



Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Local Community Youth of Latin America United in Defense of Ancestral Territories

A call from the youth voices of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru



Mural drawn by the participants of the Latin American Regional Youth Workshop, September 6-7, 2023.
Photo by Monica Orjuela for RRI

Introduction

We are the generation that embraces the richness of our ancestral roots, aware that our identity is intrinsically linked to the territories we inhabit. We unite in a deep commitment to the defense of our ancestral territories, guided by the traditional knowledge and cosmovisions of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples, Palenqueros, Raizales, Quilombolos, and the knowledge of local communities. In this unity, we find the strength and determination to protect the socio-biodiversity of our territories for the next generations and are reborn.

In understanding the current context faced by young people from Ethnic peoples and local communities—including displacement and forced migration; gender, racial, environmental and class discrimination; economic marginalization; armed conflict; lack of recognition as political subjects; loss of the right to territorial autonomy; extractive activities of natural resources (mining, hydrocarbons, agro-industrial, tourism, urban, genetic); and ancestral knowledge—we demand to implement articulated actions on territorial rights, conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and climate change.



On territorial rights

Considering the context we face as young people in our ancestral territories, we propose the following actions to be carried out at the regional level:

- Create a training process on regulatory, institutional, and community frameworks on territorial rights that includes learning about the opportunities and limitations of the legal frameworks of each country as well as international instruments related to ancestral territories.
- Strengthen territorial unity and autonomy within the framework of guaranteeing collective land ownership and tenure rights, articulated with the implementation of Ethnic peoples' and local communities' self-governing instruments.



On conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity

Recognizing the importance of biodiversity conservation, restoration, and regeneration requires the active participation of young people in leadership and decision-making at the political, organizational, and community levels. To guarantee sustainability, we prioritize the following actions:

- Strengthen ancestral, ecological knowledge of biodiversity among Ethnic peoples and local communities through knowledge exchange networks based on communities' own means of communication.
- Promote the participation of young people with a gender perspective in decision-making on sustainable management strategies for our territories within self-governing instruments.



On climate change

Given the levels of transformation of our territories and the serious effects on our food security and sovereignty models (agri-food, fishing, and harvesting systems), we consider it a priority to make progress in the following areas:

- Formation of ecological enterprises for the recovery and management of ancestral seeds, production of compost and organic fertilizers, agroforestry nurseries of native species, family gardens, and medicinal plants that allow the restoration of territory and contribute to climate change adaptation. These enterprises should be supported by strategies that allow income generation for young people with an entrepreneurial approach that can be replicated in different territories.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies must be built with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant People, Palenquero, Raizal, Quilombolo, and local community youth in decision-making spaces promoted by government agendas in the countries of Latin America.
- Ensure the participation of young people alongside traditional leaders of their organizations in decision-making spaces regarding the management of financial resources, including carbon credits derived from the carbon footprint.

For all of this, we consider it fundamental to strengthen intercultural training schools for young people in territorial rights, biodiversity management and conservation, and climate change adaptation and mitigation (including permaculture, restoration, etc.). This would allow the empowerment of young people from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local communities to participate in decision-making spaces and exercise their responsibilities, roles, and commitments in the defense of their ancestral territories.

We also propose our articulation with already formalized youth networks with which we can exchange knowledge and experiences.

This will only be possible by guaranteeing the protection of the lives of our environmental and territorial leaders, their non-criminalization, and addressing the impartial application of justice in the face of violations of their universal human rights.



Participants of the Latin American Regional Youth Workshop, September 6-7, 2023.
Photo by Monica Orjuela for RRI

**The participants of the Latin American regional youth workshop
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This manifesto was signed in Bogotá, Colombia on September 7, 2023.

**BECAUSE TERRITORY IS LIFE AND LIFE IS NOT
POSSIBLE WITHOUT TERRITORY**



**RIGHTS +
RESOURCES**