

EcoYOU – Clean and green Minds for Environmentally Friendly Behaviour
*A1.18 Developing a Joint Study that includes a Blue-Map used to raise awareness on
environmental protection for youth in BSB regions*

Interview interpretation results – NALAG Partner
(Georgia)- Qualitative research

Amidst pressing climate challenges and the degradation of ecosystems, environmental education has risen to prominence as a critical area within contemporary pedagogy. This report compiles the insights and experiences of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including educators and youth leaders actively promoting environmental education in schools, as well as environmentally conscious parents and young people such as students and volunteers.

I) Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses

1.1 Understanding environmental protection

Young respondents demonstrate a deep emotional and ethical connection to environmental protection. They see it not only as a civic responsibility but as a personal and moral obligation to care for the planet, often likening nature to family or personal property. Their motivation stems from the desire to leave a clean world for future generations and to safeguard essential resources such as air, water, and food.

1.2 Engagement and motivation

Youth are actively involved in a wide range of pro-environmental activities, especially through school-organized events. Clean-up campaigns, tree planting, composting, creative recycling, and awareness-raising art projects are common. Importantly, their engagement is largely intrinsic—driven by a personal sense of duty. However, peer influence and social learning opportunities also serve as significant motivators. Participation in these activities offers them a sense of purpose, community involvement, and creative expression.

1.3 Challenges and barriers

Several key barriers were identified:

- Infrastructure issues: Lack of waste bins, poor waste management systems, and inadequate sorting facilities—especially in rural areas—limit practical environmental action.
- Behavioral norms: Social practices such as littering and open burning persist and discourage sustainable habits.
- Institutional conflicts: Students noted difficulties in balancing academic demands with active involvement in environmental campaigns.

Interestingly, economic and social barriers were not commonly addressed, either due to lack of awareness or reluctance to discuss these issues, suggesting a gap in critical reflection or dialogue around socioeconomic influences.

1.4 Education and awareness

There is strong critique of current environmental education, which is seen as overly theoretical and disconnected from real-world application. Students express a clear preference for:

- **Interactive, hands-on learning** (e.g., games, clean-up drives, field trips)
- **Creative and visual approaches** (e.g., posters, drawings, videos)
- **Regular and dedicated time** in school schedules for environmental projects

Despite resource limitations (e.g., lack of labs), youth show resilience and a solution-focused mindset, offering practical suggestions for improving learning engagement.

Across the board, youth favor a blend of theoretical and practical learning, enriched by visual and creative formats. Seminars, trainings, documentaries, and especially social media content are considered powerful tools for awareness-raising. The use of artistic expression (drawings, videos, storytelling) is seen as an effective and emotionally resonant method for communicating environmental values.

Young people show a high level of environmental awareness and are eager to take action when given the opportunity. Their motivation is authentic, their ideas are constructive, and they are ready to contribute. However, structural and educational limitations—not lack of interest—are the main barriers to deeper engagement.

To maximize youth participation, there is a clear need to:

- **Improve infrastructure** (especially waste management systems)
- **Reform environmental education** to be more experiential and student-driven
- **Support schools with resources** for hands-on and creative learning
- **Value and integrate youth feedback** into project planning and curriculum design

This generation is ready to act—not just learn—and they are asking for the tools, time, and space to make a real impact.

II) **Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.**

2.1 Understanding environmental education

The interviewed teachers clearly demonstrate a **practical and integrated approach to environmental education**. They incorporate environmental themes into regular lessons using **experiential learning methods**—such as clean-up campaigns, field trips, debates, poster-making, and real-world case studies. Students learn about core environmental topics (e.g., recycling, composting, deforestation) and are also introduced to global frameworks like the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. This approach connects local action to broader global awareness.

2.2 Engagement and challenges

Students are described as **highly engaged and enthusiastic**, especially when learning is interactive, competitive, or community-based. Activities such as eco-challenges, awareness campaigns, and student-led initiatives foster a strong sense of involvement and concern over environmental issues like pollution and climate change.

However, **teachers face notable challenges**:

- **Resource constraints**, such as lack of funding for materials or event organization.
- **Curriculum rigidity**, where strict schedules and limited flexibility restrict the timing and depth of environmental activities.

- **Limited inter-school collaboration**, despite interest, due to administrative or logistical obstacles.

2.3 Effective strategies

Teachers have adopted **innovative and student-centered strategies** to overcome these barriers. Making learning **engaging and creative**: poster contests, geographic models, interactive games. **Partnering with external actors**: e.g., rangers, NGOs, and local government agencies, which enhance learning with real-world relevance.

Using **positive reinforcement** and student recognition (e.g., awards, competitions) to boost motivation. **Digital outreach** (e.g., eco-video challenges, social media campaigns) as a growing method for engagement and visibility. These approaches create a dynamic learning environment that fosters not just awareness but **active participation** in environmental protection.

2.4 Future improvements

To make environmental education more impactful, teachers suggest:

- **Adjusting the curriculum** to allow flexibility for environmental projects during optimal seasons.
- **Increasing funding and institutional support** for continuous environmental activities.
- **Scaling up successful collaborations** (e.g., with the Gori Development Fund or municipal agencies).
- **Encouraging peer learning** among youth and between schools to share best practices and co-develop projects.

Systematic and institutional support is needed to turn one-time projects into sustainable, long-term environmental engagement. The interviews reveal a strong commitment by educators to meaningful environmental education, despite structural and resource limitations. Teachers are already employing best practices, including experiential learning, creative expression, community collaboration, and the use of technology to engage students.

Key takeaways include:

- **Hands-on learning is highly effective** and should be prioritized.
- **Student motivation is not a barrier**—it's institutional rigidity and lack of resources that need to be addressed.



- **External collaboration** has proven successful and should be expanded into more consistent, inter-school and cross-sector initiatives.
- **Digital platforms** offer exciting new opportunities for environmental education and awareness-raising.

Teachers are not only teaching sustainability—they are actively building it into the school culture, and with stronger policy and financial support, they can significantly expand their impact.

III. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses

3.1 Role in environmental awareness

The parent views early environmental education as essential, ideally beginning in early childhood. They emphasize habit-building from a young age, teaching children not to litter and to understand the health and environmental consequences of pollution—especially hazardous waste. Rather than using rewards, the parent encourages modeling and consistent correction, believing in the power of repetition and example to shape lasting behaviors.

At home, sustainable habits are encouraged through shared activities, like waste collection and proper disposal, reinforcing responsibility and awareness in everyday life. The approach focuses on long-term behavioral change over short-term motivation.

3.2 Challenges and perceptions

One of the key challenges is the lack of infrastructure, especially public trash bins. This sometimes leads children to carry waste for long distances or, regrettably, dispose of it improperly. Interestingly, the parent observed that older children often act as role models, guiding younger ones, indicating positive peer influence.

Regarding generational awareness, the parent perceives significant improvement among today's youth. They attribute this to sustained public efforts, including community clean-ups and greening programs, which have gradually shaped youth attitudes toward the environment.

3.3 Support and resources

The parent sees schools as valuable in raising environmental awareness, but not sufficient. Education should begin within the family, with schools and universities serving to reinforce these values. For more impactful environmental education, three key areas were identified:

- **Improved infrastructure** (especially more public trash bins)
- **Wider access to information** through campaigns and educational materials
- **Stronger community involvement** via organized events and support for student participation

The parent calls for **systemic solutions**: visible signage, anti-littering messages, consistent infrastructure, and locally funded environmental programs. They also recommend **active involvement of youth** in clean-up and awareness activities, facilitated by schools and municipalities. Educational institutions should be resourced not just to teach but to organize meaningful, habit-forming experiences.

This interview reflects a **deep commitment to environmental values within the family setting**, with the parent acting as an educator and role model. The focus on **early education and consistent behavior modeling** underscores a belief in long-term, internalized environmental responsibility.

The parent's insights also highlight that:

- **Infrastructure is a practical barrier** to sustainable behavior, especially for children.
- **Generational awareness is improving**, but needs continuous support.
- **Families, schools, communities, and governments must collaborate**, combining education with tangible support (like clean-up campaigns, signage, and accessible waste disposal).

Ultimately, this perspective affirms that **environmental awareness is a shared responsibility**—one that begins at home and must be sustained through coordinated community and policy efforts.

IV. Similarities and differences across groups

4.1. Common understandings of environmental protection

Similarities:

All groups agree that environmental protection is a moral duty and a shared responsibility. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of early education and habit formation (especially noted by parents and echoed by teachers). Youth and teachers link environmental protection to concrete actions (e.g., recycling, composting, clean-up), while parents focus more on behavior in daily life (e.g., not littering).

Differences:

Youth often express their understanding in emotional and generational terms, focusing on leaving a clean planet for the future. Teachers connect environmental responsibility to global frameworks (e.g., SDGs) and emphasize structured learning goals. Parents center their understanding on family habits and the impact of pollution on children's health and well-being.

4.2. Perceptions of current education & awareness

Similarities:

All groups recognize that environmental education exists but believe it is insufficient in its current form. Preference for interactive, hands-on learning is consistently mentioned across groups.

Differences:

Youth find current education too theoretical and request more creative and field-based activities. Teachers are actively implementing environmental lessons but feel restricted by curriculum rigidity and resource limits. Parents acknowledge the school's role but believe environmental education should begin at home, with schools playing a secondary, reinforcing role.

4.3. Challenges and barriers

Similarities:

Infrastructure issues are a common concern across all groups (e.g., lack of bins, poor waste management). Resource limitations and insufficient institutional support are highlighted by both teachers and parents.

Differences:

Youth focus more on logistical and institutional barriers, such as missing school time for activities and poor access to proper waste sorting systems. Teachers emphasize curricular constraints, funding shortages, and lack of inter-school collaboration.

Parents are more concerned with practical barriers in public spaces (e.g., children having to carry trash due to lack of bins) and lack of community initiatives.



4.4. Effective strategies & desired support

Similarities:

All groups support interactive, creative, and experiential learning methods (e.g., campaigns, clean-ups, posters, videos). There is a shared call for more structured support from institutions, including better infrastructure, funding, and awareness campaigns.

Differences:

Youth suggest specific improvements like dedicated school time, art-based awareness projects, and integration of social media. Teachers seek curriculum flexibility, external partnerships (e.g., rangers, NGOs), and scaling of digital outreach efforts. Parents focus on early habit-building at home, more visible public signage, and government-led infrastructure improvements to support sustainable behaviors in families.

Summary Table			
Category	Youth	Parents	Teachers
Common Understandings	Emotional, generational duty; personal responsibility	Early habit formation; family-based behavioral norms	Teach everyday actions and global consequences
Perception of Education	Too theoretical; need creativity & practice	Schools help but family is primary educator	Active efforts in schools, but limited by structure & resources
Challenges & Barriers	Infrastructure, schedule conflicts, limited facilities	Lack of bins, limited campaigns, behavior gaps	Curriculum inflexibility, lack of funding & inter-school coordination
Effective Strategies & Support	Art, media, peer projects, field trips	Model behavior, signage, trash bins, community support	Gamification, partnerships, digital outreach, curriculum reform

Table 1: Similarities and differences across groups (from NALAG's Interviews in Georgia)

V. Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues

1. Enhancing education & awareness

- Move beyond theory: shift the focus from purely theoretical lessons to a hands-on, practical approach. integrate more experiments, workshops, and real-world projects.
- Use engaging media: leverage social media, documentaries, and videos to make environmental topics more accessible, interesting, and memorable for young people.
- Promote creative expression: encourage students to use creative methods like drawing, making posters, and creating videos from recycled materials to raise awareness and deepen their understanding.

2. Increasing practical engagement

- Organize regular activities: schedule dedicated time for monthly clean-up campaigns and tree-planting events. this provides a consistent and tangible way for students to contribute.
- Integrate field trips: plan educational excursions to relevant sites like recycling centers or natural reserves to provide practical experiences and connect learning to the real world.
- Dedicate school time: advocate for a designated time slot within the school schedule for environmental projects and activities, ensuring they don't conflict with other classes or upset teachers.

3. Addressing infrastructure & resources

- Improve local infrastructure: work with local communities and municipalities to install more trash bins and recycling facilities in public spaces, especially in areas where they are lacking.
- Provide school resources: secure funding or donations to provide schools with the necessary materials and equipment for hands-on projects and experiments.

4. Fostering community & collaboration

- Encourage social interaction: emphasize the social and fun aspects of environmental activities. Organize group events where friends can participate together to make the experience more enjoyable and motivating.
- Educate the broader community: launch public awareness campaigns to address cultural habits and low awareness of waste management. This can help reduce issues like littering and burning waste.
- Bridge the socioeconomic gap: although not a focus in the provided text, future efforts should address the economic and social barriers that may prevent some young people from participating in environmental initiatives.

Conclusion: A unified call for action

This study, synthesizing perspectives from youth, educators, and parents, reveals a powerful and unified narrative about environmental responsibility: it is a shared endeavor that requires intentional collaboration across generations and institutions.

The findings confirm that young people are not only highly aware of environmental issues but also genuinely motivated to act. Their eagerness is rooted in a deep, moral conviction and a desire for hands-on, tangible involvement. However, this passion is frequently held back by systemic barriers, not a lack of interest.

Educators, mirroring this commitment, are already employing best practices like experiential learning and creative projects despite limited resources. They see firsthand that the biggest obstacles are institutional rigidity and inadequate support systems. Their success depends on more than just curriculum; it requires consistent policy and financial backing.

Crucially, the parental perspective highlights that environmental values are first instilled at home, through consistent role modeling and early education. This foundational awareness is then strengthened by schools and the wider community. The insights from parents reinforce a key finding from all three groups: a lack of supporting infrastructure—such as accessible recycling and waste disposal—serves as a very real barrier to sustainable behavior for everyone.

In summary, this research underscores that environmental awareness is a shared responsibility, but its success depends on coordinated action. To truly unlock the potential of the next generation of environmental stewards, we must:

- Reform environmental education to be more interactive, practical, and student-driven, and provide schools with the necessary resources.
- Invest in community-level infrastructure to make sustainable behaviors easier and more accessible for everyone.
- Create and sustain partnerships between families, schools, and local governments to provide consistent support and opportunities for meaningful, collective action.

The study's ultimate conclusion is an optimistic one: the will to create a sustainable future already exists. Now, it is up to all of us—from parents and teachers to policymakers and communities—to build the supportive framework that will allow that will to flourish.

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