

Climate change in the raw

The schooner Tara set out on her latest two-year expedition from Lorient, France, on 11 July 2006 – and was on station in the Arctic by the end of the month. Her crew, led by Etienne Bourgois and Bernard Buigues, will carry out scientific observations and research on how the Arctic environment is changing – and relay their findings to scientists and general public alike. And the team, which is supported by UNEP, is making every effort to ensure that this research vessel has the smallest energy footprint possible, generating most of the power it needs from solar and wind sources. Follow the progress of Tara, and find out about the shrinking Arctic ice on www.taraexpeditions.org

Francis Latreille/ADO

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Juan Hoffmaister

University challenge

Juan Hoffmaister, Tunza Youth Advisor for North America, works through a youth network to persuade schools and colleges to make the switch to clean energy

Our generation absolutely must overcome the world's dependency on fossil fuels. If we are to halt climate change we will need to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 90 per cent by 2050 worldwide.

When I realized that small, vulnerable communities are hardest hit by the effects of climate change – and that renewable energy can mitigate its impact – I decided to start making a difference by helping to bring wind and solar power to my part of the world.

I became National Programs Coordinator for SustainUS, a youth network trying to advance sustainable development within the United States through advocacy and grassroots work. It is part of Energy Action, which organizes young North Americans to campaign for clean energy, and tries to convince adults in the United States and Canada to invest in it.

One of its projects, Campus Climate Challenge, for example, helps universities to switch to renewable energy sources and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Through it, young people track energy consumption on 400 campuses and persuade them to save energy, such as by reducing heat loss through windows and doors and buying energy-efficient appliances. It also helps students encourage their universities to build with energy efficiency in mind and create a culture of conservation on campus, and to buy energy from clean sources and install renewable technologies – like ground source heat pumps and solar panels.

It shows that small communities working together can make a difference, and that young people can encourage and educate each other.

Renewable energy provides hope. At present its cost is an obstacle, so better and more accessible technologies are needed to make it cheaper. But increasing demand, as more people are encouraged to buy it, will spur the necessary research and development. By working together in this way, we can make it accessible right round the planet.