



# BETWEEN GENERATIONS, ONE PLANET

A Landscape Analysis of Youth Climate and Environmental Action in Thailand

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Most importantly, this report was made possible by the first-hand experiences and perspectives of young people who actively participated in consultations. Their voices provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in youth climate activism in Thailand. By highlighting these insights, the report aims to inspire both young people and government institutions to foster stronger collaboration in shaping climate and environmental action.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF.

# Acronyms

CO2	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CYCT	Children and Youth Council of Thailand
DCCE	Department of Climate Change and Environment
DCY	Department of Children and Youth
DLA	Department of Local Administration
EESD	Environmental Education for Sustainable Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GC26	General Comment No.26
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Others
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PM	Particulate Matter
TCAT	Thailand Climate Action Team
TLHR	Thai Lawyers for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



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# Executive Summary

Thailand is on the frontline of the global climate crisis, facing far-reaching consequences for its children and young people. Ranked 50<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries in UNICEF's 2021 Children's Climate Risk Index (UNICEF, 2021a), the country is increasingly vulnerable to environmental threats that disproportionately affect the most marginalized. From devastating floods to prolonged heatwaves, the growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events underscore one urgent truth: inclusive climate action is not optional – it is essential. At the centre of this response are young people, whose voices, energy, and innovation hold the power to drive transformative change.

Recognizing the escalating threat of climate change, Thailand has integrated climate considerations into several key national frameworks, including the National Strategy (2018–2037), the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDC) (2023–2027), the Climate Change Master Plan (2015–2050), and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) (2023–2037). Additionally, Thailand has committed to international climate goals through its Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2022), the Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS, 2021), and the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Strategic Plan (2022–2025).

These frameworks aim to guide national efforts on mitigation, adaptation, and public empowerment. Yet, despite these commitments, the connection between national policy and youth-led climate initiatives remains weak, with limited pathways for young people to contribute meaningfully to planning, implementation, and accountability processes.

Nevertheless, young people across Thailand are not standing still. They have mobilized through grassroots movements, forming networks and organizations dedicated to environmental advocacy, climate education, and community-based action. However, their ability to influence formal decision-making remains constrained by structural and institutional barriers, including limited access to information, platforms, and resources.

This report presents an analytical mapping of youth climate and environmental action in Thailand. Through extensive research, the mapping identified over 110 youth-led organizations and 19 youth-serving organizations, revealing a vibrant yet fragmented landscape of youth engagement. These groups operate at various levels, some as independent

movements, others within more formal structures supported by academic institutions, civil society organizations, or international partners, and engage in a wide range of activities, from climate literacy and policy advocacy to environmental conservation and mitigation projects.

Drawing on key informant interviews and focus groups with young people and policymakers, this report explores the motivations behind youth climate activism and the systemic barriers limiting their participation in climate governance. It also proposes concrete mechanisms to strengthen youth engagement in climate governance, offering both a resource and a call to action for stakeholders committed to more inclusive and effective climate responses in Thailand.

At its core, this research seeks to bring General Comment No. 26 (GC26) to life, affirming the right of children and young people to live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and recognizing them as essential agents of change in shaping the future of climate governance (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023).

## Key Findings

**Youth are engaged in climate action yet sidelined in decision-making:** Young people in Thailand are playing an active role in climate action, driving grassroots initiatives, advocating for policy change, and mobilizing their communities. Their engagement is motivated by a sense of urgency, direct experiences with climate impacts, and inspiration from global movements. However, despite their efforts, their voices are often missing from formal decision-making processes. While government policies acknowledge the value of youth participation, structured opportunities for meaningful engagement remain limited. When youth are consulted, their contributions are frequently perceived as symbolic rather than substantive. Without institutionalized representation and clear mechanisms for integrating youth perspectives into policy frameworks, their ability to influence national climate strategies remains constrained.

**Youth climate leadership exists, but systemic barriers hold them back:** Despite the systemic challenges they face, young people in Thailand remain committed to climate action. They are adaptive, resourceful, and determined to drive change, even with limited institutional support. However, their impact will remain limited unless structural reforms are implemented. Institutionalizing youth participation in climate governance, ensuring sustainable funding, fostering inclusive engagement, and protecting young activists from political risks are not just necessary, they are urgent. By recognizing and empowering young people as key partners, Thailand has the opportunity to build a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

**Thailand's climate movement is leaving marginalized youth behind:**

While youth climate activism in Thailand is gaining momentum, it remains largely centred in urban areas, limiting opportunities for rural, indigenous, and marginalized youth to participate. Many young people in remote communities face financial and logistical barriers that prevent them from engaging in national climate discussions. Language barriers further exclude non-Thai-speaking youth from accessing critical information, training, and decision-making platforms. Ironically, those who are most affected by climate change, including young people from vulnerable regions, are often the least represented in shaping policies that directly impact their future. Closing this gap requires deliberate action to make climate engagement accessible to all, ensuring that every young person, regardless of their background or location, has the opportunity to contribute to solutions and influence decision-making.

**Youth climate activists face barriers to safe and open participation:**

For many young people advocating for climate justice, activism comes with challenges. In some areas, youth activists encounter obstacles such as restrictions on organizing activities, limited access to decision-making spaces, and concerns about public scrutiny. Environmental advocacy often intersects with complex issues like land use and industrial development, requiring careful navigation of existing policies and stakeholder interests. As a result, some young activists opt for indirect approaches, focusing on environmental education and conservation rather than direct policy advocacy. Ensuring that young people have safe and supportive spaces to engage in climate action will be key to fostering a new generation of leaders who can contribute to sustainable and inclusive environmental solutions.

**Lack of sustainable funding limits the impact of youth-led climate action:**

Youth-led organizations are often the driving force behind local climate solutions, but their ability to sustain and scale their efforts is hindered by financial barriers. Accessing funding remains one of the biggest challenges, as grant application processes are bureaucratic and often favour established institutions over grassroots initiatives. Short-term funding cycles and strict procurement regulations make it nearly impossible for young activists to plan for sustained, long-term impact. Many rely on personal funds or small-scale crowdfunding, which is neither sustainable nor sufficient to expand their impact. Without dedicated financial support, promising youth-led initiatives are forced to shut down before they can achieve lasting change.

**Youth climate action is overlooked due to rigid impact measurement:**

The way youth climate initiatives track progress often clashes with government expectations. Government agencies prioritize structured, quantitative indicators, such as carbon reduction and measurable environmental outcomes, while youth-led groups rely on community feedback, storytelling, and social media engagement to demonstrate their impact. This misalignment prevents many young activists from securing funding or recognition, as their contributions do not fit neatly into formal reporting structures. Without a more inclusive evaluation framework that captures both qualitative and quantitative impact, youth-led climate action risks being overlooked, limiting opportunities for collaboration, scaling successful initiatives, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

# Recommendations

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Young people in Thailand are leading climate action, yet systemic barriers continue to limit their ability to drive lasting change. To fully harness their potential, urgent reforms are needed to create an enabling environment where youth-led initiatives can thrive. Overcoming financial, institutional, and political challenges is essential to ensuring that young climate activists are not just participants in climate discussions but recognized partners in shaping policies and solutions. The following recommendations outline key actions to support and strengthen youth-led climate action in Thailand.

- 1. Institutionalize youth participation in climate governance:** Young people must have a seat at the table in climate decision-making processes. This requires formal mechanisms that ensure youth representation in climate policymaking, from national strategies to local governance. Youth engagement should not be tokenistic but integrated into structured advisory roles where their contributions are valued and acted upon.
- 2. Develop inclusive and accessible climate engagement mechanisms:** Participation in climate governance must be accessible to all young people, not just those in urban centres or with institutional connections. Rural, indigenous, and marginalized youth must have equal opportunities to engage in climate discussions and policy advocacy. Expanding outreach, providing financial and logistical support for participation, and addressing language barriers will help ensure that climate action is truly representative of all communities.
- 3. Strengthen protection for youth climate activists:** Young people advocating for environmental justice must be safeguarded from political risks, intimidation, and restrictions on activism. Clear policies should be established to protect youth from surveillance and retaliation, ensuring that they can organize and advocate without fear. Safe spaces, both physical and digital, must be created where young activists can collaborate freely and push for change without facing threats or suppression.
- 4. Empower youth through capacity-building and mentorship:** Young climate leaders need structured training and mentorship to strengthen their advocacy, project management, and policy engagement skills. Capacity-building programmes should be embedded within national climate strategies, equipping youth organizations with the technical knowledge, leadership skills, and financial literacy required to drive impactful and sustainable climate solutions.
- 5. Create sustainable funding for youth-led climate initiatives:** Youth climate organizations need long-term, accessible funding to sustain and expand their impact. Dedicated financial support mechanisms should be established, ensuring that funding is flexible, responsive to youth-led priorities, and free from the bureaucratic barriers that currently prevent young organizations from accessing resources. Removing restrictive grant requirements and simplifying application processes will enable more youth groups to secure the support they need.
- 6. Bridge the gap between youth and institutional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems:** A more inclusive impact assessment framework is needed to recognize and validate youth-led climate action. Current government and donor evaluation models must evolve to capture both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, including community engagement, awareness-raising, and long-term behavioural change. This will enable youth organizations to demonstrate their effectiveness in a way that aligns with institutional expectations, improving their ability to access funding and policy influence.



## Background

Globally, nearly one billion children – almost half of the world’s child population – live in countries classified as ‘extremely high-risk’ due to climate change. One in five children, or 466 million children, now experience extreme heat at least twice as frequently as children did six decades ago, increasing risks such as stillbirths and preterm births. Additionally, air pollution has become the second leading cause of death among children under the age of 5 years, second only to malnutrition (UNICEF, 2024a).

UNICEF’s report, *A Threat to Progress: Confronting the Effects of Climate Change on Child Health and Well-Being* (UNICEF, 2024b), highlights how climate change disrupts nearly every stage of child development, exacerbating risks when multiple climate hazards overlap. The report identifies six major threats affecting children worldwide: extreme heat, drought, wildfires, floods and storms, air pollution, and ecosystem changes. These hazards impact children’s health and well-being from pregnancy through adolescence, with overlapping exposures compounding the risks.

The growing urgency of these challenges was recognized at the 29<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in 2024, where, for the first time, children's rights, education, and health were formally included in the Global Goal on Adaptation. This inclusion reflects the unique vulnerabilities of children to climate change impacts and underscores the need to prioritize their needs in climate policy and action.

Thailand ranks among the most climate-affected countries globally. UNICEF's 2021 Children's Climate Risk Index places Thailand 50<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries most vulnerable to climate-related risks, particularly for children living in multidimensional poverty. Without urgent intervention, projections indicate that children in Thailand could face severe heatwaves by 2050.

Findings from the 2022 *Impact Assessment of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation on Children in Thailand* (Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) and UNICEF, 2022) identify the Northeastern and Southern regions as particularly at risk, with ten provinces, including Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Narathiwat, facing significant climate impacts under a moderate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions scenario (RCP4.5) between 2016 and 2035.

Recognizing the escalating threat of climate change, Thailand has integrated climate considerations into several key national frameworks, including the National Strategy (2018–2037), the National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027), the Climate Change Master Plan (2015–2050), and the National Adaptation Plan (2023–2037). Additionally, Thailand has committed to international climate goals through its Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2022), the Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS, 2021), and the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Strategic Plan (2022–2025), which promotes climate education and public engagement. Despite these efforts, the unique vulnerabilities of children and youth remain largely unaddressed. More importantly, these policies lack clear and meaningful entry points for young people to engage in climate adaptation and resilience-building efforts.

This disconnect is particularly stark when contrasted with the momentum of youth-led climate activism on the global stage. Young people around the world have mobilized for climate justice, influencing public discourse and international policy through movements like Fridays for Future and child rights advocacy at the United Nations. The adoption of GC26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change in 2023 reinforced the need for child-centred climate policies. Yet, in practice, youth participation often remains tokenistic, with their perspectives frequently sidelined in formal decision-making processes.

In Thailand, a 2024 UNICEF U-Report Poll revealed a striking gap between young people's interest in climate action and their actual engagement. While 89 per cent of respondents expressed a strong desire to take part in climate initiatives, only 34 per cent reported being actively involved. The findings pointed to several key barriers that limit participation. Many young people cited a lack of opportunities, resources, and accessible platforms for meaningful engagement. Others highlighted limited access to information and knowledge about climate solutions. Academic and personal responsibilities often left little time for involvement, while geographic and logistical challenges further hindered participation, particularly for those in rural areas. Importantly, a recurring concern was the perception that youth voices are not genuinely considered in policymaking processes, discouraging sustained engagement.

The survey identified several barriers contributing to this gap. These include a lack of opportunities and resources, limited access to information and participation channels, and insufficient knowledge or problem-solving skills related to climate action. Time constraints, often due to academic and personal responsibilities, further limit young people's ability to engage. Geographical distance also poses significant challenges, particularly for those in remote areas. Perhaps most critically, many young people feel that their voices and proposed solutions are not genuinely heard, with little to no follow-up action taken to reflect their needs or recommendations.

Despite these obstacles, young people continue to recognize the critical roles they can play in climate action, whether by adopting sustainable practices in their daily lives, leading community-based projects, raising awareness, or participating in policy discussions. Yet many still feel unequipped to turn their passion into meaningful impact, citing a lack of support, guidance, and access to decision-making spaces.

In response to these challenges, the 2022 *Impact Assessment of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation on Children in Thailand* emphasizes the urgent need for structured platforms that empower young people to engage meaningfully in climate governance. These platforms would enable them to share ideas, build capacities, and contribute to resilience-building efforts at local and national levels.

To ensure these platforms are effective and inclusive, a systematic mapping of youth-led and youth-serving organizations is essential. Such mapping can help identify existing initiatives, amplify their impact, and bridge the persistent gap between policy and participation. This report contributes to that effort by analyzing the current landscape of youth climate engagement in Thailand, identifying opportunities for stronger collaboration, and advocating for the recognition of young people as key stakeholders in climate resilience.

Ultimately, by enhancing youth participation and embedding their perspectives in climate strategies, Thailand can move toward a more inclusive and sustainable future, one where young people are not just impacted by climate decisions but actively help shape them.

## 1.1 Research Objectives and Methodology

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in Thailand engaged in climate and environmental action. By mapping their contributions, challenges, and opportunities, it aims to strengthen collaboration between young activists, policymakers, and stakeholders, ensuring more effective youth participation in climate initiatives.

Aligned with *GC26* on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, this research supports Thailand's commitment to empowering young people as agents of change. It offers actionable insights to create inclusive platforms for youth participation, ensuring their voices shape climate policies and decisions.

The specific objectives of this analytical mapping are to:

1. Develop a database of youth-led organizations and networks working on climate and environmental issues.
2. Analyze the motivations, challenges, and proposed solutions of youth climate activists.
3. Gather perspectives from government policymakers on youth engagement, identifying gaps and opportunities for support.

### 1.1.1 Key Definitions

**Child:** Anyone below the age of 18 years.

**Youth:** Persons aged between 15–24 years.

**Youth-Led Organization:** A group, network, or entity that is primarily initiated, led, managed, and coordinated by young people, typically aged 15–24 years, though some frameworks extend the age to 30 years. These organizations may be formal or informal, and either registered or unregistered. While individuals over the age of 24 years may support in advisory or mentorship roles, decision-making authority remains with youth.

**Youth-Serving Organization:** An organization that works for and with young people, offering programmes, resources, and support aimed at enhancing their development and well-being. These organizations help youth build confidence, skills, and networks, and create opportunities for them to engage in social, civic, or economic initiatives. Youth are the beneficiaries, but not necessarily the primary decision-makers.

## 1.1.2 Research Methodology

The analytical mapping utilized a mixed-methods approach, integrating desk research, key informant interviews, and participatory youth consultations. This framework offered a comprehensive understanding of the organizational landscape, identified key challenges and opportunities, and generated actionable recommendations to enhance youth engagement in climate action.

- 1. Desk Review:** The study conducted a comprehensive review of available documentation, including literature, video clips, interview articles, and reports in both Thai and English published between 2019 and 2025. It also incorporated existing literature on good practices in youth climate activism to inform its recommendations. Key search terms included: *youth, young people, youth engagement, youth activism, youth-led initiatives, youth climate activism, climate change, climate action, and environmental issues.*
- 2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** KIIs were conducted with four government representatives to explore policies and strategies supporting youth-led climate action. Interviewees shared examples of current initiatives and explained how youth voices are integrated into policy design and implementation. The KIIs provided insights into existing collaborations with youth-led organizations, the role of youth in addressing climate challenges, and key issues tackled by youth groups. Participants also described available support, such as funding and training, while highlighting barriers to engagement. Additionally, they proposed actionable recommendations to strengthen collaboration between policymakers and youth climate activists. Lastly, stakeholders outlined their approaches to monitoring and evaluating youth engagement, sharing examples of youth-led initiatives that have influenced policy or achieved measurable outcomes.
- 3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Two FGDs were conducted via Zoom with 24 young people (10 male youth and 14 female youth, including two identifying as LGBTQ+) representing 13 youth organizations, using participatory approaches. Each session included representatives from youth-led climate organizations, ensuring diversity in age, gender, geographic location, and organizational focus, including marginalized groups.

The FGDs explored participants' motivations and experiences in climate activism, their understanding of what it means to be a young climate activist, and the roles they play. Participants shared details about their projects, key achievements, and the metrics they use to assess impact. They also discussed challenges such as barriers to resources, collaboration, and inclusivity for marginalized groups. Discussions covered available support, additional needs (e.g., training or mentorship), and strategies for raising awareness, engaging other young people, and fostering collaboration with government agencies and the private sector. Participants also reflected on ways to improve the representation of underrepresented groups in climate action. Additionally, the FGDs captured insights on policy advocacy, recommendations for integrating youth perspectives into policymaking, and participants' long-term visions for their activism. They also shared perspectives on Thailand's climate action priorities and practical advice for young people starting their own climate activism journeys. Once the findings were finalized, they were also validated with the FGD participants through an additional follow-up FGD, ensuring their views were accurately reflected and any necessary clarifications or additions were incorporated.

### 1.1.3 Limitations

The mapping of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in this study may not be fully comprehensive due to time constraints. The desk review was limited to data available between 2019 and 2025, and insights gathered from online sources and FGDs may not fully capture the perspectives of all youth climate activists.

To enhance the methodological rigour of the FGDs and KIIs, purposive sampling techniques were employed. This approach strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings by reducing social desirability bias, ensuring that participants' responses reflected their genuine perspectives and experiences rather than what they perceived as favorable.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a multi-layered and comprehensive analysis. It expands existing knowledge, identifies key knowledge gaps, and provides valuable insights to inform policy and future research on Thai youth climate activism initiatives.

### 1.1.4 Research Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with UNICEF's *Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection, and Analysis* (UNICEF, 2021b). Ethical approval was obtained in November 2024.

All participants, including key informants and young people, provided informed consent after receiving a full briefing on the study's nature, purpose, timeframe, and expected outcomes. During FGDs and KIIs, participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any point during or after the interviews without consequences.

Strict confidentiality protocols were upheld throughout the study. No identifying information of youth or key informants was included in reports or shared with third parties without explicit consent. All data was anonymized, and robust security measures were implemented to safeguard participant privacy. These measures included regular password updates, antivirus software, firewalls, and intrusion detection systems to prevent unauthorized access. Audio and video recordings, as well as transcripts, were securely stored in the data system. The final study outputs, including findings and recommendations, remained anonymous to protect participant confidentiality.

To ensure accountability, all participants, including parents/guardians of youth participants, were provided with contact information for the interviewer. Additionally, a complaint mechanism was established, allowing participants to raise concerns through direct contact with the project leader.

# CHAPTER | 2

## Youth Activism for Climate and Environmental Action in Thailand



## 2.1 A Brief History of Youth Activism for Climate and Environmental Action in Thailand

### 2019–present

Thai youth have long demonstrated environmental consciousness and active participation in environmental advocacy initiatives, with engagement dating back to before 1973 (Pakorn, 2018). Across universities nationwide, student-run environmental clubs provide spaces for learning and action on environmental issues. These clubs regularly organize hands-on experiences such as forest camping trips and volunteer projects, including constructing simple dams to regulate water flow in forests and participating in mangrove restoration efforts. Many clubs also unite in solidarity actions against environmental injustices or policies threatening ecosystems and community livelihoods. For example, in 2019, 22 university environmental clubs formed a network to issue a public statement in support of communities affected by dam and water-diversion projects (Singwaedlom, 2019). Another notable case is Beach for Life, a youth-led organization founded by secondary school students. In 2015, at just 19 years old, the group's young leader initiated legal action against a seawall construction project to protect their local coastal ecosystem (Charuvastra, 2024).

Youth-led climate initiatives in Thailand gained significant visibility in 2019, influenced by the global 'Fridays for Future' movement. A notable example was the Global Strike 4 Climate rally in September 2019, where over 100 young people staged a 'die-in' protest in front of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, chanting "Save our Earth" (Reuters, 2019). However, most participants were foreign students from international schools in Thailand, with only a few Thai students, also from international schools, joining the demonstration. The Ministry's Deputy Permanent Secretary expressed support for the activists by accepting their letter and reaffirming the government's commitment to environmental protection, including a planned ban on plastic shopping bags set for 2020. That year, alongside government initiatives, many private sector organizations launched campaigns to reduce plastic waste, implementing new solutions to eliminate plastic bags and foam packaging from their operations.

### 2020: The Rise of Thai Youth-Led Activism

Youth activism and civic participation in Thailand experienced growth between 2020 and 2022, with thousands of secondary school and university students organizing and participating in youth movements nationwide (Mobdata Thailand, 2024). Young people demonstrated a strong commitment to civic engagement, organizing peaceful demonstrations in schools, universities, and public spaces. They raised concerns on a range of issues, including education reform, economic challenges, political reforms, and climate-related matters, contributing to sharing national discourse (Lertchoosakul, 2023). Among the most notable youth-led groups during this period were the White Ribbon Movement and Bad Student Group (Tangwongwanit et al., no date).

In January 2020, university students advocating for climate action staged a demonstration in front of parliament during the NotMyPM (2.5) campaign, wearing N95 masks to demand a Clean Air Act (Thai PBS, 2020). A few months later, a 17-year-old girl made headlines by writing an open letter to Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, urging him to cancel the public hearing for an industrial development plan (Piyaporn, 2020). She argued that the plan lacked inclusive stakeholder engagement and posed a threat to ocean health and biodiversity, critical to sustaining livelihoods in her hometown. *"What I have seen and learned from working with many young people is that we all have dreams we want to achieve. But we have to leave those dreams behind to fight for something important in the present. Otherwise, we won't have a future left to dream of,"* she stated. She also wrote a letter to young climate activist Greta Thunberg.

## Challenges, Adaptation, and Resilience

While committed to active citizenship and youth participation, many young activists in Thailand face significant pressure from schools and authorities. This includes harassment, surveillance, and even lawsuits filed by government officials in response to their activism (Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR), 2020). According to TLHR data, at least 286 children faced legal action for political activism between 2020 and January 2024, with the youngest being just 12 years old (TLHR, 2024). Furthermore, as of January 2024, at least 230 children and youth remain entangled in ongoing court proceedings. This form of repression has instilled fear among young activists, discouraging engagement in campaigns that advocate for policy-level change, including in relation to climate change and environmental action.

Additionally, public spaces have become increasingly sensitive to youth gatherings, further restricting opportunities for collective action. In 2021, the Thai Volunteer Service Foundation noted that youth demonstrations of potential and abilities are often judged and stigmatized as inappropriate, disruptive, or even threatening to social order, rather than being encouraged and supported (Thai Volunteer Service Foundation, 2021). As a result, some young people face punishment, while Thai society misses out on the contributions and innovations of its new generation. This is further supported by the *Kids for Kids Youth Survey 2022*, which found that 71.2 per cent of surveyed youth feared expressing opinions that contradict those of seniors, authority figures, or individuals of higher social status (Lertarat and Kasidej, 2023).

A young climate activist reported facing significant challenges during her peaceful protest against an industrial complex project (Suntadkan, 2020): *"I was sitting in front of the city hall when I received multiple phone calls offering to pay my school tuition and provide lifetime financial support for my entire family, on the condition that I stopped protesting. That was psychological harassment to me. I have the right to protest because my livelihood is at risk. If these practices take root in Thailand, what can I say? I only stand by my actions, and I believe I am doing the right thing."* In another interview (Leelertyuth, 2020), she further recounted, *"The police came to my school. My classmates and teachers were frightened. We were being threatened, and my father was being followed everywhere. Recently, a surveillance camera was installed at the intersection of my village for the first time."* A similar concern was raised by a participant during the FGD conducted as part of this report: *"Youth must be careful when taking action on climate issues because it can affect their future careers."*

The youth movement of 2020–2021 was a landmark moment for civic participation and activism in Thailand. However, this powerful movement has since experienced a significant decline as young activists faced harassment and legal action. While direct activism has waned, youth-led movements, including climate organizations, have adapted, shifting towards creative initiatives that emphasize awareness-raising and mitigation strategies rather than direct policy confrontation.

## 2.2 Institutional and Policy Landscape for Youth Engagement in Climate Action in Thailand

The Royal Thai Government has taken steps to support youth engagement in climate action through various programmes and funding mechanisms. However, much of this participation still occurs through informal networks and grassroots initiatives. While some agencies have dedicated programmes for youth engagement, many youth-led climate movements operate independently, relying on peer collaborations, civil society partnerships, and digital advocacy rather than direct government support. Despite existing programmes, mechanisms for youth engagement remain fragmented, uncoordinated, and often disconnected from the realities of youth-led climate activism.

The **Department of Climate Change and Environment (DCCE)** under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is the only government agency with a dedicated policy on youth engagement in climate action. This commitment is institutionalized through the Children and Youth Environmental Promotion Section, which oversees programmes that fund and support youth-led climate initiatives. The Green Youth Programme provides annual funding to support youth climate initiatives, initially focusing on young people aged 18–24 but later expanding to include children. In 2024, 76 environmental youth clubs participated, receiving funding for materials, stationery, and equipment. DCCE also facilitates the Climate Change and Environment Children and Youth Forum, which serves as a platform for regional youth representatives to exchange ideas, provide feedback, and strengthen youth engagement in climate policy discussions. Furthermore, the agency supports youth representation in key national and international climate platforms, such as Thailand Climate Action Team (TCAT) and COP29.

Other government agencies address climate and environmental issues through policies and programmes but lack explicit provisions for youth engagement in climate action. The **Department of Local Administration (DLA)**, for instance, promotes waste management initiatives in municipal schools but does not have a dedicated youth climate engagement policy. The Wet Waste Garbage Programme, established in 2019, promotes waste segregation in 1,700 schools and 18,935 child development centres across Thailand, indirectly engaging students in sustainable practices.

Similarly, the **Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC)** integrates climate education into school curricula but does not systematically connect this with youth-led climate action. The Bureau of Education Innovation implements the Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD) Academy, engaging schools and students in environmental action. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Student Activities Development works directly with student councils on youth participation initiatives, though these efforts are not formally connected to climate policies. Despite the lack of a clear strategy linking climate education with youth engagement, programmes like the EESD Academy have facilitated school-based environmental action through initiatives such as the From Mountains to Ocean Youth Leadership Programme and the GREENFLIX School Environment Short Film Contest, which provides training for students on climate issues through creative media projects.

**The Department of Children and Youth (DCY)** plays a critical role in youth participation policy, operating under the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act, B.E. 2550 (2007). Section 19(10) mandates the Children and Youth Council of Thailand (CYCT) to promote youth participation at national and provincial levels, including in environmental and climate action. DCY integrates climate change awareness into youth leadership programmes through initiatives such as the We Think for the Earth Programme, a youth ambassador initiative that has trained 77 provincial CYCT representatives on climate change and environmental advocacy. Additionally, DCY provides funding for provincial CYCTs to implement their own projects through the Shelter for Children and Families, offering grant opportunities for innovative climate initiatives. The National Children and Youth Assembly, co-organized annually by DCY and CYCT with UNICEF support, serves as a platform for

youth representatives to submit recommendations on various issues affecting their lives, including climate and environmental policies.

A key challenge, as identified through KIIs with government stakeholders, is the limited cross-sector collaboration between ministries and agencies. Government institutions tend to operate independently, resulting in a siloed approach where youth engagement and climate action policies remain disconnected. Without clear mechanisms for coordination and integration, existing initiatives fail to align with broader national climate strategies, making it difficult for youth to participate meaningfully in policy decisions.

Despite these challenges, partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector play a crucial role in advancing youth engagement in climate action. The GREENFLIX School Environment Short Film Contest has formed partnerships with six organizations, including the Princess Sirivannavari Thai Coral Reef and Marine Life Conservation Foundation, the Department of Fisheries, and the Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization, covering topics such as climate change, marine and coastal resources conservation, biodiversity, waste management, and environmental health. Additionally, DCY has worked with DCCE to provide technical expertise during youth empowerment workshops, while DCCE has collaborated with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) Thailand, the country's largest youth climate activist network, to provide expert input at regional forums.

However, as highlighted in the KIIs, direct engagement with youth remains limited, as only DCCE and DCY work directly with youth groups receiving government funding. This further reinforces the need for greater inter-agency collaboration and the establishment of structured pathways for meaningful youth participation in climate action.

## 2.3 Thai Youth Climate Advocates: Motivations, Identity, and Patterns of Engagement

### “Advocates” Rather Than “Activists”

Despite their involvement in climate-related initiatives, many young Thais avoid identifying as “activists,” preferring terms like “youth advocate” or “organizer.” This choice reflects perceptions of activism in Thailand, as well as concerns about personal safety and career stability. As one 22-year-old participant explained, *“The term ‘activist’ is linked to political movements and protests, like Greta Thunberg or Greenpeace. It might be misleading if used in Thailand. I’d rather call myself an organizer.”*

Additionally, young people often associate activism with creating significant impact. Since their current work primarily focuses on raising public awareness through campaigns rather than directly influencing policy, many feel that “activist” does not accurately describe their role.

This hesitation is deeply rooted in how activism is framed within Thai society. According to young people, the term “activist” carries a politically charged connotation, often associated with confrontation and anti-state movements. Between 1993 and 2013, its definition in the Royal Institute Dictionary was revised multiple times, at one point describing activists as individuals who *“take action to create rapid change through aggressive means.”* This portrayal has shaped public perception, making young people wary of the label, particularly in a context where advocacy can attract legal scrutiny and professional risks.

Many young people in Thailand fear that involvement in high-profile campaigns could jeopardize their careers or lead to legal repercussions. In 2023 alone, at least 196 environmental defenders were murdered worldwide, while nearly half of journalists covering climate issues faced threats for their work (Global Witness, 2024). In Thailand, environmental advocates have increasingly faced harassment and judicial lawsuits, reinforcing the perception that climate activism carries significant personal and legal risks (Protection International, 2023).

For many, however, climate activism is not a choice but a response to urgent environmental threats that directly impact their livelihoods and fundamental rights. Yet their reluctance to embrace the “activist” identity underscores the broader tension between the necessity of advocacy and the reality of personal security in Thailand’s socio-political landscape.

## Motivated by Urgency

A 2021 article by Kowasch et al. examines the motivations driving youth participation in climate activism, particularly within the Fridays for Future movement, and explores how such activism can be integrated into EESD and transformative learning processes. It identifies several key factors motivating young individuals to engage in climate activism: 1) Emotional Responses: Feelings of anger, fear, and frustration regarding the climate crisis propel youth to take action; 2) Solidarity and Collective Goals: A sense of unity and shared objectives among peers encourages participation in movements like Fridays for Future; and 3) Desire for Political Engagement: Youth are driven by a wish to influence political discourse and advocate for substantial climate policies.

Thai youth engage in climate action through diverse pathways, but a common thread among them is a strong awareness of the direct impact of climate change on their lives and communities. Whether driven by personal experience, frustration over inaction, or the belief that change is possible, young people see climate activism as a crucial part of shaping their future.

A 17-year-old girl from northern Thailand reflected on the urgency of the crisis: *“Climate change is not a joke, it really happens.”* This sentiment was echoed across FGDs, where participants highlighted the connection between environmental challenges and broader social issues. Many recognize the power of awareness-raising, believing that collective knowledge can empower individuals to take meaningful action.

A 19-year-old male participant from the Northeast illustrated this connection by sharing his firsthand experience: *“My parents are farmers. Since I was young, I have witnessed the burning of agricultural waste as a common practice, which contributes to PM 2.5 air pollution. Although it is not the main cause of the greenhouse effect, it still significantly impacts the environment.”*

For those living in climate-affected regions, activism is not simply a choice, it is a necessity. These young people see the environmental crisis as a direct threat to their fundamental rights, including education, healthcare, and livelihood autonomy. Recognizing the disproportionate impact on their communities, they feel a strong responsibility to act. As an 18-year-old indigenous male explained, *“We are the most impacted. Climate change affects our livelihood and violates the rights of children and vulnerable groups.”* Many also critically examine their own environmental footprint, seeking to be part of the solution rather than passive victims of the crisis.

At the same time, many youth view their involvement in climate action as an opportunity for skill development, networking, and career exploration. Organizing climate initiatives allows them to gain leadership experience, develop project management skills, and explore professional pathways related to sustainability and environmental policy.

## Collaborative, Adaptive, and Evolving

Youth-led climate action in Thailand is highly interconnected, with many young people engaged in multiple groups simultaneously. These organizations prioritize collaboration over isolation, integrating climate action with community rights, resource management, and social justice. This approach reflects how Thai youth view climate activism as part of broader socio-economic challenges rather than a separate issue.

Unlike traditional environmental movements that focus solely on climate change, Thai youth-led groups address a range of environmental concerns, including deforestation, water management, and biodiversity conservation. Their activism is highly adaptive, responding to evolving local environmental threats as well as shifting political and economic realities.

Over time, many youth-led groups transform as their members grow and take on new roles. Some founders remain involved into adulthood, transitioning from activists to mentors, ensuring continuity by supporting younger generations. As a result, certain youth-led organizations gradually shift their focus from direct advocacy to education, mentorship, and capacity-building.

An example of this evolution is Beach for Life, founded by Namning-Apisak Tasanee, a young man who began his climate advocacy at the age of 16 in 2012, working with coastal communities in southern Thailand to promote conservation. Today, he continues to provide learning spaces for children and young people, helping them understand climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, Isan Youth Leaders has transitioned into an intergenerational network, where former youth leaders remain engaged in climate and environmental initiatives.

However, not all young activists stay involved indefinitely. Career aspirations and financial pressures often lead members to shift their focus toward professional development. While some groups sustain their activities for years, others evolve into new projects, giving rise to independent organizations with distinct environmental priorities. Green Talent Generation and Carbon Farming Academy, for example, emerged from the same youth network but developed into separate initiatives with unique approaches to climate action. Similarly, members of Angel New Gen moved on to higher education and other social causes, demonstrating how activism continues in different forms.

Despite their networks, youth climate groups face significant coordination challenges due to their diverse membership across schools, universities, and provinces. Finding suitable meeting times is difficult, as members must juggle academic schedules and extracurricular commitments. Geographic distance and inadequate transportation further complicate in-person gatherings, as seen with Isan Youth Leaders, whose members are spread across northeastern provinces. Additionally, the varied backgrounds of participants, including students and working graduates, add to the complexity of organizing collective activities.



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# CHAPTER | 3

## Overview of Youth-Led and Youth-Serving Organizations in Climate and Environmental Action

## 3.1 Levels of Youth Leadership in Climate and Environmental Organizations

Based on the desk review and direct interviews with youth leaders conducted during the research timeframe, this study identified **110 youth-led** and **19 youth-serving organizations** actively working on climate and environmental issues across Thailand. These organizations engage in a wide range of activities, addressing both direct climate challenges and climate-related themes. Their focus areas include climate education and awareness-raising, adaptation and mitigation, policy advocacy, climate justice, and green skills development.

To distinguish between **youth-led** and **youth-serving** organizations, the study categorizes them into four levels of youth leadership, illustrating the varied structures within Thailand's youth climate organizations and highlighting the different degrees of autonomy, influence, and institutional support that shape young people's engagement in environmental action:

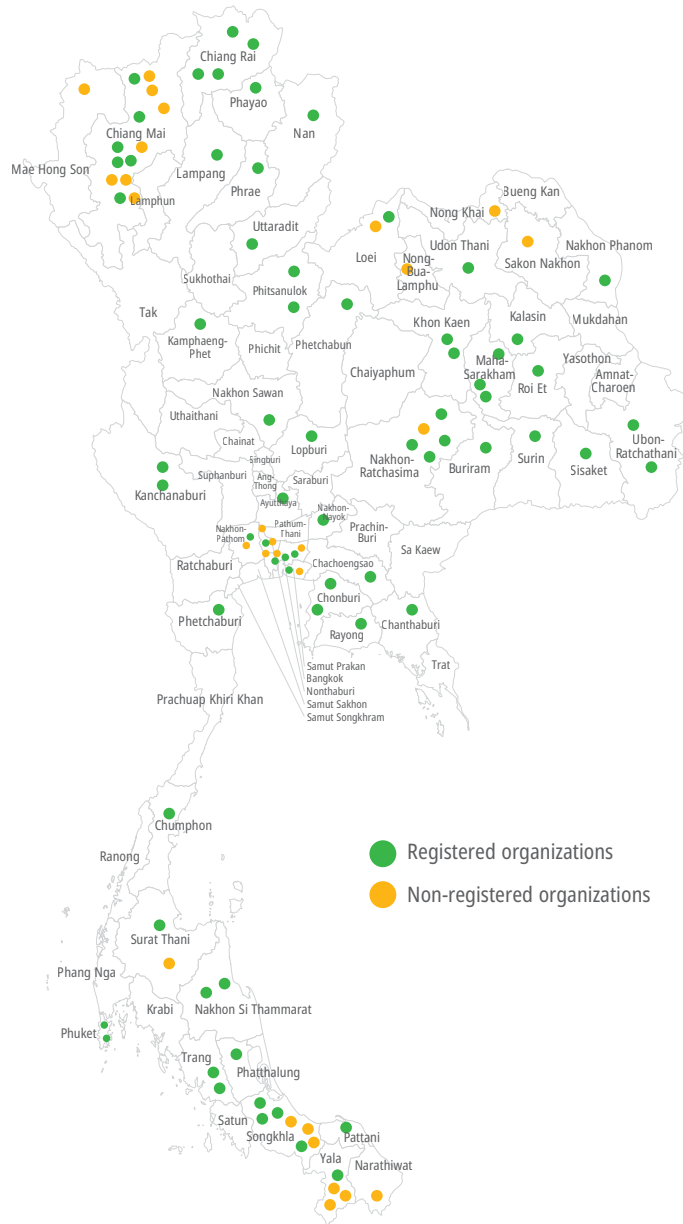
- a) Youth-Led Organizations (Independent and Autonomous):** These organizations are founded, structured, and entirely managed by young people, operating with full autonomy in decision-making and implementation. Youth members design their own organizational structures, working methods, and initiatives without external intervention. Their independence allows them to be highly flexible and responsive to emerging environmental challenges. Examples include Green Power Gangster Thailand in Northern Thailand, and Seed of Development in the Deep South.
- b) Predominantly Youth-Led Organizations (Youth-Driven with Advisory Support):** These organizations maintain strong youth leadership but receive guidance and advisory support from older members or mentors. While they may have been initiated by either young people or adults, youth retain significant ownership of projects and activities. They lead the planning, execution, and direction of initiatives, developing leadership and organizational skills in the process. Senior members act as supportive advisors, stepping in only when necessary while ensuring that youth voices remain central to decision-making. Examples include the Salween Youth Network and most university-based environmental clubs across Thailand.
- c) Partially Youth-Led Organizations:** These organizations operate within pre-existing institutional frameworks, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community networks, or educational institutions, where adults provide strategic direction while youth play active but secondary roles in implementation. Teachers, lecturers, or senior professionals often oversee activities and guide decision-making, meaning that while young members contribute significantly, their influence over core strategies remains limited. Examples include school-based environmental clubs and structured youth projects within larger organizations.
- d) Youth-Serving Organizations:** Rather than being led by youth, these organizations are designed to support and empower young people by providing opportunities, training, and resources. While adults take the lead in designing programmes and strategies, young people are encouraged to engage meaningfully and take on leadership roles within specific initiatives. These organizations often act as platforms for youth participation, amplifying their voices in environmental and climate advocacy. Examples include Young Yim, where adult leaders plan activities but allow youth volunteers to implement them, and international organizations like Save the Children and Terre des Hommes Germany, which conduct youth consultations as part of climate policy advocacy.

## 3.2 Types of Youth-led and Youth-serving Organizations

The characteristics of youth-led and youth-serving organizations working on climate and environmental issues in Thailand can be categorized into four main types:

- a) School-Based Climate Clubs:** These groups primarily operate within school settings, often linked to formal climate and environmental activity programmes. Few are independently organized by students. They typically function as time-limited projects, concluding at the end of the school year or when students transition to a different educational level. The database for this study does not include school-based climate clubs due to time constraints and a different research approach, as these clubs operate within the school system and follow its administrative structure.
- b) Registered University Clubs:** Environmental and conservation clubs have been established across most Thai universities since before 1973. These organizations often build connections at regional and national levels, forming networks of like-minded student groups. Many are affiliated with science faculties and receive faculty guidance, reflecting the technical nature of environmental work. University regulations on club establishment vary – some require at least 50 members from diverse faculties, while others need only 20 members. All clubs must have designated advisors or supervisors who provide oversight, ensuring approval for financial expenditures and activities. These clubs receive institutional funding, enabling them to carry out various initiatives. Despite their structured organization, these clubs face challenges in maintaining continuity. The natural four- to five-year university cycle leads to frequent leadership and membership turnover, making it difficult to sustain long-term activities and leadership consistency. The study identifies 85 university clubs across the country. Some institutes may have more than one climate youth led group.
- c) Registered and Unregistered University Groups:** University club regulations, such as membership requirements and the need for designated advisors, can prevent some young people from forming official groups. Registered groups typically consist of 7–15 members and receive less support from universities than official clubs. Unregistered groups operate independently, forming their own identity and direction. Lacking university financial support, they seek external funding from NGOs and businesses to sustain their initiatives. This independence allows them greater autonomy in project selection and operations, ensuring alignment with their core mission and members' interests. Examples include Explorment TU and the Thammasat Vegan Society.
- d) Area-and Issue-Based Youth Groups:** These groups emerge through two primary approaches:
  - 1. Area-Based:** Formed through community networks and regional collectives, such as Beach for Life, which connects coastal communities across Thailand, and Eonson Nature, comprising members from Northeast Thailand.
  - 2. Issue-Based:** Focused on specific environmental and social challenges, including bird species surveys, marine conservation, and indigenous rights. Examples include EV Choice, which promotes clean energy, and Ton Kla Indigenous Children and Youth Network (TKN), which advocates for indigenous cultural and livelihood.

**Figure 1: Types of youth-led and youth-serving climate and environmental organizations (registered and non-registered)**



### 3.3 Geographical Distribution

Youth-led climate organizations in Thailand operate across a diverse geographical landscape, emerging in urban areas where young people benefit from access to resources and rural regions where communities face direct environmental threats. The geographical context plays a significant role in shaping the strategies, focus areas, and challenges of these organizations.

In **urban centres**, youth-led climate activism is policy-oriented, utilizing technology, advocacy networks, and institutional engagement to drive systemic change. These organizations actively lead public awareness campaigns, sustainability initiatives, and climate innovation projects, leveraging digital platforms to mobilize national and international support, secure funding, and connect with global climate movements. However, despite their visibility and outreach, bureaucratic barriers and institutional resistance often limit their ability to translate advocacy into concrete policy changes.

In contrast, **rural and climate-vulnerable communities** experience first-hand environmental degradation due to resource exploitation, large-scale infrastructure projects, and natural disasters. Activism in these areas is deeply community-centred, driven by local survival needs. Youth-led organizations, often emerging in isolated regions, mobilize grassroots resistance to advocate for land rights, conservation, and the protection of traditional livelihoods. Facing challenges such as deforestation, water resource exploitation, and industrial pollution, these groups rely on traditional ecological knowledge, community solidarity, and grassroots mobilization to safeguard their environment and cultural heritage.

In **northern Thailand**, indigenous youth organizations such as the Salween Youth Network in Mae Hong Son and Tak and the Kaboedin Youth Group in Chiang Mai's mountainous areas advocate for forest conservation, land rights, and air quality improvement. These communities face persistent environmental risks, including annual PM 2.5 air pollution and natural disasters, such as the severe flooding which occurred in 2024. Additionally, hydropower projects (Pongpai, 2024) and coal mining expansion threaten their ecosystems, forcing young activists to push back against unsustainable development.

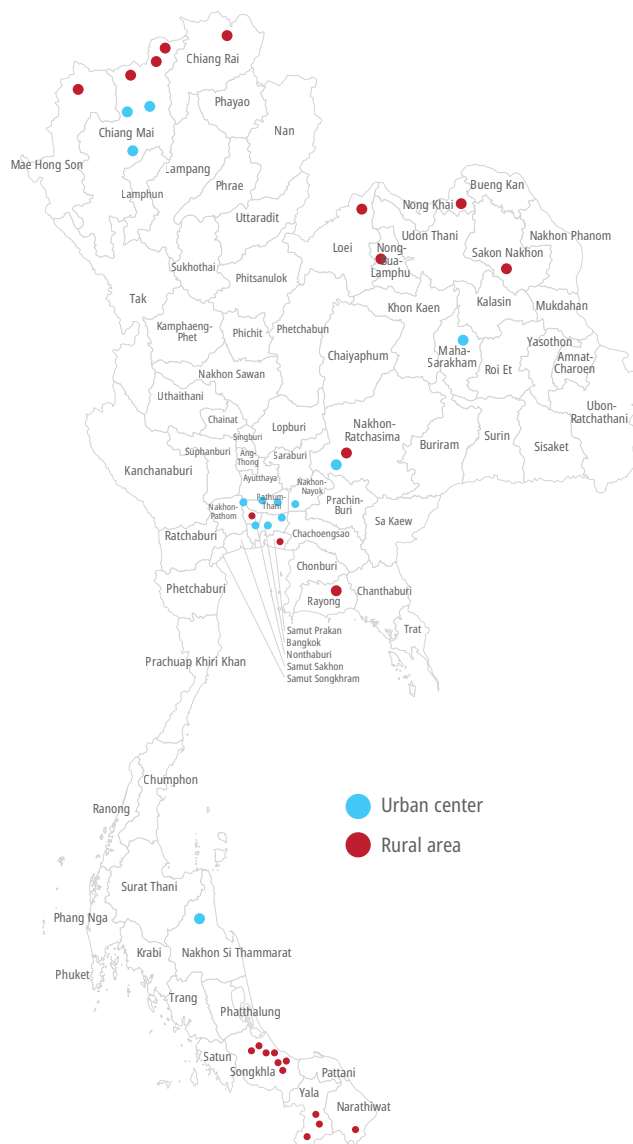
In **northeastern Thailand**, the Hug Mae Khong Youth Group in Loei and Nong Khai provinces fights to protect the Mekong River Basin, a region under pressure from rapid hydropower expansion. Large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly hydropower dams and sand mining, contribute to riverbank erosion, reduced fish stocks, and disrupted local economies, affecting nearly 70 million people who depend on the river (International Crisis Group, 2024).

In **southern Thailand**, Muslim youth are mobilizing against a power plant project that threatens their communities (Isra News Agency, 2024). These groups are based in environmentally sensitive coastal and water-rich areas, where industrial projects risk polluting water sources and damaging marine ecosystems. Despite cultural and language barriers, young activists are advocating for community-led conservation strategies and pushing for sustainable alternatives to harmful development projects.

**Table 1: Geographical distribution of youth-led and youth-serving climate and environmental organizations by urban centre and rural area**

REGIONS	URBAN CENTRE	RURAL AREA
Northern Thailand	Chiang Mai (3)	Chiang Mai (3), Chiang Rai (1), Mae Hong Son (1)
Central	Bangkok (6), Nakhon Nayok (1)	Bangkok (2)
Northeastern Thailand	Nakhon Ratchasima (1)	Nakhon Ratchasima (1), Loei (1), Nong Bua Lamphu (1), Sakon Nakhon (1), Nong Khai (1)
Eastern Thailand	None	Rayong (1)
Southern Thailand	Surat Thani (1)	Songkhla (7), Yala (3), Narathiwat (1)
Western Thailand	None	None
Western Thailand	None	None

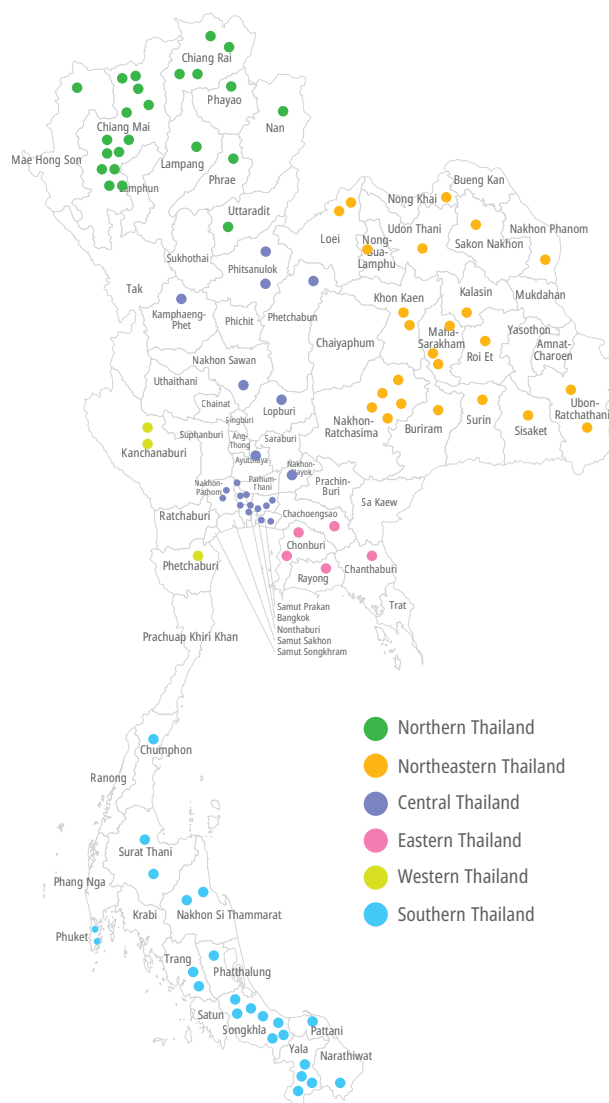
**Figure 2: Geographical distribution of youth-led and youth-serving climate and environmental organizations by urban centre and rural area**



**Table 2: Geographical distribution of youth-led and youth-serving climate and environmental organizations by region**

REGIONS	PROVINCES
Northern Thailand	Chiang Mai (13), Lampang (1), Uttaradit (1), Phrae (1), Nan (1), Phayao (1), Chiang Rai (4), Mae Hong Son (1)
Central Thailand	Bangkok (26), Nakhon Pathom (3), Nonthaburi (1), Pathum Thani (6), Kamphaeng Phet (1), Nakhon Sawan (1), Phetchabun (1), Phitsanulok (2), Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya (1), Lopburi (1), Nakhon Nayok (1)
Northeastern Thailand	Kalasin (1), Khon Kaen (2), Nakhon Phanom (1), Nakhon Ratchasima (5), Buriram (1), Maha Sarakham (3), Roi Et (1), Loei (2), Sasaki (1), Sakon Nakhon (1), Surin (1), Nong Khai (1), Nongbua Lamphu (1), Udon Thani (1), Ubon Ratchathani (2)
Eastern Thailand	Chachoengsao (1), Chanthaburi (1), Chonburi (2), Rayong (1)
Southern Thailand	Chumphon (1), Nakhon Si Thammarat (2), Narathiwat (1), Pattani (1), Phatthalung (1), Phuket (2), Songkhla (7), Surat Thani (2), Trang (2), Yala (4)
Western Thailand	Phetchaburi (1), Kanchanaburi (2)

**Figure 3: Geographical distribution of youth-led and youth-serving climate and environmental organizations by region**



## 3.4 Primary Focus Areas

Youth-led climate organizations in Thailand engage in a diverse range of initiatives, addressing both environmental challenges and systemic issues through education, direct action, advocacy, and youth engagement. Their work reflects a holistic approach, recognizing that effective climate action must integrate awareness, practical solutions, policy reform, and the mobilization of young people at all levels.

- a) Climate Education and Awareness:** Youth-led organizations prioritize climate education through creative and accessible approaches that simplify complex environmental concepts for the public. Social media platforms play a key role in disseminating engaging, easy-to-understand climate information, reaching a broad audience through infographics, child-friendly materials, and simplified research-based content. Beyond digital outreach, experiential learning is central to their approach. Many youth groups organize camping trips, hiking excursions, bird-watching expeditions, and interactive surveys as ways to foster a deeper connection with nature. Some also incorporate art-based activities, such as painting and drawing leaves, to raise awareness in creative ways. Additionally, these organizations help communities understand how climate change directly affects their economic security, food systems, and daily lives by linking scientific knowledge to real-world experiences.
- b) Direct Climate Action:** Direct climate action among Thai youth includes both mitigation and adaptation efforts. Many organizations engage in practical mitigation projects such as tree planting, small-scale dam construction, and community waste separation campaigns, which yield immediate ecological benefits. Others focus on long-term behavioural changes, advocating for sustainable consumer habits like reducing plastic use and promoting reusable containers. A common starting point for many young climate activists is personal and household-level action, such as waste segregation and sustainable consumption choices. These small yet impactful steps often expand into school- and university-led initiatives, where students implement regular garbage collection programmes, sometimes scheduled on Sundays, Buddhist holidays, or during festival activities, as a means of instilling environmental responsibility in their communities.
- c) Climate Justice and Policy Advocacy:** Some youth groups, particularly those in climate-affected areas, focus on climate justice and policy reform, recognizing the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on vulnerable communities. These groups conduct scientific research and community data collection, documenting biodiversity loss, climate shifts, and pollution levels to create evidence-based arguments for policy action. Beyond national concerns, youth-led advocacy often takes on a regional perspective, addressing cross-border environmental challenges such as dam construction and industrial expansion. Many organizations campaign against large-scale industrial projects, such as mining and hydropower developments, that threaten ecosystems and local livelihoods. These groups frequently integrate their environmental campaigns with human rights and legal awareness initiatives, ensuring that community voices are represented at the national policy level.
- d) Youth Engagement and Network Building:** A defining feature of Thai youth climate organizations is their emphasis on youth participation and movement-building. These organizations intentionally connect youth across different geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, forming networks that amplify their collective impact. Notable examples include the Children and Youth Climate Council, GYBN Thailand, and indigenous youth groups, which provide platforms for young people to engage in climate governance, share resources, and strengthen advocacy efforts. Many youth groups also adopt science-driven approaches, conducting community species surveys and publishing scientific data through social media and public seminars to influence public discourse on climate change. Meanwhile, university-based clubs, particularly those within science faculties, spearhead clean energy and technology initiatives, leveraging their technical expertise to promote innovative solutions.

## 3.5 Funding and Other Forms of Support

Youth-led organizations secure funding and collaboration support for their climate initiatives through a variety of channels. These funding sources can be categorized as follows:

### Governmental Support

Both national and local government agencies provide financial assistance. Examples include:

- The DCCE Green Youth Programme and DCY funding for provincial CYCTs through the Shelter for Children and Families, enabling them to implement their own projects.
- The Thai Health Promotion Foundation, which offers open grants for organizations proposing innovative projects that aim to shift public values.
- My Hometown World Learning Centre in Songkhla province, which collaborates with Subdistrict Health Promotion Hospitals for well-being-related activities.
- The EESD Academy, which provides training for school staff and students.

### Academic Institutions

University-registered clubs and student groups typically receive semester-based funding, contingent upon proposal submission and approval.

### Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Many youth-led organizations receive grants from local and international NGOs. For example, international youth-serving organizations like World Vision and Save the Children frequently allocate funds to youth initiatives that align with their programme priorities. These funds are often distributed through community-based organizations or directly to youth groups.

### Embassy Grants

Some embassies offer grant programmes to support youth initiatives. The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Seeds for the Future programme, under the U.S. government, provides grants for youth-led projects in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Isan Youth Leader, for example, launched their youth-led project with YSEALI funding. However, many embassy funding opportunities require proficiency in English or the language of the respective embassy's country.

### Corporate Funding

Some youth-led organizations receive financial support from the private sector through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and marketing budgets.

## Public Contributions and Self-Fundraising

Many youth organizations conduct independent fundraising efforts, including:

- **Street Performances:** A 24-year-old female youth activist from southern Thailand shared: *“We go street busking in public markets and fairs during our university breaks. We divide the fundraising teams by province, covering all the markets we can reach. The activity team does their job, and the fundraising team does theirs. The money comes in and goes out so fast.”*
- **Entrepreneurial Initiatives:** Young people produce and sell merchandise such as T-shirts, crafts, and postcards to generate funding. Indigenous youth groups, like the Kaboedin Youth Group, for example, create and sell woven textiles, not only as a fundraising tool but also to preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
- **Eco-tourism and Environmental Education Packages:** Some youth-serving organizations have diversified their income sources by developing eco-tourism initiatives and environmental education programmes that generate both financial resources and social impact.

## Beyond Financial Assistance: Additional Support for Youth Initiatives

Aside from direct funding, youth-led organizations benefit from partnerships that provide essential resources, including technical expertise, venue access, stationery supplies and training opportunities.

Despite the variety of funding sources available, many youth-led organizations still struggle with limited financial resources to fully implement their initiatives. A 24-year-old-male youth activist from a community-based youth group explained: *“We made hats to sell and raise money for our project. We had to plan, how many hats do we need to sell to cover our costs? If it wasn't enough, we'd look for other solutions, like hosting training sessions or activities and charging a small registration fee to support us.”*



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# CHAPTER | 4

## **Bridging Perspectives – Government and Youth Views on Youth Engagement in Climate and Environmental Action**

A survey conducted by UNICEF Thailand through the U-Report Climate Action Poll and Suan Dusit Poll between August and October 2024 revealed a significant gap between young people's interest in climate action and their actual engagement. While 89 per cent of youth expressed an interest in addressing climate change, only 34 per cent reported being actively involved in climate and environmental initiatives. This means that despite their interest, two thirds of respondents have not engaged in climate-related activities.

The survey identified several barriers contributing to this gap, including a lack of opportunities and resources, limited access to information and participation channels, insufficient knowledge and problem-solving skills, and time constraints due to academic and personal responsibilities. Geographical distance also poses a challenge, further limiting youth engagement. Additionally, a major obstacle cited by young people is that their voices and proposed solutions are often not genuinely heard, with little to no action taken to reflect their needs and recommendations.

At the same time, the survey revealed that young people in Thailand recognize their role in addressing climate change in various ways, including adopting sustainable behaviours, implementing climate action projects, raising awareness through different platforms, and engaging in policy discussions. Some youth expressed a desire to better understand how they can effectively participate and ensure their actions contribute to meaningful change.

This disconnect between youth interest and active participation underscores the need for a deeper examination of the structural, financial, and institutional barriers that hinder meaningful youth engagement in climate action. By exploring the perspectives of both government stakeholders and young people, this section highlights the opportunities and challenges in fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and impactful youth climate movement in Thailand.

## 4.1 The Role of Youth in Climate Action

Both government stakeholders and young people agree that youth play an increasingly significant role in addressing climate change in Thailand. Government officials recognize that young people effectively use digital tools and social media to raise awareness, initiate campaigns, and mobilize their peers. Through initiatives like the Green Youth programme, youth-led groups have demonstrated strong organizational skills, setting clear objectives, conducting impact assessments, and forming strategic partnerships.

These collaborations extend beyond youth networks, engaging local businesses and schools in sustainability efforts. For example, in one Green Youth project focused on reducing single-use plastics, students from environmental clubs successfully promoted waste separation initiatives in university shops. They showcased their ability to establish clear goals, measure impact, and even develop applications to support their efforts. Some interviewees also noted that participation in the programme led to personal behavioural changes, such as carrying reusable water bottles and reducing plastic bag use, further reinforcing young people's role as effective climate and environmental changemakers.

While government stakeholders commend youth involvement, they also observe that most youth-led initiatives focus primarily on awareness-raising and localized mitigation activities, such as waste segregation and air pollution advocacy, rather than long-term policy engagement. Some officials believe this narrow focus stems from limited access to technical expertise, while young people argue that short-term funding cycles constrain their ability to engage in policy-level advocacy. Government grants often require measurable short-term impact, such as immediate reductions in plastic waste or carbon emissions, making it difficult for youth groups to invest in long-term, systemic climate action.

Young people, on the other hand, see their engagement as a direct response to climate threats affecting their communities. Many youth from rural and climate-vulnerable areas emphasize that activism is not a choice but a necessity, as they witness firsthand the effects of extreme weather, resource exploitation, and environmental degradation. However, they acknowledge that their ability to act is often constrained by financial instability and lack of institutional support.

## 4.2 Challenges in Youth-Government Collaboration

### Lack of Recognition for Youth

Young people shared that they often feel dismissed by adults, who perceive them as inexperienced and lacking the necessary capacity to contribute meaningfully. *“When adults treat us as childish and doubt our abilities, it damages our confidence and self-belief. Their lack of trust makes it difficult for us to maintain faith in our own capabilities,”* shared a 19-year-old LGBTQI+ youth activist. Others reported that when they take the initiative to advocate for policy change, they are sometimes accused of being “hired” by NGOs, a narrative that they feel is deliberately used to undermine their credibility and diminish their efforts.

Additionally, some youth believe that their initiatives are often evaluated through a narrow lens, where adults focus solely on tangible outputs rather than recognizing the value of these efforts as learning processes that build leadership and civic engagement. *“Lots of youth initiatives are either narrowly framed or unfairly criticized. I wonder if we need to do more to raise awareness about youth potential among adults?”* questioned a 19-year-old male from Northern Thailand.

For many young people, the perceived lack of trust from policymakers and institutions discourages their engagement in climate advocacy. *“When we share our suggestions, adults often dismiss us by claiming we’re childish and demanding academic evidence to support our recommendations. It feels like our perspectives are consistently disregarded,”* remarked a 22-year-old female activist. These concerns highlight how young people feel their contributions are undervalued, ultimately discouraging them from sustained participation in decision-making processes. Without meaningful recognition, many fear that youth engagement risks becoming performative rather than impactful.

### Security and Privacy Concerns

Young people express frustration at the bureaucratic barriers and security issues that limit their ability to engage with institutions.

For example, youth-led groups operating outside formal education settings, particularly in rural or politically sensitive areas, report being monitored or restricted by local authorities. Young people describe how youth networks are closely watched by security officers, including through photo surveillance, and require mandatory permission at the community or provincial level for any activities.

Some youth groups in the Southern Border Provinces and along the Thailand-Myanmar border state that security forces monitor their activities closely, requiring them to submit participant lists or seek multiple layers of approval before conducting community events. *“Drones fly over our meetings at night. Security officers photograph us constantly. We live in fear of being labelled criminals,”* shared a 24-year-old from the Southern Border Provinces. Similarly, a 24-year-old male from the Muslim community explained, *“To receive financial support from local authorities, we are required to provide comprehensive personal data of all participants. As a result, we prefer to fundraise for our own activities.”*

Beyond direct surveillance, some respondents highlighted how government agencies actively discourage young people from discussing political issues, a restriction they believe weakens meaningful climate action. *“When communicating with funding agencies, we’re pressured to use only positive language and avoid political discussions, but this approach is counterproductive. By avoiding the real issues, we render our campaigns ineffective,”* said a 22-year-old female from Central Thailand.

Others stressed the inseparability of political and environmental issues. *“Adults repeatedly advise me to steer clear of political commentary. However, politics and the climate crisis are fundamentally inseparable. Good governance is essential for addressing environmental rights. If political systems were truly responsive, we could openly advocate for our right to a healthy environment,”* remarked a 24-year-old indigenous female activist.

## Gaps in Knowledge, Mentorship and Capacity Building

While many young activists develop valuable skills in policy advocacy, data collection, and financial management, they often find mentorship opportunities lacking, particularly for community-based youth groups outside university networks. Without sustained guidance, many struggle to expand their impact and navigate the complexities of climate action effectively.

Despite growing awareness of climate change among Thai youth, significant knowledge gaps persist. While many young people understand basic climate concepts, they often struggle to connect environmental issues to broader policy frameworks or recognize opportunities for meaningful youth engagement. Their understanding frequently lacks the depth needed to grasp how climate change intersects with social, economic, and political challenges, both within Thailand and globally.

A major challenge youth organizations face is the difficulty in accessing experts who can provide specialized knowledge in areas such as carbon farming, biodiversity conservation, and climate justice litigation. *“We desperately lack guidance. We’re young, motivated, and eager to learn, but there’s no one to support us,”* shared a 21-year-old activist from Central Thailand.

While government agencies occasionally provide adult participants for youth forums, young activists stress the need for long-term mentorship, rather than one-off guest lectures that offer little in terms of sustained capacity-building. From the government’s perspective, officials acknowledge the enthusiasm and growing expertise of young activists but recognize the challenges in providing continuous mentorship and structured support. Some cite limited resources and the need to align with existing government programmes, while others suggest that youth networks could play a more proactive role in engaging experts and forming partnerships with universities, research institutes, and professional organizations. However, young people argue that these connections remain difficult to establish without initial guidance and institutional support.

Beyond access to expertise, financial sustainability remains a major challenge for many youth groups. During focus group discussions, young people emphasized their need for technical support and mentorship in grant writing and financial management. While some are aware of funding opportunities, they struggle with drafting proposals, budgeting, and navigating application processes. *“We know there are grants available, but without the skills to write proposals or manage finances, we can’t access them,”* noted a young activist.

Limited English proficiency further exacerbates the issue, as many funding applications require strong English reading and writing skills, making it harder for youth-led groups to compete for international grants.

Additionally, both youth activists and government officials recognize that funding mechanisms often favour organizations with proven track records, making it difficult for emerging youth groups to secure financial resources. While government representatives acknowledge the need for more structured funding opportunities, some express concerns about accountability and transparency in youth-led initiatives, particularly those that operate informally or outside recognized institutions.

Both youth activists and government officials agree that closing these gaps is critical to strengthening youth-led climate action. A more structured and inclusive approach to mentorship and funding, one that provides sustained technical support, accessible funding pathways, and stronger institutional partnerships, would empower young people to drive meaningful and lasting change.

## Funding Challenges

Youth climate organizations face persistent challenges in securing funding, which limits their ability to sustain and expand their initiatives. Many operate within isolated networks, making it difficult to access broader financial support. Even when funding opportunities exist, navigating complex application processes proves to be a major obstacle, leaving many youth groups uncertain about where to seek assistance or how to meet eligibility requirements.

From the perspective of young activists, short-term and fragmented funding cycles create instability, making it difficult to establish long-term projects with lasting environmental impact. When initial funding runs out, many initiatives are forced to end prematurely. Strict state procurement regulations further hinder implementation, often preventing the timely purchase of essential materials. *“Funding agencies usually look for organizations with proven experience and demonstrated impact, but we are just starting. We need space and support to launch our initiatives. It took us time and effort to finally receive financial support”* shared a 21-year-old male from Northern Thailand. Many young people believe that early-stage funding should be more accessible to allow emerging youth-led initiatives to develop before being held to stringent performance metrics.

Government officials acknowledge these concerns but emphasize that funding allocation must comply with regulations to ensure transparency and accountability. Some representatives suggest that youth organizations could benefit from closer collaboration with institutions that can provide guidance on financial processes and administrative support. However, young people argue that bureaucratic hurdles make it difficult for smaller, independent youth groups to access funding, leaving them dependent on self-financing or informal donations. A 22-year-old female youth from Bangkok shared, *“We need to learn how to write funding proposals. Climate and environmental funding in Thailand is limited, so we are increasingly looking to international sources. But most of us don't even know who provides these funds. Established groups have their networks and understand funding requirements, but independent groups like ours have to find our own way.”*

While some youth groups have successfully partnered with international organizations such as UNICEF, others note that government involvement in funding processes often introduces additional administrative hurdles. Approval procedures and reporting requirements can delay or restrict fund disbursement, creating inefficiencies in project execution. Government agencies stress the importance of accountability and structured financial management, but young activists call for more flexible and accessible funding mechanisms that allow grassroots initiatives to thrive. Addressing these funding barriers will be critical to ensuring that youth-led climate action achieves long-term and meaningful impact.

Beyond direct support from CSOs, many youth climate groups struggle with restrictive funding conditions. Interviewees reported that grants often cover only short-term needs, such as stationery or venue rental, with budgets too limited to support sustainable initiatives. Most funding cycles last between two to six months, preventing youth-led organizations from designing long-term projects. Additionally, funding applications frequently require extensive documentation, which many youth groups lack the capacity to provide.

Youth representatives from university-based environmental clubs noted that institutional support is often tied to strict geographic limitations, restricting them from engaging with environmental issues or networks outside their region. One female activist from Bangkok described the rigid nature of funding applications: *“The proposal template asks for the names of speakers, but it's too early for us to provide that information. We need to secure funding before we can even invite resource people. The application is rigid, with predetermined questions and measurable indicators, leaving no space to explain our vision or the deeper impact of our project.”*

Both youth activists and government officials recognize the urgent need to improve access to sustainable funding. While governments prioritize financial oversight, young people advocate for more youth-friendly grant processes that allow flexibility, support early-stage initiatives, and foster meaningful climate action. Bridging these gaps will require collaboration between youth networks, CSOs, and institutions to create funding mechanisms that empower young climate leaders and ensure the long-term success of their efforts.

## Lack of Inclusivity

Both government agencies and youth groups recognize the importance of inclusive participation in climate action. Government officials highlight ongoing efforts to engage underrepresented youth by partnering with CSOs to reach indigenous communities, youth from low-income backgrounds, and children with disabilities. For example, DCY has collaborated with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities to improve accessibility, while the DCCE has worked with community-based organizations to support youth engagement in rural areas.

However, youth activists remain critical of the depth and effectiveness of these initiatives. While many climate youth groups actively work with marginalized communities, they argue that government programmes often favour urban-based youth and those with strong institutional affiliations, leaving grassroots groups with limited visibility and access to government support. As a result, many youth-led organizations in rural areas struggle to participate in national climate discussions, despite their direct experience with environmental challenges.

Although government agencies emphasize non-discrimination and gender inclusivity, youth activists feel that gender representation and LGBTQ+ inclusion are not systematically ensured in climate policymaking spaces. They note that participation is often based on self-selection rather than intentional outreach, leading to the overrepresentation of certain demographics while rural and non-English-speaking youth are frequently excluded from high-profile opportunities, such as international climate conferences.

Even when policies exist to promote youth representation in climate forums, young people feel that these mechanisms are not consistently followed. One respondent noted that authority figures sometimes bypass established selection processes, appointing youth representatives through quota systems or personal networks rather than through open and transparent procedures. Additionally, many young people believe that climate representation is dominated by youth from urban centres, with those from rural and climate-affected areas often overlooked. Language barriers further restrict participation, as some youth with valuable perspectives are excluded simply due to limited English proficiency, preventing them from contributing meaningfully to national and international climate discussions.

These concerns highlight the need for more deliberate and inclusive strategies that ensure diverse youth voices, especially those from rural, indigenous, and marginalized backgrounds, are actively represented in climate decision-making spaces.

## Lack of Effective Monitoring and Evaluation

A major obstacle in youth-led climate action is the lack of robust M&E mechanisms that accurately capture the impact of youth initiatives. The gap between government-driven assessment frameworks and the informal tracking methods used by young activists makes it difficult to recognize, scale, and sustain youth engagement in climate efforts.

Government agencies typically rely on structured, quantitative M&E processes that prioritize measurable indicators such as participation numbers, grant applications, and environmental outcomes like carbon emission reductions or waste management improvements. Programmes are assessed using formal tools, including participant feedback surveys and predefined metrics tied to funding cycles. However, these methods often emphasize short-term, tangible results, overlooking broader impacts such as behavioural change, awareness-building, and long-term environmental stewardship.

On the other hand, most youth-led organizations lack formal M&E structures due to limited resources and the temporary nature of many initiatives. Without the capacity to conduct in-depth impact assessments, they rely on alternative methods to measure success, such as tracking social media engagement, participant numbers, and the energy and enthusiasm observed during activities. While these informal indicators reflect community interest and mobilization, they do not meet the standard reporting requirements of government agencies or donors, making it harder for youth groups to secure long-term funding and institutional support.

This disconnect between youth and institutional M&E approaches creates a significant barrier to recognizing and sustaining youth-led climate action. Young activists struggle to provide the quantifiable evidence that funders and policymakers demand, while government agencies often overlook qualitative successes that are critical to long-term environmental and social change. Without a more inclusive and adaptable evaluation framework, many impactful youth initiatives risk remaining undervalued and unsupported.

# CHAPTER | 5

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role young people in Thailand play in addressing climate and environmental challenges. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations are driving awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and community-based initiatives, demonstrating their commitment to environmental sustainability. Their efforts span from grassroots activism to engagement in national and global climate discussions, reinforcing their position as key stakeholders in the fight against climate change.

Young people recognize climate change as an urgent issue and are eager to contribute their energy, creativity, and innovative approaches to climate action. However, they face significant barriers, including limited access to financial resources, restrictive regulatory frameworks, and insufficient institutional support. While government agencies express a willingness to engage youth in climate initiatives, existing funding mechanisms and bureaucratic processes often hinder effective collaboration. Young activists find it difficult to secure sustainable funding due to complex application processes, short-term grant cycles, and rigid procurement regulations that do not align with the operational structures of youth-led organizations.

The study also highlights a critical gap in mentorship and technical support. Many youth organizations struggle to access expertise in areas such as policy advocacy, project management, and technical climate solutions. Government agencies and CSOs can play a more active role in providing capacity-building opportunities that equip young people with the necessary skills to sustain and scale their initiatives.

Another key challenge identified is the disconnect between youth and institutional M&E frameworks. While government agencies prioritize quantitative impact assessments, youth-led organizations often rely on informal tracking methods such as social media engagement and community feedback. The lack of standardized evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult for young activists to demonstrate their impact in a way that aligns with funding and policy requirements, limiting their ability to secure long-term support.

Despite these challenges, young people continue to push for more meaningful engagement in climate policy and decision-making. They seek opportunities to influence policies at all levels, ensuring their voices are considered in climate governance. However, concerns remain about the inclusivity of youth representation. Many rural, indigenous, and marginalized youth face barriers to participation due to language limitations, financial constraints, and systemic exclusion from formal decision-making processes. Ensuring diverse and equitable representation in climate dialogues is essential for fostering inclusive and effective youth participation.

While some government and institutional actors recognize the potential of youth-led climate initiatives, there is still a prevalent perception that young people lack the necessary expertise, experience, or professionalism to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions. Many youth activists report encountering skepticism from adults who see their involvement as symbolic rather than substantive. This perception often results in youth being given minor roles in decision-making processes or being excluded from key policy discussions. Overcoming these biases requires a shift in how youth contributions are valued, ensuring that young voices are seen as legitimate and necessary in shaping climate solutions.

To address these gaps, the study calls for a more integrated approach that strengthens collaboration between youth, government agencies, and CSOs. Sustainable funding mechanisms, capacity-building initiatives, and inclusive policy frameworks must be established to support youth-led climate action. Creating safe spaces for youth activism, ensuring transparency in funding allocation, and implementing participatory evaluation methods will be crucial in amplifying the impact of youth-led efforts.

Ultimately, empowering young people as equal partners in climate action requires a fundamental shift in perception, recognizing them not just as beneficiaries of climate policies but as essential contributors to sustainable solutions. By fostering a supportive ecosystem that values youth leadership, Thailand can harness the potential of its young generation to drive meaningful and lasting change in climate and environmental sustainability.

## 5.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Institutionalize youth participation in climate governance

Young people must have a seat at the table in climate decision-making processes. This requires formal mechanisms that ensure youth representation in climate policymaking, from national strategies to local governance. Youth engagement should not be tokenistic but integrated into structured advisory roles where their contributions are valued and acted upon.

To advance this, the following actions are recommended:

- Institutionalize youth representation by creating permanent youth advisory roles within national and local climate bodies.
- Develop youth-inclusive climate policies that mandate consultations with youth-led organizations before finalizing national climate strategies and action plans.
- Simplify bureaucratic barriers that prevent youth from engaging in formal climate policymaking spaces, ensuring accessibility to consultations, negotiations, and funding streams.
- Build the capacity of policymakers and government officials to effectively engage with youth in climate governance by providing training on youth participation frameworks, intergenerational dialogue, and inclusive policymaking.
- Provide leadership training for youth activists to enhance their ability to navigate institutional structures and effectively advocate for policy change.

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*Our youth group is led by high school students. Despite our age and limited experience, we are ready to contribute to impactful solutions. We urge adults to have confidence in our capabilities rather than dismissing us as 'just students' who can't get things done. With an open mind and heart, give us the chance to prove what we can accomplish.”*

*Male, 19, Northern Thailand*

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## Recommendation 2: Develop inclusive and accessible climate engagement platforms and mechanisms

Participation in climate governance must be accessible to all young people, not just those in urban centres or with institutional connections. Rural, indigenous, and marginalized youth must have equal opportunities to engage in climate discussions and policy advocacy. Expanding outreach, providing financial and logistical support for participation, and addressing language barriers will help ensure that climate action is truly representative of all communities.

To advance this, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop inclusive participation policies that mandate diverse representation in national and international climate forums, ensuring young people from marginalized communities have a voice.
- Provide financial and logistical support to enable rural and underprivileged youth to attend decision-making meetings, consultations, and climate conferences.
- Strengthen outreach programmes to engage youth from historically excluded communities and offer capacity-building tailored to their unique needs and challenges.
- Incorporate multiple languages in climate communication and training programmes to ensure accessibility for non-English and non-Thai-speaking youth.

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*Youth representation should include those outside Bangkok. Youth representatives from across the country should have opportunities to participate, as every young person's voice is valuable and deserves to be heard. Youth representatives need meaningful spaces to speak up and contribute their recommendations, regardless of where they live.*

*Female, 23, Central Thailand*

*National conferences like TCAT should include dedicated youth zones similar to COP, not merely as PR activities, but as substantive spaces where youth from across the country can convene, share best practices, and voice their perspectives. It is essential to integrate youth spaces within mainstream platforms rather than relegating them to isolated hotel conference rooms. Climate and environmental issues encompass diverse topics such as green skills, clean energy, air pollution, and water management, all requiring dedicated space and time for in-depth exploration and discussion.*

*Male, 24, Southern Thailand*

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### Recommendation 3: Strengthen protection for youth climate activists

Young people advocating for environmental justice must be safeguarded from political risks, intimidation, and restrictions on activism. Clear policies should be established to protect youth from surveillance and retaliation, ensuring that they can organize and advocate without fear. Safe spaces – both physical and digital – are essential to enable young activists to collaborate freely and push for change without facing threats or suppression.

To advance this, the following actions are recommended:

- Facilitate safe physical and digital spaces where youth can organize, discuss, and engage in climate action without risk of harm or exclusion.
- Develop and enforce policies that protect youth activists from harassment, intimidation, and undue surveillance, particularly in politically sensitive regions.
- Establish confidential reporting and support systems for youth facing threats, ensuring access to legal, financial, and mental health resources.
- Incorporate human rights and environmental activism protections into climate education programmes.

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*During the activity, security officers were observing us. Even though they appeared friendly, their presence made young people uncomfortable. The students were scared, they felt threatened. We hope the state will stop monitoring youth initiatives. We are simply gathering to create positive change in our communities.*

*Female, 22, Southern Thailand*

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## Recommendation 4: Empower youth through capacity-building and mentorship

Young climate leaders need structured training and mentorship to strengthen their advocacy, project management, and policy engagement skills. Capacity-building efforts must move beyond ad-hoc training sessions toward long-term, institutionalized models that equip youth with the technical expertise, leadership capabilities, and access needed to influence policy and drive impactful change.

To achieve this, the following actions are recommended:

- Integrate capacity-building into national climate policies by establishing dedicated programmes that provide training and mentorship in proposal writing and financial literacy to youth-led organizations.
- Develop structured mentorship programmes that pair youth activists with government officials to facilitate knowledge exchange and professional development.
- Create a national youth climate training fund to support ongoing education, leadership development, and technical training for youth organizations, ensuring that resources are accessible to those from diverse backgrounds.
- Streamline bureaucratic processes to enable youth organizations to access government-led training and resources without facing excessive administrative barriers.
- Establish youth advisory roles within relevant government agencies to ensure young leaders are directly involved in shaping climate-related policies and strategies.
- Facilitate regular policy dialogues and working groups where young climate activists can collaborate with policymakers, ensuring their perspectives are integrated into national decision-making processes.

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*There should be a consistent capacity building mechanism from the government and private sector to support youth-led organizations, focusing on skills such as proposal writing and project management. Government funding programmes should not reject youth groups lacking prior project experience but instead provide opportunities for them to learn and develop their skills through collaborative work. Additionally, accessible mentorship and advisory service platforms should be established to guide youth throughout their project development and implementation processes.*

*Male, 22, Central Thailand*

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## Recommendation 5: Create sustainable funding for youth-led climate initiatives

Youth climate organizations need long-term, accessible funding to sustain and expand their impact. Dedicated financial support mechanisms should be established, ensuring that funding is flexible, responsive to youth-led priorities, and free from bureaucratic barriers that prevent young organizations from accessing resources. Removing restrictive grant requirements and simplifying application processes will enable more youth groups to secure the support they need.

To advance these goals, the following actions are recommended:

- Establish dedicated funding streams for youth-led climate initiatives within national and local environmental budgets, ensuring sustained financial support.
- Allocate budget for youth-led climate activities that are comparable to public hearing activities – i.e. as a government-supported activity separate from other youth-led initiatives – to ensure sustainability.
- Simplify grant application processes to reduce bureaucratic barriers and make funding accessible to grassroots youth organizations.
- Develop micro-grant programmes that provide small-scale, flexible funding for early-stage initiatives, allowing youth groups to test and refine their projects.
- Ensure transparency in funding allocation by implementing clear guidelines and youth-inclusive decision-making processes.
- Facilitate public-private partnerships to mobilize corporate sponsorship and private sector contributions to youth-led climate action.

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*Due to budget constraints, we are unable to implement activities as originally planned or envisioned. The government agency has strict regulations and indicators. While we understand the need for monitoring and transparency, the implementation process is overly restrictive, particularly with procurement rules and spending regulations. Greater flexibility in these regulations would be more supportive and enable more effective implementation.*

*Female, 23, Central Thailand*

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## Recommendation 6: Bridge the gap between youth and institutional M&E systems

A more inclusive and responsive impact assessment framework is needed to effectively recognize and validate youth-led climate action. While government agencies and donors often emphasize quantitative metrics, youth-led initiatives tend to rely on informal, community-based tracking methods that capture outcomes such as awareness-raising, behavioural change, and local engagement. This mismatch in evaluation approaches can result in youth contributions being undervalued or overlooked. Bridging this gap requires the development of inclusive, flexible M&E frameworks that reflect the diverse ways in which youth make an impact.

To support this shift, the following actions are recommended:

- Establish participatory M&E frameworks that integrate both quantitative and qualitative indicators, ensuring that youth-led climate action is evaluated holistically.
- Develop youth-friendly reporting mechanisms that allow young activists to document impact using storytelling, case studies, and multimedia, alongside traditional metrics.
- Provide technical training on impact measurement for youth-led organizations, equipping them with skills to track progress in alignment with donor and government standards.
- Create national youth climate action databases that document and showcase the contributions of youth-led initiatives, increasing their visibility and credibility.

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*Our group still lacks knowledge in many areas. For example, after the activity, we had to write a report, but we were unsure where to start or whom to submit it to. It would be empowering if someone could come to our community to guide us, helping us understand clear indicators and how to set goals for our activities.”*

*Male, 24, Southern Thailand*

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