



## **CONCEPT NOTE**

**“One Billion Earth Hours Award” (2026–2030)  
*A Global Civil Society Movement to Recognize, Mobilize, and  
Scale 10 million Climate and Social Impact Champions***

**2026-2030**

## 1. Executive Summary

The One Billion Earth Hours Award is a global civil society initiative designed to identify, recognize, and scale the work of 10 million grassroots changemakers, contributing one billion verified hours of climate action and social development by 2030. Verified hours refer to documented and independently confirmed hours of climate action performed by individuals or groups, as validated by accredited certifying organizations.

Despite being at the forefront of climate resilience and social transformation, grassroots actors receive less than 10% of climate finance and remain largely excluded from global decision-making processes. This initiative addresses that gap by building a transparent, digital, and decentralized recognition and acceleration ecosystem. Certifying organizations will follow a standardized protocol to evaluate and confirm grassroots activities, ensuring that recognized contributions meet defined criteria for climate action and social development.

Over five years, the project will:

- Accredite 3,500+ certifying organizations, which are entities authorized to validate impact hours and ensure the integrity of documented climate actions.
- Recognize 10 million individuals and institutions for their contributions to climate action and social development.
- Mobilize 1 billion verified impact hours, which are hours of meaningful climate and social action validated using standardized criteria.
- Connect grassroots actors to funding, policy, and global platforms, enhancing their visibility and access to resources.

By 2030, this initiative aims to shift global climate finance toward grassroots solutions, empower local leaders, and accelerate progress toward sustainable development goals.

## 2. The Opportunity

The **One Billion Earth Hours Award** was conceived in October 2025 during the NGO pre-summit ahead of the Second World Social Summit in Ottawa, Canada. Civil society leaders from 11 countries united around a shared vision:

*To create a global recognition and mobilization platform that elevates grassroots impact, unlocks financing, and accelerates scalable solutions for climate resilience and social transformation.*

This initiative responds directly to key barriers faced by civil society: Limited access to sustainable and flexible funding, Structural exclusion from global policy platforms, Visa and mobility restrictions for Global South actors, and limited visibility in mainstream media and donor ecosystems.

### 3. Vision and Goal

**Vision:** To see a world where environmental stewardship is not just a high-level policy, but a celebrated community value. We believe that the most profound solutions to our planet's climate crisis are often found in the quiet, persistent actions of grassroots leaders—our **Unsung Heroes**.

**Goal:** To build a transparent, data-driven global ecosystem that identifies, validates, and amplifies the work of 10 million grassroots changemakers, contributing one billion verified “*Earth Hours*” of climate and social impact by 2030.

### 4. Strategic Objectives and Expected Outcomes

**Objective:1. Elevate Invisible Impact.** *Shine a global spotlight on under-recognized climate and social innovators.*

- Outcome: Millions of verified impact stories shared globally
- Metric: Digital reach, storytelling engagement, and media coverage  
“*What gets recognized gets replicated.*”

**Objective:2. Catalyze Grassroots Innovation and Replication.** *Inspire scalable, low-cost, locally led solutions.*

- Outcome: Replication of successful models across regions
- Metric: Number of initiatives scaled or adapted globally

**Objective:3. Strengthen Social Cohesion and Civic Engagement.** *Build a global movement rooted in collective action and shared purpose.*

- Outcome: Increased volunteerism, partnerships, and NGO participation
- Target: Engage 3,500+ organizations as certifying and implementing partners

**Objective:4. Influence Policy Through Evidence and Storytelling.** *Integrate grassroots insights into global decision-making processes.*

- Outcome: Inclusion of case studies in UN dialogues, COP processes, and policy briefs
- Metric: Number of policy engagements and citations.

### 5. The Earth Hours Award Model

The initiative is designed as a credible, scalable, and transparent recognition ecosystem built on five pillars:

#### 1. Global Governance and Standards:

A Strategy Advisory Team (SAT) comprising international experts was established:

- Eligibility criteria and impact standards

- Verification protocols
- categories of award (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Distinguished, Lifetime Achievement)

## 2. Decentralized Certification System:

Accredited Certifying Organizations (COs)—including NGOs, universities, private sector actors, and community institutions—will:

- Nominate candidates
- Verify impact and service hours
- Ensure compliance with standards

## 3. Digital Platform and Data Ecosystem: A centralized platform will:

- Collect and validate “Earth Hours” contributions
- Host global storytelling and impact dashboards
- Connect changemakers to funding and partnerships

## 4. Rigorous Evaluation and Recognition:

Independent expert panels assess nominees based on:

- Climate and environmental impact
- Social development outcomes
- Innovation and scalability
- Community engagement and sustainability

Awardees receive:

- Global recognition (certificate, pin, trophy medal, and media coverage)
- Access to funding and partnership opportunities
- Invitations to global forums (e.g., UNCFFF COP, UNEP, CSOCD events, etc.)

## 5. Global Visibility and Movement Building:

Every year, the *Earth Hours Award* culminates in high-profile award ceremonies aligned with major global events (e.g., UNFCCC COP, UNCSOCD, World Environment Day (WED), or the annual NGO Common Space event), which will:

- Showcase impact stories
- Attract media and donor attention
- Foster cross-sector partnerships

## 6. Innovation and Value Proposition

The One Billion Earth Hours Award stands out for its distinctive approach and impact:

- **Quantifies grassroots impact** by verifying and recording service hours contributed by local communities. This measurable system highlights the tangible efforts made at the grassroots level.
- **Bridges the gap** between local actors and global funders, offering a platform that connects community-driven initiatives with international support and funding opportunities.

- **Combines recognition with acceleration** by providing both visibility and access to resources. Awardees gain acknowledgment for their contributions and receive support to further their impact.
- **Builds a global movement** rather than serving as a one-time award, fostering ongoing engagement and collaboration across regions and sectors.
- The initiative **aligns directly with SDGs (1, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17)** and **Paris Agreement goals**, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable development and climate action.

## 7. Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

The “Earth Hours Award” campaign will focus on building partnerships across the continent and engaging key structures involved in annual popular mobilization, media, policy, and advocacy efforts.

The initiative will establish strategic partnerships with key:

1. **Government ministries:** e.g., Environment, Education, Health, Energy, etc
2. **Multilateral and UN Agencies,** e.g., UNFCCC, UNEP, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNCCD, CBD, etc.
3. **Development Partners and Investors,** e.g., World Bank, GEF, CIF, GIZ, SIDA, WWF, philanthropic foundations, etc.
4. **Civil Society and Grassroots Networks,** e.g., NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, Indigenous communities, women's groups, youth-led/lead organizations and networks
5. **Private Sector,** e.g., business corporations, trade unions, and ESG investors
6. **Learning Institutions:** e.g., Primary and Secondary schools, junior high and high schools, colleges and Universities, research centers, etc.

### Why This Matters Now (Call to Action)

We are at a defining moment.

The world cannot meet its climate and development goals without unlocking the full potential of grassroots action.

*“The solutions already exist—in villages, towns, and communities across the globe. What is missing is recognition, resources, and the bridge to scale.”* The *One Billion Earth Hours Award* offers that bridge.

We invite donors, development agencies, and partners to join us in advancing this vital initiative and redefine who leads climate action and social transformation. Your engagement is essential to catalyzing grassroots action and driving meaningful impact on a global scale.

***Let's turn invisible efforts into unstoppable global change.***