



MIGHTY WOMEN

ACTION BY GROUPS IN THE
SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL
AGENDA - TRANSFORMATIONS
AND IMPACTS

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This is the second Publication
fruits of Casa Fund's work
through the GAGGA Alliance.¹

Acting at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice, this work had powerful impacts not only **on personal and professional transformation and on the reverberation of women's voices**, but also on **organizational changes and the scope of the actions of the organizations in which they work**, and, finally, had great results in terms of **advocacy with the local authorities of the territories in which they operate**. These impacts deserve a space where we can analyze, in more detail, the evidence of positive changes in the territories, from this partnership between Casa Fund and GAGGA.

The 117 projects supported between 2016 and 2020 in 4 countries - Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay - by Casa Fund, within the scope of the GAGGA Alliance,

¹ Mighty Women: Performance of groups on the socio-environmental agenda - Experiences in South America (link: <https://casa.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/mighty-women-casa-gagga-eng-digital.pdf>)



Women transformed and
transforming

More capable
More powerful voices
Strengthened Organizations
More engaged local authorities



experienced the most varied social, economic and political contexts: in addition to the difficulties already faced by women due to the structural prejudice that they suffer, they have experienced the advance of State developmental, extractive and predatory models, and the systematic closure of spaces for civil society participation, and, as an aggravating factor, the economic crisis and the post-COVID scenario.

Casa Fund's support for these projects was based on the fact that working with a model of small donations in favor of grassroots groups is the most transformative way of protecting the territories and the rights of their inhabitants, as it bestows all the decision making processes with the people who live in the territories and are part of them. These are the people who really achieve great changes, since they are connected with the life and contexts of the territories, mobilizing their wisdom and knowledge to generate great transformations.

Work at the intersection between women's rights and environmental justice opens spaces for women to participate and act in their

communities and with local authorities, as these women are recognized and made visible as the main agents of transformation.

The results presented below are the result of the Final Assessment of Implementation of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) through the Casa Socio Environmental Fund, carried out by consultants Alejandro Imbach and Natalia Ortiz, from the consultancy GeoLatina. In this publication, we highlight, among the many findings of the evaluation already extensively presented in the publication 'Mighty Women: Group Action in the Socio-Environmental Agenda - Experiences in South America', the Impacts related to changes in funded organizations, changes in local authorities and changes in women as individuals.

The results are powerful and reinforce the importance not only of programs that work at the intersection of women's rights and environmental justice, but also demonstrate the value of small support to grassroots organizations and the breadth and reach of the results they provide.

² www.geolatina.org

Changes and Transformations

The work to collect results took into account a broad evaluation matrix. For this publication, we are considering what we believe to be the most important and impactful changes that have taken place in these projects, which are illustrative of the transformative potential of this type of support.

Among the questions collected, the answers to the following questions were selected:

- Who are the main actors impacted by the supported groups?
- What types of transformation have the main impacted actors undergone?

From the results collection exercise, it was possible to identify the types of actors that the supported projects most frequently influenced or supported. Of the 75 results collected, it was observed that practically 3 out of 4 results (73%) were linked to one of these 3 types of actors: the organization itself, local authorities or women.

CHANGES / IMPACTS OCCURRED IN ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR MEMBERS



68%

The organization itself



43%

Local Authorities

(municipal level, state level or local levels of national governments)



28%

Women

(enquanto indivíduos)

Actors impacted = Environment and territories preserved

Observing the main impacted actors allows us to reflect that the Casa Fund support format is being surgical in the means to achieve results and greater impact. By strengthening organizations and women, ensuring their maintenance, performance potential, strength and sense of security, these two actors

directly affect local authorities, which are responsible for formulating, implementing and monitoring public policies. **There are two important points being contemplated regarding the defense of territories: the main beneficiaries and stakeholders, and, those responsible for their preservation and defense.**

Changes / impacts occurred in organizations and their members



The greatest impact observed in organizations and their members concerns **improvements in internal management (planning, fundraising, internal processes) and in the organizations' infrastructure**. This was observed in 45% of the organizations that were interviewed. Ultimately, this means that these organizations are increasingly professionalizing their processes for a more effective performance, and also increasing their fundraising potential, which means expanding their operations.

In 35% of the organizations evaluated, it was identified that the members of the organizations **became better able to generate income through their own enterprises**. This represents not only an impact in itself, but a potential for revolution in the territories. **Practicing their profession / their work and feeling secure in terms of generating income for themselves and their family members is of enormous transformative potential**. Being an activist when you have personal

concerns is an arduous task, and it is very important that these aspects are considered in the support decisions of funders.

Another highly relevant impact was observed in **33% of the organizations**, which empowered their members to **design and implement their own advocacy actions to defend their rights**. This applies both to the **defense of women's rights** and to environmental justice related to these groups, their members and the communities to which they belong.

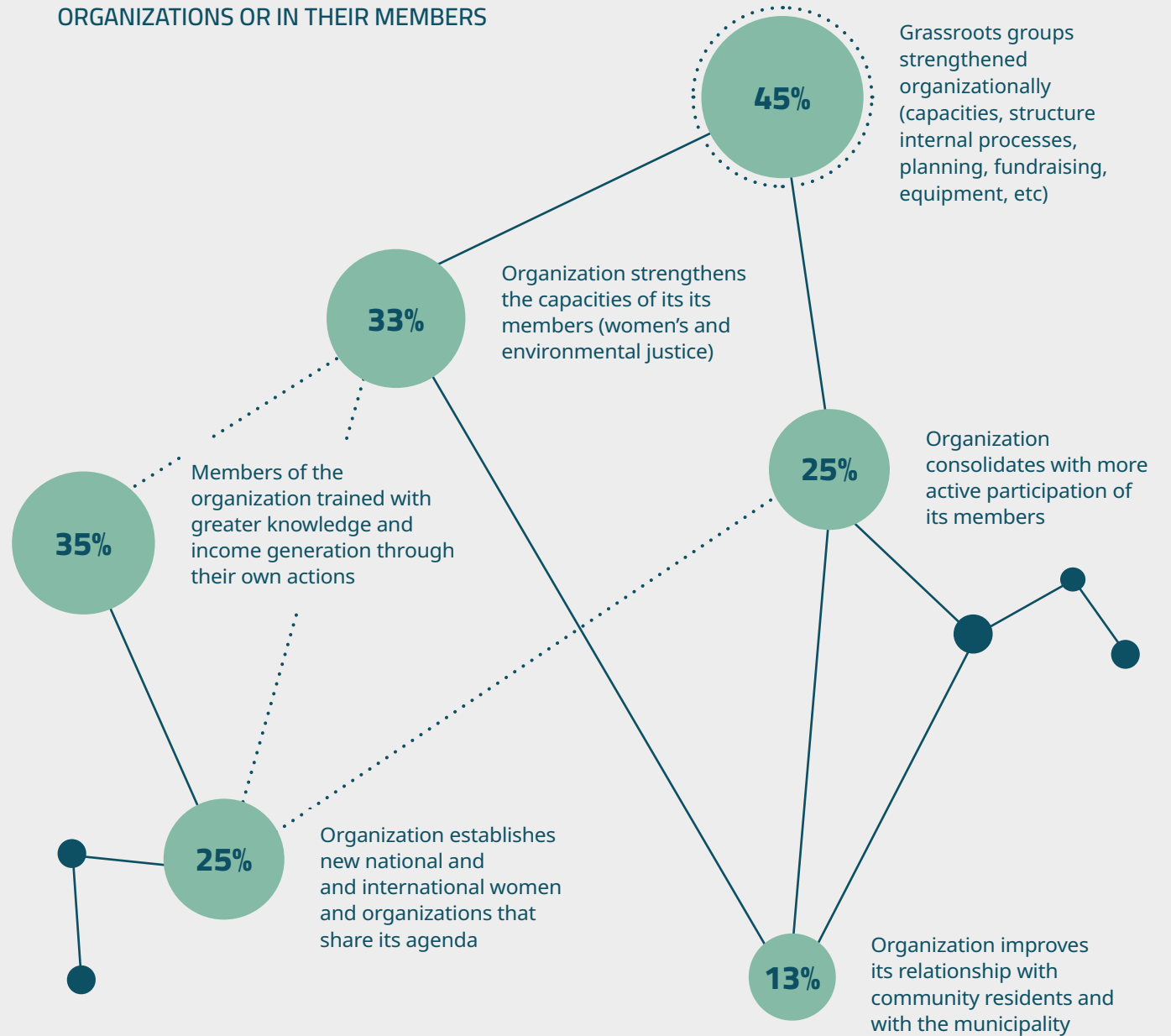
25% of organizations saw their members participating more actively in their daily lives, reinforcing their democratic and participatory character. This indicates that the increase in the organizations' activities and their effectiveness in achieving results generated a revitalization effect on the participation of their members, in addition to attracting new people.

25% was also the percentage of organizations that started to establish new national and international alliances with women and organizations that share their agenda, expanding and strengthening their local networks.

Finally, 13% of organizations were recognized by their communities, local authorities and other relevant actors. It is the lowest percentage, but it indicates a very important aspect, as it means **legitimizing the group's performance** in relation to its community.

More effective organizations with the potential to expand their operations.

TYPES OF CHANGES OCCURRING IN THE ORGANIZATIONS OR IN THEIR MEMBERS



Relevant actors - people working at the intersection of the Gender and Environmental Justice themes, representatives of supported organizations and the Casa Fund team itself - were interviewed to carry out this Assessment. They raised some important questions about the impacts on organizations and their members.

We highlight below some of their perceptions, which corroborate with the numbers presented above:

- There was an increase in the visibility of organizations in their communities and with local authorities, as a result of their achieved results;
- There was a strengthening of contact networks, interactions and alliances between groups;
- Organizations and their Members were empowered, which were strengthened:
 - For the formulation and execution of proposals and projects;
 - For the management and handling of resources, including to implement their own agendas;
 - For action and incidence in the contexts where they operate, with direct actions that generate visible changes;
 - For their ability to lead and communicate with other actors.

Changes / impacts occurred on Local Authorities

An important aspect of this assessment was to be able to observe whether and how local authorities were impacted by the actions of the supported groups. Effective advocacy and generating changes that directly influence the action of public administrations is the ultimate goal of civil society organizations. It is an extremely important step for the longevity of its performance and for the generation of profound changes in society.

28% of organizations claim that **local authorities have come to support actions proposed by grassroots groups at the intersection of gender and environmental justice agendas.** This includes expressions of support and public commitments, but also refers to concrete actions to mobilize budgetary resources in support of the initiatives. For 23% of the groups, local authorities began to listen to the women's proposals and express interest in working together. This would, in theory, be an action prior to the one described above, which indicates that, for these groups, there is still the **prospect that this listening will evolve into effective joint actions.**

TYPES OF CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have come to support actions proposed by grassroots groups at the intersection of gender and environmental justice agendas.

28%

Local authorities began to listen to the women's proposals and express interest in working together

23%

Local authorities increase inclusion in their agendas of issues related to environmental justice that were not considered a priority before

20%

Local authorities have started to establish alliances with grassroots groups and other relevant actors for joint action on shared agendas

18%

Local authorities are beginning to recognize the role of women and invite them to participate

13%



Another impact that refers to local authorities is the increasing inclusion in their agendas of issues related to environmental justice that were not considered a priority before (20%). The groups also report an increase in the level of involvement of local authorities in environmental initiatives led by other actors. In addition, 18% of the groups report that local authorities have started to establish alliances with grassroots groups and other relevant actors for joint action on shared agendas.

Finally, 13% of the groups claim that **local authorities are beginning to recognize the role of women and invite them to participate**. This is a very important step in the gender agenda and has to do with the recognition of women and their groups in contributing to sustainability agendas in their territories. As a consequence of this recognition, **spaces for participation and decision-making are opened for women**.

This last aspect and its importance lead us to the next topic and the analysis of the substantial changes that have taken place in women as individuals, in addition to the changes that have taken place in their action agenda.



Women, and their changes



And, finally, we come to the women, one of the main focuses of the GAGGA Alliance, who have undergone important and powerful transformations during the support period that we are outlining in this article. As a result of the support, women felt more empowered, strengthened and qualified to act on the gender and climate justice agenda in 28% of the organizations evaluated.

The most recurrent aspect of change, which occurred in 23% of the organizations evaluated, was that women began to feel empowered to participate more actively in decision-making spaces and in advocacy actions. This means that they felt more comfortable and confident to make their voices heard, while they felt more respected in these environments. Also in 23% of these organizations, women and young people started to organize themselves to work together around environmental issues relevant to their

TYPES OF CHANGES IN WOMEN AS INDIVIDUALS



23%

Women began to feel empowered to participate more actively in decision-making spaces and in advocacy actions



23%

Women and young people started to organize themselves to work together around environmental issues relevant to their communities and their rights as women



20%

Women started to form networks and alliances among themselves at the regional and national levels



13%

Women started to feel empowered to generate income from their own entrepreneurial initiatives

communities and their rights as women. In 20% of the organizations, women started to form networks and alliances among themselves for joint advocacy on issues related to gender and environmental justice at the regional and national levels, increasing and amplifying their voices and actions.

The last item, although less frequent, is a very relevant item: for 13% of the groups evaluated, women started to feel empowered to generate income from their own entrepreneurial initiatives, which, for many, is a great achievement of independence and, consequently, of strength and elevation of self-esteem. In most of the cases evaluated, these are initiatives that seek to scale up to the commercial level productive activities that the women themselves were already developing.

Relevant actors - people working at the intersection of Gender and Environmental Justice, representatives of supported organizations and the Casa Fund team itself - who were interviewed for this Assessment also spoke about the impacts and changes perceived in women, resulting from their involvement in supported projects or because they are beneficiaries.

We highlight below some of the perceptions of these actors who were interviewed, which corroborate with the numbers presented above:

WOMEN IN RELATION TO RIGHTS

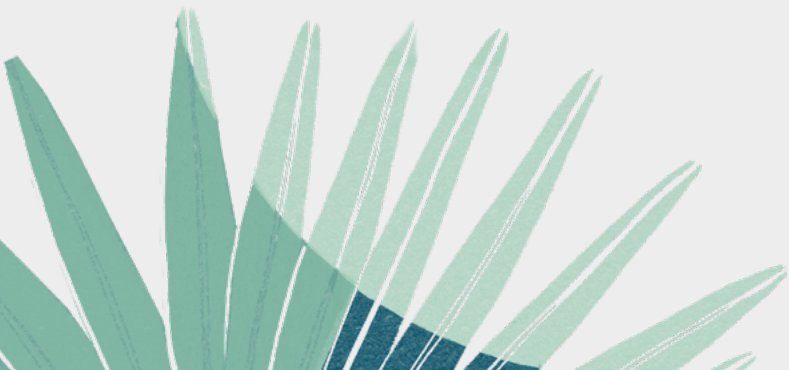
- Women recognize themselves as citizens with rights and recognize that they are especially affected by environmental violence;
- Women and communities with greater knowledge and awareness of women's rights and the environment.

EMPOWERED WOMEN AND LEADERS

- Women take an active and leading role in defending the territory and making local issues visible.
- Communities and local authorities recognize and value women's contribution to environmental issues and community interest.

EMPOWERED AND RECOGNIZED WOMEN FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- More knowledgeable women and communities implementing environmentally friendly practices.
- Local Authorities support women's initiatives and develop affirmative actions for their inclusion.





Increasingly Powerful Women: Looking Ahead

The GAGGA Alliance reaped beautiful results from its work with Casa Fund. Casa Fund, in turn, was enriched by seeing enormous strength and power flourish in the groups that it supports, while, internally, it was also transformed in its way of perceiving and feeling the struggle of women activists in South America, active in the various nuances of the socio-environmental agenda.

Strengthening small grassroots organizations is the fundamental belief of Casa Fund to achieve great, enormous results. Strengthening the local population is the main strategy for protecting biomes and territories. Empowering women is the main movement for the preservation of human life.

The evaluation indicates the potential for community transformation as a result of the empowerment of women and points to elements that are still necessary in this historical-cultural moment that we are living.

There needs to be family, collective and public solutions to allow women to step out of the exclusive responsibility for domestic tasks, which they traditionally assume;

It is necessary for women to be strengthened to occupy their places in decision-making spaces;

It is necessary that women have a voice and participation in these decision-making spaces;

It is necessary to encourage the awakening of women - and society - to their important role in protecting the environment.

The results of the transformations that we see in GAGGA, and in other Casa Fund programs, only confirm how this set of three aspects - small organizations, local population and women - converge in the greatest power to revolutionize South America.



