

YFU'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

In 2025, the YFU network adopted a binding YFU Sustainable Development Policy, encompassing five Key Sustainability Objectives. By making Sustainable Development not only an important part but a foundation of YFU's activities, we contribute to the empowerment of active and engaged citizens of one world who will shape the future of our planet in a sustainable way. YFU not only provides members of our community with a better understanding of the world but also with tools for engaging with their community more proactively, in line with the UN SDGs.

YFU's Sustainability Objectives

Through five Sustainability Objectives, we focus our efforts on selected Sustainable Development Goals hence contributing to 9 of the 17 UN SDGs. However, our sustainable development activities have an indirect positive impact on several of the remaining SDGs.



1. Our educational offer for students and host families fosters inclusive, peaceful, and just societies (SDGs 4, 10 and 16)

- We cultivate democratic values, promote social inclusion, and enhance conflict resolution skills by empowering individuals with knowledge on democratic competences, human rights, and constructive communication.
- Within the spectrum of the UN SDGs, YFU focuses on topics close to our DNA where we have skills and competencies to ensure genuine empowerment, in particular:
 - Interpersonal skills, intercultural communication and personal development
 - Equality, bias and stereotypes
 - Democratic culture and human rights
 - Conflict resolution and peacebuilding
 - Active citizenship and volunteering
- We continuously review and improve our educational & support offering to ensure that these topics are not just elements among others but receive a substantial share of attention of the YFU community.

Specific actions:

- Our updated [Educational Goals](#) form the basis of the educational content for all our program participants and volunteers as well as guide our approach to on-program support.



- Our **Learning Outcomes for Orientation Programs (LOOP) framework** establishes YFU-wide the subjects and methods of the series of orientations that YFU program participants attend throughout their exchange experience. These orientations are a core tool to achieve the educational impact we strive for in YFU and they go far beyond what most exchange providers offer. The LOOP is currently being revised based on our updated Educational Goals.

2. We strengthen our volunteers' capacity for intercultural understanding and civic responsibility (SDGs 4, 10 and 16)

- We equip volunteers with the skills and knowledge to understand global challenges such as inequality, climate change, and threats to democracy. We encourage them to take action, both locally and globally, to promote fairness, inclusion, and sustainability.

Specific actions:

- A **Volunteer Management Network (VMN)** strengthening our global volunteer community and enhancing collaboration across the YFU network. The VMN is intended to serve the development of a thriving, international community of volunteer leaders. The initiatives to be developed within the VMN shall allow our Member Organizations to create strong mutual connections around the topic of volunteer management and development and to promote communication and support amongst our volunteer communities worldwide. The VMN is also intended to serve as a space for our Member Organizations to share best practices and develop content, support volunteer training and retention and promote lifelong learning and engagement with YFU - at home and abroad. By connecting staff members, global governance and key volunteers globally, we empower volunteers to drive action within the YFU community, contributing to global efforts for sustainable development in service of YFU's goals and mission.

3. We embed social responsibility as a foundation of sustainable development (SDGs 3, 5, 8)

- Sustainability is not only about environmental impact - it's also about the way we treat people. Our commitment to social responsibility is deeply woven into our operations, ensuring that our global network of staff and volunteers thrives in a culture of respect, equity, and ethical conduct. Our global Social Responsibility Policy encapsulates this.
- We also uphold rigorous privacy and data protection standards, recognizing that trust and transparency are essential to sustainable development.
- By integrating these principles into our daily work, we lead by example - creating a workplace and community that reflects the inclusive, ethical, and people-centered future we strive to build.

Specific actions:

- Through our **Universal Code of Conduct**, we promote inclusive behavior, prevent abuse and harassment, and foster a safe and empowering environment for all. All staff and volunteers receive onboarding and annual training on the UCC, privacy policies, and ethical standards to ensure consistent understanding and application.
- Every YFU Member Organization has a **Delegate for Safe Communication**, offering a confidential and neutral space for addressing concerns and upholding our values.
- Regular **wellbeing surveys** help us listen, learn, and improve. Anonymous annual surveys assess the emotional and professional wellbeing of staff and volunteers, guiding improvements in HR practices and organizational culture.



4. We enhance environmental sustainability in YFU (SDGs 12, 13)

- We commit to minimizing our environmental impact in all aspects of our operations. This includes adopting sustainable practices in mobility, reducing waste and energy consumption, and ensuring ethical standards in partnerships and supply chains.
- **Travel:** we implement measures to reduce our travel-related carbon footprint as much as possible. Where carbon emissions are unavoidable, we offset our footprint.
- **Operations:** each YFU office worldwide pledges to implement environmentally friendly practices for its operations as much as possible and reduce resource consumption substantially. This includes energy efficiency, sustainable sourcing and waste reduction.

Specific actions:

- Recognizing the impact of travel, which is inevitable in the context of our programs, we apply a **Carbon Offsetting Program** for all student exchange travels to and from their host country. This includes a flat carbon offset contribution per program participant based on the actual carbon emission produced by YFU students in one program year. These contributions are directed to certified, high-quality carbon offset projects recognized and promoted by the United Nations Carbon Offset Platform to ensure transparency, credibility, and measurable climate benefit. We actively promote bus or train travel alternatives where feasible, to reduce emissions at the source.
- YFU Member Organizations also commit to greener operations, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable sourcing. Each YFU organization worldwide has a designated **Green Advocate** who promotes and oversees the green initiatives in YFU offices and activities of the organization. Additionally, YFU established a **Green Champion Initiative:** an annual competition to recognize the most sustainable YFU organization. Member organizations showcase their green initiatives and improvements; a committee evaluates and selects the Green Champion of the year.

How our Carbon offset program works:

Starting with the 2026 program year, all YFU exchange students contribute a flat-rate fee which is included in their program price to offset the emissions generated by their travel. The fee is calculated using a global travel matrix that estimates YFU's annual emissions based on actual travel routes and distances of the previous program year and draws on recognized platforms to determine the amount of compensation. Collected by the YFU Global Office via the national YFU organizations, the funds are then pooled and annually allocated to projects recognized by the United Nations Carbon Offset Platform, which supports high-impact, certified projects around the world, such as renewable energy, reforestation, and community-based climate resilience.

Through this program, YFU ensures that the life-changing experience of cultural exchange contributes to a more climate-conscious and sustainable world.

5. We establish local and global partnerships focusing on Sustainable Development (SDG 17)

- YFU is a youth exchange organization with an educational ambition, and this will remain the core and focus of our activities; however, we cooperate with strategic partners to broaden our coverage of sustainability topics which YFU cannot deliver with its own resources and skillset.
- By adding the complementing capabilities, experiences, and networks of partners, we further enhance our impact on sustainable development without losing focus on our core strengths.

We are aware that our contributions can only make a small difference. But we believe that every action matters and we want to inspire others.

Sustainability is not a single achievement; it is a continuous journey.