

SHIFT China: Catalysing Youth Leadership for Community Climate Resilience

Country: China

Year: 2026–2028

Theme: Climate Action and Youth Empowerment

Age Range: 14–25

Location: Nationwide with Yangtze River Delta and Guangdong Province as priority

Project Length: 3 years



Youth can be the heart of community climate action in China

Through this project, Save the Children will launch our global youth movement accelerator, **SHIFT**, to equip Chinese youth with the tools, networks, and confidence they need to lead local responses to climate change — while also investing in their long-term capacity to influence community-driven solutions.

This 36-month project will partner with local changemaker groups who are already active in their communities. Through SHIFT, these youth-led groups will gain structured support to design and lead impactful, locally relevant movements that influence behaviour, strengthen resilience, and expand community participation in climate solutions.

Young people in China represent a powerful but under-leveraged force in the national climate response. SHIFT will help unlock that potential — by providing clear action pathways, flexible funding, mentorship, and access to a globally connected peer network. Through this, we will transform youth concern into coordinated, constructive leadership for a greener future.

The Problem

Across China, youth are increasingly aware of the climate crisis and eager to act — yet they lack accessible ways to translate their concern into action. Community climate responses often miss the critical ingredient of youth participation, leaving a gap in local leadership, innovation, and social engagement. Without adequate knowledge, support, or visibility, young people are excluded from decision-making and disconnected from the community dynamics they are best placed to influence.

At the same time, youth are uniquely positioned to drive change. They are closely connected to their peers, families, and cultural contexts — the very systems that must shift for meaningful climate action to take root. Investing in youth is not just a moral imperative — it is a strategic one. With the right support, young people can become catalysts of behaviour change, resilience, and collective action within their communities.

Our Approach: The SHIFT Model

SHIFT is Save the Children's global youth movement accelerator — a proven model to transform emerging youth-led groups into confident, capable community leaders. By creating clear pathways for action, supporting critical decision-making, and connecting young people to one another, SHIFT ensures they can lead movements that matter.

In China, SHIFT will support youth-led groups working on climate issues to design and deliver movements that promote sustainability, strengthen local adaptation, and build community-wide momentum. These groups will receive training, mentorship, seed funding, and access to SHIFT's global learning network. The goal is not only to amplify youth efforts — but to build lasting leadership that continues to drive local change long after the project ends.



Changemakers are cycled through three phases over the course of our project:

- **Acceleration:** Youth groups are identified, trained, and supported to design and manage their community movements using SHIFT tools, mentorship, creative collaboration and seed funding.
- **Consolidation:** Groups build on their early wins, access smaller pots of funding (from SHIFT Next or the Carrot Fund), and measure their growth and progress using our Evolution Tracker.
- **Sustain:** Graduates are largely independent with a focus on long-term stability. They stay connected through SHIFT's global network and often return as mentors to new youth groups.

Expected Results

Every youth group supported by SHIFT develops and reports on their own tangible impact targets, related to their identified 'Right-Sized Problem.' From national advocacy to small community-based projects, each group will generate their own impact stories. Examples of results from similar campaigns around the globe can be seen on our [website](#). More generally, this project will achieve the following:

- **135** youth leaders will be trained and graduated through the SHIFT acceleration cycle.
- **9** local youth-led changemaker movements, led by the above youth, will be catalysed, with a focus on leading local climate solutions,
- **4.5 million+** children and community members will take climate action and engage with youth-led campaigns.
- **50% improvement** will be achieved by each group across key performance indicators on the SHIFT Evolution Tracker
- All supported groups will form an alliance to advocate for increased youth engagement in community responses to climate action in China and will also collaborate with peers across our global SHIFT network for learning.

Funding Request

We are seeking **\$300,000 USD over 3 years** to implement this SHIFT movement in Guangdong Province, China. The following breakdown outlines project costs:

Project Costs (Activity Costs):

- Recruitment, training, and facilitation of local child and youth-led changemaker groups
- Fees for Creative Buddies, including design and production of movement materials
- Campaign seed funding directly managed by the youth group (or with their input)
- Movement storytelling: youth-led filming and impact documentation
- Travel, workshops, and logistics to support youth participation
- Local staff coordination and project oversight
- Small follow-on grants via the Carrot Fund to strengthen sustainability

- Membership to the SHIFT Global Network, including training, mentorship, and creative/campaign support

Project Administration (CAM/ICR):

Total: \$300,000 USD

SHIFT is affordable, scalable, and proven in 22+ countries. It's a smart way to localise power and achieve lasting results led by young people.

Why Save the Children?

Young people are already leading change in China — but too often without support or resources. With the right investment, they can shift narratives, shift policies, and shift futures.

Since 2010, Save the Children China (SC China) has implemented youth development programs targeting vulnerable populations aged 15–24—such as vocational school students, migrant youth, ethnic minority youth, and youth with disabilities—across multiple regions in China, including Guangdong, Sichuan, and the Yangtze River Delta.

From 2020 to 2024, our programs reached a total of 153,971 youth (73,767 female and 80,204 male), supporting their transition from school to work and equipping them with essential skills for future employment. In parallel, 54,007 adults (33,770 female and 20,237 male)—including parents, educators, career mentors, and employer staff—were also engaged, helping to create an enabling environment for youth development and empowerment while strengthening community support networks for sustainable impact. This scale of outreach was made possible through our robust intervention framework and a well-established network of partners built over years of implementation.

SC China has developed a comprehensive and integrated framework to support the school-to-work transition, with core components including Employability Skills Training, Career Counseling, Job Linkage Activities, and Youth Advisory Clubs/Councils. Notably, the Youth Advisory Clubs/Councils reflect SC China's commitment to meaningful youth participation. Based on both theoretical and practical foundations, we have facilitated youth-led clubs and advisory councils in several regions. In our latest program, young people from participating schools were invited to advise on project design and implementation, forming youth committees that also contributed to the global youth summit in Indonesia—demonstrating SC China's leadership and achievements in advancing youth-led action. SC China has built strong and diverse partnerships across China, with particularly robust support from government agencies at both national and local levels. These partnerships ensure alignment with public policy priorities and facilitate effective implementation on the ground. Government departments such as the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, local education commissions, and civil affairs bureaus have played a key role in mobilizing local resources, and creating an enabling environment for sustainable youth development initiatives.

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