



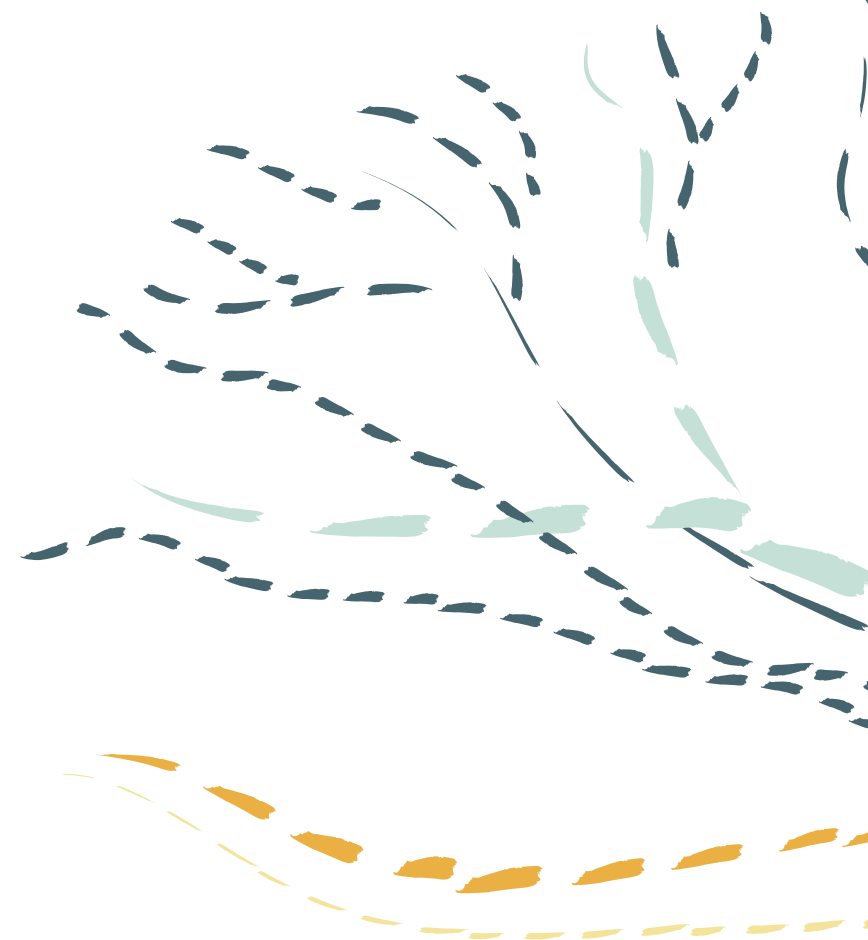
Ten Years Supporting Women Environmental Defenders

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur's
challenges and contributions to
socio-environmental and gender justice

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Graphical Data.....	7
Map of Current Grantees.....	8
Support Strategies.....	9
The Story of the Programme: Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders	12
Conclusions and Lessons Learned from Ten Years of Implementation	20
Current Challenges and Desired Futures.....	24
About the Photographs Used in this Publication	27
Useful Links.....	29

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Latin America encompasses a social space of diverse cultures and identities that coexist in territorial areas. Since the colonial process, this plurality has been confronted by a patriarchal and homogenising cultural, social and political model, that uses extractive capitalism as its economic engine.

Lengthy dictatorships throughout the 20th century in the region deepened these processes, and there were only glimpses of a response to the historical demands of indigenous peoples between the 1980s and 1990s. During that period, some Latin American constitutions recognised the existence of indigenous peoples prior to the formation of States as well as their rights, mainly territorial, in an attempt to embrace multiculturalism in the heat of a new democratic process.

However, despite said recognitions and some local democratisation processes, the Latin American continent continued and continues to have very high levels of poverty and inequality, precarious infrastructures and an economic model based on the extraction of its natural resources. These are all interrelated factors, caused or fostered by weak, anti-popular or simply failed government institutions.

Latin American poverty is strongly linked to gender inequalities and racism, integral components of the region's issues. Historically, women and girls

have received differential treatment, and have had limited access to education and health services, suffered greater violence, and have faced constant violations of their fundamental rights such as access to drinking water, food security and a healthy environment. This is even more so when the variables of race and gender intersect. Indigenous, brown and Afro-descendant women are the most exposed to violence, both structural violence and everyday violence.

In turn, the continent is characterised by its biodiversity. The Amazon and Chaco forests are amongst the most diverse ecosystems on the planet. Currently, in the context of a late capitalism that intensifies the difficulties of local development, Latin America faces disproportionate deforestation, extractive mining activity and large infrastructure projects. These exacerbate the adverse effects of the climate crisis and produce changes in the territories such as depleted, contaminated landscapes and regions that must adapt to new ways of life.

Thus, inequalities due to gender are intertwined with other variables such as the loss of biodiversity, unequal access to land and reduced possibilities of staying in their territories.

Moreover, in rural areas, women are primarily responsible for collecting food, water and firewood.



Due to the effects of the climate crisis, they must walk even further to obtain these resources when they are depleted or destroyed, leading to greater exposure to sexual and gender-based violence. They also have to take on additional agricultural work and the burden of food production at home due to poor harvests. Climate change also contributes to factors that exacerbate gender-based violence, such as conflict and forced displacement, food insecurity and the disruption of protection systems during natural disasters.

The climate crisis therefore makes it even more urgent for communities to be organised and prepared to respond to events that threaten their territories, lives and livelihoods, while addressing the root causes and long-term impacts. Furthermore, although Latin American women continue to be excluded from political participation and the colonial cultural heritage persists, they are moving towards the resurgence of community practices where they emerge as key actors, proposing essential social and political changes in the face of the inequalities that afflict their communities and territories.

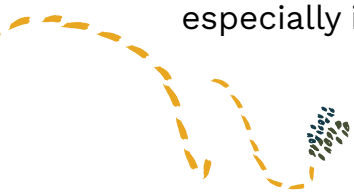
In the words of feminist thinker and historian Silvia Federici: “the importance of popular feminisms is that they have revitalised ancestral practices, especially indigenous ones, that foster communi-

ty relations, that foster communal organisation of social life”¹.

It is the women environmental defenders, the guardians of the land, the sovereigns of the territory, who care for the environment. They come together, articulating strategic alliances, managing resources, promoting collective solutions to the issues faced in their own contexts. They advocate, develop innovative and environmentally sustainable proposals and solutions.

They are the leaders of different women’s and feminist movements that seek to claim not only their ancestral and territorial cultural rights, but also to make demands in the economic, social, political and socio-environmental spheres. We feel inspired by their struggle for the reproduction of life, for subsistence and their situated knowledge, for how they care for and defend nature, which calls upon us to act and challenges us to continually rethink how we support their struggles towards socio-environmental and gender justice.

¹ FONDO DE MUJERES DEL SUR, “The reproduction of life is also the grounds for the construction of affectivity” (2022) available [here](#).



The Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders programme, our first project focused on the intersection between socio-environmental and gender justice, is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) brings a feminist approach to issues such as resistance to extractivism, defence of territory, access to land, clean and safe water, food security, a healthy and secure environment, bringing together socio-environmental and climate justice with gender justice, and decolonial climate resilience.

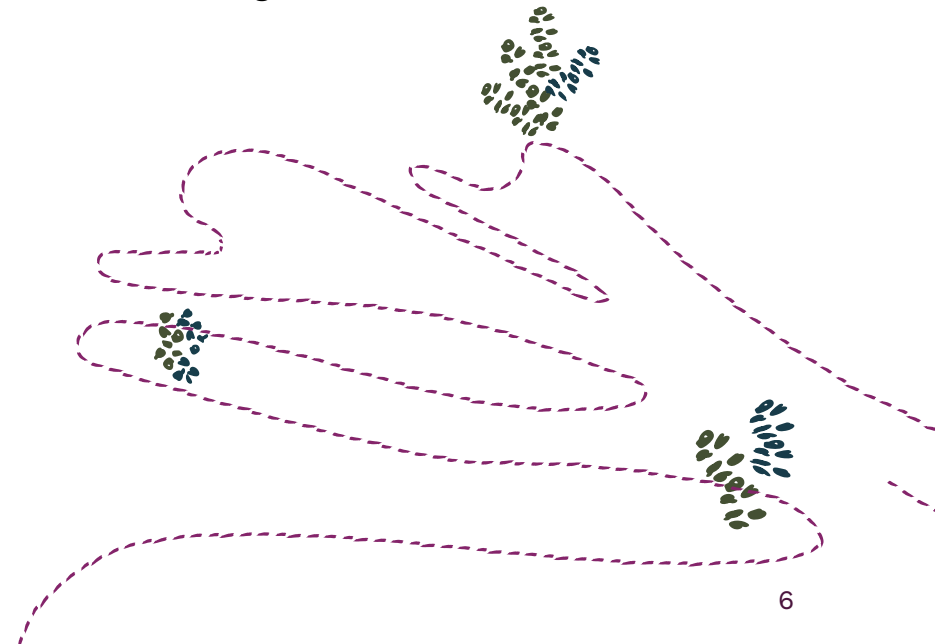
We understand this powerful intersection as the strategies that women implement from within their organisations to adapt to and mitigate the consequences of the climate crisis, which focus on actions that respect nature, their territory and its habitability for future generations, from the perspective and worldviews of indigenous peoples, their communities, and specifically women in all their diversity.

Hence we seek to intensify resource mobilisation mechanisms so that women from organisations further away from urban centres, and with greater difficulties to access any type of resources and funding, can continue their work related to environmental and territorial defence. At the same time, we aim to respond to the weaknesses around access to climate funding for women's

organisations in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru and Ecuador.

Our intersectional perspective has allowed us to reach territorial organisations led by indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, urban and grassroots women in the Gran Chaco Americano region, the Atlantic Forest, the Puna, the wetlands and the Amazon, on the outskirts of cities, where women lead territorial recovery processes for their communities.

Our challenge and commitment is to continue providing support to these feminisms that renew the dream of the “land without evil” as described in the Guaraní worldview, in which community resurgence and the power of the collective prepares the world for future generations.



10 YEARS WORKING TOWARDS SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL AND GENDER JUSTICE

We have supported

312 initiatives

93 organisations

35 in Argentina

28 in Paraguay

5 in Uruguay

20 in Bolivia (Chaco region)

2 in Ecuador

2 in Venezuela

1 in Peru

233 general grants

79 specific grants

USD 1,834,902
mobilised in grants

52

Indigenous women's
organisations*

50

Peasant women's
organisations*

6

Afro-descendant
women's organisations*

18

Urban women's
organisations from
grassroots sectors*

Main issues supported

Empowerment of women defenders
in their communities

Food sovereignty and security

Decolonial climatic resistance

Access to and ownership
of land and territory

Adaptation and mitigation
of climate crisis effects

Access to and management of safe water

Community care

Preservation of
ancestral cultures

Key stakeholder advocacy

* The sum of these values includes cross-data given the self-perception of grantee groups.

Ecuador

Ashiñwaka - Asociación de Mujeres Sapara

Perú

Huaynakana Kamatawara Kana - Organización de Mujeres Indígenas Kukama Kukamiria

Bolivia

Mujeres de la Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (APG) de Yaku Igüa

Red contra la Violencia del Municipio de Villa Montes

Asociación de Mujeres de la Provincia de O'Connor - AMPRO

Colectivo Angirü

Argentina

Red Chacha Warmi

Mujeres por el Hábitat Natural

Fundación ARETEDE

Warmis de Nazareno

Mujeres Sembrando Esperanza

Asamblea por la Vida de Chilecito

Grupo Arariwa

Asamblea de Ancasti

Pañuelos en Rebeldía

Vecinos Unidos por el Derecho a un Ambiente Sano - VUDAS

Costeras Unidas

Grupo Mapik

Taller Flotante

Equipo de Mujeres del MOCAFOR

Paraguay

Organización de Mujeres Guaraní de Macharety

Sombra de Árbol - Asociación de Artesanas Ayoreas

Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Guaraní del Paraguay "Kuña Guarani Aty"

Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas e Indígenas - CONAMURI

Grupo de Mujeres Artesanas de Santa Rosa

Coordinadora Departamental de Mujeres de San Pedro

Grupo de Mujeres Pañ Tavyterã de la Asociación Jopotyra

Red de Mujeres Productoras Kuña Mbarete

Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas y Populares de Caaguazú - AMUCAP-C

Mujeres Víctimas de la Masacre de Curuguaty

Comunidad Ava Guaraní paranaense Sauce

Comité de Mujeres Oñondive

Kuña Afro

Red de Mujeres de Humaitá

Uruguay

Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de Lagunas Costeras - APALCO

Mujeres Floressiendo

Comunidad Charrúa Basquadé Inchalá

Key

Main issues supported

- Access to and management of safe water
- Access to land and territory
- Resistance against extractive industries
- Food sovereignty and security
- Organisational strengthening

Mainly made up of

- Indigenous women
- Afro-descendant women
- Urban women
- Peasant women

Since its founding in 2007, Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) has been promoting the rights of diverse women, identities and sexualities, and the strengthening of organisations that work to achieve transformative results. To this end, FMS organises its lines of action into four priority areas: political participation and feminist activism, economic justice, eradication of violence and discrimination, and socio-environmental and urban justice.

In relation to socio-environmental and urban justice, we support actions that resist extractivism, defend and recover territories, adapt to and mitigate climate change in order to construct and strengthen sustainable and healthy ways of life for diverse women, identities and sexualities and their communities.

FMS has provided multi-year funding to 93 organisations in the priority area of socio-environmental and urban justice, and has directly granted a total of 1,834,902 dollars.

Since its inception, FMS has supported organisations linked to socio-environmental justice, and for the past ten years it has continued to do so within the framework of specific initiatives, mobilising financial resources from different sources, through initiatives and programmes, with various

donors (including the European Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands and the Equality Fund).

We do this through various strategies:

General, flexible and multi-year financial grants (for at least five years) with the conviction that organisational strengthening and social changes are processes that require both money and time in order for them to come about, be sustained and for them to last.

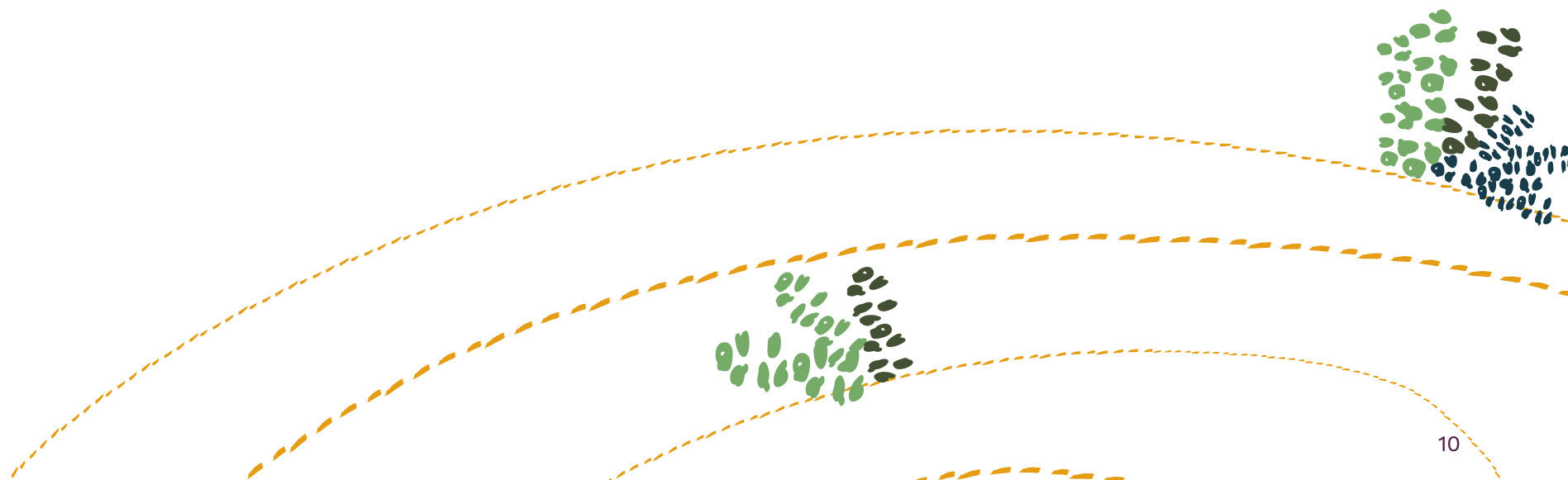
In addition to multi-year grants for organisational strengthening, FMS uses a strategy to provide **specific support grants**. These are one-off grants for large-scale or strategic actions, which are made possible through coordination across feminist organisations to respond in contexts of serious setbacks in terms of rights. These grants are key because they respond to needs that arise in realities of permanent change and uncertainty, and they provide support for the construction, strengthening and resistance of movements. For example, we contribute to the financing of events organised by civil society, or we cover the costs for activists to participate in these events or other key advocacy spaces.



Technical-political support to strengthen organisational capacities, participatory leadership, and the implementation of action plans aimed at political and community advocacy.

Creation of spaces to establish networks and alliances between groups. We facilitate gatherings and meetings between organisations and collaborate for the participation of grantee representatives before international human rights mechanisms, and at meetings and exchanges between local, regional and international women and feminists.

Knowledge production in various formats to monitor and produce information on the situation of human rights violations from a socio-environmental and gender perspective.





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PORTA



The Story of the Programme: Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders

In 2014, FMS began implementing the Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders programme, whose main objective is to contribute to the strengthening of women's organisations that fight for their rights from a socio-environmental and gender justice perspective. We support groups led by women who defend water, their land, their rights, those of their communities and families.

The first project of this programme, Strengthening Women Environmental Rights Defenders in the Chaco Americano, was implemented in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay (2014-2017). It was funded by the European Union, with a total budget of 642,396 dollars. It was led by FMS in alliance with two organisations with extensive experience in the area of environment and gender in the target countries: Fundación Plurales (which is now known as Fondo Socioambiental Plurales) in Argentina, and Centro de Capacitación e Investigación de la Mujer Rural de Tarija (CCIMCAT) in Bolivia.

The American Chaco ecoregion covers more than one million square kilometres. It extends across

Argentina (62.19%), Paraguay (25.43%), Bolivia (11.61%) and Brazil (0.77%). It includes the second largest forest in South America, after the Amazon rainforest. Its large water reserves, extraordinary biodiversity and vast lands are subject to great pressure from extractive industries, transgenic monocultures and large-scale livestock farming.

The main objective of this initiative was to contribute to the strengthening of grassroots women's organisations that fight to defend their environmental, economic, social and cultural rights along with those of their communities. As well as to strengthen Red Trinacional de Mujeres del Chaco Americano which is a network which brings together around 500 people who make up groups and organisations of woman that are indigenous, rural, small-scale producers, artisans, peasants and Chaco migrants from Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.

A high percentage of the groups that fight for socio-environmental justice are made up of indigenous and peasant women. This requires not only a deep knowledge of the complex problems and the diverse territories, but also an understanding of multiple cultures and different rhythms and ways of understanding feminism and social change.

Within the framework of this initiative, FMS implemented the following strategies to contribute

to strengthening the organisational capacities and advocacy actions of women defenders:

Financial grants and technical-political support to 18 groups through direct and flexible grants, prioritising funding for groups of women in situations of high socio-environmental and cultural vulnerability. The grantee organisations were made up of and led by rural, indigenous and urban women from grassroots sectors. For the majority (82%) this was their first time receiving funding. In addition to general grants, specific grants for communication and emergency response strategies were awarded.

Annual training workshops on organisational development in three specific areas: promotion, communication and resource mobilisation. The grantee organisations in each country had their own annual workshop to address their specific needs and contexts.

Support for the Trinational Meetings of the Red de Mujeres del Chaco Americano, co-organised with Network members. A meeting was held in each country where the project was implemented (Córdoba in Argentina, Tarija in the Bolivian Chaco and Asunción in Paraguay), with massive attendance by women and key local and national actors. Exchanges between women are central

to ensuring an environment of support and trust, especially for those from more isolated areas. For many of them, it was the first time they had left their communities, used a microphone to express their opinions and shared strategies for the defence of human rights.

Tools for the dissemination and visibility of the programme and the work of FMS partners. Through different media and initiatives, such as the Observatorio de Justicia Ambiental (OJA) that laid the foundations for the subsequent Plataforma de Justicia Ambiental y de Género, different actions were carried out to raise awareness about the programme, its donors and the impacts of its implementation.

The increased capacity of the groups to organise meetings, travel to capital cities, present demands and persuade different actors about their causes contributed to the presence of the women defenders in the public sphere. This had a positive impact on the achievement of a series of accomplishments such as legal triumphs for the recovery of lands, access to drinking water, preservation of common goods, strengthening of grassroots organisations, digital literacy and acquisition of technological management knowledge.



These achievements increased the women's self-confidence, as well as leading them to value their activism. In addition, Red de Mujeres del Chaco Americano underwent significant growth and its structure, sustainability and public positioning were notably strengthened.

FMS reinforced its technical capacity in the priority area of socio-environmental and urban justice, being able to provide technical-political and strategic support to organisations that were not grantees and that reached out to the programme with referrals from grantee organisations. Later we were able to provide them with funding through other initiatives. This first programme created great expectations and demand from organisations in other ecosystems and regions.

Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action

Through the links generated within the Latin American Women's Funds Alliance, in 2016 FMS became a local member of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA). GAGGA phase I (2016-2020) and phase II (2020-2025) were a collaborative initiative between women's and socio-environmental funds and organisations, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands and led by Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), in alliance with Both Ends and Mama Cash. In Latin America, the Urgent Action





Fund - Latin America (UAF LA) and the Fondo de Mujeres de Bolivia Apthapi Jopueti are also strategic partners. In the second phase, the women's funds called Elas (Brazil) and Semillas (Mexico) joined.

The main objective of this alliance is to strengthen the capacities of grassroots groups to defend women's claims to their territorial rights, to water, to food security and to a clean, healthy and safe environment.

Through this alliance, the budget of the Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders programme increased to 1,026,881 dollars. Thus, FMS secured the support and increased direct financial resources allocated to grassroots women's organisations, reaching more organisations of indigenous peoples (such as the Ayoreas, Ishir, Chamacoco, Ishir Yvytoso, Nivaclé, Manjuy, Maskoy, Guaná, Ache, Guaraní, and Pai Tavytera).

It expanded its reach to other geographic regions beyond the Chaco, such as the Atlantic Forest and wetlands, and provided strategic and technical-political support to women environmental defenders in a broader spectrum of causes and demands. Through GAGGA, FMS provided sustained support to 12 grassroots groups and one intermediate sized organisation in Bolivia and 25 organisations in Paraguay.

The results and impacts of these grants reinforce those mentioned in the initiative Strengthening Women Environmental Rights Defenders in the Chaco Americano (2014-2017).

Another key objective of this alliance is to strengthen collaboration between movements to enhance the role of grassroots groups in lobbying and defending socio-environmental justice and women's rights. Consequently, there has been a reciprocal relationship of exchange of experiences and knowledge between the various members of the community in the region: grassroots organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), women's funds and environmental funds.

The links between organisations provided new tools for group mapping and planning activities as an alliance. One of the central concerns during the first Latin American GAGGA Meeting was the struggle of women for the right to safe, clean and sufficient water. This was also a constant theme among the grantee organisations, which led FMS to run the first joint communication campaign called "We, Women Are Water."





This campaign sought to give visibility to the contribution of women in the provision and protection of water and the differential impact that a lack of water has on their lives and those of girls. The next step in this collaborative experience was the writing, publication and dissemination of the Joint Position Paper from GAGGA in South America, [Las Mujeres Somos Agua](#) (available in Spanish only). It was presented at the Alternative World Water Forum in Brasilia, in 2018.

Since 2017, the “We, Women Are Water” campaign has been run every year, from International Working Women’s Day (March 8) until World Water Day (March 22). It is a campaign that has been globalised and is replicated every year by organisations from different locations in the global south.

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur also added a local fundraising campaign called “We Are Water” narratively based on the work of women environmental defenders for access to safe water. The results were favourable and encouraging: the number of individual donors to our organisation increased considerably, as did awareness of the intersection between both socio-environmental justice and gender justice.

We also collaborated in documenting the socio-environmental issues and solutions of women from Paraguay and Bolivia in a Participatory Diagnosis on the situation of women defenders

of territories in the face of extractivism and other forms of dispossession. Through the training of community researchers, some grantee organisations managed to produce the documentation that is compiled in this [publication](#) available in Spanish.

In our quest to foster interactions between feminist and socio-environmental movements, we implemented an internship programme for grassroots women leaders. Members of eight territorial organisations participated in activities organised by the Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas y Campesinas (CONAMURI), an intermediary organisation based in Asunción, Paraguay. These activities were carried out within the framework of different significant dates related to the environment and women’s rights, such as March 8, November 25 or October 11 and 12. Participants attended workshops, debates, demonstrations, marches and other activities prepared by CONAMURI. In addition, FMS organised specific workshops on community feminism and ecofeminism, to focus on reflections regarding the link between socio-environmental and gender justice.

One of the great achievements of sustained support to our grantees is that women in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay found a sense of belonging as women environmental defenders, while also discovering deep links between indigenous, rural and urban demands.

Key achievements in political lobbying and advocacy include:

Reversal of local government conservation or development decisions in favour of women's groups; putting a stop to destructive and unsustainable economic development initiatives that would harm women's lives and livelihoods; successfully influencing national impact assessment and safeguard policies; influencing financial institutions to strengthen their policies and safeguards; strengthening direct engagement of grassroots groups to influence climate funding; environmental preservation to ensure cultural survival; advancements related to land tenure cases and recovering ancestral territories; influencing key government actors to allocate local and national state resources to communities such as water containers, houses for women artisans and organisations, and putting a stop to processes of natural ecosystem destruction.

GAGGA has also provided rewarding collaborative experiences that opened up several funding opportunities, through the Dutch Postcode Lottery (NPL), the Ford Foundation and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), with which we were able to resume grants whose funding had ended in 2022, both in Argentina and Paraguay. This also allowed us to expand the geographic scope of the area for so-

cio-environmental and urban justice, by generating maps of organisations that work on this topic in Uruguay, allowing us to start providing funding to various initiatives.

In addition, among members of the women's fund movement in Latin America, resources were mobilised that helped complement the efforts and strategies of each fund to support women environmental defenders. This is the case of funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP), with which we were able to expand support in FMS' priority countries (Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay).



Deepening Support for Women Environmental Defenders in Argentina.

During 2018, FMS once again managed to obtain additional resources for women environmental defenders in Argentina. Women Environmental Defenders Organised in the Fight for the Preservation of the Environment (2019-2022) was an action implemented in alliance with Fundación Plurales and financed by the European Union. The main objective was to strengthen the skills of women's groups as key actors in the fight against climate change and in favour of the preservation of the environment in the Chaco, Puna and Wetlands ecoregions of Argentina.

With this initiative, we managed to sustain grants for organisations both in the Chaco region and in others. With a total budget of 822,450 dollars, this new funding sought to deepen FMS' work at the intersection between women's rights and socio-environmental justice, renewing efforts to support women's resistance to the growing dependence on the local economy, linked to the excessive exploitation of natural resources. In Argentina, extractive industries and the advance of the agricultural frontier, in conjunction with the progressive dismantling of public policies, have had great

impact on rural populations and grassroots urban sectors (particularly on women).

Within the framework of this initiative, FMS provided grants to 25 grassroots groups of women environmental defenders, to strengthen their collective leadership, their strategies for advocacy, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, as well as to contribute to their participation in environmental governance.

Together with the Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation team, the tools to monitor and analyse the grantee groups and organisations were improved. A baseline study was carried out, highlighting key aspects of the context where projects were being implemented, the relevant actors involved and the resources available.

The training focus within this initiative was on strategic litigation and legal assistance, topics that most groups were keen to discuss, as most of them face legal proceedings as part of their projects defending their rights.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned from Ten Years of Implementation

Working closely with the affected and ultimately resistant populations

FMS has a remarkable track record of making sustained and flexible financial grants and technical-political support reach places and women where resources are not usually available: the most isolated or marginalised populations that embody the struggles because they are directly affected by the socio-environmental issues. They know their territory, they propose solutions that can transform their realities from the grassroots up. To reach them, FMS uses two main strategies: continual mapping of grassroots organisations and open calls for proposals.

The availability of flexible resources has allowed us to also support organisations in the face of circumstantial adversities, such as those that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic left us with several lessons learnt and allowed us to strengthen ties and connections with organisations, as well as support strategies implemented despite such a challenging context, in which all forms of violence against women and girls worsened, especially during confinement.



The strategies implemented by grantees highlight the importance of collective activism which was focused on immediate solutions to the crisis such as the organisation of community gardens, community soup kitchens and food packages, printed educational materials so that children would not fall behind at school, making face masks to sell and distribute in communities, guides for collective care, among others.

The effects of the pandemic exacerbated the economic, social and political crisis in the region. In this regard, it prepared us, got us organised and made us stronger to resist the fundamentalist attacks and the weakening of democracies that we are currently experiencing.

Close, permanent and on-site support

Due to the extremely complex conflict scenarios that organisations are going through, highly qualified support is necessary to guarantee timely and effective technical, political and administrative assistance in the implementation of their projects. This leads FMS and its partners to carry out face-to-face monitoring and learning visits, most of them in the group's own territory.



Context knowledge in participating countries

A central aspect of this programme was the alliances with CCIMCAT, Fundación Plurales, CONAMURI, Sombra de Árbol and other intermediary organisations. These proved to be crucial to maintain contact and obtain up-to-date knowledge of the context. They also made it possible to connect grassroots groups with new data, training proposals, resources and other groups working in the area, as well as reading the process along the way, improving our learning, monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Clear and effective formal partnership agreements

Over the years, FMS has accumulated a wealth of experience developing a solid institutional framework to formalise agreements and commitments with partner organisations, in order to ensure effective implementation as well as long-lasting partnerships. This includes signing a Memoranda of Understanding and Protocols to monitor annual planning and budget execution, which set out clear lines of action to achieve a satisfactory overall result, both in terms of administration and management of the grants and technical coordination.

The lessons learned so far regarding the context, external evaluations, the European Union ROM missions and financial evaluations led to a more formalised approach in the implementation of the collective initiatives led by FMS.

Increasing visibility of women environmental defenders and empowering them in the international arena

FMS strongly encourages the participation of women defenders at international mechanisms for the protection of rights, to disclose their situation to international actors and take advantage of these conferences and meetings to escalate their struggle at the regional and global level, as well as to establish or strengthen links, alliances and directly influence international donors.

The most representative events include the second and third Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (known as the Escazú Agreement), Argentina, 2023 and Chile, 2024; the United Nations Water Conference, United States, 2023; the Climate Change Conference COP 25, 2019; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, United States, 2018, or the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), United States, 2018.

We also provide support for the participation of activists at other international events that catalyse their visibility, their ability to create alliances and broaden support, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Gathering (EFLAC in Spanish) (2017 and 2023), or the Latin America and the Caribbean Rural Women Gathering (ENLAC in Spanish) (2017 and 2023).





Current Challenges and Desired Futures

Over the past ten years we have mobilised resources to strengthen women's and feminist movements that have emerged while defending common goods and environmental rights, which we understand to be the defence of life itself. These movements, mostly situated in isolated areas that are subjected to grave injustices, are led by and made up mainly of feminised identities, including women and people with diverse identities, sexualities and ancestries, who share an all-encompassing struggle for a world that we deserve to inhabit and experience, in a healthy, safe and enjoyable way.

We maintain that it is women who build these movements, with broad and systemic strategies, based on building and establishing collectives. It is women who worry about whether or not there is water in the community; they are the ones who put their bodies on the line to resist evictions and care for the land that feeds and nourishes them. It is also women who take responsibility for providing care in activism as well as domestic and community settings.

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur seeks to understand and support these actions emerging from women's and

feminist movements. We generate maps to understand, broaden knowledge and bring together the populations that are part of these movements, including indigenous women, peasant women, urban women from grassroots sectors, Afro-descendant women, who fight against the effects of extractive colonising policies spanning across vulnerable ecoregions such as high-altitude wetlands and Atlantic forests, as well as urban areas affected by floods, fires and pollution.

Based on our experience so far, we have identified debates that we seek to intensify, and new needs that we seek to address, such as the role of sustaining life historically assigned to women, traditionally tied to the care of people. From the standpoint and construction of women environmental defenders we see how the concept of sustainability expands and implies a holistic point of view, that it is also tied to the habitability of the planet.

The populations we support work to sustain not only the well-being of individuals, but also equity, collective cohesion, preservation and access to common goods in harmony with natural processes, the social and community fabric, and the long-term functionality of the economy. This often leads to overload, which implies and is fuelled by a historical inequality in responsibilities, not only related to gender inequality but also social, cultural and political inequality, which intensifies and

spreads given the increasingly present and urgent climate crisis.

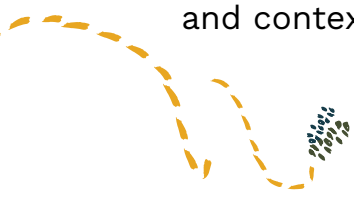
It is at this point that we face the need to re-conceptualise ideas such as justice, resilience, resistance, adaptation and mitigation of climate change. These are words or terms that we borrow to convey a way of understanding life that transcends technical terminology, and which is rooted in how women defenders, through processes of empowerment and by exercising their sovereignty, declare their ways of inhabiting the world.

The challenges outlined involve efforts that feed back into the territories. We observe that socio-environmental justice is related to urban justice, because the effects of the generalised crisis of life are evident in cities, mainly on their outskirts, their peripheries. We observe that socio-environmental justice is related to economic justice, because the current consumption models imply differentiated impacts on the population, starting with unequal access to basic subsistence goods, and generating pressure on natural common goods that leads to displacement, extractivism and pollution for local communities, which end up bearing the environmental costs of a development model that gives rise to dispossession. We observe that these justices are framed in new paradigms and contexts, intersected by the challenge of in-

corporating technologies, digital literacy and re-thinking a map of articulations with renewed antagonisms and alliances. The movements highlight the importance of weaving together experiences that require greater and more efficient support to generate and strengthen networks and alliances of collaboration and cooperation.

Finally, a fundamental commitment to address in the near future is to mobilise resources that can reach organisations and provide flexible and multi-year funding. Flexible because it must be able to respond to the critical, untimely and unexpected state of our surroundings, the environment and the climate. Multi-year because we know that activism involves diverse temporalities to achieve substantial and situated transformations, and that to do so, grants sustained over at least five years are necessary.

By providing support and working closely with organisations, we also seek to contribute to the administration of resources in precarious contexts, to support demands, renew debates, and preserve the feminist perspective of sisterhood and the sovereignty of those who inhabit the body-territories they defend. Accordingly, we are determined to develop resources with creativity, in order to support initiatives in pursuit of a habitable and more just and egalitarian world.





Defender nuestras tierras y aguas
es defender nuestra vida...

About the Photographs Used in this Publication



Cover photo: Natalia Roca for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.



[Page 3](#)

In 2019, we held a Trinational Meeting of the Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders programme in Salta, Argentina. More than seventy women from Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay participated.

Photo: Natalia Roca for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.



[Page 10](#)

Members of Vecinxs Unidxs por un Ambiente Sano (VUDAS) outside the Federal Courts in the city of Cordoba, Argentina. The organisation is seeking a court order to relocate a bioethanol factory operating in their neighbourhood, thus recognising their right to a healthy environment. In 2021, they were given the Berta Cáceres Award in the National Argentine Congress.

Photo: collaborative coverage, courtesy of the organisation.

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[Page 13](#)

Agroecological production at Cooperativa el Chaco's vegetable garden (Los Colorados, La Rioja, Argentina). The cooperative promotes community-based rural tourism, food sovereignty and recovery of the region's identity and ancestral knowledge.

Photo: Natalia Roca for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.

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[Page 15](#)

Women from Grupo Mapik stand around one of the cisterns they built during the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to the scarcity of drinking water in their community (Tostado, Santa Fe, Argentina).

Photo: Natalia Roca for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.

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[Page 19](#)

Collecting native plants near El Aguilar, in the Puna region of Jujuy. Members of Mujeres por el Hábitat Natural aim to create an Andean greenhouse to recover native species that are disappearing due to the impact of pollution from mining projects (Jujuy, Argentina).

Photo: Juana Demarchi for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.



[Page 20](#)

An assembly organised by the Ayoreo people in Campo Loro community, Boquerón, in the Paraguayan Chaco.

Photo: Leticia Galeano for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.

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[Page 22](#)

One of the craftswomen from Asociación de Artesanas Ayoreas de Campo Loro holds gourds woven with karaguata. The textiles woven by the Ayoreo women recover ancestral memory, re-creating the particular and unique designs of the seven Ayoreo clans (Boquerón, Paraguay).

Photo: Leticia Galeano for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.

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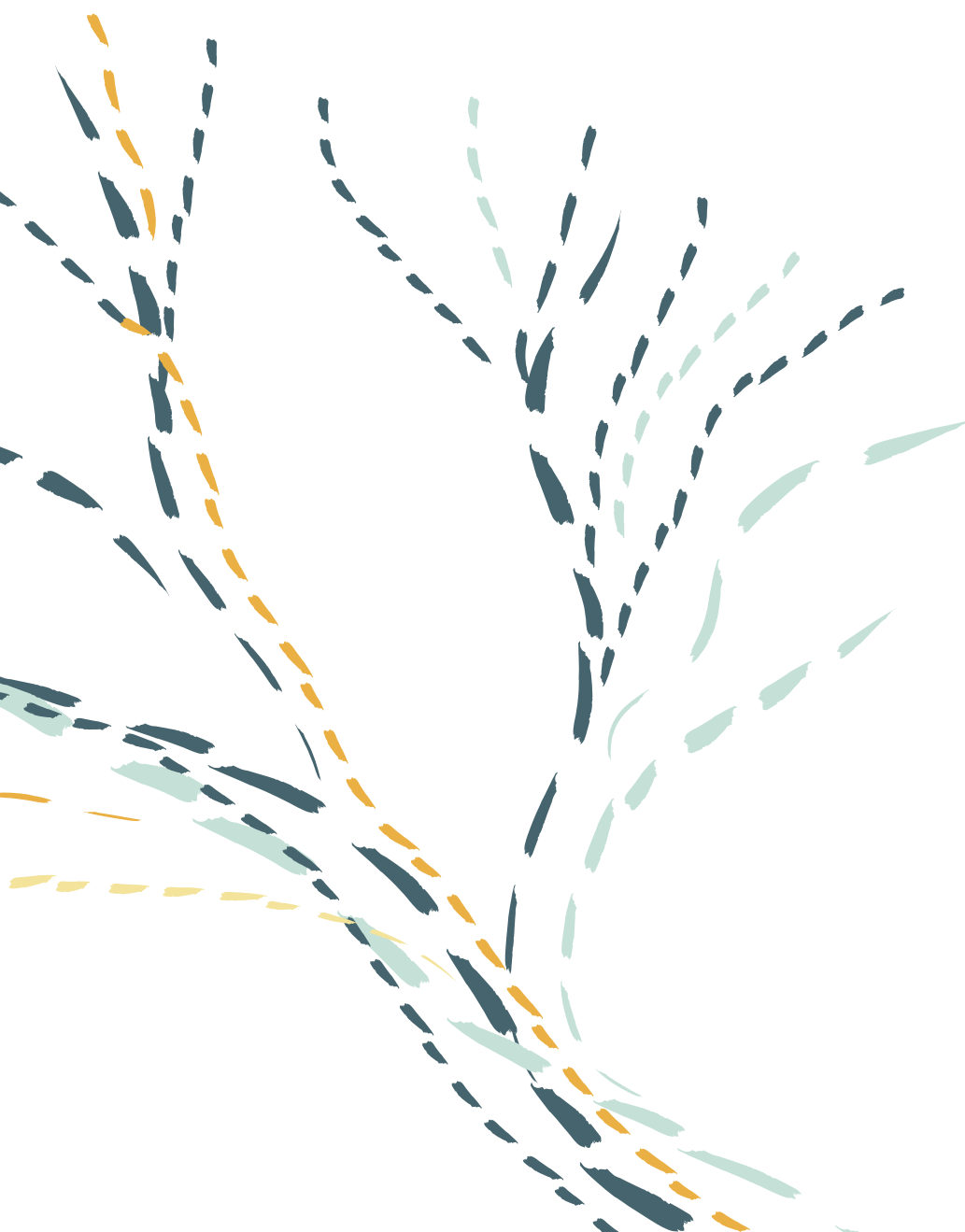


[Page 25](#)

Members of Red Chacha Warmi hold a banner that summarises their network's struggle ("To defend our land and water is to defend our life"). The network brings together peasant, Afro and indigenous women from the Aymara, Kolla, Quechua and Omawaka peoples and the Chicha nation. They are taking joint action against the installation of mining projects in the Puna region of Jujuy (Jujuy, Argentina).

Photo: courtesy of the organisation.

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Useful Links

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[Activisms in Times of Pandemic Report](#)

[Posicionamiento en conjunto desde la Alianza Global para la Acción en Ambiente y Género Región Sudamérica: Las Mujeres Somos Agua \(Available only in Spanish\)](#)

Reflections and Context Analysis

[Silvia Federici: “The reproduction of life is also the grounds for the construction of affectivity“](#)

[Maristella Svampa: “Today is it the Women—the Ecoterritorial Feminists— who Build the Future”](#)

Reports and Stories about Organisations and Activists

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[Mapik: The Carob Tree Women](#)

By Magdalena Artigues Garnier (Periódicas)

[The story behind VUDAS or how a group of women stood up against the heart of agribusiness](#)

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[Mujeres de la comisión de víctimas de la masacre de Curuguaty \(Available only in Spanish\)](#)

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