

Yale JACKSON SCHOOL
OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Unseen Dimensions



of the Climate Crisis

Mapping Nuance, Experiences, and Untold Stories

Yale Emerging Climate Leaders Fellowship

Tanya Kak, Juliana Vélez

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Acknowledgment

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the individuals who generously took the time to respond to our survey. Your words, reflections, and lived experiences have given shape to this work, helping us uncover the unseen dimensions of climate change. Each response carries not just information, but wisdom, care, and courage. This project would not exist without your voices, and we are honored to hold and share them here.

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Unseen Dimensions

“You can’t measure the impact of a pause. You can’t report a silence. But sometimes, the quietest moments are what allow the deepest change to take root.”

From our survey

Manager, Communication & Design
India (Uttarkhand and Himachal Pradesh)

of the Climate Crisis

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“One of the most overlooked aspects of climate impact is the quiet circle of care that surrounds any meaningful community-led change. It rarely makes it into reports or metrics, but that is where the real transformation begins - through slow, steady work rooted in trust and human connection.”

Scrappy Initiative
Photo credit: Going to School

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Foreword

I've spent more than twenty years drawing on quantitative analysis from the International Energy Agency and others to document the climate crisis and to suggest corrective actions. So when Yale Climate Fellows Tanya Kak and Juliana Velez proposed examining climate from a more anecdotal, storytelling perspective, I was admittedly skeptical.

What new insights could they possibly bring to the table?

As you can appreciate from examining the attached article, my instincts were wholly misplaced.

The **"Unseen Dimensions of Climate Change"** weaves a compelling argument in favor of placing the human dimension and shared responsibility at the centerpiece of effective climate action. Weaving together the experiences of dozens of practitioners from across the Global South, Juliana and Tanya assemble perspectives of community, land, memory, wisdom, and trust that are frequently overlooked by mainstream climate analysts but are essential to frame practical climate solutions.

Heartfelt congratulations to our talented Yale Climate Fellows for identifying these previously ignored dimensions of the climate crisis which must be tackled in any successful approach to resolving this critical issue.

Paul Simmons

Founding Director

Yale Emerging Climate Leaders Fellowship

Introduction

Climate action, as defined by the Sustainable Development Goals, is to **"take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts"** (United Nations, n.d.). It entails implementing coordinated measures to significantly reduce the climate crisis and its consequences. Yet climate change, far from being solely an environmental issue, has proven to be a socio-economic challenge that cuts across all the systems underpinning our society.

Coordinated efforts to prevent, delay, or mitigate it require solutions to highly complex, multi-scale, and multi-sector problems, yet the ways we measure and respond to it often fail to capture its full reality. The dominant reliance on metrics, emission reductions achieved, hectares reforested, resilience indices improved, provides clarity and accountability, but also risks narrowing our field of vision. In privileging what can be counted, we overlook what cannot: the lived experiences, cultural contexts, and hidden stories that give texture and meaning to climate action.

Emerging scholarship reinforces this gap. For example, research from Hulme (2011) argues that climate change is not simply a scientific or technical problem, but also a cultural and political one, experienced differently across contexts. Similarly, adaptation research highlights that quantitative indices can obscure inequities, local knowledge, and community resilience strategies that resist reduction into numerical form (Eriksen et al., 2021).

The key challenge this project seeks to uncover is how to make visible, and actionable, the unseen dimensions of climate change's impacts.

These are the dimensions that rarely surface in policy or project frameworks but deeply influence outcomes: shifts in identity and belonging, the erosion or renewal of trust, stories of loss and resilience, and the capacity of communities and institutions to relate to one another and work together across differences. In essence, relational capacity is as critical as technical capacity for effective and enduring climate action - without it, even the most innovative solutions risk faltering.

We are motivated, therefore, by a conviction that climate action must be understood and acted upon, not only through the lens of metrics, but also through the narratives, connections, and relational practices that

The key challenge this project seeks to uncover is how to make visible, and actionable, the unseen dimensions of climate change's impacts.

“As humans we are moved to action by emotion. And so I would try to tell a story of positive emotions in relation to nature/ climate - love, empathy, curiosity. These emotions in relation to both living things (birds, trees, etc), as well as the abiotic (rain on your face, the warmth of the sun, the majesty of mountains).”

In surfacing these dimensions, we hope to shift not only how climate action is tracked, but how it is imagined

sustain real change. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) has recognized, responses to climate change require systemic transformations in values, behaviors, and worldviews alongside technological and financial solutions. Those transformations cannot be meaningfully captured by numbers alone.

As a starting point, this project began with a hunch and genuine curiosity about how others working in this field perceive the immeasurable dimensions of climate action—and whether, to any extent, there are commonalities in those aspects we are unable to name or quantify. Our research interest centered on understanding whether there are key elements, shared across geographies, sectors, and roles, that could be brought to the attention of implementers early in the project cycle, with the aim of incorporating them from the outset and perhaps identifying visions of success (rather than metrics) that could be nurtured during implementation. This project, therefore, asks:

- How do people working in different geographies and sectors name and value what is difficult to quantify - the dimensions of climate action tied to belonging, identity, and interdependence?
- What stories and experiences remain invisible in conventional project evaluations, and why are they crucial for enduring impact?
- How might an expansive view of success- rooted in both measurable outcomes and relational capacity- reshape future climate initiatives?

The results we’ve found speak not only to overarching themes in the unseen aspects of climate action, but also to a deeply human component rooted in connection, belonging, identity, and interdependence. Addressing these questions is not merely academic. It speaks directly to how we must show up differently at this moment in history. Policymakers must expand the frameworks by which they design and monitor interventions; funders must be open to supporting processes and stories that defy easy quantification; civil society organizations must honor localized, culturally embedded ways of defining success; and communities must be recognized not just as beneficiaries of projects, but as co-authors of the climate future.

The urgency of this work comes from an understanding that numbers can only take us so far. What sustains commitment over decades, what builds trust in fractured communities, what drives the courage to change ways of life - these often live in the realm of the unmeasurable. In surfacing these dimensions, we hope to shift not only how climate action is tracked, but how it is imagined: as a collective endeavor grounded in human connection, mutual care, and shared responsibility for the planet we hold in common.

Methodology

Our research methodology is quite straightforward. It draws primarily on the testimonies of people who, like us, work in the field of climate action. Our goal was to listen to other practitioners in an unstructured way, using open-ended questions that allowed for flexible interpretation. This approach enabled us to gather responses rich in narrative detail, nuanced reflections, and—most importantly—testimonies that were not geared toward any specific outcome, but instead emerged from a genuine curiosity about what is out there. In the sections that follow, we delve into the variables we considered important to examine, the survey questions that framed them, and the results we obtained.

Research variables

The immeasurable is defined as “incapable of being measured; indefinitely extensive” (Merriam-Webster); “very great in size or amount, impossible to measure” (Encyclopaedia Britannica); and “of such great magnitude that it cannot be measured, not subject to measurement or valuation” (RAE). Examples of the immeasurable include abstract qualities (such as love, beauty, suffering, or happiness), values of worth (such as relationships, cultural heritage, or knowledge), and scales of magnitude (such as time, the universe, or human potential). The immeasurable is part of the human experience and of the way we approach reality; it also carries meaning in how we relate both to others and to our environment.

In seeking to understand the immeasurable dimensions of climate action, we looked at aspects of implementation that cannot be captured through traditional forms of measurement. However, this does not mean that they cannot be made visible. These include the sense of purpose and meaning people find in working toward climate change prevention; the subtle enabling conditions that grow out of relationships and connection; the unseen work or labor that often goes unrecognized precisely because it cannot be measured; and the narratives that weave projects together through collectives and communities. With these in mind, we invited people to reflect on the following variables of the immeasurable.

- **Meaning/purpose:** understood as the perceived meaning/values attached to climate or conservation work (drivers of significance: personal fulfillment, social impact, collective achievement, justice, etc.). **Survey question:** *When you think about the most meaningful change you’ve been part of in climate or conservation work, what made it meaningful?*
- **Conditions/enablers:** framed as the enabling and sustaining factors of climate/conservation impact (resources, policies, partnerships,

community ownership, cultural or institutional support). **Survey question:** *What conditions made that change possible — and what helped it last?*

- **Unpacking climate impact and the recognition gap:** Perceived as the recognition gap in climate impact (unacknowledged contributions, invisible or undervalued actions, reframing of what counts as “impact”). **Survey question:** *What’s one experience, action, or change you’ve witnessed that you believe is climate impact — but hasn’t been named or recognized as such?*
- **Intangible narratives:** Seen as the narratives of intangible or unquantifiable climate/conservation impact (personal or collective stories that resist measurement but carry symbolic, cultural, or emotional weight). **Survey question:** *If you could create your own “exhibit” in a Museum of Unmeasurable Things, what story would you tell?*

Survey

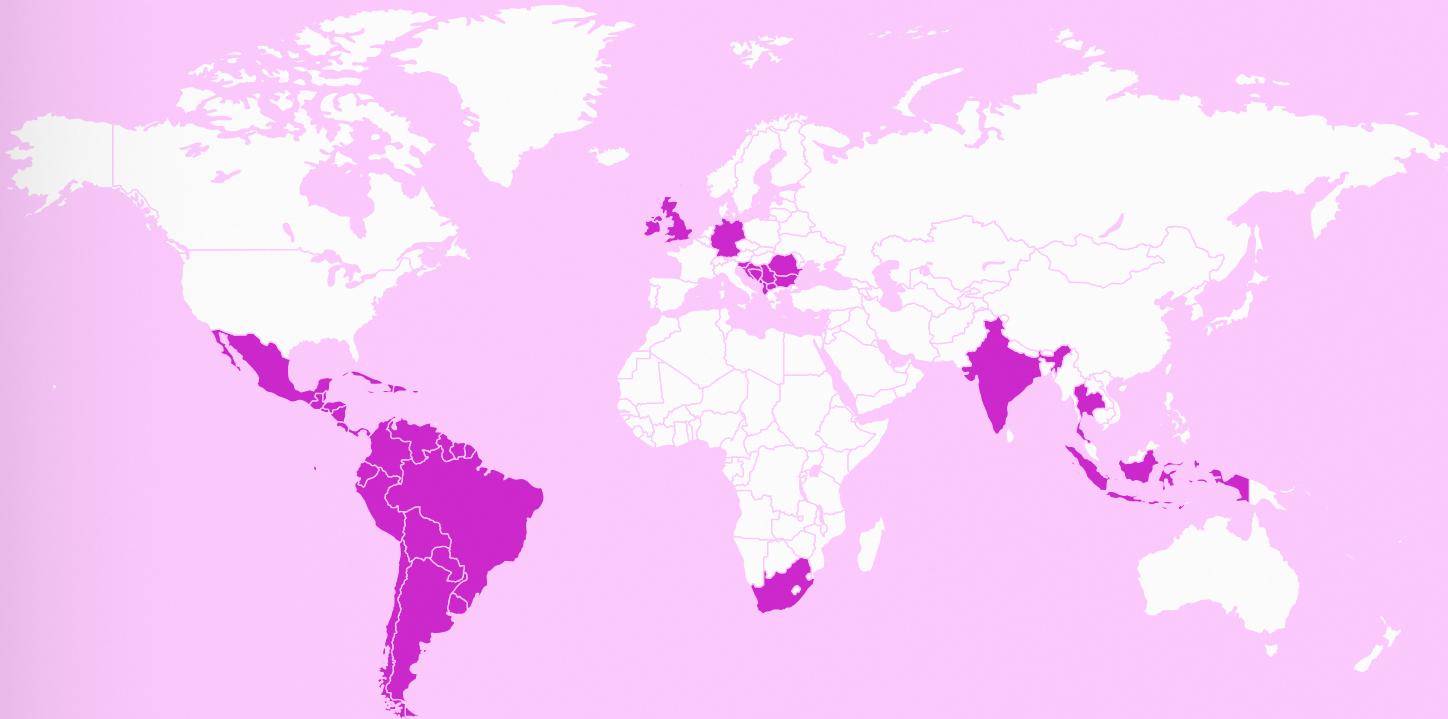
To better understand how practitioners perceive the immeasurable aspects of climate action, we conducted an online survey with 35 respondents from the global south (June–August 2025). The technical note from the survey can be found in the following table:

Technical Note	
Sample size	35 responses
Population surveyed	Climate practitioners
Sampling method	Respondents were reached through professional networks (LinkedIn and targeted email outreach), which reflects a convenience sample rather than a representative one. Participation was voluntary.
Mode of data collection	Online survey using google forms. The questionnaire was available both in English and Spanish.
Dates of field work	1st of June to 16th of August of 2025
Limitations / caveats	Results are not representative of the entire population, and findings reflect perceptions of participants only.

Doni & Men carrying Mountains
Photo credit: Waste Warriors

Respondent Profile

- **Dominant organisational profile:** Nearly half the respondents (≈49%) are based in non-profit organisations, with the remainder distributed across independent practitioners (≈20%), academia (≈11%), government/multilateral roles (≈9%), and a small set affiliated with the private sector or unaffiliated initiatives. This signals that civil society is a primary site where “immeasurable” dimensions of climate action are being surfaced and documented.
- **Geographic focus:** Most respondents are based in India (21 people; 58%), confirming it as the strongest hub of responses. Latin America follows with 10 people (28%)—including Colombia (4), Mexico (4), and other countries in the region (2). Additional perspectives came from South Africa, Indonesia, Southeast Europe, Thailand, Germany, and the United Kingdom (1 each; 3% respectively).
- **Experience levels:** Respondents represent an even split between early- to mid-career professionals (2–5 years: 31%) and highly experienced practitioners (10+ years: 31%), with an additional 20% having 6–10 years of experience. This balance ensures that reflections capture both fresh, emerging perspectives and the seasoned insights of practitioners who have witnessed cycles of climate policy and practice evolve.
- **Thematic focus areas:** The largest proportion of respondents (≈26%) work on systems change, movement building, and advocacy, pointing to a collective emphasis on transformation at systemic and cultural levels. At the same time, there is substantial representation from adaptation and resilience (17%), conservation and biodiversity (17%), and justice-oriented approaches (14%). Smaller but significant clusters work on education and storytelling (11%) and technical mitigation fields (9%).



After reviewing the responses to the four guiding questions—on meaning and purpose, enabling conditions, unpacking climate impacts and the recognition gap, and intangible narratives—we found that participants were pointing toward something larger than isolated variables.

Across stories, reflections, and testimonies, five cross-cutting themes emerged with striking consistency. Together, they reveal the unseen but essential dimensions of climate action that often make the tangible possible: **the relational, emotional, cultural, and imaginative forces that shape how change takes root.** These themes do not fit neatly into metrics or frameworks, yet they are the unifying threads that sustain transformation. In the next section, we present them as the elements of immeasurable climate action.



Top 5 cross-cutting themes



Weaving Whole-System Tapestries: The Relational Fabric of Community and Land

Climate change is not a single problem with a single fix—it is a web. **Transformative climate action emerges not from isolated technical solutions, but from relational ecosystems where emotion, ecology, politics, and imagination intertwine.** The most meaningful change is never just technical; it is deeply human and layered.

As one participant reflected: *“What made the change meaningful was this holistic awareness—that climate action is a complex, collective endeavor embedded in social, psychological, and political dimensions.”* Another described the power of gathering: *“To be able to host each other and meet in both imaginations of other liberatory worlds and grief of the current collapsing one.”*

This resonates with what scholars have long argued: worldviews are an underappreciated element of adaptation, shaping how people understand the causes of climate-related phenomena and influencing the acceptability of responses (Leonard et al., 2013). In many contexts, weather and climate are understood not only as physical processes but as part of a universe infused with spiritual significance, where variability and change may be interpreted through cultural, social, or religious norms (Leck, 2017).

Meaningful change, then, happens when solutions are co-created with communities, respecting their lived realities and addressing both psychological and political barriers. Without accounting for these socio-cultural beliefs, major gaps emerge in understanding how people perceive and respond to risks—sometimes even leading to maladaptation (Leck, 2017).

Stewardship does not emerge from technical plans alone, but from interpersonal trust, love of land, and cultural continuity—none of which fit neatly into logframes or KPIs. Climate change is multi-dimensional and deeply entangled with broader power relations, political-economic structures, and social processes. Over-simplistic explanations fail to capture these complexities, yet it is precisely within this web—where the cultural, the political, and the ecological converge—that transformative climate action can take root.

“To be able to host each other and meet in both imaginations of other liberatory worlds and grief of the current collapsing one.”

Invitation: Can we reimagine climate work not as carbon-reduction transactions, but as ecologies of transformation?

Narrative to highlight: Climate action is both place-specific and community-specific because it is rooted in the interconnection of relationships—woven into the relational fabric of community and land.

“What knowledges take up disproportionate space in how we govern? What voices are dismissed when we define climate science only through Western paradigms?”

Invitation: These voices do not call for token inclusion within existing systems, but for plurality to become the system itself. What would a world look like if it celebrated many truths rather than shying away from them? Whose wisdom lives outside our current frameworks, and how might we create space to honor it?

Narrative to highlight: Stewardship of ancestral knowledge is climate action. It demands labor, organization, and protection. Communities bring knowledge as an asset to climate implementation, and our challenge is to learn how to honor and embed this wisdom in project planning and other modes of decision making.



**Unearthing Tacit Knowledge & Custodial Wisdom:
Quiet acts of knowledge and resistance**

Climate resilience does not live only in data models or policy frameworks—it lives in soil, memory, and story. Yet Indigenous, local, and community-held knowledge systems are often the first casualties of climate and development agendas. Partners point to a dual crisis: ecological degradation and epistemicide—the systematic erasure of ways of knowing.

As one participant warned: *“Climate breakdown and ecocide are results of epistemicide—the loss of knowledge systems as climate and ecological chaos deepen and authoritarianism rises.”* Another asked: *“What knowledges take up disproportionate space in how we govern? What voices are dismissed when we define climate science only through Western paradigms?”* For many, land and culture remain inseparable: *“Amongst immeasurable things would surely be the stories of our seeds, biocultural foods, and the recipes passed down to sustain the well-being of tribes and cultures.”*

Traditional ecological knowledge is knowledge of the environment derived from the lived experiences and traditions of specific groups. It is dynamic and cumulative, building on past experiences while adapting to changing circumstances (Leonard et al., 2013). Such knowledge is commonly held collectively, though at times entrusted to particular elders, specialists, or lineage groups, and is rooted in societies with deep historical continuity in resource use (Leonard et al., 2013).

These testimonies remind us that quiet acts of knowledge—cultural transmission, intergenerational care, and slow, embodied practice—are themselves forms of climate resistance. They counter extractive systems by preserving alternate, relational futures. As Marrion (2020) notes, culture itself remains a key to successful climate adaptation: Indigenous ways of knowing, especially, hold indispensable insights for interacting with and caring for natural systems—insights that will be pivotal for stabilizing the climate.

Climate resilience, then, can be found in the existing models of these community interactions. To recognize these ancestral acts of stewardship is to understand climate action not as something new to be invented, but as wisdom already held, nurtured, and defended by communities across generations.



Mangrove cleanup day and seed collection
Photo credit: Casa Mangle



Janita Didi in Naitwar Waste Bank
Photo credit: Waste Warriors



The emotional architecture of climate adaptation

Beyond visible destruction, climate change leaves unseen scars. It wounds not only landscapes but also minds, carrying an insidious toll of grief, anxiety, rage, and helplessness. These emotional realities shape how people engage with, resist, or retreat from climate action—and they form part of the very terrain of resilience.

As one respondent reflected: *“One experience I’ve seen that reflects a significant climate impact—but often goes unrecognized—is the surge in mental health challenges linked to environmental anxiety and uncertainty, especially during crises like COVID-19. While we talk a lot about physical impacts like floods or heatwaves, the psychological toll—eco-anxiety, stress about the future, feelings of helplessness—has quietly grown. This emotional and behavioral response deeply affects communities’ resilience and their capacity to engage with climate action. Recognizing mental health as a direct climate impact is crucial for designing holistic responses that support both people and the planet.”*

Another recalled a powerful encounter: *“One moment that stayed with me came during the Urban Climate Festival I curated in Chennai... What made that moment meaningful wasn’t just their honesty—it was the trust in the space we had created. They felt seen. And for me, it shifted something. It reminded me that climate action isn’t just about data or carbon—it’s also about emotional stewardship. Creating spaces where people can speak, grieve, and still find hope together.”*

Yet dominant monitoring and evaluation frameworks tend to privilege “success stories,” while overlooking the quiet but consequential labor of emotion: persisting through burnout, rebuilding trust, and confronting loss. What made transformation possible, as one participant noted, was *“a combination of intention, trust, and the freedom to move beyond rigid frameworks. We had time to listen, to sit with discomfort, and to let the unexpected surface. That breathing room made all the difference.”*

Research echoes this insight: resilience depends not only on external support but also on the internal capacities of communities—their kinship ties, social networks, and traditions of mutual aid—what Heimann & Mallick (2016) term “social capital.” Change, then, does not begin with strategy alone. These quiet acts of care and connection are as vital as technical solutions, for they are the foundations of resilience.

“It reminded me that climate action isn’t just about data or carbon—it’s also about emotional stewardship. Creating spaces where people can speak, grieve, and still find hope together.”

Invitation: What if climate frameworks recognized not only outputs and outcomes, but also the emotional costs of adaptation? How might our work shift if we held space for grief, rage, and exhaustion alongside hope and achievement?

Narrative to highlight: The climate crisis is also a mental health crisis, undermining well-being across communities and stakeholders. Emotional resilience is vital to sustain action and to honor the grief and difficult emotions that must be integrated into climate frameworks.

“This work is slow. It does not always look like action. But it is where trust is born. It is how the community begins to shape the solution themselves”

Invitation: What would it take to fund trust as an outcome—long-term, flexible, people-first support that allows for inquiry, listening, course correction, and reimagination? Can grant structures leave room for emergence, not just answers?

Narrative to highlight: To cultivate trust is to cultivate representation. Transformation requires time and space to create with the communities most affected by climate impacts, who hold wisdom in how paradigms shift. Prescriptive solutions will not take root; only approaches grounded in trust, reciprocity, and co-creation can achieve the depth of change the climate crisis demands.



Cultivating Trust & Adaptive Alchemy: Language and Representation

Wherever lasting transformation takes root, trust is its soil. Climate action flourishes not through rigid KPIs or prescriptive outputs, but through relationships, flexibility, and co-creation. The most meaningful impact stories come from spaces where people are trusted to listen, adapt, and design together.

As one practitioner described from work in remote mountain communities: *“There is often a sharp difference in language, in worldviews, and in lived experience between those who live the challenges and those who come in to support. As someone walking alongside these communities, the role is not to lead but to learn. To sit through the silences. To return even when no one speaks. To share space, often over endless cups of pahadi chai, without rushing toward a solution”*. As put by another responder *“This work is slow. It does not always look like action. But it is where trust is born. It is how the community begins to shape the solution themselves”*.

Trust is inseparable from representation. Multilingual and oral traditions often carry epistemologies—ways of knowing land and climate—that conventional frameworks filter out. Honoring these traditions means creating space for communities not as beneficiaries but as equal co-creators of solutions. As Leck (2017) reminds us, cultures are not monolithic but contain “diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action.” Communities draw on this repertoire as a toolkit of habits, skills, and styles to construct their approaches and plans of action.

Scholars have pointed out that we still lack a theoretical framework capable of fully capturing how cultural, ecological, and institutional contexts interact in shaping adaptation practices (Heimann & Mallick, 2016). This makes contextual trust-building even more crucial. It is in the lived practices of listening, waiting, and creating shared space that such frameworks begin to take shape on the ground.

Trust, then, must be built contextually—rooted in traditions and social norms, and attentive to the slow harmonizing of multiple worldviews and languages. True co-creation emerges not from rushing to consensus, but from making time for these voices to encounter one another, and for solutions to grow out of trust itself.



Mangrove cleanup day and seed collection
Photo credit: Casa Mangle



Janita Didi in Gaichwan
Photo credit: Waste Warriors



Reframing Metrics – The Power of the Unmeasurable: Working in Complexity and Chaos

Not all impact can be plotted on a log frame. **Some of the deepest indicators of transformation—emotional resilience, narrative reclamation, identity shifts—remain invisible to conventional metrics.** Yet these are often where change takes root most profoundly.

As one participant shared: *“Young people used fiction and satire to grieve disappearing wetlands. These weren’t just stories—they were acts of quiet protest, born out of care and frustration.”* Another reflected: *“A woman said storytelling ‘changed her life.’ It won’t appear in a funder report. But something powerful moved.”* Others reminded us of the lived cost: *“This isn’t just weather. This is loss. This is loneliness. This is what climate change feels like.”*

These stories remind us that expressions of dealing with climate change are fluid, shifting, and deeply human. As Leck (2017) notes, “culture has myriad spatial, physical, visual, and emotional expressions” and exists at multiple scales, constantly in flux and open to influence. Interpretations and responses to climate change are therefore not abstract but rooted in social processes and cultural interests (Leck, 2017).

Climate action, then, can be understood as the creation of a new culture: one that is not only technical but lived. As Ensor and Berger (2009) observe, culture can be seen as capital, as creativity, or as a total way of life. In this third sense—*“the sum total of the material and spiritual activities and products of a given social group... a coherent and self-contained system of values and symbols as well as a set of practices reproduced over time”*—climate action becomes inseparable from meaning-making, belonging, and identity.

Climate action unfolds in conditions of complexity and chaos, where change is emergent, contextual, and rarely attributable to a single input. Rigid metrics cannot capture these dynamics, and so much of what matters—trust, meaning, memory—is lost. To measure only what fits into a framework is to miss the deeper transformations that emerge in stories, rituals, grief, satire, and care. These cultural expressions are not peripheral to climate action, they are its very ground.

“This isn’t just weather. This is loss. This is loneliness. This is what climate change feels like.”

Invitation: If climate action’s deepest shifts live in culture, emotion, and story—can we honor them as real impacts? What if stories were treated not as communication, but as ground truths carrying memory, healing, and hope?

Narrative to highlight: Climate action unfolds in uncertainty; rigid metrics miss the flexible results that spark change. Storytelling and creative practices are not side work but central impacts—connecting people, preserving memory, and sustaining transformation toward transformation.



“People who’ve contributed the least to the climate crisis are already doing the most to live within limits. We just haven’t named it yet.”

Recommendations

The following section takes a closer look at how the five cross-cutting themes can be meaningfully integrated into climate implementation. By examining these dimensions, we move beyond narrow outputs to consider the cultural, social, and emotional shifts that ultimately sustain impact and resilience.



Center relationships and place

Approach climate action not as a set of technical transactions but as relational ecosystems. Invest time in co-creation with communities, honoring local contexts, cultural continuity, and emotional realities alongside technical planning.

Actionable steps:

- Require place-based consultations and participatory co-design workshops.
- Build relationship-building time and budget into project timelines.
- Embed cultural and ecological custodians as formal partners in program governance, not just as beneficiaries.

Examples

- Patagonia’s campaign supporting Puelo Patagonia in Chile elevated local NGO leadership over global spotlight.
- The Enlight Foundation’s \$1M multi-year youth climate grants explicitly incorporate mentorship and network support over several years.



Honor diverse knowledge systems

Recognize Indigenous, local, and community-held knowledge as assets, not add-ons. Create mechanisms in projects that protect, value, and embed tacit and ancestral wisdom—acknowledging that safeguarding knowledge is itself climate action.

Actionable steps:

- Establish knowledge councils or advisory boards that include elders, farmers, women, and youth alongside scientists.
- Document and archive oral traditions, rituals, and local practices in community-owned repositories.
- Ensure knowledge integration in monitoring frameworks, so impact assessments include ecological, cultural, and intergenerational perspectives.
- Build teams with social work and communication specialists to strengthen community engagement and co-creation.

Integrate emotional resilience

Acknowledge that the climate crisis is also a mental health crisis. Build space in programs and implementation frameworks to address grief, burnout, and other complex emotions, and to strengthen the emotional resilience of practitioners and communities.



Actionable steps:

- Integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into climate action programs, especially in frontline communities.
- Provide well-being stipends and care infrastructure for practitioners, activists, and volunteers.
- Create community safe spaces (grief circles, storytelling forums, youth art collectives) where emotional realities can be voiced and held
- Train climate practitioners in mental health first aid to address the complex psychosocial dimensions of climate change.

Examples

- La Rolita in Bogotá provided psychosocial support to women bus drivers of electric buses to promote their continuity in good green jobs.
- Climate conversation groups like the Good Grief Network and All We Can Save Circles help people process eco-anxiety collectively and build resilience.
- Techniques like journaling, group sharing, breath work in “climate cafés” have been used effectively to align emotional well-being with action

Fund for trust and adaptability

Advocate for flexible, long-term support that allows projects to adapt, change course, and co-create solutions with communities. Design processes that value trust, reciprocity, and representation as much as measurable outputs.



Actionable steps:

- Shift toward multi-year, unrestricted funding or flexible resourcing models across sectors.
- Introduce adaptive learning reviews that reward pivots, reflection, and innovation instead of penalizing deviations from plans.
- Formalize shared governance structures with communities (co-created budgets, joint decision-making committees).
- Establish citizen oversight systems for long-term projects that are supported by regulatory instruments in their territorial contexts.
- Promote open data systems and public reporting to monitor progress in projects and implementations.

Examples

- The Enlight Foundation and Patchwork Collective’s \$1M, 2–5 year youth climate grants include mentorship and flexible adaptation—valuing relationship over rigid deliverables.
- The Ford Foundation’s BUILD program and the Rohini Nilekani Foundation’s multi-year unrestricted grants offer partners the flexibility and freedom to focus on their larger mission instead of being tied narrowly to misaligned funding opportunities to address a wicked problem like climate change



Expand what counts as impact

Move beyond rigid metrics. Recognize storytelling, creative expression, narrative reclamation, and identity shifts as legitimate outcomes of climate action. Treat communication tools, art, and cultural practices as central vehicles of transformation rather than peripheral activities.

Actionable steps:

- Include storytelling, films, podcasts, exhibitions, and art as eligible budget lines in climate projects.
- Train practitioners to capture narrative and experiential data alongside quantitative metrics.
- Support platforms and networks of storytellers (youth media collectives, Indigenous journalists, community radio) to amplify underrepresented voices

Examples

- Bloomberg Philanthropies funded documentaries like From the Ashes to pair story with data in their environmental campaigns.
- Climate conversation networks generate narrative-based community support and action beyond standard metrics

Taken together, these recommendations point toward a more holistic vision of climate implementation—one that is grounded in relationships, attentive to culture, and responsive to human needs as much as technical ones. They invite us to reimagine climate implementation as more than technical delivery. By broadening what we value—relationships, knowledge, resilience, and expression—we open space for approaches that are flexible, humane, and grounded in context. Such shifts can move us beyond rigid outputs toward living systems of change that honor both people and planet, sustaining impact and justice over time.

If embraced together, these shifts can move climate action from narrow outputs to living ecosystems of change—where technical, emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions work in concert to sustain resilience and justice over time.

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Unseen Dimensions

"You can't measure the impact of a pause. You can't report a silence. But sometimes, the quietest moments are what allow the deepest change to take root."

of the Climate Crisis

Mapping Nuance, Experiences, and Untold Stories