offer"; let the discussion lose focus; become defensive or attack the other person; insult the other person; question the other person's motives; rejects arguments out of hand; force decisions prematurely.

Step 5: Reach agreement

You reach an agreement by identifying the areas where you and the other group, or person, you have been negotiating with agree. It may be possible that an agreement is not reached, and instead people need more time to think about your offer. In this case, you can recommend that you adjourn the meeting to another time.

Do: record all decisions in writing and make sure they are witnessed; use the law of reciprocity or other face-savers; give people time to consider their acceptance; check that all parties are committed to the decision and will abide by the agreements; make sure that both sides of the negotiation acknowledge their own and the other person's contribution to the successful outcome; make sure that all parties are clear about the next steps.

Don't: rush decisions through before everyone has stated that they agree; leave any actions to be followed up open-ended; gloat.

Step 6: Follow up on the negotiation

The last step is following up after a negotiation, where you either finalize the deal (if the outcome was positive) or arrange the next steps (if the negotiation ended with an agreement that another meeting was needed). If the negotiation was unsuccessful, an appropriate follow-up would be to thank those who participated.

Do: Send a note or e-mail to all parties summarizing the agreements reached and reminding them of the next steps; carry out all your agreed actions by the agreed deadline; inform all relevant parties, including those who were not directly involved in the negotiation, about the conclusions that have been reached; send a letter of thanks to those involved in the negotiation.

Don't: forget to follow up!

Learn to deliver a compelling elevator pitch

Whether you're running a business and meeting with potential investors or leading a climate change adaptation campaign and want to influence people in power, knowing how to deliver a powerful "elevator pitch" is an essential skill.

As the name suggests, an elevator pitch is a short speech (think 2-5 minutes) that tells people exactly who you are, what you do, and why it's important. It communicates what solutions you offer, or what you aim to achieve with a product or campaign. You use it to quickly capture someone's attention and secure their interest for a further, deeper discussion.¹¹

Your elevator pitch should give your audience:

- A **concise, basic description** of your climate change adaptation solution, campaign, or business.
- An **indication of the need, or growing demand**, for what you are proposing.
- An understanding of the value your solution, campaign, or business brings.
- A **positive impression of you and your team**, and an indication of your expertise and why you are the best people for the job.



Box 2: Elevator pitch keys to success

- Know who you are talking to before you start.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- If people ask recurring questions, this shows your pitch is missing something. Revise it.
- Have a 1–2-minute version ready for networking events and impromptu meetings.
- Have a five-minute version ready for longer pitch events.
- After your pitch, exchange contacts and follow up with an executive summary about your adaptation solution, campaign, or business.

Where to use your leadership skills

As a young climate change leader and advocate for adaptation, you will have many opportunities to apply your leadership skills. Also remember that leaders continue to learn, remaining agile and open to new knowledge and ways of doing things.

Ways you might use your leadership skills include:

- **Building partnerships** with civil society organizations, businesses, youth advocacy groups and government.
- **Engaging in local adaptation actions** (learn more about this in Module 8).
- **Influencing politicians** to make changes to climate change adaptation policy.
- **Training other young people** on climate change adaptation and leadership.
- **Starting a business** that provides climate change adaptation solutions.
- **Engaging with the media** to raise public awareness of climate change adaptation.
- **Running an advocacy campaign** to drive positive changes that promote adaptation (learn more about this in Module 7).



Heat Wave

Understanding leadership

READ the Harvard Business Review article, [Understanding leadership](#) for a detailed overview of leadership.

READ this article by Kevin Kruse in Forbes on [What is leadership?](#)

READ this article at Emeritus, [What is leadership? Definition, Meaning and Importance](#) to learn more about key concepts in leadership.

READ the article at MindTools, [What is leadership](#), to enhance your understanding of how to become a more effective leader.

Tools for developing leadership skills

READ the advice from the Harvard Business School about [how to assess yourself as a leader](#), which lists four ways to assess your leadership qualities.

READ the report, [A New Green Learning Agenda](#), from the Brookings Institution. It offers a framework for conceptualizing the green skills needed by young people to catalyze technical and social transformation in response to climate change.

READ UNICEF's "[Prepare to act! Practical tips for climate advocacy and action.](#)" This is a toolkit for young climate activists in Latin America and the Caribbean created by young people who, as activists, have faced many challenges when advocating and taking climate action.

EXPLORE this [toolkit](#) from The Transformative Action Institute to learn about different activities that you can use to develop your leadership skills.

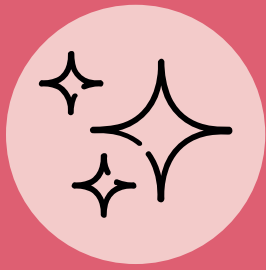
EXPLORE the [tool from UN Women](#) for organizations to self-assess how they support women's leadership and meaningful participation in disaster and climate risk reduction, recovery, climate change adaptation (CCA), post-disaster recovery, and resilience building.

Learn about emotional intelligence in leadership

READ about why emotional intelligence is important in leadership in an article by Lauren Landry of the Harvard Business School. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, use, understand, manage, and handle emotions. People with high emotional intelligence can recognize their own emotions and those of others, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, and adjust emotions to adapt to environments.



Portia is a young climate leader from Ghana working to reduce carbon emissions from coal.
Copyright: Portia Adu-Mensa



Bright Spark

Case studies

Adaptation action led by girls in Mali, Somalia and Zimbabwe

As part of a CARE International project, adolescent girls took the lead on actions in rural communities severely affected by climate change. In these contexts, traditional gender norms contribute to high rates of early marriage and other forms of gender-based violence and exclusion, which disproportionately affects girls' education.

In Mali, 1,027 young leaders conducted activities with other students and out- of-school children in their communities to help mitigate the impact of climate change. They took part in reforestation, demonstrated drought-adapted agriculture techniques, and improved water management and sanitation in their communities.



In Zimbabwe, girls took the lead in a project using solar energy to get water for menstrual health management and to maintain school gardens. They developed their leadership skills and helped the community improve its water management system.

In Somalia, actions focused on the barriers faced by pastoralist girls displaced by recurrent droughts, including supporting enrollment, tracking cases of absenteeism and dropout, preventing early marriage, and enhancing awareness of menstrual health management and gender rights.

Read the case studies in full in this [report](#) from the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies.

Platforms for young people's voices

LEARN about [The United Nations Climate Change Conference](#), the world's biggest and most important climate change conference. Known as the COP, this event brings world leaders together each year. There is plenty of space for young people to engage with days and events dedicated to learning more about issues affecting youth and to amplify youth voices. For example, COP27 (in 2022), featured a [Youth and Future Generation Day](#), where young people showcased success stories and challenges and engaged with key climate decision makers.

Competitions for climate advocacy and solutions

CHECK OUT UNEP's [Young Champions of the Earth Competition](#), a global competition for entrepreneurs and innovators aged 18–30 with big ideas to secure a sustainable future. All these ideas address urgent environmental issues in bold and creative ways. The Young Champions of the Earth is a forward-looking prize designed to breathe life into the ambitions of young environmentalists. Watch [this video of 2020 winner Nzambi Matee](#), whose company Gjenge Makers produces building materials from recycled plastic.

CHECK OUT the [African Youth Adaptation Solutions \(YouthADAPT\) Challenge](#), an annual competition and awards program for youth-led enterprises (50% women-led). Jointly organized by the Global Center on Adaptation, the African Development Bank and Climate Investment Funds, the competition seeks to boost sustainable job creation through support for entrepreneurship and youth-led innovation in climate change adaptation and resilience across Africa. Read about the [2022 winners](#).

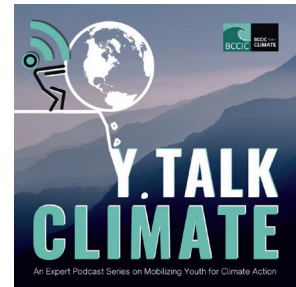
Podcasts

LISTEN to an episode of the Africa Renewal podcast on [African Youth and the Climate Crisis](#). Adenike Oladosu, a Nigerian youth climate change activist, talks about the impact of climate change on women and girls and why “delaying [action] is denying the urgency of the climate change crisis in Africa.”

LISTEN to this episode of the TED Climate podcast, featuring Indonesian climate activist Melati Wijsen, who has been pushing for environmental protection on the island of Bali, where she lives. Wijsen offers three pieces of advice for young people seeking to make lasting, sustainable progress as well as how young changemakers can keep from burning out.



LISTEN to Y Talk Climate. The goal of this podcast is to educate youth in British Columbia, Canada, and around the world about the climate crisis, and empower them to turn expert insights into action. Listen to Episode 4: "A conversation with Youth Climate Leader, Marina Melinidis" (38:50), one of Canada's Top 30 Under-30 Sustainability Leaders and Top 25 Under-25 Environmentalists.



Climate poetry

WATCH this video (2:38) of young poet Jordan Sanchez delivering her poem, 'On climate denial.' Sanchez was one of the high school students who took part in a 2019 poetry slam event about climate change, hosted by New York's Climate Museum.



Cool Down

Test your understanding *answers on page 26*

- 1 When it comes to leadership, social influence refers to which one of the following?**
 - (a) having lots of followers on social media
 - (b) being continually in the public eye
 - (c) having friends in high places
 - (d) ensuring that the work of others contributes toward achieving a defined goal

- 2 Which of the following is not one of the 10 characteristics of a good leader?**
 - (a) respect
 - (b) integrity
 - (c) self-awareness
 - (d) commanding

- 3 Which one of the following attributes is important for a facilitator?**
 - (a) good communicator
 - (b) mind reader
 - (c) good-looking
 - (d) emotional

- 4 Which one of the following should you not do when you are negotiating?**
 - (a) Call adjournments where necessary
 - (b) Ask probing and clarifying questions.
 - (c) Rush decisions through before everyone has stated that they agree
 - (d) Send a letter of thanks to those involved in the negotiation

- 5 True or false? An “elevator pitch” should take about 15 minutes and include in-depth details about your climate change adaptation solution, campaign, or business idea.**
 - (a) True
 - (b) False

BONUS QUIZ: To further test your knowledge of climate change, do [this online quiz](#) developed by UNDP. It covers three topics:

- [The problem of climate change](#)
- [The impacts of climate change](#)
- [Mitigating the impacts of climate change](#)

Reflect and prepare for your climate adaptation action

As a young person who is working on becoming a leader in the world of climate change adaptation:

- What qualities do you already have that will help you be an effective leader?
- Based on what you have learned in this module, what qualities do you feel you need to develop further? How could you develop, or strengthen, those qualities?
- What opportunities do you see in your community or country for taking a leadership role in climate change adaptation action? Map out your vision for how you will move from your current state to your desired role as a leader, identifying concrete steps you can take to make your dreams a reality.

Answers

1. Correct answer: (d) ensuring that the work of others contributes toward achieving a defined goal.

EXPLANATION: In the case of leadership, social influence means having the ability to ensure that the work of others (e.g., in a team or group you are leading) contributes toward achieving a defined goal.

2. Correct answer: (d) commanding.

EXPLANATION: a good leader does not need to command. Other than respect, integrity and self-awareness, a good leader should be able to delegate, communicate, show gratitude, have learning agility, exercise influence, show empathy and be courageous.

3. Correct answer: (a) good communicator.

EXPLANATION: A good facilitator should be able to communicate the message to the audience in a way and a language that they will understand, while also translating their messages to others.

4. Correct answer: (c) Rush decisions through before everyone has stated that they agree

EXPLANATION: You reach an agreement by identifying the areas where you and the other group, or person, you have been negotiating with agree. It may be possible that an agreement is not reached and instead people need more time to think about your offer. In this case, you can recommend that you adjourn the meeting to another time.

5. Correct answer: (b) False.

EXPLANATION: As the name suggests, an elevator pitch is a short speech (think 2-5 minutes) that tells people exactly who you are, what you do, and why it's important. It communicates what solutions you offer, or what you aim to achieve with a product or campaign. You use it to quickly capture someone's attention and secure their interest for a further, deeper discussion.

Endnotes

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