

RAÍCES Team Wins Gold as the Brazil Station Final of the “2026 Poverty Alleviation Challenge” Concludes

China-Latin America Youth Responding to Global Challenges: 2026 Poverty Alleviation Challenge

Brazil Station Final



Figure: Group photo of distinguished guests, judges, participating teams, and staff

On August 14, 2026, Brazil time, the project evaluation for the final of the “China-Latin America Youth Responding to Global Challenges — 2026 Poverty Alleviation Challenge” was held at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The Poverty Alleviation Challenge is co-hosted by founding organizers including Tsinghua University, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC), Universidad de Chile, and Universidad del Pacífico (Peru). The program is jointly organized by the Embassy of China in Brazil, the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) EAESP, Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH), and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP).

The final was attended by guests including João Torres de Mello Neto, Vice Rector of UFRJ; Chen Taotao, Director of the Latin America Center, Tsinghua University; and Ana Célia Castro, Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

Delivering remarks via video link were Yang Bin, Member of the Standing Committee of the Party Committee, Vice President, Tsinghua University; Zhu Qingqiao, Ambassador of China to Brazil; Marcos Galvão, Ambassador of Brazil to China; Song Yang, Ambassador of China to Peru; Cynthia Sanborn, Director of the Center for China and Asia-Pacific, Universidad del Pacífico (Peru); Lv Xingcan, representative of Envision Group; and Oscar Gaggero, Superintendent Domestic Corporate Affairs of Minera Las Bambas S.A..

Serving as judges were experts and scholars including Jamie Coats, Senior Partner at Wise Decisio; Andréa Daher, Professor at UFRJ; Roberto Emery, Social Responsibility Expert at Petrobras; Silvia Díaz Furtado, Head of R&D and Innovation Programs and Professor at the Technological University of Uruguay; Shao Lei, Dean of Institute for Accessibility Development at Tsinghua University; Jiao Yang, Researcher of Future Laboratory at Tsinghua University; and Marco Nascimento, Deputy Vice-President at Fiocruz.

More than 60 students and faculty from Tsinghua University, UFRJ, and other Chinese and Latin American universities participated in the final. The session was moderated by Professor José Orlando Gomes, Associate Dean for International Affairs at the School of Engineering, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

The program then proceeded to the project presentation session. Six participating teams — BioYield Partners, EcoCycle, Farol, Lab Pau-Brasil, RAÍCES, and The Amazonians — took the stage in sequence to showcase their projects addressing poverty alleviation themes such as education empowerment, community industry, circular economy, public health, and agriculture and infrastructure. Combining preliminary research with cross-cultural perspectives, each team proposed solutions that balanced innovation, feasibility, and long-term impact. The judges conducted in-depth inquiries focusing on dimensions such as problem definition, project logic, stakeholder collaboration, financial sustainability, implementation paths, and experience transfer, with teams responding to each in turn.



Figure: Six teams conducting project presentations and defense sessions in sequence (From top to bottom, left to right in each row: BioYield Partners, EcoCycle, Farol, Lab Pau-Brasil, RAÍCES, and The Amazonians)

After approximately three hours of presentations, judge inquiries, and on-site deliberations, **the Sino-Peruvian transnational team RAÍCES, composed of students from Tsinghua University and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), was awarded the Gold Award.** RAÍCES is an acronym for “Resilient Andean Income through Community Enterprises and Supply Chains,” which aims to enhance the income resilience of residents in the Andean region through the establishment of community enterprises and supply chains. Using the Sacha Tarpuy community forestry project in the Apurímac region of Peru as a point of entry, the team addressed the anticipated mining exit window around 2039, proposing a strategic path to help 34 farming communities transition from corporate dependence toward self-sustaining, community-owned livelihood systems.



Figure: Team RAÍCES winning the Gold Award

Farol and The Amazonians were awarded second and third place respectively, receiving the Silver Awards.

The Farol team created an offline AI education system for Brazil's rural schools, specifically targeting approximately 9,000 schools without network coverage. Utilizing an offline box with a built-in battery that broadcasts its own WiFi and runs a localized Portuguese AI model, the system provides a two-track service for both classroom teaching and after-school community learning. The project is operated by a local Brazilian civil society organization (OSC) and has already confirmed its pilot school in Minas Gerais.

The Amazonians team focused on the Cahuanaciza indigenous community in the Peruvian Amazon to address a double poverty trap caused by the pollution of their only water source: impaired child health and decreased cocoa export quality. Their solution integrates AguaClara gravity water treatment technology with off-grid solar energy and edge AI monitoring, achieving sustainable operations through community autonomy, multi-party collaboration, and local training.



Figure: Award ceremony for the Silver Award teams (Farol and The Amazonians)

EcoCycle, Lab Pau-Brasil, and BioYield Partners were awarded fourth, fifth, and sixth place respectively, receiving the Bronze Awards.

The EcoCycle team is dedicated to building a circular economy recycling network for waste cooking oil in the Pavuna-Meriti basin of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The project aims to solve the “last mile” collection challenge and improve recycling efficiency. By establishing this recycling network, the team creates sustainable income for vulnerable collectors, promotes ecological restoration and poverty alleviation, and contributes to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Lab Pau-Brasil team targets vulnerable households in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro where food insecurity and heat risks overlap. Utilizing satellite thermal infrared data for precise positioning, they deploy a Sichuan strip-intercropping system on 10 square meters of idle concrete ground. By utilizing community-embedded markets to absorb surplus output, the project strives to simultaneously alleviate the three major local challenges: food access, extreme heat, and low income.

The BioYield Partners team developed an AI-driven platform, using the Quilombola community of São Manoel in the state of Pará, Brazil, as a pilot. The project connects a multi-stakeholder mechanism including farmers, enterprises, governments, financial institutions, and universities to provide financing, technology, market access, and traceability support for agroforestry systems. It aims to transform forest resources into sustainable income, helping the community break free from five centuries of structural poverty.



Figure: Award ceremony for the Bronze Award teams (EcoCycle, Lab Pau-Brasil, and BioYield Partners)

In the closing remarks, Professor Chen Taotao encouraged the youth to extend the cross-cultural cooperation from the competition into long-term learning and practice, maintaining continuous research to further deepen their innovative solutions and valuable transnational partnerships. Professor Ana Célia Castro emphasized that the value of the projects lies not only in proposing ideas but also in continuously advancing implementation. She expressed her expectation for teams to further strengthen interaction and cooperation to drive the landing of poverty alleviation projects and attract more stakeholders to join.

The 2026 Poverty Alleviation Challenge received support from the Embassy of China in Brazil, the Consulate General of China in Rio de Janeiro, the Embassy of Brazil in China, the Embassy of China in Chile, the Embassy of Chile in China, the Embassy of China in Peru, and the Embassy of Peru in China. Leading Chinese and international companies and institutions, including Envision Group, CGE Group (Chile), Minera Las Bambas S.A. (Peru), Zhongshan (Beijing) Cultural Industry Co., Ltd., DiDi, China Mobile International (Chile), Kuaishou International Business (KSIB), and

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