

EMBARGOED until 12:01 am EDT, 18 September 2020

United Nations launches 2020 Class of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals

Young Leaders for the SDGs is a flagship initiative of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth which recognizes the efforts of young people who are driving action and galvanizing others in support of the 2030 Agenda

18 September 2020, UN Headquarters, New York — The United Nations today announced the names of the latest class of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On a biennial basis, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth recognizes 17 young change-makers who are leading efforts to combat the world's most pressing issues and whose leadership is catalyzing the achievement of the SDGs.

"As the UN marks its 75th anniversary during unprecedented times, the 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs are a clear example of how young people are leading the way in shaping a more sustainable and inclusive future for all," said Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. "Despite being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, young people around the world continue to demonstrate immense resilience, resourcefulness and leadership in finding innovative solutions to recover better and achieve the SDGs."

These young leaders — between the ages of 18 and 29 years old — represent the diverse voices of young people from every region of the world, and are collectively responsible for activating millions of young people in support of the SDGs. This group will come together as a community to support efforts to engage young people in the realization of the SDGs both through strategic opportunities with the UN and through their existing initiatives, platforms and networks.

The 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs are:

- AY Young, 29, United States
- Hadiqa Bashir, 18, Pakistan
- İlayda Eskitaşçioğlu, 26, Turkey
- Jichen Liu, 23, China
- Lester Philipp Vargas Angeles, 24, Peru
- Loay Radwan, 21, Egypt
- Mariama Djambony Badji, 22, Senegal
- Martin Karadzhov, 27, Bulgaria
- Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi, 29, Nigeria
- Ralf Toejnnes, 28, Brazil

- Satta Sheriff, 22, Liberia
- Siena Castellon, 18, Ireland
- Tania Rosas, 29, Colombia
- Tim Lo Surdo, 26, Australia
- Udit Singhal, 18, India
- Vanessa Nakate, 23, Uganda
- Zahin Razeen, 22, Bangladesh

More information on the 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs, including the full profiles of the Young Leaders and their commitments to advancing the SDGs, is available at un.org/youthenvoy/about-the-young-leaders-for-the-sdgs.

About the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

In 2017, the UN Secretary-General appointed Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka as his Special Envoy on Youth and as the youngest senior official in the history of the organization.

Ms. Wickramanayake's mandate is to harmonize the UN system efforts on youth development, enhance the UN response to youth needs, advocate for the development needs and rights of young people, as well as to bring the work of the United Nations on youth closer to them. The Envoy on Youth also acts as the advisor to and the representative of the Secretary-General on youth related matters.

For more information, follow @UNYouthEnvoy on social media and visit our website at un.org/youthenvoy.

Media Contact

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
Matthew Hunter
+1 (631) 829-4275
matthew.hunter@un.org

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Note to Editors:

Profiles of all 17 Young Leaders for the SDGs (quotes immediately follow):



Mariama Djambony Badji, 22, Senegal

Mariama is a young entrepreneur of green and smart architecture. She is the CEO of [DNA SABL](#), a company specialised in ecological building using natural, local, no industrialized materials like earth bricks and Typha. They purposely create bioclimatic buildings that combine comfort and energy efficiency in order to improve our living conditions.

[Facebook](#) (DNA SABL)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)



Hadiqa Bashir, 18, Pakistan

Hadiqa is a young activist calling for an end to early and forced marriages. She is the founder of Girls United for Human Rights and is working for the protection and promotion of Girls Rights in the Tribal Regions of Pakistan especially in Khyber PakhtunKhwa, Pakistan.

[Facebook](#)



Siena Castellon, 18, Ireland

Siena is an autism and neurodiversity advocate. She is the founder of [Neurodiversity Celebration Week](#), which aims to encourage schools to recognise the strengths and talents of their students with special educational needs, instead of just focusing on their weaknesses and difficulties. She is also the author of the Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide: How to Grow Up Awesome and Autistic.

Twitter: [@NCWeek](#), [@QLMentoring](#)

[Instagram](#)



İlayda Eskitaşçioğlu, 26, Turkey

İlayda is a fighter against period poverty. She founded "[We Need to Talk](#)", an initiative that aims to provide sanitary materials to rural women in Turkey and to destroy the stigma around it. The initiative targets three groups of women: seasonal agricultural workers, Syrian refugees, and pre-teen who are going to school in remote rural areas.

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)



Martin Karadzhev, 27, Bulgaria

Martin is a LGBTQ activist and chair of the first Global LGBTI Youth Steering Committee at [ILGA World](#). He advocates for mainstreaming LGBTI youth issues on a global level and fights to ban all harmful practices (conversion therapies, IGM, forced sterilisations) and repealing all laws that prosecute and discriminate against them.

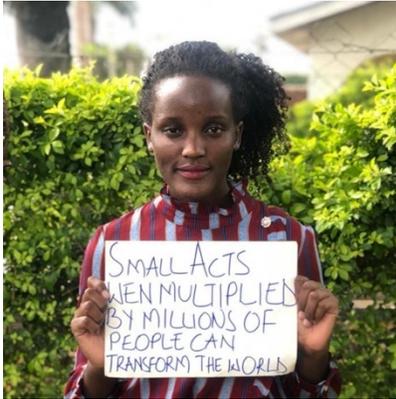
[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)



Jichen Liu, 23, China

Jichen is a young social entrepreneur. He is the founder of [Vevolution Tech and Clear Plate APP](#) which has the mission to reduce food waste through education and incentives.



Vanessa Nakate, 23, Uganda

Vanessa is a climate activist. She is the founder of the Rise Up Movement seeking to amplify the voices of Africa within the climate movement. This movement has extended to countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Togo, South Africa, Zambia and Uganda.

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)



Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi, 29, Nigeria

Oluwaseun strives to end sexual violence. She is the founder of [Stand to End Rape Initiative \(STER\)](#) to engage in policy advocacy, lead innovative programs towards the elimination of SGBV and provide pro bono holistic support to survivors. The organization has provided support to over 350 women, girls, boys and men and reached about 200,000 Nigerians with information. She is awarded 2019 TIME 100 & Commonwealth Person of the Year.

[Facebook](#)

Twitter: [@StandtoEndRape](#), [@AyodejiOsowobi](#)

Instagram: [@ayodejiosowobi](#), [@standtoendrape](#)



Loay Radwan, 21, Egypt

Loay is an environmental engineer. He is the founder and CEO of G-Beetle, which tackles the water crisis and crop protection problems to overcome the effects of climate change. They provide farmers with a rover equipped with sensors and machine learning algorithms that manoeuvres the fields collecting data about the moisture content and the plants' state.

[Instagram](#)



Zahin Razeen, 22, Bangladesh

Zahin is a deep-tech architect. He is the founder of [Hydroquo+](#) (collaborating with south-east asian countries to leverage A.I for ensuring water security) and [Quantum Polychemics Biotechnology](#) (producing all-natural non-toxic organic biopolymer). He co-founded [Aqualink Robotics](#) (making Industrial IoT devices for companies seeking automation). He is also the managing director of [Lingwing ed-tech](#), an A.I enabled MOOC language platform.

[Instagram](#)



Tania Rosas, 29, Colombia

Tania is the founder of the [El Origen Foundation](#), an indigenous-first model that provides at-risk youth with a second chance at education and works to close the illiteracy gap for indigenous youth.



Satta Sheriff, 22, Liberia

Satta Sheriff is the founder and Executive Director of [Action for Justice and Human Rights \(AJHR\)](#), a ngo founded to advocate and ensure access to justice and respect of human rights in Liberia. AJHR is breeding a society of young leaders that advocate increase access to social justice while preaching peace for equal rights. Satta is founding member of the Global Youth Leadership Council and a recognized member of the 50 most impacting young females Leaders in Africa 2017 (One World Foundation). She's the former Speaker of the Liberian Children's Parliament and co-founded the Joint Action Committee on children.

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)



Udit Singhal, 18, India

Udit is the founder of [Glass2Sand](#), an environment-friendly project that addresses the growing menace of glass bottles being dumped to landfill. The project uses an innovative New Zealand technology to crush these bottles into silica-rich sand to create a “zero waste” eco-system.

[Facebook](#)

Twitter: [@uditsinghal](#) [@glass2sand](#)

Instagram: [@uditsinghal](#), [@glass2sand](#)



Tim Lo Surdo, 26, Australia

Tim is the founder and national director of [Democracy in Colour](#), Australia’s first racial and economic justice organisation led by people of colour.

He currently serves on the Boards of Plan International Australia Environment Victoria (peak environmental advocacy organisation in Victoria), Climate for Change (the only organisation training people to have effective conversations about climate change), The Wilderness Society (an organisation that has led Australia’s most historic environmental campaigns), and Be Slavery Free (a coalition of 40 organisations tackling modern slavery).

[Facebook](#)

Twitter: [@timlosurdo](#), [@democracycolour](#)

Instagram: [@timlosurdo](#), [@democracyincolour](#)



Ralf Toejnés, 28, Brazil

Ralf is the founder and CEO of two national organizations [Renovatio](#), a non-profit, and VerBem, a social business with the mission to democratize the access of eye care in Brazil and internationally.

Renovatio/VerBem has been able to supply more than 150K people with correct eye care and donate more than 60,000 eyeglasses to people in a vulnerable situation in 21 of the 26 states in Brazil and also in Mozambique, Haiti, and India. He was awarded Forbes 30 Under 30 in 2017.

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

Instagram: [@ralftoenjes](#), [@ong.renovatio](#)



Lester Philipp Vargas Angeles, 24, Peru

Lester Philipp is the co-founder and co-CEO of [FractalUp](#), a AI-enabled virtual education/Learning experience platform for +8 000 000 students in Peru approved by the Ministry of Education in 2020. The company received a grant for acceleration in Latam by The World Bank. He was awarded Forbes 30 Under 30 (Education) in 2015.

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)



AY Young, 29, United States

AY is a sustainable artist and advocate for renewable energy. He is the creator of the "[Battery Tour](#)" where every event/concert/experience is powered by renewable energy. He uses his events to connect to communities at a local level and educate people on practicing sustainability, raising awareness, sustainable solutions, and building a network of change makers.

[Facebook](#)

Twitter: [@aymusik](#) [@batterytour](#)

Instagram: [@batterytour](#) [@aymusik](#)

Quotes from the Young Leaders for the SDGs:

“Being a Young Leader for the SDGs will give me a global platform on which to raise awareness of neurodiversity and the importance of recognizing, supporting and harnessing the overlooked strengths and talents of people who think differently and perceive the world differently.”

- Siena Castellon

“As a Young Leader for the SDGs, I have the opportunity to support ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth as it relates to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as engaging young people across the globe to implement, monitor and review the key indicators of the SDGs, while holding governments accountable.”

- Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi

“Being a Young Leader for the SDGs means that I've got the mission to empower youth to lead the change from their own communities.”

- Tania Rosas

“Being a Young Leader for the SDGs is an impetus to solve the grand challenges at light speed.”

- Zahin Razeen

“Engagement is the key to make the world a better place!”

- Mariama Djambony Badji

“I will continue to lead our team to make continuous efforts in support of the SDGs.”

- Jichen Liu

“As young people, if we want to make SDGs a reality, we need to raise our voices, louder and prouder than ever before. Being a Young Leader for the SDGs gives me a chance to do so.”

- İlayda Eskitaşcioğlu

“Our generation has the obligation and the responsibility to transform the way humanity produces, consumes and organizes itself socially, and we have to do this including everyone, every human being, leaving no one behind. Being a Young Leader for the SDGs means acting as a protagonist of this change, not only sharing the transformation and impact that we have promoted but also inspiring and connecting with other young people in different parts of the world.”

- Ralf Toenjes

“One person with conviction can bring real change.”

- Hadiqa Bashir

“As a Young Leader for the SDGs, I will be an active agent of change. I hope to be able to encourage communities to embrace a better civic sense to create sustainable living spaces — like when mountain-high landfills are detonated.”

- Udit Singhal

“Being a Young Leader for the SDGs means bringing change, justice, transformation and sustainability so that the people and the planet can be happy.”

- Vanessa Nakate

“Such a great opportunity — youth need their voices to be heard now more than ever.”

- Loay Radwan

“Being a young leader for me means being the plug. Everyone is an outlet for change so being a young leader helps me continue to use music as a vehicle to get the world plugged-in to sustainability.”

- AY Young

“It’s an opportunity to help millions of students to learn more and faster with the Live Digital Learning of FractalUp that humanity needs to re-invent schools, universities & institutions, by identifying for the first time in history the existence of our Natural Fractals of Learning (NFL).”

- Lester Philipp Vargas Angeles

“At a time of unprecedented challenge and opportunity in the world, being a Young Leader for the SDGs provides a platform to work with young people everywhere to recreate the future and build a society that honours the dignity and humanity of all people.”

- Tim Lo Surdo

“Being a young leader for the SDGs is an opportunity to help break down barriers for LGBTIQ youth, advocate for our rights and amplify the voices of those too often sidelined and silenced on a global level.”

- Martin Karadzhev

“Being a young leader for the SDGs means being a voice that inspires change globally while engaging and advocating for human rights, justice and the inclusion of young people in the implementation of the SDGs.”

- Satta Sheriff