Report on the Canvas Convergence from Mapping to Ecosystem Activation: A Full-Day Strategic Brokering Session for Youth Climate Action in Addis Ababa



Date: August 21, 2026

Venue: The Hub Hotel

Number of Participants: 28

1. Introduction

Youth Canvas is a CDKN-supported directory, established in 2025, that maps youth-led and youth-serving initiatives across Addis Ababa working on climate action and environmental protection. Alongside the development of the directory, Youth Canvas also conducted research to better understand how these organisations operate, the successes they have achieved, and the challenges they continue to face. Based on the data collected, Youth Canvas prepared a capacity-strengthening session titled *The Canvas Convergence from Mapping to Ecosystem Activation: A Full-Day Strategic Brokering Session for Youth Climate Action in Addis Ababa*, through CDKN's continued support for networking sessions.

The Canvas Convergence Workshop was held on August 21, 2026, at the Hub Hotel. Organised by Enfluencers and Ethiopian Women and Youth Climate Assembly (EWYCA), with support from the CDKN programme of SouthSouthNorth, the event created a collaborative learning and engagement space for youth canvas members and young people (refer to Annex for more details).

Participants included 17 male and 11 female, 11 youth canvas members organisations, a total of 17 organisations were present, for a day of learning, experience sharing, discussion, and networking. The workshop created an opportunity for Canvas members and other invited youth-led organisations to reflect on their work, exchange practical experiences, explore opportunities for collaboration, and discuss ways to strengthen the sustainability and impact of youth-led initiatives.

The workshop combined presentations, experience-sharing sessions, World Café discussions, and informal organisational exchanges. Key areas of discussion included resource mobilisation, funding diversification, policy influence, storytelling and documentation, government recognition of youth-led initiatives, and collaboration among Youth Canvas members.

2. Opening Session

The workshop began with an opening speech by Hilina Teklu, Executive Director of EWYCA, who welcomed participants and introduced the purpose of the gathering.

Following the opening remarks, Yordanos Getachew, project manager at EWYCA delivered a presentation introducing the Youth Canvas and sharing findings from the assessment conducted on the initiatives. The presentation provided participants with an overview of the Youth Canvas, its purpose, the organisations involved, and the key lessons and findings emerging from the research.

3. Experience-Sharing Session

Following the presentation on the Youth Canvas, the workshop continued with experience-sharing presentations from two Youth Canvas member organisations that had received a small grant from CDKN to implement their projects, following a competitive process.

The presentations were delivered by Maren Ahlers Executive Director from Egre Menged Impact, and Kidus Molla from Enderase Youth Association.

Both presenters introduced their respective organisations and explained their involvement in the Youth Canvas.

- **Egre Menged Impact (EMi) – From Bike Lanes to Climate Action: Youth-Led, Gender-Responsive Mobility in Addis Ababa**

EMi's project promotes inclusive, climate-resilient mobility by encouraging more women and young people to safely use Addis Ababa's new bicycle lanes. Its main activities include improving cycling skills among young women, confidence-building, training youth and women as community-based cycling trainers, collecting gender-responsive data on bike-lane use, and communication activities promoting the climate and gender-equality benefits of cycling. A key achievement was putting youth and gender-responsive approaches at the center of active-mobility programming and building local capacity so that trained community members can continue cycling education beyond the project.

Maren highlighted the value of continuing and strengthening collaboration within Youth Canvas, with EMi noting the need for a stronger sense of "team feeling" among members.



Maren Ahlers Executive Director from Egre Menged Impact sharing their experience. Credit: Jeba Studio

- **Enderase Youth Association – Raising Next Climate Leaders**

Enderase Youth Association's project strengthened young people's knowledge, skills, and capacity to engage meaningfully in the climate ecosystem in Addis Ababa and Hawassa. Its main activities were climate leadership and awareness workshops and a six-week online mentorship programme that supported participants in moving from understanding climate issues to developing, designing, and pitching their own project ideas. The project reached **83 young people** through two workshops, including persons with disabilities, with pre- and post-training assessments showing improved climate knowledge; around **10 participants** also completed the full mentorship programme and qualified for the final stage.

An important lesson was that one-off training is not enough: young people benefit from continued, structured mentorship and follow-up to turn knowledge into practical action. The project also showed the importance of flexibility, intentional inclusion, and measuring actual learning rather than only counting participants.



The Addis Ababa cohort- the first 40 of LEAD's 83 trained leaders. Credit: Enderase Youth Association

The session allowed participants to hear practical examples of youth-led project implementation and provided an opportunity to learn from both the achievements and challenges of organisations that had already translated Youth Canvas engagement into concrete initiatives.

4. World Café Discussions

The next session was organised using a World Café approach. Participants were divided among three discussion tables, each focusing on a specific topic. Participants rotated between tables at approximately 20-minute intervals, allowing everyone to contribute to each discussion.

4.1 Beating the resource crunch

The first table focused on the question:

How can organisations move beyond grants and personal contributions to build a sustainable and diversified resource base?

This table was facilitated by Ilham Mohammed, Program Associate at Enfluencers.

The discussion was divided into two main areas.

4.1.1 Resources Youth Canvas members can provide

Participants reflected on the resources, expertise, and support that already exist within the Youth Canvas network and identified several ways members could support one another. These included:

- Providing advocacy training to other organisations;
- Supporting organisations that are working through registration processes;
- Providing spaces where training and meetings can be conducted;
- Connecting organisations with relevant government offices;
- Sharing contacts, connections, information, and opportunities;
- Collaborating with other Youth Canvas members to jointly implement projects;
- Supporting organisations with social media campaigns;
- Reviewing project ideas and providing constructive feedback;
- Providing guidance and mentorship; and
- Sharing skills, experience, and institutional knowledge across the network.

The discussion emphasised that resources do not always have to be financial. Networks, knowledge, skills, facilities, institutional connections, and technical support can also play an important role in helping youth organisations grow and sustain their work.

4.1.2 Changes needed within organisations

Participants were also asked what they needed to change within themselves as individuals and within their organisations to become more sustainable and collaborative.

They identified several areas for improvement, including:

- Becoming more open and willing to share information;
- Developing a stronger culture of collaboration;
- Continuously upgrading organisational and individual skills;
- Strengthening negotiation skills;
- Building and maintaining networks;
- Improving follow-up and communication;
- Developing a better understanding of relevant rules and regulations; and
- Designing projects in ways that allow them to continue or generate value even when external funding is unavailable.

A major message from the discussion was that organisational sustainability requires both external resource mobilisation and internal changes in attitudes, systems, skills, and ways of working.

"In the climate sector, organisations often hold on to information as if sharing it with others might somehow reduce their own value or make them less relevant. But when organisations working toward the same goals do not share what they know, we end up duplicating efforts, wasting time, and using already limited resources inefficiently. Going forward, I will be more open and share the knowledge

and experience I've gained over the past three years working in this sector, from registration processes to the practical lessons I have learned along the way."

Biruk Tsehaye, Jitu Organic Fertiliser, Manager



Table one discussing beating the Resource Crunch. Credit: Jeba Studio

4.2. Moving from action to policy

The second World Café table focused on the question of *how youth-led action can influence policy and achieve greater impact.* This table was facilitated by Yordanos Getachew, project manager at EWYCA

Participants emphasised that organisations should begin by properly tracking and documenting the completed work. Demonstrating the results and impact of a project provides evidence that an intervention is effective and can serve as a strong foundation for policy advocacy. Participants noted that if successful projects are supported by appropriate policies, their impact can extend beyond individual communities or project locations. Policy support can help proven approaches reach a larger population, become institutionalised, and continue beyond the duration of a single project.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of clearly demonstrating how developing or improving a policy around a successful intervention could expand its impact. Participants emphasised the need to actively advocate for policy development, communicate recommendations publicly, and build enough awareness and support to encourage decision-makers to take action.Participants further suggested

learning from experiences in other countries. Rather than starting from the beginning in every situation, youth organisations and policymakers can study approaches that have already worked elsewhere and adapt them to local realities. This can help save both time and resources while providing evidence for proposed policy solutions.



Table two discussing moving from Action to Policy. Credit: Jeba Studio

4.3. The power of narrative

The third World Café table focused on *the power of narrative and storytelling in communicating the work of youth organisations.* This table was facilitated by Helina Teklu, Executive Director of EWYCA.

Participants discussed the importance of developing clear, compelling stories around their work. They emphasised that connecting activities and results to human stories makes it easier to communicate the value of an initiative and demonstrate how people's lives have changed.

Participants also noted that organisations often carry out valuable work but do not document or articulate their achievements effectively. Without proper documentation, partners, donors, government institutions, and other stakeholders may not fully understand what has been accomplished.

The discussion stressed that potential partners are more likely to support organisations when they can clearly see evidence of previous work, results, and impact. Strong documentation and storytelling therefore play an important role not only in communication but also in partnership development and resource mobilisation.

Participants agreed that organisations should make a deliberate effort to document their activities, collect stories of change, communicate their results, and build narratives that show both the human and institutional impact of their work.



Table three discussing the power of narrative. Credit: Jeba Studio

5. Thematic Discussions

5.1 Funding diversification

In the afternoon, participants continued the discussion through two additional thematic tables.

The first table focused specifically on funding diversification.

Participants began by identifying a wide range of possible funding and resource sources for youth-led organisations. These included:

- Grants
- Sub-grants
- Partnerships
- Bootstrapping (self-funding)
- Income-generating activities
- Loans from microfinance institutions

- Partnerships with the private sector through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) programmes
- Philanthropic financing
- Government revolving funds
- International competitions
- Crowdfunding
- Development banks and
- Collaborative initiatives with other organisations.

The discussion then shifted toward practical strategies for accessing these different forms of financing.Participants emphasised that organisations should first conduct stakeholder mapping in order to understand which institutions, companies, donors, networks, and government bodies could potentially support their work.

They also stressed the importance of continuously building and maintaining networks. Participants encouraged organisations to remain persistent and continue approaching potential partners, recognising that an opportunity that may not be available today could become possible in the future.

Organisations were also encouraged to understand the different requirements associated with grants, loans, partnerships, and other forms of financing. Different funding mechanisms require different organisational capacities, documentation, eligibility criteria, and risk considerations.

Continuous skills development was identified as another important factor, particularly in proposal development, negotiation, financial management, partnership building, and communication.

Participants also recommended forming partnerships between organisations. Collaboration can allow organisations to complement one another's strengths and jointly meet requirements that one organisation may not be able to satisfy independently.

Overall, participants emphasised that funding diversification requires organisations to be proactive, flexible, persistent, and willing to explore multiple sources of support rather than relying only on traditional grants.

5.2. Local government recognition of youth-led climate initiatives

The second discussion table focused on the question:

What would it take for Government to formally recognise youth-led climate initiatives?

This section reflects participants' recommendations for strengthening government engagement and recognition of youth-led climate initiatives.

Participants highlighted several approaches that could help strengthen recognition and collaboration between youth organisations and government institutions.

First, youth-led initiatives should systematically document and showcase their work. Demonstrating successful activities, measurable results, and community impact can help government institutions better understand the contribution youth organisations are making.

Second, participants emphasised the importance of aligning youth-led initiatives with existing government priorities. Organisations should understand what government ministries, departments, and agencies are currently focusing on and identify areas where their own work can contribute to those priorities.Alignment was seen as a way of creating practical opportunities for collaboration rather than approaching government institutions only to request support.

Participants also suggested that youth organisations should actively support government institutions where possible. By contributing knowledge, skills, networks, community engagement, or implementation capacity, youth organisations can demonstrate their capabilities and build stronger relationships with public institutions.

Another recommendation was for organisations to develop clear proposals and proactively present them to relevant ministries and government offices. These proposals should identify specific areas where collaboration could take place and demonstrate the value that youth-led organisations can bring.

Participants agreed that formal recognition is more likely when youth organisations consistently demonstrate their impact, align their work with government priorities, and approach public institutions as potential collaborators and partners.

6. Informal organisational exchange and collaboration

The workshop concluded with an informal conversation among participating organisations.

During this session, representatives from different organisations shared the challenges they were currently facing, the resources they needed, and the types of support they were seeking.

Other participants then responded by suggesting possible solutions, sharing relevant experience, connecting organisations to useful contacts, or offering opportunities for collaboration.

This session demonstrated the practical value of the Youth Canvas as a network. It created space for organisations to discuss challenges and also to identify resources and possible solutions from within the group itself.

The conversation reinforced an important message that emerged throughout the workshop: Youth Canvas members possess significant collective knowledge, skills, networks, and resources, and stronger collaboration among members can help organisations address challenges that may be difficult to overcome individually.

7. Key takeaways

Several important themes emerged throughout the workshop.

- **Collaboration is a resource in itself**. Participants recognised that Youth Canvas members already possess valuable skills, networks, knowledge, spaces, and institutional connections that can be shared.
- **Financial sustainability requires diversification**. Youth organisations should explore grants alongside partnerships, income-generating activities, private sector engagement, crowdfunding, government financing, development finance, and other funding mechanisms.
- **Internal organisational development is essential**. Sustainable organisations need stronger skills, better networks, openness to collaboration, improved negotiation capacity, understanding of regulations, and consistent follow-up.
- **Evidence is critical for influencing policy**. Youth organisations should document their activities and demonstrate the impact of their interventions before seeking to scale successful approaches through policy.
- **Learning from other contexts can save resources**. Successful policy approaches and implementation models from other countries can provide valuable lessons when appropriately adapted to local realities.
- **Storytelling strengthens visibility and credibility**. Organisations need to document and communicate the human stories and results behind their work to attract partners and demonstrate impact.
- **Government engagement should be based on collaboration**. Youth organisations can strengthen government recognition by aligning their initiatives with public priorities, demonstrating results, supporting government efforts, and proposing concrete areas for partnership.
- **Networking should be continuous**. Participants emphasised persistence in building relationships and approaching different institutions, recognising that opportunities can develop over time.

8. Conclusion

The Youth Canvas workshop held on August 21, 2026, at the Hub Hotel provided an important platform for 28 participants to exchange experiences, identify common challenges, and develop practical ideas for strengthening youth-led initiatives.

The discussions showed that while access to financing remains a significant concern, sustainability goes beyond funding. It also depends on strong collaboration, effective networks, organisational capacity, documentation, storytelling, policy engagement, and the ability to demonstrate value to potential partners.

The workshop also highlighted the importance of the Youth Canvas as a space where youth-led organisations can learn from one another and make better use of the resources that already exist within the network.

The final organisational exchange of the day demonstrated the potential for this collaboration to become practical, with participants directly offering support, connections, advice, and opportunities to one another.

Moving forward, continued engagement among Youth Canvas members, stronger documentation of results, greater collaboration with government and private-sector actors, and deliberate efforts to diversify funding will be important for strengthening the sustainability and long-term impact of youth-led initiatives.

Annex

Participant List

No.	Name	Organization	Gender	Youth Canvas Members
1	Mikiyas Ngusu	Tena kebena Organization	Male	Youth Canvas Member
2	Kidus Molla	Enderase Youth Association	Male	Youth Canvas Member
3	Maren Ahlers	Egre Menged Impact	Female	Youth Canvas Member
4	Biruk Tsehaye	Bsf Fertilizer	Male	Youth Canvas Member
5	Mizanu Adisu	Azmera Farms	Male	Youth Canvas Member
6	Sirak Moges	GRC	Male	Youth Canvas Member
7	Betelhem Mamo	YWCA	Female	Youth Canvas Member
8	Roba Mideksa	Green health africa	Male	Youth Canvas Member
9	Ilham Mohammed	Enfluencers	Female	Youth Canvas Member
10	Yordanos Getachew	EWYCA	Female	Youth Canvas Member
11	Solomon Nigussie	Global platform	Male	Youth Canvas Member
12	Barento Dino	AAU	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
13	Simachew Tesra	AAU	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
14	Muad Dejen	MoPD	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
15	Betselot Mohammed	Soil and more	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
16	Bezawit Taye	Women & youth for green action	Female	Non-Youth Canvas Member
17	Yalweayker		Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
18	Dawit Derese		Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
19	Tsion Mekonen	Next-gen for Earth	Female	Non-Youth Canvas Member
20	Tilahun Timotewos	Ministry of Education	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
21	Feven Abraham	JRFBE	Female	Non-Youth Canvas Member

22	Wengelawit Yohannes		Female	Non-Youth Canvas Member
23	Tadesse Endeg	AAU	Male	Non-Youth Canvas Member
24	Tigist Endeshaw	Consultant, Climate Action Policy Advocacy	Female	Non-Youth Canvas Member
25	Jodahi Bezabi	Enfluencers	Male	Youth Canvas Member
26	Nahom Fekadu	Enfluencers	Male	Youth Canvas Member
27	Hilina Teklu	EWYCA	Female	Youth Canvas Member
28	Halelluja Solomon	EWYCA	Female	Youth Canvas Member