

Research Article

THE DYNAMICS OF INDONESIAN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of the role and impact of the involvement of Indonesian youth delegates in the COP25–COP29 Climate Change Conferences through the lens of Two-Track Diplomacy. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, combining semi-structured interviews with six key informants and a literature analysis of scientific articles obtained from reputable databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and DOAJ, as well as official reports from the UNFCCC, YOUNGO, and position papers released by the Indonesian youth delegation during COP. This study identifies how youth leverage informal diplomatic channels (Track II) to support and strengthen official negotiations (Track I). The findings indicate the presence of three primary mechanisms: (1) capacity building through climate negotiation simulations and literacy; (2) policy bridging by integrating data from affected communities into policy documents; and (3) transnational networking connecting YOUNGO, NGOs, and digital platforms. This simultaneous approach effectively promoted the adoption of several youth recommendations into Indonesia's Enhanced NDC 2022. However, structural challenges and tokenism continue to hinder the full effectiveness of their influence. These findings underscore the significance of implementing Two-Track Diplomacy as an integrative framework to bolster the representation and strategic impact of the younger generation in global climate diplomacy.

Keywords: :Two-Track Diplomacy; Climate Change and Youth Engagement; COP25–COP29.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of climate change has gained significant momentum and become a matter of global concern over the past two decades. It is evident in the increasing number of policy commitments and financial support dedicated to addressing it. According to the Climate Policy Initiative findings, the total amount of global climate finance recorded in 2022 was approximately 1.27 trillion United States Dollars. This figure is more than double the amount of international climate finance recorded in 2019, which was 600 billion United States Dollars (Initiative 2023). Moreover, the number of countries adopting mitigation and adaptation policies based on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) increased to 195 countries following the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow.

Concerning public awareness, a survey by the Pew Research Center (2021) revealed that 72% of citizens in developed countries regard climate change as a significant threat to their nation, marking a substantial increase from the 56% who held this view in 2013. This surge in attention is also reflected in the growth of civil society organizations and global youth movements, such as Fridays for Future, which has organized more than 7,500 protests in 150 countries since 2018 (Center 2021). This phenomenon underscores the transition of the discourse surrounding climate change from the periphery to the forefront of public and global agendas, encompassing diverse sectors such as economics and social justice.

Climate change has also become a multidimensional global challenge whose impacts have been felt in real terms, ranging from extreme temperature increases and the frequency of hydrometeorological disasters to a decline in the quality of life of vulnerable communities (Aldrian and Djamil 2007; Sari and Al. 2022). While political elites and international stakeholders often dominate the discourse on the climate crisis, the participation of civil society groups, particularly young people, has demonstrated a pivotal role in articulating climate justice. Nevertheless, the contributions of young people to global strategic agendas, such as the Conference of the Parties (COP), are frequently perceived as symbolic rather than substantial. Even though over 60% of the population in developing countries is under 30, their involvement in global policy-making processes, particularly

regarding climate change issues, is frequently constrained to the informal sphere (Waechter 2017).

However, a study by Adriázola et al. (2014) demonstrates that contemporary climate diplomacy has initiated the opening of new spaces through the Two-Track Diplomacy approach. This approach enables non-state actors, including youth, to influence official negotiations through informal channels and inter-community dialogue. This context is important when we realize that young people are not merely recipients of the impacts of the climate crisis, but also catalysts for social and political change through data-driven advocacy and powerful personal narratives (Germanwatch 2016). Indeed, on a global scale, the role of youth has been formally acknowledged through the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) framework enshrined in Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. This framework emphasizes the importance of education, training, and public engagement in climate-related matters (UNFCCC 2022). Representing the youth constituency within the UNFCCC, YOUNGO functions as the principal instrument of youth diplomacy and as a contributor to "Action for Climate Empowerment," a term encompassing education, training, and public participation (UNEP 2022).

A comparable situation exists in Indonesia, the largest archipelagic country, comprising more than 17,000 islands, and is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, extreme weather, and coastal ecosystem damage. According to the Climate Risk Index report by Germanwatch, Indonesia is among the countries with a high level of risk (Germanwatch 2016; Gray and Cointet 2023; Initiative 2023). It underscores the critical nature of climate change, as evidenced by the heightened focus on climate-related issues.

For instance, the unconditional emission reduction target has been elevated from 29% to 31.89% in the Enhanced NDC for 2022, and a commitment of Rp 104 trillion in funding for climate action by 2030 has been made (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan 2022). In response, the Indonesian government has prioritized mitigation and adaptation through the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). However, the approach employed by the Indonesian government is characterized by a top-down structure that fails to engage

youth effectively. This oversight poses a significant challenge for the nation, the world's fourth most populous country, to leverage its youth's potential as active and productive contributors in addressing climate change (Suryatini and Riesardhy 2024).

Many Indonesian youth representatives have attended and contributed to various formal and informal forums, from COP25 in Madrid to COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. They have delivered public statements, participated in negotiations, and advocated for local interests within the global climate policy framework. Notably, these actions have transcended mere symbolic advocacy, successfully shaping a novel narrative that advocates integrating intergenerational justice and low-carbon development values into domestic policy (Pattinussa and Pratikno 2024). Nevertheless, the participation of Indonesian youth in international forums such as the Conference of the Parties (COP) continues to be constrained by systemic, representational, and restricted political access impediments.

Indeed, the dynamics of representation are frequently erratic and contingent on institutional support and individual capabilities. It prompts the inquiry into how such involvement influences the development of national policies within the country. Research by Nandyatama (2021) indicates that civil society organizations and youth networks can influence ASEAN and national policies through parallel advocacy strategies in informal diplomatic channels. This finding substantiates that youth involvement is not merely a complementary discourse but an integral component of a dynamic and multi-directional diplomatic process.

Several studies have indicated that youth involvement in international forums is not as effective as it could be, particularly in the absence of mechanisms for mainstreaming in national policy. A study by Bakti & Kusumo (2022) indicates that cross-sector collaboration between youth and local government institutions remains significantly constrained. However, youth can articulate the pressing need for change and function as a conduit between scientific knowledge and regional needs. This awareness has yet to be fully integrated into regulatory frameworks, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), despite Indonesia's

acknowledgement of the significance of public participation in its climate policy documents.

Additionally, a noteworthy development has emerged in Indonesia, where the nation has demonstrated progress but has yet to achieve its full potential. Various organizations, including Youth for Climate Indonesia, Climate Rangers, and Extinction Rebellion Indonesia, have actively developed digital culture-based diplomacy and grassroots campaigns (Jones and Youngs 2024). According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report (2022), the involvement of Indonesian youth delegates in Conference of the Parties (COP) forums has increased since COP26 in Glasgow to COP28 in Dubai. Various forums, including the Youth Climate Leaders Roundtable and Youth Day, have served as platforms for articulating the voices of local youth (Kompas.id 2023; UNDP 2022).

However, domestic advocacy capacity has been weakened by internal challenges, including shrinking civil space and democratic regression (YAPPIKA-ActionAid 2023). Indonesian youth face a dual dilemma, navigating structural limitations within their domestic environment while competing in a complex and hierarchical global arena. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding the potential for "tokenism" and "youth-washing" indicates that youth are frequently symbolically included without genuine access to the decision-making processes (Ehing and Nesadurai 2020). This underscores the necessity for an integrated diplomatic strategy that strengthens technical capacity, expands transnational networks, and promotes institutional recognition of youth voices (Mungkasa 2022; Pattinussa and Pratikno 2024).

The present study employs the concept of Two-Track Diplomacy, a conceptual framework introduced by Montville and Davidson (1991), which emphasizes collaboration between official diplomacy (Track One) and informal non-state diplomacy (Track Two) in resolving conflicts or reaching international agreements. Within the framework of climate diplomacy, young individuals occupy a pivotal position, albeit with the potential to exert significant influence over Track One policies through disseminating information, exerting public pressure, and actively engaging in international forums. A study by Akindoyin (2024)

demonstrates the efficacy of the Two-Track approach in legitimizing the diplomatic process by directly incorporating the perspectives of the affected populace and communities. The involvement of Indonesian youth in the Conference of the Parties (COP) can be interpreted as a manifestation of civil society diplomacy. This phenomenon contributes to shaping the nation's diplomatic discourse, particularly in criticism of Indonesia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) or the advocacy for a transition to clean energy. Examining Two-Track Diplomacy offers novel insights into the youth's symbolic and strategic role.

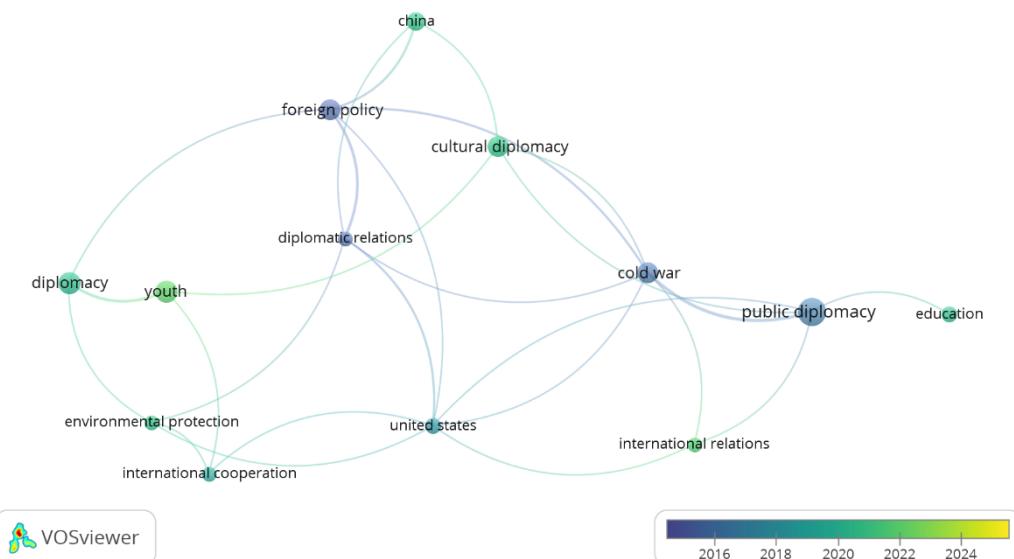
However, a paucity of scientific studies analyzes explicitly the impact of Indonesian youth participation in the COP on climate change policy at the national level. A thorough review of the extant literature on youth diplomacy in the context of climate change, as conducted by the author using the keywords "Youth AND Diplomacy" and "Conference AND of AND the AND Parties" in the Scopus database, yielded only three documents that are directly relevant to the issue. A thorough examination of these three documents was conducted, and they were utilized as the primary literature sources for this study. The initial document is a book titled *In Quest of a Shared Planet*. In her 2023 publication, "Negotiating Climate from the Global South," Naveeda Khan (2023), presents an ethnographic perspective on the climate change negotiation process from the 2015 Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the 2019 Conference of the Parties (COP25), with a particular focus on the Bangladesh delegation.

That book makes a significant contribution to the field by offering a comprehensive analysis of the role of Global South countries in the dynamics of COP, emphasizing the pivotal role that delegates' experiences play in shaping policy direction. The second and third documents demonstrate a comparable focus (L. et al. 2020; Snyder 2013). The primary distinction of this study is its emphasis on developing countries in general, as opposed to a specific focus on youth actors or the Indonesian context. Additionally, it places greater emphasis on state diplomacy than non-state diplomacy.

The author also conducted a follow-up search using the keywords "Youth AND Diplomacy", which yielded 130 documents on Scopus. These documents

were then analyzed using Vosviewer. The ensuing figure illustrates the aforementioned outcomes:

Figure 1. Overlay Visualization of Youth and Diplomacy



Source: processed by the author using Vosviewer, 2025

The bibliometric visualization above maps the evolution of discourse on international relations and diplomacy from 2016 to 2024 through keyword co-occurrence analysis. The blue color indicates an initial focus on the "Cold War," "United States," and "diplomatic relations," reflecting the dominance of traditional geopolitical studies and bilateral relations. As the colors gradually shift to yellowish green, we observe a thematic shift toward "public diplomacy" and "cultural diplomacy," connecting Type I actors (governments) with the media and civil society sectors, alongside the emergence of "China" as a key node, reflecting a new multipolarity.

Additionally, the nodes "environmental protection" and "international cooperation" indicate the integration of climate issues into diplomatic discourse, which is relevant to the COP agenda. At the same time, the emergence of the terms'

youth' and "education" marks a research trend on the role of young generations and public diplomacy in global advocacy. The connection between "foreign policy" and "international relations" emphasizes the interdependence between state policy and IR theory, while "diplomacy" serves as a conceptual bridge between clusters. Overall, this map confirms a paradigmatic shift from traditional security approaches toward issue-specific diplomacy, network governance, and the participation of non-state actors, which form the theoretical foundation of this study, particularly the Transnational Advocacy Networks and Multi-Level Governance frameworks for understanding how Indonesian youth delegations build capacity, bridge policies, and cultivate cross-sector networks in the COP arena.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the documents, the author employed a screening process based on the following criteria: article type, English language, open access, field of study in the social sciences, and the period 2019–2025. The screening resulted in 17 documents that formed the basis for understanding the conceptual map, practices, and theoretical approaches to youth diplomacy in the contemporary era. Most of these articles address youth involvement in multilateral forums, cross-border advocacy, and the relationship between young people and formal foreign policy institutions. Moreover, some articles incorporate case studies, such as the role of youth in the United Nations, climate action in the European Union, and advocacy through digital platforms as part of public diplomacy.

While these seventeen documents are pertinent, they do not explicitly address the context of the COP Climate Change Conference. Most of these initiatives prioritize cultural diplomacy, security, or sustainable development in general. To date, no systematic study has investigated the dynamics of the role and impact of Indonesian youth involvement in the COP forum, especially from the perspective of the resulting national policies. This phenomenon creates a discrepancy between the presence of young actors on the global stage and the institutional recognition of their contributions to national policy-making. Preliminary interviews with all informants who were Indonesian youth delegates at COP 25-COP 29 indicate that several advocacy initiatives, such as the submission of youth statements and dialogues with ministries, have yet to be fully converted into concrete policy

influence. A study by Gray & Cointet (2023) indicates that developing countries with top-down policy structures frequently perceive youth voices as rhetorical rather than consultative.

This research is essential because it comprehensively examines Indonesian youth participation dynamics in COP25 to COP29. It does so in two ways. First, it examines the participation as a symbol of the presence of the younger generation. Second, it examines participation as an indicator of systemic transformation towards inclusive climate governance. The present study is distinct from previous research in that it seeks to ascertain the dynamics of the role of Indonesian youth at COP 25-COP 29 and the impact of Indonesian youth involvement at COP 25-COP 29 on national climate change policy, including formal policy, design, and implementation, which have not been thoroughly explored. This study employs a multifaceted approach, integrating primary and secondary data sources. It incorporates in-depth interviews with subject matter experts and a thorough examination of formal policy reviews and public Conference of the Parties (COP) documents.

The present study focuses on the efforts made by the Indonesian Youth Delegation on climate change issues through the Conference of the Parties (COP) from 2019 to 2024. The selection of 2019 is based on the momentum of the initial "Youth4Climate" initiative, which commenced on September 21, 2019, during the UN Youth Climate Summit at the UN Headquarters in New York. The selection extends up to 2024, which is the final year of the COP implementation. Consequently, this approach not only contributes to the expansion of literature on youth participation but also creates opportunities for the reformulation of Indonesia's climate policies to be more responsive to the voices of the younger generation.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach with an exploratory-descriptive design. The exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach is a research method that aims to explore in depth a phenomenon that is not yet

widely known or understood, while systematically describing the crucial elements of that phenomenon. The term "exploratory" refers to efforts to gain initial or new understanding, while "descriptive" focuses on detailing the social reality, such as behavior, narratives, and participants' experiences (Muhibuddin and Fatimahsyam 2019; Pratama 2020).

This study utilizes the present approach to comprehensively examine Indonesian youth delegates' advocacy strategies and youth networks in the COP25 to COP29 forums. Additionally, the study aims to assess how these strategies influence national climate change policies. The primary data collection technique is semi-structured interviews with Indonesian youth delegates directly involved in the COP forums from 2019 to 2024. The selection of informants was conducted purposively, with a focus on individuals demonstrating active involvement as official participants, observers, facilitators, or climate initiative initiators within the broader context of youth organizations, including YOUNGO, Youth for Climate Indonesia, Climate Catalyst Indonesia, UNICEF Youth Partners, and other entities involved in sending delegations to the Conference of the Parties (COP) (see Table 1 for a detailed list).

The interviews were conducted online, with the scheduling adjusted to the availability of the informants. The interview guide was designed to explore the dimensions of communication strategies, coalition building, influence on the national policy agenda, and the structural challenges they face in the international forum. The interview process was recorded with the subject's consent, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and thematic categories.

Table 1. Characteristics of Interviewee Participants

No	Subject of the Interviewee	Initial Name	Gender	Date of Interviewee
1	Indonesian Youth Delegation to COP 28	AA	Women	June 17 2025
2	Indonesian Youth Delegation to COP 26, COP 28, and COP 29	L	Women	June 20 2025

3	Indonesian Youth Delegation to COP 27 and COP 28	AT	Men	June 18 2025
4	Indonesian Youth Delegation to COP 28	E	Men	June 25 2025
5	Indonesian Youth Delegation to 29	AL	Women	June 24 2025

Sources: Proceed by Authors, 2025

In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher also conducted a literature review as a secondary data source. It enriched the analytical framework and provided a theoretical context for the field findings. The extant literature was reviewed, and the following sources were included: scientific articles obtained from reputable databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and DOAJ, as well as official reports from the UNFCCC, YOUNGO, and position papers released by the Indonesian youth delegation during COP. The researcher also analyzed national policy documents related to climate change, such as Indonesia's NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) document, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), and relevant environmental regulation documents. Integrating interviews and a literature review facilitates robust data triangulation, thereby constructing a comprehensive narrative concerning the youth diplomacy process within the context of COP. This narrative illuminates the influence of youth diplomats on the direction of domestic policy. Data validity is maintained through member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trails, ensuring data collection and analysis transparency. This approach is anticipated to yield empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of climate diplomacy, youth engagement in global governance, and the strengthening of network-based policy advocacy strategies.

The Dynamics of the Role of Indonesian Youth in the COP-25 to COP-29 Forums

Since the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP-25) in Madrid in December 2019, the participation of Indonesian youth delegates has increased dramatically,

rising from a symbolic level to a significant number. At the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP-25), the number of delegates was only 12, but at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP-28) in Dubai, that number increased to more than 40 young people (KLHK 2022; UNDP 2022). KLHK data indicates that since 2020, over 120 young individuals from diverse provinces have participated in the drafting of joint position papers for COP (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2022). This data places Indonesia as one of the five Global South countries with the highest consistency in sending youth delegations over the past five years (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan 2022). These numbers place Indonesia as one of the five Global South countries with the highest consistency in sending youth delegations over the past five years (Shumba 2024).

In practice, an informant with the initials AA, representing UNICEF Youth Partners at COP 28, explained that UNICEF sends youth delegations to COP every year from UNICEF Global and UNICEF Indonesia. The informant emphasized the role of international institutions in facilitating their participation. Furthermore, an informant with the initials E, representing IYCDP at COP 28 and COP 29, mentioned that:

"The Indonesian delegation was not only present as observers, but also assigned to moderate side sessions and panel speakers."

This finding aligns with the report by Youngs & Jones (2024), which indicates that delegates assumed various roles, including panel speakers, side session facilitators, and policy statement drafters. This diversification of roles contributes to enhancing the legitimacy of youth advocacy. The increased quantitative participation suggests a commitment from various levels of government and civil society organizations to expand the younger generation's voice in global climate diplomacy (UNDP Indonesia 2023).

The strategies employed by Indonesian youth in global climate diplomacy are evolving, exhibiting a marked increase in complexity. These actors have been observed to use a strategy of organizing thematic coalitions through the utilization of the Transnational Advocacy Networks approach (Keck and Sikkink 1998) and

leveraging digital platforms to expand the reach of their campaigns (Kaniaecki, Johnson, and Stocker 2025; Nandyatama 2021). An informant with the initials AL from Solar Generation elucidated:

"I gathered data based on CLAC or UNICEF insights and participated in many online discussions beforehand, then presented the data at the COP forum."

The "Youth4Climate" campaign, initiated by ChangeCOP and documented by Earth Negotiations Bulletin, successfully incorporated intergenerational discourse into Indonesia's Enhanced NDC 2022, particularly in the field of climate education (KLHK 2022; UNICEF and Ministry of Environment and Forestry Republic of Indonesia 2023). This phenomenon, in turn, underscores the efficacy of digital diplomacy, wherein delegations employ global platforms to articulate local aspirations. The ASEAN Youth Forum and Global South Youth Dialogues are facilitating the expansion of networks, thereby enabling Indonesian youth to establish connections between domestic contexts and global discourse (Ehing and Nesadurai 2020; Pratama 2020; Wong 2020). However, the initial informant, AT, acknowledged structural limitations, namely:

"Collaboration with local governments and even the central government only goes as far as advocacy... low budget."

This funding discrepancy necessitates implementing a long-term strategy to enhance the stability of thematic coalitions and ensure the continuity of youth climate advocacy. In this context, the concept of Two-Track Diplomacy, as proposed by Montville and Davidson (1991), assumes particular significance. This theory posits that youth employ informal diplomatic channels, manifesting through campaigns, advocacy, and community networks, to exert pressure and strengthen official diplomacy, a process that remains largely outside their direct control.

This transformation reached its zenith at COP-26 in Glasgow, when the Indonesian delegation presented the "Indonesia Youth Statement," endorsed by

over 150 environmental youth organizations from 27 provinces (Sari and Al. 2022; Shiddiqi 2022; UNDP 2022). According to Informant E:

"I am here to convey these messages in every session and event, so that young people's voices are heard and responded to."

At COP-27, N. Sari (2023) noted the implementation of the "Youth for NDC Alignment" session, attended by Bappenas officials, which resulted in policy recommendations for community-based adaptation. The KNPIK report (2023) observed that 68% of the delegation's intervention materials were derived from field research and surveys of affected communities, reinforcing the credibility of advocacy using empirical data. Nevertheless, concerns persist regarding "youth-washing," particularly when youth statements are relegated to supplementary documents devoid of institutional authority (Ehing and Nesadurai 2020). The emphasis of initial informant E that "without clear regulations, our statements will just be stored on the shelf" underscores the need for binding institutional mechanisms to ensure the impact of advocacy is substantial.

Regarding influencing national policy, youth contributions have been included in strategic documents such as Indonesia's Enhanced NDC. One example is the expansion of climate education to 10,000 schools by 2030 (Kencana 2023; KLHK 2022). An informant with the initials AT from Fridays For Future said:

"This intervention includes children in the Second NDC Indonesia, a result of collaboration between UNICEF Youth Partners and UNDP."

However, the official document accommodated only 4 of the 16 youth proposals (Kajumba and Al. 2024). Limited inter-institutional coordination and the absence of youth mainstreaming regulations have resulted in youth contributions not being institutionalized. Informant E suggested the need for:

"a presidential regulation or law formally establishing the role of YOUNGO," as a solution to strengthen representative structures.

However, increased participation does not necessarily guarantee fair representation. Youth for Climate Indonesia (2022) survey showed that 70% of delegates came from Java, and only 12% from the 3T regions. Informant L from YOUNGO revealed that:

"Without accreditation, youth voices are only focused on demonstrations or 'just noise' without access to official sessions."

Moreover, the scarcity of financial resources has prompted young individuals to rely on crowdfunding, creating an exclusive environment. WALHI (2023) underscores that this phenomenon is exacerbated by the diminution of civil space in developing countries due to constraints on freedom of assembly and expression. This situation underscores the efficacy of Two-Track Diplomacy as a viable alternative when official channels are excessively restricted or exclusive. Adolescents and young adults can persist in influencing public discourse through informal channels while concurrently seeking to impact formal structures.

In the future, it will be necessary to establish a National Youth Climate Advisory Council that is integrated with the national climate policy formulation system (Forestry 2022; MoEF 2023). Informant E proposed the establishment of a Youth Advisory Council on Climate Issues under the cabinet, emphasizing the significance of this initiative in the context of the global concern surrounding climate change. Furthermore, the strategic allocation of budgetary resources through the state budget, the meritocratic selection process that considers 3T regions, and the provision of pre-departure training on climate diplomacy are all crucial steps in this process. Informants AA and AT concurred and underscored the significance of "capacity building, encompassing COP history, negotiations, and leadership before departure."

Furthermore, integrating youth in monitoring the implementation of NDCs and climate budgeting mechanisms is imperative to ensure that advocacy extends beyond the confines of conference rooms. By employing a dual-pronged diplomatic strategy that integrates community diplomacy and formal diplomacy, Indonesian

youth can serve as both symbols of intergenerational solidarity and agents of transformative change in the governance of national and global climate initiatives.

The Role of Indonesian Youth Involvement in Climate Change Issues on National Policy

A remarkable increase in the involvement of Indonesian youth in the COP (Conference of the Parties) forum has been observed between 2019 and 2024. According to a report by UNDP Indonesia (2023), the number of youth delegates increased from 7 at COP25 in Madrid to 29 at COP28 in Dubai, reflecting an increase of more than 300% in five years. This participation is not limited to physical presence; it includes active involvement in Youth Day forums, side events, bilateral meetings, and drafting youth statements submitted to official delegations. A significant proportion of the young delegates, constituting more than 60% of the total, participated in consultations on drafting the Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 2022. These consultations took place through online and thematic forums organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK 2022).

This approach aligns with the principles outlined in Article 12 of the Paris Agreement's Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), underscoring the significance of educational initiatives and public engagement. From the perspective of Two-Track Diplomacy, this youth involvement signifies a shift from symbolism to substance, using informal diplomacy (Track II) to urge formal diplomacy (Track I) to address climate issues and intergenerational justice (Hariyadi et al. 2024; Kammler 2023). In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, youth have emerged as pivotal intermediaries between international moral pressure and national policy adjustments, transitioning from a peripheral to a strategic role in the diplomatic arena.

This finding aligns with the results of interviews conducted with a group of Indonesian youth informants who served as delegates at the Conference of the Parties (COP) from 2019 to 2024. As informant L recounted in an interview, he was "merely a cheerleader" in demonstrations before being accredited. However,

following the acquisition of YOUNGO accreditation, he could "present local issues to global delegates." Informant AT further noted that the capacity-building mechanisms of the UNFCCC and the Global Youth Coalition helped delegates understand the negotiation process, enabling them to "intervene in policies being drafted" through hearing sessions. Conversely, informant AA elucidated that in informal negotiations, "anyone can talk about any issue," even without special accreditation. Informant E also emphasized the importance of YOUNGO as the "official forum for young people at the UNFCCC" to ensure that youth aspirations are recognized in official documents.

The contribution of Indonesian youth has evolved from mere ceremonial participation to a more substantial role, whereby they have become active contributors to the formulation of national policy documents. In the aftermath of the COP26 conference in Glasgow, youth delegations have consistently prepared and submitted Youth Statements to the Indonesian government. For instance, the incorporation of youth recommendations within the 2022 NDC is apparent. A study by KLHK (2022) revealed that 60% of delegates participated in the Enhanced NDC consultation, while the community budget was augmented to Rp 1.6 trillion (Bappenas 2022).

This finding aligns with the outcomes of an interview with AT, who indicated that the inclusion of the children's clause in the Second NDC was made possible by the lobbying efforts of UNICEF's youth partners. Furthermore, Informant L disclosed that they had reviewed the "loss and damage" section in the Global Youth Statement, which the UNFCCC subsequently adopted. The evidence supporting the legitimacy of the power transfer grew stronger when AA explained that, although not an official delegation, CLAC's recommendations "will mainstream child-related terminology in the NDC and RPJM." Additionally, E noted that the results of the U-Report survey were identified as a "key message" in the COP28 report, while AL observed that his KLAK data was "brought to several sessions" to support interventions. This phenomenon underscores the notion that the concept of legitimacy transfer in Two-Track Diplomacy can facilitate the internalization of the structured and documented voices of young people in briefs

and statements into the formal policy process (Khan 2023; Kuhlicke et al. 2023; Tomsa and Bax 2023). In this context, youth are a conduit of influence between global advocacy networks and state actors, strengthening inclusive and evidence-based policy directions.

Youth participation in the COP forum facilitates transnational networking opportunities, expanding their advocacy leverage. Indonesia is one of six developing countries that actively organized youth forums at the National Pavilion throughout COP27 and COP28 (UNFCCC 2023). Collaborating with YOUNGO and the Global Youth Climate Network, Indonesian youth facilitated more than 18 dialogue forums and compiled 12 policy briefs, which were subsequently disseminated to relevant ministries. The Climate Diplomacy Watch report (2023) observes that three of the five primary themes identified in the brief—local energy transition, indigenous peoples' protection, and carbon governance—are beginning to manifest in the technical documents of the 2025–2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), which is currently under development.

Informant E further noted that "collaboration ... through global youth platforms" is the most effective in influencing negotiations. AT further elaborated in the UN initiation forum in Indonesia, asserting that "energy transition is the priority" before addressing climate education. Subsequently, L elaborated on cross-border initiatives, including those originating from Manado and extending to the United States. These endeavors served to fortify the "collective force" of youth advocacy. AA further elaborated that informal negotiations offer a forum for "speaking on the informal floor" when formal settings are too rigid. AL suggested that the opportunity to "participate in discussions before the Conference of the Parties (COP)" could enhance the impact of their data. This implication was made indirectly, suggesting that the potential for a more profound effect is not immediate or explicit, but rather, it is implied or suggested. This transnational collaboration can potentially accelerate the adoption of global narratives into the 2025–2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN).

The network has been demonstrated to enhance young delegates' technical capacity and expedite the implementation of policy recommendations stemming

from Track II Diplomacy. Montville's concept of Two-Track Diplomacy is particularly pertinent in elucidating the symbiotic relationship between formal diplomatic channels and the moral pressure exerted by non-state actors. This dynamic can bolster the legitimacy of governmental policies and enhance government responsiveness to transnational issues, such as climate change (Huijgh 2016; Ofodile and Abdulkadir 2024). Consequently, the youth initiatives within the COP have played a substantial role in transforming the diplomatic paradigm, transitioning from a top-down model to one characterized by collaboration and participation.

Despite the evident rise in the contributions of young people, the effectiveness of their influence remains constrained by systemic and institutional impediments. An evaluation of public participation in the 2020–2024 RPJMN by Bappenas (2024) shows that only 21% of youth organizations involved in COP have formal access to the national policy planning process at the ministerial level. The remaining entities remain within informal and ad-hoc spaces, lacking clear institutional support structures. Informant L expressed regret regarding this imbalance, stating that:

"Many young people in the Global South ... do not have equal access to accreditation, and even young Indonesians are often represented only by the same young people, making this issue and this forum seem exclusive and not inclusive."

AT further underscored the challenge of tokenism, stating that "exclusion may occur if the message is perceived as excessively critical." Informant E further elaborated on this point, noting that, from an observer's perspective, the formal negotiation space for non-states is "minimal." Consequently, side events often serve as the sole viable alternative. AA has also observed that the implementation of COP simulations remains limited, with "training still rare" as of 2023. This situation has resulted in delegations lacking the necessary preparation, highlighting a gap in disseminating and utilizing training resources. AA further noted that in the absence

of adequate funding and accreditation, advocacy is constrained to "mere support." Concurrently, AL disclosed that the collaboration with the government at COP29 "only goes as far as advocacy" due to budgetary constraints, underscoring the persistent discrepancy between Track II and formal decisions.

Moreover, the absence of an integrated information system on youth actors in climate diplomacy forums has been exacerbated by the fragmentation between institutions, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The reliance on the personal support of officials has led to sporadic and unsustainable participation of youth. Within the framework of Two-Track Diplomacy, the inadequate interface mechanism between Track II and Track I hinders the conversion of moral pressure from youth into structural policies (Isnaini 2021; Kawuri 2022). This phenomenon carries the potential for tokenism and the delegitimization of youth voices. Consequently, institutional reform is imperative to ensure the sustainability and coherence of youth participation across sectors.

Despite the structural limitations, certain local governments have exhibited innovation by establishing more systematic participatory spaces. In Bali and Yogyakarta, youth have been actively involved in formulating regional environmental regulations and community-based local mitigation programs (Shiddiqi 2022). Initiatives such as youth consultative forums at the provincial level have also begun to be adopted as policy to learn from international climate diplomacy practices. The central government has also expanded online participation channels through public hearings and youth climate town halls, particularly in the aftermath of COP28 (Jacobs 2022). This phenomenon can be interpreted as an indication that informal diplomatic pressure has resulted in concrete institutional responses.

AA unveiled UNICEF's collaborative efforts with KLHK, Kemenlu, and Kemenpppa within the CLAC framework, aiming to assess the sensitivity of children's rights within climate policy. According to L, he engaged in on-ground advocacy "to the DPRD and ministries" to ensure the implementation of COP recommendations at the local level. E further noted that the U-Report survey

initiated a discourse on "urban climate resilience" at the provincial level. Meanwhile, AT cited the UN forum in Indonesia as a multi-stakeholder model that directly submits communiqués to the government. Within the multi-level governance paradigm, youth engagement in global forums has been shown to facilitate the decentralization of climate policy innovation to the local level. Their role as catalysts and connectors of global-local narratives underscores the importance of positioning youth as policy co-creators, not merely advocates (Khan 2023; Petrich 1993). This finding indicates that Two-Track Diplomacy manifests not only in the vertical dimension (international–national) but also in the horizontal dimension (national–subnational).

The involvement of Indonesian youth in the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Azerbaijan signified a pivotal strategic inflection point, fortifying their position as official partners in climate diplomacy. Notably, the youth delegation's involvement extended beyond mere delivery of statements, encompassing active participation in formulating the government's official policy brief. Additionally, their participation in ministerial-level bilateral dialogues signified a significant advancement in their engagement with high-level political discourse. This finding is consistent with the interview with L, in which L assisted in drafting the policy brief with the government and AA's statement that "the informal platform facilitated the delivery of advocacy statements" from CRC General Comment 26. Moreover, UNDP Indonesia (2023) data indicates that 72% of Indonesian youth are prepared to participate in climate policy initiatives; however, only 19% perceive their voices being heard.

This disparity presents a significant challenge that must be addressed through regulatory reforms, such as promulgating a Presidential Regulation on Youth Involvement in Environmental Diplomacy. This issue was further emphasized by E, who underscored the potential for youth quotas within the Climate Change Council. In contrast, AL advocated for a Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action, with the aim of binding stakeholder commitments. AT indirectly underscored the significance of "consistent advocacy" and the receptivity

of the majority of stakeholders to achieving long-term objectives. To maintain the momentum of this initiative, it is essential to implement regulations such as the Presidential Regulation on Youth Involvement in Environmental Diplomacy. It will ensure that their voices are not merely "tokenistic," but they play a meaningful role in the decision-making process.

Conversely, significant opportunities emerge when Track II is reinforced with institutional bridges to Track I, facilitating innovations such as youth quotas in the Climate Change Council or the Energy Transition Unit. These measures can expedite the transformation toward a more participatory climate governance system. The notion of Two-Track Diplomacy in the Indonesian context underscores the significance of fortifying informal diplomacy as a strategic investment, thereby facilitating the expansion of national climate policy's legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability. The nation's capacity to confront the climate emergency in the future is contingent upon its willingness to heed and empower the voices of its youth.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study demonstrates that the involvement of Indonesian youth in the Conference of the Parties (COP) Climate Change Conference (2019–2024) has undergone a substantial transformation from symbolic presence to substantive participation. The increase in the number of delegates from a dozen to dozens each year has been accompanied by the adoption of systematic advocacy strategies. These strategies include capacity building through negotiation simulations and scientific literacy, policy bridging by integrating data from affected communities into the NDC framework, and forming cross-sector networks between YOUNGO, NGOs, and digital platforms. The Two-Track Diplomacy approach, which incorporates formal and informal channels, has been demonstrated to facilitate the transfer of youth legitimacy into the national policy space. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by constrained political engagement and the specter of tokenism, the collaboration with international institutions and the diversification of roles, such as panel speaking and youth statement drafting, underscore the mounting acknowledgement of youth as active participants in the realm of global climate

diplomacy.

With emphasis on the national policy implications, the contributions of youth have been incorporated into strategic documents, including the Enhanced NDC 2022, particularly concerning the expansion of climate education to thousands of schools and the inclusion of a child clause. However, it is essential to note that only a limited number of proposals have been addressed, underscoring the necessity for more effective institutional mechanisms to provide greater legal certainty. Key recommendations include establishing a Youth Advisory Council under the cabinet, allocating a special budget, and formal regulations, such as a Presidential Regulation on Youth Involvement in Environmental Diplomacy, to ensure that youth advocacy extends beyond the confines of COP meetings. Given the informal and formal diplomacy collaborations, the potential for Indonesian youth to become agents of inclusive and sustainable climate policy change is significant.

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