



Mobilising the Next Generation of Planetary Health Leaders: The Dynamism of Youth Engagement in Malaysia

Saidatul Maisarah Faiesall *, Sarah Hanani Ahmad Tajuddin *, Andrew Jason George *, Nur Hazirah Marzuki, Oliver Lacey-Hall ^(D), Jemilah Mahmood, Gopalasamy Reuben Clements and Renzo Guinto ^(D)

Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, Sunway University, Petaling Jaya 47500, Selangor, Malaysia

* Correspondence: maisarahf@sunway.edu.my (S.M.F.); sarahhtajuddin@gmail.com (S.H.A.T.);

andrewg@sunway.edu.my (A.J.G.)

Abstract: With planetary health gaining traction as a global movement and problem-solving approach, this trans-disciplinary field is well-placed to provide an exciting and dynamic platform to promote engagement with young people. Previous studies have shown that although there is great energy and passion from youth, the global planetary health community struggles in sustaining young people's motivations and engagement in today's crowded physical and online environments. Planetary health advocates are also dealing with an increase in climate anxiety that has taken a toll on the emotional and mental wellbeing of young people. Here, we review our experience in engaging youth groups and networks in Malaysia through a four-pronged approach (consultation, facilitation, capacity-sharing, and evidence-building), as well as challenges commonly faced by the planetary health community in educating and building a youth movement. After a year of engagement, we found that mobilising the next generation of planetary health leaders requires a change in existing power dynamics to a capacity-sharing model, an emphasis on clear, simplified, and effective communications that utilise the mainstream youth spaces (e.g., social media), and hopeful messages to counter apathy and anxiety into action.

Keywords: youth engagement; planetary health; Malaysia youth; climate anxiety

1. Introduction

Planetary health is a scientific field, global movement and problem-solving approach focused on understanding and addressing the growing human health impacts of anthropogenic global environmental change [1]. In recent years, it has seen increasing attention worldwide, encouraging the establishment of new programmes, networks and centres dedicated to this new field. The novelty and the interconnected nature of planetary health provides an opportunity to include meaningful youth engagement in its agenda from the outset [2].

Youth engagement is defined as the meaningful involvement and continuous participation of young people in activities that contribute to positive social changes [3]. Influenced by both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have expressed feelings of distress with impacts to their health, environment and perceptions of their collective future [4]. Nonetheless, there is still great energy among young people in leading climate action movements globally, thereby demonstrating the youth's capacities as active agents of change [5]. Young people are well-placed to challenge the inability of previous disciplines and approaches to provide a basis for transformative and visionary change and to break through the institutional silos to which the majority of today's youth are not bound [2,6]. It is heartening that the recent Fifth Planetary Health Annual Meeting in Boston, USA, featured a dedicated consultation with the Next Generation community as part of its movement-building processes [7]. The 27th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP27) in Egypt also proudly made history as the first COP to have its own Youth Envoy and a Children and Youth Pavillion [8].



Citation: Faiesall, S.M.; Ahmad Tajuddin, S.H.; George, A.J.; Marzuki, N.H.; Lacey-Hall, O.; Mahmood, J.; Clements, G.R.; Guinto, R. Mobilising the Next Generation of Planetary Health Leaders: The Dynamism of Youth Engagement in Malaysia. *Challenges* **2023**, *14*, 18. https:// doi.org/10.3390/challe14010018

Academic Editors: Samuel Myers, Susan Prescott, Antonio Saraiva, Onisimo Mutanga, Marie Studer and Jo Bjorgaard

Received: 19 January 2023 Revised: 2 March 2023 Accepted: 8 March 2023 Published: 10 March 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/ 4.0/). Despite global progress that young people are making in advancing planetary healthrelated advocacy, they still face numerous institutional obstacles such as rigid governance structures and siloed thinking that limits their involvement in key decisions [5,9]. Opportu-

structures and siloed thinking that limits their involvement in key decisions [5,9]. Opportunities for young people to engage in health-related research are disappointingly limited [10]. Meanwhile, climate anxiety among children and youth is rising globally with a great sense of feeling "doomed", "dismissed", and "betrayed". This can be observed in the Philippines and Brazil, where young people are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate-related disasters [11].

At the same time, despite rising global youth activism, we have yet to see a sustained form of meaningful engagement by international, regional, and national institutions that truly value their experiences, opinions and perspectives in matters related to planetary health, and which actively pull youth activists into relevant discourse and incorporating their ideas into global climate governance [5]. For example, climate justice claims made by participants in the youth collective, YOUNGO, have shifted from specifically youth-focused to more broad solidarity claims of all group, highlighting that while it is a commendable attempt at inclusivity, this shift is more calculated upon limitations of existing ideologies and power structures [10,12]. In this context, youth activism on climate action and other existential threats is at risk of serving only as an exclusive playground for young people, disconnected from policy influence and resulting legislative changes, particularly when the demands of a youth-led climate action movement are seemingly at odds with the global processes and systems that profit from environmental degradation and ignore the impact of these processes on human existence [2,13]. Planetary health as a transdisciplinary approach must transcend this risk.

Planetary health stakeholders must reframe how they engage with today's generation it is erroneous to suggest that we can pursue sustainable development goals for young people, but rather must do so with young people [14]. The growing body of literature on meaningful youth engagement in planetary health makes clear the need to rapidly develop a broad framework that includes structured approaches to education, consultation, facilitation, integration, investment, storytelling and evidence- and capacity-building [14,15]. As a starting point, there is a clear, urgent and obvious need to develop youth engagement plans and initiatives in schools, especially higher education institutions that are committed to integrating planetary health into their education and research agenda [16,17].

Planetary health is still a nascent discipline in countries such as Malaysia. The Sunway Centre for Planetary Health (SCPH), based in a leading Malaysian private university, Sunway University, is helping to foster meaningful engagement with today's young people. To effectively mobilise youth for the planetary health movement, it is imperative for the global planetary health community to start listening to young people's concerns, to actively include them in high-level decision-making processes, and to champion their vision for a future that they would like to live in. Here, we discuss the experience of SCPH in engaging youth groups and networks, primarily in Malaysia, through a four-pronged approach. Through active documentation of lessons learned, we also discuss the challenges for the planetary health community in educating and building a movement and mandate to mobilise the next generation of planetary health leaders.

2. The Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's Youth Engagement Strategy

SCPH aims to pioneer the application of a planetary health approach in Asia and the Pacific, with an initial focus on Southeast Asia, to address crucial challenges that lie at the nexus of human wellbeing and environmental sustainability [17,18]. The vision of SCPH is to create a safe and just world where the health of humans and the planet thrive in harmony, and its mission is to achieve this goal through education, research, public engagement, and policy influence [17]. In 2021, we developed a Youth Engagement Plan using a four-pronged approach (Figure 1) to engage youth groups and networks in Malaysia, with a focus on young people aged between 15 and 30, based on the age range agreed upon by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia: (1) consultations with youth leaders and

youth-led groups, (2) facilitation of youth initiatives, (3) sharing of capacities and resources, all while simultaneously (4) building an evidence-based mandate towards mobilising the next generation of planetary health leaders. We discuss the activities of each approach below, followed by the lessons learned and challenges faced when implementing them.

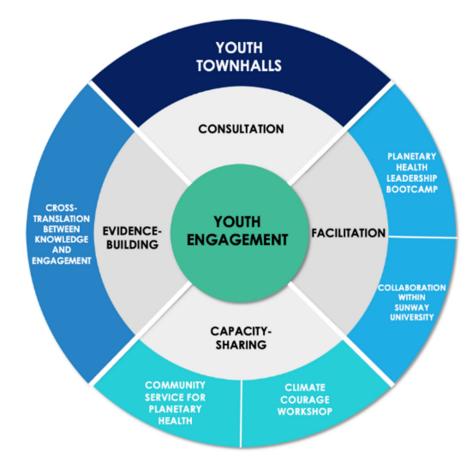


Figure 1. Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's 2021–2022 Youth Engagement Strategy.

2.1. Consultation

Youth Townhalls

Intergenerational dialogue with young people is a natural cornerstone of the planetary health approach. As a basic principle, approaching youth leaders and representatives from organised youth groups, and providing a platform for them to offer and obtain feedback on their motivations, interests, ideas and concerns relating to planetary health makes sense [19]. Planetary health as a concept confronts the reality of the Anthropocene and proposes that any sustainable way forward rests on an understanding of the need for humanity to make a great transition that remodels global governance around sustainable institutions and businesses [20]. The same shift and related need for courage must be initiated in the relationship between youth leaders and those who control the levers of power.

Grounded on this principle, the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health has organised two online youth townhall meetings since its inception in 2021 and has observed the attendance of a diverse range of Malaysian youth active in the space of climate work (Figure 2). These townhalls aimed to harness youth participation as well as to influence the forward strategy of SCPH, decision-making processes and activities [21]. The inaugural session took place in August 2021 via Zoom with 37 youth leaders participating from an open call for a discussion on planetary health. The theme was simplified to: (1) 'What scares you about the future?' and (2) 'What can we do about it?'. The session started with a brief introduction from SCPH on the interconnected relationship between humanity and the planet, and the grand challenges facing humanity such as food insecurity, increase in infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics, and climate change [21]. This was followed by a discussion on some potential ways forward.

The second townhall was conducted in January 2022, shortly after the devastating floods that ravaged eight states in Peninsular Malaysia [22]. Topics naturally revolved around frustrations over government responses towards the flood, and how planetary health should include respect for the inclusion of all voices, especially including marginalised people such as indigenous communities. When asked about their plans to contribute to the planetary health vision, young people's answers varied from high-level aspirations—"More dialogue with policy makers"—to more immediate actions such as "Start(ing) a conversation with my family and friends" and "Spreading awareness in a fun, Gen Z-like way; planetary health doesn't have to be boring!" [23].

2.2. Facilitation

While the literature on youth participation in public policy processes in Malaysia remains limited, there is a general sense of political apathy towards governance issues among young people, largely due to gaps in access, availability, and appeal of policy information to them, as well as perceived lack of agency over such policies [24]. However, we argue that young people's real or perceived lack of agency is dictated more by the long-standing political gridlock derived by powerful lobby groups' vested interests and ideological beliefs that impede diverse political participation and hamper concerted action to address the climate crisis, and often promote fatalism with the consequence that this broken system continues to thrive [12,13,24].

For a global systemic transformation to take place, civil society actors and the planetary health and science communities need to find new approaches to inform society of the impacts of political apathy and to engage all actors, including and especially, young people in this process [25]. Young people already see and feel the visible and tangible impacts of the climate crisis on their current and future realities, but are not yet being given the space, trust, and guidance to act on it [10]. To promote young people's belief in their individual and collective ability to make meaningful changes and influence public policy processes, structural and social barriers that hinder youth participation and influence in high-level decision-making processes must be removed [10,12]. Dialogue should be sought through continuous and meaningful engagement [14]. Young people should be able to lean on those who are older and in positions of power for guidance, expertise, and access to networks and opportunities, not simply be told what to do by them.

2.2.1. Planetary Health Leadership Bootcamp, myIMPACT

SCPH chose to pilot its youth engagement facilitation process through a Planetary Health Leadership Bootcamp, in partnership with a local youth-led organisation, Youth Care Malaysia, through its intervarsity public policy advocacy competition, myIMPACT. This approach used public participation theory, where awareness is heightened through an invitation to participate in the public policymaking process [26]. The competition included 100 students from 12 universities. Participants were provided with a platform to design, pitch and advocate for a public policy of their own choosing that aligned with the planetary health vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A panel of judges comprising leading policymakers and experts from international organisations, the government, private sector, and civil society organisations adjudicated.

The bootcamp was centred around four objectives: (1) to introduce the concept of planetary health, its core principles and key issues in the region especially for local communities; (2) to enable participants to relate to, articulate, and apply planetary health perspectives in their policy briefs and pitches; (3) to allow participants to explore and work on solutions covering different areas of interest across planetary health challenges; and (4) to mobilise the next generation of planetary health leaders. Participants were exposed to an overview of planetary health challenges in the Asia Pacific region using real-world case studies and were then divided into breakout groups to focus on selected areas of interest (preventing the next pandemic, building climate-resilient communities, creating healthy cities).

In a brief survey conducted after the bootcamp, improvement in knowledge, understanding, and ownership of planetary health was observed. Many believed that elements of planetary health should be integrated into educational curricula and were inspired to make a difference in addressing the climate crisis through individual and collective actions.

2.2.2. Collaboration with Other Schools and Student Organisations

As part of the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's aim to move beyond siloed approaches and to connect different fields—as principled within the planetary health approach—SCPH has also collaborated with other schools housed under Sunway University. Two initiatives during 2022 were supporting the annual hackathon, "Make It Challenge 2022", organised by Sunway iLabs and co-organising a public speaking competition, "i-Speak" with Sunway University's School of Arts.

Using a similar concept as myIMPACT, the hackathon was designed to inspire participants to create innovative solutions that address challenges on achieving the SDGs and planetary health. In 2022, the event focused on SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, where the goal was to produce ideas on creating cities that are environmentally sustainable, inclusive, and that promote health and well-being.

The inaugural "i-Speak" competition's first round focused on the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's fourth priority, "Achieving sustainable food systems" where participants were required to research and present a 5 min public speech on this topic. The content of the speech had to include relatability, solutions, a call-to-action, and to promote audience engagement. The goal of the competition was to encourage youth to seek solutions in their capacity as students to affect lasting change in their society.

As a step towards the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's larger goal of establishing a Planetary Health Action Council—a network of young leaders championing planetary health nationally, regionally and globally—SCPH is also engaged with student organisations at Sunway University through small-scale, interactive events such as film screenings.

2.3. Capacity-Sharing

Meaningful youth engagement and participation in the planetary health sphere needs to be sustained through continuous capacity-sharing; a two-way support and challenge system that transcends, and ideally replaces, traditional youth-adult power dynamics where only adults build the capacity of young people [14]. SCPH operates by the principle that young people are sufficiently informed and empowered to act on critical issues, and, at the same time, can benefit from strong empathetic leadership, mentorship and access to resources typically held only within adult circles [14,18,26].

2.3.1. Undergraduate Course on "Community Service for Planetary Health"

One such method that SCPH and Sunway University have identified to reform siloed approaches in education is through the integration of planetary health across the educational curriculum, beginning with redesigning the compulsory Community Service course, part of the Malaysian Government's General Studies core requirement for all undergraduate students in local private universities.

During the first quarter of 2022, SCPH, with Sunway University's Department of Communications, launched the pilot edition of the course "Community Service for Planetary Health" in which 37 students majoring in communication, advertising, and branding participated as part of their General Studies curriculum. During a seven-week period, these students took part in a combination of asynchronous modules and synchronous online sessions where they learned the fundamentals of the planetary health approach and were exposed to tools and skills for diagnosing problems and designing solutions. They also worked closely with various host organisations which are part of the Sunway Group (the parent company of Sunway University) to spark changes within the Sunway ecosystem first before venturing out to external organisations [17]. This was conducted through implementation of projects that addressed specific planetary health-related issues (such as healthcare waste management, urban farming and raising public awareness) and harnessed their skills in communication and advertising, among others. Each week, students also met with the course instructors for guidance and feedback. On the last day of class, students participated in a graduation ceremony where they recited the "Sunway Planetary Health Pledge" (Figure 2), which was based on the Planetary Health Pledge published in The Lancet in 2020 [27]. This course will continue to be improved through repeated testing and feedback from students, host organisations, and other stakeholders. The university's goal is to make this course available to all 3000 undergraduate students at Sunway University, regardless of their discipline, by 2024, to further strengthen an understanding of planetary health, encourage transdisciplinary collaboration among young people, as well as build the field of planetary health education [28].



Figure 2. Students reciting the Planetary Health Pledge as part of the undergraduate course on "Community Service for Planetary Health".

2.3.2. Climate Courage Workshop

Mental health, as an integral component of planetary health as well as a rising concern for young people, is also a priority focus for the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's youth engagement strategy [11,29]. Together with The Climate Initiative, SCPH piloted an online Climate Courage Workshop via Zoom to help youth channel their climate anxieties into effective community-based actions. This process involved an intimate sharing and acknowledgement of psychological anxieties and norms brought about by the climate crisis and other planetary health challenges, followed by the development of a self-care and community engagement plan.

The outcome of this workshop was the discovery of the psychological and emotional impacts that the climate crisis is having on young people, and subsequently, a need for this mental health crisis to be more centrally acknowledged and addressed. Workshop participants also made it clear their expectation that any significant opportunities to engage with ongoing climate initiatives must also be made accessible to other young people that are similarly interested in participating but lack the resources such as funding and access to networks to do so meaningfully and those who are currently outside the existing sphere of climate work. SCPH believes that replication of the Climate Courage Workshop can facilitate sustained youth participation within the planetary health sphere by providing young people with the necessary resources to protect their emotional well-being while carrying out timely—and at times, mentally taxing—climate action work [29].

2.4. Evidence-Building

Central to the discoveries documented in this paper is the need to develop a stronger and more systematic evidence base on the role of youth in the global planetary health agenda. SCPH is prioritising documentation of its engagement activities to inform academic discourse and, in turn, influence policy development and popular social changes. The prime intention here is to support the establishment of a mandate for youth leadership in transdisciplinary and collaborative planetary health public policy discourses.

3. Lessons Learned

The Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's initiatives with young people thus far provide a valuable resource for how organisations in the region and beyond can begin the process of maximising engagement on addressing global challenges. Planetary health, as a novel and transdisciplinary approach, can provide a platform to harness and amplify youth activism engagement, and support national, regional and global advocacy on intergenerational leadership across public and private sectors [9–11].

Replication of the four approaches illustrated in this paper requires support from all parties—from the ministerial level and government agencies to private sector, civil society organisations, and academia—in lobbying for greater youth involvement in development of policies and strengthening governance particularly around thematic areas of planetary health which require inter-disciplinary and systems thinking. Taking this initiative forward could be an important milestone in empowering youth leadership in championing planetary health initiatives [9].

3.1. Putting Young People at the Centre of Dialogue

The Sunway Centre for Planetary Health has focused on providing the platform and resources to support genuine empowerment of young people while largely encouraging individuals and youth groups to define their own priorities and design and lead their own initiatives. For example, the Planetary Health Leadership Bootcamp was led from start to finish by a local youth organisation. SCPH acted as adviser, provided access to networks, technical knowledge, as well as financial and other resources. Similarly, in both the townhalls and the Climate Courage Workshop, young people took full ownership and led peer-to-peer engagement to feed into, influence and inform the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's strategic priorities. Placing youth at the centre of policy and programmatic dialogue and opening up related space on an equitable basis will require humility from existing power structures. Making this switch will be key to an effective planetary health strategy development, discourse and implementation [26].

3.2. Transdisciplinary and Cross-Sectoral Action

The challenges posed by the climate and inextricably linked health crises are complex and require transdisciplinary action [16]. A top priority is an education revolution that ensures recognition of the transformative voices and minds of youth while simultaneously putting into place the opportunities that can help to shape youth leaders as leaders of the planetary health movement [17].

SCPH aims to make the "Community Service for Planetary Health" course mandatory for all incoming undergraduate students across all academic disciplines by 2024. As the 2022 pilot course has shown, by integrating mandatory planetary health education into the curriculum, young people are exposed to essential planetary health knowledge and skills, as well as presented the opportunity to collaborate with peers from different disciplines to develop diverse solutions and projects that address problems pertaining to their collective

futures [17]. Ultimately, inclusive and transdisciplinary approaches to planetary health should be encouraged.

3.3. Effective Communication and Storytelling

The road to mobilise action in the face of planetary crises is paved by effective communications [18]. SCPH has included communications as one of the three enablers that underpin action across its four priority themes. To maximise engagement, SCPH made use of social media sites that young people are familiar with —Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter—to bridge the gap between youth and planetary health knowledge using regular production of easily digestible informative posts in the form of TikTok videos and Instagram carousel posts [17]. These communications pieces avoid the use of jargon and instead post in accessible language to convey simple planetary health messages to members of the public, particularly young people. In addition, SCPH leveraged its connection with Sunway University's student networks by promoting events and workshops such as the Climate Courage Workshop through the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health Instagram page, where students make up a significant number of the follower pool.

3.4. Simplifying Communications

Planetary health messaging must be anchored on the fact that human beings are individually and collectively interconnected with the planet. Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's messaging recognises three primary levels of responsibility and related sense of empowerment to act. The first is personal: change begins with each one of us, we need to take responsibility to "DO what we can, INFLUENCE who we can, and DEMAND what we can". The second is action through partnership, that is, that humanity cannot work in silos: concerned entities need to work together, to communicate agreed key messages to carefully selected target audiences. The final level relates to engagement on policy, where messaging and calls to action aim to bridge the gaps between science and society, policy and practice, and knowledge and action. This approach resonates with previous studies across the globe on the positive impacts of framing pro-environmental messaging through positive and hopeful calls for action [30].

3.5. Harnessing Digital Technology and Social Media

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recognises the importance of ensuring meaningful participation of young people in spaces where important discussions about their future take place [31]. The direct and instant connections that digital spaces and social media now enable means that previously disenfranchised groups, including young people, are no longer bound by the same social and physical boundaries that were experienced by older generations [32].

Young leaders are attuned to communicating in today's crowded communications infrastructure including social media platforms. Planetary health as an emerging transdisciplinary approach must take advantage of the digital world and fully embrace it as a driver of transformation and engagement with young people. By using digital platforms that are used by young people, SCPH aims to communicate planetary health awareness, and to ultimately spark planetary health conversations that can support and enable goal-oriented actions. The Youth TownHalls and the Climate Courage Workshop, which were organised solely via Zoom, demonstrate how digital technology facilitates productive virtual discussions, regardless of space and distance constraints [33]. Moving forward, the next step for SCPH is to tackle the accessibility gap between privileged youths with easy access to the internet and digital tools and those less privileged in order to achieve seamless and equitable planetary health conversations that take place within our digital environment.

4. Challenges

4.1. Sustaining Young People's Motivations and Engagement

There is no shortage of energy among young people to champion planetary health using their various knowledge and skills—including digital—to push for social change [5]. This great burst of pent-up, frustrated energy poses a challenge for the global planetary health community in how to appropriately harness it in such a way that sustains youths' interest, and to effectively translate that passion and drive for change into community-led actions that promote and support a global systemic transformation. The planetary health community has a lot to learn from the climate action space about how to harness and sustain this energy into a well-organised, goal-oriented, "not taking no for an answer" youth-led global movement. Young people have been more vocal and visible than other groups in raising climate change as a top priority in global governance discussions as well as through broad social nudging and shifts in behavioural norms, thus generating pressure for policy and legislative changes [5,12].

Social media is increasingly becoming a prominent channel for climate change discourse, where communication objectives are required to be clear, interactive, and able to engage its audience towards effective action [34]. Such messaging should thus not only speak to the interests and values of young people, but also be framed through positive, solutions-oriented narratives, as has been found successful in past studies [31,34]. While making use of digital spaces that are popular with young people is essential, one of the challenges for the planetary health community is minding the digital divide [35]. This also applies to the youth where those most difficult to reach are those who live outside the bubbles of digital privilege—for whom educative messaging and engagement in policy discussions that are meaningful to them should be a priority if the movement is to truly live up to its ambition and principle of being transdisciplinary and grounded in notions of equity.

4.2. Translating Apathy and Anxiety into Action

While climate anxiety among young people is rising, recent studies show that certain environments and factors can also trigger effective action [29,36]. Translating young people's motivations and anxieties into impactful actions must be based on an understanding of their perspectives on leadership. Young people tend to be motivated to take on leadership roles that are committed to equity and sustainability, rather than those that provide self-serving status or power achievement that is more aligned with traditional adult perceptions of leadership [2,37].

At the Planetary Health Leadership Bootcamp and the Climate Courage Workshop, conversations with participants highlighted a desire to lead community-based actions for change but also a sense of powerlessness because of perceptions of lack of political will by "those in charge". While there are no quick fixes here, planetary health advocates should recognise the need to protect young people's emotional and mental health including through advocacy that promotes inter-generational engagement for a swift and transformative systemic change aligned with planetary health priorities.

5. Conclusions

This paper has underlined the potential and actual roles being played by young people in advancing the planetary health agenda through a discussion of the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health's experience in engaging youth throughout 2022. SCPH maintains that planetary health as a novel, transdisciplinary, and solutions-oriented approach is wellplaced to provide an exciting and dynamic platform to promote engagement between and with young people in fulfilling the pursuit of its goal of global transformative systemic change that transcends existing silos [28]. While SCPH is still relatively new and exploring and expanding its capacities, its youth engagement plans thus far have been grounded in four approaches. Through intergenerational dialogue and townhalls, SCPH has gained some insights into the interests, ideas and anxieties on the impact of the climate crisis and the role of planetary health amongst youth in Malaysia. This learning highlights that it is no longer enough to provide a tokenistic seat for youth at the "climate action and planetary health discourse" table but rather to pull that table towards the young people in question. SCPH believes that mobilising the next generation of planetary health leaders requires a change in existing power dynamics towards a more balanced youth-adult dynamic based on capacity-sharing. The youth that took part in the Climate Courage Workshops as well as the undergraduate course "Community Service for Planetary Health" were able to articulate their thoughts and drive their own community-based and cross-sectoral initiatives but frustrated by their "junior partner" status in broader discourse.

Communicating planetary health effectively is critical, particularly in sustaining youth's motivation and engagement in a world where instant gratification is advertised as both normal and desirable, where multiple interest compete and where attention spans are measured in seconds and the speed at which phones scroll through endless volumes of data.

Leveraging mainstream youth spaces such as social media are important, but any strategies to engage young people by the planetary health community must address the digital privilege gap, as well as engagement with communities that may not be already attuned to the climate and health discourse. SCPH has found that simplifying the concept of planetary health into positive, values-based and solutions-oriented narratives seems to garner the most engagement. This kind of engagement also provides hope for young people and aims to avert feelings of apathy and powerlessness.

At its core, the planetary health community must continue confronting and actively unpacking its origins as an academic discourse and break out of the exclusive ivory tower it currently inhabits. With the mandate and intellectual authority granted through academia, young people as the next generation leaders are an integral part of that movement-building process, placing pressure on existing power structures to influence policy and legislative changes. However, to engage, they must be enabled. Additionally, to be enabled, they must be able to understand. Additionally, to understand, the message must be appropriate, engaging and compelling. This is the challenge for the planetary health movement.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, R.G. and S.M.F.; writing—original draft preparation, S.M.F., S.H.A.T., A.J.G. and N.H.M.; writing—review and editing, O.L.-H., G.R.C. and J.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Data available in a publicly accessible repository that does not issue DOIs. Publicly available datasets were analyzed in this study. This data can be found here: https://sunwayeducationgroup-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/oliverh_sunway_edu_my/ERhFGphlO7 FMv9qzzdfrkH8BVhpMNolPZmtHNmTR2M4kNg?e=Wag22y (accessed on 10 February 2023).

Conflicts of Interest: This paper acknowledges one of the authors', Jemilah Mahmood's role as one of the Special Issue Editors of Challenges. No other conflict of interest declared.

References

- 1. Myers, S.; Frumkin, H. Planetary Health: Protecting Nature to Protect Ourselves; Island Press: Washington, DC, USA, 2020.
- Zeinali, Z.; Bulc, B.; Lal, A.; van Daalen, K.R.; Campbell-Lendrum, D.; Ezzine, T.; Fagan, L.; Germann, S.; Guinto, R.; Lakhani, H.; et al. A roadmap for intergenerational leadership in planetary health. *Lancet Planet. Health* 2020, *4*, 306–308. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- World Health Organization. Working for a Brighter, Healthier Future: How WHO Improves Health and Promotes Well-Being for the World's Adolescents; World Health Organization: Geneva, Switzerland, 2021. Available online: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/ 10665/351088 (accessed on 18 January 2023).
- Lawrance, E.L.; Jennings, N.; Kioupi, V.; Thompson, R.; Diffey, J.; Vercammen, A. Psychological responses, mental health, and sense of agency for the dual challenges of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic in young people in the UK: An online survey study. *Lancet Planet. Health* 2022, 6, e726–e738. [CrossRef]

- 5. Han, H.; Ahn, S.W. Youth Mobilization to Stop Global Climate Change: Narratives and Impact. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 4127. [CrossRef]
- Spannring, R.; Hawke, S. Anthropocene challenges for youth research: Understanding agency and change through complex, adaptive systems. J. Youth Stud. 2021, 25, 977–993. [CrossRef]
- 7. Planetary Health Alliance. 2022 Planetary Health Annual Meeting: Schedule. 2022. Available online: https://www.planetaryhealthannualmeeting.com/2022-schedule (accessed on 22 February 2023).
- 8. Children and Youth Pavilion. Children and Youth Pavilion: Programme. 2022. Available online: https://www.childrenandyouthpavilion.info (accessed on 18 January 2023).
- 9. Bulc, B.; Al-Wahdani, B.; Bustreo, F.; Choonara, S.; Demaio, A.; Jácome, D.I.; Lal, A.; Odede, J.P.; Orlic, P.; Ramchandani, R.; et al. Urgency for transformation: Youth engagement in global health. *Lancet Glob. Health* **2019**, *7*, e839–e840. [CrossRef]
- 10. Arora, R.; Spikes, E.T.; Waxman-Lee, C.F.; Arora, R. Platforming youth voices in planetary health leadership and advocacy: An untapped reservoir for changemaking. *Lancet Planet. Health* **2022**, *6*, e78–e80. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- 11. Marks, E.; Hickman, C.; Pihkala, P.; Clayton, S.; Lewandowski, R.R.; Mayall, E.E.; Wray, B.; Mellor, C.; van Susteren, L. Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A global phenomenon. *Lancet* **2021**. [CrossRef]
- 12. Thew, H.; Middlemiss, L.; Paavola, J. "Youth is not a political position": Exploring justice claims-making in the UN Climate Change Negotiations. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **2020**, *61*, 102036. [CrossRef]
- 13. Terry, M. The Direct Approach: A Participatory Framework for Meaningful Youth Engagement with UN Policymakers. In *Speaking Youth to Power*; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2023; pp. 121–149. [CrossRef]
- 14. Spajic, L.; Behrens, G.; Gralak, S.; Moseley, G.; Linholm, D. Beyond tokenism: Meaningful youth engagement in planetary health. *Lancet Planet. Health* **2019**, *3*, e373–e375. [CrossRef]
- Lal, A.; Bulc, B.; Bewa, M.J.; Cassim, M.Y.; Choonara, S.; Efendioglu, E.; Germann, S.; Hafeez, H.; Iversen, K.; Nishtar, S.; et al. Changing the narrative: Responsibility for youth engagement is a two-way street. *Lancet Child Adolesc. Health* 2019, 3, 673–675. [CrossRef]
- 16. Guzmán, C.A.F.; Aguirre, A.A.; Astle, B.; Barros, E.; Bayles, B.; Chimbari, M.; El-Abbadi, N.; Evert, J.; Hackett, F.; Howard, C.; et al. A framework to guide planetary health education. *Lancet Planet. Health* **2021**, *5*, e253–e255. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- 17. Sunway Centre for Planetary Health. *Annual Report: August 2021—December 2022;* Sunway University: Subang Jaya, Malaysia, 2023.
- 18. Mahmood, J.; Guinto, R.R.; Lacey-Hall, O.; Faiesall, M.; Poppema, S.; Lee, E. Safeguarding planetary health for southeast Asia's future children. *Lancet Planet. Heath* **2022**, *6*, e295–e296. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- World Health Organization. Engaging Young People for Health and Sustainable Development: Strategic Opportunities for the World Health Organization and Partners; World Health Organization: Geneva, Switzerland, 2018. Available online: https://apps.who.int/ iris/handle/10665/274368 (accessed on 11 January 2023).
- 20. Myers, S.S.; Pivor, J.I.; Saraiva, A.M. The São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health. Lancet 2021, 398, 1299. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Sunway Centre for Planetary Health. Youth Townhall #1[Video]. YouTube, 2021. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=AiXmdUgFne4&t=3308s (accessed on 10 February 2023).
- IFRC. Malaysia: Flash Floods—Operation Update n° 1, DREF n° MDRMY008. Situation Report. 2022. Available online: https://reliefweb.int/report/malaysia/malaysia-flash-floods-operation-update-n-1-dref-n-mdrmy008 (accessed on 10 February 2023).
- Sunway Centre for Planetary Health. Youth Townhall #2[Video]. YouTube, 2021. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=05hW-T7g8Bs (accessed on 10 February 2023).
- 24. Rauf, A.A.A.; Hamid, N.A.; Ishak, M.S.; Malaysia, U.U. Modelling the Effect of Access to Information, Political Interest and Policy Satisfaction on Youth Online Political Participation in Malaysia. *J. Komun. Malays. J. Commun.* **2016**, *32*, 317–340. [CrossRef]
- 25. Schinko, T. Overcoming Political Climate-Change Apathy in the Era of #FridaysForFuture. One Earth 2020, 2, 20–23. [CrossRef]
- Corney, T.; Cooper, T.; Shier, H.; Williamson, H. Youth participation: Adultism, human rights and professional youth work. *Child.* Soc. 2021, 36, 677–690. [CrossRef]
- Wabnitz, K.-J.; Gabrysch, S.; Guinto, R.; Haines, A.; Herrmann, M.; Howard, C.; Potter, T.; Prescott, S.L.; Redvers, N. A pledge for planetary health to unite health professionals in the Anthropocene. *Lancet* 2020, 396, 1471–1473. [CrossRef]
- Tilleczek, K.C.; Terry, M.; MacDonald, D.; Orbinski, J.; Stinson, J. Towards Youth-Centred Planetary Health Education. *Challenges* 2023, 14, 3. [CrossRef]
- 29. Whitmarsh, L.; Player, L.; Jiongco, A.; James, M.; Williams, M.; Marks, E.; Kennedy-Williams, P. Climate anxiety: What predicts it and how is it related to climate action? *J. Environ. Psychol.* **2022**, *83*, 101866. [CrossRef]
- 30. Ng, P.M.L.; Cheung, C.T.Y. Why do young people do things for the environment? The effect of perceived values on proenvironmental behaviour. *Young- Consum.* **2022**, *23*, 539–554. [CrossRef]
- Bachelet, M. COVID 19 Recovery: Youth Taking Action for a Sustainable Future. 2022. Available online: https://www.ohchr. org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/04/covid-19-recovery-youth-taking-action-sustainable-future (accessed on 22 February 2023).
- 32. Ortiz, J.; Young, A.; Myers, M.D.; Bedeley, R.T.; Carbaugh, D. Giving Voice to the Voiceless: The use of digital technologies by marginalized groups. *Panel Rep. Commun. Assoc. Inf. Syst.* **2019**, 45. [CrossRef]

- 33. Belotti, F.; Donato, S.; Bussoletti, A.; Comunello, F. Youth Activism for Climate on and Beyond Social media: Insights from FridaysForFuture-Rome. *Int. J. Press.* **2022**, *27*, 718–737. [CrossRef]
- 34. León, B.; Bourk, M.; Finkler, W.; Boykoff, M.; Davis, L.S. Strategies for climate change communication through social media: Objectives, approach, and interaction. *Media Int. Aust.* **2021**. [CrossRef]
- 35. Valentine, N.; Ajuebor, O.; Fisher, J.; Bodenmann, P.; Baum, F.; Rasanathan, K. Planetary health benefits from strengthening health workforce education on the social determinants of health. *Health Promot. Int.* **2022**, *37*, daac086. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Bright, M.L.; Eames, C. From apathy through anxiety to action: Emotions as motivators for youth climate strike leaders. *Aust. J. Environ. Educ.* 2021, 38, 13–25. [CrossRef]
- 37. Mortensen, J.; Lichty, L.; Foster-Fishman, P.; Harfst, S.; Hockin, S.; Warsinske, K.; Abdullah, K. Leadership through a youth lens: Understanding youth conceptualizations of leadership. *J. Commun. Psychol.* **2014**, *42*, 447–462. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.