



# SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

DECEMBER 2023



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## Presenting the Alliance **Amplifying the voices of local philanthropy**



The Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South is a pioneering alliance among local funds supporting community philanthropy operating in the Global South. We believe that communities on the ground play a central role in building sustainable alternatives to the major challenges we currently face. It is the people living in natural territories, rural areas, or peripheral regions of cities who bear the greatest burden of natural resource loss, pollution, and climate-related disasters. They are also the ones who deeply understand the territories they inhabit, the culture they are part of, and the main challenges faced, being the primary guardians of the world's remaining biodiversity-rich regions.

For life to be possible on our planet, communities and people most directly impacted by environmental devastation and climate change need to be a priority. Together, these local funds from the Global South are on a mission to directly support these guardians in promoting collective actions aimed at protecting vulnerable regions facing increasing pressures from human activity.

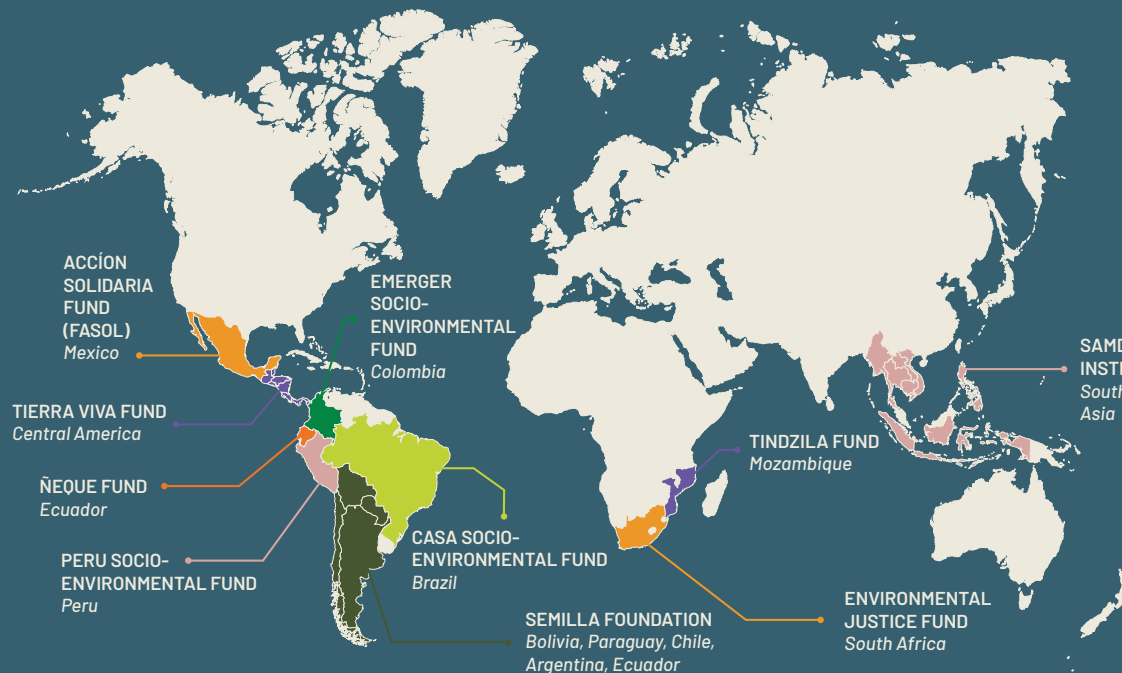


The Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South consists of institutions that have been active for decades in the global philanthropy scene - the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund, Samdhana Institute, Acción Solidaria Fund (FASOL), and Tierra Viva Fund -, as well as more recent funds, like the Emerger Socio-Environmental Fund, Ñeque Fund, Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru, Semilla Foundation, Tindzila Fund, and the Environmental Justice Fund. All of them were created and are managed by local socio-environmental activists, and they support initiatives in various areas, such as environmental conservation, food sovereignty, land and territory defense, renewable energy, and conflict resolution.

The power of this alliance lies in its ability to strengthen the actions of local funds, providing support, collaboration and access to broader knowledge networks. Together, we amplify our voices and coordinate our efforts to address local issues with global implications, from protecting forests and water to defending food sovereignty and territories. This collective approach not only

promotes the causes of local communities but also introduces a Southern perspective on socio-environmental justice in the global philanthropic community.

After a 30-year process of structuring and articulating local funds in the Global South, the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South had its official and political launch in 2021. In 2022, this coalition signed its first fundraising contract. The support came from Forests, People, Climate (FPC), a collaborative initiative between institutions and donors.



In 2023, we held our first in-person planning meeting and began our process of opening up to new members, welcoming the Environmental Justice Fund as our newest ally.

This is the first commemorative publication of the Alliance, which, in 2023, celebrates two years of existence. We invite you to get to know the experiences and visions of our members through a journey into the Global South.

**Good reading!**

# OUR UNIVERSE

## WHY LOCAL FUNDS?

Funds that support community philanthropy created, managed, and operated locally and regionally in the Global South represent a crucial component for the infrastructure of the philanthropic sector. Their authentic connections with community-based organizations, a result of cultivating these relationships through transparent and respectful approaches, enable efficient channeling of resources to those whose mission is the protection of natural territories essential to life. Beyond direct financial support, local funds offer personalized assistance, share knowledge, and promote the exchange of experiences.

→ [Learn more about this approach.](#)



## MEETING IN PERSON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2023

Between April 18 and 21, 2023, the members of the Alliance had the opportunity to meet in person for the first time. The meeting, held in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, was organized by the Emerger Fund and included the presence of the nine founding funds. The goal of the meeting was to establish the institutional structure of the Alliance, which resulted in the definition of the group's governance. Additionally, the meeting deepened discussions on the vision and mission for the collaborative enterprise and the development of the group's first strategic plan. This occasion also marked the beginning of the work of the Executive Coordination, led by Juliana Tinoco, a Brazilian-based professional.

## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

December 9, 2021 marked our historic moment – the official launch of the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South. An online event brought together the founding Alliance members alongside esteemed representatives from the global philanthropic community, including the Mott Foundation and the Inter-American Foundation. [Watch the complete event on YouTube.](#)



## OUR STRUCTURE

Our Steering Committee consists of three member funds, elected by the Members' Assembly, for a two-year term. Currently, the Steering Committee is formed by the Casa Fund, Emerger Fund, and Tindzila Fund. Casa Fund is our current fiscal sponsor. The Brazilian entity, which is one of our founding members, has played a crucial role in mobilizing and managing the Alliance's financial resources, as well as providing leadership and training for the newer members. Notably, the operationalization of our structure and the activities developed throughout 2023 are due to the significant support received from Forests, People, Climate (FPC). This vital funding will ensure the sustainability of our initiatives for the next two years.



## COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: BUILDING SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

The concept of community philanthropy encompasses the idea that local communities, along with their leadership and shared resources, are the real drivers of collective actions aimed at protecting and promoting the sustainable development of their territories. It goes beyond understanding philanthropy as merely a form of financial support or external assistance; it is, rather, a philosophy that emphasizes the value of relationships within the community, encouraging people's engagement in their own development processes. It recognizes the potential and inherent resources of each community to self-organize and find solutions to their challenges, but also understands that, in many cases, external support is necessary to catalyze their full potential.



## WE ARE MEMBERS OF WINGS

The Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South became a member of WINGS, a network of development and support organizations committed to ensuring that philanthropy achieves its full potential as a catalyst for social progress. Its community of change agents includes more than 170 philanthropic associations, networks, support organizations, academics and funders across 55 countries.

→ **Learn more about WINGS.**

## DECOLONIZING NARRATIVES

The Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South is a living system that reflects the values and actions carried out at local and regional levels, promoting decolonial narratives and working for equitable influence in the field of global philanthropy. Read our Manifesto to the Global Philanthropy Sector.



## THE TRUST GAP

According to **"The Trust Gap: The Troubling Lack of Direct, Flexible Funding for Human Rights in the Global South and East"**, the Global North holds 99% of the philanthropic dollars and keeps 88% of it, with only 12% going to groups in the Global South and East. The study, recently published by Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) analyzing data collected by over 700 Human Rights philanthropic donors, found that "two thirds of the funding from Global North foundations to benefit the Global South and East is not granted directly to the beneficiary regions, instead, it goes to Global North-based INGOs and NGOs [...] and much of it is used for projects that are very specific to Global South and East contexts".

## OUR NUMBERS\*

\*last updated on November 2023



10

LOCAL  
FUNDS



25

COUNTRIES



6,800

GRANTS  
AWARDED



USD 36,800,000

TOTAL  
INVESTED



**FOLLOW  
THE ALLIANCE**  
Stay up-to-date  
with our work on our  
[website](#) and  
[social network](#).

A stylized illustration of a tree with a thick black trunk and branches, set against a blue background. The tree is positioned on the left side of the page. At the bottom left, there are pink and purple plant-like shapes. The overall style is modern and graphic.

# SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH: Three Decades in the Making

MARIA AMÁLIA SOUZA

Co-Founder of Casa Socio-Environmental Fund

ARTEMISA CASTRO

Executive Director of Acción Solidaria Fund / FASOL

CRISTI NOZAWA

Executive Director of Samdhana Institute

IBIS COLINDRES

Director of Tierra Viva Fund

At the heart of the most progressive discussions of contemporary global philanthropy, there is a remarkable story of South-South collaboration that spans three decades. This story gives rise to the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South, a coalition of local funds from the Global South that demonstrates the resilience and unity of various local initiatives. This alliance has its roots long before it was born, back in the 1990s, when two funds were created simultaneously and in collaboration: Global Greengrants Fund (GGF), in the US, and Francisco Foundation (FF), in Brazil. Those seeds bloomed and transformed, reaching the 2020s, when a comprehensive and influential global network of socio-environmental funds was officially announced to the world. In our two-years anniversary, we now revisit milestones in this timeline.

## IN SOLIDARITY... AND BEYOND

Global North solidarity funds, three or four decades ago, were pioneers in helping to fund the struggles of the Global South countries. Global Greengrants Fund was one of the first focused on the field of environmental justice. Regardless of the genuine efforts, the challenges have always been of scope and scale – still huge layers of our societies were left out of the benefits of global philanthropy. This gap needed to be filled, especially in the socio-environmental agenda. People who guard the most important biomes of this planet - and have been protecting them with their lives - have been doing so with no money for way too long.

## GLOBAL GREENGRANTS FUND AND FRANCISCO FOUNDATION: ROOTS AND STRUCTURES

In the mid-80s, some environmental activists from across the globe began to connect with each other to influence global agendas that none could deal with separately. A product of this movement was the surfacing of global coalitions to tackle some of the most important issues of those times - the global chain of destruction caused by the environmental crisis, as well as by the rights violation of local communities perpetuated by corporations and financial structures.

In California, at the time, groups like the Rainforest Action Network, International Rivers, Earth Island Institute, Pesticide Action Network, Friends of the Earth International, and others, were being born and expanding. What was known as philanthropy was a “thing” owned by the Global North, where most of the world’s wealth has historically been concentrated. Individuals with varying degrees of access to aspects of this field initiated efforts to facilitate the flow of philanthropic resources to environmental defenders in the Global South.

These individuals were activists of global organizations, Southern experts involved in the development sector of bilateral and international cooperation, and Southern students in the North, observing the speed with which important initiatives got funded there as opposed to their home countries. Convening at spaces of shared interest, these individuals started engaging in discussions on influencing the sector to liberate philanthropic resources for the struggles of the Global South.

Global Greengrants Fund (GGF) originated from the vision of Chet Tchozewski, a North American activist working for Greenpeace, who recognized the disparities in resource access among environmental activists worldwide. Observing this, Tchozewski envisioned a structure in the US to collect and distribute funds globally for environmental causes. Simultaneously, Brazilian activist Humberto Mafra, residing between the UK and California, saw an opportunity to channel resources back to Brazil’s growing environmen-

tal movement through his California-based family foundation. Together, Tchozewski and Mafra formed a strong partnership. Mafra helped to fund the establishment of GGF, while he also set out to create the Francisco Foundation in Brazil. Both organizations aimed to break the traditional philanthropic mold, challenging the dominance of funds directed solely to social justice think tanks or large International conservation NGOs. GGF and Francisco Foundation mobilized resources globally and locally with GGF expanding its impact through advisory boards worldwide. The experience of the GGF Brazil Advisory Board, in 2000, laid the groundwork for the development of advisory boards globally, fostering a model of collaborative grantmaking.





Recognizing the limitations in GGF's capacity to raise sufficient resources for Brazil following the closure of Francisco Foundation in 1999, and, given its vast cross-border biomes, the Brazil Board decided to establish another local fund, this time encompassing the whole of South America, Casa Socio-Environmental Fund, founded in January 2005. At the same time, Samdhana Institute, originally part of GGF's Advisory Board for Southeast Asia, decided to transition into an independent fund, making them the two pioneering partners in GGF's collaborative grant-making efforts. The process to transforming advisory boards into local funding structures followed with the founding of Acción Solidaria Fund (FASOL) in México, in 2007, and a few years later, with Tierra Viva Fund, based in Honduras, the Central American independent fund.

**"Our journey started with the Global Greengrants Fund in the Mexico Advisory Board, leading to our independence a few years later. It was during this transition that I met Maria Amália Souza, who was starting her project - the Casa Fund. Our mutual connection with Global Greengrants sparked deep conversations about evolving beyond just being a funding source. Our collaboration, fueled by Amália's extensive experience and a shared cultural identification, transformed our initial vision into a more profound alliance, focusing not just on providing funds but on fostering collaborative and culturally resonant activism."**

- Artemisa Castro, Acción Solidaria Fund (FASOL)

**"Tierra Viva emerged from the shared frustrations of environmental professionals in Central America. Our experience revealed a gap: communities with innovative proposals lacked support due to their isolation and absence of organizational structures. Recognizing this, we formed an initiative to support these communities. The existence of Latin American funds like Casa and FASOL was crucial, enabling us to exchange vital knowledge on managing proposals and resource allocation, thus enhancing our capacity to support these communities more effectively."**

- Ibis Colindres, Tierra Viva Fund



Casa's first fundraising trip, sponsored by Dutch partner Both ENDS (Danielle Hirsch, ED - center) - April 27, 2005. A pivotal meeting at IUCN Netherlands, catalyzing support for the conservation of wetland ecosystems in Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Argentina.



The seeds of collaboration: In 2011 Ibis Colindres and Maria Amália Souza (in the photo) meet in Mexico with Artemisa Castro to begin coordinating a Latin American Collaborative Fund for Indigenous Peoples.



Key meeting in Recife for the strategic planning of Casa Fund, funded by C.S.Mott Foundation, whose support made the push to create Casa Fund possible. July 2005.

## BUILDING A DISTINCT CULTURAL AND POLITICAL IDENTITY OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

While the four local funds were developing and expanding at their own pace, attempts have been made to create an alliance, initially involving GGF and other northern-based funds. Possibly due to the lack of a clear shared mission, this embryonic alliance faded away eventually, but the four Global South funds continued to understand the need for a collaborative approach.

**“What has been amazing along the initial years is that, each time we had the opportunity to meet - usually at international philanthropy conferences - we recognized that our paths had been similar, and our conclusions about the needs of our countries always aligned. Although our histories, languages and even colonizers differ, our cultures have so many similarities and this is heartwarming. We were also inspired by what we have heard often enough - that the poorest are the most solidary and share with the heart. Anywhere where**

**people are excluded, vulnerable and disenfranchised, generosity, friendliness and cooperation are the rule. This statement is true across borders – it is the essence of what we mean by the Global South.”**

- Maria Amália Souza,  
Casa Socio-Environmental Fund

At that point in time, every opportunity was taken to advance the conversations between members of the local funds, but the feeling was that there was just not enough body to build a “movement” - until Casa Fund had an idea that would change that tide.

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Global Conference, Barcelona, 2008: A gathering of pioneering environmental leaders. From left to right, we have Nonette Royo (founder of the Samdhana Institute and executive director at the time), Maria Amália Souza (founder of Casa Fund and executive director at the time), Chet Tchozewski (founder of the Global Greengrants Fund), and Severiá Xavante (currently a member of the Casa's Advisory Board).



First Shift the Power Summit, 2017, where Amalia and Artemisa were two of seven global finalists for the Olga Alexeeva Memorial Prize on innovation in philanthropy

## CREATING THE VOLUME AND BASIS FOR AN ALLIANCE TO ARISE

In 2015, Casa celebrated its 10th anniversary, having built a robust structure of movement funding for South America. During this period, the fund faced challenges in being based in Brazil while mobilizing resources for South America - an extensive region. Recognizing the success of its grantmaking, and having built solid partnerships with long-standing environmental experts and activists across the region, Casa considered that it might be better to share its model with these partners, and encourage them to set up their own local funds, rather than try to grow indefinitely. The Casa Fund's leaders began to test the idea, both with regional partners as well as with funding partners, which was received with overwhelming acceptance. With that, Casa set out to document its management structure, as well as the overall philosophical basis upon which it had been built.

The endeavor was more successful than anyone expected. Four funds were created in South America - up and running in no time -, in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Casa was also able to support Mozambique environmental experts, when they decided it was time for them to have a fund too. This process enabled these five new socio-environmental funds, together with the "older four", to finally become a "movement": it was time to give birth to the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South.

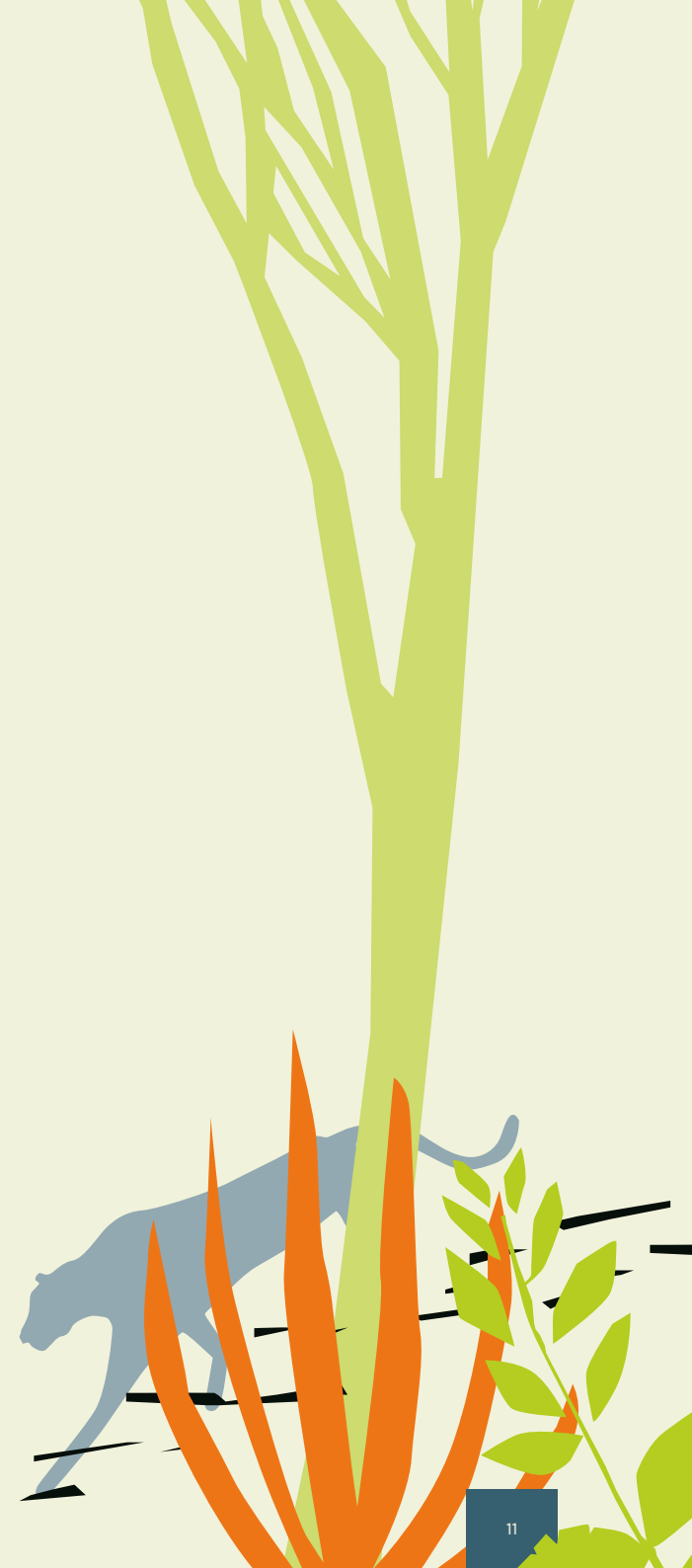
## CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY

**"We work with local communities and civil society organizations through a trust-based approach. In our 30-year journey, we've seen how large donors' methods can undermine collaboration, creating competition and dependency. Our goal is to show that organizations like Casa, FASOL, Tierra Viva and Samdhana are viable for sustaining socio-environmental movements, as we understand better than anyone our local landscapes, people, and movement's strengths and weaknesses. We believe in uniting and showing philanthropy how to work effectively and sustainably with local groups."**

-Cristi Nozawa, Samdhana Institute

The common thread among all Alianza members is our dedication to serving our own movements, and safeguarding the life-sustaining biomes and ecosystems of our countries and regions.

In order to do that, we had to gain a comprehensive understanding of the broader field. We also had to shift away from sounding solely like "activists"- transforming into peers in the international philanthropic arena. This transition required us to articulate our role as funders. We have realized that, although nu-



merous external entities claim to be the saviors of Southern countries, the local funds were quite unique: they were the pioneers as local grantmakers. Because the conventional, or even the most progressive, international philanthropic structures didn't fully attend to the real needs on the ground, we were actually creating a whole new way of resourcing our countries' social and environmental justice movements. The local funds were seed for the development of our own form of philanthropy. This, in the following years, became our strength and our trademark. It has been a huge learning curve for all of us.

The goal of the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South is to channel resources to partners on the ground. In order to serve our peers effectively, we developed systems of collaboration, consultation and accountability that made partners comfortable reaching out to us, bringing their solutions and resting assured we would do all we could to support local communities. Though each of the funds has a different operation structure, all of us abide by this principle.

It is time to acknowledge that there are serious flaws in the system of philanthropy. There are power imbalances among the most privileged and there are insurmountable challenges among the most underprivileged. Actors who try to bridge this gap aren't always regarded or even heard so much of the time. Coming together as a collective is part of our hope of changing that scenario. Pro-



ducing stories and evidence that demonstrate our efficiency and capacity is another.

Together, this alliance has the opportunity to greatly contribute to transforming philanthropy in and for our regions. It is the right place at the right time. Our combined knowledge in so many parts of the world, our lifetime of dedication to causes that are not only ours, but of planetary consequences, can be better understood and heard when we come together to elevate our voices to a whole new level. The Socio-environmental Funds of the Global South is more than a network of local funds: it is a global movement with the potential to protect our life-sustaining and climate-regulating biomes that will give humanity another chance.

It may sound like a prophecy, but this wouldn't be the first one we have fulfilled — this Alianza has the potential to change the face of global philanthropy.



# VOICES IN ALLIANCE

WHY DID WE JOIN?  
LEADERS FROM EACH  
FUND SHARE THEIR  
PERSPECTIVES.



**MARIA AMÁLIA SOUZA**  
CASA SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL FUND

“ Communities won’t achieve self-sufficiency or resource management skills through external intervention. They must possess the tools and knowledge to shape their desired future. So we need to push societies to comprehend the need for resource allocation. This is the path we’ve been following. We, as Alliance, aim to be recognized



as a new player in this broader field, as we have a lot to offer to the global philanthropic community and inside our own countries. ”

**CRISTI NOZAWA**  
SAMDHANA INSTITUTE



“ It’s not just about the funds, it’s about the ideas. It’s about passion. It’s about the individuals who commit their pain, their energy, their talents, their lives even to the movement. It allows for a community interest to be the driver of the agenda rather than what is assessed, analysed or reviewed by experts, to speak about what is happening on the ground. And we need to have this voice. ”

**ARTEMISA CASTRO FELIX**  
FONDO ACCIÓN SOLIDARIA (FASOL)



“ We are people who seek well-being, we work for this planet. Let’s find a way to do it together, without fighting, without confronting, without conflicts. We have to work on strengthening our processes and models. We need to be strong, but that’s not the essential part. In essence, it’s the more spiritual relationship we have with the world, with the planet, with life, and among ourselves. ”



**IBIS COLINDRES**  
TIERRA VIVA FUND

“ The guardians of biomes and natural ecosystems should be empowered to lead their own causes, seeking an improvement in their livelihoods and having the right to live in a healthy environment, with access to water and adequate food. That’s why resources should be directed to their territories. The purpose and usefulness of being in alliance is to present a joint approach that draws attention to this mission. ”



**FABIOLA ARREGUI**  
ÑEQUE FUND

“ So, we all have a close bond and a long history of working with community-based organizations and communities that have organized groups for the constant protection of their ecosystems. I believe that collaborating in alliance gives us the opportunity to amplify this and ensures that the voices emerging from the ground are heard through us. It also allows us to access funds that benefit everyone. ”



**JUAN CAMILO MIRA**  
EMERGER FUND

“ Community-based organizations often lack access to funding due to various forms of institutional segregation. Traditionally, these organizations are called only to validate processes, but they are rarely considered active partners in decision-making. In many cases, their participation is limited to filling out forms and receiving basic resources. Local funds are transforming this power relationship. The new modalities of resource and power distribution represent an extremely interesting innovation in the field of philanthropy in general. ”

”



**LILYAN DELGADILLO**  
SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL FUND OF PERU

“ It is really encouraging that all members have the integrity and leadership to contribute to sustainable community development from our bases and face common or very similar problems, regardless of cultural differences and the diverse ideas we may hold. ”



**EDUARDO FRANCO**  
SEMILLA FOUNDATION

“ Our commitment to the socio-environmental cause, proximity to the territories, and understanding of their issues, enable a greater capacity for comprehension and action by the local funds within this Alliance, in favor of conserving the biomes that sustain our lives and the sustainable development of the communities that call these places home. ”



**LISA CHAMBERLAIN**  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FUND

“ Firstly, as a relatively new fund, it is incredibly valuable for us to be part of a community of funds that have been engaged in this work for much longer than we have, as this provides a learning opportunity for us. Secondly, philanthropy holds significant power, and if part of our mission is to transform it, it makes sense to approach this collectively. The prospect of partnering with organizations that share our values and advocate for a global South agenda together, is what drew us to this Alliance. ”



**ALDA SALOMÃO**  
TINDZILA FUND

“ We must amplify the message that there is a group of world citizens working collectively for what is essential to improve this world. We seek to give more visibility to all these diverse faces and voices that we present and support through our funds. And our goal is to reduce the need for this mediation, allowing these faces and voices to participate directly in this transforma-

tion. My first ambition is for this alliance to be recognized in our own countries. In Mozambique, for example, it is important that people know that we are part of an alliance. In this way, we will build a dynamic of acting as a collective. ”



# LOCAL FUNDS IN FOCUS





# Transforming Southeast Asia Through Trust and Sustainability

In the vibrant and diverse nations of Southeast Asia, a tapestry of social and environmental movements strives to forge a brighter future. Anchored in a model that values the 'chain of trust', working with local communities and providing grants has emerged as a core practice for the Samdhana Institute. Against this backdrop, the region faces critical challenges: unsustainable dependency on external financing in a context of shifting priorities of donors, and fierce competition fueled by large NGOs, threatening the cohesion and effectiveness of movements. In this context, Cristi Nozawa, Executive Director of the Samdhana Institute, sheds light on the importance of a collaborative and flexible approach.



## COULD YOU INTRODUCE THE SAMDHANA INSTITUTE?

**Cristi Nozawa (Samdhana):** The essence of 'Samdhana' lies in the act of giving back—a concept steeped in the ancient Sanskrit language. Established by a coalition of activists, development workers, and environmentalists, Samdhana was created with the intent to contribute meaningfully to Southeast Asia's advocacy movements. Celebrating our 20th anniversary this year, we stand committed to our core mission: empowering indigenous peoples and local communities. Our support extends to local organizations within the socio-environmental movement across the region. Moreover, we bridge the remotest of communities with broader governance structures, especially where capacity is scarce. For instance, in the Papua province of Indonesia, a region six hours removed from the typical reach of the country, our efforts to connect the local with the national are vital for a holistic approach to regional development.





### FROM SAMDHANA'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PHILANTHROPIC SYSTEM NEED TO BE CHANGED?

**Cristi Nozawa (Samdhana):** We have witnessed large NGOs create a competitive environment by offering grants, which paradoxically divides organizations that previously collaborated, thereby diluting the strength of the movement. We then observe that when donors shift their focus due to new trends or priorities, they often withdraw from regions abruptly, leaving local partners, communities, and civil society organizations stranded with the dependency they developed on external funding. This does not fortify but rather erodes the solidarity of the collective effort. Our current reflection leads us to the conclusion that unification is essential. We must join forces to present a unified front to the philanthropic world, advocating that a flexible, localized approach to collaboration is not only more efficient but also more sustainable.

### HOW DOES SAMDHANA SEEK TO CHANGE THIS SCENARIO?

**Cristi Nozawa (Samdhana):** Our approach is founded on what we term the 'chain of trust', a collaborative method where we engage with local communities by providing modest grants. We believe it is imperative to collaborate with other institutions to raise awareness about the support our movements require and how they can persist over time. In discussions with groups like Casa and FASOL, we aim to demonstrate that our examples, including that of Samdhana, provide viable, alternative models for sustaining and fostering socio-environmental movements within our regions. With our deep understanding of the local landscape, people, and the dynamics of the movement—its strengths and weaknesses—we are better positioned to guarantee the effective utilization of resources.



# Pioneers of Change: dialogues with Latin America's Older Funds



At a pivotal moment in global philanthropy, Latin America's oldest socio-environmental funds stand as testaments to regional resilience. These funds summarize a significant shift towards localized, impactful environmental activism within the Global South. Born from a deep understanding of regional challenges and the necessity for community-based involvement, they exemplify the power of collaborative activism. In the following interviews, Cristina Orpheo (Executive Director of Casa Fund - Brazil), Ibis Colindres (Director of Tierra Viva Fund - Central America) and Artemisa Castro (Executive Director of Acción Solidaria Fund - Mexico) share their perspectives on this journey.

## WHICH SUPPORT APPROACH HAS BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA?

**Ibis Colindres (Tierra Viva):** At Tierra Viva Fund, we focus on what each community specifically needs. We do not have a standard approach. For example, with indigenous communities, we help them protect their land rights and manage their natural resources like forests and water, combining traditional practices with new knowledge. In the Central American Corridor, on the other hand, we assist communities affected by droughts and floods, especially in fishing areas, promoting environmental protection, ecotourism and food sovereignty. This approach allows us to provide customized assistance that truly addresses the unique challenges and goals of each community we work with.



### WHAT CHARACTERISTICS ARE CRUCIAL WHEN WORKING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN SUCH A CHALLENGING AND DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT?

**Artemisa Castro (FASOL):** Diversity is a great strength for us. It allows us to be flexible and adaptable in a constantly changing environment, presenting us with many challenges. We focus on supporting community-based groups, collaborating with them in their development. Each group has its own model, which is interesting because of our differences. Being highly adaptable and resilient is crucial for us. We need to endure and adapt to changes, asking

ourselves how to continue existing in these changing circumstances. This adaptability is a key strength. I've seen other organizations struggle due to rigidity. In our case, we approach each new situation by figuring out how to address it, how to support it, and how it differs from others. This ability to adapt is a significant strength for us. At FASOL, we consider it crucial to acknowledge groups, collectives, and communities as the main actors in proposals for resilience, adaptation, and innovation; they are the ones who have the primary investment in their initiatives. We simply contribute a small part to a sea of tangible and intangible resources that must be recognized to truly understand who holds the power.



## FROM A 20-YEAR PERSPECTIVE, HOW DOES CASA FUND UNDERSTAND THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY IN LATIN AMERICA?

**Cris Orpheo (Casa):** Latin America is one of the cradles of the most preserved biomes in the world and of various indigenous peoples, with ancestry and culture that sustain life on the planet. It is one of the parts of the Global South where life throbs in diversity, biodiversity, knowledge, innovation, and resistance. Philanthropy plays an important role in this context, capable of funding projects that question power structures and strengthen the fight for equality, the defense of socio-environmental rights, and for good living. We have noticed a growing increase in discussions about philanthropy in Latin America, but there is still some conceptual confusion. In general, discussions vary between private social investment and the original concept of philanthropy, which means donation and strengthening of civil society. We also understand that this debate is still very much guided by Northern philanthropy. However, in one way or another, we notice a greater engagement of family philanthropy in each country, and the questioning for a less colonialist approach: donating to truly transform. For the next 20 years, I believe that the trend of the philanthropic structure in Latin America points to the strengthening of Local Funds, Activist



Funds, and Traditional Population Funds, which are those that ensure resources increasingly reach local communities directly. May these Funds also question the donation culture within their own countries and thus the relationship between Northern and Southern philanthropies occur in a more egalitarian way. This beginning still has a very strong influence from the North, which hinders an important process for Latin America. I also perceive that the trend is for more Latin American Funds to strengthen in networks like ours, drawing attention to a unique universe we have created in our extended regions, which we call the Global South.



# Seeking socio-environmental justice in the African continent: **getting to know the funds in Mozambique and South Africa**



The local contexts observed in South Africa and Mozambique present unique challenges and dynamics. In South Africa, the quest for environmental justice is confronted by complex forces deeply rooted in systems of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and extractivism that have persisted for centuries, perpetuating underlying inequality that primarily impacts black communities, women, and rural communities. In Mozambique, with the majority of the population living in rural areas and dependent on natural resources for subsistence and the economy, land ownership and access are critical in a country where pressures on these resources come from various sources, including the state itself and the private sector. Learn more about the work carried out by local funds in the African continent in interviews with Alda Salomão and Lisa Chamberlain, executive directors of the Tindzila Fund (Mozambique) and the Environmental Justice Fund (South Africa).



## **COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FUND (EJF)?**

**Lisa Chamberlain (EJF):** The Environmental Justice Fund has been a long-standing dream of the South African environmental justice movement. EJF aims to address the common frustration of community-based organizations struggling to access resources for their crucial work. It operates as the funding arm of the movement and is unique in that it developed out of the environmental justice movement itself. This makes it a fund driven by activists for activists, shaping its identity and guiding its actions.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMES CURRENTLY ADDRESSED BY THE TINDZILA FUND?

**Alda Salomão (Tindzila):** The Tindzila Fund aims to connect the protection of rights and land ownership with the sustainable use of land and natural resources. It provides financial resources and technical support to ensure that beneficiaries understand the concept and become agents of sustainable development at the local level. Furthermore, the Tindzila Institution encompasses centers of excellence in environmental education, research on land governance, and cultural and sporting activities, reflecting the diversity of themes and institutions that are essential to the life of communities. This makes Tindzila a unique and comprehensive institution. It provides financial resources and technical support to ensure that beneficiaries understand the concept and become agents of sustainable development at the local level.

## HOW DOES EJF VIEW THE LOCAL FUND CREATION MOVEMENT?

**Lisa Chamberlain (EJF):** There is a harmful misconception that wrongly associates activism with volunteerism. This misunderstanding fails to acknowledge that those most affected by injustice and inequality often have no choice but to engage in activism, as their lives and livelihoods are at stake. Expecting that the people doing the critical work of protecting land and



natural resources - which benefits all of us - do it without any financial resources, is exploitative and risks perpetuating the very injustices we seek to address. This is why a fund is essential, as it provides a mechanism to channel resources to where they are needed most, which is in local communities on the frontlines of defending environmental rights.

## HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF TINDZILA IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESSURES ON RURAL AREAS IN MOZAMBIQUE?

**Alda Salomão (Tindzila):** Our communities have agriculture as the main economic activity,

although they are also involved in fishing and forest management for subsistence. Land access and ownership are of utmost importance in a social context like ours, due to the pressure on rural lands by the state and the private sector. Tindzila is committed to ensuring that the development goals of the state and the interests of businesses do not harm the legitimate rights of local populations, seeking to balance the interaction between communities, government, and businesses, empowering them to negotiate with knowledge and mutual respect for the rights of each party.

# A South American Perspective Through the New Funds of Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador

The analysis of the local context of funds in South America reveals the presence of crucial community-based groups in the protection of ecosystems and territories often neglected. These communities, which often lack prior support and even legal constitution, play essential roles in local preservation. Facing unique challenges and sharing territories with neighboring countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, the participation of funds from Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador in the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South strengthens a regional narrative that transcends national borders, highlighting the importance of shared biomes and promoting cooperation for environmental preservation. In the following interviews, Juan Camilo Mira (Emerger Fund, Colombia), Lilyan Delgadillo (Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru) Fabiola Arregui (Ñeque Fund, Ecuador) and Eduardo Franco (Semilla Foundation, Bolivia) share a bit about the history of their local funds and their experience working in alliance.



## COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE FUNDS?

**Juan Camilo Mira (Emerger):** The Emerger fund is dedicated to community philanthropy, and supports the strengthening of social organizations in Colombia, focusing on environmental management and sustainability. In two and a half years, it has backed almost 70 projects, mainly with rural and fishermen organizations. Its rapid growth and the significant impact of the support we have provided, reflected in the stories of its beneficiaries, have been surprising and gratifying.

**Lilyan Delgadillo (Peru):** The Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru is an organization focused on sustainable development, combating poverty and climate change, and defending environmental activists. Since its inception in 2019, it has supported almost 50 projects, working with indigenous and rural communities, as well as youth and social movements to strengthen democracy. The fund, which began operations



between 2021 and 2022, focuses on territorial protection and community surveillance. Inspired by the impulse of older funds, including the Casa Fund and the Samdhana Institute, it aimed to unite common issues and strengthen regional cooperation in South America.



**Fabiola Arregui (Ñeque):** Ñeque Fund is part of the Ñeque Foundation, which was established in 2000. Although it had a period of pause, in 2018 it was reactivated and continues active to date. Then, the Ñeque Socio-Environmental Fund was created in 2020. This fund accompanies and provides financing to support innovative socio-environmental initiatives focused on rights, conservation, environmental protection, and promoting the quality of life and rights of communities and organizations that defend their territories.

**Eduardo Franco (Semilla):** Before forming the Semilla Foundation, the founders previously received support from the Casa Fund for the implementation of different projects. Some of these initiatives were carried out alongside the Blue Foresta Foundation and other organizations that Casa supported. During this process, Casa expressed its interest in replicating its Brazilian model in other Latin American countries and shared this idea. In Bolivia, a broader group of people who had received support from Casa heard this proposal, and from an initial group of ten people, four of us were inspired by this model to found the Semilla Socio-Environmental Foundation. This process began in 2016, and in 2019, the Semilla Foundation was consolidated as an institution, starting its operations in 2020.

## COULD YOU SHARE THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM OPERATING AS A LOCAL FUND SO FAR?

**Fabiola Arregui (Ñeque):** One of the main learnings so far is the diversity of approaches on how community-based organizations work towards conservation. All forms are valid and converge in the common goal of protecting, defending, and conserving. Additionally, the importance of agility in the distribution of resources by the fund is highlighted, avoiding excessive formal requirements to facilitate quick access to smaller groups. There is also an emphasis on the need to monitor and follow up on the sustainability of projects.





**Juan Camilo Mira (Emerger):** To change how resources are transferred to community-based organizations, avoiding intermediaries and the imposition of political and aesthetic models, requires transforming public policies and regulations that limit the effectiveness of social organizations. An example is Colombia's Special Tax Registry and its equivalents in other countries, which hinder smaller and poorer organizations' access to donations and cooperation.

**Lilyan Delgadillo (Peru):** Working with communi-

ty-based organizations that have unique ethnic and cultural identities demands that we recognize and maximize these characteristics. This community-focused approach which is not individualized, welfare-oriented, or paternalistic is what we consider our main contribution to the outside world.

**Eduardo Franco (Semilla):** I believe it is essential to recognize the profound ancestral knowledge present in traditional and indigenous communities. They possess natural abilities to make

decisions that benefit their future, based on their long experience and trajectory, through mutual adjustments between humans and nature. This knowledge is not acquired simply through projects; it's necessary to understand how these groups function and adapt the philanthropy model accordingly. Being close to the territory is key to achieving this, and in our funds, we have been involved in various movements. My great aspiration is to share this message in philanthropy circles in the North and contribute to improving the entire philanthropic system.

# CASE STUDY // RESILIENT AMAZON

HOW THE "RESILIENT AMAZON" PROJECT PROMOTED COLLABORATION AMONG LOCAL FUNDS OF BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, AND PERU IN THE AMAZON BORDER REGION

## AMAZON, A DISPUTED TERRITORY



The Amazon transcends the concept of a forest - it has become a symbol of the struggle for the preservation of the environment and traditional populations, a flag for the future of planet Earth. While international attention turns to its ecological and climatic relevance, the defenders of the territory face increasing pressure from public and private actors. The lack of logistical infrastructure, communication difficulties, and limited presence of the public authority create a challenging isolation, making indigenous peoples, riverine communities, Afro-descendant population and small rural producers increasingly invisible to the world. In this distant scenario, two worlds coexist precariously: the richness of centuries-old trees, exuberant fauna, imposing rivers, and ancestral knowledge collide with legal and illegal threats, challenging the very essence of the Amazon.

The scenario is not only environmental but also geopolitical and social, as demonstrated in Paul E. Little's 2013 study, "Megaprojects in the Amazon". The insatiable quest for commodities and energy sources has transformed the region into the new frontier of global exploitation, where the expansion of agribusiness and livestock, construction of controversial hydroelectric projects, deforestation, and mining activities gain ground. This region harbors an alarming series of megaprojects, whose social and environmental impacts are felt irreversibly. The exploitation of natural resources blends with conflicts, violence, and misery, in a sad saga that can be defined as ethnocide. In this context, speaking of the Amazon is to speak of a history of invasion, colonialism, and exploitation, where regional integration, both formal and illicit, intertwines in the ceaseless search for its rich natural resources.

## THE TRIPLE FRONTIER

The triple frontier region between Brazil, Peru, and Colombia comprises an extensive area between the Solimões (Amazon) and Içá (Putumayo) rivers.

In Colombia, the region corresponds to the extreme south of the country, a distance of more than a thousand kilometers from the capital, Bogotá. The territory includes the municipalities of Leticia, Puerto Nariño, and the southern part of Tarapacá, an unincorporated area. In Brazil, it is almost 3,000 kilometers away from Brasília and includes the municipalities of Amaturá, Atalaia do Norte, Benjamin Constant, Fonte Boa, Jutai, Santo Antônio do Içá, São Paulo de Olivença, Tabatinga, and Tonantins. In Peru, the area is located northwest of the country, joined by the Marañon and Ucayali rivers, where the main course of the Amazon River originates. The towns or cities in this region are located in the province of Mariscal Ramón Castilla, in the Loreto department, a thousand kilometers from Lima.



Community work at the Minga of the Putumayo Community Organization, Colombia.

The triple frontier between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, located thousands of kilometers from the urban centers of these countries, is a microcosm of this complex dilemma, where the struggle for the preservation of the Amazon faces a series of megaprojects that cast a threatening shadow over the region. The challenges are diverse and large-scale, ranging from the construction of roads and hydroelectric plants in binational agreements to large-scale oil and mining exploration by multinationals. In the illegal scenario, rampant deforestation, illegal mining, and drug and human trafficking challenge the integrity of ecosystems and the security of local communities.

The numbers are impressive and alarming. With about 4,500 Amazon regions affected by illegal

mining, more than half of them are located in Brazil<sup>1</sup>. Legal mining, on the other hand, covers 1,628,850 km<sup>2</sup> or 21% of the surface of the Amazon basin, with approximately 80% of these areas in Brazil and 11% in Peru<sup>2</sup>. Added to this situation, the exploration of oil in western Amazon attracted massive investments, with five banks and investment funds directing about 6 billion dollars to extraction projects since 2017<sup>3</sup>. With financing coming from both public sources and private companies, these megaprojects represent an imminent threat to the integrity of ecosystems and the well-being of local communities, perpetuating a history of invasions, violence, conflicts, and misery in the Amazon region.

- <sup>1</sup> According to data from the Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information (RAISG) in 2020.
- <sup>2</sup> According to the study "Megaproyectos en la Amazonía: Un análisis geopolítico y socioambiental con propuestas de mejor gobierno para la Amazonía", produced by the Amazonian Legal Network - RAMA Law, Environment and Natural Resources - DAR Amazonian Regional Articulation - ARA. [Link to report](#)
- <sup>3</sup> According to a study carried out by the NGO Amazon Watch in 2020. [Link to the report](#)

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO ACTION AMONG LOCAL FUNDS

A collaborative approach to action among funds brings benefits in the face of the great challenges of supporting organizations that seek the defense of the territory in the triple frontier region between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. The “Resilient Amazon” project, originated from a collaboration between socio-environmental funds from Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, is supporting a narrative of change in the struggle for the preservation of the Amazon and strengthening its grassroots communities. The partnership, financed by the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA-Colombia), consolidated with the mission of sharing knowledge and resources, uniting a more experienced fund, the Casa Fund (Brazil), with younger funds, the Emerger Fund (Colombia) and the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru. Inspired by the diversity and complexity of local contexts in the three countries, these funds began to co-create a project that embraced the challenges and needs of the region. The result was a collaboration that sought the alignment of philanthropy for environmental conservation with rights defense strategies to promote a fairer development model, rooted in the cultural identity of the Amazonian communities.



Cabildo Tiwa Organization and KIWE THEGNA team, focusing on environmental surveillance and protection in Leticia, Colombia.

### THE JOINT PROJECT HAD TWO OBJECTIVES:

- Direct funding to local communities to address imminent challenges and strengthen their capacities;
- Strengthening the model of direct financial support, promoting a joint learning space between the three funds, aiming at the effective channeling of resources to the communities, including exchanges of experience on support format, monitoring, evaluation, indicators, and security.

In addition, the project sought to empower local organizations, offering tools to receive resources directly and manage their own projects, including legal formalization, management capacity development, and leadership training.

To carry forward this vision, strategies were developed to identify thematic focuses in critical areas such as infrastructure and extractivism, and to define territorial boundaries, taking into account the creation of interconnected impacts

across the three countries. Additionally, the format for the call for proposals was established. With shared governance between the Emerger Fund as the operator of the resources, the Casa Fund as technical support, and the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru as the promoter of joint initiatives, the project had its first phase of execution between 2022 and 2023.

### IMPLEMENTATION IN THREE PERSPECTIVES

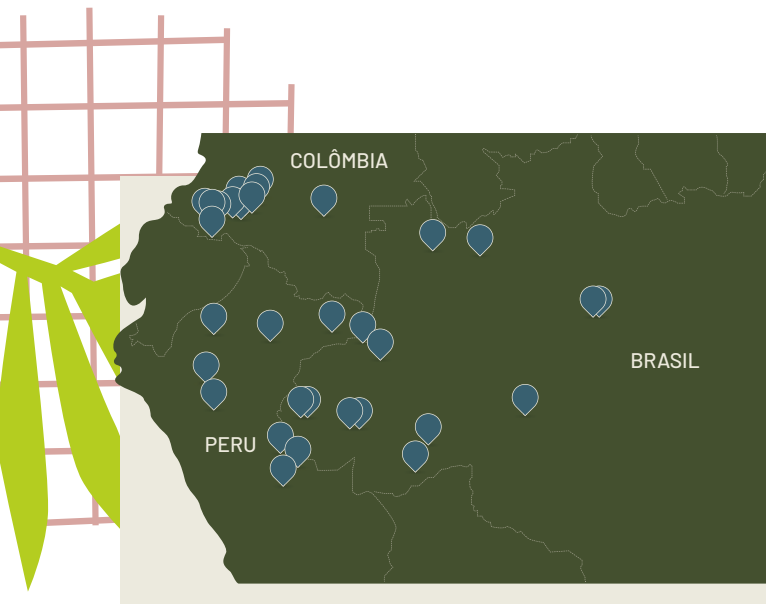
The “Resilient Amazon” project call, carried out in collaboration by the three funds, provided two lines of focus for the projects: institutional strengthening and territorial monitoring. The results demonstrate the diversity of experiences in each country. The Emerger Fund supported 19 projects, the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru carried out 14 supports, and the Casa Fund, 23.



Ticuna artisans from Caure Chixmaugu in Loreto, Peru, merging art and conservation in the Amazon.

### PROTECTING THE AMAZON THROUGH HANDICRAFTS

The “Handicrafts to Protect the Amazon” project in Peru aimed to strengthen the Ticuna Caure Chixmaugu artisan association, an entity created by women of the Ticuna ethnicity from the community of Cushillococha directed to strengthen work with handmade products made from natural fibers, seeds, and wood. The project promoted a comprehensive strategy of formalization, entrepreneurship, and awareness on gender and environmental issues, which will allow artisans to access formal markets, one of the main logistical challenges for the business. The handicraft economy reduces dependence on illicit activities and preserves the cultural identity of the people, contributing to environmental protection and reducing the impact of illegal activities in the communities of the Loreto department that suffer, among others, from the advancement of violence due to drug trafficking in the triple frontier.



## RESILIENCE IN THE JAVARI VALLEY

Of the 23 projects supported in the Brazilian Amazon, eight are from the Indigenous Territory Vale do Javari. Situated in a territory marked by the absence of public authority and the advance of miners, loggers, and illegal fishermen, Vale do Javari became world-famous in 2021, after the murder of Brazilian indigenist Bruno Pereira and British journalist Dom Phillips. The projects supported in this region had among their objectives the institutional strengthening of organizations that act in defense and territorial governance. Among the tools for capacity enhancement were the provision of radios, canoes, engines – and training for the use of these resources –, to improve the monitoring of the territory.

## REVITALIZING CAMËNTSÁ TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

In Colombia, the “Sibundoy: in our sacred territory we take care of traditional medicine” project by the Sol y Luna Caminando Juntos Hacia el Buen Vivir Association leads efforts to revitalize the knowledge and practices of Camëntsá ancestral medicine among adolescents from the Camëntsá Biyá Indigenous Reserve in Sibundoy, Putumayo. The main goal of the initiative is the rescue of Camëntsá traditions, which in the words of the association, involves: “promot-

ing the biocultural appropriation of the ancestral territory.” For this, various practices of traditional knowledge interaction were conducted aiming at the resignification of the sense of the territory among the youth. The dialogues, reflections, and intergenerational learnings resulting from this project strengthen the appreciation and recovery of the community’s collective memory, an effort that contributes to the preservation of indigenous traditions and also of the Sibundoy territory, ensuring the vision of biocultural well-being.



Indigenous Association Sol y Luna and Laura Flórez from Fondo Emerger, collaborating in Putumayo, Colombia.



Projects' gathering in Putumayo, Colombia

## CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING STRATEGIES

Although done jointly, the project call was held on different dates in the three countries due to logistical and operational challenges. The Emerger Fund faced obstacles in disseminating the call in the territories, particularly on the border with Peru, a known conflict zone. In addition to threats from conflict, it was also necessary to consider the lack of transportation connections and limited communication means available in some communities, only accessible after days of travel. To overcome this barrier, collaboration with local actors proved crucial. An example cited was the partnership with a professor from the National University of Colombia, in Leticia – a city located on the triple border that functions as a regional supply

center – to support contact with indigenous organizations in the Amazon and Orinoquia regions. The Emerger team also began travelling and participating in events to publicize the call. One such participation occurred in Orito, in the Putumayo department, a traditionally oil-producing region, where a workshop on entrepreneurship for 300 women was held.

**“It was a workshop with women who are training in entrepreneurship topics. It was somewhat outside of the Fund’s direct scope, but it worked for us to make the Fund visible in the area of Putumayo. We have made progress in establishing contacts in Puerto Leguizamo because it is a quite complex area, both in terms of transportation and security. It takes**

**eight hours by boat to reach Puerto Leguizamo, so we have been making efforts to start understanding how this territory works at the context level to be able to reach them in future calls.”**

- Laura Flórez, Emerger Fund

In the experience of the Emerger Fund, the holding of two regional meetings with the organizations supported by the fund stands out. The Putumayo and Caquetá meetings were opportunities for these community leaders to meet in person, share their experiences, and create connections beyond this project call.

The dissemination of the call in the border territories was also a challenge for the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru. The initial strategies involved publicizing the call on local radios in Ucayali and Loreto, participating in workshops for environmental defenders, and contacting national organizations that had bases in remote areas. Despite these efforts, the result in the number of proposals received was unsatisfactory. Observing similar challenges faced by the other funds, there was a decision to expand the geographical scope of the project, including the entire Amazon and nearby regions, to obtain more proposals. Among the 14 projects supported by the Peruvian Fund, a notable emphasis was on projects related to women, youth, and environmental defenders.



**“In Colombia and Peru, we are very aware of the limitations. Initially, if we had restricted applications only to local organizations in border areas, we would have received a minimal number of applications. For this reason, we decided to expand the criteria to extend the call not only to the border areas but to the entire Amazon region and its surroundings. This approach yielded more positive results, and in our case, we identified and prioritized 14 initiatives that were selected by our technical team. These proposals focus on working with women in the Amazon and in the fight against climate change with a focus on mitigation. To date, all of them have achieved significant progress.”**

- Lilyan Delgadillo, Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru

Besides learning how to overcome logistical and communication challenges for conducting calls, the Fund also observed that carrying out much of the project activities virtually, such as workshops and the submission of proposals and reports, also posed a barrier for these communities, as many border regions in the Peruvian Amazon lack internet or electricity. Thus, the leaders and other executors would be forced to make constant trips to maintain communication with the Fund during the implementation of their projects. Connectivity challenges make the opportunity for face-to-face interactions in the most remote territories even more essential.

With 18 years of operation, the Casa Fund reached grassroots groups through the capillarity of its trust networks. For them, the main challenges came from the complexity of creating a collaborative approach to implement a project with other funds in different coun-

tries. Although initially challenging due to issues such as culture and different priorities, the collaboration between the funds allowed for mutual learning and the improvement of processes also for the more experienced fund. An important part of the experience involved the alignment on territorial and thematic scopes, and also respecting the uniqueness of each fund in the operationalization of the project calls. In the Brazilian experience, it was noted that a significant portion of the 23 supported projects came from territories where Casa had not yet worked.

**“We are constantly learning from the approach of our colleagues, their perspectives, and ideas. This learning encompasses cultural and legislative aspects of different countries, which enriches our activities, especially with regard to the pre-call phase and contracting of projects. A moment that stood out was a webinar dedicated to project calls, where we could observe the practices of each fund and get inspired to improve our own processes. The opportunity to refine our procedures while working in collaboration is something that deserves recognition.”**

- Vanessa Purper, Casa Fund

Communication was constant and regular for the necessary alignments for the contract, addressing issues such as the schedule, data, ex-



Bosque de las Nuwas Association in San Martin, Peru, enhancing sustainable tourism.

ecution status, and other essential information. Face-to-face and virtual meetings played a crucial role in maintaining the fluidity of communication between the funds, allowing them to overcome logistical and geographical challenges that arose.

The three thematic meetings for learning between the funds stand out. Each of these meetings addressed specific topics: communication, monitoring, and project calls, and was led by one of the funds. All participants had space and opportunity to ask questions, bring their experiences, and present their administrative and management choices. These meetings were a valuable opportunity for the continuous improvement of the project, promoting the exchange of knowledge and strengthening collaboration between the funds.

#### BUILDING UNITY FROM SINGULARITY

The collaboration between the Casa Fund, the Emerger Fund, and the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru in implementing the project in the Amazon border region has generated a positive impact for the involved actors. Although the first phase of the project is still being finalized, with the collection of reports from the supported groups underway, significant gains in terms of collaboration between the involved funds are observed.

**“I think it has brought us much closer to the Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru and the Emerger Fund of Colombia. It is essential to professionalize not only those who are starting but also ourselves, to make the learning process more pedagogical. After all, what good is having vast knowledge if we are not efficient in sharing it effectively? Sharing knowledge is a real and complex challenge. The joint collaboration between the three funds, as demonstrated in the call, was a practical and interesting example. Everything was co-created collaboratively, which made the experience very enriching.”**

- Cristina Orphea, Casa Fund

**“Each one of us has our own work approach and background experiences, which drives us to improve our tools over time. I consider this process as a learning journey light-years away. Our youth has also allowed us to present original solutions, and at times, we have even surprised others with our perspectives. But this is part of the exchange of knowledge.”**

- Amparo Córdova, Socio-Environmental Fund of Peru.



Integration and collaboration of organizations in the project call in Caquetá, Colombia.

**“This process has been extremely enriching for the fund, as we continuously share experiences. In that sense, Peru was conducting support sessions in project formulation, carried out initiatives on the radio, and other activities in their call that made us think about implementing something similar in Colombia. We are always dealing with differences, as each territory and country has its own dynamics. Each fund must maintain the vision that we are working together for a region. However, we must also adapt to the dynamics of our country and the location where we operate. I think this complexity is what gives an interesting touch to the collaboration.”**

-Laura Flórez, Emerger Fund

The three funds, operating both individually and collectively in the same region, are a remarkable example of how cooperation between institutions can maximize results. They share experiences, resources, and strategies, adapting to the local dynamics of each country. In addition to the challenges already mentioned, such as communication with grassroots communities in border regions and the design and operationalization of

a regional collaboration initiative, the funds also had to adapt to the political instability observed in the three countries, the fluctuation of the dollar, and significant exchange losses due to international transfers. Nonetheless, the experience of collaboration has generated significant synergies, especially in terms of information exchange and joint learning for creating solutions and possibilities from the observed barriers.



Bari Wesna's project to strengthen community surveillance in Loreto, Peru.

## COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT: A VIABLE AND REPLICABLE MODEL


The case of the partnership between funds in a collaborative support model demonstrates that uniting institutions in a joint effort in a border region is viable and replicable. Moreover, this experience shows that political borders do not represent boundaries between biomes, so overcoming this logic becomes essential in socio-environmental projects. To be successful in integrated collaboration projects between local support funds in the same region, it is necessary to consider the diversity of cultures and different ways of dealing with the same challenges. The alignment in terms of territorial and thematic cutouts, selection criteria, and indicators in the project call, respecting the uniqueness of each fund, were significant steps towards an integrated and effective approach.

Finally, the renewal of the “Resilient Amazon” contract before the end of the first phase of the project provided continuity of support to the territories, strengthening the work of local groups. The collaboration between these funds has proven to be an effective approach for supporting communities in the Amazon triple border.



# MEETINGS AND GROUP DYNAMICS HELD DURING THE RESILIENT AMAZON PROJECT

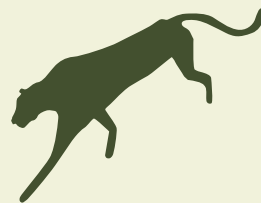




# LOOKING AHEAD: Unveiling Transformative Stories and Driving Social and Environmental Change

My roots in environmental journalism help explain the interest that not only drives my work but also shapes my way of seeing and thinking about the world: identifying and valuing stories that need to be told. This is a true personal commitment, which has led me to the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South Alliance, recognizing that it is in this context that these great narratives are found today. Acting as the executive coordinator allows me to work on the agendas that I consider most important - alongside the stories that need to be told and transformed.

Any reflection in the year 2023 starts from a unique temporal, socioeconomic, and environmental context: beginning with the hottest year on record, this landmark is added to a scenario of multiple crises, marked by the emergence and worsening of conflicts and wars, the severity of the global environmental dilemma, the Covid situation in contexts like the African continent, and more. It is, therefore, an especially significant year for this agenda - and for the planet.



**JULIANA TINOCO**  
Executive Coordinator of the  
Socio-Environmental Funds  
of the Global South

When looking at such a complex and interconnected scenario, it is crucial to reflect on systemic aspects capable of promoting change. The disarticulation and weakening of the social fabric and the human capacity for coexistence, collaboration, and the establishment of safety nets, are confirmed as vulnerabilities of our time. It is in the face of such challenges that the Alliance presents itself as a collaboration of funds seeking to strengthen the social fabric of communities in the Global South.

Focusing resources on marginalized and vulnerable populations today means looking at these stories that need to be told: far from establishing a relationship that victimizes the interlocutor, in a scenario where inequality and injustice are evident, the allocation of such resources needs to ensure the agency of these communities.

After all, these populations possess the social technologies, knowledge of the territories, and investment in human and social (and also financial) resources capable of sustaining communities. The arrival of resources, therefore, should be guided by such knowledge and practices - and towards these skills and knowledge - in order to foster the unique, concrete, and effective capabilities that communities already possess. It is not, therefore, simply about making money arrive, but rather about how to do it - telling these stories requires reinventing the way this operation happens.



The Global South is the geopolitical context that unequivocally imposes itself as the stage for these discussions. It is where most of these populations are located, where socioeconomic pressures are more latent, and from where the real solutions will emerge. In recent months, I have had the opportunity to understand the work of local and regional funds in this context and perceive a field of institutions that serve the purpose of resource flow, but, beyond that, also function as true poles of creativity, innovation, production of thought, knowledge, coordination, and influence on the field of philanthropy.

My vision for the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South is that it continues to be the platform for integration, collaboration, and voice for these institutions in the Global South.

I recently participated in philanthropic field discussion forums, promoted by partners like the WINGS network and the collaborative funds summit of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Philanthropy Together, and came away positively impressed to notice how the discussions point to real and important dilemmas, aware of the need to transform the sector, making it increasingly just, inclusive, decolonial, and egalitarian.

With this, it remains for us, as actors in this field, to help build the foundations upon which these important transformations can become a reality. This is the role I envision for the Alliance: these are the stories I consider most important, and I work to ensure they are told - and heard - more and more.

This publication reflects the composition of the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South as of November 2023. In December 2023, the Alliance welcomes three new funds: Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPN - Brazil), Pastor Rice Small Grants Fund (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam), and Red Comunidades Rurales (Argentina).



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