

Climate adaptation and action proposals for adolescents assisted by the São Paulo State Adolescent Health Program

This document presents powerful proposals, originated from the voices of adolescents, to guide political action and public management. The aim is to provide better living and development conditions for both adolescents and society in vulnerable territories.

Climate change is already underway, imposing damage, losses and permanent alterations to the maintenance of human life and to the natural system that balances all planetary life. In Brazil, between 2013 and 2022, more than 5,000 municipalities (93% of Brazilian cities) have been affected by climatic events related to changes in the hydrological cycle, suffering impacts such as flooding, flash floods and waterlogging (CNM, 2023)¹. Brazil ranks 70th out of 163 countries when it comes to environmental and climate risks for children and adolescents, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Children's Climate Risk Index.²

High temperatures, more intense and prolonged periods of drought, floods, landslides, and heavy rains are all negative impacts of climate change. These issues, along with difficulty in accessing drinkable water and an increase in the incidence of disease, are intensified in peripheral urban areas and regions with greater socio-economic vulnerability. (IPCC, 2023³; WWF, 2017⁴). These risks to health, physical integrity and quality of life make the rights of children and adolescents even more fragile. Everyone suffers from climate change, but it is the vulnerable populations who contribute the least to emissions, that feel the impact of

material loss, illness, and exclusion most acutely in their decision-making.

In addition, it is children and adolescents who are severely impacted by the trauma of losing loved ones and social cohesion in emergency events and catastrophes. This generation is being born amid an unprecedented planetary environmental crisis. This crisis is fueling episodes of climate anxiety, as young people are exposed to daily news about the lack of action and investment from companies and governments. However, there are already practical solutions to mitigate and adapt to the threats of climate change, but they remain insufficiently adopted.

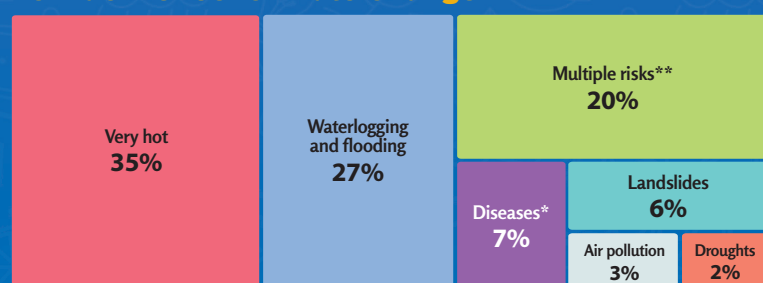
Sustainability seeks the convergence of the environmental, social and economic pillars, with the aim of preserving the living conditions for future generations. This effort is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is based on a series of international and multilateral agreements. Multisectoral collaboration at local, national and global levels is crucial for the health of our planet. However, in the midst of these initiatives, a **critical question arises: where are the voices of the children and adolescents who will be most affected by climate change?**

1. National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM). Panorama of Disasters in Brazil: 2013 to 2023.
2. UNICEF. Children, adolescents and climate change in Brazil. Brasília: UNICEF, 2022.
3. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Synthesis Report on Climate Change, 2023.
4. WWF-Brazil. Vulnerability index to natural disasters related to droughts in the context of climate change / Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of National Integration, WWF-Brazil, 2017.
5. **Climate anxiety:** emotional, mental or somatic distress in response to climate change, "a chronic fear of environmental destruction". CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY ALLIANCE. The Handbook of Climate Psychology. 2020.

What are these voices?

In this document, we amplify the voices of young people from the Adolescent Houses of Heliópolis, Pinheiros, M'Boi Mirim and Taboão da Serra, all part of the Adolescent Health Program in the state of São Paulo. A total of 18 hours of workshops were held to listen to their perceptions, identify risks and build proposals for climate action. A total of 122 adolescents and young people aged 12 to 19, of whom 60.3% were girls and 39.7% boys.

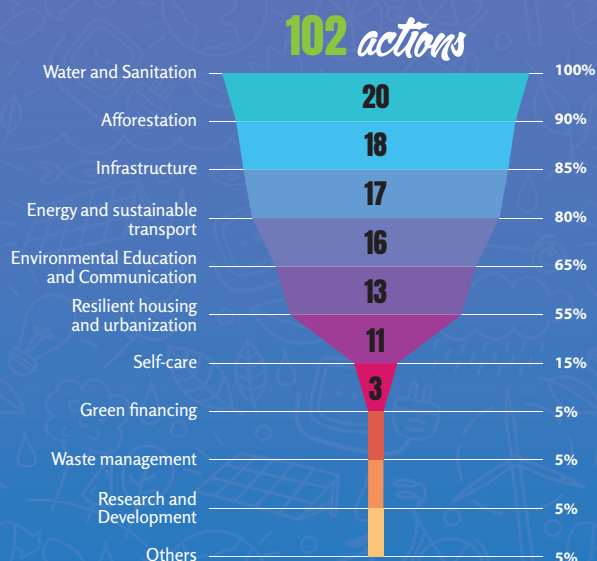
How do we feel climate change?



* Diseases: dengue, leptospirosis and other water-borne diseases.

** The "multiple risks" category covers various interconnected and non-specific risks, for which the adolescents proposed actions.

What actions do we want?



For the adolescents, the **Water and Sanitation** axis was the most cited among all the proposed actions, followed by **Afforestation** and measures related to **Urban Infrastructure**. This indicator can be used as a criteria to prioritize implementation and guide strategic decisions.

Our Top 12 actions⁶ for now!

More trees throughout the City

Trees are responsible for capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere, which helps reduce pollution and mitigate the sensation of heat. In addition, they stabilize slopes, protect the soil from erosion, and support biodiversity, especially if they are native. We want at least 3 large trees per inhabitant, according to the World Health Organization guideline.

More green spaces near my house

Green areas contribute to the permeability of the soil and facilitate the infiltration of rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding. Squares, parks, tree-lined streets and community gardens are just a few examples that can also offer us leisure, well-being and health benefits.

Low-cost solutions

(Lighter, less mirrored buildings and houses)

Painting houses and buildings in light tones and avoiding mirrored surfaces helps control temperatures and reduces the sensation of heat. It's easy and makes the city more beautiful.

Sustainable and renewable energy accessible to all

Less dependence on carbon sources contributes to climate change mitigation, but sustainable energy sources need to be accessible to all of us, receiving investment in research, development and implementation.

More sustainable and accessible public transport

Diversifying modes of transport and expanding public transport help mitigate emissions, but we need access to transport in all regions, as well as infrastructure and incentives to encourage the use of bicycles and other active mobility.

Less garbage, more recycling

More waste garbage cans, an efficient and integrated waste management system in the neighborhoods, and more recycling points are essential. In addition, it is crucial to implement environmental education programs in schools and make companies and governments responsible for proper waste management.

Rivers recovery

As temperatures continue to rise, we need more access to clean drinkable water. Why not also focus on decontamination and restoring our rivers to their natural state?

Better housing conditions

Houses located on hillsides and near riverbanks are more susceptible to climate risks. We need social housing measures to promote greater safety and dignity.

Green roofs and resilient infrastructure

Green roofs help absorb rainwater, reduce the surrounding temperatures and increase urban biodiversity. Nature-based solutions need to be implemented in cities with urgency.

Maintenance of manholes, sidewalks and the electricity grid

Prevents flooding, power outages and fire outbreaks, keeping people safe and protecting lives.

Proper plumbing and sanitation for all

It prevents diseases and floods, protects the environment and significantly improves quality of life – it's a life-saving investment.

Risk and disaster response structures

In the event of a disaster, safety is the top priority. This involves creating emergency plans for the most vulnerable areas, organizing shelters, setting up warning systems and information centers, carrying out rescue operations and training community brigades to meet the specific protection needs of children, adolescents, girls and women in particular. These measures save lives by reducing overall trauma and impact.

6. The Living Trees Institute team compiled all the actions proposed by the teenagers and added descriptions to make up this document.

If you are a decision-maker or know people who can support the cause, consider strengthening this movement by receiving a document from a teenager. If you're interested in the topic and want to know more, subscribe to the Living Trees Institute newsletter using the link in the QR code to find out more about the project and access more detailed materials.

Sign up for our
newsletter



Also, follow us on social media to get first-hand news.

Spreading the word and sharing our posts will make a significant contribution to raising awareness and support for the ideas put forward by teenagers in favor of climate health.

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