

Vol. #YourStoryOurFuture
ISSUE 1, September 2021

A **Storytelling** Magazine

PollenNectar

Buzzing Climate Clicks & Biodiversity Beatz



GLOBE IN A HONEYSPOON

Tales from the Fjords to the Caucasus:
Bridging Frontiers in Euroasian
Climate & Biodiversity Movements

(Cover picture: Svydovets massif, Carpathian Mountains, Ukraine,
by Iris del Sol, 2019 Y4N Storyteller)

SOLVE x TELL y:

Discover how Heitor uses
aquaponics and agro-
voltaic systems to dispel
myths about semi-arid
regions!



ALSO...

An Introduction to Y4N ...
Artivism as Storytelling ...
Upcycling DIY activity ...
and more!

STORYTELLER FEATURE: RUMAITHA

The youngest Omani woman to travel to the South
Pole speaks to us about her ceiling-breaking
expedition and environmentalist journey!

????, ?????
(check p. 10 to find out!)



Urban compost project, Belgium
by Esmeralda Wirtz, 2019 Y4N Storyteller



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Submit, volunteer and collaborate with us!

#Y4N

SEPTEMBER'S CLICKS & BEATZ

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Fact #1. Outside work, I'm quite keen on crafting stories through prose, music and photos! I love to write above all, and I also have my own blog. My artist logo resembles this graphic!



"Time flies when you are having fun" is such a common saying, but being a cliché doesn't stop it from being true. I have been at Y4N since we started in May 2019, and it still feels like it was yesterday when I found out about the then-idea through a Facebook post. It immediately felt like the right project for me. After all, it brought together my drive to make a difference regardless of my **age**, my nerdy keenness on **ecology**, my quest to get active in tackling **climate** vulnerability, and my lifelong love affair with **creative** writing.

At present, it is common to spot '**youth**', '**climate**' and '**nature**', maybe even '**storytelling**', within the same sentence. However, this wasn't the case back when I joined the climate movement in 2018. Countless youth-led marches, community-led demonstrations by environmental defenders, all have done an incredible job to bring intergenerational and environmental justice to the forefront of climate discourse. And with them have come more creative and engaging approaches to change, like the art of telling stories.

While in this regard, the last couple of years can be deemed as successful, we are now at risk of (if not already affected by) "youthwashing" and "greenwashing" within the climate arena. Thus, it is really important for young climate-nature activists and campaigners passionate about environmental justice and systems change to **co-own and co-design narratives and actions** around the twin green crises. Just as our Storytelling Programme as a whole, 'PolleNectar' mag aims to achieve the above, and much more.

Fact #2. The origins of my involvement in the climate-nature movement stem from learning first-hand about a community-led climate-nature solution: a regeneration & adaptation project through traditional ecological knowledge in the displaced village of Doune Baba Dieye, Senegal! Can't wait to share more of this story one of these days!

All in all, it is a pleasure for me, for everyone in the Unit, to finally share our latest storytelling baby! We hope you enjoy 'PolleNectar' and we can't wait to engage with readers like you by receiving your suggestions, advice and contributions.

With love and solidarity,

Emily Bohoba N'Dombaxe Dola, Storytelling Director at Youth4Nature



"There is no 1.5 without nature. There is no 1.5 without youth."

Founded in 2019 with a dream, to break down silos through the power of youth voices, Youth4Nature (Y4N) is a youth-led, international non-profit organization. We **educate, empower, and mobilise** fellow young people to lead on solutions for both the ecological and climate crises that are ambitious, backed by science and community-held knowledge, and grounded in **environmental and intergenerational justice**.

As a global youth-for-youth initiative, all our staff and volunteers are youth from different backgrounds, and with a common vision: a **world where communities thrive with nature across generations**. To this end, our work is grouped into three pillars: **Storytelling, Knowledge-Sharing** and **Capacity-Building**.



Now, following two years of relentless (and at times penniless!) work, Y4N is recognised as the **bridge** between **biodiversity, climate, and youth action** in NGO, policy and activist circles. With this growth in recognition has come a growth in ideas and the capacity to deliver them. Thus, 'PolleNectar' was conceived earlier this year.

Housed by Y4N's Storytelling Programme Unit ('The Unit'), 'PolleNectar' will be a monthly by-youth magazine with riveting, ingenious and poignant buzzes from the **climate-nature nexus** through the curated reflections, artwork and experiences of youth at the frontlines and at the forefront of climate and biodiversity issues and solutions.

'PolleNectar's' first volume, #YourStoryOurFuture, aligns with Y4N's ongoing Storytelling Campaign of the same name.

"We are not your cheerleaders or inspirations... You can't make decisions about us without us. As youth, we deserve to co-design our own futures."

MARINA MELANIDIS, Y4N FOUNDER

'20-'21: A YEAR OF URGENCY, COMMUNITY & SOLUTIONS

BY THE UNIT

After launching in May 2019, Y4N spent the rest of the year building a climate-nature youth-led movement. **'Raise Your Voice'**, our first Storytelling Campaign, was integral to this work through our focus on harnessing the power of youth voices.

In just a couple of months, the Campaign received **nearly 100 stories** from across the world in the format of photos, essays, videos, and art, and in five different languages. It also had a competition element through which five storytellers were selected to join the **Y4N Delegation to the UNSG Climate Action Summit** in September and to **COP25** in December.

All in all, 2019 was as momentous for Y4N as it was for the climate and the climate-nature movements. Now two years on, despite the momentum for climate & nature generated by youth, our voices & initiatives **remain tokenised, underrepresented and poorly resourced** in the climate and biodiversity architectures.

There is also still a dominant narrative and approach to the climate and ecological crises that 1) focuses more on the problem than on solutions, 2) is often gloomy, paralysing &/or delayist and 3) privileges siloed individual action over systemic collective transformation.

To counteract this, the Unit aims to **platform, connect, scale up and inspire holistic climate-nature action** that benefits biodiversity and human well-being, sustains collective youth leadership, fosters a **hopeful and solution-oriented narrative** and upholds social and environmental justice.

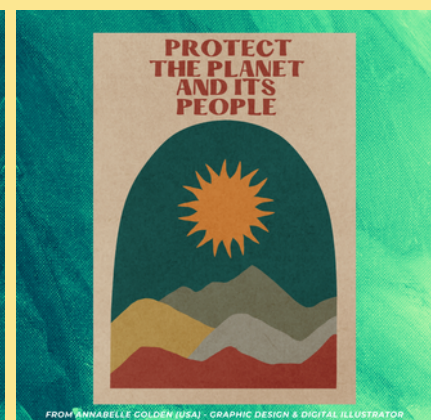
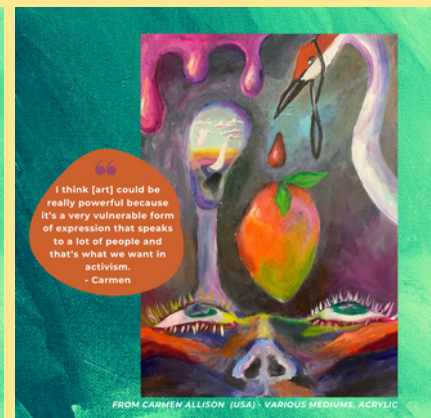
As a first step towards this, **'Your Story, Our Future'** launched in November 2020. This second Storytelling Campaign aims to amplify the **urgent messages, community-centred action, and solution-oriented work** that youth are leading around the world for nature and for the climate.

Through 'Your Story, Our Future' we are **collecting stories** in a variety of formats, mediums and languages until the end of 2021. Everyone whose submitted story is approved will be featured on our digital **Glocal Climate-Nature Storymap**, on this magazine and/or on Y4N's social media platforms, website and newsletter.

Participants also become members of **Y4N's Global Storyteller Community**, a supportive network of young activists, project leaders, campaigners, experts, and professionals that offers training, connections, resources, access, support and platforms for youth to scale up their impact.

SO FAR: ARTIVISM AS STORYTELLING

In Fall 2020, Y4N's USA Team had the pleasure of amplifying the work of young artists from around the world who shared their passion for incorporating nature and climate solutions into **their art**. We gained insight into the artist's process in a culminating live panel interview at the end of September 2020 and proudly displayed their work through a campaign on our social media platforms this past March 2021. Since then, the USA Team and broader Youth4Nature network have been incorporating artists into the Storytelling Campaign.



"We began this project to highlight **art as a more accessible form of storytelling** since it transcends language barriers and draws us to empathize with the storyteller. When working with these youth artists, we discovered that artwork is used to **visualize and experience the feelings and stories** that its creators share.

These spotlighted artists use their talents to raise awareness about the climate and biodiversity crises in their regions and globally! Our artist panel shared how art is a powerful tool in improving their individual mental and emotional well-being, has been a **powerful tool for activism and the dissemination of important messages**, and is a strong part of cultural identity. We hope this project brings the attention and support that these artists deserve, and encourages more youth to find ways to **blend their passions with the work needed to fight climate change.**"

- Y4N USA Team

More at: www.youth4nature.org/blog/art-activism

RUMAITHA'S AWAKENING

BY LEONARD IYAMUREMYE & ABBY BOSIBORI

Earlier this year, the Unit was lucky enough to sit down and interview Rumaitha Al Busaidi, the youngest Omani in history to step foot on the coldest, windiest and driest place on Earth: the South Pole! Having personally witnessed climate change impacts as a result of her expedition, Rumaitha's trailblazing passion and advocacy for climate using the lens of women and girls empowerment has only grown stronger ever since. For all the details, keep reading!

The interview below was conducted via Zoom by Badriyeh Adab, the Chair of the Board of Directors of Youth4Nature.

B: Rumaitha, you are joining today from Oman and first of all, can you please let us know a little bit about yourself?

R: Sure. I was born and raised in Oman, Muscat is my home country. I am a marine scientist by background, a big advocate for the environment, and I realised very quickly coming from a very traditional Arab background, that women empowerment is the key to actually push forward the agenda of the environment. So, that's what basically I do. I currently sit at the Board of the Environmental Society of Oman, which is the first and only NGO in the country.

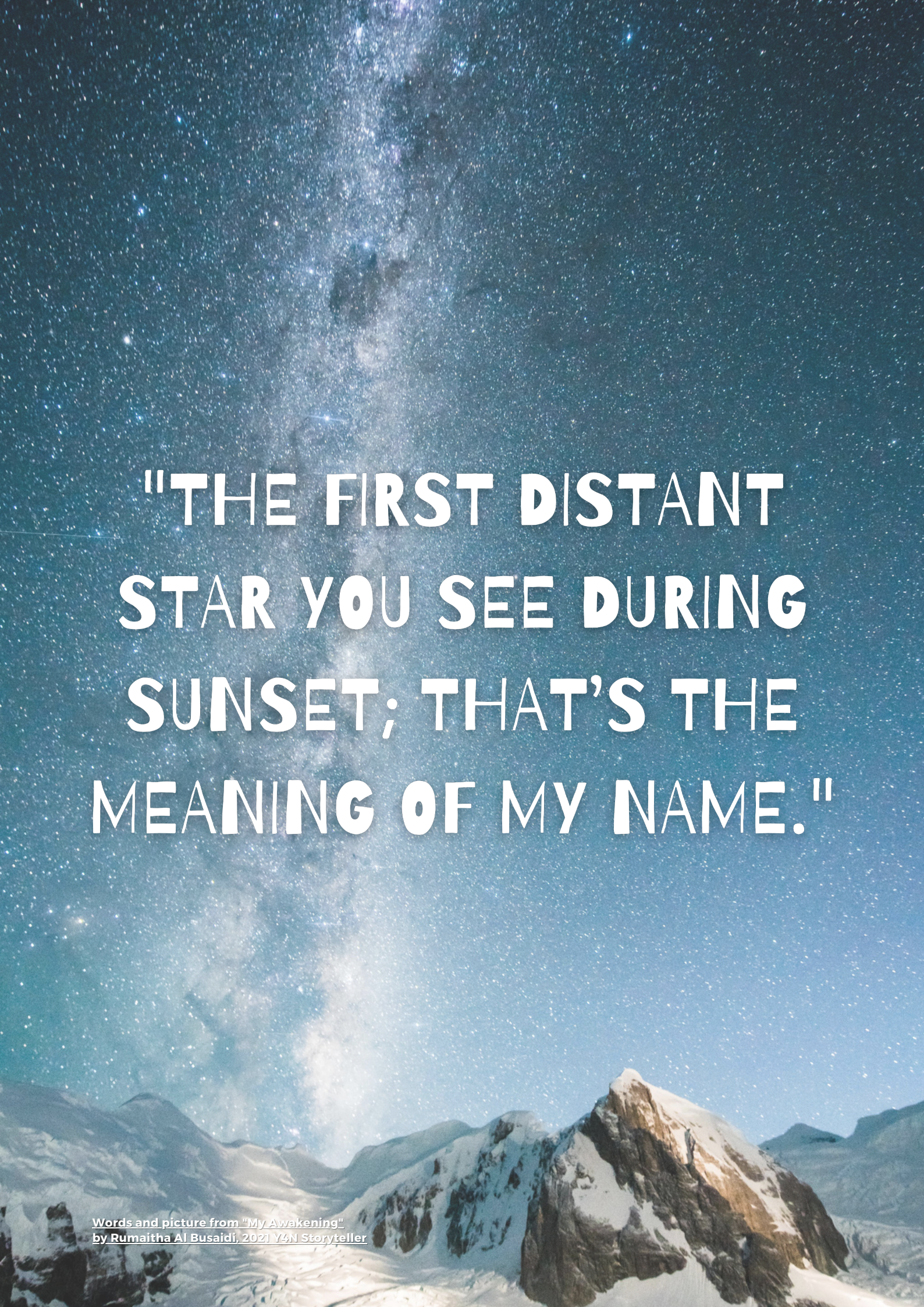
B: You just talked about your engagement in climate work. Where and how did your climate work begin?



R: I would say it started when I was 10 years old. My Dad is a big collector of National Geographic Magazines, he had a subscription ever since he was in his first year of University. I actually saw a National Geographic cover with an Omani sea turtle on it, and that's actually what got me very fascinated.

That was the first time that I learned a lot when it came to my own country. And that's the trajectory, that's when I decided that I wanted to study the environment, that I wanted to be a marine scientist, that I wanted to do so many things.

Things kind of spiralled from there to the formation of the Environmental Society when I was 17. And things have not stopped since then.

The background of the image is a composite. The upper portion shows a deep blue night sky filled with stars, with the Milky Way galaxy visible as a bright, hazy band of light stretching diagonally across the frame. The lower portion shows a rugged mountain range with snow-covered peaks and ridges, illuminated by a soft, warm light, possibly from a low sun or moon, creating a serene and majestic landscape.

**"THE FIRST DISTANT
STAR YOU SEE DURING
SUNSET; THAT'S THE
MEANING OF MY NAME."**

Words and picture from "My Awakening"
by Rumaitha Al Busaidi, 2021 Y4N Storyteller

B: Wow, you started at an early age. I am so happy to sit with you and learn about your journey and your story, where you mainly talked about your expedition. Could you please tell us more about it?

R: Sure! My expedition to the South Pole happened back in 2014. This had always been a dream of mine since I was 19. I was an undergraduate doing Environmental Science in the Netherlands & one of the classes that you take is studying the environmental treaties that are there, big treaties that actually meant to protect the environment. Obviously, the biggest one is the one meant to protect the Antarctic as the last wilderness on earth. And it took a lot of years.

So, I ended up going [to the Antarctic] when I was 25 years, as I was able to fundraise enough to get my trip covered. It did take a year of training, and coming from a desert country, where we don't have snow, we don't have ice, I actually ended up training in an industrial freezer, just to get used to the cold! (laughing & smiling)

The journey in itself took 5 days to reach the South Pole and it's a journey that I will not forget. For those who are capable of doing it, I would really suggest they do. It really opened my horizons and gave me a first-hand experience of what climate change does. There is so much I could say about my South Pole trip, so, I'll make it as short and precise as possible.

B: Congratulations on fulfilling your dream! I would like to know how you are linking this, climate, to work around women empowerment.

R: Sure. A lot of people actually don't know that gender policy, in general, has been on the global sustainability radar for years, but has never really gotten the attention it deserves.

So, there are scientists working in Project Drawdown on the top solutions on how you can actually contribute to combating climate change. These scientists actually came up with the most important solution for us all: educating and empowering women and girls. Yet, it hasn't gotten the attention it really needs, especially in a place like where I come from which is still male-dominated, and it's still very early for women to actually take a lot of senior positions.

There is a lot of work to be done. I have always been advocating the fact that in order for us to reach the targets that we want to reach, whether the Paris Climate Agreement targets or anything we want to do to combat the climate crisis, the solution is actually women... The solution is the half population that we are not really looking after the way that we should. This is how I link doing some crazy stuff like going to the South Pole and climbing mountains to kind of sending the message that you are capable of doing it no matter what. That dreaming big is ok, that's how I'm trying to link my work with climate and women.

B: I'm also facing the same issue in Lebanon, and I really loved the way you talked about the solution of getting women, so thank you so much for sharing this. On that note, I would like to know the biggest successes that you have reached until now?

"It **was** a **crackling** **sound** that **caused** **alarm** and **made** **my** **heart** **stop**. I **sat** **up** **as** I & **those** **around** **me** **realized** that...

... it **was** the **sound** of a **nearby** **glacier** **splitting**, **forcing** **us** to **flee** in **fear** of an **avalanche** that **would** **bury** **us**."

R: Wow, (laughing) I haven't done enough yet, so I don't know, I don't know actually. I have a personal mission that maybe I didn't share earlier. That is to empower at least a million people during my lifetime and I am way far behind when it comes to that. There is still a long way to go, so I think I will define success if I will be able to reach that goal way before I turn 40, for instance. That will be my definition of success, but at the moment it's well, like a lot of millennials and young people do.: hustle and try their best to make an impact through volunteering, doing a lot of things, doing a lot of adventures, and, at the same time, enjoying life. It's very difficult for me to encapsulate what success means, but to me, it is to be able to impact people's lives and hope for the better.

B: I wish you more and more success. And, as you know, as young people, and especially as young women engaged in climate work, we face a lot of challenges. What has been your biggest challenge, how was it solved and who supported you?

R: The biggest challenge I would say, is always people undermining my capabilities of doing something, or people assuming that because I'm young and I'm a woman that I'm not capable of making an impact supposedly because you are supposed to be a man, someone who is old. I think it's... getting people to take me seriously when you need to take me seriously.

The way that I've always tackled that issue is to find allies, either a woman

or a man, but mostly men. Male allies are amazing because there are the ones able to fortify the idea and topics you brought on that people kind of throw you off from.

So, I would say find your allies, find your tribe. Find people that are your safe haven and that make you feel that you are doing the right thing and that you're ok. Because your mental health is also important. And find your voice. The more and more power you have and you give to your voice, the better it becomes. That's my recipe and I really suggest everyone just follow a few of those steps. If they have any more tips for me, I'll love to hear how they tackle their challenges as well!

B: Thank you! Personally, I have been also criticised for the same issue you just shared and I learnt a lot from you. And, my last question is, what would you tell young Arab women and girls who would like to follow your path?

R: I will say now is the time to actually make yourself a priority... A lot of us tend to think whatever we think, no matter how big or crazy might be. And then someone chugs it down, you think that's the end. But it's never the end, you have so much potential to be more than you condition yourself to be, so if you want to think big, this is my permission... Nobody should ever tell you that you can't do what you set your mind to. That's my message, believe in your dreams, believe in your beautiful dreams, because without them you can never be who you are. Really follow and chase them to the ends of the Earth if possible.



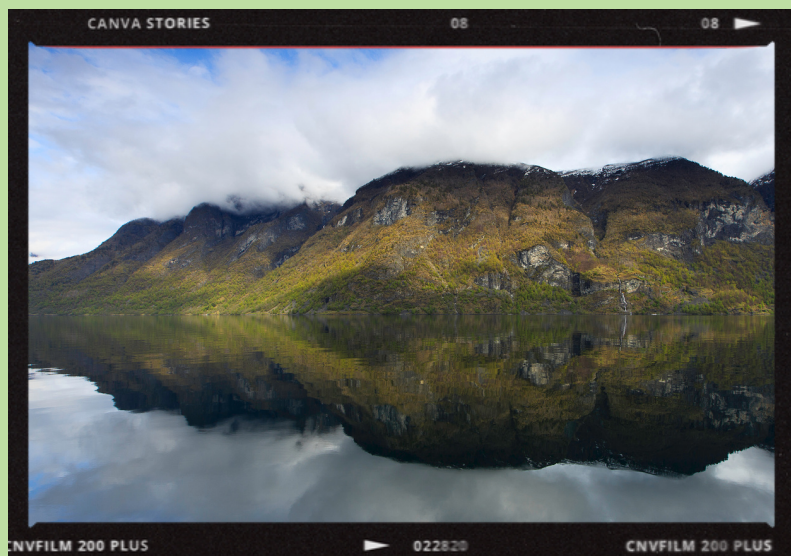
TALES FROM THE FJORDS TO THE CAUCASUS

BY PETER BULIMO

The Europe & Central Asia (ECA) region spans 55 countries and includes the Pan-European region and the Central Asian plains. The region is diverse in all spheres, made up of some of the wealthiest and poorest countries of the world, as well as the largest (Russian) and smallest countries (Vatican City). The region has a unique biodiversity network including rare mammals, reptiles, amphibian and bird species. It also boasts a rich geographical landscape comprising of mountains, high elevation plateaus, and active volcanos.

ECA's animal and plant community has been uniquely diversified by the tundra, taiga, and deciduous ecosystems adjacent to each other. The region's aquatic ecosystem is equally amazing: the waters harbour some of the rarest sea organisms, including marine mammals, crustaceans, and seaweeds. For instance, the icy waters surrounding Scandinavia and north Britain play a habitat to some of the iconic cold-water coral species. Sadly, most of these species and features have been threatened by the climate-nature crisis!

Cover picture unhidden! One of the renown fjords of Norway, Northern Europe.



Did you know that ECA...

- Comprises 8 of the 14 Biomes of the world.
- Covers 12 time zones.
- Accounts for approximately 15% of the global landmass.
- Per the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 684 species and subspecies in the region face extinction, with 138 categorized as Critically Endangered.
- Many iconic large mammals are found in the region including Tiger, Polar Bears, Persian Leopards, Saiga Antelopes, Beluga Whale & the European Bison.

BRIDGING FRONTIERS IN EUROASIAN CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY MOVEMENTS

ECA is endowed with an abundance of natural resources including oil and natural gas. However, due to the impacts of globalization, urbanization and industrialization, these resources are slowly becoming a curse in disguise. Since the onset of the industrial revolution, the region has struggled with emissions control. Poor management of cross-border environmental resources, inability to boost resource efficiency in cities and the failure to implement environmental governance policies have exacerbated the problem even further. As a consequence, climate change and its related impacts have become unprecedented. While all has not been lost, there is still so much that needs to be done URGENTLY, to mitigate the otherwise would-be effects of a climate catastrophe. Fortunately, youth across Europe and Central Asia are already up to the task, including our picture features, but also many more...



THE URGENCY FOR GREEN INNOVATION & ACTION

BY AIITA JOSHUA APAMAKU, ODHIAMBO RONALD & LEONARD IYAMUREMYE

Solutions to engage and tackle the biodiversity and climate crises are highly on the rise. Increasingly, a great deal of focus has shifted to identifying **approaches that simultaneously tackle** both the biodiversity and climate crises. Individuals, local communities, organisations, nations, and regions have not been exempted from partaking in contributions to these. Lots of work is ongoing on the ground, most especially among the youth, Indigenous communities, and women that have been **marginalised from participating** in high-level policy processes. The championed "green recovery" agenda presents an opportunity for joint action centred on the principle that no one is left behind. Not nature, not people. Holistic approaches would be essential - an **all-around joint effort** that ensures all stakeholders are involved. Such action should also address societal challenges effectively & adaptively, providing both human well-being and green benefits.

SOLUTION OF THE MONTH: HEITOR'S FUTURISTIC FARMS

The drum beats are gaining momentum! Beats of beautiful stories by young people working tirelessly to make a difference. A movement of youth who have dedicated their entirety to ensure sustainability. In this issue, we trace back our beats to the land of the Holy Cross, Brazil. Here we meet Heitor Branco Sabino, a youthful Production Engineer championing aquaponics and agro-voltaic systems solutions to climate change.

Aquaponics is a system of **growing plants in water** used to cultivate aquatic organisms. In this case, Heitor grows vegetables such as kales and lettuce in water used to rear fish. The water is rich in nutrients from the fish's waste matter. On a virtual tour, we can see that the system is flourishing with plenty of produce, hence promising food security.



On the other hand, agro-voltaic systems refer to the **coexistence of solar panels and crops**. It involves light-sharing so that panels placed above the crop generate shade and create a kind of microclimate over the growing area. This ensures freshness and less evaporation due to the solar shades.

The aforementioned agricultural systems are a perfect example of climate mitigation and adaptation, just as Heitor puts it. The Southern part of Brazil is semi-arid and as people migrate away due to **harsh climatic conditions**, young people such as Heitor have decided to stay put and adapt, with an aim of empowering and educating their communities on these wonderful alternative agricultural systems which are now bearing fruits. Thanks to these futuristic farming techniques, **food, water and energy insecurity** will be a thing of the past in the region.

'Raise your voice, don't be shy!' is the parting shot from this young leader. With a mission of reducing vulnerability from climate change and of economic empowerment for his people, Heitor believes that the future is luminous. He wants to make the world a better place. The futuristic farms are applicable all over the planet, they are the future of sustainable agriculture, so let's embrace them!

GREEN DIY: DON'T SEE IT AS WASTE BUT RAW MATERIAL



We all know that plastic, glasses waste are very dangerous to our environment and have devastating consequences. Specific measures are required to prevent this. However, we must remember that once out, **plastics and other materials can be a source of happiness** if recycled for wellbeing! Let us tell you a simple trick on how to make a great garden...

- Take any plastic waste like bottles, yoghurt containers...
- Cut it open...
- Fill it with soil and manure...
- Plant seeds or small vegetables, flowers...
- Place it anywhere you wish...
- Care for it, give it water and light...
- And finally, enjoy! No more buying those vegetables & flowers, while saving nature from plastic waste.

For more examples and more learning on this DIY, [check this guide](#) on the magic we are doing here!



'Medicine Meets Nature' / 'Sustainably Dyed Easter Eggs'
by Jelena Krivokapic, 2021 Y4N Storyteller

Our Storytelling Programme provides a unique opportunity for youth globally to amplify their voices and the work they do within the climate-nature spaces. To get involved, reach out to us at storytelling@youth4nature.org. We are open to volunteers, partners, media and participants!

For the Campaign, stories are accepted in a variety of formats, mediums and languages. We welcome them on a rolling basis until the end of 2021. Share yours and be part of our vision for transformative and glocal change!

JOIN AND THRIVE IN OUR HIVE:
WWW.YOUTH4NATURE.ORG/STORYTELLING

#YSOF |
SEPTEMBER'S CLICKS & BEATZ