



YOUTH NEEDS FOR CLIMATE FINANCE



Photo Credit: Global Youth Summit, YOUNGO

MAY 2022



In collaboration with GYCAF

About YOUNGO

YOUNGO is the official youth constituency of UNFCCC with a membership of over 1000+ youth organisations / NGOs and 10,000+ individuals. YOUNGO is organized into different Working Groups that focus on different aspects of the UNFCCC negotiations and beyond, and work to ensure that the perspectives of young and future generations are taken into account in the international decision-making processes. Besides that, YOUNGO members observe and report on climate negotiations and the implications of their outcomes.

YOUNGO Finance & Markets Working Group

- Represent youth voices in UNFCCC processes on matters related to climate finance and carbon markets.
- Advocate for Youth inclusion in decision making related to the topics we cover.
- Advocate to scale up and improve access to climate finance for Youth.

In terms of content, we cover

- All agenda items under the Paris Agreement related to climate finance and carbon markets (e.g Article 2.1c, 9.5, 6);
- More broadly any (innovative) approaches to scale up finance for climate mitigation and adaptation actions/projects that are youth-led or beneficial to youth.

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Contact: climatefinance@youngoclimate.org

About GYCAF

The Global Youth Climate Action Fund (GYCAF) is the first of its kind climate fund dedicated to financing youth-led climate action in developing countries, being the hardest hit by the impacts of climate change. The idea for the fund was birthed at COP25 and developed over a three months consultation period that involved holding virtual dialogues with finance experts to understand the need for a vehicle that supports and champions youth-led climate action. It is hosted by BLI Global.

Our goal is to raise over 100 billion dollars in funding by 2030 to be directly deployed to youth-led organizations and activists taking action on the ground for the climate in different parts of the world. We are cultivating a network of impact-driven youth projects that engage communities towards taking immediate climate action at the grassroots.

Authors

Karishma ANSARAM : 2021 Present Contact Point of YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group

Agathe JEAN-ALEXIS : 2021 Contact Point of YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group

Sheen TYAGI : 2022 Project Director of YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group

Other Contributors:

Maria Horne - GYCAF

Dolphine Magero- YOUNGO

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report represent those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of YOUNGO nor GYCAF. The report is intended to promote discussion and to provide public access to results emerging from our work.

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Executive Summary

Climate Finance has received unprecedented attention on a global level during the last few years. Yet, youth as a beneficiary of climate finance has not benefited from this momentum.

In light of the foregoing, YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group has engaged in a research project to identify the needs of young people for climate finance and the limitations in accessing it. This first report confirms the limited awareness and capacity of youth in accessing climate finance and the absence of large-scale initiatives to include this stakeholder group in decision-making and as financing beneficiaries.

YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group is currently working on a second report identifying and mapping out the existing climate finance sources dedicated to youth.

In our study, we investigate the need for climate finance by youth. By so doing, we are able to provide a precise picture of the motivation, demand and status quo of youth needs for climate finance. Those objectives are achieved through a survey run amongst the youths (~75 responses) and in-depth interviews (~25 interviews) of the board members/founders of youth-led organisations engaged in climate actions.

The overarching highlights of the report are as follows :

- There is a need to define climate finance and standardise the processes to access climate finance.
 - Climate finance being accessed by youth is still skewed towards grants. Innovative climate finance instruments should be introduced to foster climate actions by youth.
 - Youth are calling out for increasing participation in decision making towards climate financing.
 - The above should be coupled with capacity building and awareness such that youth can bring forward viable projects to access climate finance.
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BACKGROUND

Climate Change now is considered an intergenerational equity issue i.e the current young generation will face the wrath and bear the cost of climate change in the upcoming future (Benkestein et al. 2020). The world is home to 1.8 billion young people aged between 10 to 24 years old, thereby being the largest generation of youth in history (UN, 2022). Despite being the main stakeholder being impacted by climate change, the youth is often excluded from the decision process and policymaking.

Youth activism/Youth-led advocacy in the international climate negotiations arena has significantly developed in the past years gaining much attention and participation. The year 2021 saw the introduction of a Pre COP26¹ event in Milan, Italy to garner the youth voices on climate matters and for the past 10 years, the Conference of Youth (COY)² is held on the eve of the Conference of Parties (COP)³ whereby the youths young people from all around the world come up with key asks and demands towards climate negotiations.



Photo Credit: Global Youth Summit, YOUNGO

A study by Hanley (2020) even postulates that youth activist Greta Thunberg influenced the energy investors' decisions through advocacy and lobbying. Another study by Cumiskey et al. (2015) highlights the effectiveness of youth participation in Disaster Risk Reduction conferences and how they have been able to influence the decisions. International movements such as Earth Uprising,⁴ Extinction Rebellion,⁵ and Fridays for Future⁶ have fuelled climate advocacy being carried out by youths. Youth movements have also transcended to reach the greater community through networks in schools and universities. It is high time that policy spaces and platforms need to make provision for consultative and deliberative processes that include and value the diverse views of young people. Governments need to make a conscious and concerted effort toward attaining generational equity. The UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide⁷ has defined advocacy as 'Advocacy is about doing something to support, recommend, or implement actions linked to an idea or cause you care about. Advocacy is also about making voices heard, as often the ideas or practices we want to change affect the most vulnerable people in society. Advocacy uses this collective voice to defend and protect rights, or to support different initiatives or causes.' Similarly, in this study, we are capturing the voices of youths about their access to climate finance.

¹ <https://ukcop26.org/pre-cop/pre-cop-milan/>

² <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-and-youth/youngcoy>

³ <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>

⁴ <https://earthuprising.org/>

⁵ <https://rebellion.global/>

⁶ <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

⁷ <https://www.voicesofyouth.org/tools-resources/youth-advocacy-guide>

As the youth movement continues to grow, it is also important to study their access to financing for climate actions. Climate finance has been tagged as ‘the elephant of the room on the climate agenda by countries’- Chatham House. Inclusive climate finance access remains elusive globally. Similarly, youths have not lagged behind in terms of advocating for scaling and making climate finance more inclusive.

The Global Youth Statement⁸ produced as an outcome of COY16 had a dedicated section on climate finance and markets whilst being backed by more than 40,000 youths around the world. Another video by Bashal and Wilson (2021) portraying the youth advocacy in the lead-up to COP26 showcases the prioritization of climate finance as one of the key asks by youth. Those advocacies were molded into a new facility for loss and damage and increase in adaptation finance, inclusive decision making, and access to finance by vulnerable groups such as women, indigenous people, youths, and people of color. Benkenstein et al. (2020) highlighted one key gap in climate advocacy.

⁸ <https://ukcoy16.org/global-youth-statement>

Photo Credit: Middle East and North Africa Climate Week, 2022, YOUNGO



Currently, the knowledge and capacity of youths to engage in advocacy to improve access to climate finance for this group is weak. There is a disconnection between the work of scientists, policymakers, fund providers, and young community leaders acting on a grassroots level (Bohman, 2007, Barry, 2012 and Bandura and Cherry, 2020). This relates to how funds being provided for climate action are accessed and utilized by the youths as well as the question of how the processes and uptake to access climate finance can be enhanced by including youth perspectives. Decision-makers are often too distant from the knowledge production process. This study is one of the very first mapping the accessibility and availability of climate finance for youths.

Against this backdrop, the following consultation questions were investigated in this study:

- 1. To what extent are youth aware of climate finance?**
- 2. How does youth access climate finance?**
- 3. How can climate finance be scaled for youth?**
- 4. What are the challenges that youth are facing to access climate finance?**

METHODOLOGY



Data Collection

A survey was developed by members of YOUNGO Finance & Markets Working Group and shared amongst YOUNGO and GYCAF network whereby around 100 responses from board members of youth organizations were gathered.

Short online and in-person interviews to expand our understanding were conducted. The criteria to select the interview participants was their involvement in climate youth-led initiatives as a board member, founder, or project leader.

Given the disparity in the range of age for youth by different international organizations, we stuck to that of 18 to 30 as per the official youth constituency of the UNFCCC. Youth as a demographic category includes and conceals a diversity of beliefs, values, worldviews, and expectations about the future, as well as different senses of agency and responsibility.

The interviews and survey took place between 11th October to 5th November 2021. Participants were primarily recruited through the Pre COP26 Youth4Climate Summit, whereby two youths from each country participated in. Additionally, an invitation to participate in the interview was posted on diverse youth-led groups on climate change.

A small number of participants were also reached out through snowballing method, especially for those in Latin America for whom the project team faced difficulties due to the language barrier. Snowballing helped to identify potential youth activists that could speak English.

The interviews and survey aimed to get further insight on youth accessing climate finance and what should be done to scale the same. The questions asked were governed under key thematic areas:

- **Awareness of Climate Finance:** First we captured the awareness of climate finance and the definition that youths attribute to the latter. The questions also help to portray the characteristics of climate finance as well as the participation of youth in decision-making. Several countries are lobbying to harmonize the definition of climate finance to increase its transparency and accountability of it. Thus, structuring the youths' perspective on climate finance is a significant contribution to decision-making.
- **Accessing and Scaling Climate Finance:** The questions governing this section mostly appraised the type of funding that youth-led initiatives can access from the climate funds. Annual figures highlight increases in climate finance, however, the nexus between the increase and its accessibility by youths should be mapped.



Participant Statistics

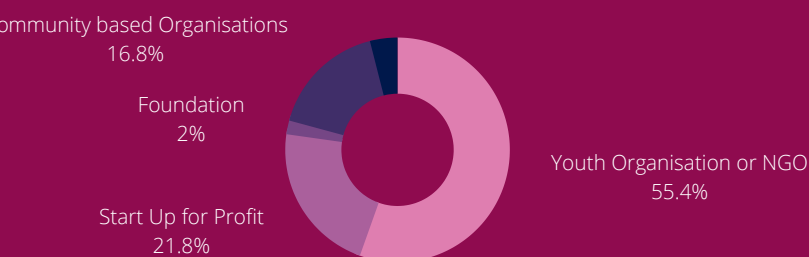


Figure 1 - Types of organisations the participants belong to

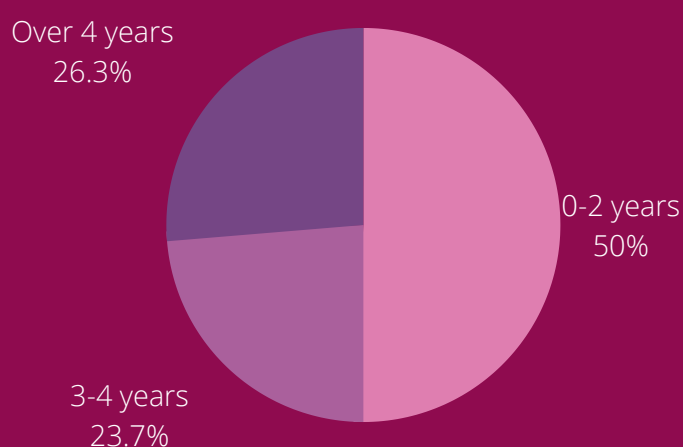


Figure 3- Types of organisations the participants belong to

Data Analysis

The Atlast.Ti platform has been used to analyze and code the data. It helps researchers analyze unstructured data like text. The program also provides tools that assist the researcher to locate, code, and explain findings. Codification permitted us to identify a list of questions and issues as well as the links among them.

After the interviews were transcribed and the analyses of the data could commence, the data was coded and further analyzed for reoccurring themes and patterns. Coding of the transcribed data, a technique to reduce data, was used to reduce a large number of individual responses to a few general categories and themes of answers (Zikmund and Babin, 2010). After segmenting the data and identifying themes and patterns, the data were reassembled to draw appropriate conclusions and recommendations.

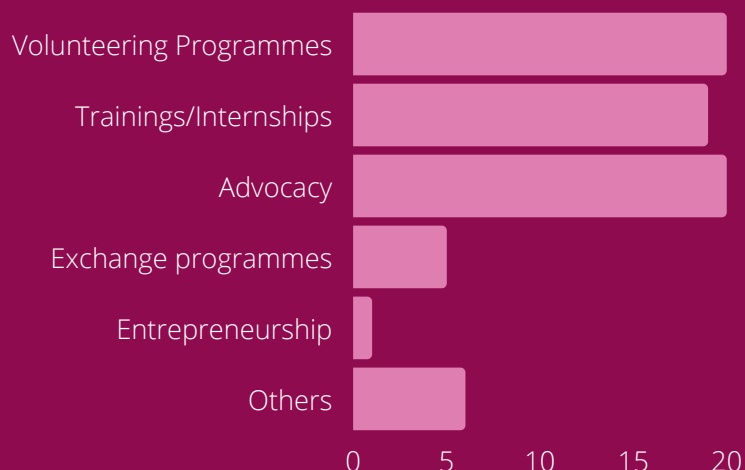


Figure 2 - Types of activities organised by the organisation

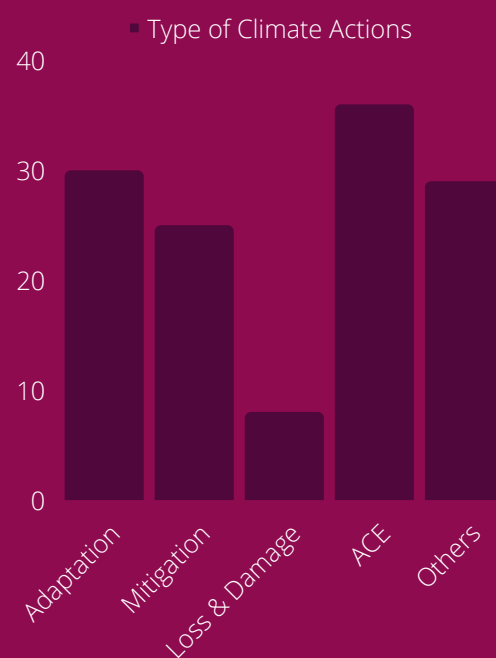


Figure 4 - Type of climate action being addressed by the organisation

Data Control and Trustworthiness

The reliability of the information provided is also an issue; data is reliable when different researchers arrive at the same conclusions and when different sources of information on the same topic corroborate each other. Therefore, we intend to use data triangulation (interviews and external documents especially youth statements before COPs) to compare the data and the emerging findings.

EMERGING FINDINGS



Photo Credit: Rio+20 Youth, 2012, YOUNGO

Definition of Climate Finance

Internationally, there is no agreed definition of climate finance (Brown et al. 2010 and Nakooda et al. 2015). According to Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Climate Finance refers to the financial resources mobilized to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The latter refers mainly to the pledge made by developed countries in 2009 during the Copenhagen Accord to deliver USD 30 billion between 2010 and 2012 whilst was later upscaled to a USD 100 billion per year commitment by 2020. Falconer and Stadelmann (2014) from Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) pointed out that Policymakers, investors, financial intermediaries, and analysts do not always have the same understanding of key climate finance terms and concepts which makes it difficult to track.

According to CPI, climate finance refers to public and private investment costs plus public framework expenditures but excludes revenue support. Roberts and Weikmans (2017) studied the climate finance definition in the Paris Agreement negotiations. It showcased that the definition and measurement of climate finance by several countries differ. Article 2.1 of the Paris Agreement, 'making financial flow consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development' seems to fail because there is a lack of collective pledges, and every country pledges using its formula and definition of climate finance (Pickering et al. 2015). Thus, in this ongoing uncertainty and tension reigning the definition of climate finance, this study captured the youth's perspective on the same.

The youths attribute three key characteristics to climate finance definition.

- **Firstly, they highlight the type of project being financed,**

For the first axe of type of project being financed, the words 'addressing climate crisis' have been used by the majority of respondents to attribute the funds to projects providing solutions to address the climate crisis. Additionally, they have put forward projects addressing mitigation and adaptation including vulnerable communities. Loss and Damages have not been highlighted in defining climate finance.

- **Secondly, the accountability and responsibility of finance providers**

Only a handful of respondents have reflected on the responsibility and accountability of climate finance providers. Those who did perceived it as an obligation of the state which

aligned with the ODI definition of climate finance. Only two participants aligned with the CPI definition which included the private sector investments in the definition. However, it can be noted that respondents made a disparity between local, regional, and international funding.

- **Thirdly, they raise a red flag over the ambiguity of climate finance definitions.**

From the findings, it can be deduced that youths do not have a technical overview and knowledge of climate finance since they did not talk about standardizing the term, the mechanisms being used to track climate finance, and neither adopted key terms such as additionality in their definitions.



Photo Credit: COY 14, 2018, YOUNGO



Also formally linked to the UNFCCC, the Adaptation Fund (AF) is financed through a 2% levy on the sale of emission credits from the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. The AF pioneered direct access to finance for developing countries through National Implementing Entities that can meet agreed fiduciary standards, as opposed to working through UN agencies or Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) as multilateral implementing agencies. The Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) established in 2008 are administered by the World Bank but operate in partnership with regional development banks including: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

[illegible]

Source: Overseas Development Institute & Heinrich Böll Foundation

When the awareness of youth-related climate finance was gauged, most respondents could not identify specific streams of funds dedicated to youth. The notion of GEF and GCF vehicles were cited by the majority. Participants have also put forward the bilateral flow of climate finance i.e finance between two countries, usually developed countries financing climate actions in developing countries. Respondents from the African region cited awareness of sources such as the Netherlands and Commonwealth climate finance being channeled to their territory.

Private climate sources were once again left uncovered by the respondents. It can thus be deduced that public climate finance by international organizations was dominant amongst the community of youths despite the that they do not have a dedicated stream for them.

When it comes to familiarity with the types of finance. Grants are most popular amongst youth organizations compared to other private instruments for climate finance. Youth organizations that are highly familiar with private climate finance instruments have been in operation for more than 4 years compared to other organizations that are aged even less than that. The paradox is that those organizations indicate that they have not reached out to banks and other financial institutions to access those private funding. There is thus a gap between the awareness about the funds available and accessing the same.

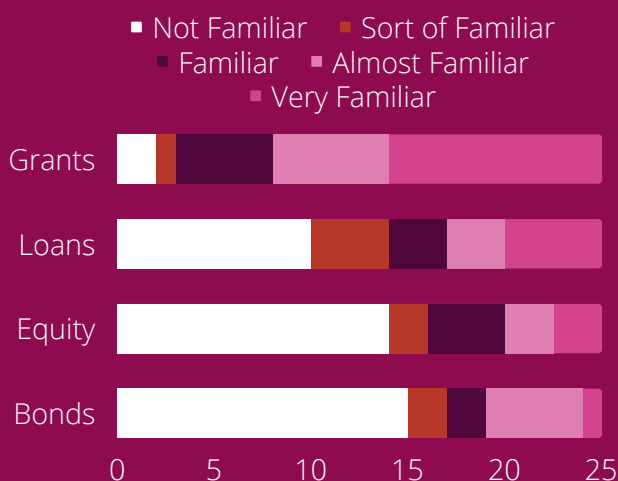


Figure 6 - Familiarity to the financial instruments available

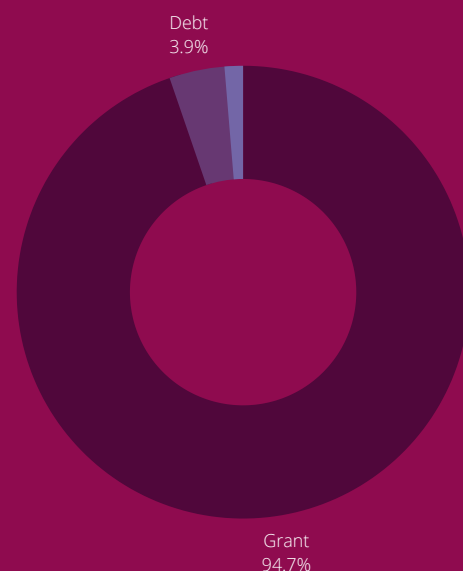


Figure 7- Type of funding requirement



Information Sources on Climate Finance

Fankhauser et al. (2016) pointed out the disparity in accessing climate finance and the information gaps. In this section, we attempt to assess the process and mechanisms through which climate finance information is shared. The participants share the common thought that so far there is no centralized database nor platform whereby the availability of those funds is disseminated. Most of them rely on word of mouth through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp.

In Latin America, they create chat groups on WhatsApp to keep the youth-led NGOs updated about the funding opportunities. In the African region, they rely mostly on dedicated websites that share opportunities entitled 'Funds for NGOs' or 'Opportunity Desk'. However, Funds for NGOs have also moved to a premium subscription lately restricting access to information for the youths. Two respondents triggered the information dissemination by their university professors through newsletters and deemed it helpful to have access to the data. Few respondents who were also Youth4Climate Summit and COP26 Delegates share that they have more knowledge on the funding opportunities through networking with other delegates who seek out collaboration.

One of the drawbacks flagged through the use of social media is the turnaround time for application is quite short as very often the opportunities are shared on the eve. In turn, this results in a missed opportunity to apply for the funding. Organizations operating on a regional level such as the EU claim to have an edge through snowballing to access information on the funding. They reach out to international organizations in their network to seek relevant information on the availability of funding. The disproportionate availability of information can thus be mapped across regions, types of organizations, and projects being undertaken.



Photo Credit: COY 13, 2017, YOUNGO

Participation in Climate Finance Decision Making or Initiatives

As discussed in Section 1, the inclusivity of youth in decision-making is becoming crucial and making headlines on an international level. It is thus important to assess to what extent youth are being involved in the climate finance initiatives.

Youths showcase their disappointments for not having participated in key activities related to climate finance. The handful who had the opportunity to do so expressed ambiguity in their responses to climate finance-related activities. They mentioned their involvement in carbon offsetting projects but also stated that they were not familiar with their role and responsibilities as part of the core project. The Latin American respondents notably from Colombia and Paraguay state that they have been involved in decision-making processes whereby they have submitted proposals to their respective governments. They have participated in strategy planning.

Respondents who were delegates to the aforementioned international conferences claim an edge to be able to partake in climate finance through working group discussions or webinars organized concerning the events. Inclusiveness with respect to climate finance seems to be on the agenda on the international level through discussions in working groups and lobbying through key demands by the youths prior to the events, but at the grassroots level, the majority of youths are still unfamiliar with climate finance activities. In turn, this lack of inclusivity reflects on their awareness level in terms of definition whereby they could not attribute the key characteristics for climate finance, awareness of the type of climate finance whereby they could identify only a handful of fund providers and information sources whereby they were relying on word of mouth.

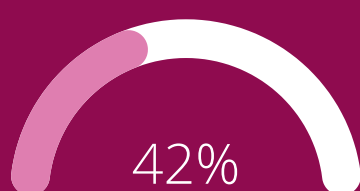


Figure 8 - Collaboration or support received from government

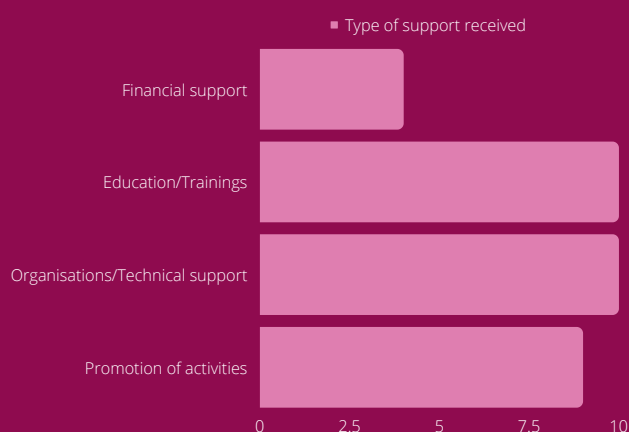


Figure 9- Type of support received

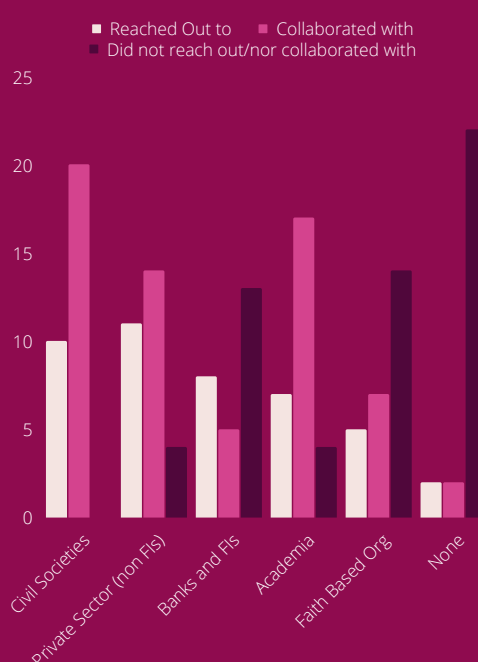


Figure 10- Collaboration with other stakeholders



Photo Credit: COP 25, 2019, YOUNGO

Accessing and Scaling Climate Finance

The type of climate finance funds that the youth organizations have been able to access is commonly the bilateral funding. The bilateral funds come from developed countries such as Germany, France, the UK, and more. They have also benefitted from funding from international organizations such as the UNDP office in their countries, UNICEF, and the European Union albeit on a smaller scale of funding. However, the respondents could not share the name of the specific funds which indicates the lack of awareness depicted in the former section.

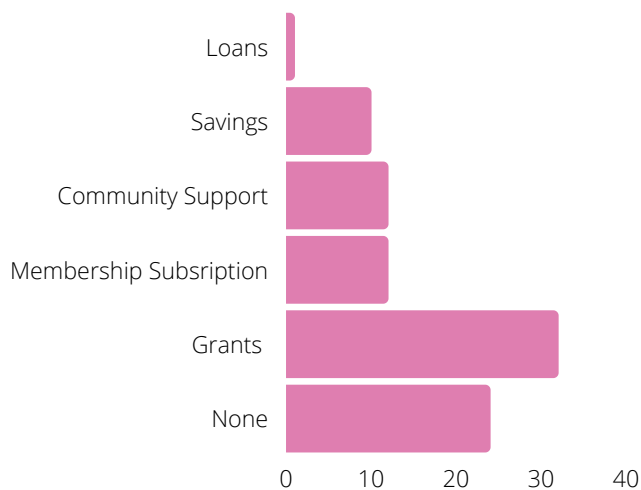


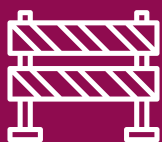
Figure 11- Type of Climate Finance accessed

Type of Climate Finance Accessed



Challenges or competitions are also very popular amongst the youth. They confirm their participation in such activities so as to be able to bag some funding. Nevertheless, also expressed their disappointment towards the long delays and bureaucracy in the disbursement of the winning prize. In addition, it can be deduced that the local authorities, governments or private sector are not actively providing climate finance for grassroots youth-led climate actions. There is still an overreliance on international and external sources of funding.

From Figure 11, it can be deduced that organizations are heavily dependent on grants and membership subscriptions and have not looked into exploring the different types of climate finance instruments available.



Barriers to access Climate Finance



Bureaucratic Process – Interviewees have expressed their dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic process in applying for the climate finance opportunities available. They deem it to be lengthy and time-consuming. The turnaround time for the outcome of the application can also delay the project implementation.



Capacity – Youth organizations suffer from a lack of technical capacity to apply for funding. Some of them are not even registered with the local authorities which renders them ineligible for the funding. The registration process takes longer in their respective countries, an issue highlighted by African respondents.



Information and Miscommunication – The dissemination of availability of funding is not centralized and the ADHOC communication sometimes takes a long to reach potential beneficiaries. Interviewees confirmed that they have missed opportunities due to last-minute communications several times.



Politics and Tokenism – The young interviewees have expressed their disappointment in the current system, notably related to the lack of climate agenda by their local authorities. They state that the local authorities are far from prioritizing and financing climate actions despite that they are being heavily affected by the same. In addition, despite they submit good project proposals, some organizations are cherry-picked for funding. This demotivates them to apply for funding.



Language – Language is a barrier for youth-led organizations. This has been vouched by Latin American interviewees as well. One francophone interviewee from Africa also put forward the disparity in funding available for English-speaking countries compared to French.



Lack of diversity in the funding – It can be noted that most funding available for youths converges to a few options rather than expanding to a wider range of climate actions. Youths are most likely to be funded through competitions rather than grants or loans. The amount of funding being offered has also been criticized. Respondents are of the view that it is easier to access funding of large amounts such as USD 10,000 but not small-scale ones such as USD 1000-2000 that could help many grassroots initiatives flourish.



Recommendations to Scale and Improve Access to Climate Finance

Youths are calling for a relaxation of the technical requirements in funding application. Given the disparity in the criteria, much time is spent on drafting proposals and many youths give up on it.

There is a need for capacity building of youth on accessing climate finance. Youth still face challenges in drafting viable proposals to meet the criteria for funding.

Communication hierarchy needs to be defined in international agencies (such as UNDP, EU, Commonwealth and more) based in local territories; very often one does not reach out to the right responsible individual for the funding opportunity and misses out on funding.

More Climate Finance products should be targeted toward youth. The type of funding being accessed is skewed towards grants and membership subscriptions. The private sector should be incentivized to provide other types of financial instruments for youth-related climate actions.

There is a need to centralize the communication on climate finance for youth so that they can easily access it. Youth often miss the opportunities available due to the lack of awareness. To increase inclusivity, we need to centralize information.

Sound governance and transparency are needed for fund allocation and tracking the use of proceeds

The local authorities should create an inclusive environment for the youth so that they can partake in the climate finance initiatives even if they do not have the capacity to provide finance. Youth should be involved in devising national strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the scant reporting on stakeholders linked to climate finance and even niche with respect to the youth. To the authors' knowledge, it is the very first study being carried out to map the accessibility and needs of climate finance for youth. The overarching findings from this study shall contribute to further advocacy for scaling climate finance and fuel the key asks by youths in upcoming international climate conferences.

Limitations and future research

The sample was skewed towards African respondents mainly. This was due to the researcher's participation in Pre COP26 Youth Summit and active engagement with African delegates. They were most likely to respond to the invitation to participate given the acquaintance. Additionally, the other regions such as Latin America and Asia faced language barriers and they did not even respond to the invitation when we reached out to them.

Another barrier resides in the knowledge about an organization's finances. Some participants might be part of the board, but they did not have the entire information to share about the finance and climate funds accessed, the reason why most interviews lasted shortly.

The key findings show that there is still a reigning ambiguity towards the concept of climate finance from youth perspectives. They have restricted knowledge and communication on this subject which in turn restricts their accessibility. There is a need to make climate finance initiatives more inclusive for youth by defining key streams of funding for them. So far, climate finance for youth takes the form of grants mainly and other sources seem to be unexploited by the youth.

Future research can be expanded into assessing the type of finance accessed and the pathways for the same. This study has not investigated this aspect in depth. It will be beneficial to map the different sources and the process for accessing the same. Similarly, there is a need to map the geographical architecture of climate finance for youth which could involve the main providers of finance, the beneficiaries, and the type of climate actions being supported.



Work in progress: The YOUNGO Finance & Market Working Group is working on a second report to map the availability of climate finance for youth.

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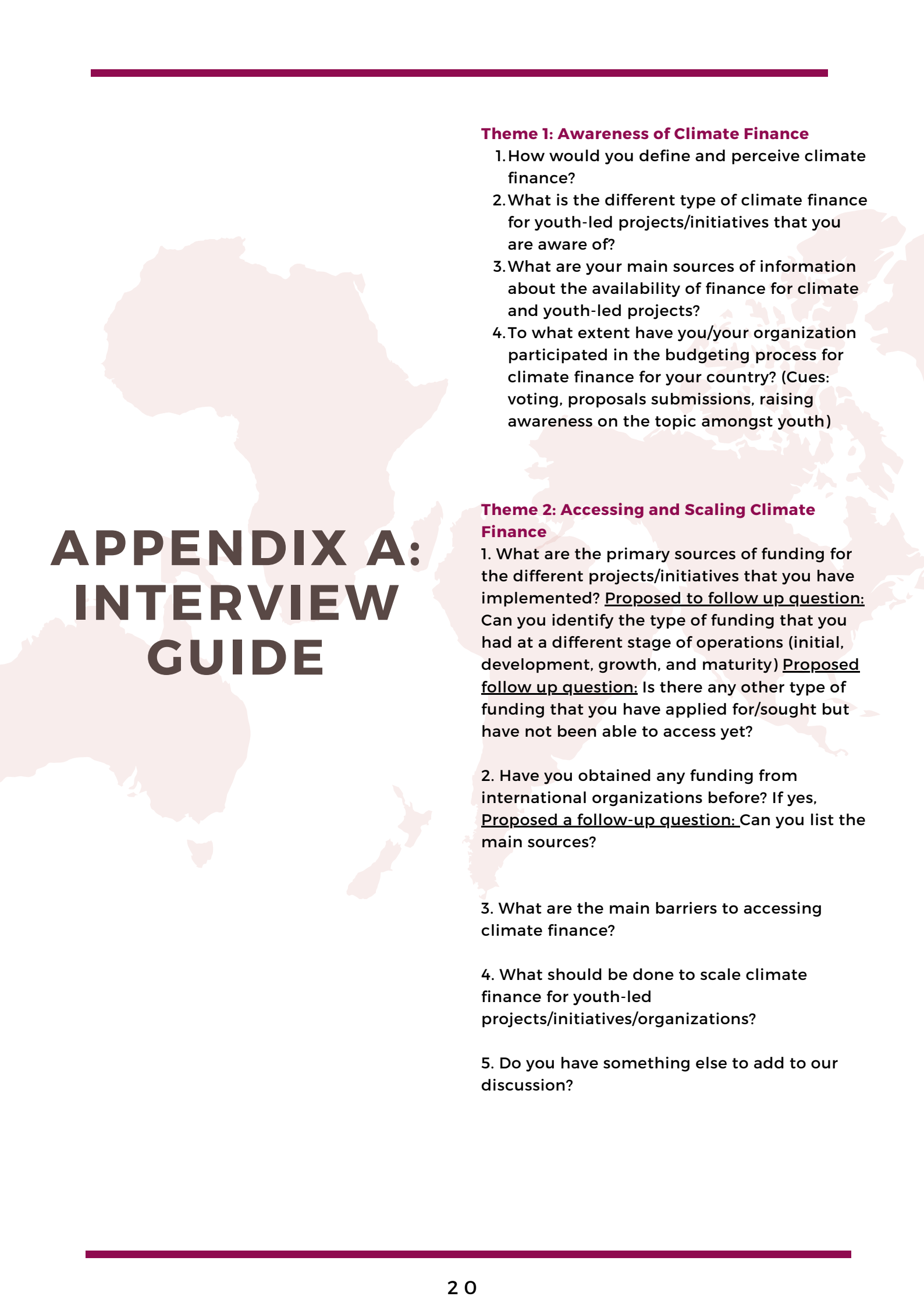
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Theme 1: Awareness of Climate Finance

1. How would you define and perceive climate finance?
2. What is the different type of climate finance for youth-led projects/initiatives that you are aware of?
3. What are your main sources of information about the availability of finance for climate and youth-led projects?
4. To what extent have you/your organization participated in the budgeting process for climate finance for your country? (Cues: voting, proposals submissions, raising awareness on the topic amongst youth)

Theme 2: Accessing and Scaling Climate Finance

1. What are the primary sources of funding for the different projects/initiatives that you have implemented? Proposed to follow up question: Can you identify the type of funding that you had at a different stage of operations (initial, development, growth, and maturity) Proposed follow up question: Is there any other type of funding that you have applied for/sought but have not been able to access yet?
2. Have you obtained any funding from international organizations before? If yes, Proposed a follow-up question: Can you list the main sources?
3. What are the main barriers to accessing climate finance?
4. What should be done to scale climate finance for youth-led projects/initiatives/organizations?
5. Do you have something else to add to our discussion?