

# Seeking **SAFETY**

Learning Brief vol.2, no.1



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# ABOUT

Seeking SAFETY is a focused investment in the ways children and youth actively seek, create, and cultivate safety—especially those who cannot take safety for granted. Our partners are organisations who have been in the community for a long time. These organisations in turn nominated the seven young people who participated in the seeking safety summer programme 2022.

# PARTNERS

The Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF) is a collective challenge to reinvigorate and transform the global children's rights field by building power with youth activists and their allies. As a grantmaking fund and donor learning community, we cultivate innovation and collaboration to dismantle the root causes of children's vulnerability and strengthen the root drivers of their well-being.

Just Beginnings Collaborative is the only activist fund in the world led by and meant for survivors directly impacted by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism—people dedicated to ending childhood sexual harm within their communities and without state intervention.

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# Project Goals

- 1 Advance an understanding of safety from the perspective of children and youth who experience precarity or lack of safety beyond concerns of institutional liability
- 2 Identify and celebrate local opportunities to resource community- and local- level supports for marginalized children and youth beyond an over-reliance on state-defined "child safety"
- 3 Inform policy and practice in the children's rights and protection sector regarding violence prevention and intervention for the most marginalized children and youth
- 4 Uncover tools and practices that build on children and youth resilience and understand safety as a practice and process of negotiation
- 5 Engage in mutual learning and relationship building with children and youth to advance our understanding of the issue of child harm



# In a Brooklyn Brownstone in Summer 2022

Seven young people - all residents of New York City, most of them from migrant American backgrounds - met each other for six weeks. During this time, they deliberated on what safety means, developed a criterion for selecting grantee organisations, wrote up a statement of their values, had meals together, did movement work, watched films, visited an art museum, made collages, and selected community-based organisations whose work delivered on the criterion on safety as they collaboratively articulated.

## Bringing the ethic of youth work to philanthropy

Through all of our work by young people, we try to bring in a commitment to care in philanthropy. You can read the statement on our work and ethic of care [here](#).

During the Seeking Safety Summer, this meant ensuring all participants had MetroCards for the subway system, following up with telephone calls to ensure their well-being, coming up with creative ways to ensure participants are paid - even when they do not have access to traditional banking systems.



# Safety from the perspective of children and youth

The following concepts emerged prominently in Seeking Safety participants' description of what safety means to them. One of the most frequently used terms was 'freedom' - to express themselves, be who they are, to have bodily autonomy and well-being, to stay on the path of their hopes and dreams - through well resourced public schools and having relationships and people to talk to and to have a say in the issues that impact them.

While some descriptions of well-being were aligned with biomedical understandings, of mental health, others approached it in more broader terms. The links between culture and mental health was also highlighted, and the lack of trust in formal systems was also brought up. Seeking Safety Summer was a beginning, and in line with CRIF's learning philosophy, we hope to collaboratively deconstruct these concepts further in the coming months.

having someone to talk to

peer / mutual support

bodily autonomy

well-resourced public schools

expression

\*well-being

**freedom**

decision making by young people impacted by the issue

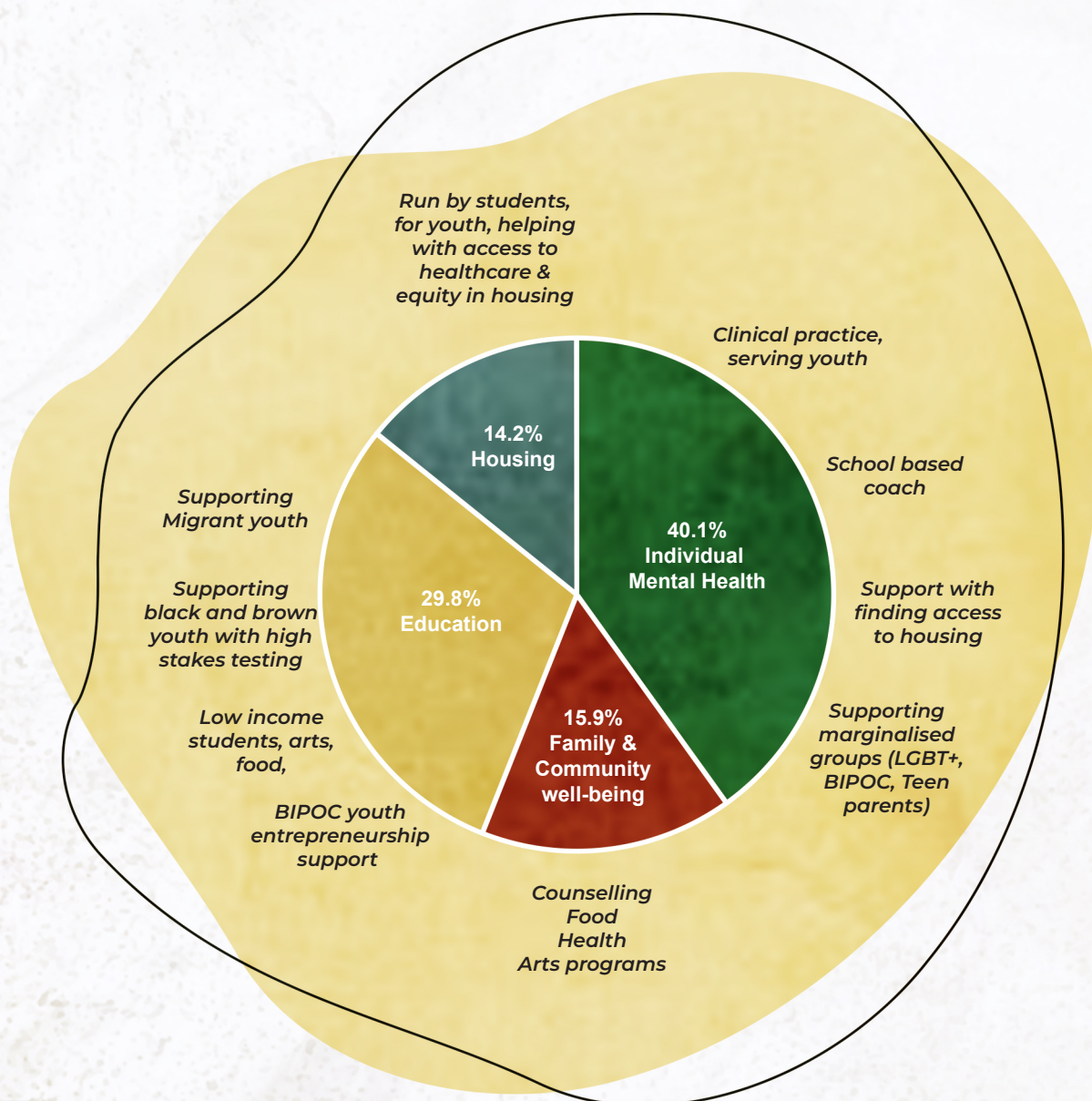


# Identifying and celebrating local community resources

## Seeking Safety Summer 2022

In the Summer of 2022, seven youth who have experience with seeking, creating or cultivating safety joined CRIF to help us understand what safety means from the perspective of young people in Brooklyn and to move \$30,000 to people, places and institutions that create safety for young people in Brooklyn.

## The Awardees



"WE WANTED TO BENEFIT AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE... A BIG IMPACT, TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY - WE WANT IT TO HAVE A DOMINO EFFECT."

# Informing policy and practice

Juxtaposing the perspectives shared by young people during Seeking Safety Summer about what safety means to them, against traditional children's rights discourse, it becomes clear that there is a gulf that divides what helps children and young people experience safety, and international development, humanitarian aid and children's rights sectors' imagination of where the solutions are.

Facilitating access to safety may therefore involve challenging the paternalism inherent in the different structures and vehicles in these sectors that rely on victimhood narratives and the construction of young people as innocent, naive and lacking capacity and expertise. This in turn may also involve challenging the use of 'risk' as a hermeneutic device. The term risk is used frequently - young people are at once 'at risk' (thereby warranting family policing, safeguarding and protection) and a 'risk' themselves (thereby warranting the use of juvenile justice laws).

Centering young people's ideas of safety therefore involves recognising and supporting young people's social power and agency (e.g youth survivor- led advocacy), remembering that 'those closest to the issues are also closest to solutions' and decolonizing approaches to addressing harm.



*Safeguarding and Protection*

*Sexual Violence Against Children*

*Family Policing*

*Juvenile Justice*

*Victimhood narratives*

*Idea of risk*