



WEAVING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Youth perspectives on
the role of philanthropy
in the fight for justice





TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The research reported in this publication has been conducted by Global Fund for Children (GFC) as part of the Weaving Climate Solutions initiative. This material was developed with the direct participation of youth-led collectives and organizations from different territories of the country, as part of the National Initial Mapping of Youth and Climate Justice process.

Realization

Global Fund for Children

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Where We Start From: Background and Objectives of this Research

The effects of the climate crisis are intertwined and exacerbated by other socioeconomic problems, such as inequality, poverty, population growth and high population density. Factors such as race and gender also elucidate the greater susceptibility of some people and places to suffer major losses. This makes it evident who is paying the price for what society calls progress – it is Indigenous, *quilombola* and other traditional communities, Black, and peripheral people and territories that first feel the weight of social, economic, and environmental injustices in Brazil. This world model, sold as “developed” and modern, has turned everything into a commodity: land, water, forest, and even our bodies. As the Brazilian *quilombola* leader and thinker **Nêgo Bispo¹** points out, this is not development, but the continuation of colonization that tries to erase ways of life, memories and knowledge. Yet it is precisely this knowledge that sustains life and points out paths of resistance, what he calls counter-colonization.



Territory, race, and gender continue to mark those who suffer the worst effects of racism and environmental racism. An example of that is how Brazil is a signatory of the **International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169**, which guarantees the right to free, prior, and informed consultation of indigenous peoples and traditional communities regarding any legislative or administrative measure that affects them. Even so, this right is systematically disregarded, with major infrastructure projects continuing to move forward without consulting those that will be most impacted by them. This contradiction elucidates how the discourse of “progress” transforms specific territories and bodies into sacrifice zones. This criticism also appears in the report **Vision of Engajamundo’s Youth for the Development of Brazil (2021)**, which questions development models currently adopted and defends ways of *bem viver* (good living) built from the knowledge of traditional peoples and communities.

Despite their vulnerability, these communities are fighting daily to protect their territories, keep their cultural manifestations alive and build their good living. They create adaptation

¹ Nêgo Bispo (Antônio Bispo dos Santos) – Thinker, writer, and *quilombola* leader of the Quilombo Saco Curtume, in Piauí state. He is a leading figure in the fight for territory and criticism of colonialism in Brazil.

and mitigation solutions rooted in their realities and priority demands, while resisting to guarantee their right to exist and remain. After all, they are the ones who always had their territories, bodies, and ways of life affected by the colonization and capitalism. Young people are at the forefront of this fight and are coming together to demand action on the moral responsibility and obligation to protect the planet and future generations. According to the national research **Youth, Environment and Climate Change (JUMA, 2023)**,



8 out of 10 young Brazilians recognize that we are experiencing a climate crisis that is already directly affecting their lives, with impacts such as loss of mental health, food insecurity, and hopelessness about the future.

At the same time, the research shows that many young people do not understand some of the technical terms related to the climate agenda—such as “climate justice” or “Paris Agreement”—, especially young Black people, those from peripheral communities, and those from traditional communities. This distance between official discourse and everyday life reinforces the urgency of territorializing the climate agenda and ensuring that the most affected young people are at the center of decisions and the constructions of solutions. Sparked by this alarming scenario, Global Fund for Children (GFC) created the initiative **Weaving Climate Solutions**, guided by two main principles: 1–Strengthening young people’s autonomy and 2–Centering their voices and realities. We do that by supporting Brazilian young leaders’ activism and participation in strategic climate spaces, and by listening to their voices through a collaborative mapping process that gathers data and narratives about their diverse challenges, demands, and realities. The data collected through this mapping is the bridge between what young people are already building and what philanthropy and public policies need to do to support them to expand their autonomy, ancestry, diversity, and presence in decision-making spaces.

In this publication, we have gathered the main findings of this collective listening to what young people believe the role of philanthropy in the fight for climate justice is. May the voices here echo and transform into concrete actions, ensuring that diverse youth in Brazil and the world—especially Indigenous, Quilombola, and other traditional communities, as well as Black and peripheral youth—have their knowledges respected and valued, unbureaucratic access to resources, and effective participation in strategic climate spaces.



Nothing about young people without young people: Methodology that speaks to our way of doing things

The research on young climate leaders' needs and perspectives on philanthropy's responsibility in the fight for justice was developed as a participatory process, through active listening and knowledge exchange with young people who are working for advancing climate justice in different regions of Brazil.

This mapping process was designed based on the principle that young people are not only sources of data, but political subjects who also produce knowledge. GFC sought to create a space for youth-led collectives, organizations, and movements to share their experiences, challenges, and solutions for tackling environmental racism and protecting their territories, as well as gathering their viewpoints on types of support and needs that speak to philanthropy's role in addressing climate injustices and historical reparation. Therefore, this research combined three complementary methodologies, that enabled a plural, participatory and co-authoring process:



1. Virtual Survey

- Data collection through a virtual survey that had 49 questions organized into thematic sections: general information about the group responding to the survey; climate action strategies; main challenges faced by the group in their work and fundraising; priorities for their territories; and types of support required from philanthropy.
- Open to all youth-led groups, collectives or organizations working on the climate agenda to participate.
- Designed to be a democratic gateway, ensuring diverse perspectives and viewpoints in identifying both priorities and desired types of support from philanthropy.

In the survey, participants were able to indicate more than one option on questions related to types of support and urgent issues and priorities, acknowledging the complexity of young people's realities. On average, each person or collective mentioned two to three responses, which means that the percentages presented do not correspond to a single vote per group, but to the total number of responses that emerged throughout the process.

This method ensured that the different challenges and solutions identified by young people were faithfully recorded. Thus, the results presented reflect the frequency of the most cited answers.

2. Individual interviews

- Carried out with invited youth-led organizations and collectives, ensuring territorial and profile diversity.
- Allowed us in-depth conversations and reflections from young leaders, as well as sharing detailed experiences, personal stories, specific challenges and resistance strategies, reinforcing the **qualitative and affective dimension of the research**.
- Flexible approach that allowed respecting the time and form of expression of each group.

3. Optional Co-creation Spaces

- GFC held different moments of collective creation for all the young people participating in the different stages of the process.
- Virtual meetings for those who wanted to collaborate in the research strategy and design.
- Served as **collective laboratories**, in which ideas were collectively weaved and validated in a horizontal way.
- Respected the availability and autonomy of each group, while enhancing the diversity of viewpoints and strengthening trust bonds between young leaders.

Collective Creation of the Research's Narrative

This publication is not only the product of external analysis, but the result of **multiple voices**. Its content is based on young people's responses and experiences, as well as their feedback and ideas on how to present the data.

Principles that guided this research

- **Active listening**: each voice has value and deserves to be heard.
- **Plurality**: guarantee the voices of different biomes, contexts and identities of youth.
- **Accessibility**: multiple paths to expand participation and co-creation.
- **Autonomy and self-determination**: the collectives themselves know how they want to be represented.



Young people that were part of this weaving process



The mapping process carried out under GFC's **Weaving Climate Solutions** initiative received, between June and August 2025, a total of 40 responses from youth-led organizations and collectives from 17 states and the Federal District, representing all five regions of Brazil. Due to time and resource constraints, this is an initial research, which opens paths and raises important clues about the realities of climate young leaders in the country. More than statistics, the data exposes structural inequalities in Brazil that cross race, gender, territory and class. At the same time, they reveal historical activisms and paths of resistance built by diverse youth, whose voices cannot be ignored.

GFC hope to conduct another round of this mapping process, enabling more young voices from different territories and collectives, thereby increasing diversity and representativeness.

Socioeconomic conditions: young activists in a context of vulnerability

Regarding the socioeconomic situation of participants of the research, most of the people (61.9%) who are part of Brazilian climate organizations and collectives are in a low-income situation, living on up to two minimum wages per capita. In addition, 16.7% point out that their main form of livelihood is informality or self-employment, which speaks to the economic instability of young people. Only a small portion falls into the middle-income bracket.

This socioeconomic assessment shows that climate youth are not isolated from their territories: on the contrary, they share the same precarious conditions that mark the daily lives of urban peripheries and traditional communities. The fight for climate justice, therefore, is not abstract: **it is directly related to survival in a country marked by structural racism, regional inequality, and the absence of effective public policies.**



On the same note, about 84% of the young people that participated in this research do not have adequate access to basic services such as sanitation, food, housing, health and education. Only 16% said they live in adequate conditions, which confirms the seriousness of the inequalities faced in their daily lives.

These findings dialogue with already known national diagnoses. The **2021 Youth Atlas** publication shows that almost half of Brazilian youth are in informal work contracts and that **two out of five young people of working age are unemployed or in occupations that do not allow them to overcome poverty**. The Atlas also reinforces that this situation is even harsher for young black people, from the North and Northeast region of the country, as well as those with less education levels. Between 2014 and 2019, these groups had greater income losses — in some cases, twice the national average.

Education: barriers to school permanence and education continuity

Data collected through this mapping process shows that **almost all young participants (92.7%) had a formal schooling trajectory**. However, the level of education varies, revealing that **only 9.5% have completed higher education**, while **the majority have completed secondary education (35.7%)** or incomplete levels of education. This data reinforces that, even with educational expansion public policies, such as quotas and university access programs, Brazilian youth still face barriers to educational continuity. This is mainly due to the lack of financial resources or the need to reconcile studies with precarious work. It is an expression of educational racism in Brazil, where black and indigenous youth are pushed out of higher education.

The 2021 Youth Atlas shows that, although education access has increased, completion rates remain unequal: **76.8% for white young people against 61.8% for black and brown young**

people. The Atlas also shows that 20.2% of young people aged 14 to 29 have incomplete basic education (primary or secondary), most of them afro-descendent. According to the report **Vision of Engajamundo's Youth for the Development of Brazil (2021)**, even among those who manage to enter university, the lack of permanence policies, such as scholarships, housing, transportation, and food aid, remains as the main causes of education dropout. This scenario is aggravated by the recent dismantling of public policies aimed at youth. The national report **Where are the young people in Federal Public Policy? (2022)** points out that, although the Youth Statute (2013) recognizes education as a fundamental right, federal actions have prioritized professionalization and work above all, leaving areas such as education, health and diversity in the background. In addition, funding for youth has suffered significant cuts, in some cases by more than 80%, which further weakens the support needed to ensure that young people from black, indigenous, peripheral, and rural areas can remain in school and university.

Race, gender and leadership: the protagonism of black and indigenous women

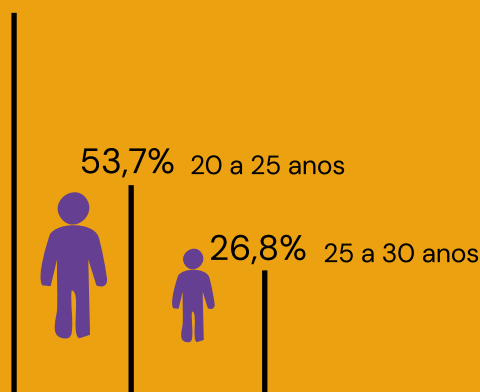


The racial profile of the organizations that were part of this research is **mostly black (39%) and brown (26.8%), followed by indigenous people (24.4%)**. Only 9.8% declared themselves white. This data is central: climate justice in Brazil is led by black and indigenous bodies, who suffer the most severe impacts of the socio-environmental crisis. The gender breakdown shows **a predominance of cis women (80.5%)**, followed by cis men (12.2%) and a minority of trans and non-binary people. More than a quantitative presence, there is a centrality of racialized female leaders: black (41.5%) and indigenous (34.1%) women are the ones who mainly occupy leadership positions in youth-led groups and organizations.

This data dismantles hegemonic narratives that often make invisible who are the real climate leaders in Brazil. Contrary to the images of male and white leaders in international spaces, those who are in the frontlines in Brazil are black and indigenous, young, and peripheral women. Their protagonism needs to be recognized not as an exception, but as a rule.

This contrast becomes even more evident in comparison to Brazil's private social investment index. The **GIFE 2022-2023 Census** shows that philanthropic organizations in Brazil have mostly white and male in their decision-making roles. In other words: **while the bases of the climate resistance are led by black and indigenous women, the top of the financing chain still reproduces historical inequalities of race and gender.** Recognizing this scenario is essential to reposition philanthropy as a partner and not as a maintainer of inequalities.

Age group: young adults between activism and livelihood



Most of the participants of this mapping process are aged 25 to 30 (53.7%), followed by those aged 20 to 25 (26.8%). These age groups reveal **young adults who are taking part in community and political action** but that **face the daily dilemma of ensuring their livelihood while maintaining their activism**. This data is central to thinking public policies that support young leadership: beyond investing in ‘professionalization’, policies need to ensure the material conditions for established leaders to continue mobilizing their communities and tackling injustices.

At the same time, the low presence of young people aged 15 to 20 among the respondents indicates how difficult it is for younger age groups to enter and remain in the climate action ecosystem. The barriers are multiple: from the lack of access to information to the absence of inclusive educational policies. The **2022 UNICEF report** shows that children and adolescents are already among the most affected by the climate crisis in Brazil, suffering from floods, droughts, food insecurity, and lack of sanitation, but they remain practically invisible in public policies and decision-making spaces.

This invisibility also appears in everyday life: a survey conducted by **Alana Institute in 2019** with children in different capitals revealed that many are not even able to name or describe their “paths” through the city, summarizing their experience in phrases such as “there is nothing on the way”. This territorial void is an expression of an urban model that denies children’s belonging and participation, reinforcing their exclusion from the climate debate.

Therefore, it’s not only a matter of recognizing the protagonism of young adults in the climate action, but understanding the chain of silencing that crosses childhood, adolescence and youth in Brazil. As Delma Neves (2006) reminds us, **poor young people have historically been treated by philanthropy and the State as a “problem” to be corrected, not as political subjects**. This helps us understand why children and adolescents are still excluded or overlooked by social movements and climate policies. It is urgent, therefore, that philanthropy, public policies and civil society eliminate an adult-centric logic, guaranteeing both conditions of permanence for youth leadership, as well as mechanisms for the inclusion of younger age groups, who have the right to exist and be part of the decisions that impact their present and future.



Sexual diversity: plurality made invisible



Regarding the sexual diversity of the respondents, 65% has identified themselves as heterosexual, and 35% declared themselves as LGBTQIAPN+, including lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual. These data reinforce that climate justice in Brazil is also built from the plurality of sexual and gender identities, and that there is no real justice without defending sexual and reproductive rights and confronting LGBTphobia.

“The [...], being a trans woman, has suffered transphobia several times in climate environments [...] [people] not respecting her leadership because she is a trans woman, or not listening to what she is saying.”

– Interview participant, Amazon state

Addressing climate issues is also about gender and sexuality. LGBTQIAPN+ youth are among the most impacted by socioenvironmental crisis because they live with multiple vulnerabilities: greater risk of violence and discrimination, job and livelihood insecurity, and difficulty in accessing health services, housing and education. The 2023 report from the **Observatory of LGBTI+ Violent Deaths** points out that one LGBTQIAPN+ person murder occurs every 38 hours in Brazil, while the 2022 **GPPD/UERJ study** shows that 80% of Brazilian states have bills that goes against the rights of this population, some of which have already been enacted.

This context adds to global inequalities. The **Global Resources Report (2021–2022)** shows that only **32% of global funding for LGBTQIAPN+ populations reaches the so-called Global South and East** — regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific (except Australia/New Zealand), and Eastern and Central Europe. Precisely where the challenges are toughest, there is less support from philanthropy.

Recognizing this contradiction is fundamental. While LGBTQIAPN+ youth are on the front lines of the climate action in Brazil and other territories in the Global South, their voices remain invisible and underfunded. It is urgent that philanthropy and public policies reposition themselves as real allies, ensuring that this diversity is not erased, but strengthened as a central part of climate justice.

Climate youth between dream and structure: What enhances and what stands in the way of action



To Remain is to Resist: Ways of Life in Defense of the Land and Memory

Social movements in Brazil have supported for decades the fight for rights, dignity and democracy, especially in territories where the State has never guaranteed a protective presence. Since the women's rights movements, as well as rural, working class, black, and student movements of the twentieth century, these popular mobilizations have been the basis of the social transformation that have shaped Brazilian society. The climate agenda, therefore, is not recent or new: it is intertwined in this same history of resistance and community-organization that has always defied the country's structural inequalities. The impacts of the climate crisis not only threaten natural ecosystems, but **the ways of life, livelihoods, cultural expressions, traditions, and the right to memory** of the populations that inhabit these territories. The climate fight, therefore, is intersectional and inseparable from the fight for human dignity. This perception appears in a striking way in the data collected by this mapping process: **53% of the collectives work with climate justice and 22% with confronting environmental racism.**

"The climate fight is rooted in the defense of life, the land, culture and ancestry. (...) Fighting for the climate is, first and foremost, fighting for the permanence of our ways of life."

– Survey participant, Bahia state



“The struggle for climate and social justice is, above all, an affirmation of existence, power and autonomy.”

– Survey participant, Amazonas state



The racial and gender data observed in this mapping reinforces the **role of young people from indigenous, quilombola, black, peripheral and other traditional communities** in the construction of climate justice in Brazil. This dialogues directly with the mobilization and collective action from the territories that suffer the most from the impacts of climate change. These young people are not only “part” of the mobilization: they are continuing a historical legacy of popular resistance. The same way social movements have for decades transformed exclusion into citizenship and complaints into public policy, the young leaders of today are fighting in defense of the land, their ways of life and their own bodies.



“We don’t come from a university group or from people who have been activists for a while and found an organization together, it’s a natural process of activism by necessity.”

– Survey participant, Pará state

This link between past and present is also expressed in the main action strategies used by the responding collectives, with 56% working with education, awareness and culture, and 49% with social mobilization and engagement. Other strategies that are strongly present are environmental and/or popular education (34%), defense of territories (29%) and climate communication and mobilization (19%). This data shows that **popular mobilization and liberating education continue to be central instruments of social transformation**. Social movements have a formative and educational role, as they raise critical awareness and strengthen the political action of individuals. From this perspective, education becomes a central axis of resistance and transformation, through which young people build practices of collective care and popular power.





“Real transformation is built by many hands, from the ground”

– Survey participant, Rio de Janeiro state

In addition, it is evident that young people recognize that change also needs to be **structural and systemic**. Political advocacy appears to be one of their main strategies of action, with **44% of the collectives** prioritizing this work strategy. This shows that young people are not only occupying decision-making spaces but **disputing narratives and influencing public policies**.

This holistic and systemic action, that starts from the territories and reaches the public sphere, reveals that the climate fight in Brazil is part of an **insurgent political tradition**: a struggle that comes from *quilombos*, rural, peripheries, riverine and urban communities. Therefore, fighting for the climate is fighting for **the permanence of life**, for autonomy and for the right to exist with dignity.

Financial autonomy to guarantee the autonomy of communities

The data collected by this mapping process validates what has been discussed by the social ecosystem for a long time: young people continue to face barriers to access financial resources and opportunities to strengthen their institutional processes and technical skills.

The main challenges faced by the young respondents to this mapping are the lack of financial resources to carry out their actions/projects (85%), the lack of resources to pay staff and/or administrative costs (37%), and the bureaucracy to access calls for proposals (29%). This data reinforces the existence of a **funding gap for youth collectives in Brazil**. Alongside, young people have spoken on the role they believe philanthropy needs to play in the fight for climate justice: **providing non-bureaucratical and flexible funding (73%), followed by influencing other funders to adopt more humane and decolonial funding practices (34%)**.



“Our organizations don’t last 12 months. They last much longer. But philanthropy imposes this short [funding] period and then disappears.”

– Interview participant, Amazon state



For Brazilian youth, access to funding and the guarantee of financial autonomy of their collectives are directly related to the **autonomy of their communities and the respect of local knowledge**. Factors such as discredit and distrust, silencing, discrimination and prejudice are some of the violent existing practices of philanthropy shared by the young people participating in this mapping. This reinforces unequal and colonial relations within the sector. Nevertheless, even in the face of limitations and structural barriers to accessing resources and participating in decision-making spaces, young people continue to act, fight and resist in the face of the country's historical and structural inequalities.

“In our territory, many young people are already developing concrete actions to coexist with the semi-arid region and adapt to climate change, even without recognition or access to specific funding.”

– Survey participant, Bahia state

It is important to note that although the lack of financial resources is a generalized barrier young people in Brazil face, the historical invisibility of the North and Northeast regions of the country is also reflected with regard to access to investments. According to the survey conducted by Rede Comuá in 2024, **“Social movements and philanthropy in Brazil”**, most private social investments in Brazil are concentrated in territories with socioeconomic specificities and in the vicinity of the headquarters of donor companies, predominantly in the Southeast region.

Another important reflection on this matter is that **in the context of financial scarcity, institutional and individual maintenance and strengthening are kept in the background**. This contributes to inequality scenarios, making it impossible for communities and groups to have autonomy and guarantee their wellbeing. This scenario is shown in the lower scores regarding young people's priority demands on institutional support for management and governance (10%), communication and visibility (7%), and support for physical, mental and emotional health (7%).

Besides resisting to maintain their groups and collectives, the lack of financial resources has a direct impact on the living and wellbeing conditions of young activists, as they are also fighting for their own subsistence. As reiterated in the report **Social movements and philanthropy (2024)**, these data and insights show the central role of minority groups in the maintenance and existence of their movements and initiatives, while highlighting the precarious conditions that activists experience throughout the country.

“Many of us, young people, work directly in our territories developing projects, mobilizing the community, communicating the cause, and we still need to do multiple functions in our professional life to ensure the minimum for our subsistence. It's extremely tiring.”

– Survey participant, Bahia state

The demand for direct, flexible and unbureaucratic financial support (71%) and support for activism and direct actions (22%) remain predominant by the responding collectives. Nevertheless, demands from young people on other forms of support also indicate **alternative approaches for a more meaningful, equitable and fair relationship between funders and grantees**. They include technical or political training (22%), support

for knowledge exchanges and collaboration between territories (19%), and support for mobility and other costs related to participation in events (19%). These responses are also related to young people's demand for a philanthropy that actively seeks opportunities for their grantees to participate in conferences/events (29%), and that facilitates the creation of collective learning networks (17%).

The data collected through this mapping process indicates how access to financial resources and other types of support from philanthropy can be definitive in guaranteeing the autonomy of youth-led groups and movements that are tackling social and environmental injustices. The **philanthropic ecosystem has a responsibility to create mechanisms and practices that ensure that money and tools reach the territories**. Therefore, guaranteeing a dignified life for the people who challenge social, economic and environmental inequalities in Brazil, and supporting communities in the creation of climate solutions.

Young people and territories at the center of the debate to enhance climate solutions



The motto “nothing about us, without us” – widely used in the fight for the rights of people with disabilities – points out that true social transformation is made with dialogue, the appreciation of people's knowledge and active representative participation. Young people from traditional, black, peripheral and rural communities are not only beneficiaries or vulnerable to the consequences of the climate crisis. They have rights and capacity to create systemic change. The qualified participation of diverse youth and communities in the climate discussion and decision-making spaces ensures that the agenda is not treated in an elitist way, but connected to the experiences and wisdom of those who are in the territories.

Young people are increasingly occupying formal spaces of discussion and decision-making, disputing narratives, bringing their perspectives and realities to the center of the debate, and fighting to ensure that public policies are not created from the top down. This claim for their fundamental rights of participation is reinforced by the data collected by this research. The majority (56%) of the youth-led groups have already participated in climate spaces and conferences at the municipal level, 48% in national spaces and 36% in international conferences.

“We’re not asking for permission to exist — we’re rightfully occupying our spaces.”

Survey participant, Amazonas state

Despite the significant presence of young people in these strategic climate spaces, they generally remain limited and biased by adult-centric postures, with romanticized, idealized, hegemonic and tokenistic views of youth. Aspects such as academicism, elitism and technical language – usually present in these spaces – are some of the barriers named by young people regarding their effective participation, distancing young people and territories from the discussions. Other factors such as language, logistical and financial barriers, insecurity, fear of retaliation, discrimination and symbolism also negatively impact the access and qualified participation of these diverse voices in events and spaces that are debating the climate agenda.

“Youth cannot be treated as ‘decorative representations’ of a climate commitment that has already been decided by others, nor as a tool to legitimize agendas that they do not control.”

– Survey participant, Pará state

Even so, the data collected by this mapping shows that there is a large majority (49%) of young people who say they feel comfortable participating in discussion and decision-making climate spaces, compared to 32% who say it depends on the context, and 7% who say they do not feel safe or comfortable in these spaces. By crossing these data with the personal experience these young people face, it is possible to draw a parallel between personal proximity to the climate agenda and the security to talk about the topic. The data show that **46% of the young people participating in this mapping process have already directly experienced a climate event and 26% had their community directly affected. Also, 29% of respondents are affected daily by some extreme weather event.** These realities reinforce the protagonism of those who feel and directly face the impacts of environmental racism in the creation of alternative futures, demanding what is rightfully theirs: participation in the discussions and decisions that directly impact their lives, communities and territories.



Young people's demand for respectful spaces where people can truly be heard, representing the different communities and realities that exist in Brazil, is the basis for effective and thoughtful participation. In addition to listening to their voices, they must be part of the discussions and integrate the decision-making processes. The importance of plural, horizontal, and intergenerational debate is brought by young people as a **starting point for breaking cycles of silence and underrepresentation**, and for these discussion spaces to also be seen as spaces for effective change.

“When black, peripheral, indigenous, quilombola youth occupy these places, they break with the logic of exclusion and invisibility. We show that the future is built with social and environmental justice at the same time — and that without our voice, no decision is truly fair or complete.”

– Survey participant, Rio de Janeiro state

It is important to emphasize that the debate on representativeness is marked by a historical erasure of the North and Northeast regions of Brazil in the climate spaces, as well as in access to funding. As pointed out by Iniciativa PIPA's report **Participatory Financing: An Equitable Form of Giving (2025)**, participation without equity can mean power maintenance, and “participation needs to be structured to minimize historical inequalities, this implies recognizing that certain voices need to be prioritized, amplified, and positioned at the center of decision-making.”

“Expanding the effective participation of young people in climate discussion spaces requires going beyond mere symbolic presence. It is necessary to guarantee concrete conditions so that youth from traditional territories, such as quilombolas, indigenous and rural communities, can be in these spaces with a voice, autonomy and recognition.”

– Survey participant, Bahia state

While representing the plurality of voices and realities is crucial in formal discussion and decision-making spaces, it is also important to reiterate the need to decentralize the debate. Creating spaces for listening and discussion within their own territories, where young people feel they belong and are empowered to speak from their own experiences, is essential to **territorializing the climate agenda and bridging the gap between discourse and everyday life**.

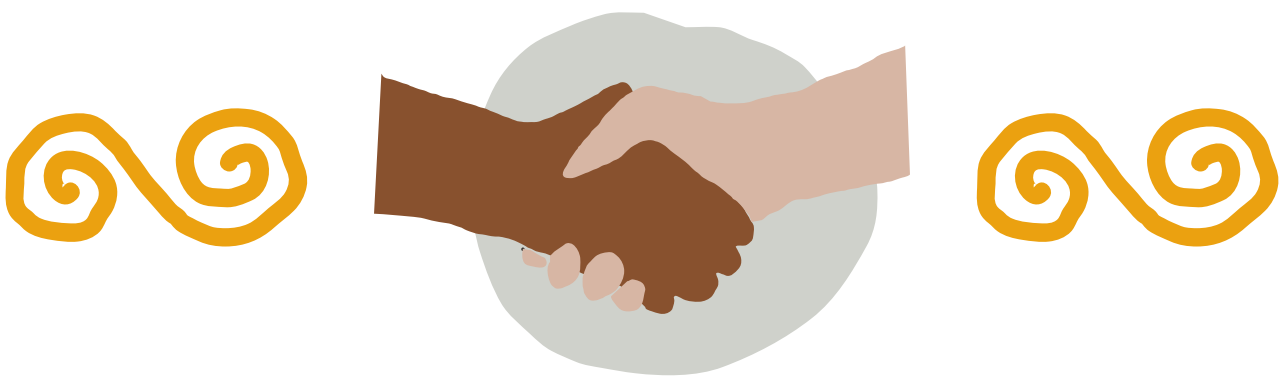
By recognizing young people as political actors and changemakers, we open space for collaboration based on trust. This is directly related to young people's demand for targeted support for qualified participation, respecting their pace and potential, and strengthening their capacities.



Some examples of how philanthropy can support qualified youth participation shared by the co-authors of this research are:

- Ongoing political and technical training.
- Prior access to information on the agendas and/or topics to be discussed at the event.
- Translation of technical terms.
- Support for studying and improving communication skills in English.
- Financial support for travel and accommodation.
- Support to ensure young people's safety when attending events and conferences.
- Guaranteed internet access.
- Valuing territorial knowledge and including methodologies that dialogue with local realities.
- Promote intergenerational exchanges by bringing young and elders together so that voices in the climate debate represent both innovation and ancestry.
- Recognize and fund community communication as a diverse participation strategy, valuing the use of radio, social media, audiovisual and art to circulate plural narratives.

Philanthropy can be an ally in ensuring that the climate debate centers the voices, knowledge, and priorities of young people and territories, thereby supporting climate solutions from the bottom up and reducing the country's historical inequalities.



Alliance and Co-responsibility: the role of philanthropy in the fight for climate justice



The evidence gathered during this research **highlights the fundamental role young people have in fighting for rights and advancing the climate agenda**. Young people across Brazil – and the world – are challenging social norms to claim their role as protagonists of their own futures and realities. They are leading the creation of climate adaptation and mitigation solutions based on the combination of ancestral knowledge, technological innovation, cultural creativity and a deep commitment to the conservation of their ecosystems. They use **their territories as a place of learning and collective care**, and use popular technologies, art, culture, and sport as strategies of mobilization, communication, and awareness. They can translate the complexity of the climate crisis **without academicism**, but with **living, accessible, and engaging language**.

Likewise, this mapping process also reinforces historical protagonism in the fight for social transformation. It shows that the construction of alternative futures is led by the same people that most feel and face the impacts of environmental racism, exposing Brazil's structural inequalities that cross race, gender, territory, and class. Youth from indigenous, *quilombola*, extractivist, black, peripheral, and LGBTQIAP+ communities continue to resist from the margins against the impacts of a system that places them as 'vulnerable'. Not because of their fragility, but because of imposed violence. They claim for their fundamental rights and for the protection of their lives and communities.

Access to finance is not an operational detail, but a matter of power. In a country where the economic system prioritizes accumulation over historical reparation, access to financial resources becomes a **condition of existence and resistance** for youth collectives. However, the data collected by the Weaving Climate Solutions mapping on the gaps and barriers faced mainly by groups from traditional, Black and peripheral

communities to access private social financing, shows us that the difficulty lies not in their capacity, but in the **structures that insist on keeping them on the margins**. This reality shows the **asymmetrical power dynamics still present in global philanthropy, based on adult-centric and colonial logics and biases**. Funders often decide who is “eligible” to receive resources based on criteria that do not recognize other forms of organization, orality, spirituality and care as legitimate operating and planning practices. Despite their immense potential for creating change, young people face excessive bureaucracy requirements from funders, calls for proposals written in inaccessible languages, institutional demands incompatible with their realities, and constant distrust of their ability to manage resources. Most of the time, **the problem is not the lack of skills or expertise from young people to access resources, but a lack of those who recognize them as legitimate or capable**.



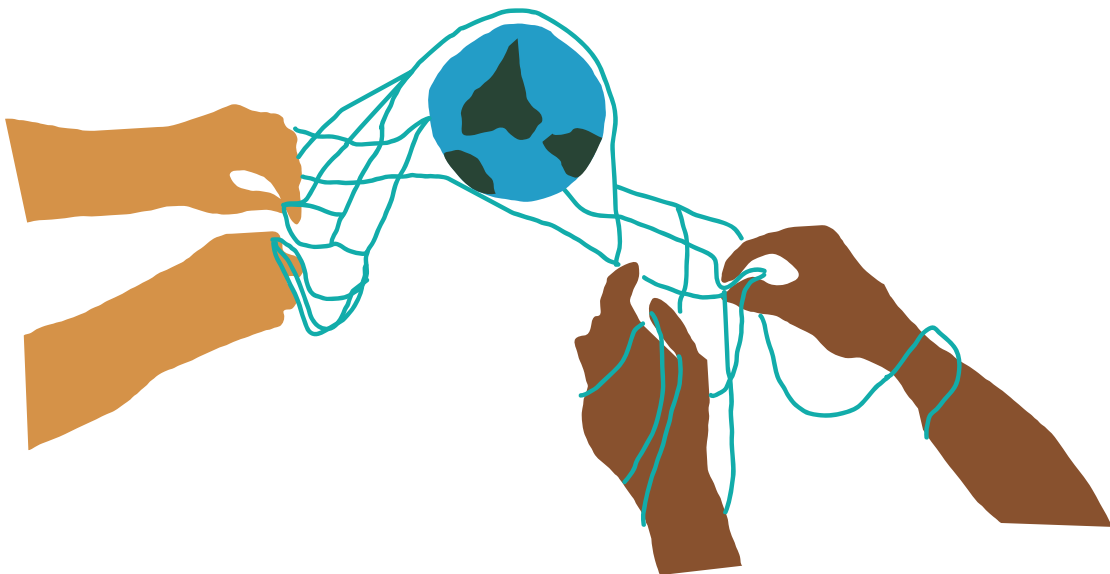
Even so, youth-led groups continue to resist and build solutions with almost nothing. They resort to self-financing, the sale of raffles, community donations or events, and other strategies for collective survival. Beyond the romanticized view that these groups can accomplish great things with little, this resistance has individual and institutional costs. Physical and mental exhaustion, impossibility of maintaining paid staff, lack of resources to pay for transportation, food or purchase tech equipment are just some of the obstacles that impact the continuity of their work. These structures impose precarious conditions on the capacity of young people to dedicate, advocate and remain in the climate fight. Due to this reality, we affirm that **philanthropy cannot remain neutral**. Young people are already taking action and building new possibilities that sustain life and prevent the sky from falling on us, as indigenous thinkers Ailton Krenak and Davi Kopenawa teach². **Investing in them is a political commitment to climate justice and historical reparation.**

2 Reference to indigenous thinkers Ailton Krenak (Ideas to Postpone the End of the World) and Davi Kopenawa (The Fall of the Sky), who remind us that, without the protection of the forest and the people who defend it, the sky could literally fall on us all.

It is crucial that philanthropy positions itself as a true ally to young people and committed to climate justice. This implies in the creation of mechanisms to **democratize and debureaucratize access to resources**, ensuring that the historically most affected groups have the conditions to exist and expand their action. An allied philanthropy embraces the responsibility to understand the diversity and the multiple realities of Brazilian youth, as well as the concrete barriers that are intersectional to their fight for environmental, racial, and social justice. This means not only recognizing the current context and issues, but **rethinking strategies and structures with political intentionality**, understanding that neutrality also reproduces inequality.

In addition to financial resources, being an ally implies **decentralizing and sharing power**, allowing young people themselves to define priorities, languages and work rhythms. It means promoting capacity strengthening according to the existing knowledge and paces of each territory, recognizing that autonomy is built with trust, not with guardianship.

Being an allied philanthropy is putting money, influence and infrastructure into the service of life. It is supporting the work of those who are already creating local climate solutions, not as beneficiaries, but as authors of a more just and equitable future.



To change courses and support the creation of these possible futures, **philanthropy needs to listen humbly, analyze critically, and courageously review its own practices**, recognizing that many of them still reproduce inequalities under the guise of support. It is necessary to build, collectively and equitably, funding practices and mechanisms to share the power and guarantee popular sovereignty and dignified conditions of permanence to the groups that are already creating transformation.

More than fulfilling an institutional function, **global philanthropy needs to recognize its biases, name the colonial structures it still sustains, and assume its co-responsibility in the fight for climate justice, not as a trend, but as a political position.**

It is not a matter of finding a perfect funding or support model. **There is no single approach, and that is precisely the strength of young people's action.** Youth are advocating for collaboration, respectful listening, and honest power-sharing with those who already sustain and lead transformation. **Only then will we be able to build more just, vibrant and resilient present and future.**

From Listening to Action: Youth voices on types of support that respect their autonomy and knowledge

1. Funders need to act as partners, not controllers!
2. Building a horizontal relationship, based on mutual trust and active listening.
3. Having transparent and open communication with grantees, with clarity about interests, limits and expectations.
4. Guaranteeing active participation of young people in the design of financing initiatives.
5. Providing flexible and time-sensitive resources that allow for careful planning, stability, and response to local emergencies or changing contexts.
6. Offering direct funding to communities and territories, without bureaucratic intermediaries.
7. Less paperwork! An ally funder guarantees simplified accountability and reporting requirements, compatible with the reality and logistical nuances of grassroots groups and avoiding barriers that exclude or weaken youth collectives.
8. Allowing constructive and non-bureaucratic reports: impact is measured by the group's autonomy, advocacy and mobilization capacity, and the connection of young people with their territories and causes.
9. Respecting the autonomy of groups and the knowledge of territories: priorities and strategies come from the group itself, not from external demands.
10. Trusting in the collective decisions of youth and local leaders.
11. Respecting the rhythms and paces of communities and

territory.

12. Providing funds to fairly pay activists and mobilizers, so they can dedicate their time fully to the cause.

13. Supporting institutional strengthening! Create spaces for training, mentoring and exchanges that strengthen capacities, without imposing external solutions or models.

14. Supporting the care and wellbeing of activists, including strategies that promote emotional balance, mental health, that addresses ecoanxiety and the appreciation of community and family ties.

15. Providing legal advice and technical and financial support for activist security.

16. Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity: production of multilingual content that respects ancestral knowledge.

17. Encouraging the construction of alliances and networks with other territories and movements.

18. Supporting institutional visibility and political articulation.

19. Supporting and/or funds young people's access to political training and English lessons to increase and strengthen participation in climate discussion and decision-making spaces.

20. Funding internet access, technical equipment and other resources that are essential to deliver our work.

21. Understanding that communication is also part of social transformation: specific resources are needed for popular communication strategies and campaigns.



We invite funders to continue to reflect, listen, and collectively create other elements that can enhance their relationships with their grantees, as well as ensure the autonomy of the people and communities that are leading change!



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