



MIGHTY WOMEN:

PERFORMANCE OF GROUPS ON
THE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL
AGENDA - EXPERIENCES IN
SOUTH AMERICA





CASA FUND TEAM - 2022

Executive Director: Cristina Orpheo

Founder/Strategic Development:

Maria Amália Souza

Finances Coordinator: Taila Wengrzynek

GAGGA Program Manager:

Vanessa Ourique Purper

Technical Staff: Attilio Zolin; Beatriz Roseiro;

Claudia Gibeli; Denise Farias; Helen Maria,

Inimá P. Lacerda; Jani Aparecida Joana; Janice

Mello; Ketlyn Santos, Maíra Lacerda; Regilon

Matos, Rodrigo Montaldi, Thiarles do Santos.

GOVERNANCE BOARD 2020 - 2023

Chair of the Board: Renato Cunha

Board Members: Brent Millikan;

Henrique Silveira; Selma dos Santos Dealdina;

Severia Maria Idioriê Xavante.

Consulting and data analysis: Geolatina

www.geolatina.org

Data Systematization: Iracema Marques

Graphic design: Motora - Branding e Design

Revision: Angela Pappiani

Photos: Casa Fund Archive

Realization:



Support:



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INTRO- DUCTION



We are here, in the beginning of this challenging year of 2022, for a great celebration of the first five years of the GAGGA Alliance, the English-language acronym for Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action. This initiative conducted by the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund channeled resources to support over 100 projects at the interface of women and the environment in Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay.

An innovative program, it revealed the natural potency of this union: the creative, sensitive, and enterprising force of women in search for historically denied rights and the struggle for environmental justice, such as the right to clean water, food sovereignty, healthy and balanced environment, and maintenance of the necessary resources for the life of present and future generations.

Introduction

It is an alliance of forces apparently so natural, but that had not been put forward in clear and objective way. Challenges that first appeared as separate struggles, defended with courage and determination by various groups, unfolded in new pathways, strengthened by dialogue and sharing of experiences and dreams.

What we can see in this publication goes beyond the surprising results achieved by supported groups, it is the revelation of a powerful truth, capable of producing great revolutions: **women trying to achieve their rights, voice and place in the world, protect and look after all forms of life, crossing limits imposed by institutional power,**

speaking different tongues, in cities, fields, and forests. After all, Mother Earth and Pachamama, names used by many Indigenous peoples to designate nature and the planet, is also the mother who generates and welcomes, sows and looks after the fields, protects and educates the children, bathes and baptizes them with clean water, weaves and shapes forms with clay, works hard to build the house, shares food with neighbors, studies, dances in circles pulling everybody together, celebrates joy and pleasure, and sings to strengthen the struggle and put the children to sleep.

The GAGGA Alliance



GAGGA is a global program initiated in 2016, with the first stage completed in 2020. It was financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of the initiative “Dialogue and Dissent” supported by it.

The main objective of the first stage of the GAGGA Alliance is “to catalyze the collective power of movements in defense of women’s rights and for environmental justice towards a world in which women can exercise their right to water, food sovereignty, and a clean, healthy and safe environment.”

The program is facilitated by a consortium of organizations led by Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, headquartered in Nicaragua, in collaboration with Mama Cash and Both Ends, both headquartered in Holland. The consortium works in close collaboration with strategic allies and a wide range of funds for environmental justice and women’s rights, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and community-based groups working at local, national, and regional levels in over 30 countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe (Georgia).

GAGGA action in 2016-2020



€ 31,987,154

IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO MOBILIZE THE DEFENSE OF
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

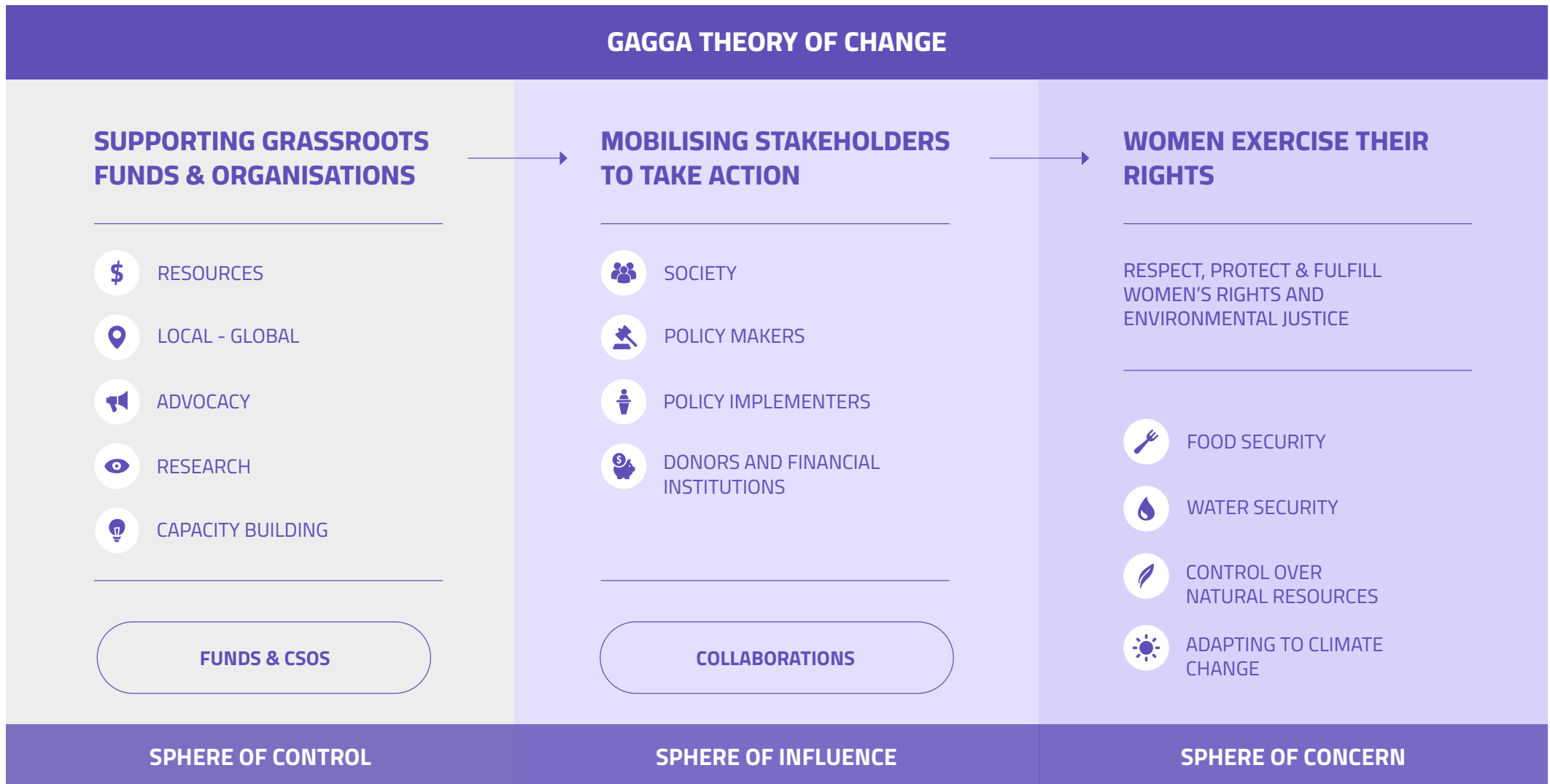
The organizational strengthening of grassroots groups, as well as women's political and economic empowerment and autonomy, is one of the priority areas in the work of GAGGA, as part of its strategy to strengthen the defense of women's rights and environmental justice at local, national, regional, and global levels.

The GAGGA Theory of Change:

The GAGGA Theory of Change understands that grassroots groups, working for women's rights and environmental justice in the territories they inhabit, are in a better position to promote women's right to water, food sovereignty, and a clean, healthy, and safe environment. GAGGA concluded that these groups are more capable of achieving those goals when they are empowered and united, after receiving financial support, means, and capacities to implement the political agendas defined as priorities and their work in networks/partnerships is aligned with and based on the strong points of one another.

GAGGA: Catalysing the collective power of women's rights and environmental movements

According to GAGGA Theory of Change, when the Alliance supports funds and community-based organizations to strengthen them, developing their capacities, advocacy and research work, fostering participation in networks, establishing connection between local and global, it mobilizes different actors to promote actions and influence society, public policy formulators, governments, and donors to ensure that women actually exercise their rights in relation to water, food security, control over natural resources, and adaptation to climate change.





The Casa Socio-Environmental Fund

The Casa Fund is an organization created to promote environmental conservation and sustainability, democracy and social justice. To this extent, we developed a powerful network to support small initiatives of civil society groups. A network that mobilizes resources, provides support and strengthens their capacities, ensuring an increasing autonomy for these groups spread throughout South America. We believe transformation begins with listening and that is why we listen to the true protagonists

of each cause we embrace: those whose lives are directly affected by any change in their territories. The objective of our support is to reinforce the capacities of these community organizations, working with issues related to environmental protection, community development, institutional strengthening, renewable energy, protection of water, and protection of women and young people defending the environment, among others, in urban and rural areas.

WE EXIST TO TRANSFORM.

With a hopeful smile, feet on the ground and a hands-on approach, we welcome challenges and support solutions.

GAGGA – Casa Fund partnership

When we began negotiating our participation in the GAGGA Alliance, we were very excited about the design of their work – so innovative and challenging. Our role was to implement a five-year program in two bordering countries, very different from each other, focused on supporting women environmental defenders in their long trajectory to ensure access to water, safe environment, and rights to maintain life instead of putting it at risk.

In addition to challenges, inspiration, and lessons, GAGGA brought to the Casa Fund the beautiful opportunity to strengthen the gender issues as a transversal axis of all our programs. With GAGGA, we learned much more about feminism and the various feminist perspectives for environmental protection; we worked in close collaboration with other funds and NGOs; and we began to know numerous grassroots groups in Bolivia and Paraguay, which qualified our understanding of these territories and their socio-environmental imbalances. We had the opportunity

to mobilize more attention of the philanthropic field for the importance of directly supporting grassroots social movements, the true Guardians of the Planet through our many conversations and participation in events to discuss this theme.

The Casa Fund invested financial resources, offered capacity building processes, experience sharing, contacts with other groups, and other forms of support to dozens of community-based groups and civil society organizations, implementing projects and initiatives at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice. To a large extent, this publication is focused on the study of the program to support projects and strengthen grassroots groups in Bolivia and Paraguay in the 2016-2020 period, as well a little of our history and how our relations with GAGGA transformed us.

In this publication we analyze the work we have done with grantees. We deepened our understanding of the close relations of women environmental defenders and the

Casa Fund calls for proposals in the GAGGA Alliance

INVESTED:

USD 579,561.11

 **179** PROJECT PROPOSALS RECEIVED
(total requested US\$ 686,892.70)

 **117** SUPPORTED PROJECTS

 **65%** OF THE TOTAL PROJECTS RECEIVED WERE SELECTED

 **90** DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS BENEFITED

 AVERAGE PROJECT DURATION: 12 MONTHS

 FOR 93% OF THE PROJECTS, BUDGETS RANGE FROM US\$ 4,000 TO US\$ 5,000

issues of environmental justice. Even when this understanding is not explicit and obvious to defenders themselves, it is undeniable the relevance and importance of women's action to protect ecosystems and life – individually and collectively.

Internally, GAGGA was and continues to be a powerful opportunity for the Casa Fund to have a more in-depth relation with gender justice. Our participation in the GAGGA Alliance has impacted all our programs. After our contact with the universe of intersection between the agendas of women's rights and environmental justice, we have understood that all our calls for projects have to valorize the skills of women in community-based groups for the collective transformation we want to strengthen.

Finally, another important factor to carry out the Casa Fund's mission included in this publication are some results from our influence on the philanthropic sector for environmental and social justice – part of our own essence. Like ants and bees, we have been resilient and tireless in calling attention of funders to the importance of supporting community-based organizations – in strategic and interconnected fashion, taking into account environmental and gender justice – in search for a dignified, safe, and welcoming environment for all forms of life on the planet.






CASA SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL
FUND IN SOUTH AMERICA

HISTORY AND WORK

ANGELA PAPPIANI



A stylized illustration on the left side of the page. It features a dark teal hand reaching from the top left, holding a light green plant stem with several leaves. The background is a mix of light and dark teal washes.

Throughout its history of over 20 years, many projects supported by the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund in Brazil and across South America were led by or had important participation of women, often anonymous women, working to achieve results despite not having their names on associations' boards, even without recognition and due credit for their efforts. Slowly, this reality has been changing thanks to efforts, wisdom, and resilience of women fighters of all ages, skin colors, and nationalities. GAGGA came to consolidate these gains, supporting women's work, opening spaces and inspiring new initiatives for life on the planet.

After all, the Casa Fund itself originated in the vision of a woman, Maria Amália Souza, who at age 17 was on a student exchange program in Idaho (United States) and had to confront her attitudes toward the destruction of the Amazon and, willing to find answers, started on a course she

never abandoned. In 1986, a bright light appeared during the First Citizens Conference on the World Bank, in Washington, D.C., when Maria Amália met Ailton Krenak, back then the coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI). For the first time, she recognizes another way of being in the world in his accounts of the resistance and organization of Indigenous peoples in Brazil, a struggle with strategy focused on ensuring rights included in the new Brazilian Constitution.

Thus, Maria Amália Souza, creator of the Casa Fund, tells us that based on these working relations with Indigenous peoples she perceived the importance of using international philanthropy resources to redress centuries of domination and strengthen civil society in southern countries, so effaced from history and oppressed by governments and economic systems. However, she also realized the great distance between philanthropic resources and the most affected and vulnerable communities, invisible to supporting systems. Funders do not know local reality and demands, do not recognize the difficulties, the lack of structure, and cultural differences in these groups. All this makes direct grantmaking unviable and strengthens large organizations,

which execute projects **for**, not **with** those communities, perpetuating a colonial approach to affected populations.

LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING, BUILDING

How could we overcome this chasm? This was the challenge. It is very simple, but at the same time it is very distant from the "white way of being": listen to the communities, understand their real needs, support their strengthening, trust their capacity to identify and solve problems, and monitor as an ally their autonomy to apply funds. In the same way tree roots, underground and invisible, provide nourishment, communicating amongst them in a complex system to maintain life; as each cell in our bodies is connected to the whole, fulfilling an important role in the body as a whole and thus allowing all kinds of complex functions, social system are also alive and organic, they communicate and multiply, interact and mutually reinforce one another.

Multiple small grants to solve actual demands in a community, when applied in strategic and coordinated way, can produce concrete results with great impact within the system as a whole.

This is the answer, a philosophical approach based on the observation of nature and traditional knowledge that has guided, as a star in the sky, the history of the Casa Fund.

This history began in 2005 with the creation of the Center for Socio-Environmental Support (CASA), as it was initially called, thanks to the key support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which since 2003 had believed in the proposal, creating the conditions for the emergence of the new organization.

CASA emerges combining experience and passion of people around environmental and social issues, seeking solution for big problems based on the action of grassroots groups in the remotest and neediest regions.

In 2012, Casa officially assumes its mission of raising funds for grantmaking and incorporated the term Fund in its name. In this way, we maintained the word “Casa” now re-signified as “our home planet.” The organization was strengthened as a point of reference for international philanthropy, consolidated and recognized for its transformational role, with a new logo, slogan, and name: Casa Socio-Environmental Fund, investing in care.

// Relations of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation with the Center for Socio-Environmental Support (CASA) began when CASA was nothing but a creative idea discussed during the 2003

World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. The Mott Foundation supported a planning project for this group, then part of the Global Greengrants Fund Council for Brazil, to explore the possibility of transforming that concept into reality. Two years later, CASA officially emerged as a Brazilian organization. Immediately after this, the Mott Foundation approved a project of institutional support directly to CASA. This relationship continues to be productive until now. Why does a foundation promoting public financing with environmental sustainability need to support a fund for small projects? As CASA director Maria Amália Souza says in a video recorded last year (2009) for Mott directors, to offer support to small community-based organizations is crucial to ‘make visible what is invisible’ to the eyes of authorities developing and implementing public policies. Because they amplify local voices, small grants help to create a bridge between local realities and the broad changes in public policy that Mott’s IFS programs pursue. We are very happy to have been partners of CASA since the beginning, and wish to continue learning together in the future.”

TEXT BY AMY SHANNON OF THE CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION, FLINT, MICHIGAN (US) FOR THE FIVE-YEAR REPORT OF THE CASA FUND IN 2010.

A bit of history

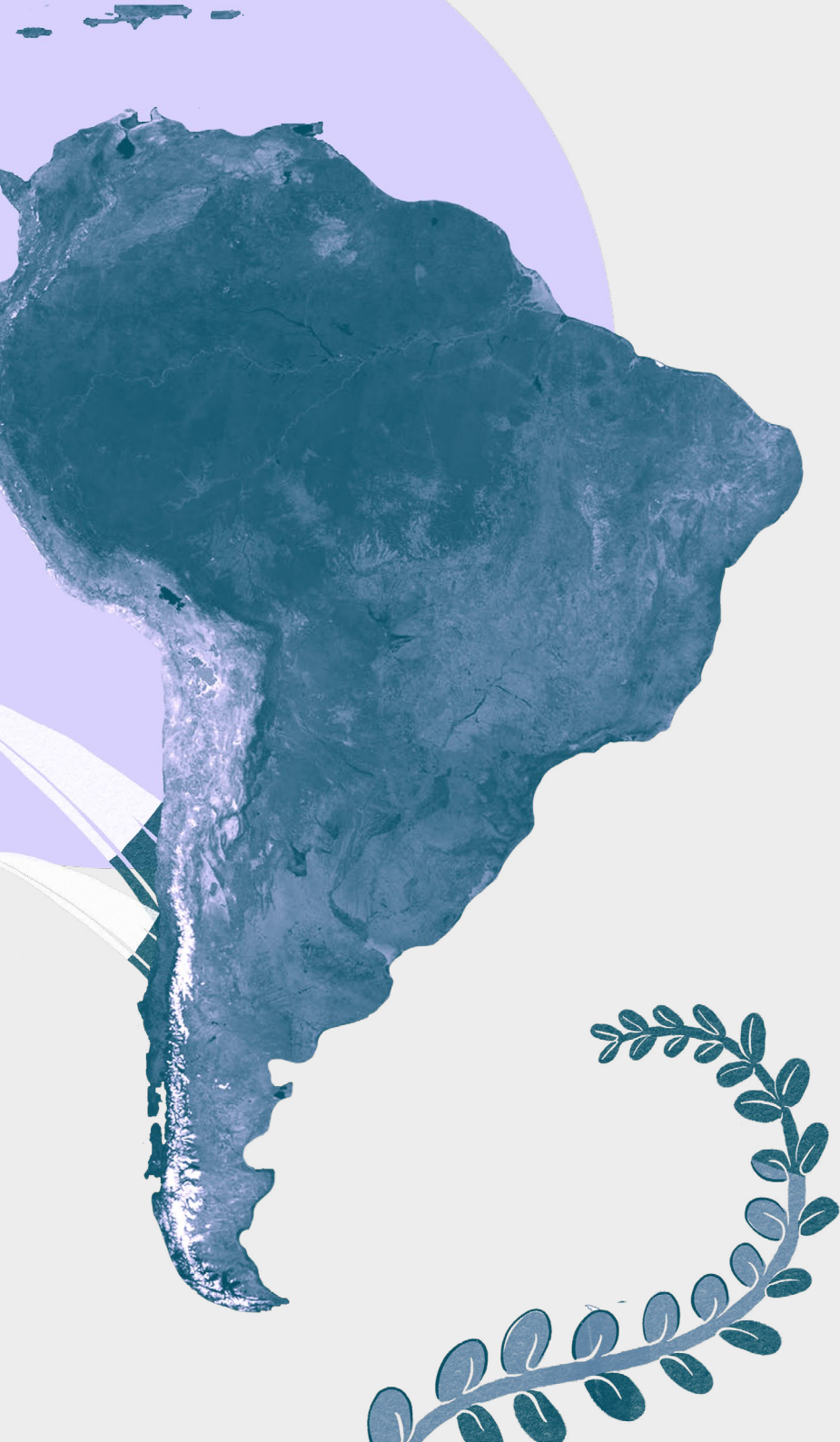
It has been a long trajectory of 20 years since the first grants of international philanthropy arrived for grassroots communities in South America, through important partners such as the Damien Foundation, Global Greengrants Fund, and Francisco Foundation, in a process to strengthen civil society after the harsh period of authoritarian governments and serious threats against communities and the environment across the continent.

The Casa Fund results from this maturing process, many struggles, many environmentalists engaged in their regions, working in many local and regional organizations that know the territory, biomes that cross borders, economic and political contexts, as well as a wealth of relations established with the local population. They are people who get together to concretize this philosophy of supporting grassroots communities, believing in their transformational potential.

The focus of the Casa Fund is to support projects that protect and defend territories and the way of life of traditional populations, such as Indigenous people, extractivists, Quilombolas, and riverside dwellers, emphasizing food security, guaranteeing the right to speak out and influence megaproject plans that threaten citizens' survival and rights, seeking sustainable solutions that would strengthen the economic situation of communities in various situations of vulnerability, as well as solutions for climate change and urban issues. Casa Fund always reinforces the protagonism of local people and institutions influencing and monitoring work, mobilizing public opinion, and formulating public policies.

However, going beyond resources and projects, the Casa Fund invests in capacity building, supporting exchanges and the construction of networks; and legalization of organizations, with acquisition of equipment, and including support for operational costs. The latter is often disregarded by other institutions, and some funders even require operational costs as counterpart, including governmental funds. To this extent, the Casa Fund believes it helps in strengthening the rank and file, promoting their autonomy and capacity to raise larger funds and expand their access to new funding sources.

In 2019, with its work consolidated, the Fund adjusted its name and visual identity. A slight inversion in the order of words, more welcoming text and symbols reflect a long process of listening to supported groups, partners in the fields of action and philanthropy, team, and boards. Casa Socio-Environmental Fund – Welcoming challenges and supporting solutions could not better represent the past trajectory, the commitment and vision of the future of work done with so much love.



I am from South America

Going back millions of years, in the beginning of time, all continents were just one – the great Pangea. As described in most origin myths, humankind was one, perfect creation, coexisting in harmony with all beings and their creator.

Slowly lands started to move, South America stretched out, separating from Africa and continents to the north. Millions of years after, the “men of merchandise, “ as Davi Kopenawa denominates the “white” society, coming from overseas, humans who followed the road of accumulation, of transforming nature in economic resources, arrived to take possession of the territory, planted their flags and subjugated Indigenous peoples.

Satellite images show the great South American continent as a landmass between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, the Caribbean Sea and the Drake Passage, with its natural beauty, incredible contrasts, without borders and languages, without owners or governments. A blessed land, with some of the largest rivers in the world, the greatest forest, one of the largest deserts, the majestic cordillera, waterfalls, glaciers, wetlands, thousands of

miles of beaches – a unique and unreplaceable biodiversity. Taking a closer look, one sees the marvelous diversity of intermixed cultures, languages, technologies, and arts. Then, about 500 years ago, there was another great change for the people who had always inhabited these lands since time immemorial, freely circulating and expanding nature with their skillful hands. They were forced to change course by imposed colonization.

No matter the lines traced on maps since then, the Amazon Forest stretches for nine countries, the Pantanal and Chaco include Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, as well as rivers cross hundreds of kilometers with margins in different countries, and the Pampa and Altiplano also extrapolate national boundaries. And people living in these biomes also cross borders with their customs and beliefs. Actions by governments and corporations with their development projects also indistinctly affect different border sides. Floods or water shortages provoked by dams, agrochemicals poisoning from big monocultures, mercury from mining, and oil spills pollute rivers and affect flora, fauna, and people.

The issue of fossil fuels in the Chaco, mining everywhere, predatory and unregulated livestock raising, deforestation for land grabbing, criminal forest fires, and large projects to integrate regional infrastructure with their roads, ports, waterways, railroads, pipelines, all these actions that transform the landscape and exploit nature as simple merchandise available to those who can afford this domination demonstrate the size of the challenge we face. National governments adopted a development model focused on infrastructure, with the Pacific Alliance, free trade agreements, interocean corridors, and large Chinese investments – all this irreversibly impacting fragile ecosystems on the planet.

The great challenges of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s when small movements in organized societies began to take positions and seek alternatives and solutions only increased. The world is increasingly global and the dominant economic system advances, with the consent and direct participation of governments and institutions. At the same time, swimming against the current, communities cry out for their rights, meet, protest, influence policies, create alternatives, seek support to confront this reality.

If the role of the Casa Fund was important in the early 2000s, what can we say now that people all over the world understand the point of no return of the environmental destruction caused by climate change? When tragedy is already taking place, bringing about huge loss in assets and lives, some governments and institutions began to move.

At the same time, political changes in many South American countries, as well as in other continents, after a period of apparent progress in the areas of environment and human rights, brought about a shift to conservative governments that rolled back gains achieved through much struggle.

These two factors demonstrate more than ever that the support to civil society in its resistance and search for alternatives is fundamental. In this panorama of political, social, economic, and sanitary crises, aggravated by the new coronavirus pandemic, which exposed all social inequalities, the cruelty of the economic system, and the urgency to look after the environment, many philanthropic institutions turned again their eyes to the Global South, and started to support large, medium, and small organizations that fight against this chaotic situation in cities and countryside.




Where we are and which way we are headed

These movements, at regional and international levels, also impacted the Casa Fund, which introduced important changes in the last years, reorganizing its structure and team to face increasing challenges. We began to develop narratives, participate in many philanthropic events, publish articles, and be active on online platforms. All this had significant repercussion, achieving respect and very welcome results.

Regarding the fund for small grants, the Casa Fund began to be approached by investors who had never destined funding to this audience. Demands increased exponentially, as well as the need to promptly meet emergencies, without losing the focus on strategic grantmaking. Several programs with new donors were implemented, the volume and diversity of supported themes increased, generating a huge amount of data in a data bank capable of revealing the profile of grants and grantees from different angles, amounts invested, goals achieved, challenges, successes and mistakes, developments and advances.

In this movement of growth, the pathway chosen by the Casa Fund was to feed the network of underground roots spread across South America, supporting the creation of new local funds in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, as a way of expanding the action through the protagonists who know the territories and realities, and can be on the ground monitoring the application of raised funds in the best way, with autonomy and strategic vision. Thus, the work continues to be cooperative instead of competitive, seeking resources for actions in transborder systems, a joint and harmonious development, demonstrating that this cooperative and networked model is different and can inspire more people. The Casa Fund has been the leading coordinator of this Socio-Environmental Alliance of Southern Funds, but this is another chapter to be discussed later.



My life, my dead
My crooked ways
My Latin blood
My captive soul
I broke treaties,
I betrayed the rites
I broke the spear,
Threw it into space
A scream, a release
And what matters to me
Is not to be defeated

SONG "SANGUE LATINO" BY JOÃO
RICARDO AND PAULINHO MENDONÇA



"My history with the social movement began when I was born. I'm the daughter of a leader of the Krenak people and a journalist and activist. I grew up in the Indigenous movement."

Up to age 35 I worked in Indigenous organizations. This kind of work was never easy because these organizations always had many difficulties in getting support for their projects, in having their autonomy, capacity to lead, and to establish strategies respected.

"Then, when I began working at the Casa Fund in 2015, I found a way to continue in the movement facilitating the work of those organizations. It is an experience of philanthropy in communion with the social movement. This practice of constantly sharing with the grassroots groups, our peers, is what gives us the capacity to quickly respond to any emerging need. For me, philanthropy should be connected to social movements through listening, respecting, and trusting."

MAÍRA KRENAK – CASA FUND
PROGRAM MANAGER

Small initiatives for big transformations

Grants provided by the Casa Fund enabled many different initiatives:

- Purchase of a freezer, blender, and packing machine for an extractivist community that processes and markets fruits in regions under the pressure of deforestation or real estate occupation.
- Building a shed, buying a computer, installing Internet, or else funds to legalize an association that mobilizes the population in an area affected by large projects.
- Installation of mechanical water pumps, water reservoir, and planting fields in an Indigenous village located in a strategic point of its territory, seeking to recover their culture and traditional knowledge, thus confronting a destructive occupation model in the Cerrado.
- Installation of vigilance stations to prevent invasions of protected areas and Indigenous lands.
- Funds to ensure long-distance travel along Amazonia rivers between riverside communities or between Indigenous villages and cities, so people can participate in public hearings, or attend meetings with public authorities to discuss large projects affecting their lives.
- Creation, training, and purchase of equipment for fire brigades in times of extensive forest fires.
- Denunciation, mobilization, and resistance against oil drilling and spills.
- Struggle for justice and reparation in cases of collapsed mining dams, and the dismantling of existing dams that threaten thousands of people and other living beings.
- Creation of protocols for free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).
- Information and mobilization campaigns against implementation of large projects involving roads, hydro-electric power plants, and mining.

- Confronting and denouncing land-grabbers and miners against polluting the air, rivers, and waterways.
- Protecting the lives of forest protectors or activists under death threats.
- Protecting small urban fields that pull together people and cultures.
- Promoting alternative power sources in deprived communities, the purchase of fabric so women may sew face masks against the new coronavirus, buy basic food baskets to feed those without any income and who cannot leave home to work because of the social isolation imposed by the pandemic.

These are just a few examples of demands received and supported across South America with resources raised by the Casa Fund. With each small victory, each expression of gratitude and enthusiasm for what the struggle achieved, the strength and determination of people of all colors, languages, beliefs in almost all South American countries make us stronger and more confident that we are on the right path.

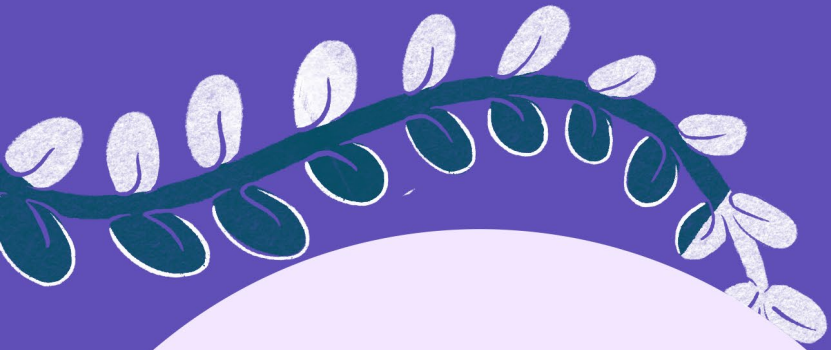




// How can a tiny amount change anything, given the size of existing threats? By itself, in isolation, it can change almost nothing. However, let's take a look at an intact forest. How many millions of living beings are in a square meter of forest, – species of insects, plants, fungi, reptiles, mammals, birds? Who controls this environment? Who commands the relations? And the human body, who orders it to process food, heart to beat, lung to breathe, and separate the oxygen and discard the rest? These are living systems that function because it is of their essence to maintain life. If a tree falls and opens space for the sun, the forest rapidly adapts to the situation and springs up new lives. If the body gets sick, some little external stimulus (tea, medicine, needle) creates the conditions to return to equilibrium. The speed of the information about change that arrives at the 'system' is crucial for it to make adjustments and for the

whole system to recover balance in a feedback loop. The same happens with the great systems of social relations. Often, small stimuli based on in-depth knowledge of reality can leverage regenerative processes for communities and their ecosystems. The problem is to know that reality in-depth, so as to tell exactly where to intervene. This is the model used by the Casa Fund, based on the science of systemic thought, designed to provide fast and efficient answers to the great socio-environmental issues of today, at it is nourished by the knowledge of thousands of people who dedicate their lives to those causes and are seeking results. Everything the Casa Fund supports is millimeter by millimeter designed to respond in fast and efficient way to the complexity of issues and regions where we work."

MARIA AMÁLIA SOUZA



WALKING AND SOWING

what did we harvest in five years?





Our mission is to protect the true guardians of life on this planet and stimulate systemic changes in environmental and social contexts. Thus, the methodological design and approach of the GAGGA Alliance in seeking these transformations is deeply aligned with the vision and actions Casa Fund has implemented since its inception.

Throughout the years, we have observed that in general philanthropy for civil society in the Global North tended to approach complex problems by offering large sums of money to a small number of large organizations. Even northern solidarity funds, which seek a better distribution of funds among social movements in the Global South, also have many limitations in responding to the demands of large and complex regions, despite their good intentions. The Casa Fund strategy has a different way of applying funds to defend the environment. **We raise large sums from the main national and international funders, divide up these sums in multiple small grants and donate directly to local defenders and groups, traditional and grassroots communities so they can be protagonists of their own solutions for their lives and territories.**

By doing this, we spread grantmaking in a coordinated and strategic way, developing a well interconnected layer of actors at grassroots level, committed to social and environmental justice. We provide direct support to small organizations because we trust their skills to defend the right of their communities to a clean, safe, and healthy environment, in addition to their huge potential to propose creative and efficacious actions. This great web formed by many knowledges and experiences facilitates collaborative work and networking, reinforcing the old maxim “together we are stronger.” If together we are stronger, many of us together can change the world.

The implementation of the GAGGA Alliance was, and continues to be, so important for Casa Fund actions that we decided to study this work with help from external consultants, and their results have inspired us to gather the information for this publication. When we were approximately halfway in implementing GAGGA’s actions in South America, we began to consolidate our feelings about the importance of medium and long-term support to territories.

We felt a strong desire to look back with more curiosity. Five years, time, attention, and several thousand euros invested...What did all this bring to community-based groups? How do philanthropic funds, invested this way, affect the changes we want for our Common Home?

We worked with a team of consultants who already had in-depth knowledge of the GAGGA Alliance, as they had been involved in several monitoring actions at global and regional levels. A profound look at the relationship between fund and the grassroots groups was the missing factor to complete the scenario. The Casa Fund maintains a comprehensive data base of all projects received, and this was very helpful for our study of the GAGGA Alliance implementation in the first five years of work. To complete quantitative data, we made qualitative analyses and the results of this study are presented in this publication that fills us with joy and confidence that the work with community-based groups and the true guardians of the planet is the key to socio-environmental justice.

Small grants and coordinated actions

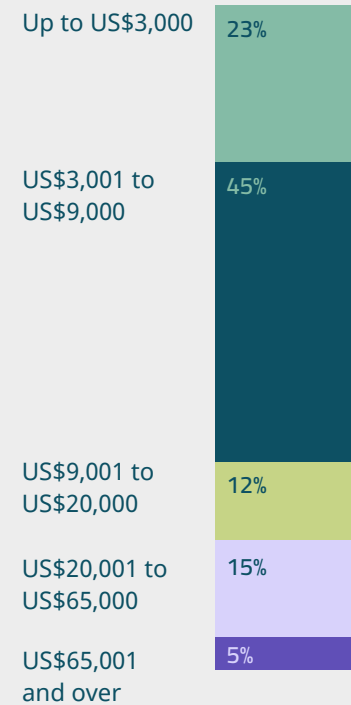
Profile of organizations

They are relatively new community-based organizations: 23% of them had existed for three years or less. Groups, collectives, movements, associations, cooperatives, networks – the diversity of organizational formats is huge. Sixty-two percent are legally established and 38% are not yet formally legalized. In many cases, the Casa Fund grant was the only financial revenue they received in the period. Seventy percent operate annual budgets of less than US\$9,000 and 23% manage annual budgets of less than US\$3,000, as shown in the chart.

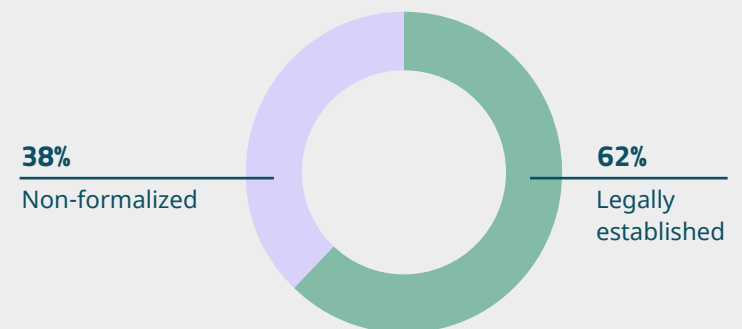
TIME OF EXISTENCE OF ORGANIZATIONS



ORGANIZATIONS' ANNUAL BUDGET



FORMALIZATION OF SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS



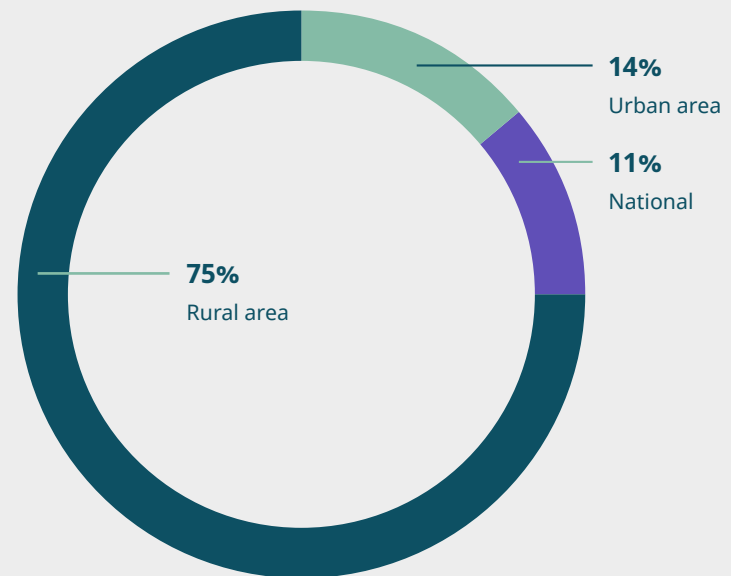
COUNTRY WHERE PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED (2016-2020)



Profile of supported projects

To truly understand the reality of territories where we work, the Casa Fund collects data on the context of these regions, threats that might exist against ecosystems, and how organizations that submit project proposals are inserted in those contexts. For example, for us, it is indispensable to know the missions and the way of working of organizations seeking support.

SCOPE OF SUPPORTED PROJECTS' EXECUTION



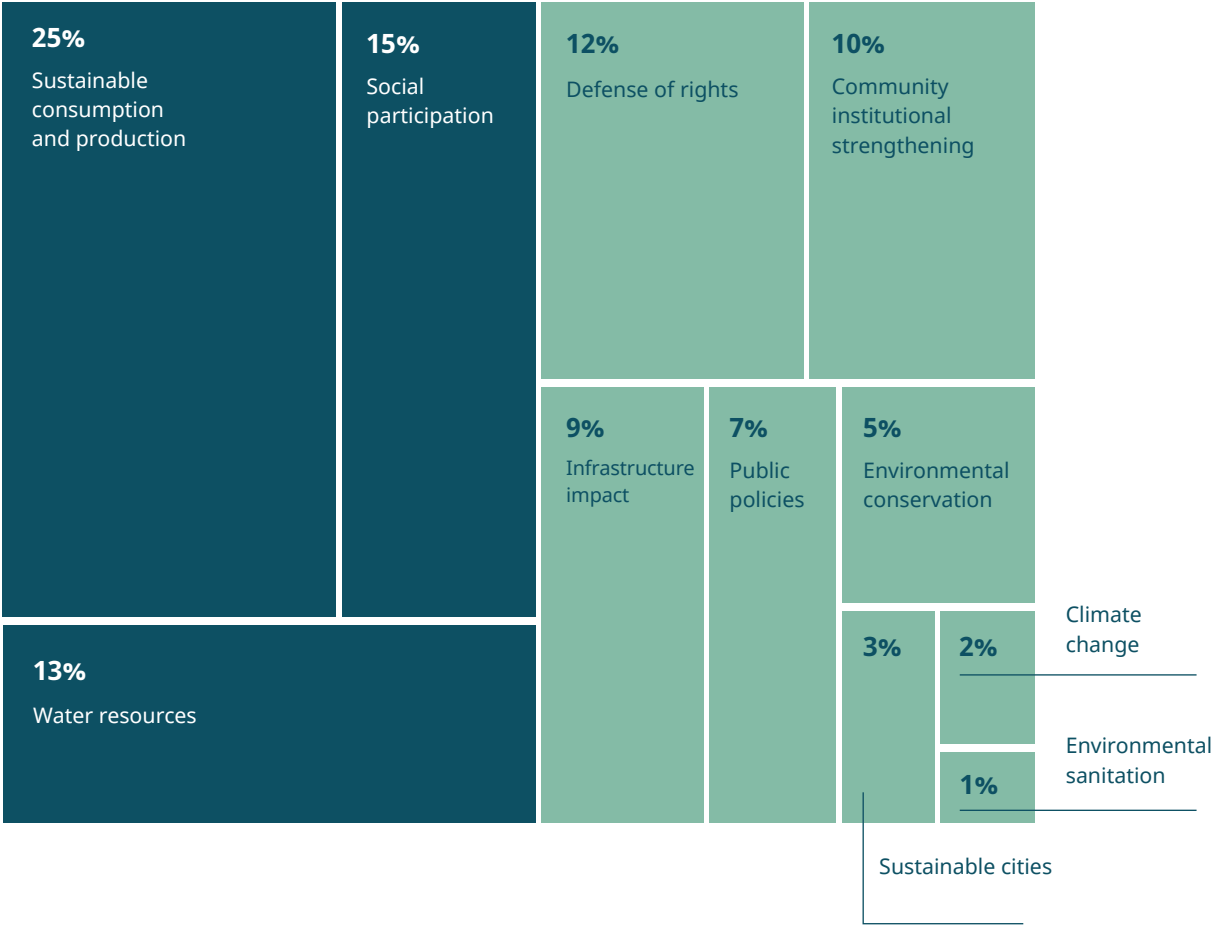
It is well-known that large infrastructure projects for energy, mining, and deforestation for agribusiness deeply affect people and ecosystems. It is not a coincidence that 75% of our grantmaking went to rural areas.

Data about the work of Casa Fund-supported projects is segmented and organized in a huge data base, built over years, by carefully listening to the information brought by organizations applying for grants. As we realized that many themes, depending on a series of factors, are addressed by the groups, we decided to define one main theme and some secondary themes for every project received.

In the 2016-2020 period, the Casa Fund supported 117 projects with GAGGA funding. These projects are distributed in 11 main themes, with 52.1% of total projects on sustainable consumption and production (24.8%), social participation (14.5%) or water resources (12.8%).

Issues of sustainable consumption and production and water resources are closely related to the **intersection of the agendas of struggle for women’s rights and environmental justice**, as this study has demonstrated. Social participation is considered a modality of interaction related to lobby and advocacy, another key point for the GAGGA Alliance.

MAIN THEMES OF SUPPORTED PROJECTS

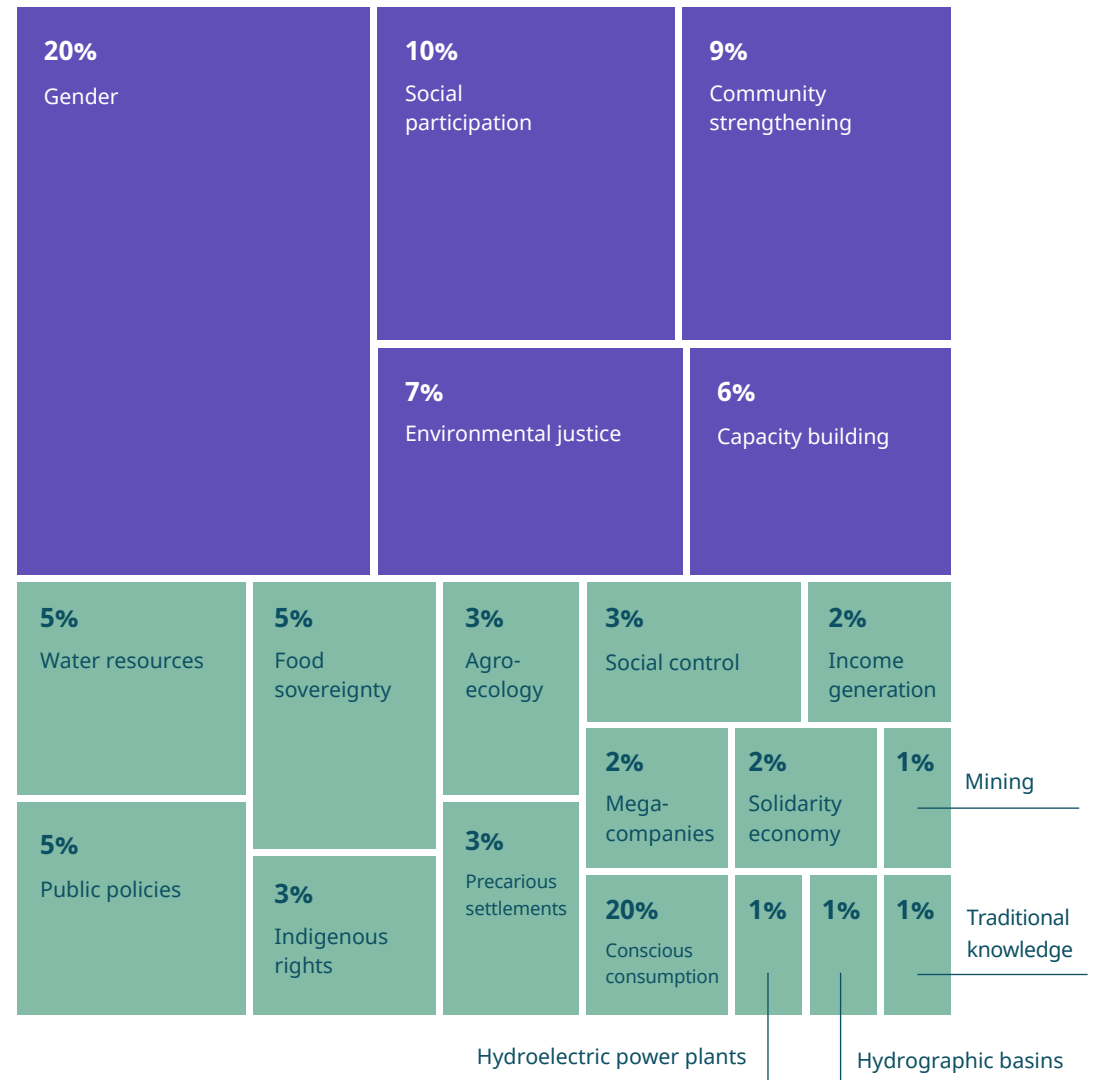


Regarding complementary themes addressed by projects funded with GAGGA's resources, **one out of every five** (20%) worked with **gender**, in addition to the main theme. Fifty-one percent addressed one of the following five aspects as complementary topic:



Detailed distribution of projects by complementary theme:

COMPLEMENTARY THEMES OF SUPPORTED PROJECTS





Women's protagonism in the execution of projects supported with GAGGA's funding is crucial. When we analyze project proposals, we take into account women's participation in activities, but also how these women relate to organizations.

Are they included in governance bodies? Do they have voice and power in financial and administrative management? Women's participation in project actions is not enough – we want them to be protagonists and decision makers. For these reasons, in addition to financial support, we think that strengthening the institutional capacities of community-based groups, involved in actions to defend the intersection of women's rights and socio-environmental justice agendas, is essential to make sure women are empowered and assume leading roles in different fronts.

Actions executed by projects

Our study classified the types of actions implemented by grassroots groups to achieve transformations that will be reported later. The most frequent single action reported by those groups to achieve results is related to developing their advocacy capacities (22%). Second, it is the creation and/or participation in networks and alliances for advocacy work and joint action (17%). Taking measures for dialogue at the community level (15%) or at local and national governmental levels (9%) is the most common type of action reported by grassroots groups, which add up to 24%.

When we examine this feedback, based on accounts from supported women, we understand in practice the efficacy of one of the Casa Fund's foundations: **many small grants, interconnected and recurrent, improve the working conditions of community-based organizations.** Supporting the grassroots in strategic, systemic, and plural way generates positive changes in territories. Groups that received financial and non-financial resources to act within the defined scope, aligning the agendas of women's rights and socio-environmental justice, feel more capable of developing public policy advocacy, participating in collective actions and networking.

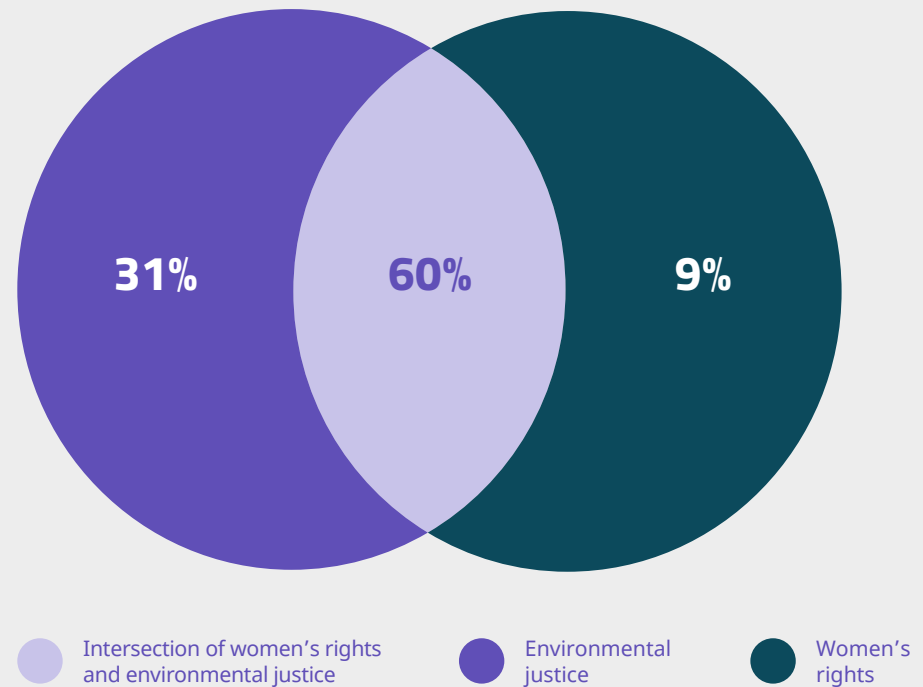
TYPES OF ACTIONS EXECUTED BY PROJECTS



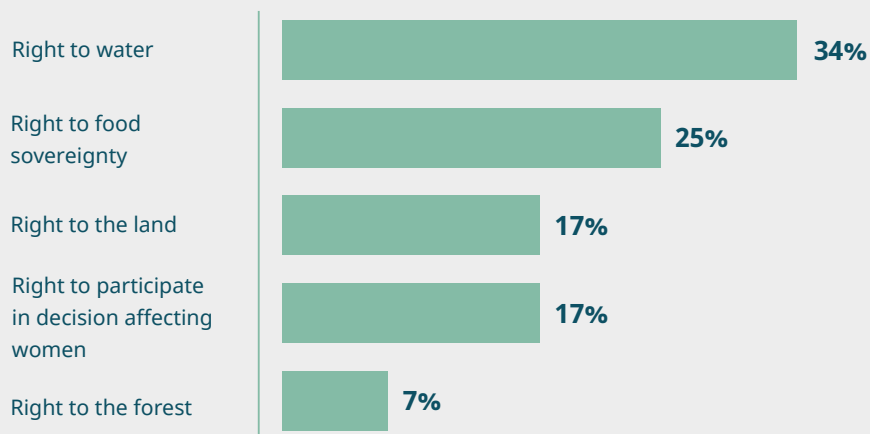
Gender justice and women environmental protectors

The study conducted by external consultants enabled us to observe how and when activities of supported groups were aligned with GAGGA's macro objectives. When we investigated the perception of supported groups about the primary nature of executed projects, we realized that **60% indicate the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice**, i.e., results addressing both issues. For GAGGA's work this link is vital. Around one third of the results (31%) are related to environmental justice, while 9% are related to the defense of women's rights. In this respect, for example, actions such as capacity building with women's groups to participate in decision-making spaces or in advocacy work are also included, although not explicitly or directly connected to issues of environmental justice by the groups.

PROJECT ACTIONS



THE STUDY HAS ALSO SHOWN THAT CONCERNING RIGHTS WOMEN DEFEND AND PROMOTE THE DISTRIBUTION IS THE FOLLOWING:



The defense or promotion of the right to water has the highest percentage. It is no coincidence. Women have a unique relationship with water, and it is only natural that so many environmental defenders mentioned this issue. Around a quarter (25%) of the collected results are related to the right to food sovereignty, and the third place for rights defended and promoted is shared between the right to the land (17%) and the right to participate in decision making affecting women (17%). In the fourth position is the right to the forest (7%).

Since the inception of the GAGGA Alliance, there is an annual campaign called “We, women, are water” to amplify women’s voices defending water.




We, Women, are Water – A global campaign to defend a crucial issue

Vanessa Purper


To amplify the voices of women defenders of water has been one of the marks of the work of the GAGGA Alliance in Latin America. Since 2017, inspired by collaboration among GAGGA actors in the region, especially women environmental defenders, we have decided to publish on social media key messages on the protection of long threatened water ecosystems.

Water is essential for life and survival of all forms of life
on the planet Earth. It is a vital humankind commons,
present in social, economic, cultural, and environmental
activities and thus a strategic natural heritage.



We have seen systematic and grave interferences in water biomes, implemented in name of a “development” model that contaminates and degrades. In addition, there is a connection between exploitation and degradation of nature and women’s subordination and oppression. Due to gender, class, and race inequalities prevailing in our societies, the most affected by socio-environmental injustices are women and girls from marginalized and impoverished populations in urban and peri-urban areas, and rural and Indigenous communities.

The lack of water affects women in differentiated way, as violence against their bodies and lives. Extractivist activities, for example, tend to happen in highly masculine spaces, even militarized, thus increasing the risk of physical and sexual violence against women in their territories, especially with the emergence of gangs of drug dealers and sexual exploitation. In dry seasons, women and girls walk kilometers in the fields to fetch water, exposed to differentiated dangers by the simple fact of being female, and especially exposed to sexual violence.



The central concept of the campaign “We, Women, are Water” has been, since its inception, to call attention to women’s very important role and their actions in the struggle for clean, sufficient, and accessible water in face of climate change and projects by governments, investors and companies that degrade the environment. The main objective is to give visibility to the resilience of organizations and community-based practices led by women, in addition to highlighting the way these actions by women water defenders help in better managing this common good, since access to water is globally established as a fundamental human right for a decent life.

To mark our collective presence in digital spaces, we chose to use graphic arts – illustrations portraying the deep relation women have with water – beyond its physical and practical aspects. There is very strong connection between water and spirituality and feminine cycles.

“Water and rivers are fundamental for our spirituality, territory, defense of our individual and collective rights, common goods, and nature.”

BERTA CÁCERES, NATIONAL MEETING OF WOMEN DEFENDERS OF LIFE AGAINST EXTRACTIVISM (2015)



Following the graphic part of the campaign, messages are jointly developed, by carefully listening to accounts, concerns and information brought by women defenders about interferences in their territories. These messages are disseminated in digital spaces of GAGGA actors – funds, grassroots organizations, NGOs, and Alliance website – with specific hashtags created to convey our desire to maximize the reach of messages and communicate the situation and work of women defenders.

This campaign is always held in March, beginning on the International Women’s Day (March 8) and concluding on the World Water Day (March 22). Every year we select a specific audience to be the main target and write an initial statement that establishes the tone of the campaign. Campaign actions also reach strategic in-person spaces for advocacy work. Thus, in 2018, we carried out two activities during the Alternative World Water Forum that took place in Brasília (Brazil) in parallel to the World Water Forum. GAGGA brought women water defenders from several countries and organized an audiovisual show and conversation circle on actions for water protection and advocacy for inclusive and respectful water management.

The choice of March is no accident, as this month has several important dates to resonate our voices:



March 8

International Women’s Day



March 14

International Day of Action for Rivers and against Dams



March 21

International Day of Forests



March 22

World Water Day

In the first five years of GAGGA Alliance implementation (2016-2020), the framework of our action was based on financial support and strengthening capacities for lobby and advocacy work and defense of women’s rights in favor of a clean, healthy and safe environment. The second cycle of the GAGGA Alliance is taking place; it started in 2021 and will continue until 2025 paying attention to the work of women in climate actions. This second cycle expands the range of countries with GAGGA’s presence and this will also be reflected in the campaign “We, Women, are Water.” Beginning in 2021, the campaign has increased its territorial scope including other countries with GAGGA’s work, and becoming a global campaign.

In this new moment of the campaign, we included in the publication accounts of struggles of communities supported by the GAGGA Alliance in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, regions where limited water security is seriously aggravated by the actions of companies, governments, and investors involved in extractivist activities, false solutions for climate change, deforestation, and agribusiness.

Demands of the 2021 campaign were addressed to investors, corporations, and governments with the following points:

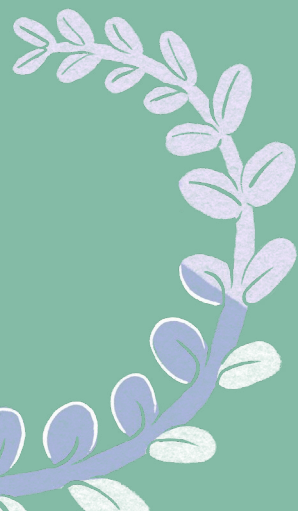


- Disinvestment in fossil fuel industries that violate women’s right to water.
- Ensure women’s right to water through fair climate solutions that take gender into account.
- Solutions must be sustainable and culturally adequate, and have the contribution, consent, and control of women, Indigenous people, and local communities.
- Incorporation of women’s leaderships, practices, and proposals in water access, management, restoration and conservation.

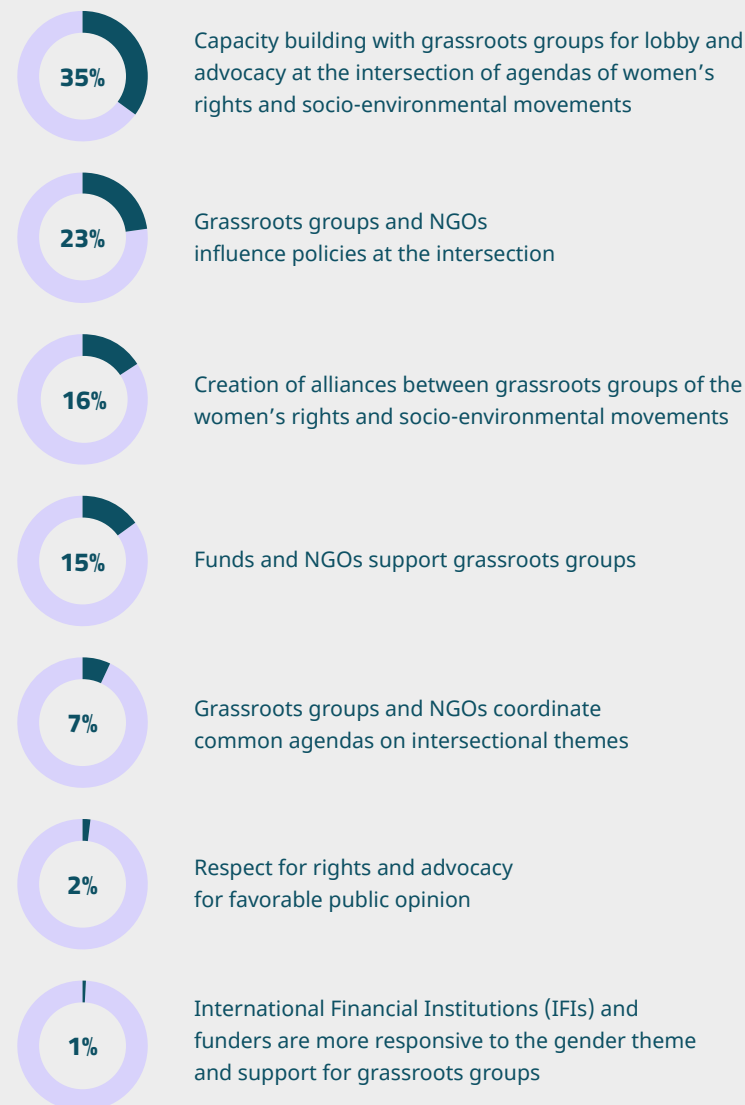
Women are crucial in the defense of their environment, families, and bodies. Defense of water will continue to be a priority for us!

The strength of union

Relating the outcomes initially desired by the GAGGA Alliance to perceptions and indications of the grassroots groups consulted for this study, we understood that the logic of GAGGA's approach is fairly aligned with possible ways of strengthening civil society and its capacity to exercise citizens' rights and defend social and environmental rights. Over a third of the groups indicated that they felt **strengthened to develop lobby and advocacy work at the intersection of the agendas of the women's rights and the socio-environmental justice movements**. Another important role of supported groups is **to influence public policies to take into account both women's rights and socio-environmental justice in territories where they work**.



GAGGA OUTCOMES



Changes and transformations

The experience of implementing the model proposed by the GAGGA Alliance (work at the intersection of women's rights and socio-environmental justice), together with the social technology developed by the Casa Fund (small grants strategically interconnected in territories, combined with capacity building activities), generated a significant impact on the scope of GAGGA Alliance objectives and grassroots groups' priorities.

Women's organizations tend to take on leadership roles in the face of environmental problems in their communities, seeking solutions that benefit all people. Grassroots groups supported in the period of this study have demonstrated efficacy in their lobby and advocacy work and support for local actors.

Continuity of the financial support was crucial to achieve outcomes in lobby and advocacy work led by grassroots groups.

Representatives of groups consulted for this study also indicated an additional value aggregated to the Casa Fund support: development of trusting ties, essential for networking.

Casa Fund believes that strengthening groups' institutional capacities creates the necessary bridge for their internal consolidation, achieving self-esteem and credibility with the community. Increase in institutional self-esteem favors the search for other resources and partners, which enhances the rights defense network. Often, this is the beginning of a virtuous cycle of efficacy, organizational growth, and credibility (internal and external) that leads to the consolidation of these groups as relevant social actors in their contexts.

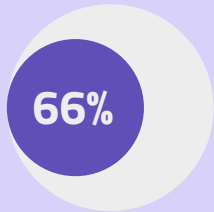
The methodology used in the study of the relation between Casa Fund and grassroots groups had a series of stages, including quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

The qualitative evaluation involved collecting and analyzing the outcomes extracted from defined groups in the sample, based on the methodology known as outcome harvesting from a sample of forty final reports of selected projects. In this qualitative stage, we held semi-structured interviews with a selection of ten important actors in the process, including the Casa Fund team, GAGGA representatives, representatives from supported organizations, and external actors relevant to the process.

Collected outcomes were categorized in different ways. In the methodology of outcome harvesting, outcomes are understood as changes in behavior (attitudes, actions, relations, and interactions) of social actors.

117 PROJECTS:

16,615 PEOPLE DIRECTLY BENEFITED



66% (10,990) OF THEM WERE WOMEN

55,400 PEOPLE INDIRECTLY BENEFITED

Direct beneficiaries are those people who had very close relation with project activities –in terms of execution or as action targets. Indirect beneficiaries are people who in some way enjoy the outcomes and changes projects brought to the spheres where they were executed.

When questioned about the types of transformations they experienced after receiving financial and non-financial support from the Casa Fund, with GAGGA's funding, the organizations indicated that almost a third (29%) were transformations that **strengthened their organizations**. They are related to improvements in infrastructure and equipment, capacity building on institutional issues (administration, management of funds, human resources). The second important group of transformations (27%) undergone by Casa Fund-supported organizations has to do with creating and/or strengthening **alliances and networks**. Thirdly, one out of every four outcomes was related to the **reinforcement of technical capacities to care for the environment**.

TYPES OF TRANSFORMATIONS THEY EXPERIENCED AFTER RECEIVING FINANCIAL AND NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT

29%



Organizational strengthening (infrastructure, administration, legalization, monitoring/evaluation)

27%



Ties/strengthening alliances and networks

25%



Strengthening technical capacities – care for the environment

11%



Capacity building for lobby and advocacy

5%



Other category

4%



Increased knowledge about public policies

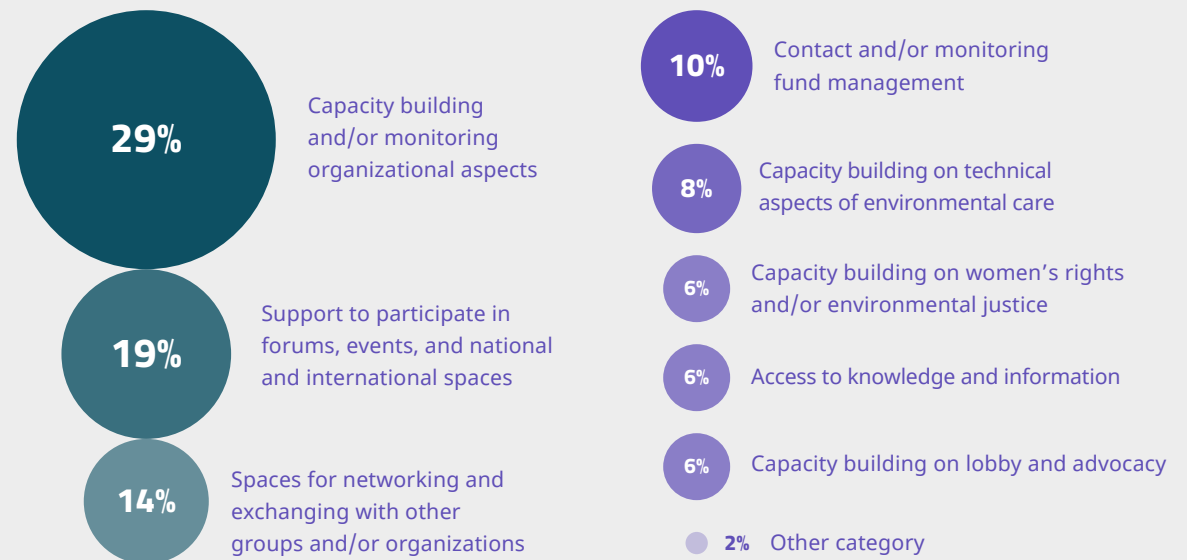
Non-financial support

Beyond financial support to project activities, the Casa Fund promoted trainings and spaces for exchanges that strengthened the organizations' capacities and local and regional networks. These supports, to a certain measure, are related to capacity building, for example, experience sharing, but are mostly intended to **strengthen networks and alliances among grassroots groups**.

We will give some examples of considerations made by groups consulted in this study about the non-financial contribution received for participating in Casa Fund call for projects with GAGGA funds.

We highlight the importance of the first three types of contribution, which add up to 62% of the total: strengthening the organization, participation in meetings and events, and spaces for networking and exchanging. When we talk about the great impacts that multiple small grants, strategically interconnected in territories, can generate, we are specifically speaking of these three possibilities.

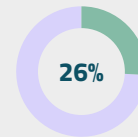
Organizations that were institutionally strengthened have more opportunities to establish alliances and exchanges with similar organizations. Participation in key events and meetings is indispensable to expand knowledge, develop ties, and reinforce trusting relations for joint collaboration.



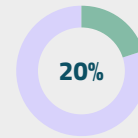
Collected results identified that actors most impacted by supported projects were the organizations themselves (or their members), local authorities (municipalities, local governments, and local agencies of the central government), and women individually. The study made a more detailed analysis of the types of change reported by grassroots groups with each of the most impacted actors and prepared a characterization of the transformations affecting them.



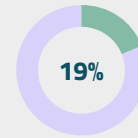
ORGANIZATIONS THEMSELVES (AND THEIR MEMBERS)



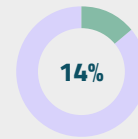
Organizationally strengthened (capacities, structure, internal processes, planning, financial management, equipment, etc.)



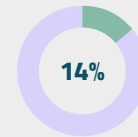
Group participants reinforced their capacities and implemented initiatives for their own economic empowerment



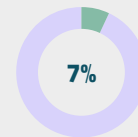
Group members are empowered and strengthen their capacities to advocate for their rights



Grassroots groups are strengthened and consolidated through active participation of their members

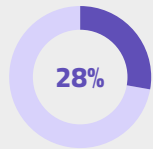


Grassroots groups establish new alliances with women and partner organizations

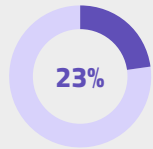


Grassroots groups are acknowledged by their communities, local authorities, and other relevant actors

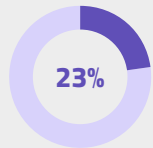
LOCAL AUTHORITIES (MUNICIPALITIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND LOCAL AGENCIES OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT)



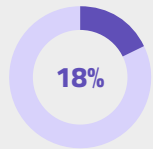
Local authorities support actions at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice agendas



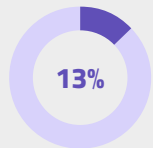
Local authorities listen to women's proposals and show interest in working with grassroots groups



Local authorities are involved in environmental issues and include them in their agendas

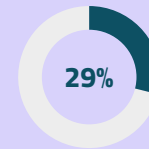


Local authorities establish alliances and agreements with grassroots groups and other organizations to advance environmental and women's rights agendas

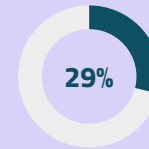


Local authorities acknowledge women's role and invite them to participate in spaces they organize

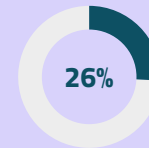
WOMEN



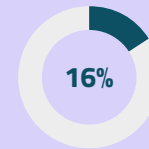
Empowered women, with knowledge and capacity to have more active participation in decision making spaces and lobby and advocacy



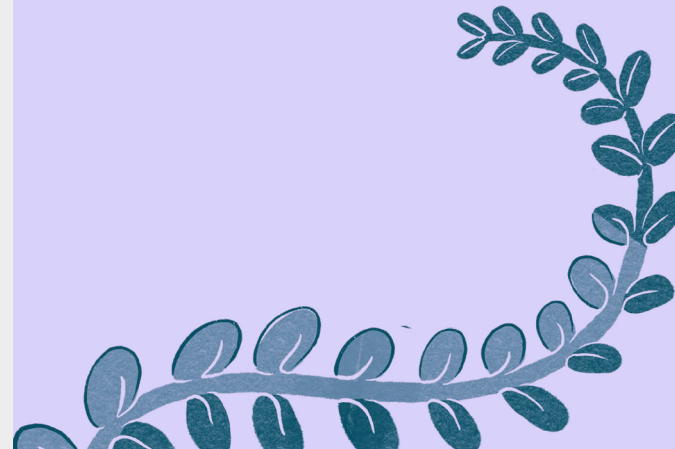
Young women become organized and agree on the possibility of joint work on environmental and women's rights issues



Women reinforce their alliances to get organized at regional and national levels



Empowered women, with knowledge and capacities to generate income in their own businesses



Relevance of organizational processes for women's empowerment in Paraguay

Ruth Amarilla

Pre-colonial Paraguay, community women

Originally, Guaraní women had an essential role in their communities, culturally educated and trained in a legacy of ancestral knowledges, passed on from generation to generation, they knew how to plant and cultivate food and medicinal herbs, and deal with collective creation. In a way, cultural wealth generated more collaboration in distributing community tasks.

“Indigenous women play a fundamental role in intergenerational transmission of spiritual traditions, history of their peoples, their philosophy, and defense of the land, territory, and natural resources. Great part of the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities in the region, including knowledge of medicine, properties of medicinal plants, seeds and herbs, animal life, oral traditions, drawings applied to visual arts, ceramics, and fabrics that include ancestral symbols, was preserved thanks to women's efforts. In most countries of the region where organized Indigenous communities live, women are the main preservers of traditional clothing”

(Report of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights – CLADEM).

Thus, women have historically demonstrated their relation of horizontality and collective construction in Indigenous communities.

Paraguay, phallocentric colonialism

With the arrival of invaders, customs and traditions with strong patriarchal roots also arrived, and in some ways became established during the occupations. Indigenous men assumed community responsibilities for supplying food from gathering and hunting, being absent from their communities for long periods to fulfill these tasks.

“The phenomenon of the arrival of Spaniards (...) is marked by profound cultural differences. On the one side, we had very strong European ethnocentrism with its culture, language, and religion; on the other, Indigenous populations (...) with their respective tongues, traditions, and beliefs. The cultural shock was traumatic, especially for Indigenous peoples.”

JOSÉ ZANARDINI, *LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS DEL PARAGUAY*. P. 25

“In the discovery and conquest of American territories Spanish conquerors applied methods of conquest and colonization developed during the Reconquest: a region is militarily occupied, the government is organized, and the population is converted to the winner’s religion. In cruel and unequal struggle, Spain rapidly triumphs. Political, social, and religious conceptions of the metropolis are transplanted. Politically, a foreign authority is introduced in the continent. In the social area, there is no scruple in using forced Indigenous labor.”

RAFAEL COLOMÉ I ANGELATS, *LA ÉTICA DE LA CONQUISTA DE AMÉRICA: REVISTA SELECCIONES DE TEOLOGÍA MORAL* 2, P. 13

As described above, the invasion of the Paraguayan territory was not different. Men had to adapt to the new conditions, declaring war in disadvantage or put themselves in the hands of their masters. Although there are accounts of resistance by Indigenous peoples, of warriors who fought back, many were forced to give up. The imposed culture was taking root in the lives of the Indigenous populations, changing their behavior. Patriarchy brought a culture from other continents of domination and subjugation of women, an event taking place in this historical stage of the invasion, in which most Indigenous men were learning to be integrated. Indigenous men adopted new forms of behavior and attitudes and, like women, they acquired a new social identity.

The War of the Triple Alliance was a watershed moment for women and their participation in this process that lasted for years. They had visibility and were praised for bravery and courage in several accounts of the time – from women providing services or being objects of propaganda to their roles in reconstructing a totally devastated society. In all this social, political, economic, and cultural development, we should consider that the Paraguayan men did not base their power and domination, or their skills for submitting, recognizing the existence of a millenary and inherited oppressive system, such as the patriarchy, rather their domination was based on the “male power,” the open phallogocentrism in Paraguayan society. This attitude establishes power relations, machismo and micro-machismos naturalized in everyday life that relegates, demeans, despises, and discriminates women of all social layers.

Relevance of empowering women’s community organizations today

Paraguayan history is marked by women who fought and continue to fight against social injustices that seriously affect us at community and national levels.

Those who talk about women’s struggles in general may point to freedoms achieved and facilities for social and political advocacy, but this hardly reaches rural areas, where feminist gains are still observed from afar, as a reality almost impossible for many women living in communities.

The rural reality is different. While urban feminist women are organized, making demands and becoming empowered in a much higher level, rural women are afraid, demonizing everything related to feminist struggles. This creates an almost unbearable gap for those involved in women’s struggles, forcing us to come down to earth and acknowledge the need for capacity building and awareness raising, ensuring an integral space framed by horizontality, care, and affection.

Our difficulties as rural women are an endless vicious cycle. History has tormented us with customs, traditions, silence and resignation, forcing us to deal with all this burden of being women, bearing all this suffering.

Victims of domestic violence on a regular basis, we tend to keep silent and to naturalize the situation. Some women assume they are incapable or even helpless to support themselves and their families financially, and have to put up with violent men who often subjugate them.

Those who decide to change this situation are judged, condemned, and ridiculed and try to find another man as “refuge.” Many women just have too many limitations to advance, such as lack of institutional support in cases of reported violence, and affective and emotional problems leading to deep depression.

In addition to these situations, we find a community immersed and alienated in capitalist activities, individualist, egotist, uninterested and, thus, indifferent to problems affecting women and the environment.

Impact and relevance of Casa-GAGGA small grant funds

Management and access to small grants is key for actions developed in women’s organizational processes. It is what give us collective hope, the possibility of building a new type of community where women are visible, first of all to ourselves, and then to all people. The contribution from the Casa Fund and GAGGA is very important. They gave us the chance to recognize ourselves, generating a meeting space, where there are thousands of opportunities for training, moments to see each other, talk, question, clarify our doubts, and effectively develop ourselves knowing we are supported.

Caudillo-type leaders have always imposed great obstacles to our development and growth in communities, and this doubles our work to maintain independence and autonomy of women’s organizations and their self-management.

The first Casa-GAGGA grant was used for an organizational process that quickly strengthened us. In this period, we perceived an open space for our participation, without being judged, and this gave us great strength and reinforced our positions in the community, ensuring our first actions concerning women’s rights and advocacy in environmental justice, a fundamental knowledge for our resistance.

Different activities of this initiative have begun to strengthen us and at the end we had strong pillars. We felt identified individually and acknowledged collectively, with acquired knowledge and elements to continue fighting for our rights and the defense of the environment.

The second grant during the new coronavirus pandemic was decisive, as it gave us an opportunity to create an economic alternative: our first experience of collective production and processing for marketing – an experiment in community resilience.

We began to set an example for other women in the community and surrounding areas. Empowered and with clear positions, protagonists of our own development, we have shared our experience with other women's organizations in the area. In different spaces, we recounted our learning process and our experiences with management and access to funds, such as GAGGA's grants, and our possibilities to develop and continue demanding our rights if we organize as women.

The experience in these processes has been so rich that, in addition to sharing knowledge with the community, we have become actual partners, providing significant help to the process of other women. We are always on alert to any opportunity to help in the organizational development of other women, with whom – together – we deconstruct ourselves to reconstruct again, as we know that there are people and organizations out there dreaming and yearning, as we do, for a possible dream.

The importance and relevance of knowing that we will continue to support each other, defending our visions and bodies, as well as our territory and environment, is what makes us stronger and gives us the courage to continue struggling – justice is possible.

Our organizational process advances and our experience is disseminated to other localities, beginning processes, with the same hope, with women's force and power, with dreams in sight and keenly felt commitments – because we deserve!



GAGGA and Casa Fund: profound internal changes

Our participation in the GAGGA Alliance brought new perspectives and challenges for the Casa Fund. We have begun to rethink our views and actions in relation to gender justice and its close ties with socio-environmental justice. We have always paid attention to the important role of women in issues related to the protection of the land, territory, and life in general. However, we have not had the opportunity to make in-depth study of this different, and sometimes controversial, universe: what is gender justice for us, in our country, in our region? How do the groups we have relations with take into account their relation with women, beyond their mere participation in community activities?

We feel invited to rethink our way of approaching criteria for the calls for projects in all our programs. We have begun to include gender issues in deeper and broader way, in all scopes of institutional relations.

Our views and actions were transformed by our relation with GAGGA, and we feel we have gained with it. We enhanced our perspectives and our relations and we feel that, in some ways, this enhancement spread to several areas of our work.

Internalizing aspects of gender justice reinforces the type of grantmaking developed by the Casa Fund, especially to strengthen the untiring work of awareness raising with the philanthropic area concerning environmental justice that we have developed since our inception. We believe that many micro-grants, strategically interconnected and well distributed in the territories, with financial and non-financial resources provided directly to women environmental defenders, have much greater capacity of social transformation than large sums concentrated on few intermediary organizations, which in most cases do not know anything of the true needs and realities of territories, do not have ancestral and traditional knowledges and, worst of all, do not directly experience socio-environmental injustices.

// My life restarted in 2019, precisely on September 16, with the birth of my daughter and the beginning of my history with the Casa Fund. Today my word is of gratitude to the universe and to all of you! Back then, when Amália sowed this little seed, somehow all things conspired for us to collect this fruit at this moment! I'm extremely happy for all the support the Casa Fund offers me. I'm grateful they believed me when I myself didn't. I was a lost girl, with a small daughter, recently separated. I'll never forget the friendly hand stretched out to me. And the woman now in construction could not have had better examples of gender equity, defense of rights, environmental justice, and resilience. In my work, the GAGGA Alliance is a daily source of inspiration to expand my knowledge and become a better citizen, a young woman who desires a more just world and works to achieve this every day. The Casa Fund supports dreams. It's wonderful to be part of this and see the transformation of the realities of many people and communities!

JANI JOANA - CASA FUND ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

// Being able to contribute to the GAGGA Alliance communications has always been a pleasure and also a learning process. In the last years, I was able to follow the campaign 'We, Women, are Water' held in March, when we shared stories of women involved in projects supported by this initiative. I also had the opportunity to visit projects in Bolivia and Paraguay to produce short institutional documentaries. These experiences helped me to understand the urgency to debate gender transversality in South America. For us, men, listening and paying attention to gender agendas is crucial, and this was part of my experience working with GAGGA. There is still a long stretch ahead when it comes to environmental justice and gender equality, but the initiatives supported by the GAGGA Alliance point to the right direction.

ATTILIO ZOLIN - CASA FUND COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR





5 YEARS OF GREAT RESULTS



A socio-environmental fund for Bolivia and the creation of the Alliance of Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South

Maria Amália Souza and Eduardo Franco Berton

Bolivia is among the 15 countries with world's greatest diversity. The variety of biogeographic conditions has privileged the country with several types of ecosystems and a very significant ethnic and sociocultural diversity, with a wealth of 36 Indigenous peoples who inhabit territories of global importance. These extensive ecoregions range from the Andes to the Valleys, going through the Amazon Forest and the Great American Chaco.

However, Bolivia is also going through a very complicated phase in socio-environmental terms. Expansion of agribusiness, one of the main models of economic development, mining, and large infrastructure projects are leading to continuous deterioration of natural resources, putting environmental health at risk and threatening fundamental rights of Indigenous populations and rural communities.

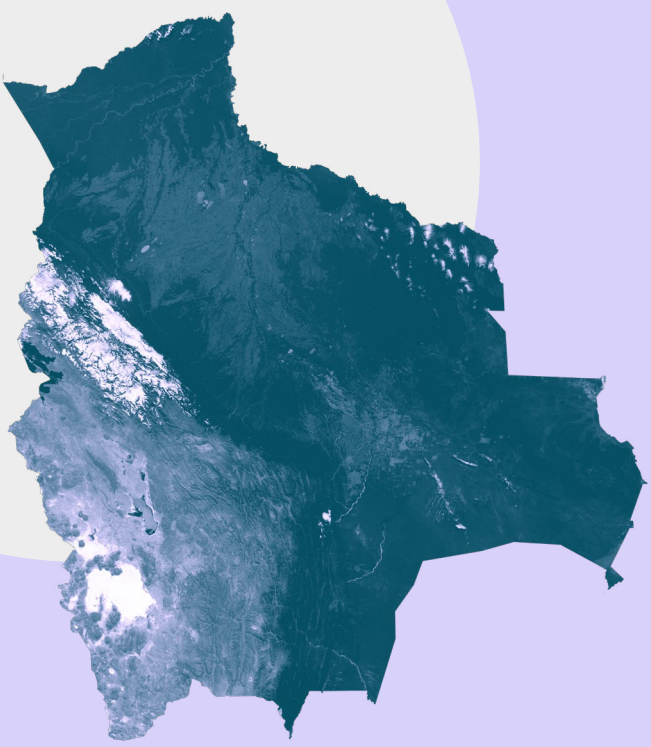
In 2020, Bolivia ranked third in the world for deforestation, overcoming Indonesia for the first time. This fact represents a very serious threat to over 50 million hectares of forests in the country. This reflects a national economy with alarming dependence on extracting natural resources.

Thus, in a constant search for equity and sustainable management of our ecosystems, trying to strengthen the community groups that inhabit them, the Semilla Socio-Environmental Foundation was created, a socio-environmental fund whose mission is to help in conservation of the environment and promotion of sustainable production, strengthening leaders' capacities and civil society management in Bolivia.

One of the attributes of our organization is to have emerged from the same Bolivian environmental movement. Hence, thanks to the previous experience of its founding members, Semilla managed to build trusting relations with different Indigenous communities and groups in various regions, thus enabling the institution to have a solid understanding of the local context.

Inspired and guided by the experience of over 15 years of the Casa Fund in South America, the Semilla Foundation has created a financing structure capable of meeting the needs of grassroots communities and groups in Bolivia, through local, national, and international philanthropic support. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to access those resources and allow these grassroots groups to find their own local solutions for the main challenges in their territories. This is possible thanks to a dynamics of consultations to a network of specialists of different areas, whose vast experience helps us in allocating economic resources at the very important grassroots level.

Establishing networks from the heart of Latin America to the Global South



The Semilla Foundation covers the whole of Bolivia and includes transborder ecosystems, such as the Great American Chaco, Chiquitania, Amazonia, and Andes, among others. Hence, since the beginning, we have understood the importance of establishing alliance with other socio-environmental funds in the region, capable of reaching the most vulnerable grassroots groups in their countries.

To this extent, Semilla was interested in being a member of the Alliance of Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South (Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur), a new network pulling together independent socio-environmental funds, locally founded and led, in different regions of the Global South.

As in the case of Semilla, the purpose of these funds is to support community groups in different transborder biomes and ecosystems in their countries, to achieve a combination of grantmaking that systematically promotes the integral and regional protection of ecosystems in South America and other countries in the Global South.

The other Funds of the Global South were created by local environmentalists and activists who firmly believe that the only way to protect our planet is providing resources to support grassroots groups facing the negative impact

of environmental devastation; and at the same time, proposing just and sustainable alternatives to protect the rights and territories of communities in all ecosystems.

Each socio-environmental fund in this Alliance of Funds of the Global South has its own structures to disburse donations at national and regional levels, created in different countries of the Global South, and administered collectively by environmentalists in their countries and regions.

The Alliance pulls together socio-environmental funds with vast experience, such as the Casa Socio-Environmental Fund in Brazil, Solidarity Action Fund in Mexico, TierraViva Fund in Central America, and the Samdhana Institute in Southeast Asia. They joined the Alliance inspired by creation of five new funds: Semilla Foundation in Bolivia, Peru Socio-Environmental Fund, Emerger Socio-Environmental Fund in Colombia, Ñeque Fund in Ecuador, and Tindzila Fund in Mozambique.

These socio-environmental funds have in common the understanding that the populations most vulnerable to the environmental challenges are also the most excluded, their rights are constantly violated, and they are also largely invisible to international philanthropy.

What is the importance of national funds for strengthening community organizations?

As each national fund creates its own financing structures at national and/or regional levels – managed independently – each one is responsible for mobilizing resources from multiple sources and defining adequate mechanisms to ensure grants actually reach communities.

Thus, collective and participatory decision making structures make country teams responsible for direct strategic donations, in local currency, to local groups. Thus, they include those who otherwise would have minimum possibility of accessing any other type of philanthropic donation.

Alliance contributions to the philanthropic area

The Alliance of Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South helps the nine member funds to coordinate and promote their individual and collective causes in more efficient ways. Hence, member funds of the Alliance can share our models of grantmaking and help one another with new ideas and procedures. They can also combine our experiences to achieve more solid narratives, describing the role of local funds in the area of philanthropy, as well as describing our role in relation to environmental donors in the field of conservation.

Thus, we develop joint proposals with specific thematic approaches for financing, coordination of funding to transborder regions, production of information to map out and monitor impacts to become stronger at local level and more visible to international philanthropy.

In sum, an idea born from on-the-ground observation by actors of the same camp, based on years of experience, created an innovative wave in the world, the multiplication of local socio-environmental funds, organized by local people, part of their own culture, opening more accessible pathways for local communities, who had no idea of the existence of the philanthropic universe and are invisible for this universe, and now can finally access resources promoting solutions to protect their way of life and territories.

Finally, this process enables not only democratization of access to philanthropic resources in countries like ours, where this culture is just being created, but also helps us to promote this same camp, so it grows and understands that to protect important biomes and ecosystems on the planet, there is no other way but to invest resources in the ways of life of traditional populations in territories, in a broad, agile, and decentralized form. This investment should be based on in-depth vision and understanding of local cultures, capable of reacting promptly in efficient and systematic way. View the macro and act at the micro level – a sort of social acupuncture that stimulates many solutions, from the bottom up, and all together promote the necessary protection to continue living in full and just way, including all beings inhabiting this world.

Pathways for tomorrow

Amália E. Fischer and Shinji Carvalho

The here and now

Beings inhabiting the Earth, both humans and non-humans, are going through a somber period, through an unprecedented climate crisis at global level: deforestation, expansion of agricultural lands, climate change, and global warming. This crisis has implications for health, food security, water shortages, and spread of existing diseases and new ones due to the human invasion of wild environments. So far, the pathway is well known: expansion of production and consumption as if resources were not finite; domination and expropriation of natural resources, traditional lands, as well as knowledges and labor of Black people, Indigenous people, and women.

However, in this 2020 climate crisis, as foreseen by scientists, we have the spread of the new coronavirus that generates the Covid-19 pandemic, thus aggravating other existing

crises, such as the economic, political, public health, social, educational crises, among others. This exposed what social movements and civil society organizations have analyzed, debated and denounced for so long: inequality, discrimination, and socio-environmental injustices that particularly affect women, Indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, poor and LGBTQIA+ people.

UN Women data (bit.ly/3uErHmk) demonstrate that in 2018, only 15.7% of the Global Environmental Facility projects had undergone a gender analysis prior to their approval. Forty percent of the countries have at least one restriction to women's property rights. Every year, 3.8 million people, the majority women and children, die from air pollution caused by the use of dirty energy in cooking and home heating. The environment and women's labor are dealt with as devalued and infinite resources, although they are the basis of all economies.

Brazil is one of world's main emitters of greenhouse gases. In the country, the main causes of greenhouse gas emissions are livestock production and changes in the use of lands and forests, followed by the use of energy, especially fossil fuels. Illegal advance of livestock production and deforestation are related to the expropriation of Indigenous peoples, Quilombolas, small rural producers and settlers, who often act as environmental guardians, with women leaders playing essential roles in these groups. Women from those peoples and groups often suffer violence with heinous cruelty while defending their territories.

In urban areas, groups led by women are also leading actions to increase community resilience to the effects of global warming, such as floods, droughts, and mudslides. Actions for more inclusive mobility and changes in consumption are part of the universe of new narratives and attitudes proposed by these women who challenge patriarchal logic that makes the labor of women and nature invisible and defend infinite production and consumption.

A decorative illustration on the left side of the page. It features a stylized hand in shades of green and blue, reaching out to hold a leafy branch. The background is white with some faint green and blue patterns.

The uncertainties

For almost two years, the planet has seen the collapse of several public healthcare systems caused by Covid-19, which has killed thousands of people and threatens to kill more. Our daily lives were interrupted, changed by a strange external agent. We are back to uncertainties.

Uncertainty, which is part of life, is today more clearly perceived. As the saying goes, "death is life's only certainty." However, we do everything to delude ourselves, not accepting uncertainty. In the beginning of the pandemic, time seemed to have stopped, and in some sectors of society life slowed down around the world.

Currently, we have to live with the uncertainty of who will live and who will die, afraid of losing loved ones, collaborators, partners, with fear of unemployment and loss of income. World economy is in deep crisis, all prices going up, with global and obviously local inflation too. In the words of Brazilian feminist philosopher Carla Rodrigues in a short Facebook note: "today, more than ever, the future is a promise."

In less than six months, Covid-19 destroyed everything we believed in: space, time, social, political, economic, and financial perceptions, psyche, cities, countryside, countries, governments, and so on. The virus was able to do all this because we are inescapably interconnected, and that which affects some people, affects all, as in the story of a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon forest and causing a hurricane in Florida.

We are interconnected, as humans we are interdependent, but in economic and financial terms we are also co-dependent. And right there we have a very important problem because the interdependence in this logic was imprisoned in structures of subjugation and control. This is what countries in the Global South have experienced under integrated global capitalism which, in its

neoliberal version, with its economic and financial policies, have produced extreme authoritarianism; persecutions; death of human, civil, and socio-environmental rights defenders; death of Indigenous, Black, LGBTQIA+ people, and so on. These policies enabled the development of narratives of hate, racism, sexism, homo-trans-lesbophobia, misogyny, extermination of human and non-human beings that put at risk both new pseudo-democracies and the most consolidated ones.

Today, by the human hand and irrational interference with nature, excessive ambition for profit, ego, and ethnocentrism, we are dying because of a pandemic spread by a virus caused by human invasion of natural environments. Covid-19 has exposed the darker side of humankind, and more than ever, it starkly revealed inequalities, poverty, prejudices, and injustices. It also showed the luminous side of humans, such as solidarity, empathy, love, and conscience. Today, more aware of our interdependence, it is very important to listen to the Indigenous peoples, feminist movements and socio-environmental movements that talk to us about the importance of collaborative living, the close relations between human and non-human beings. This might save the human species.

The future

The lack of understanding and knowledge about how to build a better post-pandemic world makes it very hard to analyze the future, causing anguish, desolation, and hopelessness. However, social movements, especially women's organizations, have resisted patriarchy for over 21 centuries, and Indigenous women have accumulated millenary knowledge in 500 years of confrontation with colonialism and necropolitics. Philanthropic response for survival that many communities and movements gave to the pandemic was, generally speaking, fast, creative, innovative, solidary, generous, and collaborative. The philanthropic ecosystem realized it should trust the decisions and solutions of community organizations in territories. This means to donate in flexible ways to strengthen these organizations that know community needs.

However, we know we are at an unprecedented crossroads. If the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to act on an emergency basis, we know now that we have around 10 years to act and stop a climate hecatomb fatal for humankind as we know it. We have to start working yesterday to maintain global warming below the 1.5°C needed for our survival.

Thus, the future is more uncertain than ever
and we need to bet on the possibility of change,
responsible in terms of gender, race, ethnicity,
class, sexual orientation, and the environment.



We know women will be among the most affected by climate change, but we also realize that women's leadership and protagonism are crucial to stop global warming, according to Balgis Osman-Elasha in the article "Women... in the shadow of climate change" – UN Chronicle.

In this context, we have the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) in which ELAS+ participates for the first time in 2021. GAGGA is a strategic collaboration, based on knowledge and experiences acquired since its inception from two social movements: women's rights and socio-environmental justice. The two movements have enormous capillarity, promptly reaching communities and having in-depth understanding of challenges in the territories.

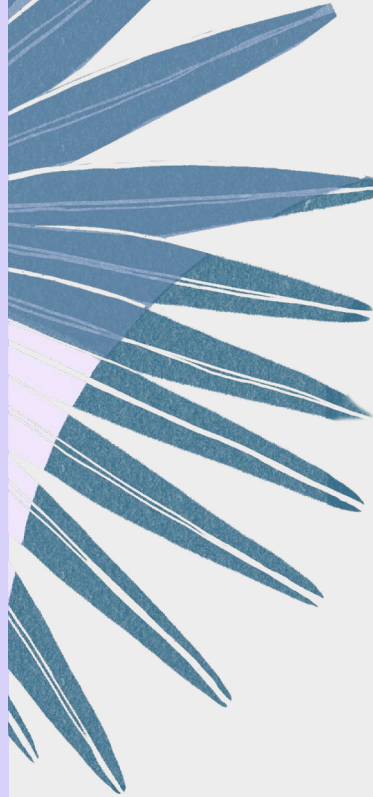
Since 2016, GAGGA has been transforming the form of philanthropic grantmaking in the world. The center of solutions is now based on the community, on territories, for problems created by a system focused on extreme profits, exploitation of people and the environment, including slave labor and persecution and death of women rights defenders. GAGGA supports and monitors community organizations led by women in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In 2021, GAGGA enabled us to launch the Call for Proposals on Women and Environmental Justice, and thus directly support with flexible grants eight groups led by women and LBT+ people dealing with this theme. These groups are in five regions of the country led by Indigenous, Black, and LBT+ women, who are part of different intersectionalities,

coming from Indigenous territories, Quilombola, rivers, forests, countryside, rural settlements, and urban peripheries. In addition to financial support, these groups also share spaces guaranteed to groups supported by the largest ELAS+ program, Women in Movement, a flexible program dedicated to strengthening movements and capacities, and that in 2021 launched the biggest call for proposals in the history of ELAS+, selecting at least 80 groups.

Supported groups will participate in building movements with the program Women in Movement and thus will be able to establish networks and alliances with a wide range of movements. In this way, according to our experience, other groups among the 80 organizations in that program will include the defense of the environment in their agendas. Supported groups also will participate in immersing spaces with funders, specialists and other activists, thus strengthening their capacities and institutions.

Our glimpse of the future reveals a strengthened, plural and diverse civil society, present in decision making spaces and able to work safely in their fields. That is why we reinforce our support to the protagonism of women and LBT+ people, especially those at the intersections of gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and socio-environmental justice.



Hence, we continue the everyday construction of a new philanthropy, based on needs of territories, communities, and collaboration among different actors, partners, funders, and supporters. This approach is also based on the horizontality in the forms of supporting and relating with different types of organizations of women from the Global South and that will continue to guide GAGGA's work. It is important to realize that civil society organizations are not enterprises or corporations, but nonprofit entities. They cannot be managed according to parameters of corporative models, involving the same methodologies to measure corporate results and project execution. It is important to trust the wisdom and knowledge of these civil society organizations and groups, as they know their communities, territories, movements, and causes. Actually, they are the ones who know what they want, what they need, and how to change their realities.

Based on our work and our discussions, we project the following ideas for GAGGA's next ten years:

- Increase advocacy to include more countries. Support to tackle post-pandemic impacts and consequences should be continued, as we will need more than ten years to rebuild the countries in the Global South, recognizing that women in the framework of socio-environmental justice are crucial to rebuild societies and preserve the environment.
- Expand material and immaterial resources to strengthen women's rights and socio-environmental justice.
- Expand the collaboration of the philanthropic ecosystem of NGOs, inviting foundations, national and international funds and institutes, women's rights organizations and those defending socio-environmental justice, as well as universities to carry out researches and develop with all partners their own metrics and forms of evaluation, thus avoiding the corporate logic of efficiency, efficacy, and immediate results. Social transformations take time because they must change minds, hearts, and behavior.
- Expose sources of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, such as changes in land use, livestock production, and deforestation.
- Continue to strengthen narratives including greater diversity and intersectionality of grassroots groups that are key for climate and environmental justice, as the defense of territories, traditional ways of life, and the good living.
- Expand the communication actions of GAGGA, a very important model, especially for the post-pandemic period, of great interest for the philanthropic ecosystem that can be replicated in other spheres, beyond the partnership of women's rights and socio-environmental rights.

The privilege of learning from women environmental defenders

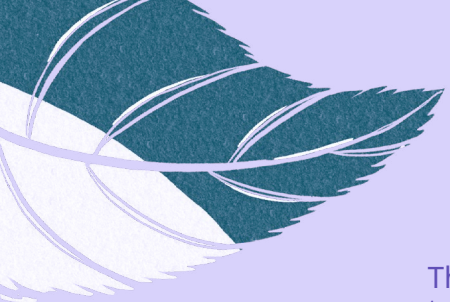
Tamara Mohr

For over 30 years, I have worked for Both ENDS, a global organization founded in Holland in 1986, whose objective is to strengthen civil society, connecting social, environmental, developmental, and human rights issues

Both ENDS always sought the most effective ways of reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. That is why we have been involved in supporting the creation of funds all over the world since the 1990s. These funds are initiated, developed, and managed by partners, quite often by environmental activists. The Casa Socio-Environmental Fund is a great example. Funds that channel financial and non-financial support to communities and environmental human rights defenders; connecting groups to strengthen one another, and investing in linkages and learning as part of their expertise. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we clearly witnessed their unique function and capacities. These funds were extremely flexible and quick to respond to the needs of communities and the most vulnerable women, in remote localities that would not receive any benefit from governmental or international emergency aid.

In 2014, we had the opportunity to reinforce the support to these funds and expand our reach uniting efforts with Mama Cash, the first international women's fund, which supports the idea of strengthening these funds across the world, and with the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), which has an impressive trajectory as a fund in its region. Jointly, we built GAGGA, a unique opportunity to seek synergies between two movements – environmental justice and women's rights – as GAGGA includes specialized funds for both of them. Out of the total financial resources mobilized, almost € 23 million were distributed by 20 funds in the Global South in five years, benefiting over 400 community-based organizations (CBOs), in addition to stimulating and creating spaces for dialogue and knowledge and experience sharing at several levels, leading involved organizations and myself personally to learn many lessons. I would like to share some of them.

First, as part of these two movements – environmental (Both ENDS) and women's (FCAM and Mama Cash) – we have identified from different angles that we face very similar challenges, although we still often act in isolation. Although we all agree on the need to unite our forces, this is not what happens. To overcome isolation, it was necessary to find a strong common denominator. This was revealed in the overlapping of the needs of both movements, translated into the strategic objective of the first stage of the GAGGA program (2016-2020): “catalyze the collective power of women's and environmental justice movements and groups for the creation of a world where women enjoy and exercise their right to water, food, and clean, healthy and safe environment.”



The program created the opportunity for environmental justice funds and community organizations to invest in integrating or incorporating women's rights in their own organizations, their work as environmental defenders, and their advocacy work. Likewise, women's rights funds and their partners strengthened their ties with environmental justice.

Second, as Both ENDS, we realized that many partner environmental organizations are in general led by men. This implied not to include women's strength, knowledge and ideas in the joint struggle to achieve a more sustainable and equitable world.

We also understood that the GAGGA program, which lasted five years, gave us the time to invest in incorporating women's rights in our environmental justice work. This is not easily achieved in a project of just 1-2 years, just adding gender as an element or

a paragraph. This is fundamental because "it is not just a matter of adding women and shaking," in one of the curious expressions of the North American feminist and author Charlotte Bunch, with which we became familiarized through this joint work. Women should be part of the process of defining ideas and actions, their own priorities, and play a central role in implementation. By incorporating women's rights in the work of environmental justice, we get a different agenda, a distinct dialogue, and a different way of discussing problems and solutions. For example, allocate time to rituals that are part of the culture before discussing content or provide psychological support to women environmental defenders who live in areas of conflict.

GAGGA provided to environmental justice funds the opportunity and the time to carefully analyze the role of women in environmental struggles and projects. How are

women affected in different ways than men? How do we make sure their voices are heard? How can we ensure that supported initiatives are beneficial to women and enable them to play a fundamental role? Do we recognize how similar are our struggles and how important is to unite forces and share our knowledges and strategies? Slowly, it became easier to understand one another and to develop and implement joint actions.

We have learned that environmental organizations involved with GAGGA had a different starting point. Some people realized they never had truly taken women into account. Others would like to invest in enhancing their institutional policy for gender. Every one defined where improvements were necessary and where to focus.

However, there is no single manual, plan or magical formula.

In 2020, Both ENDS and partners documented several partners' experiences and lessons. We published them in "Embedding gender justice in environmental action: where to start?" that offers ten key recommendations to environmental organizations wishing to intensify their work in favor of gender justice. Each recommendation is followed by a concrete experience of an organization partner of Both ENDS, many of them having also participated in the GAGGA program. The publication provides suggestions on the following: where to start, how to translate your organizational ambitions into concrete actions, and how to adjust your approach to your everyday work.

Based on the exchange of information on the type of initiatives we support, we learned that environmental justice funds and women's rights funds support very similar projects. Women environmental human rights defenders at community level make no distinction between "women" and "environment." In their lives and struggles, it is all interconnected. It seems that the farther from reality, the more divided the themes. We, environmentalists, tend to focus on specific issues and invest our attention and resources according to the current trend. At international level, from the UN, ministries, donors, to NGOs, we specialize and concentrate on issues such as wastes, water, land, health, pollution or biodiversity. For women defenders, struggling against extractivists, such as miners, all those issues are relevant and interconnected. Thus, women defenders' initiatives can easily meet the criteria of both funds. Hence, we realized that it became easier for women defenders to establish connections, understand one another and unite forces.

GAGGA has demonstrated that is possible to find synergies and common actions between the two movements. GAGGA became a fruitful collaboration at world level between women's rights and the environmental justice funds, civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). This resulted in a strong and integrated approach to gender in environmental justice funds and vice versa. The outcome is a diversified Alliance that analyzes the actual needs of women defenders in their communities, based on their own proposals for change. Within the Alliance, we share knowledge and ideas, participate in learning events, develop joint initiatives, narratives, and campaigns.

In Latin America, joint work focused on the campaign "We, Women, are Water," which became a global action in 2021. In Asia, women defenders defined the impact of extractivist industries as their main focus and established the initiative "Women Action on Mining" (WAMA). These are just two of many GAGGA's initiatives. We have influenced donors to provide more and better resources to women defenders who work for environmental justice. We influence governments and investors to improve their policies and monitor implementation. For example, we influenced the Green Climate Fund to increase access of women's rights groups to the resources they administer.





Finally, GAGGA has become an incredible opportunity for learning. We advance by doing and learning, as well as we learn by allowing ourselves to make mistakes along the way. Last but not least, we have learned a key lesson: we proved that the learning process between two movements, not so familiar with each other, will not happen by simply gathering people in the same room and ticking off the same items on the agenda. Although communities understand each other, we recognize that the movements have different working cultures, use different concepts, view issues from distinct perspectives, and have different values. It takes time to establish actual dialogue, to be able to listen and learn from each other, respect differences and see that our struggles and proposals are complementary or even overlapping. This process should be facilitated and sometimes is hard work. It requires a careful process, analysis and preparation on both sides. It involves building trust and it does not happen overnight. But it is worthwhile if we really want to join forces and face the many challenges of this world.

For me, on the personal level, the more I think about my learning process at the GAGGA Alliance, the more I realize how it made me change. I can no longer read any document without noticing if women were taken into account. I cannot attend a debate without asking myself why only men were invited to share their wisdom. And I will continue to be surprised by the strength of women, their courage and incredible capacity to adapt and innovate. I observe that often are the women who take the lead in defense of human rights and in the struggle for a just and sustainable world. This will stay with me forever, and I hope with many others inspired by the work of the GAGGA Alliance. This work will be continued in 2021-2025, with the objective of expanding its scope and helping in combating climate change - the greatest crisis of our time.

Final remarks

Working at the intersection of the women's rights and environmental justice agendas, with a model of small grants to grassroots groups, is the most transformational way of achieving the protection of the territories and the rights of their inhabitants. In order to secure needed changes, it is crucial to work with people living on the frontline of environmental impacts – although they do not own the territory, they are part of it.

Focus on intersectionality opens space for women's participation in their communities and with governmental authorities, to the extent **their role as agents of socio-environmental transformation becomes visible and recognized**. It is only possible to promote the protection of a territory through the connection with the rights of people living there. The people who live in the territory are the one who actually can transform it, as they are connected to the life and processes taking place in that area. Processes mobilized by these groups are based on their knowledge of the territory and the dynamics they face. Hence, they are truly organic because are based on social groups who know and experience the problems.

Naturally, the intersectional work of defending women's rights and environmental justice addresses issues related to actions of grassroots groups in their territories. The connection between Indigenous women and the environment have always existed. Indigenous women are the ones who remain in the territories and are directly affected by environmental pressures. Hence, **women in territories experience intersectionality**, as they are the most affected by violence and environmental pressures and remain in their communities.

There is ambivalence in this overlapping because of women's excessive workload, as they are assuming the role of environmental protectors, in addition to their traditional role in domestic care.

The current context poses a series of challenges for the work at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice agendas. Based on the perspectives of actors interviewed for this study, we have selected some relevant items for our work.

Advance of extractivist models

In several Latin American countries, governmental agendas are clearly extractivist. It is state policy and it does not matter if the government leans to the right or the left. They are development models based on the exploitation of natural resources, without taking into account the voices of affected communities.

COVID-19

The economic recession resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic serves as pretext to strengthen extractivist economic models based on predatory activities (mining, oil drilling, extensive agriculture, settlements, infrastructure megaprojects, etc.). The economic and sanitary crises have aggravated poverty levels of local communities, making it harder to transport and market their products, in addition to generating more violence and environmental degradation.

Closing down participatory spaces

Challenges are increasing and the systematic closing down of civil society participatory spaces is an aggravating factor. In this context, women are the most exposed and less protected.

Structural discrimination against women

Social organizations face a challenge in relation to women's political participation. Family and structural changes are needed to democratize the roles traditionally attributed to women in home care, so they can have political participation and hold remunerated jobs, without sacrificing their personal and family life.

Unsustainable activism and lack of self-care

Illness and health issues appear as the consequence of excessive work performed by women leaders. It is not only work demands, but also the emotional overburden and everything that is happening with fellow workers. It is very hard emotionally.



Following, we have summarized the main points shared by interviewees concerning **priorities for the work at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice**:

Thematic agenda

Continue working on issues such as access to water, food sovereignty, economic autonomy, recovery and protection of native seeds, protection of natural reserves and Indigenous territories, contamination of waters and aquifers, waste management and recycling in urban areas. The theme of healthy eating is becoming more important in groups' agendas, as well as agroecology, clean production, subsistence farming to fight against hunger, among others. There is also a great need to address the economy, income generation for women defenders and their communities.

Strengthening women's capacities and recognizing their protagonism

Change women's self-perception as important transformational agents so they have voice and participation in decision making spaces. This was a role denied for long time, but now there is an awakening. Enable women's participation in political spaces, democratizing family, collective or public solutions for domestic chores traditionally assumed by women.

Self-care for women defenders

Care for people who work in those organizations and allocate time to self-care for the wellbeing of work teams, with support from specialists

Knowledge management

Work with knowledge and information is a very valuable asset. When money runs out, people keep their knowledge. We should systematize and understand legislative and normative structures concerning women's rights and the environment at local, national, and international levels. Investigate the differentiated impact on women caused by environmental pressures and violence in territories, making visible the connection between women and the environment to strengthen arguments in defense of our causes.

Advocacy strategies

Reinforce human rights and environmental defense networks. Defend the right to information and prior consultation in the case of megaprojects that directly and indirectly affect the territories. Put more efforts in global campaigns that have more impact. Prioritize the defense of public policies. This is long, hard work, but it is crucial.

Management and access to financial resources

Have flexible funds available that can be invested in actual needs, without much bureaucracy for grassroots groups.

