

Fighting Climate Change with Community Action

As we celebrate Earth Day, it is important to remember that fighting climate change is a year-round responsibility. This lesson looks at how people around the globe are fighting back against climate change in their own communities, using the following resources:

1. **“Panamanian Indigenous People Act to Protect the Forest from Invading Loggers” by Guido Bilbao for *Mongabay***: This story looks at how the community in the Darién Gap is organizing to fight back against the illegal logging trade that contributes to deforestation.
2. **“An Environmental Newspaper Fights for Press Freedom in the Russian Arctic” by Amy Martin for *PRI’s The World***: This story profiles a Russian newspaper working to draw attention to thawing permafrost in the Russian Arctic.
3. **“Ecology Monks in Thailand Seek to End Environmental Suffering” by Kiley Price for *Mongabay***: This story explores how Buddhist Monks in Thailand are using their influence to draw attention to and push back against climate change.
4. **“How Cape Town Defeated Day Zero—for Now” by Jacqueline Flynn for *Global Health NOW***: This story uses the water crisis in Cape Town, South Africa to examine how residents responded locally and how their responses helped avert a much worse disaster.

Warm-up:

1. Before reading, write at least one answer in each of the following boxes:

1. What do you know about climate change?	
2. How can you see climate change affecting your community?	

3. What are you or people in your community doing to fight climate change?	
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2. Ask someone you live with the questions above. What new information did you learn from them?

3. While climate change gets a lot of coverage in the news, individuals' and communities' activism against it doesn't always get the same attention. Have you seen any news coverage about people fighting back against climate change? **Respond in the boxes below.**

1. If so, who do you hear about the most? What do they do to fight back?	
2. If not, why do you think that people fighting back may not get as much attention?	

Background:

Almost every day we see stories in the news about the devastating impacts of climate change on our planet. It can be easy to get discouraged or complacent. However, the fight isn't over. Today we will look at how communities around the world are pushing back, not only against the effects of climate change, but also against the global systems that discourage climate action. Climate change's effects look different in each community we are going to look at today, which means that local responses do too. The ways in which people fight back are varied and innovative, but we can all learn from and be inspired by their work.

Introducing the Reporting:

The four resources above address different countries and different effects or causes of climate change. These are the places and corresponding news stories we will explore today:

- **Panama:** “Panamanian Indigenous People Act to Protect the Forest From Invading Loggers”
- **Russia:** “An Environmental Newspaper Fights for Press Freedom in the Russian Arctic”
- **Thailand:** “Ecology Monks in Thailand Seek to End Environmental Suffering”
- **South Africa:** “How Cape Town Defeated Day Zero—for Now”

1. Which countries do you want to learn more about? Choose two of the countries and stories above to explore. Before you read, jot down your answers to these questions **on a separate sheet of paper:**

- What do you already know about climate change in this country?
- Make some predictions about what climate change might look like there, based on what you know about this country's geographical features and about climate change in general.

2. Read one of the two articles silently to yourself or aloud to your group. Keep the following questions in mind as you read:

- How does climate change look in this community?
- How are the people in this story fighting back against climate change?
- Do you think they are working against the cause of climate change, the effects, or both?
- What outside forces (companies, laws, other countries, etc) are contributing to climate change in this community?
- How does this story connect to your own community?

3. Repeat Step 2 with the second story you picked.

Reflection:

Reflect on what you have learned about climate change and the fight against it. How do you think this connects to your own community? Write down your answers to the following questions on **the same sheet of paper that you used to respond to the questions above.**

1. How is climate change viewed differently or similarly in a community you read about versus your community?
2. What would you do if you were living in one of the communities you read about?
3. How are both of the climate issues you read about connected to one another? Do you think the actions you read about in one article would have worked in the scenarios described in the other?
4. Do you think that any of the climate change actions you read or heard about today could be used in your community?
5. How might our actions be contributing to climate change around the world? What steps can we take to reduce our personal contributions to climate change?

Extension Activities:

Option 1: Research

Do your own research on the topic you read about today. More Pulitzer Center reporting on climate change can be found below. Take this research and **create your own creative project to raise awareness and spur climate change action**. This could be a visual arts piece (maybe a collage or poster), a short story, a poem, or a short essay.

Other stories about climate change are below:

- “After the Flood” by Katie Pyzyk for *Belt Magazine* (Chicago)
- “From Louisiana To The Netherlands, Climate Change Brings New Threats” by Tegan Wendland for *New Orleans Public Radio*
- “‘There’s No More Water’: Climate Change on a Drying Island” by Tommy Trenchard for *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*
- “The Amazon’s Defenders” by Francesc Basia I Dalmases and Pablo Albarenga for *The Washington Post*
- “Community Fights Construction of Mountain Valley Pipeline” by Kelsey Wright for the Pulitzer Center (North Dakota)

Send your finished product to education@pultizercenter.org or share it on Instagram or Twitter using the #EarthDayEveryday and by tagging @pultizercenter.

Option 2: Take Action!

Take action to respond to the impacts of climate change by trying one of the the following options:

1. Design a social media campaign, raising awareness and promoting steps that individuals and communities can take to combat climate change around the world and at home.

Write a letter to your representatives and encourage others to do the same. (Letter-writing template)

2. Start a virtual green action club at school to raise awareness and plan a climate action day, recycling drive, plant a community garden, plant trees, or volunteer with other local environmental action groups.

3. Write a profile on one of the activists you read about today. This can look like a short written bio, a poster, or even a presentation. Be sure to share the finished piece with education@pulitzercenter.org and on social media, tagging [@pulitzercenter](https://twitter.com/pulitzercenter).