

Embedding gender justice in environmental action: where to start?

Ten recommendations for environmental organisations



Colophon

PUBLISHED BY:

Both ENDS
Nieuwe Keizersgracht 45
1018 VC, Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www.bothends.org



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This publication is made possible with financial assistance from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA). The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of Both ENDS and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



November 2020

Photo front cover: Sengwer women discuss the building of the Cultural Centre, Embobut, Kenya © Milka Chepkorir

Photo back cover: Women of Lakardowo (Indonesia) prepare for a protest © Both ENDS

Foreword

Since it was launched nearly five years ago, the GAGGA programme has provided a unique space for experimentation, learning and sharing, with the aim of strengthening and unifying the women's rights and environmental justice movements. As you will see, there are truly beautiful things happening in our network, and we are pleased to share some suggestions for other environmental organisations and funders to spread the beauty.

The stories below are a remarkably honest and open account of some of the experiences, triumphs and challenges that we – our partners and Both ENDS – have had. We are deeply grateful to those who have contributed their valuable insights to this publication. You'll hear from people who dared to step out of their comfort zones and critically reflect on their beliefs and approaches. You'll read how new relationships, perspectives and strategies made their work stronger and more effective. It is our hope that these stories, and the concrete recommendations that accompany them, will inspire others to do the hard work that is sometimes necessary to create real change.

There is another lesson that emerges from these pages: the critical importance of dedicated programming and dedicated resources for putting gender justice at the centre of environmental action. In this, funders and policymakers can and do play a significant role. They too can augment their ambitions and become catalysts of this vitally important agenda.

Danielle Hirsch
Director, Both ENDS



Summit of Women Defenders Bolivia © Colectivo CASA

Introduction

Environmental justice organisations increasingly recognise the importance of advancing gender equality and women's rights as an intrinsic part of their work. They understand that environmental justice cannot be achieved without gender justice. Securing respect for women's rights, including their access to and control over natural resources, is not only crucial within a rights-based perspective, it is also a prerequisite for successfully realising environmental justice.

But the big question is how. Where do you start? How do you translate your organisational ambitions into concrete action? How do you adjust your focus and your day-to-day work? Guides and checklists abound, but these often remain quite general, and may not feel relevant to your specific area of expertise or the context in which you work.

Over the past several years, Both ENDS and many of our partner organisations around the world have accelerated our efforts to advance gender justice. As part of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) programme, Both ENDS and our partners have raised awareness, initiated dialogues, created institutional policies, and learned from women's rights organisations and experts. We have found new ways to successfully address inequalities and women's rights violations within our diverse strategies, from research to advocacy to grantmaking. It was largely a process of learning by doing, with many insights, challenges and lessons along the way.

In the pages that follow, we offer 10 key recommendations for environmental organisations that want to step-up their work toward gender justice. Alongside each recommendation is the concrete experience of a partner organisation of Both ENDS, many of which were involved in the GAGGA programme.

By sharing these suggestions and experiences, we hope to provide practical guidance and inspiration for others. We invite other organisations to act and to learn with us as we contribute to the structural changes needed to achieve both gender and environmental justice.



For more information:
www.gaggaalliance.org



Women in Mali planting trees © Both ENDS

01 **Commit to a serious, systematic and collective process to develop – and implement – a gender policy**

An institutional gender policy must be more than a piece of paper. It should be grounded in a serious, systematic and collective process to learn about gender issues and reflect on your own internal practices and ways of working. Then develop and implement a plan with concrete ambitions, actions, resources, responsibilities and indicators. **See page 8.**

02 **Recognise your own power and be the feminist change you seek**

Consciously addressing power requires inclusive ways of working, such as different (feminist) approaches to organising meetings and discussions, engaging in collaboration, and in planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL). Recognise your own institutional or personal position of power and consider how you can use that power to make space for, and shift power to, others. **See page 12.**

03 **Partner with the experts to conduct feminist participatory action research**

Women's rights organisations have valuable tools, like feminist participatory action research (FPAR), that can be used to analyse women's perspectives, initiatives and needs, and to assess a project's gendered impacts. In FPAR, the process itself is as important as the findings, as it elevates women's voices and awareness of their own rights and means for claiming them, and strengthens their roles in decision-making, lobbying and advocacy. **See page 16.**

04 **Identify and address cultural, social and gender norms that stand in the way**

Cultural, social and gender norms determine what is acceptable and appropriate for women and men – their roles, actions and positions in society. These norms influence not only women's (often unequal) access to resources, but also their voice, power and sense of self. It is important to identify and address cultural, social and gender norms that stand in the way of women's rights. **See page 20.**

05 **Create women-only spaces and initiatives for women to strengthen solidarity and define their own agendas**

Cultural, social and gender norms often make it difficult for women to assert themselves in mixed groups. In many contexts, it is critical to create women-only spaces which can give women more room to speak freely, formulate their own goals and agendas, and strengthen solidarity among themselves. **See page 24.**

06 Provide tools and strengthen capacities for women to claim and secure respect for their rights

Women are often heavily involved in land and water use and management, and in the conservation and restoration of ecosystems. When faced with pollution or other environmental abuses, it is essential that women know their rights, and are equipped with the tools and knowledge to ensure their rights are respected and abusers are held to account. **See page 28.**

07 Support and fortify women's leadership

For many women around the world, to cultivate a plot of land is to cultivate life and serve as a guardian of nature. It is important to deliberately support and fortify women's leadership in protection, restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems, which protects and enhances their well-being, livelihoods, resilience and economic opportunities. **See page 32.**

08 Partner with women's rights organisations and build on each other's strengths

Women's rights organisations are the experts in women's rights and gender justice. By partnering with them to exchange knowledge and expertise, you can build on each other's strengths and enhance both partners' effectiveness in advancing women's rights to water, food and a clean, healthy, and safe environment. **See page 36.**

09 Hold policymakers and investors to account for commitments on gender equality and women's rights

In your advocacy towards decision-makers (governments, development banks, donors and the like), look into their commitments and policies on gender equality and women's rights. These commitments provide an important avenue to hold actors to account for women's rights to water, food security and a clean, healthy and safe environment. **See page 40.**

10 Earmark resources to support work at the nexus of women's rights and environmental justice

Women are at the frontlines of action to protect the environment, yet their initiatives and activities are grossly underfunded. By earmarking resources, such as setting up a specific fund to support women's initiatives, you can help fill the gap, while gaining new insight and furthering your understanding on gender equality and women's rights. **See page 44.**

Commit to a serious, systematic and collective process to develop – and implement – a gender policy

An institutional gender policy must be more than a piece of paper. It should be grounded in a serious, systematic and collective process to learn about gender issues and reflect on your own internal practices and ways of working. Then develop and implement a plan with concrete ambitions, actions, resources, responsibilities and indicators.

MadreSelva Colectivo, Guatemala

Investing in a process

The MadreSelva collective has been working for decades in the struggle for environmental justice in Guatemala. The collective supports local communities suffering from environmental degradation due to extractive projects. In 2010, MadreSelva developed a gender policy with the stated aim to 'mainstream gender' throughout its work. The policy was fine on paper, but it was written primarily to satisfy donors; the collective's approach and work strategies were, in fact, largely inattentive to gender. Although MadreSelva staff understood and believed that there can be no environmental justice without justice for women, they had yet to design a plan that put the principle into practice.

That changed in 2018. 'We realised that we were working with more and more women,' explains Isabel Cuxé. 'We saw the difficulties they face – with patriarchy and *machismo*. We knew we had to learn more about these problems to work effectively with women in the communities.' The collective embarked on a process, facilitated and supported by external feminist experts, to review its organisational practices and attitudes, and strengthen the organisation's knowledge and capacities to advance environmental justice for women. They made a serious organisation-wide commitment to the process: the entire staff cleared their agendas for a series of focused, full-day meetings.

Develop and implement a gender policy

Beginning with themselves

MadreSelva began at square one, with an experiential process to explore oppression, gender, power relations and personal and institutional dynamics within the collective. 'We felt that before we could do this work in the communities, we needed to do it within the organisation,' says Cuxé. Among other things, MadreSelva staff discussed their own attitudes about gender and analysed the gendered distribution of decision-making power and mechanisms of resistance to organisational change. After a thorough and honest discussion, staff members identified and agreed on a variety of concrete measures for improvement, including better orienting and integrating new team members – mostly younger women – into the collective's decision-making.

'We felt that before we could do this work in the communities, we needed to do it within the organisation.'

Isabel Cuxé

From there, MadreSelva analysed its existing work with women in communities, reflecting on its role, current strategies, practices and objectives. The staff realised that former members of the collective had previously been driving attention to gender issues and work with women. There



Women of the resistance of Santa María Cahabón participate in different training processes promoted by the MadreSelva Collective © Madre Selva

Develop and implement a gender policy

had been a lot of good work done, but it was not systematised and established as institutional practice. MadreSelva came up with a variety of ways in which its work with women, and for women's rights, would be strengthened. The collective agreed to make more visible the foundational role of women in the struggle to defend their territories, to foster dialogues with men about patriarchy and male privilege, and to take action to address the violence against women that often accompanies extractive projects. Other commitments included development of a specific module for MadreSelva's School of Ecological Thought on oppressions and power relations, which addresses violence against women.

At another stage in the process, MadreSelva built staff knowledge and capacity for advancing women's rights in the context of environmental justice. The staff learned about the legal framework of women's rights in relation to the defence of natural resources and territory. Staff analysed national legislation and existing international treaties and conventions on women's rights toward strengthening their advocacy and legal work.

After having reflected on and analysed its internal practices and ways of working with communities, the next and final step in MadreSelva's process entailed a collective review and overhaul – again,



Indigenous women preparing medicinal calendula oil from agroecological produce
© Mercedes Monzón

Develop and implement a gender policy

facilitated by a gender expert – of the collective's existing gender policy. The result was a robust new policy, founded on clear political and practical principles, to systematically direct the efforts of the collective to advance women's rights to live in dignity, free from violence, and in harmony with people and nature. Specific objectives, activities, resources, responsible parties, and indicators were spelled out in a detailed policy implementation plan. The plan includes promotion of methodologies and materials aligned and adapted to these principles and objectives. The methodological tools focus on promoting and making political participation and women's rights visible in order to contribute to economic, political and cultural transformation of gender relations.

The responsibility of all

Crucially, implementation of the gender policy and plan was agreed to be the responsibility of all members of the collective and a commission was established to monitor progress. The gender policy and plan was also embedded in MadreSelva's new five-year strategic plan, which includes a cross-cutting focus on gender.

Much more than before, MadreSelva now recognises the importance of women in the struggle to defend territories, and works to strengthen their leadership and participation. The collective knows that addressing gender inequality goes far beyond just 'counting women'. 'It involves acknowledging and valuing women's particular contributions, their approaches and knowledge, and important roles. Even if they're in the kitchen, providing food for meeting participants, that is important and must be recognised and valued,' says Cuxé.

'The most important thing we learned is not to be afraid. If you're not afraid, then change is possible.'

Oscar Pérez

We learned not to be afraid

MadreSelva found the process very enriching for the staff as individuals, for the organisation and, ultimately, for its work with communities. The team has built new bonds of trust to better relate internally and with the communities with which it works. Having gone through its own internal process, which entailed confronting and difficult discussions about gender and machismo within the collective, the team has built the confidence to put issues on the table internally and in the communities where they work. The group is no longer afraid to ask difficult questions, to push the envelope. It now sees this as the first step to transformation. 'You have to start the discussion, to make people think and reflect,' explains Oscar Pérez. 'Even men should not be afraid to have discussions and confront people about gender issues. It's a process, but you have to start the discussion so that people realise there are other possibilities. The most important thing we learned is not to be afraid. If you're not afraid, then change is possible.'



For more information:

MadreSelva, www.madreselva.org.gt

Recognise your own power and be the feminist change you seek

Consciously addressing power requires inclusive ways of working, such as different (feminist) approaches to organising meetings and discussions, engaging in collaboration, and in planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL). Recognise your own institutional or personal position of power and consider how you can use that power to make space for, and shift power to, others.

Both ENDS, The Netherlands

From promoting gender equality to understanding power

Both ENDS has always been cognisant of the links between gender and the environment. Women's rights have been part of its mission from the start. In fact, the organisation itself grew out of a project, begun in 1986, called 'Women and the Environment'. Yet the approach and level of attention given to gender equality and women's rights has fluctuated over the years.

In 2006, recognising the need to refresh and enhance its work on gender, Both ENDS reached out to one of its founders, Irene Dankelman, an expert in gender and sustainable development, for advice. At Dankelman's urging, and with the support of experts, Both ENDS began a learning process. It started increasing gender

'It's not just about unequal access and rights, and lack of women's participation, it's about understanding and addressing the history and root causes behind these inequalities.'

Annelieke Douma

Recognise your power



Both ENDS participates in the Thematic Social Forum in Johannesburg, 2018
© Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy

considerations in specific projects and programs, and stepped up its efforts to fundraise for women's rights work. The organisation's results and expertise grew bit by bit, but a turning point came with the development and launch, in 2016, of the GAGGA programme in partnership with Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) and Mama Cash, which both fund feminist activism.

Both ENDS describes GAGGA as a steep learning curve. 'We first looked at gender equality and women's rights mostly from a content perspective,' says Annelieke Douma, who helped develop the GAGGA programme. 'But it's not just about unequal access and rights, and lack of women's participation, it's about understanding and addressing the history and root causes behind these inequalities. It's about oppression and power. So not only *what* we do or say is important, but also *how* and *with whom*.'

Creating safe spaces for dialogue

Identifying, understanding and discussing power – both at personal and institutional levels – is essential to feminist activism. For FCAM and Mama Cash it was customary, but for Both ENDS, Douma explains, 'It was something we had to get used to. It was sometimes uncomfortable.' Both ENDS staff learned to recognise and acknowledge power dynamics in their own interactions, and in different settings and relationships. They learned the importance of building trust and creating safe spaces for honest dialogue.

How did Both ENDS staff put this learning into practice? Tamara Mohr, coordinator of the GAGGA programme at Both ENDS gives an example, 'We started changing the way we organised meetings. We take more time for all participants to share at a more personal level how they are doing before we

Recognise your power

launch into content discussions.’ The organisation also uses more creative and diverse methods of communication and sharing, such as drawings, games and one-on-one discussions to ensure everyone’s participation. Staff members who are more talkative or opinionated – many of whom are senior colleagues – have learned to be aware of how they occupy a collective space, and to give others time and space to speak. And of course, Both ENDS aims for gender-balanced participation in events it organises or supports, as well as those in which it participates. Staff will call attention to or decline to participate in external meetings or panels that are all-male. Both ENDS staff also applies these learnings when they organise meetings with other actors from the environmental community, and in cooperation with donors.

Both ENDS also changed the way it organises itself internally. Although this process started prior to GAGGA, it benefited greatly from the GAGGA lessons. Staff have received training in providing constructive feedback, with attention to grounding feedback in one’s own perspective. Staff members are also coached in taking and giving responsibility

in decision-making processes. In the regular performance review cycle, junior as well as senior colleagues are invited to give each other feedback, also spontaneously, not just when things go wrong. Both ENDS now operates more as a self-steering organisation and the management team has been dissolved.

Acknowledging that funding is power

Recognising and talking about power and gender is especially uncomfortable in communication with partners. Both ENDS increasingly administers financial resources to support the work of partners, and like it or not, that means power. Both ENDS staff is very aware of how it communicates with partners. ‘We can’t brainstorm with partners on an equal level when funding is involved. We have to recognise that they see us as a donor,’ says Karin van Boxtel. Both ENDS addresses this power dynamic through an approach it calls mutual capacity development. ‘We first try to get a clear picture of partners’ needs and priorities. We are very careful not to pressure them to do something that isn’t on their own agenda.’

‘We have also increased the safe space to learn within Both ENDS and with partners. Being vulnerable and open about difficulties or questions you have has proved to be important. We have started seeing vulnerability as a strength.’

Karin van Boxtel

Recognise your power

What about the partners' agenda on women's rights and gender equality? Many of Both ENDS's partners work in patriarchal and hierarchical contexts. Both ENDS recognises that every organisation has a different starting point, but it is committed to putting gender issues on the table and starting the conversation with partners, while being open to wherever the process may lead. Both ENDS has learned that it works best to ask questions and try to understand the challenges, including cultural differences and sensitivities. Staff may start a conversation about partners' views on women's involvement in designing or implementing projects. They may ask about possible gendered impacts of a problem a group is trying to address, or about budgeting for activities that advance gender justice, including learning opportunities. Both ENDS sees these conversations as part of a long-term learning process. 'Staff sometimes feel uncomfortable about these conversations, given that we're a Western organisation in a position of power,' says van Boxtel. 'But we have also increased the safe space to learn within Both ENDS and with partners. Being vulnerable and open about difficulties or questions you have has proved to be important. We have started seeing vulnerability as a strength.' Being able to talk frankly about that discomfort with colleagues and with partners, such as in learning sessions dedicated to these issues, has been fruitful.

Using your power for good

Realising your position of power can be uncomfortable, but it's also the first step in using power in a positive way. In its role as a funder to many partners, Both ENDS also recognised



Both ENDS strategy meeting with partners in Amsterdam, the Netherlands 2019 © Both ENDS

the opportunity to change its ways of working at the end of the project cycle. It adapted its PMEL processes to make reporting easier for partners and to take on more of the reporting burden itself. Through GAGGA, Both ENDS learned how the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology helps focus on actual changes as perceived by partners, rather than reporting on strict pre-defined results. The organisation also uses its power to engage in dialogue with donors about power relations and inclusion, a topic which is clearly gaining attention and traction. 'Stated commitments of donors or governments on gender often remain good intentions and risk being treated as an add-on,' says Douma. 'However, meaningfully addressing gender inequality and inclusion is in fact highly political. It requires a fundamental shift in the way you do things.'



For more information:

Both ENDS, www.bothends.org

Partner with the experts to conduct feminist participatory action research

Women's rights organisations have valuable tools, like feminist participatory action research (FPAR), that can be used to analyse women's perspectives, initiatives and needs, and to assess a project's gendered impacts. In FPAR, the process itself is as important as the findings, as it elevates women's voices and awareness of their own rights and means for claiming them, and strengthens their roles in decision-making, lobbying and advocacy.

Lumière Synergie pour le Développement, Senegal
WoMIN, Africa

Building a powerful case through partnership

Since 2010 Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (LSD) has been supporting communities in Bargny, Senegal in their opposition to the Sendou coal-fired power plant project, mainly funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Dutch Development Bank (FMO) and the West African Development Bank (BOAD). When LSD began researching the Sendou project and the impact it would have on the local community, the group quickly learned that the plant would severely harm some 1,000 fisherwomen. The women's local fishing drying grounds were within the prescribed 500-metre

'buffer zone' around the plant where, according to Senegalese law, economic activities are not permitted. In addition to pollution and other environmental harm, the women would be forced from their grounds and denied access to land that is critical for their livelihoods.

LSD is an experienced advocate for improved policies and practices of the African Development Bank, the primary financier of the Sendou project. Although the group was not experienced in women's rights, it recognised the need and importance of supporting the women's struggle. LSD highlighted the impact on the women's drying grounds in a complaint about the Sendou project to the AfDB Compliance Review and Mediation

Conduct feminist participatory action research

Unit. The organisation did what it could to support the fisherwomen, but the group felt that the effort would be more powerful with the involvement of a women's rights organisation, as the roots of the issue is linked to the AfDB's gender policy. 'Environmental organisations often don't have lobby and advocacy capacity or expertise on gender and women's rights related to International Financial Institutions,' says Aly Marie Sagne, President of LSD. 'So, we need to connect with women's rights organisations. But we need to take the time to build this partnership with them.'

'We need to connect with women's rights organisations. But we need to take the time to build this partnership with them.'

Aly Marie Sagne



Women from Bargny dry fish next to coal plant
© Lumière Synergie pour le Développement

'This is what we can do'

At a meeting organised by the GAGGA Alliance in Uganda in 2016, LSD found the ideal partner. WoMin, launched in October 2013, is an African alliance specialising in the impacts of extractives on peasant and working-class women. WoMin supports organised groups of women in movement-building and solidarity, and conducts research and advocacy aimed at advancing a post-extractivist, eco-just, women-centred alternative to the dominant, destructive model of development in Africa.

Central to WoMin's approach is feminist participatory action research (FPAR). For WoMin, this means that women are involved in research as researchers, not subjects or informants. Women are actively engaged in the preparation, implementation and reflection on the research, which is motivated by and focused on meeting their needs. Where needed, the approach contributes to elevating women's capacities and

Conduct feminist participatory action research

awareness of their own situation, their rights and ways to address the issues. 'With feminist participatory action research, women are the ones doing the research in their community. It's not some scholar coming in and interrogating women and then going back to the city. Women are sitting together and sharing, saying this is our problem and deciding what they should do.' The research is done not only for knowledge-building, but for the purpose of taking action, such as lobbying and advocacy. 'We trained women on how to use the tools available in FPAR and in so doing increased their capacity to articulate their issues and to set out strategies to address them,' explains Georgina Kengne of WoMin.

Ecofeminist standards for development

After the 2016 meeting, LSD and WoMin teamed up to explore and expose the gendered impacts of AfDB investments, like the Sendou plant, with the goal of engaging the AfDB on its gender policy. The groups sought to understand and analyse the impacts of Sendou on the women's lives, livelihoods, and on the environment and natural resources by developing and using an ecofeminist framework. While the women in Bargny were already organised – thanks to LSD's work – what they needed was support to strategise and voice their problems. WoMin created a space where the women could decide together on the messages and demands they wanted to bring to the AfDB and the government, as well as how to communicate these.



Fisher women strategy meeting in Bargny © Lumière Synergie pour le Développement

Conduct feminist participatory action research

The feminist participatory action research in Bargny and analysis of AfDB documents came to fruition in [Women stand their ground against BIG coal: The AfDB Sendou power plant impacts on women in a time of climate crisis](#). Based on the information given by the women as well as desk research and interviews with others, the report evaluated the degree to which ecofeminist standards were (not) met in the implementation of planning and operation of Sendou. The ecofeminist standards used in the report were developed by LSD, WoMin and U.S.-based Gender Action. They differ with mainstream standards by bringing together ecology and climate, women's rights, and alternative viewpoints about development. For example, ecofeminist standards recognise women's right to refuse a proposed project that impacts their right to land, forests, fisheries, livelihoods, cultural heritage, bodily autonomy or health. By ecofeminist standards, a proposed project would also be evaluated in terms of potential sexual and gender-based violence, and measures would be implemented to prevent it. (For a complete description, see Annex 1: Ecofeminist impact assessment framework in [Women stand their ground](#).)

Bargny women exert their power

The research report was launched in October 2019 in Abidjan. Together with representatives from LSD and WoMin, women from Bargny met with the Gender Unit of the AfDB and five AfDB Directors to present the report and its major findings. The meeting marked the first time that affected women and African civil society organisations have engaged in high-level discussions with the bank on its gender policy. The AfDB's gender

**'Now the women say:
It is our right to stay
and work and feed our
families!'**

Aly Marie Sagne

department apologised for the bank's conduct in the case. Since then, the African Legal Support Facility of the AfDB, which provides legal support and technical assistance to member countries, has requested the groups' assistance in mainstreaming gender in its efforts, some of which relate specifically to the extractives sector. LSD, WoMin and Gender Action believe the ecofeminist framework used in the Sendou report can be a valuable tool for analysing and challenging large-scale development projects across and beyond the African continent.

Although the Bargny women's struggle continues, the women have become an increasingly powerful and vocal group. They have succeeded in reversing the buffer zone policy and regaining access to their fish drying grounds. 'Originally the women didn't think they could do anything to stop these powerful institutions,' Sagne recalls. 'But they have totally changed their perspective. Now the women say: It is our right to stay and work and feed our families!'



For more information:

Lumière Synergie pour le Développement,
www.lsdseegal.org
WoMin, www.womin.org.za

Identify and address cultural, social and gender norms that stand in the way

Cultural, social and gender norms determine what is acceptable and appropriate for women and men – their roles, actions and positions in society. These norms influence not only women’s (often unequal) access to resources, but also their voice, power and sense of self. It is important to identify and address cultural, social and gender norms that stand in the way of women’s rights.

Centro Terra Viva, Mozambique

The husband speaks for the family

Since 2012 Centro Terra Viva (CTV) has been providing legal assistance to communities in Mozambique facing resettlement due to large-scale land concessions for extractive industries, agribusiness, and conservation. Local communities are usually not well-consulted, receive limited information, and risk losing access to the natural resources on which they rely.

This is especially true for women. In rural areas, it is women who have the principal role in local development. They work the land and tend the animals, and are most affected by resettlement. But social and cultural norms often preclude women from meaningful participation and decision-making about such issues. Even when women are present in meetings, they are expected to remain silent. ‘The culture in Mozambique is

not easy,’ according to CTV’s Samanta Remane. ‘It is the husband, the father or the father-in-law that speaks for the family.’ Men decide about development issues, resettlement and compensation packages, even when it concerns women’s access to land and resources.

In past work, CTV trained paralegals to provide legal assistance to affected communities and ensure that their concerns were channelled to the government and companies involved. The paralegals were, however, mostly men who came from outside the local communities. While their work led to positive results, CTV saw that women did not feel comfortable or were not able to bring their particular concerns and issues to the male paralegals. There were also travel costs and other expenses, since the paralegals were at the provincial and district level, rather than in the communities.

Address norms that stand in the way

Building on these lessons, CTV designed a programme to train local rural women in four provinces to serve as paralegals for their communities. The women would be given the information and support to provide family-to-family legal assistance and help ensure that the priorities and needs of women, and all family members, are taken into account in the context of resettlement.

Sensitising male leaders

Since the launch of the programme in 2018, CTV has trained one hundred and seventeen rural women from districts in four provinces. Given the patriarchal and hierarchical contexts in the communities, CTV put great care in preparing the communities for the trainings. In the districts of Massingir, for example, CTV staff went to the communities and sensitised local leaders to the training programme. CTV asked for assistance

‘The women appreciated the recognition that they could do more to help their community. They could demonstrate to local leaders that they have the capacity to solve problems.’

Samanta Remane



Women take part in CTV training © Centro Terra Viva

Address norms that stand in the way



Women from Ile district in Mozambique receive a paralegal training © Centro Terra Viva

from local leaders in identifying women, such as those with influence in the community, who would be good candidates to receive training and serve as paralegals. By reaching out to the male leaders, CTV strengthened the legitimacy of the programme and ensured that women felt free to participate. 'This strategy was very important,' says Remane. 'The women appreciated the recognition that they could do more to help their community. They could demonstrate to local leaders that they have the capacity to solve problems.' In other areas, CTV engaged local partners – community-based organisations – to help identify women candidates for the training programme.

Another strategy was to speak with the local administrators of each district, and urge them to support the programme. CTV saw the local government role as vital to achieving the programme's aims, which included not only support for women's empowerment, but also prevention of conflict at the local level, a significant problem in Mozambique. In one case, the local administrator opened the training and encouraged the women to speak out in their role as paralegals. The administrator described the women paralegals as an important resource for their communities. Following the training, women received a certificate signed by the local

administrator and CTV, another way in which the programme bolstered the women's authority and demonstrated the linkages between the women paralegals and the local government.

Seeing women as a community resource

CTV also encountered challenges in implementing the training programme. Women in rural communities have limited formal education and many do not speak Portuguese, the dominant language of CTV staff. To tackle these issues, CTV's local partners identified participants who could speak some Portuguese and could assist in facilitating and translating the training, and give locally relevant examples. CTV also adapted materials to be less technical and more accessible to the women.

Significantly, CTV made sure to make it possible for women with babies and small children to participate in the paralegal programme, which included a three-day training to which the women had to travel. CTV invited women to bring their children with them. 'We had a lot of babies!', says Berta Rafael of CTV. In some cases, other women came along to tend them. 'Our finance colleagues wondered why we only had 10 women participants, but claimed the cost of 15 dinners!', she laughs. Husbands also came along. One wanted to see where his wife was going, and CTV staff had to spend some time assuring him.

But the greatest challenge is the one ahead: to support the women paralegals from a distance and maintain their involvement. CTV has organised chat groups and is available by phone to discuss cases, but access to a charged and connected

CTV made sure to make it possible for women with babies and small children to participate in the paralegal programme.

phone is not a given for most of the women. CTV hopes to provide the women paralegals with mobile phones or tablets, alongside systematic and continuous post-training support, including information packets on topics like land tenure and natural resource management, and manuals for providing paralegal support. The group also hopes to cover travel of the trained female paralegals to sites of conflict or where their paralegal support is requested. 'The women have had only one training, and we are just seeing the results now,' says Rafael. 'In a few communities, the women paralegals are seen by local leaders or administrators as a community resource, as a way to get CTV to solve their problems, which is good!'



For more information:

Centro Terra Viva, www.ctv.org.mz

Create women-only spaces and initiatives for women to strengthen solidarity and define their own agendas

Cultural, social and gender norms often make it difficult for women to assert themselves in mixed groups. In many contexts, it is critical to create women-only spaces which can give women more room to speak freely, formulate their own goals and agendas, and strengthen solidarity among themselves.

Sengwer Women's Traditional Singing Group, Kenya

Custodians of culture

Since 2015, Milka Chepkorir has been working with indigenous Sengwer women in the Embobut forest of Kenya, in Marakwet County. Milka, who is Sengwer from Kabolet, got familiar with the community in the course of academic research into Sengwer women's experiences, particularly in relation to forced evictions. In the name of conservation, the Sengwer of Embobut have been repeatedly evicted from their indigenous and ancestral lands by the Kenyan government, through the Kenya Forest Service.

In her conversations with Sengwer women, Milka learned of significant impacts on women, including psychological torture, physical abuse, assault and extreme poverty due to destruction of homes and shelters. In Sengwer culture, these

spaces are traditionally of special importance to women and children. Milka also found that the continuous forceful evictions meant that Sengwer women had little opportunity to get together. The community has been scattered and deprived of their traditional livelihoods, making it difficult to sustain Sengwer culture or strategise to defend their rights.

Inspired to support the women in organising themselves, Milka helped the women secure funding for what soon became the Sengwer Women's Traditional Singing Group. Like many indigenous women, Sengwer women play an important role as custodians of Sengwer tradition and culture, and this became a key focus of the group's activities. With control over their own financial resources, the Sengwer Women's Traditional Singing Group works to celebrate and

Create women-only spaces



Sengwer women discuss the building of the Cultural Centre, Embobut, Kenya © Milka Chepkorir

‘It doesn’t make sense to push them. Then we lose the whole logic of empowerment.’

Milka Chepkorir

fortify transmission of Sengwer culture, including through construction of a Sengwer Cultural Centre in Maron. Three traditional huts have already been built, and a planned common community hall will eventually make the Cultural Centre complete.

A physical and metaphorical space

The Cultural Centre provides the women’s group the space they need – both literally and figuratively

Create women-only spaces

– to speak openly, discuss their own issues and priorities, and make their own decisions. Equally important, the Centre serves everyone in the community. Strategically located at the top of the hill, the Centre is visible demonstration of women's contribution to the community and to Sengwer culture. The Centre offers the Sengwer a place to safely store traditional objects, pass on indigenous language and distinctive ways of living to youth. It is also a place for the community to meet and welcome visitors.

The autonomy of the women's group has been vital. 'It is important to give women their space and time to make their own decisions,' explains Milka. She criticises funders that expect a quick change. 'The problem is really with supporting organisations, and not giving women the space and time to do things at their own pace. It doesn't make sense to push them. Then we lose the whole logic of empowerment. Everything should be with the women.'

The group's plans for a high-profile festival to celebrate Sengwer culture was recently called off due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the women stepped in to protect the health of the community. While local government guidelines require regular hand-washing and sanitising, local communities often lack soap. To fill the gap, the women's group organised to produce and distribute traditional, handmade soap to households in many villages. Their efforts drew attention and respect from local leaders, including politicians.

The fact that the Cultural Centre is the initiative of the women's group, and that they have provided

'We always remind leaders that it is a women-only project that benefits the whole community.'

Milka Chepkorir

the leadership and the financial resources to build it, has enhanced recognition and respect for women's contributions to the community. 'It has been very empowering for the women to be able to provide vital physical and metaphorical space for activities that will enrich the community land struggle,' says Milka. 'The women's group has also used some resources to support older men and youth to participate in court hearings to fight evictions. It was a very powerful gesture, and very much appreciated.'

Of course, the Sengwer Women's Traditional Singing Group has also encountered challenges and resistance. There has been tension in the community around the women's access to funding and land for the community centre. 'We always remind leaders that it is a women-only project that benefits the whole community,' Milka says.

Participation in the group has stimulated the women and built their confidence to speak out and defend their personal as well as community's rights. In their weekly meetings, the women have

Create women-only spaces



The Cultural Centre is located strategically on the top of a hill © Elias Kimaiyo

developed new songs of resistance and advocacy. The lyrics describe the challenges they have faced during evictions and call on the government to let the Sengwer live in their ancestral forests in peace. When the women raised their voices in song at a meeting of the Mau Forest Taskforce, in 2019, the assembly of local, national and international attendees came to a standstill to listen. The women's songs – and their organising – were also critical to the success of the Sengwer's multi-day

Walk of Justice, which ended at the Office of the President in Nairobi. Women made up nearly a third of the 150-person delegation that submitted a petition demanding recognition and protection of their constitutional right to their ancestral land in the Embobut Forest.



For more information:
Sengwer Women's Traditional Singing
Group, www.forestpeoples.org

Provide tools and strengthen capacities for women to claim and secure respect for their rights

Women are often heavily involved in land and water use and management, and in the conservation and restoration of ecosystems. When faced with pollution or other environmental abuses, it is essential that women know their rights, and are equipped with the tools and knowledge to ensure their rights are respected and abusers are held to account.

Ecological Observation and Wetlands Conservation (ECOTON), Indonesia

Connecting health impacts to pollution

Many environmental organisations possess valuable technical or scientific tools and knowledge that can be effectively used by women to secure respect for their rights. In 2016, ECOTON, in Indonesia, began raising awareness among women farmers in the village of Lakardowo, East Java, about their constitutional right to clean water and a healthy environment, and about the specific health impacts of contaminated water, which was a severe problem in the village. In Lakardowo, as in many places throughout the world, women in particular suffer from water pollution as they often have more direct and prolonged contact with water due to heavy

‘[Women] are the managers of the house, of the water. They have a strong interaction with water. If women are educated about their water rights, their human rights, they will teach their community, their daughters.’

Prigi Arisandi

Provide tools and strengthen capacities

engagement in household work like cooking, cleaning and washing. Among the toxins known to be prevalent in Indonesia's water are Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals which can lead to cancer and diabetes, and harm fetal and infant development.

While the women in Lakardowo were fully aware of the low quality of their water, they did not know the extent of the problem, its source or impacts. Through ECOTON, they learned that the water was being polluted as a result of illegal burning and dumping of hazardous waste by a privately-owned waste processing plant. The women knew about the illegal dumping, but did not realise that it included hazardous materials that were polluting

the water. ECOTON worked to support and strengthen the knowledge and leadership of the women in demanding government action.

For ECOTON, building trust and communicating not only with the women, but with the whole family, was essential. Prigi Arisandi, of ECOTON, explains: 'In Indonesia, women are still underestimated. But they are the managers of the house, of the water. They have a strong interaction with water. If women are educated about their water rights, their human rights, they will teach their community, their daughters.' ECOTON staff developed close personal relationships with the Lakardowo women and their families.



Women measuring water quality of the Surabaya river © ECOTON

Provide tools and strengthen capacities

From testing to mobilising

Most of the Lakardowo women have limited formal education, and were not informed about their environmental rights, Indonesian regulations and legal procedures. When they learned from ECOTON that Indonesian citizens can report water pollution to the Ministry of Environment, they were eager to learn how.

ECOTON trained the women to collect the data they needed to assess the quality of their water and build a solid case for government intervention.

In hands-on trainings using simple equipment that is readily available, the women learned how to take water samples and measure basic parameters such as temperature, pH (which measures how acidic or alkaline the water is), total dissolved solids and electrical conductivity. With these tools in hand, the women began monitoring and assessing the quality of the water in their wells, and determining whether it was drinkable or not. The women soon realised that the water at their sampling sites exceeded standards, and could not be considered safe. They ultimately mapped the water quality of more than 100 wells in the community.



Women of Lakardowo protest during the trial against the waste treatment plant © Both ENDS

Provide tools and strengthen capacities

With support from ECOTON, the women developed the knowledge and confidence to discuss technical data and effectively advocate on their own behalf for access to safe water. They became conversant in Indonesian regulations on water quality standards, so they could discern whether or not officials were giving them accurate explanations about the quality of their water. Their data became crucial evidence in the fight against industries that have polluted Lakardowo's water.

In 2018, the women filed a lawsuit against the local government for extending the permit of the offending waste processing plant. The mayor, who was on the plant payroll, had extended the permit on the basis of incorrect data, without adequate consultation with the community and before completion of the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment. The women insisted that the local government withdraw the permit and clean up the contaminated area. Although the lower courts declined to hear the case for technical reasons, the women are undaunted. They have appealed the case to the Supreme Court and have taken their demands to the health department, the governor, the president and the Indonesian public. In 2019, after a week-long demonstration in front of the main gate of the governor's office, the governor met with the women and announced plans – now underway – to build two new government-run waste treatment facilities. In Arisandi's words: 'Our fight is like a marathon. You must be patient and strong. It is the women who have the power and perseverance to prevail.'

The Lakardowo women and their struggle are now well-known throughout Indonesia and have become an inspiration for other communities. The

'The women now see their struggle not only as a struggle for their own village, but for many hundreds of communities like theirs.'

Prigi Arisandi

women have attracted significant media attention and been featured in a major Indonesian television programme. They have been invited to speak to university students and to other communities engaged in similar environmental struggles. 'The women now see their struggle not only as a struggle for their own village, but for many hundreds of communities like theirs,' says Arisandi.

Although the Lakardowo plant currently continues to operate, the women have succeeded in reducing hazardous waste pollution in their community and drawing significant attention to the issue. Thanks to their efforts, dumping has declined and the government has removed some of the hazardous waste. ECOTON continues to support the women to demand accountability from the government and the waste processing plant, and to restore the environmental health of their community.



For more information:
Ecological Observation and Wetlands
Conservation, www.ecoton.org

Support and fortify women's leadership

For many women around the world, to cultivate a plot of land is to cultivate life and serve as a guardian of nature. It is important to deliberately support and fortify women's leadership in protection, restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems, which protects and enhances their well-being, livelihoods, resilience and economic opportunities.

International Analog Forestry Network

Women trainers

The International Analog Forestry Network (IAFN) is an international network with member organisations in Latin America, Africa and Asia. IAFN member organisations cooperate with local farmers and indigenous communities, supporting them in maintaining and restoring their forests, and improving their income and subsistence. The network specialises in Analog Forestry, an approach to ecological restoration that uses natural forests as a blueprint to create ecologically stable and socio-economically productive landscapes. IAFN member organisations work in very different contexts, both socially and geographically, yet they share a common agenda and similar ways of working, especially training and knowledge-building, including via Analog Forestry demonstration sites.

In 2016 IAFN launched a concerted effort to work with more women and women's groups locally and globally. The aim was to enhance women's participation and leadership in Analog Forestry, including among the network's own accredited trainers. 'The forestry and agricultural extension sector is a strong domain of men,' explains Lubica Bogantes, who coordinates the women's leadership programme within IAFN. 'We really looked hard to identify new women trainers.' IAFN was successful in recruiting five new women trainers to join the global IAFN Trainers Network, increasing the percentage of women to nearly 30%. 'We have more work to do, but it is an ongoing process,' says Bogantes. The accredited women trainers have played an important role in facilitating training programmes with women and women's groups on Analog Forestry techniques.

'The accredited women trainers have played an important role in facilitating training programmes with women and women's groups on Analog Forestry techniques.'

Lubica Bogantes

Women practitioners and their stories

IAFN has also worked to increase the number of women practitioners using Analog Forestry, involve more women farmers and producers in IAFN's international Forest Garden Products and national Participatory Guarantee System certification programmes, and build connections between women practitioners and potential organic distributors. In Latin America, for example, the network has recently launched a new training programme for 'Analog Forestry Promoters'. Twenty-six women are being trained to become leaders and trainers on Analog Forestry in their local communities. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the training programme is being conducted virtually, with audio and video

recordings, and weekly calls via whatsapp. IAFN accredited women trainers virtually 'accompany' trainees by providing on-going mentoring.

The network has also increased investment in demonstration sites managed by women farmers, providing them technical and financial support so they can, in turn, inspire and inform other women about how Analog Forestry works, and how it benefits women. Bridgetta Vensai, from the Mbiame community in northwest Cameroon, is a great example. With support from IAFN member CENDEP, Vensai became one of the first women to implement Analog Forestry in her community. Women are typically denied control over land, but Vensai's father wanted to support his daughter and challenge restrictive, patriarchal social norms. Hoping to set an example for the community, he granted her 1.5-hectare farm and organised a public ceremony to mark the occasion.



Women in Mbiame, Cameroon engaged in Analog Forestry
© CENDEP - African/Cameroonian hub of IAFN

CENDEP has supported Vensai with extensive training on topics such as soil restoration, erosion control, and beekeeping. She now serves as a trainer for other women and members of her community. She provides tours and workshops where women can learn about Analog Forestry by seeing and doing. She has also built a team of local experts to offer specialised trainings in topics like beekeeping.

IAFN has also increased visibility of women's leadership by increasing attention to women on its website and in communication materials. The group recently collected the stories of women practitioners like Bridgetta Vensai in [Analog Forestry Gardens](#), a booklet written largely from women's personal perspectives which profiles women's achievements in using Analog Forestry to ensure access to food and water, and restore degraded landscapes.

Sarita Macas, from The Ashiringa Reserve of Ecuador, is among the several women featured in the publication. IAFN, she says, has 'worked with us, lived our experiences and sympathised with our problems. We have learned that together we may change history through conserving and recovering what we have. Our children and grandchildren will thank us for the struggles, devotion and sacrifices we have had to make.... People need to look at and value water the same way that we need to value women, so that future generations can sustain life, grow and be healthy.'

Women's perceptions and priorities

IAFN also developed specialised workshops and trainings designed for women leaders and local

'People need to look at and value water the same way that we need to value women, so that future generations can sustain life, grow and be healthy.'

Sarita Macas

women's groups in diverse countries. In Nicaragua, IAFN teamed up with Fundación entre Mujeres (FEM) to establish two new forest restoration sites. With IAFN's technical and financial support, FEM is establishing a food forest and will rehabilitate the sites' water, soil and biodiversity. Through demonstration workshops, the sites will be used to further spread skills and knowledge among women and others in the community.

In Togo, IAFN partner Les Compagnons Rureaux engaged with 'Queen Mothers', elected female leaders who work closely with traditional chiefs on issues related to women's development and empowerment. The goals were to learn from the Queen Mothers, and understand their problems and priorities for enhancing environmental justice, including their right to clean water, food sovereignty and access to land and to introduce the women to Analog Forestry concepts and techniques. In Cameroon, policy-

Support and fortify women's leadership

focused workshops were organised where women developed concrete proposals for restorative actions around water, soil, food sovereignty and forest conservation. These were then formulated into local 'Action Plans' to serve as a basis for dialogue with local policymakers, led by the women themselves.

The network has learned from its increased work with women and adjusted its training methodologies accordingly. IAFN's veteran trainers, who are mostly male, have become more aware of the need to use inclusive, gender-sensitive language. Trainers are also more attentive to the context in which women practitioners work. 'We pay more attention to how women perceive forests and water,' explains Bogantes. 'We have added in sessions for reflection. For example, in one session, women make a drawing of their farms and their realities, their households and everyday lives, how they use the land. The exercise gives trainers immediate insight into participants' lives and it helps raise important issues for women, like security and economic issues. The problem of access to land always comes up.'

IAFN has learned a lot from its intensified work with women and women leaders, and feels it is now contributing to a women's rights agenda in a more organic way. As IAFN's Isabel Macdonald puts it, 'As we share our methodology for ecological restoration, we see that women really value having a safe space for knowledge sharing and decision-making around priorities for land management and especially for ensuring family food sovereignty. The application of Analog Forestry designs enables women to dream, to draw, to plan and to plant, offering environmental



Peter Nalini, Analog Forestry leader in Sri Lanka
© Rainforest Rescue International

and economic benefits, including opportunities to sell, share or barter. Women are actively providing solutions to environmental degradation and the climate crisis by restoring ecosystems and ecological functions, and recording their efforts and stories as testimony for influencing change.'



For more information:

International Analog Forestry Network,
www.analogforestry.org

Partner with women's rights organisations and build on each other's strengths

Women's rights organisations are the experts in women's rights and gender justice. By partnering with them to exchange knowledge and expertise, you can build on each other's strengths and enhance both partners' effectiveness in advancing women's rights to water, food and a clean, healthy, and safe environment.

Prakriti Resources Centre, Nepal
Tewa - The Nepal Women's Fund

Cross-fertilisation

Prakriti Resources Centre (PRC), based in Nepal specialises in climate change and development, with a particular focus on national and international climate policy and climate finance mechanisms. In 2016, PRC was researching Nepal's Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA) with the aim to influence the design of the Green Climate Fund. The organisation realised that it needed assistance from women's rights experts to ensure that the gender perspective in the research was strong. 'Gender was not our core strength,' says PRC Executive Director Raju Pandit Chhetri, so the group asked Tewa - The Nepal Women's Fund to serve on a research advisory group.

Tewa is a well-rooted women's fund that supports hundreds of rural, grassroots women's groups

in Nepal through grantmaking and capacity building, and by connecting them to relevant groups and national initiatives and processes. While PRC wanted to strengthen its work on gender in the context of climate finance, Tewa wanted to develop its expertise on environmental justice. The relationship between the two groups developed organically into a robust and productive partnership.

'The partnership was a perfect fit,' says Chhetri. 'We recognise that not everybody can do everything.' The groups' collaboration took a variety of forms, including training of each other's staff. PRC and Tewa also helped found Nepal's Climate and Development Dialogue, a platform for sharing and learning, which links national policy to realities at the local level. Within the platform, Tewa contributes its expertise on women's rights

Partner with women's rights organisations



Participants engage in a group exercise during the climate finance training © PRC

and gender and PRC on climate finance. Cross-fertilisation within the platform, as well as learning workshops on gender and climate finance, has helped ensure that both groups, as well as other platform members, are now well-versed on the intersection of these issues. In 2019, the platform organised a National Roundtable on Climate Change and Development with a key focus on mainstreaming gender in climate change and climate finance discourse in Nepal. The roundtable included 15 women's groups as well as other CSOs, and government representatives from the Ministry of Forests and Environment, the National Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Finance.

An untapped resource for women

Tewa and PRC also co-organised a three-day training focused on environmental justice, in 2018,

'The partnership was a perfect fit. We recognise that not everybody can do everything.'

Raju Pandit Chhetri

for 29 participants from 17 women's organisations. As part of the training, the women's groups developed their skills in identifying environmental and climate problems, and built their advocacy and media skills. They developed ideas for

environmental projects and, with support from Tewa and PRC, formulated concrete project proposals. PRC informed the women's groups about climate finance issues and about municipal governments' obligations to fund environmental conservation and climate actions. 'The training was a huge success,' says Chhetri. Among other things, Tewa, PRC and the participants realised that municipal-level climate finance was an important untapped resource for local women's groups. 'It was an eyeopener for all us.'

The training gave PRC and Tewa the idea to support women's groups in holding their municipalities accountable for their climate finance obligations. To that end, PRC and Tewa teamed up with another member of the Climate and Development Dialogue, the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI), to provide training and on-going support to 20 grassroots women's groups – all long-term grantee-partners of Tewa and HIMAWANTI – in five municipalities.

As part of the training programme, the women learned about key topics like climate change, climate finance, environmental impact assessments, and the municipal planning and budgeting process. They discussed the obstacles to women's engagement in planning and budgeting processes, including discrimination, nepotism and tokenism. They engaged in role plays to build their skills and confidence to engage with local officials on climate change and environmental issues. Following the training, the groups received tailored support for following up with ward and municipal authorities on environmental issues, and submitting their own

Tewa, PRC and the participants realised that municipal-level climate finance was an important untapped resource for local women's groups. 'It was an eyeopener for all us.'

Raju Pandit Chhetri

environmental and climate adaptation projects proposals. PRC and Tewa also organised training for mayors and deputy mayors and other officials in the targeted municipalities on incorporating climate and gender perspectives in their policies, plans and budgets.

The partnership between PRC and Tewa has produced positive results at many levels. At the local level, women's groups have increased attention to and resources for their environmental work. Tewa has seen a welcome increase in project proposals from grantee-partners related to climate and the environment, and the women's groups involved in the training programme have had some success with their local governments. One of the groups succeeded in securing municipal funding for a proposed irrigation plan, another for a first aid course to improve resilience in case of disaster. Targeted municipal leaders are now more

Partner with women's rights organisations



Community discussion in Manthali Municipality © PRC

aware of their obligations and have expressed their commitment to ensure gender and climate responsive planning and budgeting. On the national level, Nepal updated its Climate Change Policy to prioritise mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion in climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes.

For PRC, which focuses on national and international policy, working with Tewa and the women's groups has enhanced its attention not only to gender but also to local issues and needs. In addition to enhancing PRC's programming, the partnership has also strengthened PRC's

operations. The organisation and its staff have become much more aware of and sensitive to gender and women's rights issues. The group now ensures an equal number of women on panels, has adapted its hiring practices, and brought on more women staff members. Last year, PRC made a strong commitment to implementing a new, more robust gender policy.



For more information:

Prakriti Resources Centre, www.prc.org.np

Tewa, www.tewa.org.np

Hold policymakers and investors to account for commitments on gender equality and women's rights

In your advocacy towards decision-makers (governments, development banks, donors and the like), look into their commitments and policies on gender equality and women's rights. These commitments provide an important avenue to hold actors to account for women's rights to water, food security and a clean, healthy and safe environment.

Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA), Latin America

A feminist lens

For more than twenty years, AIDA has been supporting communities in Latin America in defending their land and territories and promoting the right to a healthy environment. Among other strategies, AIDA works in several Latin America countries to hold International Financial Institutions (IFIs) accountable when they finance projects that violate their social and environmental safeguard policies. AIDA supports communities in filing complaints against harmful projects.

Although women's rights has always been part of AIDA's mission and work, the organisation had never put women squarely at the centre of its efforts to hold IFIs accountable. In 2018, AIDA decided to use a more consciously feminist lens on

a case involving indigenous Mayan communities in the Ixquisis region of Guatemala, where the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has financed the construction of several hydroelectric dams. The dams are causing severe social and environmental damage in the region.

Shifting women to the centre

AIDA wanted to make the voices and experiences of Ixquisis women central to the case. Through the process, the group also hoped to bolster its cooperation with women's rights experts and strengthen its own organisational capacity to analyse and address development projects from a gender perspective. AIDA reached out to local and national women's groups and leaders, informing them about the potential to use the



Ixquisis region © AIDA

‘We had to be careful not to impose our view of women’s rights on the community, but to understand the context in which the women live, to understand their concerns and develop a collective strategy to support their claims.’

Liliana A. Ávila García

IDB’s accountability mechanism (the Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism, known in Spanish as MICI) to support the community’s struggle against the dams. AIDA sought the experts’ advice in developing a gender analysis and the arguments behind the complaint. Workshops and interviews with local Ixquisis women affected by the dam served as the basis of a gender impact assessment.

‘It was scary at the beginning,’ says AIDA lawyer Liliana A. Ávila García, who is based in Colombia. ‘There were many things we had to be careful about as lawyers from abroad, working on a case of indigenous women in Guatemala. We had to be careful not to impose our view of women’s rights on the community, but to understand the context in which the women live, to understand their concerns and develop a collective strategy to support their claims.’ AIDA quickly learned that

its methodology for consulting with communities needed to be 'fixed' in order to ensure women's participation. The group had organised a large community meeting intended for both women and men, to which only the men came. 'If we want women to participate, we have to be really careful about every detail: the time, place, day, location. We had to analyse all the barriers that an Ixquis woman may face in attending a meeting' says Ávila. AIDA started meeting with Ixquis women in their homes, or on Sunday afternoons at the river, where they washed their clothes.

Complaint highlights barriers for women

In August 2018, the Ixquis communities, represented by AIDA and supported by Gobierno Ancestral Plurinacional de las Naciones Originarias Mayas Akateko, Chuj, Q'anjob'al y Popti' de Guatemala and the International Platform Against Impunity, filed the complaint to MICI. The complaint described breaches in the IDB's environmental and social safeguards, and policies on public consultation and indigenous rights, as well as its gender policy. AIDA framed the case around the women's experience, drawing attention to the failure of the IDB to address the specific barriers and impacts on women in relation to all of its safeguard policies. In doing so, AIDA was charting relatively new territory. The IDB has rarely, if ever, been called to account for its record on women's rights: few IFI accountability experts focus on gender, and few women's rights groups focus on IFIs. The complaint detailed, among other things, the particular harms suffered by Ixquis women, including severe environmental damage, water scarcity and pollution, and threats to the women's safety and security due to violence and

stigmatisation by dam workers. The complaint made clear that a separate gender policy is not enough to ensure protection of women's rights: the IDB must take into account and address gender inequalities in *all* of its safeguard policies and processes, using an intersectional approach that takes into account gender, race and class, among other factors, and recognises the specific damages and risks for lowercase indigenous and rural women.

The complaint has set the MICI accountability process in motion. The MICI launched an investigation and conducted a fact-finding mission to Guatemala in 2019, which included a two-day visit to the communities. Interventions by AIDA helped to ensure that the MICI investigation team included a gender perspective, with attention to gender-differentiated impacts. AIDA also made sure that the research team interviewed the women independently.

Although the MICI's findings have yet to be published, the complaint and the work behind it have already had an impact. The complaint has put

'Feminism is something that touches you and then you can't be the same person. I feel it from the bottom of my heart.'

Liliana A. Ávila García

Hold policymakers and investors to account



Women from the Ixquis community © AIDA

women's rights on the MICI's agenda and given visibility to the situation of the women of Ixquis. It has highlighted their importance in the struggle to defend their territory. The women have since organised themselves into a formal committee.

Working with the Ixquis women and framing the Ixquis case around women's rights has been a huge learning experience for AIDA. Ávila describes her experience working on the Ixquis women's case as life-changing: 'Feminism is something that touches you and then you can't be the same person. I feel it from the bottom of my heart.' AIDA has since developed and put forth specific recommendations for the MICI to guarantee real participation and inclusion of women in all its procedures. AIDA is now promoting gender

analyses and impacts in all its cases. The group is updating its recommended best practices for conducting Environmental Impact Assessments, with attention to women's rights now integrated throughout, as well as a separate chapter on gender. AIDA is sharing its experience on the Ixquis case with other environmental groups, IFI accountability allies, lawyers and women's rights organisations, raising awareness about the MICI and other IFI accountability mechanisms as an important new space for advocacy at the intersection of gender and environmental justice.



For more information:

Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente, www.aida-americas.org

Earmark resources to support work at the nexus of women's rights and environmental justice

Women are at the frontlines of action to protect the environment, yet their initiatives and activities are grossly underfunded. By earmarking resources, such as setting up a specific fund to support women's initiatives, you can help fill the gap, while gaining new insight and furthering your understanding on gender equality and women's rights.

**Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP),
South and Southeast Asia**

From supporting communities to prioritising women

The Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) is a network of over 100 non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations in South and Southeast Asia working with forest-based communities to strengthen their capacity in the sustainable management of natural resources. Among other things, NTFP-EP serves as a platform for information and knowledge exchange of appropriate resource management techniques and experiences, technical support and training, documentation of best practices, lobbying and advocacy, and mobilisation of resources. Since 2007, NTFP-EP has provided small grants to its community-based partner organisations. Known

as the Pastor Rice Small Grants Fund, the fund focused on community-based forest restoration, sustainable natural resource management and utilization, protection of customary land rights and ancestral domain recognition, and advocacy against development aggression, especially in forest areas.

In 2016, during development of its new strategic plan, NTFP-EP made a commitment to do more and be more deliberate about embedding women's rights and gender equality in its work. The GAGGA programme came at a perfect time, enabling the organisation to operationalise – and resource – its commitment, including hiring the additional staff needed. NTFP-EP worked with a board member, an expert in gender, to develop a gender mainstreaming agenda for the



Forest dependent communities led by the women in Rejang Lebong, Indonesia map out their territory to delineate their livelihood and conservation sites © NTFP-EP

organisation. A key programme strategy was to prioritise women's issues in its small grants funds. 'The fund was for community-based initiatives, but had no clear focus on women or gender concerns,' explains Femy Pinto of NTFP-EP.

Asking tough questions

In order to target women-specific initiatives, NTFP-EP had to review and adjust its grantmaking criteria, as well as the process for obtaining proposals. NTFP-EP felt that it was important to start with its own network and give them a chance to develop proposals. This was a challenge, as the forest community-based organisations with which NTFP-EP works are mostly led by men. The communities are often patrilineal and patriarchal. 'We had to speak to the male leaders.

'It was a challenge to break into that social structure. But we needed to adjust what we were doing to make sure women's voices come out.'

Mayna Pomarin

Earmark resources for women's initiatives

We had to talk directly to the women. It was a challenge to break into that social structure. But we needed to adjust what we were doing to make sure women's voices come out.' says Mayna Pomarin of NTFP-EP.

Given its male-dominated network and its own lack of experience funding women's initiatives, NTFP-EP accepted the fact that the first round of grantmaking might not really reach women in the way intended. And sure enough, the proposals it received early on were very general, typical community projects without a gender focus. 'Some of the proposals answered the questions about women, but just for the sake of answering. When you really looked at the activities, it wasn't

clear,' explains Pinto. After a few grantmaking rounds, NTFP-EP adapted its grant application form. 'In the beginning we were open. Then we started asking tougher questions about women's engagement. After some time you could see the gradual change in the network.' Now NTFP-EP scrutinises proposed initiatives to make sure they involve, engage and will benefit women.

The revisions to the grant application reflect a greater awareness and seriousness about gender and women's rights throughout the organisation. It now focuses on funding initiatives that are clearly women-led, or are implemented by and impact a majority of women. If a community organisation applies, they have to really show how the proposal



Digital storytelling workshop for women leaders in the Philippines © NTFP-EP

will make a change for *women* in the community. 'Internally, for us, it has been good to realise that even with your good intentions and good strategies, you may be excluding people,' says Pinto. 'Even though we are targeting communities and our objectives are positive, we didn't realise that in our actions, women may have been excluded or not really benefitted equally.' NTFP-EP now actively reaches out beyond its network. It has started identifying new partners, including strong grassroots women's groups, facilitated by new contacts it has developed with women's rights networks. It has also created the possibility for re-granting to women's groups via local NGOs.

Dedicated programming for women's rights

NTFP-EP sees grantmaking as a tool which works much better when coupled with capacity building activities. The group's community workshops and exchanges have been crucial for helping build the skills and confidence of women to self-organise, develop their own initiatives and strategies, including engagement with government officials. NTFP-EP is committed to building a pool of women leaders, especially young women and girls. The group has seen grantee-partners spread their knowledge and inspire women in adjacent communities. 'Women's leadership is infectious,' says Pinto. 'You can really see how communities have blossomed by being more active.'

Many environmental organisations see gender as a cross-cutting issue. But NTFP-EP urges them to recognise that gender mainstreaming doesn't preclude dedicated programming for women's rights. 'Dedicated resources and dedicated

'An institutional commitment – as we had in our strategic plan – and a framework for partnership, support and resourcing are essential ingredients for advancing gender equality.'

Femy Pinto

programming for gender equality is important, because there really are gender differentiated experiences, impacts and issues,' explains Pinto. 'Women need to have their own space for solidarity and resistance.' In NTFP-EP's experience, the GAGGA programme itself demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of dedicated resources for women's rights. 'An institutional commitment – as we had in our strategic plan – and a framework for partnership, support and resourcing are essential ingredients for advancing gender equality.'



For more information:

Non-Timber Forest Products–Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) and the Pastor Rice Small Grant Fund for Community-Based Forest Ecosystem Initiatives, www.ntfp.org/grants

