



NBI Quick Brief

What are the Youth Climate Strikes?

We have been bombarded with news on environmental catastrophes. From hurricanes to major floods to fires in rather unexpected places (the Amazon and the Arctic Circle), climate change is front and centre in the news, but not in our politics or our solutions. As reflected in international agreements like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Change Agreement, we need significant socio-economic and environmental change.

The youth, led by young people like Greta Thunberg, are acting, and through a platform called [#FridaysForFuture](#), are mobilizing globally. This involves school strikes each Friday. What started out as a small number of students acting, is growing exponentially and is something we should take note of.

This mobilization is intensifying prior to and just after the UN Secretary General's Emergency Summit on Climate Change: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/>, which takes place in New York on the 23rd September 2019. Backed by civil society, youth from around the world will be skipping school and inviting adults to join them in marches to transform economies away from fossil fuels and towards a lower carbon future. This intensification of the predominantly youth movement is planned for the 20th and 27th of September 2019.

The official website: <https://globalclimastrike.net> describes the escalation like this: “Millions of school climate strikers have been leaving their classrooms every Friday. Now they hope that everyone else will join them in action. Going on climate strike means people everywhere walking out of their homes, their offices, their farms, their factories.... Together, we will sound the alarm and show our politicians that business as usual is no longer an option. The climate crisis won't wait, so neither will we... These Climate Strikes won't solve the climate crisis alone. What this moment can do is demonstrate that people are no longer willing to continue with business as usual. The urgency of the climate crisis requires a new approach and a just response centred on human rights, equity, and justice.”

In South Africa, these strikes are supported by the following organisations: [350 Africa](#), [AfrikaVuka](#), [Africa Climate Alliance](#), [Earthlife Africa](#), [Project 90 by 2030](#), [African Climate Reality Project](#), [Citizens Climate Lobby](#), [Surge Africa Organisation](#), Gray2Green Movement and the Dawar Arts [Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development \(FENRAD\)](#). Our information thus far is that school strikes have been organized in Mount Frere, Newcastle, Durban, King Williams Town, Springs, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, Emalahleni, Rustenburg, Graaff-Reinet, Louis Trichardt and Cape Town. Most strikes are scheduled for the 20th September 2019.

Climate change awareness is low in South Africa. Thus, we don't expect significant disruption to traffic and work attendance. The key question is how should companies and 'adults' respond to the climate strike. A constructive approach would be to seriously consider the youth message, their concerns that they have a sustainable future and what reasonable change to achieve this will be required.

Ways that your Company/Organisation might respond to the initiative could include being sensitive to the needs of staff who may have children participating in the strike, including giving permission for them to leave work to manage transport to keep their children safe. You could also consider amplifying the voices of the youth as a meaningful constituent of our democracy. Furthermore, you could support your staff participating in the strike or even consider joining in ways appropriate to you, for e.g.: the call made for a day long digital strike: <https://digital.globalclimastrike.net/>.

The key issue to be aware of is that the global youth movement includes South African youth and it will grow in popularity in South Africa. We need to hear the message from the youth globally - that it is time to do things differently in the long-term interest of our economies, environment and people.



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The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela

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