

# Q&A

## **A.R.C. Challenge Malaysia Forum — Youth, Climate Change and Cultural Rights**

Panellists address questions posed by the audience during the forum.



**Professor Dr. Joy Jacqueline Pereira**  
National University of Malaysia

**1. Why is it important to address climate change?**

The current status of climate change is articulated in the National Communications submitted by the government to the UNFCCC. With respect to global warming of 1.5 degrees Celcius, there is a need to address issues related to extreme weather and coastal hazards.

**2. What are Malaysia's current initiatives or plans to combat climate change? Have plans / initiatives changed or affected by Covid-19?**

There has been no formal review on the impacts of Covid-19 on climate actions in the country. Malaysia has been late in submitting their updated NDC - this is an indication that Covid-19 has had an impact. The NDC would probably provide more insights.

**3. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by Malaysia today in combating climate change?**

The lack of political will and whole of government approach; as seen in the case of handing the Covid-19 pandemic.

**4. What are the biggest changes to human lifestyle and industry practices that have already taken place since the start of COP?**

The first IPCC Assessment Report contributed to the establishment of the UNFCCC. The second to fifth IPCC assessments have documented changes over various COPs. The latest (Fifth Assessment Report) contributed the science for the Paris Agreement. All the reports, including the Summary for Policy Makers and Frequently Asked Questions are available at the IPCC website: <https://www.ipcc.ch>

**5. In your opinion, how would you rate Malaysia's contribution towards improving climate change, compared to other South East Asian countries?**

Malaysia has done well in some sectors but generally we have some ways to go in adapting to climate change. The country has not developed a National Adaptation Plan, unlike many of its ASEAN neighbours.

**6. Are there any efforts in implementing or trying carbon pricing in the country and your thoughts on implementing carbon pricing in Malaysia?**

I am not aware of any efforts but in my personal opinion, I don't think that carbon pricing is effective if it allows countries to offset their emissions rather than making absolute reductions in their GHG emissions. Carbon tax would be a far more effective instrument to drive change; in combination with a range of actions including behavioural changes, deep emissions cuts in all sectors, increased investment in low carbon options etc.

**7. How far has Malaysia progressed in addressing problems of climate change and engaging the youth in solving the problems?**

The country has been progressing in various sectors as evidenced by the [National Communications](#) submitted by the government to the UNFCCC. However, youth engagement has not been specifically mentioned in these reports. The youth have mobilized on their own and that is something we can be proud of in our country.

**8. What (if any) goals has Malaysia set to achieve from the Paris agreement COP21, and how has the progress been?**

We are waiting to see the goals of the country in the NDC which has been delayed. Thus far, we have pledged a reduction of 40% intensity reduction, part of which is conditional to transfer of technology.

**9. Are targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or 2045 too little, too late?**

According to the IPCC, global carbon emissions peak before 2030 in all pathways compatible with 1.5°C warming. Emissions of carbon dioxide fall by 45% by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050, with deep cuts in methane and other emissions. So the carbon cuts alone are not sufficient. Other GHG has to be reduced as well.

**10. How aware is the Malaysian public of the impact of climate change? How does Malaysia measure the level of awareness on the issue of climate change?**

Generally, the urban population is relatively more aware of environmental issues compared to the rural areas. In the absence of a comprehensive survey, this may be the case. However, the rural farming community are already feeling the impacts of climate change in many parts of the region although they may not articulate it as such.

**11. If climate change cannot be halted, what plans should the international community put in place to manage the changes that will be required? How are we going to work amongst nations to ensure climate change work is properly executed?**

Unlike Covid-19, there is no one magic vaccine for climate change. The science indicates that global warming beyond 1.5 degrees puts the world in a pathway to irreversible changes. All countries must take action now.

**12. How can a country empower its youth to address the issues of climate change?**

The youth in Malaysia need to drive the agenda and move the government to take action. This world is your world.

**13. What are some efficient ways of persuading policy makers to emphasize the importance of environmental issues (i.e. climate change)?**

Policy makers need to be made accountable for their decisions. Transparency, open access data and healthy debates. I think Malaysian youths are an innovative lot. Organise and take coordinated actions.

**14. How do we better articulate and communicate the interdependencies of public economic and healthcare concerns along with that of climate change?**

Read up on the vast amount of literature that is out there. All IPCC reports are available on the web. They have been transformed into simple language suitable for the lay person. Please use this resource. Arm yourself with scientific facts and convey them to specific target groups.

**15. How do you envision UK and Malaysia cooperating to combat climate change?**

I think we have great potential to increase collaboration, particularly in climate change adaptation. This will benefit the UK by protecting their investment in the country. We need a programmatic approach; not one-off projects to promote effective action.



**Alison Tickell,**  
Director of Julie's Bicycle, UK

**1. Why is it important to address climate change?**

Life on earth is reliant on an earth system that support a thriving web of life but these systems are collapsing. Climate change offers us a mirror to see ourselves in relation to one another, and to Mother Earth and asks us whether we are good stewards living as community, or not.

**2. What is the link between climate change and cultural rights?**

The climate crisis is above all one of cultural values. The overwhelmingly dominant global value system is one that relies on exploitation of natural and human resources to serve the wealthy. The erosion of cultural rights, almost always prompted by environmental issues such as land ownership, resource exploitation and short-term profit, is inextricably linked to climate change — which is caused by these values — past and present. Tangible and intangible heritage are intimately tied up with identity — sometimes survival — and precious knowledge systems along with communities are being lost due to environmental impacts (weather, temperature, sea levels etc) as well as deliberate extraction. This extends into the non-human world.

**3. In terms of climate change, what do you think are the biggest challenges?**

This speaks to resilience and adaptation. There is a huge amount of work to be done to put in place the infrastructures and behaviours which will enable us to meet this challenge — and most of the work needs to focus on richer economies. But this can be done provided there is a values re-set. And culture lies at the heart of this.

#### **4. In your opinion, how should we combat climate change?**

The world is mobilising everywhere on climate, environment and justice issues. Every action counts and all of it will resonate in different places to different communities — in other words transformational movements are happening but need to accelerate. Certain levers can be pulled now which will have exponential effects, especially cultural policy at all levels, new narratives and stories from culture, and much better cultural infrastructure (zero carbon/nature regenerative etc). All of this will prompt value shifts in the wider world.

This also speaks to the importance of putting young people at the heart of this agenda, reinforcing their voices, values and creativity.



## **Eliza Collin**

Sustainable fashion and material designer

### **1. Why is it important to address climate change?**

Climate change is happening, it's irreversible and it's putting humans and other species at risk. It's our responsibility now to take decisions with the future generations in mind. These decisions are complicated and technical and involve multiple systems from the individual through to politicians and global corporations.

### **2. Do you think we will be able to cope with climate change repercussions in the future?**

Human beings have evolved over hundreds of thousands of years and are highly adaptable and resilient, nevertheless some of the impacts of climate change might be fatal, simply because of the loss of the essential basics to life such as our temperate climate and water. We already see evidence of this in parts of the world with extreme events related to climate change. It will take huge innovation and invention to provide us with protection against what could be the catastrophic consequences which are currently being predicted by climate scientists.

**3. How can we effectively raise public awareness on climate change issues and affect behavioural change?**

The most effective way to raise awareness on climate change is to involve people in the environment in which the most serious effects of climate change are being felt. Simply telling people what they should and shouldn't do is not demonstrated to have effectiveness. Starting with children, involving them in the natural world physically by taking them into environments could be one of the most powerful interventions to make future impacts.

**4. How can small, community-led organisations play a more proactive role?**

Community led organisations can have quality collaborative conversations both vertically, from the power bases, and horizontally, out towards further reaching communities so that those smaller communities can have a better flow of information.

**5. How can art and artists be relevant in addressing the issue of climate change and enhance youth participation?**

Artists are trans generational, and therefore artists with an interest in climate change can connect to all generations stimulating ideas and creativity. They have access to institutions and can involve many people from different backgrounds in collaborative exercises. These group sessions give birth to inclusive ideas.

Creatives pave the way in many areas, one in which is close to my heart through material and production. With their uniquely creative outlook they can explore new and less damaging directions and broadcast them through their work. The arts need to continue to be supported in schools, giving youth access to a diverse range of topics and means of expression, this is the best way to ensure a high quality of art education from a young age.

**6. How in your own practice / capacity are you addressing climate change?**

Currently Wendy Teo and I are working on the project 'Narratives of Soil' and the aim is to really enlighten people into how versatile and untapped this material is and how in many of its applications it can be recycled directly back to the land. We are drawing on bringing ancient and often indigenous techniques which use mud and what lives within it as a pivotal component.

A project I explored in 2020 was communicated through conversations which presented to the viewer different opinions looking at how people perceive the non-human world. Researching through these conversations supported me in discovering the questions I needed to be asking, questions which came directly from the people who are beginning to feel the effects of climate change yearly.



Finally, I come from a fashion background and we all know the huge and negative impact this industry has on the planet. The knowledge I gained from working in this industry has really driven me forward in my practice. Design has been the driving force for many of the issues we are facing today — therefore I see it as my duty to continue my practice with more awareness than designers before me. By digging deep into every process I engage with and discovering stories along the way whilst working with communities, I believe we can best reform the ways we work to benefit producers, consumers and the non-human.

**7. How can youths and young professionals contribute towards the cultural rights discussion on climate change?**

Youth needs to have the necessary information whilst being offered clear channels for communication and opportunity to motivate them with the feeling they have a voice which will be heard. Leaders can be crucial in facilitating this.

**8. What are the challenges for youth to address climate change?**

Many do not feel they have power because they're not adults, their voice is not yet heard, most markedly in voting. So the challenge is, how can they find their voice and what support do they need to find their voice and be heard.

**9. How can youth be inspired and empowered to address the issues of climate change?**

I believe we need to empower youth by giving them the information they need, reliable and relatable stories, we need to trust them - it is their future we are building, we need to listen to what they want.

**10. Given that we are now in a climate emergency, I think there is a big responsibility for educational institutions to equip students to deal with this. What are the skills that we should be teaching and revolutionising all our curricula with? Is it coding, economics, LCA?**

Whilst we are growing up we move from one institution to the next, these are the places which should be empowering us, for a start I don't believe I had enough education into how the political system worked as a student, this is the sort of knowledge we need to be trusting our young people with. Institutions need to adapt by understanding this is the top priority, and really listening to the voices at every level. The main issue is institutions take time to change, but we don't have much time, their real challenge is to become nimble and lean, responsive to the changes which need to take place. Specifically for the arts we need more awareness in material choices, understanding of the top to bottom industries students are entering into, the challenges on every step of the production line and provide them with the tools to change these systems and implement more sustainable practices. We need to understand our impact as creatives. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations and empowering students to make connections beyond the creative realm, in the areas of science, politics and economics to name a few.

**11. There are many impoverished communities whose livelihoods are largely affected by the climate, for example migrant workers in plantations or workers of the controversial cloth industry in India. Alternative processes sometimes might be more expensive to such individuals so what could be done to help such communities while still protecting the environment?**

I recently worked on a project called the LIPA project with the Rumata art space in Makassar, Indonesia about the production of the sarong and I was shocked by the use of synthetic fibres and dyes in the region. The argument for these is that they are cheap, meaning the producers can buy the materials cheaply and that they will be more likely to sell them as the sarong will be cheaper once produced.

I decided to see if I could find a traditional technique which would challenge this idea. By exploring further the technique of mud dyeing, I found a process which is free, readily available in the region and a 100% harmless process to the people taking part in it and the environment around them. It also produces the most beautiful colours. I think we can get stuck in the idea that quality means an increase in cost of production but the skills these people have should not be downgraded. I believe if done well and with innovation then it can mean no increase in cost but a likely increase in how much people will pay and very little effect on the environment, in fact keeping an ancient technique alive at the same time.



## Toh Zhee Qi

Malaysian Youth Delegation

### 1. Why is it important to address climate change?

I think climate change is important to be addressed because it is not a standalone event. It affects people all around the world, and climate change can cause the crumbling of many sectors in the world. If we don't act now, there will be no resources left for the survival of the human race. It is necessary because it is a global emergency and it needs global effort to salvage what we have left. It is important to remember that we do not possess the environment but rather we hold it in trust for future generations and are supposed to survive in peace with other beings inhabiting this globe.

### 2. How can we effectively raise public awareness on climate change issues and affect behavioural change? How can small, student-led organisations play a more proactive role? How in your own practice / capacity are you addressing climate change?

By making information more accessible within your own circle. By educating yourself and creating waves within your community.

I am a part of the Malaysian Youth Delegation, a Malaysian civil society that represents Malaysia's local youth climate movement and raising awareness of climate policies among Malaysians. I am also working on a research paper on the importance of courts to hear environmental disputes. Further, I also try my best to participate in forums, join discussions, and start conversations among the people around me. Aside from that, I try to incorporate environmentally friendly efforts into my daily life and attempt to educate myself to make more environmentally conscious choices as a consumer.

**3. How can youth be inspired and empowered to address the issues of climate change?**

For me, it was looking at other youths playing a role in combating climate change, because it is motivating to know youths do have a role to play in this fight. The fact that these youths are making a change, makes you believe you can too. It also ignites the sense of responsibility to partake in the combat against the climate crisis.

**4. How can university students from different faculties play their role in ensuring positive climate change?**

It is important to realize that every faculty has a role to play in climate change. University students from different backgrounds should aim to further develop their respective sectors towards a more sustainable direction. The burden does not solely fall upon students of science or environmental backgrounds, for instance, personally as a law student, I think it is important for us to study the law and attempt to further improve its protection towards the environment.

**5. What are the challenges for youth in addressing climate change?**

The greatest issue is not being taken seriously due to our age, thus there are times when our voices are undermined. Aside from that, being born into an era where information is readily available, it is very easy to fall into climate anxiety due to the overwhelming information about how serious the climate crisis is.