

 Pillar 6.  
**INFLUENCING AND ADVOCACY**

# ARAPYAÚ INSTITUTE

## Incubating initiatives to be stronger advocates for the forests

- **Country:** Brazil
- **Number of staff:** 20
- **Year of incorporation:** 2008
- **Type:** Independent foundation
- **Endowment:** No
- **More information:** [arapyau.org.br](http://arapyau.org.br)

The Arapyau Institute is a Brazilian private social investment foundation with a 15-year history of supporting transformative networks. Arapyau is part of the Maraé ecosystem – a group of companies, not-for-profit and impact investment organisations that are committed to sustainability, have pledged not to invest in fossil fuels and are working to advance sustainable business models.

Guilherme Leal, the founder and primary donor of Arapyau, is the co-founder and co-chairman of the board of Natura – a leading cosmetics manufacturer in Brazil. Natura has been pushing the boundaries of best commercial sustainability practices for decades, prioritising Brazilian biodiversity and engaging local communities in its value chain since its establishment in 1969. This responsible business approach also inspired other creative sustainable ideas from Leal, many of which have since become projects incubated by the Arapyau Institute. The Southern Bahia Territorial Development Programme, for example, started in 2008 from his vision to “make the region a Brazilian benchmark of sustainable development, with reduced inequalities”, by seeking to dynamise the cocoa value chain. This Programme, alongside its Climate Programme, remains the Institute’s main focus.

The central theme for Arapyau’s Climate Programme, established in 2015, is to combat deforestation and address land-use change – the sector responsible for around 70% of Brazil’s greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate

Programme engages various sectors, particularly business, civil society and decision-makers, to design effective public policies and create conditions for forestry-related sustainable businesses to flourish. The Programme consists of three main strategies: network activity, international agenda, and bioeconomy.

## Discovering its DNA: From funder to incubator

After years of experimenting with traditional grantmaking and providing structural assistance to early-stage projects, the Arapyau team identified significant demand for the incubation of more multi-stakeholder networks and initiatives while in their early stages of institutional development. Backed with the expertise and passion to do this, the team recognised that responding to this demand would present a unique opportunity to reach their larger advocacy goal of promoting sustainable practices in Brazil.

Incubating transformative networks has proven to be a useful strategy to mobilise diverse organisations to collaborate on climate advocacy. The Institute usually supports high-impact projects over four to five years. At the beginning of this cycle, it provides a wide range of support, from sharing office space to providing legal advice. Based on the Institute's experience with nascent projects and the demand to professionalise them, incubated initiatives are required to plan to become self-sustainable, thereby enabling Arapyau to move on to supporting other projects to flourish. The Institute is now in the process of systemising its learnings about the different governance structures that they have adopted in multi-stakeholder initiatives, including its strengths and weaknesses.

Arapyau's first incubated initiative was RAPS – Rede de Ação Política pela Sustentabilidade<sup>1</sup> (Political Action Network for Sustainability) – a network of politicians and civic leaders dedicated to helping politicians, regardless of their political affiliations, to include sustainability in their agendas, renew the Brazilian political system and contribute to enhancing democracy. RAPS was founded in 2012 and now counts more than 750 local politicians, 45 members in Congress, and 228 mayors and state governors, affiliated with 29 political parties.

Another multi-stakeholder platform incubated by Arapyau was Coalizão Brasil Clima, Florestas e Agricultura<sup>2</sup> (Brazilian Coalition on Climate, Forests and Agriculture). The Coalition is constituted of more than 300 representatives from the private sector (particularly the financial sector), academia, and civil society. Since

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<sup>1</sup> RAPS – Rede de Ação Política pela Sustentabilidade, <https://www.raps.org.br/>

<sup>2</sup> Coalizão Brasil Clima, Florestas e Agricultura, <https://www.coalizaobr.com.br/home/index.php/sobre-a-coalizao/quem-somos>

2015, they have been joining voices to call for greater Brazilian leadership in a new forestry and agriculture low-carbon economy. The learnings from this initiative led the Institute to other advocacy spin-offs.

After an enormous effort to launch the Coalition's position paper for COP21, a big gap in the Brazilian agriculture and forestry sector became evident: reliable data. Data for policymaking and advocacy is at the core of another initiative incubated by Arapyau and supported by several climate philanthropic organisations: MapBiomass<sup>3</sup>. This high-tech, multi-institutional, scientific-led initiative contributes to public understanding and awareness about the transformation of Brazilian territory.

The interaction between data, science and democracy permeates everything Arapyau supports. Their third initiative is called Uma Concertação pela Amazônia<sup>4</sup> (Amazon Concertation) – a plural and non-partisan network of people, entities and companies formed to seek solutions for the conservation and sustainable development of this territory. Through this initiative, more than 400 engaged leaders, representing dozens of initiatives in defence of the Amazon, convene in a democratic space around the shared goals to increase the impact of their actions, and to generate new proposals and projects to protect the forest and populations living in the region.

## Finding its own climate advocacy voice

During the 2019 UN General Assembly, Arapyau's founder felt compelled to call on businesses, donors and funders, to act against climate change and towards sustainable development in the Amazon region. This moment marks the Institute's shift to establishing a stronger climate advocacy goal as part of its philanthropic mission.

Having incubated many different initiatives and stakeholders, Arapyau must now identify the sustainability focus areas in which it can most effectively use its voice as a philanthropic institution, to contribute to advancing climate debates. When it comes to talking about bioeconomy, Arapyau has a more active public presence. While the Institute tends to keep a low profile, Arapyau's founder actively uses his entrepreneurial experience to seek out decision-makers and high-level networks to raise the climate agenda in non-philanthropic spaces, such as with the B-Team<sup>5</sup> ecosystem (a global collective of business and civil society leaders).

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<sup>3</sup> MapBiomass, <https://mapbiomas.org/en>

<sup>4</sup> Uma Concertação pela Amazônia, <https://concertacaoamazonia.com.br/>

<sup>5</sup> The B-Team, <https://bteam.org/>

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*It does not make sense to have an endowment that would last up to 100 years if the crisis is here now”.*

– RENATA PIAZZON, ARAPYAÚ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Developing Arapyau’s international voice and contribution is the next chapter of the Institute’s advocacy efforts. During the Global Climate Action Summit in 2018, Arapyau signed a joint pledge with 18 other philanthropic organisations to call for an urgent increase of investments to conserve forests and land. In 2021, Arapyau was the first Brazilian institution to sign the International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change and in 2022, they co-hosted a Brazil Summit as part of New York Climate Week.

Arapyau’s climate journey is still unfolding, but one thing for them is clear: now, and not later, is the time to invest in climate collaborative efforts.

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