Women’s Fund from the South / Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS)

The Women’s Fund from the South (FMS, for its acronym in Spanish) was created in 2007 to promote women’s rights through the investment in women-led grassroots organizations. The FMS is the only women’s fund of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay that mobilizes financial, political and technical resources to support the initiatives of women’s organizations that promote gender equality as a central strategy for social change. The FMS is part of the International Network of Women’s Funds (INWF / Prospera), a membership association that links 38 Women’s Funds around the whole world to promote philanthropy with a feminist perspective through diverse fundraising alliances.

Since its establishment, the FMS has mobilized more than **US$ 3 MILLION** for the region, and provided more than **390 GRANTS TO 100 WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATIONS**.

**WORKING AREAS**

- Economic, Social, and Labour Rights
- Environmental and Cultural Rights
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights
- Rights to Political Participation
- Right to a life free of violence
- Rights of girls and young women

**Our Team**

We have a Board of 6 feminists Advisors and an Executive Team. One head office in Córdoba, Argentina. One field office in Asunción, Paraguay.

**BOARD OF ADVISORS**

President of the Board: Mabel Busaniche
Treasurer: Carmen Colazo
Secretary: Ana Falú
Vowels: María de Los Ángeles Bonzano, Estela Díaz and Carmen Beramendi

**EXECUTIVE TEAM**

Executive Director: Luz Aquilante
Administration Officers: Rosa Dure and Ivan Maceda
Accountant: Natalia Bertiche
Programme Officer: Virginia Bolatti
Programme Assistant: Paula Leiva
Local Resources Development: Natalia Eberbach
Communication & institutional development: Laura Leonelli Morey
Coordination in Paraguay: Raquel Aveiro
MOVING AND OPENING

This year, we have plenty of news about our work places. The FMS Argentina moved to a more spacious office –only a block away of the previous one.

Moreover, FMS Paraguay opened a new office as a response of the increasing number of groups supported in the country and as a way to contact them personally with the Fund staff.

FMS’ Strategies

- **MOBILIZING INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES:** The FMS’s priority is mobilizing international resources to fund programmes and operating expenses of the Foundation. We have worked with donors like European Union, Mama Cash, Global Fund for Women and UN Women. We usually design and execute programs in conjunction with other funds of the region.

- **LOCAL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:** The FMS promotes various strategies of local development resources to achieve sustainability:
  - **DIRECT DIALOGUE CAMPAIGNS:** The strategy is meant to promote awareness and raise funds on the streets through direct dialogue (“face to face”). Fundraisers explain to pedestrians the importance of FMS’ work and request their support through a monthly contribution.

  This experience also allowed us to **GENERATE KNOWLEDGE:**
  *Article about the FMS local resources development’s strategy: “Sustainability through direct dialogue: a Latin American success story”*
  *International Network of Women Funds (INWF). Article “Collective Change: The Value of Mobilizing Local Resources for Women’s Rights in the Global South and East”.

- **PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS:**
  The FMS promotes alliances through formal or informal agreements with various official institutions whose mandate is consistent to the objectives and mission of the Foundation.

- **CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP:** The FMS promotes the generation of alliances through formal or informal agreements with those companies whose products or services can contribute to achieving the objectives of the Foundation through their respective areas of Corporate Social Responsibility.

- **PARTNERSHIPS WITH ACADEMIA:** The FMS promotes the generation of alliances through formal agreements with academic institutions for the sustained incorporation of volunteers. We receive the support and commitment from 6 to 10 volunteers per year.
• **FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO GRASSROOTS GROUPS:** The FMS provides financial support to groups and grassroots organizations through annual donations (for organizational strengthening) and singular donations (for communication, advocacy, legal strategies, travel support, emergencies at threat or risks) backed by monitoring and ongoing technical support.

• **CAPACITY BUILDING:** The FMS promotes the development of organizational, institutional, political and labour skills, and the resource mobilization of women’s groups and grassroots organizations so they can act on an equal level with governmental institutions and private corporations. Later, they transfer their knowledge to smaller and newly formed organizations. To this purpose, training workshops and capacity development strategies are steadily fostered.

• **KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND LEARNINGS MANAGEMENT:** The FMS promotes the generation of knowledge and learnings about the situation of women and their organizations and its management, mainly through ICTs.

• **NETWORKING AND ALLIANCE BUILDING:** The FMS promotes the development of networks and partnerships for the implementation and sustainability of national and subregional agendas that are built in the areas in which we work (environmental protection, decent employment diversity rights, etc.). Our strategy is based on national and regional meetings and the management of ICT-based communication tools.
**Building Networks and Partnerships Programme (Permanent)**. It is a support programme that aims to strengthening groups of women that are at initial stages of setting up organizations in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

This programme provides support to groups of women from urban, rural and low-income sectors. It mainly consists of groups of indigenous and rural women, grassroots women’s groups and also women’s groups within other community-based organization.

**Programme on Environmental Justice and Gender Equality – Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action – GAGGA (2016- ONGOING)**. GAGGA’s main aim is to strengthen the Lobby and Advocacy (L&A) capacities of grassroots groups in the field of women’s rights and environmental justice.

GAGGA’s long-term goal is to catalyze the collective power of the women’s rights and environmental justice movements towards realizing a world in which women can and do exercise their rights to water, food security and a clean, healthy, and safe environment.

**Strengthening Women’s Defenders in the Eco Region of the American Chaco (2014 – ONGOING)**

This programme seeks to strengthen grassroots women’s organizations in the Eco-region of the American Chaco (ERCHA) in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia.

These organizations fight for their economic and social rights from a sustainable development approach and gender equality perspective in a context of permanent deforestation, pollution and barriers to access to drinking water and land tenure.

Through this initiative, 11 organizations from Argentina (5), Paraguay (3) and Bolivia (3) were selected in an open call to receive financial, technical and political support.

These organizations are integrated and lead by peasant and indigenous women living in small towns or rural areas. The initiative began in 2014 with European Union
The Programme was designed by the FMS in partnership with two other organizations with extensive experience in the areas of environmental rights and gender equality: Plurales Foundation (Argentina) and the Center for Training and Research of Rural Women of Tarija (Ccimcat, Bolivia).

104 environmental advocates, of 11 organizations, received permanent financial, technical and political support in their workplaces. For 82% of them, the grant was an unprecedented access to economic resources which allow them to decide for the first time how to strengthen their organizational processes autonomously.

During the first year, 450 women and 199 men, who actively participate defending the environmental rights of their communities, benefited directly from the programme. 2668 women and 1633 men benefited indirectly through the activities of the organizations within the programme framework.

**FMS Grantmaking in numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Direct Grants Allocated</th>
<th>Total of organizations supported</th>
<th>Total amount awarded in Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>246,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>220,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>245,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (first semester)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>304,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 2013-2016</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,016,938</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“For the first time, we have a project for indigenous women”

As members of a women’s organization, they had never received nor administered money autonomously. As part of the Guarani community of Macharety from the Paraguayan Chaco, drinking water, rather than a human right, was a scarce commodity.

In 2010, they began to get together and, in 2014, submitted an application form to the programme Strengthening Women’s Defenders of Environmental Rights in the American Chaco. In 2015, they received funding which allowed them to build the cistern, a rainwater harvesting system.

“For the first time in history, we have a project for indigenous women; it’s very important for us to show that we can administrate money by ourselves, without a person from another organization”, highlights Angelina Barrientos, member of the Macharety Guarani Women organization in Paraguay.

The 19 women who are members of the organization were responsible for buying and moving materials and for articulating with the rest of the community the construction of the cistern, which benefits more than 80 people. Today, they store drinking water and, thus, face emergency situations generated during drought. This way, they guarantee the right to drinking water and thereby prevent diseases related to dirty water and ensure good health of indigenous women and their families.
**Some little big results (2015 – 2016)**

**DIRECT DIALOGUE**

- **4 CAMPAIGNS, 10 DAYS EACH, IN 2 ARGENTINIAN CITIES**
- **112 MONTHLY INDIVIDUAL DONORS**
- **7 MONTHS – RETURN OF THE INVESTMENT (ROI)**
- **THE INVESTMENT OF EACH CAMPAIGN COULD BE QUADRUPLED IN 4 YEARS!**

**FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH...**

With the support of the FMS, one of the members of the Guarani Indigenous Community The Tabacal Station, Irma Bertozzi, got into the selection process and was chosen to participate of the UN Conference on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, Switzerland, during July 2016. It was a lifetime opportunity to present the problems that women from the Chaco deal with.

**LABOUR RIGHTS ITINERANT TENT OF GARMENT WORKERS**

This is an action implemented by organizations in public spaces in order to promote labour rights and denounce labour exploitation in the sector. It was possible due to a 1,000 euros donation by XminY under the Programme Building an Agenda for Labour Rights of Women’s Workers.

**COMPUTERS EQUIPMENT (NOT IRONS...)**

Due to Women’s Day, Garbarino -an important tech-company of Argentina- donated computer equipment for the first time —instead of domestic appliances— for the value of USD 72,650. The purpose was to bringing technology to women’s organizations. The FMS was the intermediary between the company and grassroots organizations, accompanying them on form filling and other steps to get the equipment.

As a result, a total of more than 100 women’s organizations received computer equipment to improve their work.

**SUPPORT FROM IBM**

The FMS received for one month (May to April 2016), a multicultural team of IBM consultants (from India, USA and Denmark), who accompanied us at the FMS Argentinean office, providing technical support in the area of communication, and in databases management.

After completing their stay in Cordoba, the volunteers left for the FMS some guidance materials to improve particular tools of the mentioned areas. They also wrote a report of the visit to two of our grassroots partners in a small rural community in Santiago del Estero province, which is located in the north-west part of Argentina. We are spreading that report among our networks as it shows the struggles of the women from the area.
WE WERE ABSOLUTELY THERE! AGAINST FEMICIDES!

The FMS co-organized, along with dozens of social organizations and unions, the second edition of the massive demonstrations Ni Una Menos (Not One Woman Less) against violence against women, in Córdoba-Argentina.

The two demonstrations NiUnaMenos have been the biggest during last years. Thousands and thousands of people have marched in most of the cities and towns across Argentina and neighborhood countries. Workers, student, youth, all of them joined to demand Not One Woman Less!
WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

*STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP AND BOARD MEETING*, Held in our Argentinean office, on 22 and 23 of March, the strategic planning workshop was facilitated by Emiliene de León, the executive director of INWF/Prospera. Simultaneously, the annual meeting of our board took place.

*THREE NEW WORKSHOPS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING* held in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia as part of Women’s Defenders of Environmental Rights programme. In these new meetings the goal is to strengthen the political advocating capacities for environmental impact, July-October 2016.

+2016 TRINATIONAL MEETING OF THE WOMEN’S GROUP OF THE AMERICAN CHACO (30th September to 2nd October in Paraguay, 2016) with the participation of 150 environmental defenders of the 11 groups supported by the FMS and other indigenous, rural, urban-popular and migrant organizations of the American Chaco.

*THIRD GREAT CHACO WORLD MEETING*, Villamontes, Bolivia (May 2016). The FMS participated together with the 11 women’s organizations supported under the programme.
Pollution, Gender Violence and Environmental Rights

In April 2016, it was held in Rio Ceballos, Argentina, the first Capacity Building workshop as part of the Women’s Defenders of Environmental Rights Programme. Later in the year, the same workshop will be replicated in Paraguay and Bolivia. The goal of these meetings is to strengthen the political capacities of advocacy for environmental impact. The following are some of the stories told by women’s environmental rights defenders –rural and indigenous- in the first meeting:

**The issue that concerns us most is our health. We have been fumigated for 20 years. Where are these agrochemicals? In the groundwater, so we believe that the water we consume is contaminated. Children, young, old people all are with diarrhea. The authorities do not accept this and put up barriers to analyze the water. Animals are born deformed. My mother, my father, my husband and my granddaughter have died. We are fighting for the lives of our children, for our lives; we do not have to ask anyone’s permission.**


**We are working with the issue of water pollution and open dumping grounds. But we came upon a previous problem: husbands that did not let their wives participate. Why? Because in our spaces arose other issues such as violence, so husbands made their wives’ lives miserable and women started missing meetings. Our strategy to be close to them now is to bring the cinema to their home. We get together to watch a thematic movie which we use as training.**

Miriam Vilcay, Free Women from the North of Cordoba group (Mulinec). Tulumba, Córdoba province.

**It is very difficult in our communities to get women to come to the meetings. They often go through violence situations; in other cases, youths are simply not interested and make excuses like ‘I can’t’, ‘I have no time’. Gradually, with hard work, we’re putting together groups of women to participate and learn about their rights. We have very good human rights laws but most of the people of our communities do not know their rights, especially environmental ones, so it is impossible to demand them to the authorities.**

NETWORKING WITH OTHER FUNDS AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS

+REGIONAL MEETING OF WOMEN’S FUNDS (BOLIVIA, APRIL 2016). Representatives of Women’s Funds from Central and South America gathered with international funds as FIMI/Ayni (International Fund for Indigenous women) and FRIDA (Young Feminists Fund). The Meeting was supported by Mama Cash, Global Fund for Women and INWF/Propsera.

+GAGGA GLOBAL MEETING (AMSTERDAM, MAY 2016). The FMS participated in the Global Inception Meeting of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) with the alliance members, grassroots groups, Women’s and Green funds, NGOs and international organizations part of GAGGA.
+PARAGUAY (MAY 2016). We met with various actors (AECID, UN Women, Casa Fund, BothEnds, Amnesty International) in Asuncion. After the meeting, the FMS agreed with Amnesty to share offices in Paraguay and add them as allies in a project.

+INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDER GROUP (IHRFG) (NEW YORK, JULY 2016). It was a Donors Conference, an enabling environment to meet and contact with donors and leaders in resource mobilization for the defense and promotion of Human Rights. We discussed new strategies for philanthropy and built partnerships.

+LATIN AMERICA PHILANTHROPY CONVENING (URUGUAY, JULY 2016). The FMS participated with 20 representatives from different parts of Latin America engaged in community philanthropy, including women’s funds, human rights funds, environmental funds, community foundations and other development organizations. It was organized by the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) and Fondo Acción Colonia with the objective of conforming a constituency interested in taking philanthropy forward in the region.

+BAHIA, BRAZIL (SEPTEMBER 2016). The FMS will participate in the regional GAGGA meeting.

+AWID INTERNATIONAL FORUM (BRAZIL, SEPTEMBER 2016). Our ED and our Local Resources Development Official will participate and deliver a joint workshop alongside FCAM and Semillas.

The main goals are locating the opportunities and threats for advancing women’s rights and explore strategies for mobilizing greater solidarity across diverse movements. We will share our experience of the Direct Dialogue Campaigns.