

Building Resilience in an Unprecedented Time

In 2020, women around the globe reinforced and strengthened community systems of resilience, maintaining the life of their communities and the planet in the face of enormous challenges. For GAGGA and our partner organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic presented an unparalleled situation that necessitated a swift review and adjustment of priorities and plans. GAGGA partners overcame countless obstacles and developed new ways to communicate, build connections and solidarity, and continue organising.



Photo: RENAMAT

GAGGA in 2020: Key figures	
426	women-led community-based organizations were supported by GAGGA
79%	received a total of €2.2 million in grants
21%	received exclusively non-financial support

Organising in digital spaces

GAGGA partners helped to ensure **safe and effective use of digital tools and participation in digital spaces of women-led grassroots groups**. Strategies included: purchasing data packages for mobile phones; providing safe travel to the nearest town or village with access to internet; strengthening computer skills; and providing trainings on how to participate in national and international virtual spaces.

The **International Analog Forestry Network** set up a [digital space for Analog Forestry Women Promoters](#) in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Via audio messages and videos, shared through messaging apps like WhatsApp and Signal, they shared technical know-how about Analog Forestry, the design and implementation of regenerative plots by women, and methodologies to support outreach to rural communities, particularly women. The digital space forged circles of trust and mutual support among the women promoters. **FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund**, released a [content series on digital care and security](#), covering topics such as basic internet infrastructure, safe messaging apps, and digital care when using devices. Specific attention was given to young feminist climate and environmental defenders.

GAGGA organised virtual collective knowledge-building and reflection spaces, which contributed to our external evaluation process and generated ideas for the future. These discussions helped guide the development of **GAGGA's 'Women Leading Climate Action' programme** (see below) and a [newsletter focused on women's leadership in climate justice](#). In cooperation with the Women's Environment & Development Organization and Friends of the Earth International, GAGGA co-organised a session at the global gathering 'From the Ground Up', hosted by the COP26 Coalition. The session, **'Feminist Climate Action: Building Power at all Levels'**, was attended by over 150 people.

Launched in 2016, the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) rallies the collective power of women's rights, environmental and climate justice movements around the world. GAGGA's vision is a world where women's rights to water, food security, and a clean, healthy and safe environment are recognised and respected. It is facilitated by the [Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres](#) (FCAM), in cooperation with [Mama Cash](#) and [Both ENDS](#). For more information, visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and [subscribe to our newsletter](#).

Advancing respect for women's rights and environmental justice at local and national levels

GAGGA partners continued to strengthen their sustainable, community-based practices, not only to ensure their livelihoods, food security and access to safe water, but also as a means to maintain control or claim back their land and territory. The lobbying and advocacy initiatives of the grassroots groups supported by GAGGA focused on issues such as restoration/ecological protection (including biodiversity); sustainable agriculture; climate change; and empowerment and economic autonomy among other issues.

In Indonesia, plans for the development of geothermal, hydropower and wind farm projects have never included proper consultation with the local communities who would be affected. In 2020, GAGGA partner **Aksi!** conducted **Feminist Participatory Action Research**, compiling testimonies from more than 50 women about how they've been **negatively impacted by renewable energy projects**. The research was the basis of a report submitted by Aksi!, together with Save Gunung Slamet, to the CEDAW Committee, which led to direct follow-up with the Indonesian government. With roundtable discussions and a webinar, 'Women from Energy Project Areas Speak Out', Aksi! highlighted the need for **people-centred solutions and alternatives** that are democratically and inclusively developed, based on the input, consent and control of women and local communities.

Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre and Lokiaka Community Development Centre, based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, have raised awareness about issues faced by women and local communities in the Niger Delta in relation to and oil extraction and gas flaring (when oil companies burn off gas that escapes as a result of oil drilling). A 2019 GAGGA Linking and Learning grant helped reinforce the complementarity of the two organisations' work. In 2020, Kebetkache strengthened the awareness of women in Lolouma and Umuechem communities on their **right to say 'No' to gas flaring** and their capacities to identify and engage with decision-makers. A forum involving community members, civil society organisations, and representatives of the regional Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment and National Orientation Agency was organised. At the forum, the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs committed to paying more attention to issues raised, particularly the impacts on women of gas flaring and pollution.

Maintaining pressure on International Financial Institutions

Despite the barriers created by COVID-19, GAGGA continued to engage, influence and contribute to the development, strengthening and monitoring of social and environmental policies of International Financial Institutions. Together, GAGGA partners and members engaged with the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Interamerican Development Bank. They focused attention on the urgent need for **assessments of project proposals, as well as project implementation to adhere to the banks' social and environmental policies**.

Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA) continued to build pressure on the **Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)** to take action with respect to two large-scale hydro projects, Pojom II and San Andrés in Guatemala, which violate the bank's Operation Policy on Gender Equality, among other policies. Although AIDA was unable to directly participate and engage in official IDB-related spaces due to the pandemic, the group continued to raise awareness, denounce the situation, and most importantly, ensure continued contact and **solidarity with the local Ixquisis women** and their communities, whose rights have been violated by the projects. AIDA organised different virtual spaces and an online petition and communications campaign, increasing awareness across the region about the consequences of the projects and building support for the Ixquisis communities.



Photo: Women African Alliance

Engagement with the Green Climate Fund

GAGGA partners have continued to conduct learning sessions and capacity building trainings to raise awareness and mobilise grassroots groups to engage in national **Green Climate Fund (GCF) decision-making** processes. GAGGA supported women's rights organisations in Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal and Tanzania to enter into **policy dialogues with their GCF National Designated Authority (NDA)**; increase their engagement in national decision-making processes, such as by providing gender expertise for the implementation of projects and using formal avenues to engage with the government/NDA; and monitor current or planned GCF projects in their country.

GAGGA, along with other actors, also continued to centre partners' demands and needs in international GCF decision-making processes, and promote local access, gender responsiveness and inclusive decision-making. During the board meetings of 2020, we advocated to **improve the gender action plans and gender assessments** of different funding proposals and ensured direct participation and representation of women from different regions and communities in these spaces. For example, Wanun Permpibul, the GCF Regional Gender Monitor for Asia, from **Climate Watch Thailand**, participated in the GCF board meeting and was elected to the Active Observer Team of CSOs. Meanwhile, the collective advocacy of a large groups of CSOs, including GAGGA, led to the temporary retraction of Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) – the world's third largest lender to coal plan developers – from the GCF agenda in order for SMBC to improve its application and energy investment policy, which is not aligned with the goals and objectives of the GCF and the Paris Agreement.



Making the case for better resourcing

Together with strategic allies Global Greengrants Fund and Prospera—the International Network for Women's Funds, GAGGA worked to strengthen interest and **momentum amongst government donors and the philanthropic community** for inclusive, flexible, feminist, and community-driven resourcing for local women-led movements that are leading environmental and climate action. GAGGA was invited to share our work and results with Global Affairs Canada, including its Climate Finance and Food Systems and Environment Divisions, and to meet with the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

Global Greengrants Fund and Prospera continued their work with the **Funder Learning Community for Women and the Environment (FLC)**, a group of private foundations. An evaluation of the FLC showed that 82 percent of respondents strongly agreed that they had learned how women are leading critical initiatives to combat climate change and other environmental damage, and that their knowledge changed/increased 'to a great extent' for the majority of the topics covered over the past two years.

GAGGA partners and members also successfully influenced donors to provide support for women-led, gender-responsive environmental and climate work in 2020.

- In 2020, **53 percent of GAGGA partners indicated they received funding from new donors**, adding up to at least €1.9 million EUR¹. However, while the increase in new donors was positive, it is important to note that the total amount was less than in previous years.
- The **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected GAGGA as a Strategic Partner** under its 2021-2025 Power of Voices policy framework. GAGGA's 'Women Leading Climate Action' programme was awarded €34 million.
- The Ford Foundation, under its new Resilient Women and Natural Resources Plus Fund, provided GAGGA a grant of \$100,000 USD to lead a **mapping of community-based women-led groups, collectives and organisations** in the Global South working at the intersection of women's rights, environmental and climate justice. The mapping looks at different types/forms of **structural violence faced by women and girl environmental and/or land and territory defenders** and how they are responding.

¹ This does not include new funding received by GAGGA Alliance Members FCAM, Both ENDS and Mama Cash.

Cross-movement collaboration and alliance-building

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the strength of GAGGA's unique cross-movement collaboration revealed itself in multiple ways. We quickly learned more about the realities and needs of the local movements we supported and saw the need to adjust plans accordingly. In May, GAGGA launched the **Autonomy and Resilience Fund** (ARF), a one-time funding initiative aimed to address the urgent needs of women environmental defenders and their communities through the strengthening of **community-driven systems of resilience and autonomy** that are based on principles of equity, solidarity, and collective care for people and nature. The structure of the GAGGA network, particularly the relationships and trust it facilitates, proved crucial to the success of the ARF. In just six weeks, GAGGA received a total of 211 applications, including 193 from women-led community-based organisations and 18 from GAGGA's NGO partners. Within a period of three months, GAGGA granted **€214,108 to 41 grassroots groups** and **€40,292 to seven NGOs in 21 countries around the world**.

Following the conclusion of the grantmaking process, GAGGA commissioned a study of the ARF to learn about and understand the experiences, perspectives and needs of women environmental defenders and their communities in times of crisis. The report, [The Autonomy and Resilience Fund: Transforming fear into hope](#), contributes to critical discussions about inclusive, flexible, feminist, and community-driven resourcing for gender, environmental and climate justice work, in both the short and long-term.

Voices from the GAGGA network

From 8-22 March – International Women's Day to World Water Day – GAGGA partner organisations in Latin America conducted the fourth annual ['We, Women are Water' campaign](#). The campaign highlighted the role and leadership of Latin American women in defending and protecting water, and brought to light the impacts that women suffer due to exploitation and contamination of this common good. The campaign took off just as the seriousness of COVID-19 was becoming evident, so a key message was the importance of ensuring the [human right to water in the face of COVID-19](#), including for simple measures like hand washing.

GAGGA also raised awareness and made visible the realities of local women and their communities in the context of COVID-19. GAGGA collected 60 recordings from partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America, who described their experiences during the first months of the pandemic. The [audio stories](#), mainly shared on Twitter, were accessed over 17,500 times and led to over 600 engagements with Twitter users, as well as coverage by external news outlets.

Collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Highlights of GAGGA's collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2020 included co-organising the **Women, Inclusion and Environmental Roundtable**, which brought together 40 representatives from the Canadian, Dutch, German, Swiss and United Kingdom governments working on environmental and climate policymaking, and from private foundations from the US and Europe. The roundtable was organised with the Inclusive Green Growth Department of the Ministry and facilitated peer-to-peer exchange and learning, building on the key findings of our [mapping](#), conducted in 2019, on relevant policies, mechanisms, tools and funding channels of five government donors. GAGGA also advocated to **ensure that the Ministry's COVID-19 crisis funding reached local people and communities**, especially those from disenfranchised groups – women, Indigenous peoples, rural and coastal farmers, and fishing communities – via existing innovative funding mechanisms.

Lessons from five years of GAGGA

Since 2016, GAGGA has provided **€10.24 million in 1,518 grants to grassroots groups working on women's rights and environmental justice**, primarily through women's and environmental justice funds. A final external evaluation of our first five-year programme concluded that we have made significant progress towards achieving our five-year goals.

Our experience over the past years has made clear the importance of **bringing together women's rights, environmental and climate justice movements and centring the knowledge and experience of women-led community-based organisations** in environmental and climate action, as well as in environmental and climate-related policies.

Women, in all their diversity, are taking forward bold, creative and holistic solutions not only to address the environmental degradation and negative climate impacts they are facing now and in the future, but also to positively transform their realities, and that of their communities. As we close these first five years of GAGGA, we can be proud of what we have achieved together and look forward to seeing the network grow and expand.

