



Promoting Agroecology through Small Grants

The PAPeS Small Grants Fund in Senegal





Member of the 'Protectors of the classified Forest of Mbaou' group, receives PAPeS-supported seeds and equipment to advance forest protection and agroforestry activities



The PAPeS Fund showcases a successful model for unlocking climate finance for agroecological initiatives by providing tailored grants through a Small Grants Fund. In doing so, the fund demonstrates the effectiveness of these initiatives and advocates for increased funding, while strengthening the resilience and food security of local communities, specifically women and youth.

About

The PAPeS' Small Grants Fund supports the strengthening and spread of agroecology throughout Senegal by delivering resources directly to those who need them most: **grassroots groups and community organizations working on the frontlines of sustainable farming and food systems**, and on agroecology in particular. These groups, especially women and youth, are too often excluded from traditional (international) climate and environmental funding streams, despite their vital role in building healthy ecosystems and resilient communities. Our fund aims to bridge that gap.

Core to PAPeS are our key values: **flexibility, inclusion, transparency and trust**. Local communities hold the knowledge and experience needed to protect their environment and feed themselves with dignity. Rather than prescribing what should be done, we work alongside these communities,

allowing them to shape their own priorities and solutions, adapted to their realities. In doing so, we support a grounded and inclusive agroecological transition that reflects the real needs and strengths of those at the heart of the food system.

Our Approach

What sets PAPeS apart is our strong commitment to **accessible, low-barrier funding that reaches those often excluded from traditional funding streams**, such as informal groups, youth collectives, and women's associations. We focus on agroecology as a holistic approach linking healthy food, ecological balance, and social justice. We are convinced that real change starts from the ground up. Our approach is fundamentally different from many conventional funding mechanisms that are often top-down, bureaucratic, and inaccessible to those who need support the most.

Our small grants are not defined by their size alone, but by their intent: **to shift decision-making power to the people implementing change on the ground**. Our grants are designed to be flexible, needs-based, context-specific, and quickly available without excessive bureaucracy, always adapted to local circumstances. To ensure the grants are meaningful without being disruptive, we strive for a balanced size that provides sufficient resources for impact without creating division ([Kraan & Wensing, 2019](#)). The grant sizes are carefully assessed with guidance from local advisors and experts to ensure they truly add value to recipient communities. In the first phase, the maximum grant size is set at €5,000, which will be evaluated regularly and adjusted if needed to remain relevant and effective in different contexts. This way, PAPeS avoids the pitfalls of overly large or insufficient grants, maintaining a model that is both

¹ Promouvoir l'Agroécologie à travers les Petites Subventions (Promoting Agroecology through Small Grants)



Ande Diarign Sa Gokh ('united to serve one's community'), a women's group in horticulture and neem oil production for organic pest control, receives support for a poultry shed and water supply

impactful and sensitive to local dynamics. By funding locally-rooted solutions and supporting people already active in their communities, **PAPeS helps build ownership, long-term impact, and real momentum for change.** In this way, we aim to be a real-life example that small grants funds are an effective way to reach local women and youth.

Small grants funds are an effective way to reach local women and youth

Our governance model is designed to uphold the principles of inclusion and transparency:

- IED Afrique coordinates and facilitates the implementation of the fund.
- A Steering Committee made up of 10 members acts as an advisory group,

composed of experts in agroecology, finance, monitoring and evaluation, research, development support, and farmers representatives. This committee provides guidance on selection criteria, funding, and strategic priorities.

- An independent Selection Committee of 5 members is responsible for the pre-selection and final selection of applicant organizations.
- A research partner is appointed to document the evidence of the impact of the grants on the agroecological activities of the beneficiaries.
- Both ENDS uses its extensive experience in small grants funds to advocate for their vital role in bridging environmental and climate finance gaps, ensuring that resources effectively reach local communities.

Women and Youth

The PAPeS Fund is specifically designed for women and youth: two groups at the heart of food systems, yet facing the greatest barriers to accessing resources, means of production, and representation in decision-making bodies.

By prioritizing women and youth that work on agroecology, we aim to unlock their full potential as powerful agents of transformation. When equipped with resources and support, these groups are not only able to improve their own livelihoods, but also lead the way toward more just, resilient, and sustainable food systems.

In many rural communities, women are the primary producers, processors, traders and caretakers of seeds, soil, and family nutrition. Youth represent the future of agriculture, innovation, and community leadership, while bringing energy, creativity, and a willingness to try new approaches, making them key drivers of innovation and long-term change.

Despite their key roles, both women and youth remain vastly underfunded by international organizations: only 0.1% of foundation funding globally is directed toward initiatives that support women and the environment (FLAC, 2022), while less than 1% is allocated to youth-led climate action (Youth Climate Justice Study).

Agroecology

The PAPeS Fund defines agroecology as **a holistic and transformative approach to food and farming systems that integrates ecological principles with social justice and local knowledge**. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of people, nature, and food systems, drawing on indigenous practices, scientific research, and community-led innovation. Agroecology is not a one-size-fits-all model: it is context-specific and rooted in local realities, promoting solutions that respond to environmental, cultural, and socio-economic needs. It enhances biodiversity, reduces dependence on external chemical inputs, and strengthens the resilience of communities and ecosystems. As a practice, science and movement, agroecology empowers farmers and food producers to co-create knowledge, drive system-wide change, and advance food sovereignty, equity, and sustainability ([aligning with FAO](#)).

Agroecology is also a movement for social and environmental justice

Agroecology is also a movement for social and environmental justice. **It challenges the dominant industrial food system by addressing structural inequalities**, including those related to land access, gender, youth, and the rights of indigenous communities ([HLPE, 2019](#)). Agroecological transitions are driven by bottom-up processes and collective action, with farmers, pastoralists, consumers, researchers, and policy-makers all playing essential roles. It supports food sovereignty and the right to healthy, culturally appropriate, and sustainably produced food. Agroecology offers a way

to fundamentally rethink how we produce, distribute, and consume food in harmony with nature and society.

The groups we support apply for small grants aimed at advancing agro-ecological practices within their communities

The groups we support apply for small grants aimed at advancing agroecological practices within their communities. These grants fund a wide range of initiatives such as scaling up and improving communal composting systems, setting up Farmer Field Schools, purchasing mobile solar-powered irrigation systems, and training youth in biodegradable packaging. These efforts contribute not only to more resilient and healthy food systems, but also to shifting power relations by strengthening local agency and promoting more equitable access to resources and knowledge.

Youth from the 'Protectors of the classified Forest of Mbao' group organises and carries out a forest planting day with seedlings provided through PAPeS grants



More info

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IED Afrique is an independent, non-profit organization based in Senegal, with fifteen years of experience in French-speaking West Africa. It focuses on sustainable development and citizenship issues in Africa, emphasizing methodological and participatory innovations.



Both ENDS envisions an environmentally just world in which people and ecosystems thrive and all people can live in dignity. We strengthen and connect civil society actors globally to bring about an environmentally just world and collaborate with more than 500 partner organisations worldwide. Together, we promote environmentally just practices and processes, and tackle the systems that cause environmental injustice.



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