

Climate activist Azeez Tobi Abubakar is working hard to save Nigeria

Azeez Tobi Abubakar was just 16 when a frightening event opened his eyes to the climate crisis. During a heavy period of rain, an increasingly common occurrence in his home country of Nigeria, he and his brother became stuck on a bridge.

There was no visibility, and the traffic couldn't go anywhere. He watched as the water underneath rose, getting closer and closer to the car he was in. He recalls how scared he was as the waves shook the bridge.

"It felt like the bridge was going to collapse," he said. "The experience was so, so terrifying."

At the time, Azeez's knowledge of climate change was extremely limited. It was through his hard work and dedication – and a lot of time spent on the internet – that he was able to realise the extent of the climate crisis. Now, the 22-year-old climate activist is working hard to raise awareness of the issues facing Nigeria and the Global South.

"The loss and damage that a lot of vulnerable communities have been suffering from needs to be addressed," he said. "For countries like mine who are still developing, it can be very challenging."

"It keeps me bothered and it keeps me looking for ways to amplify their stories"

Nigeria's coastal location means that its southern region is extremely vulnerable to floods. By contrast, the northern region of the country is facing extreme droughts and desertification, causing food insecurity for much of the population.

Lack of infrastructure and ongoing social issues makes it extremely difficult for the country to deal with the issues climate change causes. This is the case for many developing nations, and it highlights how important it is for developed nations to do their part.

Azeez has been putting in the work to help Nigerian communities deal with the extreme weather events. He co-created the Climate Adaption Project which works on flood risk mapping to develop solutions to help the communities manage and adapt to the climate crisis.

He also co-created the Nigeria Youth Consultation on Climate Change (NYCCC). The NYCCC held regional conferences to hear directly from the Nigerian youth about the issues facing them. Azeez and his co-creator Joy Egbe then took those concerns with them when they represented Nigeria at the Pre-COP events in Milan.

That led him to attending COP26 in Glasgow last month. Restless Development, a youth leadership charity, reached out to him and asked him to attend as part of their delegation.

While there, he raised awareness for the Missing Majority – the young people who were underrepresented at the conference and could not attend. Throughout the 14 days they handed cards to different delegates. On them were stories from young people most

affected by climate change but were unable to attend the conference. The hope being that the delegates would keep them in mind when making important decisions.

Unfortunately, visa issues meant that two of the Restless Development delegation were prevented from attending, just one element of exclusivity that has become synonymous with this year's COP.

But Azeez is cautiously optimistic that next year will be better. It was announced during this year's event that COP27 will be held in Egypt, the first time it will be held on the African continent. He thinks that with thorough planning and critical thinking, the Egyptian government can pull it off.

He also hopes that the world coming down to Egypt means they "will actually get to experience what climate change is already causing on the African continent."

Climate activism is hard work and sometimes it can feel like nothing is changing. But for Azeez, and others like him, it's worth it.

"At times it seems like my voice is not being heard," said Azeez. "But I like to think that every single thing I say out there, every single station I go to talk about these issues, someone could be at home listening."