

VOICES OF THE SOUTH

2024 EDITION



ALIANZA SOCIOAMBIENTAL
FONDOS
DEL SUR

Socio-Environmental Funds of the
Global South

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THREE YEARS OF VOICES OF THE SOUTH

AS WE CELEBRATE OUR THIRD ANNIVERSARY, WE INVITE YOU, DEAR READER, TO JOIN US IN THIS CELEBRATION

In 2024, the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South • Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur opened itself to the world while also turning inward. It was a year of expansion and introspection, of revisiting our values and the purposes that unite us: the challenges posed by environmental, climate, and social crises which affect our territories and our commitment to overcoming them by supporting communities that protect them. We reaffirm the meaning of “South” in our alliance: in defense of grassroots movements, local resistances, and of the strength of traditional and Indigenous knowledge, while sustaining hope for a shared future.

Currently, our network includes sixteen (16) socio-environmental

funds dedicated to protecting the most precious biomes and communities that continue to resist in times of crisis. On this third anniversary, we celebrate the diversity of our members, whose work spans from Brazil to Mozambique, from Colombia to the Philippines. This publication is our heartfelt tribute to those who, day after day, transform philanthropic practices in the Global South for the common good.

We have gathered stories that reflect the inspiring work of our members, addressing themes such as community-based value-chains, social innovation, and local governance. Above all, the stories we share shed light on tireless efforts of Indigenous peoples, women, youth, forest, rural and urban communities, revealing

their paths of resistance and collaboration.

More than a collection of stories, articles, and interviews, this publication is a celebration of local knowledge which seeks to inspire socio-environmental action. We wish to show the global philanthropic community the power of local activist funds, whose impact is made possible through community ties, trust-based relationships, and the efficiency of practices that genuinely respond to the needs of the territories.

In 2024, the Alianza strengthened its political role, raising a bold voice to defend critical agendas for local philanthropy in the Global South. We were present at international forums, deepened connections among members, and expanded our learning and collaborative community.

We grew with the incorporation of three new funds and consolidated our executive structure by expanding our internal team and developing tools to strengthen capacities, technical exchanges, and policies that foster cooperation. In the following pages, we will share more about these achievements.

In 2025, we will remain steadfast in building our identity and affirming narratives that bring the essence of our Alianza to life. We will be present in strategic spaces, shaping philanthropy and financing for climate and biodiversity. Above all, we will continue cultivating bonds of collaboration, solidarity, and companionship that reinforce core values of Global South’s visions and inspire a philanthropy grounded in respect and integrity.



JULIANA TINOCO
Executive Coordinator

THROUGHOUT 2024, ALIANZA...

WELCOMED NEW MEMBERS...

Since our last anniversary, we have welcomed three new funds to our network. Joining us were the Fondo Socioambiental Plurales from Argentina and the Youth Climate Justice Fund, which has a global reach. In December 2024, we welcomed FunBEA (Brazilian Fund for Environmental Education) from Brazil, a fund dedicated to mobilizing and channeling strategic resources to promote transformative actions in the field of environmental education. Stay tuned to learn more about this new member in 2025!



... STRENGTHENED OUR INTERNAL TEAM

Clara Daré and Paula Tanscheit joined the Executive Coordination, reinforcing our coordination, engagement, and communication abilities.



AND WE REMAINED CONNECTED, BOTH REMOTELY AND IN PERSON!



We held **ELEVEN (11) VIRTUAL MEETINGS** throughout the year, one a month, along with...



TWO ACTIVE WORKING GROUPS



AND A COMMUNITY OF OVER EIGHTY (80) individuals engaging continuously through digital channels.



Additionally, many of us had the opportunity to **MEET AT VARIOUS EVENTS WORLDWIDE**. With great joy, we brought together thirty (30) representatives from all fifteen (15) member funds to our members' meeting in Maputo, Mozambique.

Our 2024 Year



OUR MEMBERS MEETING

From August 11-14th 2024, on a journey of collaboration and celebration, we held our second member meeting. Fundo Tindzila, the event host, warmly welcomed us, offering the opportunity to visit their headquarters and one of the key projects they support, a rural property dedicated to diversifying sustainable practices and managing resources efficiently.

Over four days of intense activities, we reflected on achievements, exchanged ideas on best practices, and planned for the future. This gathering not only strengthened our bonds but also defined strategic pillars for our collective action. We extend our gratitude to Fundo Tindzila for hosting this special milestone for Alianza.



Maputo, Mozambique
- August 2024

OUR JOURNEY OF INFLUENCE AND GLOBAL ACTION

Over the past year, we have consolidated our presence in global spaces of strategic relevance, always striving to advance a vision of a community-centered

philanthropy that promotes socio-environmental justice and innovation.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

FUNDING FUTURES FESTIVAL - HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDERS NETWORK

Tbilisi, Georgia - April 2024

We promoted discussions to strengthen the vision of socio-environmental justice as a human rights issue at an event organized by an international philanthropy network.



F20 CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FORUM 2024 AND PHILANTHROPY WEEK

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - June 2024

We brought the local funds model and reflections on the value of community philanthropy to events focused on the philanthropic sector's role in preparation for the G20 Summit in Brazil.



PAVING THE WAY: COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY AT THE G20

We participated in the Sustainable Development Working Group (GT9) within the Civil 20 (C20), a civil society engagement group involved in the G20 process. Our efforts helped secure the inclusion of the

term "community philanthropy" in the final recommendations sent to G20 negotiators, emphasizing the importance of communities in sustainable development. This outcome reflects the active participation of Alianza's members in critical decision-making processes that define essential terms for philanthropy within influential political forums.

PRESENCE IN ECUADOR

Quito, Ecuador - June 2024

Fondo Ñeque organized an accountability event for local stakeholders, where they also opened a space for dialogue on community philanthropy. Alianza was present, bringing an international perspective, and had the

opportunity to visit the Agroecological Farms of Calacalí, a project supported by the fund.



Our 2024 Year

NYC CLIMATE WEEK

📍 New York City, USA – September 2024

We promoted and participated in meetings and discussions on the role of locally led development in reshaping climate philanthropy and fostering innovative and equitable funding approaches.



16TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY – COP16

📍 Cali, Colombia – October 2024

We participated in side events during the official conference program, aiming to influence discussions on biodiversity conservation from the perspective of communities in their territories while advocating for appropriate funding strategies to protect nature.

Fondo Emerger from Colombia played a prominent role at COP16, supporting ninety-one (91) local organizations that participated thanks to a call for proposals held in partnership with the Colombian Ministry of Environment.



Our 2024 Year

AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY NETWORK ASSEMBLY 2024

📍 Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe – November 2024

We were represented at the event by Maria Amalia Souza, Founder and Strategic Alliances Director at Casa Socio-Environmental Fund, and Alda Salomão, Executive Director of Tindzila Caminhos Sustentáveis. The assembly brought together leaders in African philanthropy to share experiences on Africa's development through a philanthropic approach that respects local contexts.



29TH UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE – COP29

📍 Baku, Azerbaijan – November 2024

Financing was the central theme of the 29th UN Climate Conference, and we were present to amplify our key message: resources for climate adaptation and the protection of ecosystems essential to life must reach the most affected communities. We also highlighted that Global South philanthropy is ready to scale up these transformative local solutions.



COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE: PILLARS OF OUR EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, we have strategically engaged in key spaces, always seeking to reflect our identity as a network with this particular perspective, we strengthened our presence through a variety of strategic communication and knowledge initiatives.



OUR HIGHLIGHTS:



The launch of the interactive game *Funding the Planet's Guardians*, which offers a playful and dynamic opportunity for participants to step into the shoes of community-based movements in Global South territories. This immersive experience blends learning with entertainment, providing a deep understanding of the essential role of activist funds through fictional scenarios grounded in real-world contexts.

The game won the **Design for a Better World Award**, which celebrates initiatives focused on building a better world through creativity. Our design team, **Utopika Estúdio Criativo**, brought home the **Curupira Trophy 2024** for the best project in the concept category.



We developed a Climate Finance Toolkit to support our member funds in navigating the complex landscape of climate and biodiversity finance. This resource delves into key concepts and financing mechanisms, providing practical and strategic examples. Scan the QR code below to access the full Toolkit.



We also strengthened our presence on LinkedIn, a strategic platform for connecting with global debates. We invite you to follow us if you are not already doing so.



Finally, our quarterly newsletter continues to bring updates about Alianza, news from member funds, and stories from communities at the frontline of socio-environmental justice. Subscribe through the QR code!



Boletín - Agosto 2024

Editorial.

Al alcanzar el segundo semestre de un año marcado por el creciente agravamiento de la emergencia climática y los riesgos de asfixia de los espacios cívicos en diversas partes del mundo, la Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur se ha posicionado activa y contundentemente en los debates políticos internacionales relevantes al sector. Como comunidad de actores locales de la filantropía del Sur Global, la Alianza utiliza estos espacios para contribuir con su enfoque de actuación.

Recientemente, participamos en eventos internacionales importantes, como las discusiones sobre el papel de la filantropía en el G20 (que este año se celebra en Brasil), el Climate Solutions Forum, el Festival de la Human Rights Funders Network en Georgia y el Foro Social Panamazónico (FOSPA). Miembros de la Alianza estuvieron reunidos en Ecuador para el evento de presentación de resultados del

FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF ALIANZA

Alianza's work in 2024 was enabled thanks to the vital support of the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA) through the Forest, People, Climate initiative. We also celebrate the addition of two new supporters to our efforts: the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) and Porticus. These funding partners uniquely contribute to strengthening our member funds, consolidating our presence in key philanthropy spaces, and promoting our institutional growth. Meet our allies:

CLIMATE AND LAND USE ALLIANCE (CLUA): Dedicated to maximizing the potential of forests and land use to mitigate climate change, benefit communities, and protect the environment. CLUA supports policies and partnerships in strategic tropical regions to combat deforestation and defend Indigenous rights.

INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (IAF): Invests in community-led development across Latin America and the Caribbean, fostering self-sufficiency and partnerships between community organizations, businesses, and local governments. The IAF ensures the participation of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and persons with disabilities, strengthening community groups that improve living conditions for thousands.

PORTICUS: Focuses on creating a fair and sustainable future by strengthening community resilience. As philanthropic advisors, they develop programs that promote systemic change, prioritizing participation, flexibility, and continuous learning.

STORIES FROM THE GROUND

Through articles, case studies, and interviews, we share inspiring stories of transformation led by local communities and organizations driving change in their territories with the support of Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur's member funds.

From agroecological practices spearheaded by LGBTQIAPN+ communities in Brazil to participatory grantmaking models in South Africa, these narratives showcase the profound impact of initiatives rooted in local knowledge, advancing socio-environmental justice, gender equality, and community leadership.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH ASHÁNINKAS¹ WOMEN IN MELIPONICULTURE

BY KIT HUAYAS and IAN BRAVO
Fondo Socioambiental del Perú



Peru

The Fondo Socioambiental del Perú has been working for over five years alongside grassroots organizations from different regions of Peru, aiming to support the defense of human and gender rights.

The work carried out by the communities of **Cusco** and **Junín** are great examples of development and ancestral knowledge production. These communities are promoting training in stingless bees (meliponas) breeding in the central Peruvian jungle to promote a circular economy that contributes to the conservation of Amazon ecosystems, where women and youth play a leading role.

This work is bearing fruit thanks to collaborations with the following partner organizations: Eco Asháninka, Amazon Research International (ARI), and native communities from the **Valley of the Apurímac, Ene, and Mantaro Rivers (VRAEM)** in the central Peruvian jungle.

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

Meliponas are a species of bees native to the Americas, known for their lack of stingers. They play an essential role as pollinators, and, in recent years, their honey has gained recognition for its medicinal properties.

1. The Asháninka communities are indigenous groups primarily found in the Amazon region, especially in Peru and parts of Brazil. They belong to the indigenous people who speak the Asháninka language, which is part of the Arawakan language family.

“This natural resource from the Amazon not only empowers local economies but also strengthens the protection of these species, which are vulnerable to climate change and deforestation,” says **Rosa Vásquez Espinoza**, a Ph.D. in chemical biology and director of ARI.

In Peru, 175 species of stingless bees have been scientifically recognized, out of the 300 species estimated to exist, as highlighted by biologist **César Delgado**, who is in charge of the Native Stingless Bees project at the Institute of Amazonian Research of Peru (IIAP). He further points out that this initiative can be developed in remote communities alongside local populations.

This initiative highlights the participation of Asháninkawomen through circular economy opportunities offered by meliponiculture. As community leader Micaela Huaman Fernandez from the Marontoari Native Community shares: **“Meliponiculture is the livelihood of my community and my home. Plants and bees give us life as Asháninkas,”** she says.

“These initiatives empower indigenous people. They allow us to continue conserving [ecosystems] and avoiding any kind of threat”, affirms César Ramos Pérez, President of ECO Asháninka. “The important thing is to work on the social aspect; that is where the key lies. It doubles conservation” he adds.



The communities practice meliponiculture in specialized boxes

At the Fondo Socioambiental del Perú, we believe that promoting sustainable conservation requires involving all actors: communities, ecosystems, state authorities, civil society, among others.

“Communities that protect biodiversity have a close relationship with

all resources. For them, conserving biodiversity means conserving their knowledge, traditions, and culture. The balance between people, communities, and conservation projects brings longer-lasting results,” says **Dennis Meza**, the Local Support Program monitor. ■

The scientist Rosa Vásquez works on building partnerships to develop meliponiculture in native communities

PHOTO: IAN BRAVO/FONDO PERÚ



In July 2024, a Fondo Socioambiental del Perú team visited two meliponiculture projects developed by the Asháninka communities of VRAEM

PHOTO: IAN BRAVO/FONDO PERÚ



RESILIENCE IN ACTION: THE ECOTOURISM FARMS OF CALACALÍ

BY DANIELA CEVALLOS
Fondo Ñeque

 Ecuador

In the heart of Ecuador's **Chocó** Andino, a region renowned for its unparalleled biodiversity, twelve families came together to form the Ecotourism Farms Association of **Calacalí** (Asociación de Granjas Ecoturísticas de Calacalí). **Ana Lucía Cajas**, a mother of five, leads this initiative, which balances human livelihoods and environmental conservation. For years, the community engaged in deforestation for agricultural purposes, but the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prompted a reassessment of their relationship with the land. Guided by Ana Lucía, **in their fertile soil they found an opportunity to build a resilient food system and generate income in harmony with nature.**

In 2022, the community formalized the association to connect their lands through agroecological

practices and design ecotourism routes to showcase the region's beauty. Their land, surrounded by majestic valleys, is home to sixteen (16) species of hummingbirds, thirty-three (33) species of tanagers, and many other life forms. This initiative caught the attention of Fundación Ñeque, which, through Fondo Ñeque, supported the project "Sustainable Livelihoods with Forests in the Ravines of the Chocó Andino" ("Medios de Vida Sostenibles con el Bosque en las Quebradas del Chocó Andino"), sharing a common vision of sustainability.

THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSFORMATION

The transition to sustainable practices has been challenging. For years, deforestation for agriculture seemed like an inevitable economic necessity.

IN THEIR FERTILE SOIL THEY FOUND AN
OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A RESILIENT
FOOD SYSTEM AND GENERATE INCOME
IN HARMONY WITH NATURE.



PHOTO: FONDO ÑEQUE ARCHIVE

Ana Lucía Cajas, president
of the Ecotourism Farms
Association of Calacalí



Hummingbird in the birdwatching area of one of the association's farms

PHOTO: FONDO ÑEQUE ARCHIVE

As Ana Lucía notes, **"we were part of the problem, cutting down forests to make a living"**. However, with a renewed purpose and support from Fondo Ñeque, the community embarked on the arduous process of mending their relationship with the land.

Restoring the environment has proven particularly challenging due to the region's rugged terrain, marked by steep ravines that complicate fieldwork. Social challenges added to these difficulties. Historically, the community was deeply resistant to changing life habits that had long exploited nature, even as they aimed for restoration and sustainability.

Ana Lucía and her fellow women leaders also had to navigate traditional gender roles that imposed a dual burden: managing household tasks while leading the association. This limited their capacity to fully engage, but they found strength in their community. Together, they built a support network to share responsibilities and empower one another.

A LEGACY OF NATURE AND COMMUNITY

The families have constructed six greenhouses, far more than initially planned, ensuring a steady supply of organic produce for their consumption and for sale in local markets. This has strengthened the community's food sovereignty while generating new income opportunities and boosting ecotourism.

In the Maraksacha Reserve, owned by Ana Lucía, visitors can marvel at hummingbirds in flight and enjoy the unique landscape. This corner of the Chocó Andino, **declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2018**, is home to extraordinary biodiversity. The association's work ensures that future generations may inherit this natural treasure.

For Ana Lucía, the future is one of hope and resilience. **"Our children will grow up seeing hummingbirds, tanagers, bears, and rabbits roaming freely. Time is running out to mitigate climate change, but if we focus our hearts on nature, not just profit, we can leave behind a better world for them,"** she affirms with conviction.

WOMEN'S PIVOTAL ROLE IN CALACALÍ

The women of Calacalí have taken on key roles in the association, challenging traditional norms. Through reforestation efforts, ecotourism leadership, and organic agriculture training, they have shown that sustainability is closely tied to gender equity.

The association has sparked a broader movement toward economic independence in rural areas by creating spaces for women's empowerment. Women are learning to manage farms, lead tourist excursions, and advocate for environmental justice, inspiring others to follow their example.

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

The Ecotourism Farms Association of Calacalí stands as a powerful model for what communities can achieve when they unite to protect both their natural environment and social fabric. With Fondo Ñeque's and other allies' support, this group has transformed degraded lands into a biodiversity haven and a source of sustainable livelihoods.

As the association continues to grow, it is not only conserving one of the world's most significant biosphere reserves but also **planting seeds of resilience, solidarity, and hope. Calacalí's story proves that, with commitment and collective action, even the most vulnerable communities can build a future where humans and nature thrive together.** ■



BARU: THE CERRADO NUT THAT CONQUERED THE WORLD

BY CAMILA ARAUJO
*Institute Society, Population and
Nature Communications Team*

 Brazil

Amid old, yellowed papers in the archives of the Institute Society, Population and Nature (Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza – ISPN), one detail stands out: back in 1995, a project focused on solar dehydration of medicinal plants, tropical fruits and native species from the **Cerrado** biome, developed by the Agroecological Technology Center for Small Farmers (Centro de Tecnologia Agroecológica de Pequenos Agricultores – Agrotec), included plans to process and use baru nuts.

Approved under the first call for proposals of a program then known as PPP-ECOS – short for the Small Ecosocial Projects Program (Programa de Pequenos Projetos Ecosociais, in Portuguese) –

this initiative was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). One of its goals was to commercialize baru in two forms: roasted nuts or paste from the nut kernel.

It was the first time the baru production chain was ever supported.

Agrotec made a bold proposal under the leadership of its then-president Vanderlei Pereira de Castro. At that time, baru was little known and scarcely consumed, even by native Cerrado populations who coexisted with the baruzeiro tree in their pastures. The nuts were mostly used for cattle feed.

With the production chain now established, baru has entered international markets

PHOTO: CAMILA ARAUJO/ISPN ARCHIVE



AFTER 30 YEARS, ISPN CELEBRATES 950 SUPPORTED PROJECTS, \$25 MILLION INVESTED, AND LAUNCHES THE FUNDO ECOS.



PHOTO: CAMILA ARAUJO/ISPN ARCHIVE

The history of the Ecos Fund is intertwined with the commercialization of this Cerrado nut

Since then, much has changed. Baru's nutritional value has been recognized and the nut has gained space in international markets. The baru production chain has been structured, and PPP-ECOS, now known as

Ecos Fund, played a significant role in this transformation. Over 30 years of operation, more than a dozen projects supported by the fund have been dedicated to this nut's production chain.

When Vanderlei from Agrotec proposed commercializing baru in the GEF/UNDP-funded project, ISPN had just been selected to coordinate the Small Grants Programme (SGP) in Brazil. The PPP-ECOS program, as it became known in Portuguese, was designed to conserve the Cerrado biome through the leadership of rural communities, including those living outside protected areas.

The program's pioneering spirit extended beyond its methodology. The Brazilian SGP was the first fund dedicated to the Cerrado biome, focusing on supporting family farmers, Indigenous peoples, and traditional communities in a region neglected by environmental policies and projects.

A series of organizations and cooperation networks emerged from the foundation of PPP-ECOS. In 2013, the program expanded its operations to the Caatinga biome, and, in the same year, it diversified its funding sources. The Amazon Fund and BNDES (Brazilian Development Bank) were added to PPP-ECOS'

donor portfolio, and three new states in the Legal Amazon region – Maranhão, Tocantins, and Mato Grosso – were integrated into its strategy. A major milestone came in 2019 when PPP-ECOS evolved into a broader initiative that permeates all of ISPN's work. Its institutional strategy is based on four pillars: community leadership, political advocacy, knowledge management, and resource access.

Like the baru production chain, which grew and solidified, PPP-ECOS also grew roots and bore fruit, benefiting communities supported by the fund. **After 30 years, ISPN celebrates funding over 950 projects, investing \$25 million, and unveiling a new name for its financial mechanism to support community ecosocial projects: the Ecos Fund.** This fund remains committed to strengthening Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and family farmers. ■

interview

ENVIRONMENTAL, RESTORATIVE, AND GENDER JUSTICE FROM AND FOR THE TERRITORIES

BY the Socio-Environmental
Fund Plurales's team

📍 Argentina

Marta Esber is a feminist and socio-environmental activist with over 35 years of experience supporting Indigenous and rural communities in defending land and territories. She currently resides in **Córdoba**, Argentina, and is part of the Plurales Fund team. In this interview, she shares her journey and the feminist vision that guides the fund's work, highlighting initiatives that support women leading resistance against the expansion of extractivism in their territories.

What was the main motivation behind the foundation of a socio-environmental fund as Plurales, and what needs or gaps were you aiming to address?

Plurales was founded in 2001. Argentina's social, political, and economic crisis at the time called us to defend economic, political, social, and environmental rights both in the country and the region. In 2006, we became a Foundation, and in this initial stage, we focused on developing projects, alliances, and networks with organizations and groups of rural and Indigenous women.

In 2024, facing yet another alarming context, we understood it was time to implement new support strategies. That is why, from a feminist perspective, we established ourselves as the Socio-Environmental Fund Plurales. **Our goal is to provide flexible seed funding and technical-political support for the development and strengthening of organizations, groups, and networks facing a significant expansion of extractivism in their territories and commons, in violation of their rights.**

1. Guaraní authorities

How is the feminist perspective integrated into practices and strategies of the Plurales Fund? What actions reflect this vision?

We have developed several tools guided by feminist perspectives, both internally within our organization and in our relationships and partnerships with the organizations, networks, and groups we work with. For instance, we created a protocol and a gender action plan to guide the Fund's activities.

As a socio-environmental fund, we primarily support **gender-just proposals that strengthen women within their organizations and support their efforts to achieving their goals.**

For proposals submitted by mixed-gender organizations, they must clearly demonstrate women's leadership, with women being the main representatives. This is tied to the persistent patriarchy in the region. For example, in Indigenous communities, authorities are often male leaders, such as caciques or **mburuvicha**¹, and in rural families, men tend to have more decision-making power. The requirement for women to lead projects is aimed at shifting this power imbalance.

What are the meanings and nuances of implementing a feminist approach in a socio-environmental context? What lessons have you learned so far?

From our experience, **women are the ones who most actively resist the expansion of extractivism, which violates human and environmental rights in their territories. This resistance holds special significance due to their deep connection with nature.**

However, it is also important to recognize the multiple tasks they carry out daily, including care work and self-care.

Another critical issue to consider is the violence women face, often with particular intensity, whether institutional, corporate or within their own communities and families.

How does the Fund work with local organizations to ensure that the voices of women and marginalized communities are heard? What are some examples of initiatives that reflect this collaboration and feminist perspective?

At Plurales, we also promote initiatives that encourage participation in various advocacy spaces.

Since 2022, we have been developing the Feminist School for Climate Action (Escuela Feminista por la Acción Climática- EFAC), which includes over 30 organizations of Indigenous, rural, Afro-descendant, and quilombola women across the region, from Mexico to Argentina. Through EFAC, we collectively organize virtual training sessions, exchanges, and information-sharing events. We also hold in-person gatherings to foster stronger connections among participating organizations.

We promote and support the participation of women from these organizations in local, regional, and global advocacy spaces, such as the Forums for Defenders of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Conferences of the Parties on

WE PROVIDE FUNDING AND SUPPORT TO RESIST EXTRACTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.



Visit to a Peasant Organization / Santiago del Estero - Argentina

both the Escazú Agreement and Climate Change, and other venues. These spaces allow them to raise their voices, influence decision-making, and connect with other environmental activists who face similar challenges and demands in the region and the world.

How do you see the evolution of Plurales' work in the coming years concerning promoting a feminist agenda? What are your long-term goals to reinforce this focus in your initiatives?

All our projects and initiatives have a strong component of fostering connections among the diverse organizations we support, whether they are rural, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, or urban-marginalized groups. In the long term, these connections aim to build a strong movement of environmental defenders in the region.

We believe advocacy efforts to promote feminist agendas will be more successful as women emerge from such movement built within the territories. ■

article

TRANSFORMING ACCESS TO RESOURCES FOR THE NEXT- GENERATION LEADERS

BY the Youth Climate Justice
Fund Team

📍 Global

Youth-led grassroots actions are essential to preserve our collective well-being, as the climate crisis is not an isolated problem but a complex, interconnected web of challenges that interact and amplify each other. By fostering climate and environmental justice, these next generation of leaders are fighting for our future.

Yet, youth-led climate initiatives receive only 0.76% of all climate grants from major foundations¹.

In this context, the Youth Climate Justice Fund (YCJF) emerged to strengthen and transform support for youth-led groups. From an intersectional approach,

¹ [Youth Climate Justice Study](#)

we support young people from marginalized communities to create a greener and fairer world through capacity development and participatory grantmaking.

At the heart of our work lies an unwavering dedication to young changemakers rooted in community and climate justice principles. We are committed to unleashing youth potential while pushing for bold socio-environmental commitments and holding policymakers accountable to their promises.

We believe young people are our best renewable energy, and inclusivity is essential.

OUR MISSION IS TO
MAKE RESOURCES
AND OPPORTUNITIES
ACCESSIBLE, FOSTERING
AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY
FOR EVERYONE,
PARA TODOS.
BUT HOW DOES ALL
OF THIS LOOK IN
PRACTICAL TERMS?



Youth Climate Justice Fund team gathered.

PHOTO: YCJF ARCHIVE

This belief drives our commitment to transparency and accountability, allowing us to adapt to the evolving needs of youth-led efforts.

Engaging donors to see the value of investing in community-rooted and youth-led initiatives helps us grow the pie of funding available for grassroots groups.

PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

Driving innovative **youth-led participatory grantmaking** is our strategic focus for building strong youth leadership and consolidating trust and credibility between groups and funding sources.

Through our participatory process, youth representatives take the lead in the funding decisions. Our Steering Committee is structured to include a diverse range of voices, ensuring that we have a mix of expertise and perspectives. This dynamic group is composed of youth representatives, experienced leaders and community leaders.

We've also welcomed new Regional Committee members from the Pacific, Central Asia, North America, and Francophone West Africa, enhancing our expertise and decentralizing decision-making to boost outreach and local youth participation.

In our pursuit of reaching diverse communities, we prioritize accessibility by providing funding applications in seven languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Hindi, Swahili and Arabic) and incorporating flexible processes that put trust and community-driven engagement at the center.

As Joshua Amponsem, Strategy Director at the YCJF, says:

"If we continue to provide only project funding without actively engaging with these groups to foster their organizational development, we risk leaving them in a cycle of temporary solutions that ultimately undermine their ability to create lasting change".

IMPACT OF YCJF'S EFFORTS

At the Youth Climate Justice Fund, we're aiming to reshape the ways funders and philanthropy support young people to efficiently allocate resources by recognizing their potential. **Since 2023, we have committed funding to 98 grantee partners in over 50 countries, awarding grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$80,000.**

Building on this foundation, our dedication to decentralized, participatory grantmaking empowers communities and elevates voices that often go unheard. By prioritizing inclusivity and collaboration, we're sparking a movement for youth-led socio-environmental solutions to thrive. ■

From left to right, Joshua Amponsem (YCJF), Paige Andrew (FRIDA), and Kat Cadungog (FES) at a YCJF event during NYC Week 2024

PHOTO: YCJF ARCHIVE



case study

PERIPHERAL SEEDS: TRANSFORMATION AND INCLUSION THROUGH AGROECOLOGY IN PERNAMBUCO, BRAZIL

BY LUCAS DUARTE
and VANESSA PURPER
Casa Socio-Environmental Fund



Marcella Ramos,
a trans woman and
regional leader in Olinda

PHOTO: COLETIVO MULHERES
PERIFÉRICAS E LGBT+



OVERVIEW

The project *Peripheral Seeds: Planting and Harvesting Care and Knowledge*, led by the Peripheral Women and LGBT+ Collective (Coletivo Mulheres Periféricas e LGBT+), has become a reference in using agroecology as a tool for social inclusion and transformation. Supported by the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund since July 2023, the initiative has directly benefited women and LGBTQIAPN+ communities in the outskirts of **Olinda**, in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. Its efforts have focused on strengthening a peripheral garden, fostering discussions on environmental racism and climate justice, and creating a knowledge-sharing network among community gardens.

PROBLEMS THAT THE PROJECT SOUGHT TO TACKLE

The community in Olinda faced significant social and environmental challenges, including food insecurity, lack of green infrastructure, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups such as women and LGBTQIAPN+ individuals. Additionally, environmental racism and the absence of climate justice posed major obstacles to creating sustainable and inclusive spaces.

OLINDA REGION IN CONTEXT

Olinda is a city marked by deep social and economic inequalities. While rich in cultural traditions, it lacks sufficient social and environmental inclusion initiatives in its peripheral communities. Agroecology has emerged as a solution to strengthen community bonds, enhance food security, and promote discussions on climate justice. In this context, the Peripheral Women and LGBT+ Collective has stood out by leading a transformative local project directly impacting environmental practices and social inclusion.

PERIPHERAL SEEDS PROJECT STRATEGY

The project aims to promote food security, sustainability, and climate justice in the outskirts of Olinda through three main approaches. The first is the strengthening of the Peripheral Garden, which involves building new garden beds, planting seedlings, and organizing community workdays, fostering both food production and a welcoming environment.

Next is a collection and recycling campaign that repurposes PET bottles to create eco-friendly garden beds, encouraging sustainable practices and environmental awareness. Lastly, the knowledge-sharing network connects community gardens, facilitating exchange of ideas and heirloom seeds to strengthen agroecology and promote the inclusion of women and LGBTQIAPN+ individuals. These integrated actions foster collaboration and inclusivity, compounding sustainability and community engagement.

PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The project's execution faced challenges such as high staff turnover and communication barriers. The turnover affected the PET bottle collection, but adjustments to the budget and increased community mobilization addressed this issue. Communication hurdles were overcome by adapting the format of audiovisual activities, ensuring the project's objectives remained on track. The Casa Socio-Environmental Fund provided consistent support, helping to navigate administrative obstacles.

RESULTS

The project achieved transformative results. The Peripheral Garden was expanded with 32 new garden beds and the planting of 1,900 seedlings,

directly benefiting the community by distributing 480kg of food. The PET bottle collection campaign gathered 1,500 units, which were used to create sustainable garden beds. The project was also a finalist for environmental awards and secured around US\$ 7,000 (R\$ 35,000) in funding to strengthen its activities.

"The project was like planting hope in the soil and watching the transformation we long for bloom. We learned that agroecology is not just about planting but about resisting.

The garden has become a space for reconnection, where children, neighbors, and participants recognize one another and confront the climate and social injustices surrounding us together."

- Elisângela Maranhão dos Santos, project coordinator.

One of the most impactful stories is that of **Marcella Ramos**, a trans woman from the outskirts of Peixinhos neighborhood, who found in the project a space to improve her mental health and engage in discussions on food security and climate change.

"Participating in the Peripheral Seeds project transformed my life during the pandemic. In the garden, I not only learned to plant and harvest but also to help others and take people off the streets. It's a space where I leave my problems behind and dedicate myself to something greater", she says.

Marcella founded the Diversity on Agroecology and Urban Agriculture Coordination Working Group, becoming a regional leader and being honored at the Pernambuco State Legislative Assembly in 2024.


LESSONS LEARNED

- **Social inclusion through agroecology:** The project demonstrated that agroecological practices could be a powerful tool for including marginalized groups.
- **Communication and community mobilization are crucial:** Adjustments to internal and external communication were key to the success of activities, highlighting the importance of flexible strategies and ongoing dialogue.
- **Resilience in the face of challenges:** The project overcame obstacles through creative solutions and support from partners, serving as an example for future initiatives. ■

The community garden became a space for reconnection between neighbors and project participants

PHOTO: COLETIVO MULHERES PERIFÉRICAS E LGBT+





Leaders of the Kichwa Alto Naporuna Cabildo verifying the number of project participants they were formulating, using the flashlight of their cellphone

PHOTO: FONDO EMERGER ARCHIVE

case study

LESS OFFICE, MORE TERRITORY: DESIGNING PROPOSALS THROUGH AN ALTER- NATIVE LENS TO SHIFT POWER DYNAMICS

BY LAURA V. FLÓREZ
and MARISOL GARAY
Fondo Emerger

Colombia

Over the years, development cooperation and philanthropy have established precise systems for resource management. Thematic and geographic areas are defined, calls for proposals are issued requiring logical frameworks, objectives, indicators, results, and budgets, and the highest-scoring proposals are selected.

At first glance, this seems reasonable. A process that evidences transparency and logic. However, **these rigid, bureaucratic systems have proven to be exclusionary for those on the frontlines of addressing climate change challenges in their territories: grassroots community groups.**

Much has been said about the difficulties these organizations face in crafting “strong proposals,” but **what is the point of having amazingly formulated projects if they fail to capture the realities and feelings of the territories?** What is the point of setting objectives that meet all the technical criteria if we cannot reach the communities that embody our reason for existence?

When, as a team, we spend a lot of time analyzing realities through a screen, verifying the feasibility of initiatives in the territories via a form, we sometimes forget that behind the documents are people and that we must revisit the land, the territory, with a discerning eye, in order to reconnect with our purpose.

We understand that **our reason for being lies in reaching places where traditional philanthropy does not** and in being a mechanism dedicated to highlighting and making visible initiatives that leverage local knowledge and resources. In doing so we aim to protect life and flatten power dynamics with those who work for environmental justice in their territories, based on the establishment of trust-based relationships.

At Fondo Emerger, we constantly question our systems for receiving, evaluating, and selecting proposals. While we must collect a minimum amount of information to assess the feasibility of organizations' initiatives, we strongly advocate for simplifying our processes and adapting to local realities. These realities often include poor connectivity and challenges with proposal writing, which create barriers to accessing opportunities.

Having this in mind, we strive to ensure that the relationship between Fondo Emerger and grassroots organizations goes beyond a grant call's administrative and technical aspects. We understood that **leveraging**

processes requires combining administrative management with lived experiences in the field. For this reason, we have created alternatives, such as virtual project development marathons, spaces where partner organizations provide feedback on our forms to optimize questions, and, most recently, in-person proposal-writing workshops in the territories.

As part of the Resilient Amazon (*Amazonía Resiliente*) initiative, we traveled to **Puerto Leguizamo**, a municipality in the **Bajo Putumayo**, region on the border of Colombia and Peru. Being in the territory allowed us to better understand and experience the daily challenges faced by these communities and to grasp the motivations behind their ideas, proposals, and struggles, insights that are often invisible in a form.

In a sixteen-hour session, thanks to the commitment of the **Kichwa** traditional authorities, four Indigenous reserves were able to draft proposals in their own handwriting.

What initially seemed to be a rice cultivation project from one of the communities, which on the

form appeared to be a productive initiative with a high likelihood of being rejected, turned out to be motivated by a desire to rescue the cultural heritage of a territory deeply impacted by what the communities define as bonanzas: the rubber boom in the 19th century, followed by the **"tigrilleo"**¹ era when animal skins were exploited, the cedar boom for timber extraction, and, more recently, coca cultivation. It was a cry for the defense of their territory against a continuous process of colonization that destroyed their ecosystems and eradicated their culture.

This experience reaffirmed our conviction that while rigorous processes are necessary, instead of becoming increasingly systematic, they must aim to be human, connected to the territories, and reflect what resides in the hearts of those who work to protect life.

Let us transform power by humanizing our processes, removing barriers, simplifying life for those already facing countless challenges in their territories, innovating in our systems, and bringing opportunities closer to those invisible to traditional philanthropy. ■

ULTIMATELY, IF OUR MISSION IS TO REACH WHERE OTHERS DO NOT, SHOULD IT NOT BE US THE ONES TO ADAPT TO LOCAL REALITIES?

1. A term referring to the *tigrillo* or tiger cat (*Leopardus tigrinus*).



THE VALUE OF SMALL GRANTS FOR INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Samdhana Institute

 Southeast Asia

Erwin Quinones has been the Deputy Executive Director for the Philippines-Mekong Operations of Samdhana Institute since 2018. Erwin is passionate about listening to community experiences. He believes that each story—whether of success or failure—reflects collective learning. For Erwin, the

true impact of Samdhana’s work lies in strengthening communities to make decisions about their own development and initiatives through the flexible and accessible financial support that Samdhana provides. Discover more about his perspective in the interview below.



What does “small grants” mean for Samdhana, and how do these funding levels prove most appropriate for the supported communities?

“Small” grants pertain to the amount of funds we channel directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), which is around US\$5,000.

What might seem ‘small’ for big organizations can be a huge amount for a community. The idea is to fund the “unfundable”, reaching small organizations that cannot access support because of donor requirements, such as organizational structures, bank accounts, and financial audits. The idea of “small grants” is to reach as many IPLCs and local organizations who really need support for their work.

How do you ensure that decision-making power rests with local communities, and how do you manage flexibility and monitoring for the supported projects?

The community determines their ‘project’. They discuss their needs collectively, and we mostly receive proposals from communities based

on their priorities. We support the proposals that generally align with our thematic areas, such as women’s professional development, next generation, leadership, livelihoods, and governance.

We accept proposals written in their own language and translate them into our grant-making process. Because these are community-driven proposals, we have advisors who evaluate the proposals based not only on their merits, but also on the advisers’ understanding of the local and political context. We can advise options or other strategies to the community, given that the fund is relatively small to address all their needs.

They do a simple report for the grant, which they can make in their own language. We attempt to regularly accompany the partners, not to act as watchdogs but to help facilitate that they can respond effectively when unexpected issues arise. **We believe it’s not just about the project—it’s about what the community learns through the process and the confidence they gain to manage their own funds.**

Could you share some examples of how these grants drive tangible change and how the fund also learns with it?

When we began our partnership with this community in Southern Philippines, they faced challenges securing its ancestral domain certificate. However, during the community strategic planning, they decided to prioritize building a water system, believing it would solve their urgent need. During implementation, they faced challenges, like a broken pump, but they took the initiative to repair it and later established their policies and a fund for maintenance. Having water access closer to their homes freed up their time and energy so they could give more attention to reclaiming their lands and strengthening their governance process. It was a learning process for both the community and us.

What are the main challenges in transferring power and resources to Indigenous communities through small grants, and how are these challenges overcome?

Some communities approached us seeking funding without a clear idea of how their projects would contribute to a long-term objective. Therefore, we encouraged them to think more strategically. We conduct workshops focused on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats without necessarily using those terms, aiming to create a space for communities to think practically and creatively.

Our goal is to ensure that communities themselves own the power. When we talk about power, we refer to their capacity and ability to act on their own.

The grants we provide are just a supplement, not a substitute, for what they should be doing. Funding serves to strengthen their abilities rather than replace their effective practices or change their way of doing. We connect them to other networks and the government and create access. This approach is part of our strategy to shift power dynamics by providing the necessary space and capacity so they can engage directly to pursue their objectives and promote their interests, especially for Indigenous communities who come from a position of historical discrimination.

What are Samdhana's expectations regarding the transfer of power and resources to Indigenous and local communities, and how does it envision their long-term impact?

We envision a future where indigenous communities actively support one another. They possess the needed abilities and human resources, and their ancestral domains are rich in resources. If they can control and manage these lands, they can provide for their basic needs and also generate income to set up their own social fund. More importantly, IPLCs possess cultural knowledge and a close spiritual relationship with the land, so we should be learning from them.

We hope to see them more connected to other sectors in society - sharing their knowledge and fostering innovation to help solve big problems like climate change. In the future, we hope to see more indigenous-led community funds that can also do their own small grants-making. ■

Construction of the water system

PHOTO: SAMDHANA ARCHIVE



case study

PARTICIPATORY GRANT-MAKING: AN EMERGING MODEL FROM SOUTH AFRICA

BY the Environmental Justice Fund's team

South Africa



The EJF family (staff, board and Grants Committee) taking time out to reflect during a strategic planning retreat in February 2024

PHOTO: EJF ARCHIVE

The Environmental Justice Fund (EJF) is a South African fund working to advance climate justice and realise environmental rights by strengthening the environmental justice movement. We do so by providing financial and capacity-strengthening support to community-based organisations (CBOs). Ever since EJF opened its doors in 2022, we have operated as a fund 'by activists for activists'. The communities we work with are experts. They have vast knowledge of their land, the natural resources they act as custodians over, and the ways in which climate change is impacting their communities. They also have experience with different methodologies of democratic accountability, and have an acute understanding of the challenges facing CBOs.

The question is, therefore, not why these activists should guide our work, but why aren't more funders listening to this repository of expertise? In fact, more and more are. Participatory grant-making (PGM) is a growing trend in global philanthropy as funders increasingly realise that tapping into local expertise makes sense. PGM also offers a way to confront the inequalities and harmful power imbalances in philanthropy. Shifting power to the hands of the kinds of communities that EJF seeks to serve, not just in terms of where the money goes but also in terms of how we operate, is a key way that we can contribute to this.

So, what does PGM look like in practice?

BELOW ARE THE 7 CORE FEATURES OF EJF'S PGM APPROACH:

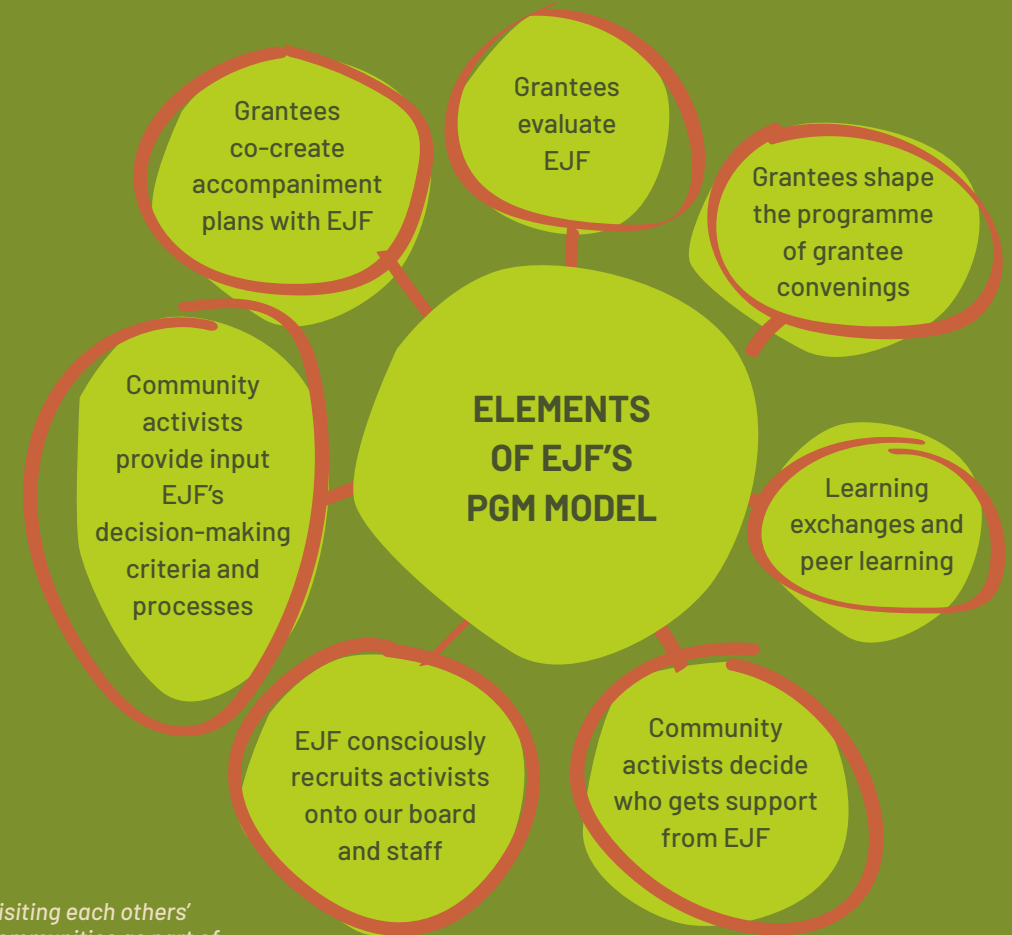
- **Community activists decide who gets support from EJF:** Decisions on which organisations should get support from EJF are designed by a dedicated structure – called our Grants Committee – comprised primarily of community activists who come from the kinds of communities and organisations we seek to support.
- **Community activists provide input into EJF's decision-making criteria and processes:** The Grants Committee was involved in developing the decision-making criteria used to evaluate proposals and continue to participate revising and refining policies and processes.
- **EJF consciously recruits activists to our board and staff:** It is important that all of our structures include representatives from the environmental justice movement. This also applies to our staff and board. This is another important way in which we ensure that we remain rooted in and led by the movement itself.
- **Grantees co-create accompaniment plans with EJF:** At the start of each grant, we sit down with each organisation to

discuss what monitoring forms they would find helpful. This results in the development of a monitoring plan which is a combination of the grantee's self-identified needs and our own assessment of areas where capacity-strengthening might be useful.

- **Peer learning:** Peer learning recognises the expertise in grassroots communities. EJF facilitates learning exchanges on particular themes and partners with larger CBOs to provide organisational strengthening and mentoring support to smaller / newer CBOs where possible.
- **Grantees shape the programme of grantee convenings:** A significant feature of our monitoring model is annual grantee convenings, where all the organisations we support come together to build solidarity and learn from each other. Participants play a key role in shaping the programme of these convenings.
- **Grantees evaluate EJF:** We are trying to live out an organisational culture of reflection and to create

multiple pathways – both formal and informal – for grantees to provide us feedback. This occurs both because the effectiveness of our work is enhanced, but also as a deliberate move away from the disregard of community voices, which is so prevalent in engagements on environmental issues in our context.

There are many ways to implement a PGM approach, and every context requires certain adaptations to our model. The EJF model is constantly evolving as we refine it in response to feedback and learning. What is clear is that taking this approach facilitates community-led solutions in ways which recognise the agency and enhance the dignity of people on the ground. It has also made it possible for us to benefit from the rich experience and expertise of the communities we serve. ■



Visiting each others' communities as part of a waste and recycling-themed learning exchange in September 2024.

PHOTO: EJF ARCHIVE



case study

THE CASE OF ASSOCIAÇÃO LIGA DO BEM

BY CRESCÊNCIO TAMELE
Fundo Tindzila

Mozambique

EVALUATION OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT ON WOMEN'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Group participating in a bean harvest at Liga do Bem's training farm.

PHOTO: FUNDO TINDZILA ARCHIVE

CONTEXT

Tindzila, Caminhos Sustentáveis's mission is to develop and support initiatives that promote awareness, responsibility, and citizen engagement in the country's harmonious and sustainable social and economic development.

Through Fundo Tindzila, resources are mobilized and channeled directly to associations and vulnerable groups to promote initiatives across diverse and interconnected thematic areas representing the three pillars of sustainable development: social, environmental, and economic.

The Associação Liga do Bem was founded in 2018 by a group of Mozambican women **with the primary goal of improving living conditions of vulnerable women and children**. It also aims to enhance the status of women and adolescents in Mozambique by providing them with tools to develop themselves, their families, and their communities.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

This text seeks to share the socioeconomic impact of Fundo Tindzila in improving the quality of life of women, using the case study of Associação Liga do Bem, located in **Katembe**, a suburb of **Maputo, Mozambique's** capital¹.

SUCCESS STORIES OF WOMEN TRAINED AT THE ASSOCIAÇÃO LIGA DO BEM

At Liga do Bem, courses in cooking and food processing, as well as in sewing, tailoring, and accessory production, are offered. Since the association's foundation, dozens of women have completed these courses.

According to **Alzira Muianga**, leader of the Associação Liga do Bem, her first contact with Tindzila occurred in 2022, when the association received its first financial support from the fund. She mentions that some cases have left an indelible mark on the history of Liga do Bem.

1. This is a qualitative study that uses semi-structured interviews and a documentary analysis based on the association's annual reports.



- 1. Ms. Alzira Muianga
- 2. Group in a hands-on activity for the tailoring course
- 3. Ms. Alzira Muianga with students participating in a harvest activity at Liga do Bem's training farm

PHOTO: FUNDO TINDZILA ARCHIVE



One of these cases is that of **Mrs. Gilda**, a young woman from the **Maganja da Costa** district in the **Zambézia** province, who moved to Maputo city to live with her husband. When the opening of the cooking course in 2022 became public, she was one of the first people admitted.

Filomena da Silva, also a student of the course, completed it successfully and returned to her hometown. With the knowledge she gained, she started a small food business, initially selling pastries and cookies. The business grew, and little by little, she introduced new dishes, such as cassava soup, which she learned to make at Liga do Bem and which attracted many customers. In the Maganja da Costa district, Filomena is called whenever there is an event requiring catering services. Alzira mentioned that Filomena's husband no longer feels financial pressure, as she has significantly contributed to the household economy.

The Liga do Bem association also offers a sewing and tailoring course focused on producing clothing accessories.

Mrs. Crisólida benefited from this course and, even before graduating, entered the workforce and set up shop in a location in Katembe, where she makes clothing mainly for women and girls, such as dresses and school uniforms.

CONCLUSION

The socioeconomic impact facilitated by Fundo Tindzila in promoting and improving the quality of life for citizens is evident through its support for grassroots community associations like Associação Liga do Bem.

With the funding provided, Liga do Bem delivers courses to empower women in strategic areas related to entrepreneurship and self-employment, such as cooking, food processing, tailoring, and accessory production. These programs enable women to build sustainable livelihoods and demonstrate the potential of local communities to address structural challenges when provided with adequate resources and consistent support. ■

case study

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR A STRONGER NETWORK

BY FACUNDO IBARLUCÍA
Red Comunidades Rurales

Argentina

The 2024 Capacity-Building and Strengthening Cycle (Ciclo de Capacitación y Fortalecimiento 2024) was carried out as part of the Rural Community Projects Bank (Banco de Proyectos Comunitarios Rurales - BPCR). This initiative was not just a training space but a truly collaborative learning laboratory, co-designed during plenary meetings by the same social organizations that make up the network.

From the beginning, **the cycle was developed based on needs and priorities identified by the**

present organizations. Through surveys and discussions, each session was designed to address concrete challenges faced by rural communities across eight ecoregions encompassed by the BPCR. This approach not only enriched content but also ensured that each meeting reflected the diversity of experiences and contexts within the group.

SPACES FOR EXCHANGE AND SHARED KNOWLEDGE

Five seminars were held throughout the cycle, focusing on key topics for

organizational strengthening and the design of socio-environmental projects:

- **Resource Management and Organizational Strengthening:** This seminar explored tools for resource optimization and for creating strategic partnerships to enhance organizational impact. Participants exchanged experiences on how to manage, nurture, and grow resources within their communities.
- **Design and Development of Socio-Environmental Projects:** This space emphasized the importance of involving all stakeholders in the project design process, generating integrated strategies to address socio-environmental challenges.
- **Technological Innovation and Community Participation:** This session highlighted how access to connectivity and technological training can transform rural territories. Participants shared advancements in innovative projects to reduce the digital divide in their communities.
- **Audiovisual Communication for Impact:** Tools were provided to

help organizations showcase their work through effective audiovisual content creation, covering visual storytelling and the use of mobile devices to capture images and testimonies.

- **Networking: Collective Construction:** Participants discussed benefits and challenges of working in networks, presenting concrete examples of community networks in Argentina and worldwide, as well as practices for joint action.

INNOVATION IN KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

One of the most outstanding aspects of this cycle was its participatory and innovative nature. Agile and participatory methodologies ensured that each meeting became a co-creation space where participants' experiences were integrated into knowledge-building processes. **Collaborative work dynamics not only encouraged the exchange of knowledge but also fostered the creation of a learning community that transcends formal meetings.**

The process was supported by an online platform to facilitate registration, promote continuous

Engineering Without Borders and the San Antonio Oeste Community building community agreements for the development of their socio-environmental projects

PHOTO: RED COMUNIDADES RURALES ARCHIVE



interaction, and give access to complementary bibliographic and audiovisual materials. At the end of the cycle, a dedicated space for questions and final reflections ensured the content was tailored to the real needs of participating organizations¹.

CALL FOR PROJECTS AND FUTURE CONTINUITY

To close the cycle, we launched the Third Call for Socio-Environmental Projects (Tercera Convocatoria de Proyectos Socioambientales). This initiative will allow organizations to showcase their progress, translate the training into concrete proposals, and share best practices co-designed to address community challenges.

This cycle of skills development is projected as a fundamental tool to continue strengthening social organizations in rural territories, enhancing their ability to drive significant change in places marked by high socio-environmental vulnerability, and serving as a prelude to action.

CONCLUSIONS

Sharing lessons from the Capacity-Building and Strengthening Cycle with the Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South is essential, as it reinforces the values of collaboration and joint growth that guide this network. As part of a diverse global alliance, showcasing how BPCR organizations co-designed a participatory and innovative process can inspire other institutions to adopt practices tailored to their local contexts. Furthermore, it highlights the concrete impact of collective action, demonstrating that shared knowledge among funds can strengthen and expand the reach of socio-environmental efforts. ■

COLLABORATIVE WORK DYNAMICS NOT ONLY ENCOURAGED THE EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE BUT ALSO FOSTERED THE CREATION OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY THAT TRANSCENDS FORMAL MEETINGS.



Independent Producers Association of Piray (Asociación Productores Independientes de Piray) and the Land Workers Union in Misiones (Unión de Trabajadores de la Tierra en Misiones) during the seminar on innovative technological experiences

1. [Reporte de referentes que completaron el registro.](#)

case study

WARMIS, GUARDIANS OF WATER:

BY SOLEDAD GUTIERREZ
and NILDA OPORTO
Semilla Socio-Environmental
Fund

 Bolivia

SHOWCASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE STRUGGLE FOR A VITAL RESOURCE IN BOLIVIA

PHOTO: PAOLA QUISEP/REDAMPIC

Olga Pajsi, from the Huarina community, only gives her animals water once a day due to the scarcity in her well



In the municipality of **Huarina**, in the Bolivian highlands, Indigenous women from four communities have taken on a crucial role in the fight for access to water and adaptation to climate change. Historically marginalized from decision-making processes, these women have seen their rights to safe water access violated, exacerbating their vulnerability to the growing scarcity of this essential resource. To address this reality, the women from these communities secured financial support from the Semilla Socio-Environmental Fund and developed the project **“Warmis, Guardians of Water.”**

THE IMPACT OF WATER SCARCITY ON ANDEAN WOMEN

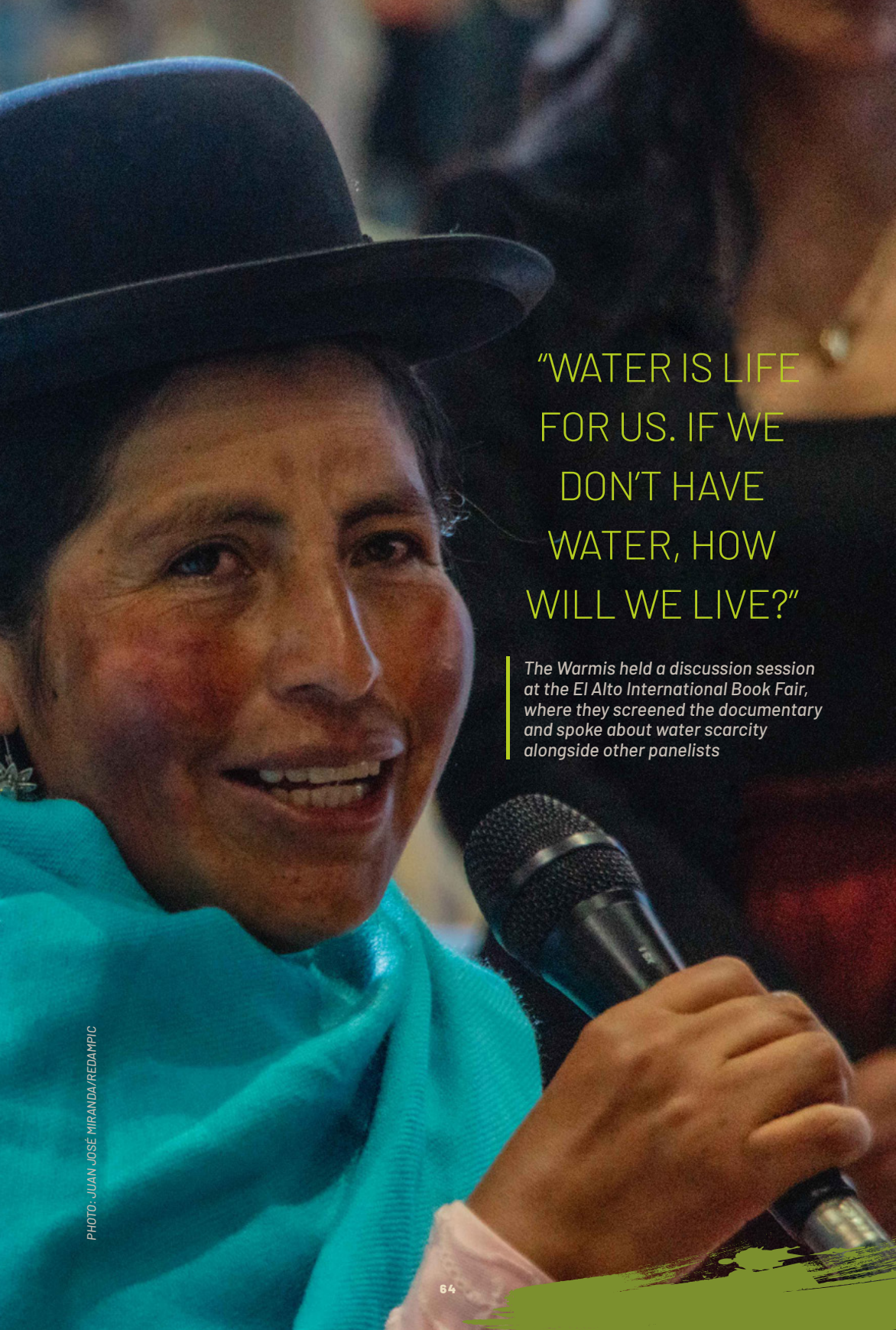
Huarina is a municipality located in the department of **La Paz**, where Indigenous and farming communities live under adverse climatic conditions characterized by low rainfall and a semi-arid climate. The climate crisis has worsened water scarcity in the region, with increasingly shorter rainy seasons. More than 50% of families lack access to potable water and rely on wells, rivers, and public water tanks.

Women, primarily responsible for managing water for their households and agricultural activities, bear a disproportionate burden in facing these challenges. Their access to resources and participation in decision-making processes are restricted by gender barriers, prompting them to seek opportunities to lead and advocate by leveraging their knowledge and capacities.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN WATER MANAGEMENT

In response to this situation, a group of women from the communities of **Quimsachata, Apuvillque, Tairo, and Utavi-Huarina** organized to enhance their leadership and participation in climate management. The strategy focused on enhancing the knowledge of 27 women through workshops on climate governance, civic participation, political advocacy, women's leadership, and communication skills.

Additionally, these women were trained in storytelling and audiovisual production, key tools for raising awareness of the crisis they face and proposing solutions



“WATER IS LIFE FOR US. IF WE DON'T HAVE WATER, HOW WILL WE LIVE?”

The Warmis held a discussion session at the El Alto International Book Fair, where they screened the documentary and spoke about water scarcity alongside other panelists

PHOTO: JUAN JOSÉ MIRANDA/REDAMPIC

for fair and sustainable water management. “Water is life for us. If we don’t have water, how will we live?” reflects Bonifacia Cadena, an **Aymara** woman from the community of **Tairo**.

COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

As a result of the workshops, the women produced the documentary “*Warmis, Guardians of Water*”, which was created collaboratively with an audiovisual team. **This documentary allowed them to share their stories and showcase the challenges they face to the world**, sparking discussions at the events where it was screened.

The documentary has been featured at various national and international festivals, **earning awards such as “Documentary of the Year” at Bolivia’s National University Film Festival and dual recognition for “Best Environmental Short Film” at the Bonito CineSur Festival in Brazil.**

Beyond raising awareness, the project implemented practical measures to improve community

water access. Sixteen water collection tanks were installed, benefiting the same number of families.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project by the women of Huarina highlights the importance of recognizing and supporting **women’s leadership in rural contexts**, where women play a key role in water management and climate adaptation. Their understanding of local needs and their capacity for innovation are essential to implementing sustainable solutions.

The use of a co-created documentary proved to be an effective strategy for communicating the effects of climate change on isolated populations and mobilizing advocacy actions.

Finally, the project reaffirms the need to strengthen community organization and facilitate access to local funds, as these are fundamental for women to drive their efforts and promote concrete political advocacy actions. ■



article

SANDY: DEFENDING FORESTS IS DEFENDING LIFE

BY the Fondo Acción
Solidaria - FASOL's Team

Mexico

In 2024, 7,819 forest fires were registered in Mexico, 853 of which affected Indigenous territories. One of these territories is **Santa Clara del Cobre**, in the state of **Michoacán**, where **Sandy Alva Ornelas** lives. She serves as the secretary of the **Indigenous community of Villa Escalante** in this municipality. Alongside members of her community, Sandy has become not only a guardian of the hills and forests and a member of an anti-fire brigade but also part of a team dedicated to reforesting their lands.

Michoacán produces eight (8) out of every ten (10) avocados in Mexico and five (5) out of every ten (10) globally, with North America, Europe, and Asia

being the largest consumers of this so-called “green gold.” However, massive production has brought illegal control of planting by organized crime, land dispossession, biodiversity loss, extreme weather conditions, and extensive soil degradation. Until 2021, lands in Michoacán lost due to fire were allowed to be legally reclassified for commercial agriculture. This policy led to intentional burning of large forested areas.

Amidst this context of climate emergency and territorial defense, resistance led by communities in Michoacán is crucial to halt deforestation, as these communities put their bodies and hearts on the front line to face fires and illegal logging.

Sandy working on reforesting an area

PHOTO: SANDY ALVA ORNELAS

Sandy is one of the few women in rural Mexico to hold a decision-making position. Of the 14,600 ejidos and communities with leadership bodies, only 7.4% were headed by women in 2019.

“It has not been easy. People are not used to a woman becoming Secretary [...] much less proposing work methods or giving opinions, [...] and this has cost me many tears over these two and a half years,” Sandy says.

Knowledge acquired by our ancestors over the years and passed down through generations

is fundamental and incredibly valuable. Sharing and exchanging this wisdom and experience among grassroots groups strengthens and reinforces collective knowledge.

Collaborating with Sandy and other representatives of **P’urhépecha** communities made the 1st National Forum on Territories of Life (Foro Nacional de Territorios de Vida - TICCA) possible. This event was held from August 8 to 10, 2024, in El Cuyo, Yucatán, Mexico. It was a space where Indigenous groups and collectives gathered to weave support networks, exchange experiences, and share knowledge to tackle shared adversities that unite them.



"Look at where I am, fighting for a purpose. Here in El Cuyo, I am even more convinced that we can achieve this," Sandy says. "I have been threatened, humiliated, and scared, but I never stop thinking that I am part of this." She adds, "I won't abandon my people. I won't let them go. I am sure this is what fulfills me. You are not alone."

At FASOL, we know that Sandy is not alone in her community's struggles; that is why it is essential to promote these knowledge exchanges, fostering solidarity and cooperation between groups and communities.

These exchanges also enable them to adapt to emerging challenges like climate change, support informed decision-making, and implement effective solutions to achieve socio-environmental justice in Mexico.

At FASOL, we work alongside these groups to collaborate in strengthening their skills, accessing funding and facilitating connections across Mexico, amplifying the work they are already weaving. ■

Fire affecting a forested area.

PHOTO: SANDY ALVA ORNELAS

AT FASOL, WE KNOW THAT SANDY IS NOT ALONE IN HER COMMUNITY'S STRUGGLES; THAT IS WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PROMOTE THESE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGES, FOSTERING SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION BETWEEN GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES. THESE EXCHANGES ALSO ENABLE THEM TO ADAPT TO EMERGING CHALLENGES LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE, SUPPORT INFORMED DECISION-MAKING, AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN MEXICO.



RESTORING DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF MISKITO DIVERS IN HONDURAS

BY the Fondo Tierra Viva team

Central America

The Miskito people, who inhabit the region known as “La Moskitia” in Honduras, has a population of around 100,000. For centuries, they have lived along riverbanks and in the marine-coastal areas of their territories, which boast stunning landscapes and rich biodiversity.

More than 50 years ago, Miskito divers engaged in lobster fishing using artisanal, breath-hold diving methods, without adequate equipment, in shallow coastal marine areas. However, with the advent of industrial fishing, Miskito divers have become “sea laborers” and victims of human rights violations, leading to the death or disability of thousands.

CONTEXT

In 2021, after a legal process initiated in 2004, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruled in favor of the Miskito divers, endorsing a “friendly settlement” reached earlier that year between the State of Honduras and 42 Miskito divers and their families. This agreement addressed human rights violations resulting from the State’s failure to regulate, supervise, and monitor hazardous activities carried out by private companies in the deep-water lobster fishing industry.

However, the situation has not changed significantly. Despite some actions taken by the Honduran government, conditions for disabled

divers, active divers, and their families have not improved. Active divers continue to face the same occupational risks that caused the deaths and disabilities of their predecessors, indicating that the “non-repetition” measures outlined in the IACHR’s ruling are not being effectively implemented.

STRATEGY

In late 2023, Fondo Tierra Viva (FTV) established a collaboration agreement with the Ford Foundation and CLUA (Climate and Land Use Alliance) to address the issues faced by disabled divers.

The primary strategies have focused on:

- Strengthening Honduran Miskito Association of Disabled Divers (Asociación Miskita Hondureña de Buzos Lisiados - AMHBLI), one of the organizations that spearheaded the legal case).
- Restoring the dignity of Miskito families and communities.
- Strengthening local capacities, with an emphasis on women and youth.

IMPLEMENTATION

The diagnostic results painted a grim picture: deceased divers, while others, including some leaders, live in critical health conditions and abject poverty. A reflection of this despair is that many divers with lesser degrees of disability return to underwater fishing, and their children see no alternative but to sell their labor to the same fishing industry responsible for their parents’ disabilities.

The crisis was addressed through an approach that included humanitarian aid, the strengthening of AMHBLI, and support in the development of community agendas.

Handing hearing aids to a disabled diver with hearing loss

PHOTO: FONDO TIERRA VIVA ARCHIVE



RESULTS

- A network of 42 young local facilitators (80% women, 20% men).
- A survey was conducted with 1,600 divers and 800 widowed women in six municipalities of the **Gracias a Dios** department.
- Delivery of 2,980 mobility aids (wheelchairs, crutches, etc.) and 1,200 medication kits.
- Creation of 300 economic activities and family gardens in two municipalities, with benefits expected to extend to the remaining four.
- Completion of 61 community and six municipal diagnostics.
- Establishment of 44 community branches and a new AMHBLI Board of Directors.
- Training of 300 leaders among disabled Miskito divers.
- Engagement with local and national authorities, receiving a positive response from the current government.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The divers' situation can only be resolved through the organized participation of the divers, their families, and their communities.
- Women are severely impacted, as they often bear full responsibility for their families, including the care of men affected by mobility and muscular strength issues caused by decompression syndrome, which confines them to wheelchairs, crutches, or canes. Women also play a vital role in seeking solutions to this complex problem.
- Achieving a long-term solution that considers the well-being of the Miskito people and the conservation of local biodiversity requires the industrial fishing sector to comply with labor and environmental legislation at both national and international levels.

Working alongside disabled Miskito divers in restoring their dignity and rights has been a spiritual experience that drives us to continue fighting for social and environmental justice. To do so, we often need to adapt our strategies and procedures creatively to address the urgent and vital needs of the most vulnerable. ■



Delivery of mobility aids to disabled divers

Miskito woman with her bread production business, Yauhribila community

Community assembly in Kukutingni

PHOTOS: FONDO TIERRA VIVA ARCHIVE



TIME, RESOURCES AND WHAT IT TAKES TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S AGENCY AND VOICE

BY MAYNA POMARIN
and LYRA PUNO
Pastor Rice Small
Grants Fund

📍 Southeast Asia



Women from the BICAMM group gather to take action in the fight for environmental protection and human rights (main photo). On the right: Norima Mablon.

PHOTO: LYRA PUNO/NTFP-EP ASIA

Norima is a resilient indigenous woman leader from **Brookes Point, Palawan**. A mother of four, farmer, and active parent-teacher association president, she reflects on her remarkable journey only two months after giving birth. Despite not having finished her primary education, Norima has flown across oceans to advocate for her community's environmental rights against extractive mining. Through support from the Pastor Rice Grants (PRSGF), she and other women have become vocal environmental and human rights defenders, engaging in discussions beyond their borders.

"I did not finish my primary education. I never dreamt of

going outside the town, let alone going outside the country. After our first skillshare with Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) in 2018, I met people from all over the globe. **I have learned so much from them, so that strengthens and inspires me to be a strong women environmental and human rights defenders (WEHRD) for my community here in Palawan**" - Norima Mablon

Norima's experiences resonate with her group, called MKE BICAMM, which began as a small collective of women from six villages committed to protecting their land. destructivas.

Nolsita, a member, highlights how the initial grants they received in 2019 were crucial for building their organization from the ground up. They have expanded into multiple subsidiary organizations and recently secured larger funding from another donor. Nolsita stated, **"We would not be where we are now at an organizational level if they had not trusted us."**

The Pastor Rice Grants or NTFP-EP Asia - PRSGF, established in memory of Pastor Delbert Rice, has existed since 2007 and significantly grew after gaining support from the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) in 2016.

The fund aims to empower community-based and indigenous organizations, particularly grassroots women and youth, in conservation, food security, health, and sustainable livelihoods.

From 2016 until October 2024, PRSGF has awarded around 300 travel and strategic grants to nearly 200 women's groups in South and Southeast Asia. These initiatives have reinforced the communities' natural resource management systems, livelihoods, women's access to resources, and representation in land tenure, as well as improved health policies and advocated against destructive mining practices.

KPPL MAJU BERSAMA INSPIRES WOMEN AROUND TNKS (KERINCI-SEBLAT NATIONAL PARK) BENGKULU, INDONESIA

In 2017, NTFP-EP's first visit to PAL VIII Village in **Rejang Lebong, Bengkulu Province**, introduced them to the KPPL Maju Bersama women's group, led by **Ibu Rita Wati**. They aspired to manage the TNKS forest and utilize its non-timber forest products (NTFPs). In 2019, their efforts paid off when they became Indonesia's first women's group to secure a conservation partnership with the national park. This achievement not only enhances climate resilience and food security but also inspires other rural women to fight for their rights to forest management.

Since then, they have been cultivating NTFPs and encouraging women to develop mixed garden patterns in their coffee farms for food and water security. They prepare nurseries for various seedlings, which they provide to women for free.

"The NTFP-EP Asia's Pastor Rice Grants means a lot to my friends and I. It has strengthened our consciousness of the importance of protecting and conserving forests, which are a source of life, livelihood and knowledge for women. The grant also really helped us fight for women's rights to forests.

Without it, the group that I lead may not have been the first women's group in Indonesia that obtained legal forest management rights and would not have been able to become an inspiration for women in various regions in Indonesia to fight for their rights to forests. It would not figure as a source of scientific development related to women, forests, food security and climate change in Indonesia." - Ibu Rita Wati

WAMA NETWORK: STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE FACE OF MINING

As the climate crisis worsens, women environmental and human rights defenders (WEHRDs) in the Women in Action on Mining in Asia (WAMA) network are vital for advocating environmental protection and addressing barriers women face in their participation and environmental rights defense. NTFP-EP Asia is committed to capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, and promoting gender equality in grassroots movements.

Inclusion challenges are significant, including logistical constraints and a lack of technical knowledge. Aware of these issues, Pastor Rice Grants focuses on enhancing women's representation and abilities to articulate their concerns while seeking solutions to improve their social, economic, and cultural situations.

The efforts of PRSGF and grassroots organizations have empowered women like Norima, Ibu Rita and the WEHRDs of WAMA to lead in their communities, addressing urgent environmental and social challenges while nurturing future generations. ■

Ibu Rita speaking at a meeting in Bali

PHOTO: LYRA PUNO/NTFP-EP ASIA





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