

Voices of Change

Initiative Pitch

Intersectional Environmentalism
Storytelling



"Empowering a Greater Future, Rising as One"

United Rising (UR) is an organization fostering collaboration toward the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants from a holistic point of view.





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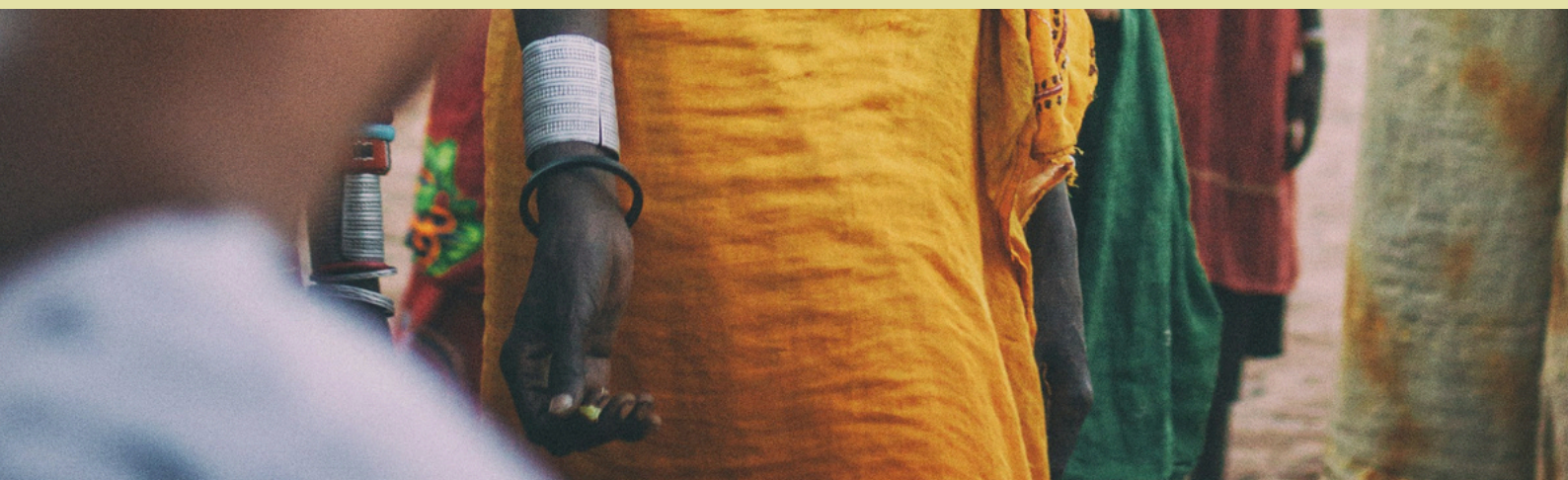




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I. Introduction

United Rising (UR) is an organisation dedicated to safeguarding our planet and its inhabitants from a holistic perspective. We believe in sustainable solutions that are not only inclusive but also fair and just for all.

In alignment with our overarching mission, we have launched the Intersectional Environmentalism Campaign. This initiative represents a concerted effort to employ an intersectional lens in tailoring strategies aimed at fostering a nuanced understanding of the intricate structures and power dynamics inherent in environmental challenges. Through this campaign, we endeavour to elevate the voices of marginalized communities, while recognizing their invaluable perspectives as essential in shaping international solutions that authentically address the multifaceted challenges faced by those most vulnerable.

The decision to incorporate this storytelling initiative into our campaign is purposeful. For Indigenous cultures, storytelling is an innate practice part of their cultural heritage as a potent vehicle for truth dissemination and the perpetuation of communal narratives across generations. Their ancestral connection to the land and their relational knowledge of the non-human beings who dwell in their territories offer unparalleled insights into sustainable stewardship. We believe that youth should take a central role in this project, as intergenerational leadership is essential to complement our intersectional approach. We strive to find long-term and holistic solutions for, and from, considering that new generations are disproportionately affected by current challenges.

Our initiative begins with a genuine invitation to co-create with Indigenous representatives. This is why we maintain an open-ended approach to our project objectives, seeking to align not only with our organization's mission but also with the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities.



II. Methodology - A decolonial and collaborative approach

Indigenous intellectuals identify several points of rupture with Western research, such as:

1. The roles of researchers and local collaborators are too often exclusive;
2. Local collaborators are treated as passive subjects rather than actors in research;
3. They have no role in data interpretation, receive little feedback on results, and see no benefits from research that could improve their situation;
4. Research is often overly theoretical and unconnected with the motivations and interests of the people and communities involved and
5. The importance of human and non-human relationships, dialogue, lived experience, respect and reciprocity are not recognized as heuristic, particularly in the production of knowledge.



- **Collaboration / co-production of knowledge**

Collaborative approaches should not be confused with decolonizing processes but can offer methodological, epistemological and ethical avenues for moving closer to them. A genuine process of decolonization can only be effective through the establishment of research approaches conceived, developed and carried out by Indigenous peoples.

According to this perspective, and to develop a project that can be locally and globally relevant, our goal is to work with the **local collaborators** to idealize the project and its objectives, at all stages of the research process, from conceptualization to knowledge restitution.

- **Storytelling**

Indigenous storytelling - taking numerous forms of folktales, songs, and rituals - serves as a crucial intergenerational anchor and a fundamental aspect of Indigeneity. **Personal narratives** in storytelling can not only unearth the undocumented Indigenous wisdom but also the underlying socio-economic contexts associated with the challenges faced by Indigenous groups, such as colonialism, discrimination, and inequality. Today, Indigenous storytelling is finding increased expression in research and advocacy efforts through digital mediums and methods like participatory action research, fostering, at the same time, community building and reconciliation.

III. Objectives of this project

1- Intersectional empowerment for effective protection of Indigenous peoples and communities

- **Reclaiming Indigenous voices and heritage**

The environmental challenges faced by Indigenous communities are intricately linked to multifaceted forms of harm, impeding their well-being and survival. Achieving **environmental justice** demands more than just recognizing the inequalities endured by Indigenous peoples - it necessitates empowering them by respecting their **agency**, deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and profound bond with the land. Despite the persistence of silence and stigma surrounding Indigenous voices, we understand the crucial significance of offering a platform for these communities to reclaim their voices. United Rising aims to act as facilitators, committed to establishing a safe and supportive environment where Indigenous voices can resound and seek empowerment.

- **Indigenous Agency in decision-making**

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of the importance of Indigenous knowledge, governments often fail to integrate such perspectives, including in climate change adaptation plans. This omission is entrenched in structural dynamics and a **state-centric approach** that tends to overlook the **powerful agency** of Indigenous communities. By facilitating intercultural communication that bridges the two worldviews, we aim to pave the way for shaping climate change communication and adaptation that align and resonate more closely with the local communities.

2- Raising awareness by amplifying Indigenous Voices; Addressing structural inequalities & power dynamics

- **Raising awareness**

By sharing compelling narratives, United Rising aims to bring personal narratives, cultural traditions and ancestral wisdom from **Indigenous voices to the forefront**. Raising awareness through storytelling is a first step towards educating the collective on the **interconnectedness of social and environmental issues** while bringing **structural inequalities** to the surface. We aim to shed light on often-overlooked consequences of climate change and unsustainable practices that are perceived by our Western society as “out of sight, out of mind”.

- **Address structural inequalities**

Using an intersectional lens is fundamental to holistically understanding how intersecting identities profoundly shape individual experiences, exposing individuals to various layers of privilege and oppression. Structural inequalities, such as patriarchy, racism, colonialism and capitalism further exacerbate these systems of dominance and subjugation. Our objective, via storytelling, is to **shed light on these biases, power dynamics and dominant narratives** which are the root cause of systemic injustices and to reiterate the suppression of the Global South by the Global North. With storytelling, we can **humanize complex issues** – ultimately, cultivating greater solidarity and dismantling oppressive systems.



3- Paradigm Shift Towards Inclusive and Representative Environmental Justice

- **Critical Approach to Sustainable Development**

The current mainstream definition of sustainable development is framed as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations”. The notion of ‘**development**’ implicitly suggests a relentless pursuit of **perpetual growth and perpetuation of exploitative systems**, translating, often, into various forms of violence and injustices for Indigenous communities. Challenging our conventional ideologies and predetermined solutions starts by embodying a critical and decolonial approach to sustainable development. Through storytelling, we promote a paradigm shift which integrates Indigenous philosophies and their conceptions of what constitutes justice and the corresponding environmental solutions.

- **Policy Advocacy**

Storytelling is an approach that can help us to directly incorporate **Indigenous knowledge and experiences into our policy advocacy efforts** at United Rising. Employing an intersectional building on the storytelling blueprint helps us to identify and address blind spots and inefficiencies of the current international framework.

- **Holistic Approach to Intersectionality**

Building on existing knowledge, United Rising strives for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of **intersectional identities, challenges and dynamics**. In pursuit of this goal, we recognize the transformative potential of storytelling to transcend boundaries and unite individuals from diverse backgrounds. Through narrative, we endeavour to highlight the intricate layers of privilege and oppression, fostering a more robust and varied discourse on environmental justice. Recognizing the potential limitations inherent in our perspective, we are driven to **cultivate mutual learning** - mindful of the ever-evolving dynamics of our current challenges.

V. Potential Next-Steps

Our campaign is an open-ended project, aiming to leave sufficient room for fluid adjustments according to the stakeholders' insights and participation. Nevertheless, there are some potential steps that we think could result from our collaboration:

1. Co-create the Storytelling Initiative in Collaboration with Indigenous Communities
2. Find a Representative who can Mediate and Connect Us to Local Communities
3. Pinpoint Key Needs and Challenges within Indigenous Communities
4. Gain Insights into the Nuanced Dynamics of the Regions
5. Tailor Strategies to Address Community Needs
6. Foster Synergies among Indigenous Representatives and Communities
7. Secure Funding to Support the Initiative





Concluding words

United Rising's Intersectional Environmentalism campaign is an initiative attuned to local stakeholders' participation and insights. To that end, United Rising is mindful of ruling out any preconceived ideas associated with the people of these regions or their grievances. The end goal of this campaign is the collaboration with the local stakeholders to highlight and (re)define the intersectional challenges and priorities of their communities, in the spirit of open-mindedness and mutual understanding.

As emphasised, we envision an initiative shaped and organised in active collaboration. With the conclusion of this pitch, United Rising wholeheartedly welcomes and invites the stakeholders to provide any inputs and opinions that may have arisen regarding the Intersectional Environmentalism Campaign or any parts of the pitch.

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United Rising



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