

VCA

VOICES FOR JUST CLIMATE ACTION



Reclaiming land one tree at a time, credit: Regional Team Indonesia

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AMwA	Akina Mama wa Afrika
Avina	Fundación Avina
AWID	Association of Women's Rights in Development
BASE	Building Approaches to fund local Solutions with climate Evidence
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ESSF	Environmental Social Safeguards Framework
FLoCCA	Financing Locally-Led Climate Action Programme
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GLA	Green Livelihoods Alliance
GloPro	Global Programme (global team working on creating local to global impact)
IGG	Inclusive Green Growth Department within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
JPT	Joint Programme Team
L&D	Loss & Damage
LCOY	Local Conference of Youth
LLA	Locally-Led Adaptation
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSF	Multi-Stakeholder Forums
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NCQG	The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLGF	Next Level Grant Facility (direct access and emergency funding within VCA)
PACJA	Pan African Climate Justice Alliance
PMEL	Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
POV	Power of Voices (policy framework by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
PPHPZ	People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia
RT	Regional Team (Regional VCA Alliance)
SC	Steering Committee
SCS	Strengthening Civil Society Framework
SDI	Slum Dwellers International
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
SSN	SouthSouthNorth
TF	Task Force
TOC	Theory of Change
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VCA	Voices for Just Climate Action Alliance
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WCCPC	Ward Climate Change Planning committees
WGC	Women and Gender Constituency
WHRDs	Women Human Rights Defenders
WWF-NL	World Wide Fund for Nature Netherlands

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its fourth year, the **Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the "Power of Voices" partnership** to advance civic space, climate justice, and inclusion, wove a powerful narrative of resilience and transformation across seven countries—Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Indonesia. Guided by a coalition of six organizations, VCA empowered local communities to shape climate-resilient futures, **upholding its foundational mandate**. VCA was able to again empower marginalized voices, which is essential for equitable, sustainable progress that aligns with Dutch interests in stable, prosperous partner regions. Migration, trade and security are more viable in a world where local communities advance in locally-led climate solutions.

Rooted in its Theory of Change, VCA integrated mutual capacity strengthening, amplified voices, and relentless advocacy to align policies and finance with the needs of those most impacted by climate change, fostering locally-led responses and demonstrating resilience amid a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

The year 2024 unfolded against a backdrop of **unprecedented global challenges**. Temperatures soared past 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, unleashing floods, wildfires, and droughts that battered VCA's implementing countries, deepening food insecurity and displacement. Civic spaces shrank under the weight of protest suppression and restrictive laws, while political instability—exacerbated by global policy shifts like the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement—threatened progress. Amid a pivot away from gender equity and climate initiatives, **VCA demonstrated resilience through grassroots leadership and innovative coalitions**, aligning with renewed Dutch priorities while preserving its commitment to inclusive, community-driven solutions.

The programme's achievements were profound, with **quantifiable impacts reinforcing its strategic relevance**. By expanding its network to **215 partners (now 249 partners since 2021)**, VCA continued to nurture local capacities in **advocacy, gender equity, and climate finance**. **Over 120 knowledge products**, including tools like the Gender Audit Tool, enriched intersectional approaches, with 179 partners reporting stronger, more inclusive climate interventions. From feminist climate justice training in Kenya to nature-based solutions workshops in Indonesia, VCA empowered communities to lead with confidence and creativity. *Through these efforts, we have earned legitimacy and built synergies. Working together, blending local and Indigenous insights with technical expertise, supporting each other, and developing long-term relationships allows VCA partners to achieve far more than it could achieve alone. For example, we collaborated with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) to advance feminist intersectional climate actions in Kenya, ensuring that gender justice remains central in climate advocacy efforts.*

Meanwhile, **490 local initiatives** contributing to climate adaptation, nature restoration, water and sanitation development and food security **touched 2 million lives**. Our Next Level Grant Facility impacted an additional **7.3 million people**. Projects like Kenya's Ramat model, which revived rangelands, and Bolivia's Pantanal campaign, which captivated 1.5 million people, exemplified the program's commitment to solutions that harmonise people and nature. Measures were also taken to enhance **food security**. For example, in Santarém, Brazil, açai seedlings were grown and distributed to aid in reforestation efforts while addressing local families' production needs. Local climate solutions that address **access to water and sanitation**, especially in informal and slum areas include rehabilitation of the nine historical public water cisterns (Feskia) on Djerba Island (preserving the region's heritage while enhancing water conservation and management), installation of a demonstration site for the ecological treatment system in Paraguay and several waste management initiatives in Indonesia, Paraguay, and Zambia. *We started the programme assuming that implementing locally-led climate solutions would result in win-win solutions for nature and people. This has been widely underscored by the fact that these initiatives have nature at their heart as solutions to address societal challenges like water and food security.*

VCA's influence extended to the heart of **public discourse and policy**. Through **45 multi-stakeholder forums**, marginalised voices shaped decisions on **policies, land rights, access to finance, gender equality, social inclusion, and South-North solidarity** at local and global stages. Our efforts expanded civic space, empowered Southern-led dialogues at local, national, and global levels, and leveraged media alliances and digital activism to reach new audiences. The forums include the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the interinstitutional Roundtable on Water (Paraguay), the first National Water Forum (Tunisia), the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum (FOSPA), the III Regional Meeting of Youth from the Gran Chaco, and COP29, among others. *Due to VCA's efforts, civil society's views are increasingly being recognised in developing and implementing climate-relevant (public and private) policies and practices. For example, as part of the Women and Gender Constituency, we made a submission advocating for more accessible participation mechanisms and equitable representation, underscoring the need for institutional reforms that foster inclusive and just climate governance, particularly in reallocating more badges to Global South observers.*

As a result of strengthened local capacities for advocacy concerning climate solutions, contributing financial resources, and bringing together social capital, we have been able to influence the amendment, blocking, adoption, or implementation of an **additional 51 national, and local development plans, policies, and laws** since our last reporting during the Mid-Term Review. This brings the total to **99 laws and policies** influenced by VCA for sustainable and inclusive development during the entire program. Examples include the blocking of a law introduced in 2021 by the State of Tocantins and the adoption of a Climate Action Plan in Brazil, the adoption of the Climate Change and Green Economy Bill in Zambia and the development of the Kisumu County Climate Change Fund Regulations in Kenya. Partners have actively contributed to local climate action planning in Indonesia and Tunisia by developing practical guides to support municipalities in designing their climate action plans. *Our strategy of joint influencing has led to a recognition of civil society's views in the development and implementation of climate-relevant policies and practices. The local and national climate adaptation planning is geared toward building resilience and solidifying inclusive and sustainable development models.*

Since our last reporting during the Mid-Term Review, we influenced an additional **7** laws and policies that influenced access to finance, bringing the total to **19**. In 2024, we developed, piloted or advanced **8 climate finance delivery mechanisms** in line with the LLA principles. For example, the Fund for the Management of Protected Areas (Bolivia), the Brazilian Amazonian Indigenous Fund – Podáali, the LoCAL Climate Adaptive Facility (Tunisia), the Building Approaches to fund local Solutions with climate Evidence (BASE), Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) and the Next Level Grant Facility (NLGF). *These mechanisms can channel resources to Indigenous movements, organisations, and communities, guaranteeing autonomy and increasing the bargaining power of these actors in climate finance processes. They promote approaches to funding that move away from competitiveness, to embracing solidarity and trust. In addition, these models of devolved climate finance support the governments in VCA-implementing countries in translating their ambitious climate agendas into scaled-up action on the ground.*

We influenced the **World Bank Gender and Climate Finance department and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Regional Representative for Southern and Western Africa** on enhancing access modalities to civil society, establishing robust monitoring of the actions and impacts of the fund, and simplifying the application process and access modalities. *Our efforts also contributed to adopting a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, amounting to USD \$300 billion (contrary to the science-backed 1.3 trillion). These efforts improve the quantity and equality of finance, support local and Indigenous communities to build resilience and transparency, ensure that funds reach the intended beneficiaries, and enhance the credibility and effectiveness of climate finance efforts.*

We also **leveraged €47.8 million in external funding**, inching closer to the \$100 million goal by 2025. These funds contribute to the delivery of **117 initiatives** supporting the identification and implementation of locally led projects in all the program implementing countries. For example, increased support for adopting VCA concepts not previously included in a plan, policy, proposal, or programme outside VCA and financial support to ongoing VCA-supported projects. VCA partners have also received non-VCA funds for pursuing locally led climate actions, enabling them to embed VCA principles in their organisations, and ensuring continued implementation towards VCA goals. *This enables us to reach our goal of implementing locally-led climate solutions for increased resilience, adaptation, and sustainability post-2025.*

VCA's digital presence flourished, with website users climbing to 5,600, LinkedIn followers surging 387% to 3,540, and newsletter subscribers growing 37.1% to 1,124, ensuring climate justice narratives reached far and wide. Digital platforms such as Brazil's Plantaformas Movement and Paraguay's Chaco Network reached **3.5 million people**, while **activism and climate festivals sparked inspiration**. *Digital literacy has been key to advancing narratives that reflect the realities of the local and Indigenous communities, strengthening women's groups, advocacy, and product sales. These efforts have bolstered rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly by local and marginalised groups to both raise awareness about human rights and exercise human and other rights in climate action.*

VCA's learning agenda fueled this progress, weaving reflection into annual partner meetings and global sessions, culminating in an alliance-wide event in January 2025. From Brazil's CUIDA training, which equipped youth to shape national climate plans, to Zambia's agroecology workshops led by women, the program learned that capacity building fosters lasting leadership. Kenya's youth campaigns and Bolivia's journalism initiatives revealed the power of creative storytelling, while tools like the Mulika Tracker underscored the impact of evidence-based advocacy. Flexibility proved vital, as seen in Tunisia's pivot to youth conferences amid setbacks, ensuring relevance in turbulent times. *Our learning agenda has enabled us to drive adaptive management and innovation at country levels, thereby contributing to local ownership and risk management; bridging and aligning country and programmatic levels, ensuring efficient horizontal and vertical feedback loops. It has also been instrumental in driving reflection and strategising on how the alliance operates and adapts.*

Collaboration was the lifeblood of VCA's success. In 2024, we embarked *on collaborations demonstrating greater South-South and South-North exchange. Through these meaningful, symbiotic, innovative, and diverse collaborations, we have been able to realise strategically important national climate transitions. Many developments are encouraging in terms of sustainability beyond the VCA programmatic period.* Examples include local partnerships, like Brazil's coalition model and Kenya's county-level co-creation, which maximised resources and advocacy. Governments became allies, with Zambia's policy breakthroughs and Indonesia's sub-national alignments driving change. Embassies amplified efforts, from Kenya's flood response funding to Bolivia's financial partnerships. Academic and private-sector ties in Indonesia and Brazil scaled innovations, while international alliances, like Brazil-Tunisia exchanges for COP30, enriched global advocacy. These connections underscored a truth: shared vision and trust magnify impact.

Conclusion: In 2024, VCA proved that locally led climate solutions can thrive in a contested world. Boldly fulfilling MoFA's original mandate for civic space, climate justice, and inclusion, VCA has delivered outcomes in food security, water management, and community resilience, aligning with Dutch priorities while navigating tensions with evolving changes in foreign policy and aid. *Defending this mandate remains critical, as inclusive, community-driven approaches ensure long-term stability and equity, benefiting both partner regions and Dutch objectives. VCA's exit strategy centres on knowledge preservation, sustained local networks, and continued fundraising that will secure a lasting legacy, empowering communities to drive sustainable, inclusive futures beyond 2025.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION



Women carrying water in Komote village, Kenya, credit: Kalmox

For the past four years, the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program has united global and local perspectives across seven countries – Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Indonesia – fostering collaboration among a vibrant and diverse coalition of civil society organizations. These groups represent a wide spectrum of voices, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, urban poor, digital activists, and other marginalized communities often sidelined in climate discourse. This ambitious initiative is led by an alliance of six organizations—Worldwide Fund for Nature Netherlands (WWF – NL), Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Fundación Avina, SouthSouthNorth (SSN), and Hivos—under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' five-year strategic partnership, "Power of Voices." Beyond its work in these seven countries, VCA maintains a dedicated global team that amplifies local insights, ensuring they resonate in international policy arenas and influence transformative climate action.

Since its launch in 2021, the program has made significant strides toward its five-year strategic goal: **by 2025, local civil society groups will have secured a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators, and advocates for climate solutions.** This vision is rooted in our Theory of Change (ToC), which drives us to address systemic social and environmental injustices through bold and creative approaches. Our innovations include forging unconventional partnerships, elevating unheard voices, strengthening Southern leadership, and enabling local communities to access climate finance. We have reimagined traditional models by forming diverse alliances with budgetary autonomy and flexibility, promoting citizen science, and shifting paradigms to prioritize nontraditional partners. This has reframed narratives, positioning local and Indigenous communities as proactive agents of change rather than passive recipients. At the grassroots level, we have cultivated new horizontal connections among non-governmental actors who, for too long, operated in silos—building solidarity and collective strength through bottom-up, participatory processes that ensure even the most voiceless are meaningfully engaged. Yet, our journey has not been without obstacles. Persistent environmental degradation, political instability, and socioeconomic disparities continue to test our resilience. Despite these challenges, our commitment to driving equitable and impactful climate solutions remains unwavering.

This report encapsulates the progress achieved in 2024, the fourth year of VCA's implementation, structured around the three core pillars of our ToC: (1) mutual capacity strengthening to co-create local climate solutions, (2) amplifying voices to shape public debate and policies, and (3) joint lobbying and advocacy to align policy and financial flows with community-driven climate priorities.

Each chapter highlights examples from our regions, offering a glimpse into the transformative work unfolding across the VCA network. These stories, while compelling, represent only a fraction of the countless activities, initiatives, and innovations carried out by our partners and communities. They cannot fully capture the depth and richness of a program that thrives on diversity, collaboration, and the relentless pursuit of justice in the face of a warming world.

Political, Environmental and Socioeconomic Context Update

In 2024, global temperatures soared to unprecedented levels, building on the exceptional warmth of 2023 ([World Meteorological Organization, 2024](#)). This marked the first year with an average temperature exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels—a critical Paris Agreement threshold—driven by record-breaking greenhouse gas concentrations, air temperatures, and sea surface heat. These shifts fuelled extreme weather events worldwide, including floods, heatwaves, and wildfires. VCA's seven implementing countries – Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Indonesia – faced severe impacts: floods and landslides in Bolivia, Indonesia, and Kenya; wildfires in Bolivia and Paraguay; and droughts in Tunisia, Zambia, and Indonesia. These disasters triggered food insecurity, water shortages, fatalities, mass displacement, and widespread infrastructure damage, underscoring the accelerating toll of human-induced climate change.

Civic and political freedoms contracted across all seven countries, with protest suppression, electoral disputes, and legislative crackdowns intensifying ([CIVICUS Monitor, 2025](#)). Arbitrary measures stifled human rights advocacy, shrinking civic space. In Indonesia, the February election of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming sparked protests over election law changes and a 20% cut to climate funding. Kenya's Finance Bill, proposing tax hikes on essentials, ignited deadly nationwide protests, forcing its withdrawal under public pressure, though advocacy for a fairer replacement persists. Paraguay's Senate passed a law titled "Control, Transparency and Accountability of Non-Profit Organisations. The law defines an excessive and arbitrary control over all CSO resources (public, private, national, and international) and oversized sanctions that go against the national constitution and threaten the independence, freedom, and sustainability of CSOs.

Tunisia's shrinking civic space curtailed advocacy, while Brazil's conservative Congress clashed with progressive environmental policies, greenlighting Amazon oil and infrastructure projects that harmed Indigenous and riverside communities, contradicting a just energy transition.

The re-election of Donald Trump in November 2024 (Trump 2.0) reshaped global dynamics. His administration withdrew from the Paris Agreement, froze climate finance, scrapped foreign aid, dismantled USAID, and imposed trade tariffs. This disrupted interconnected funding networks, halting environmental, health, and civic rights programmes co-financed with the U.S. The Dutch government, a key VCA partner, pivoted its development focus to agriculture, trade, and health, away from the "Power of Voices" approach. This has major implications on the Global South's already compromised rights and freedoms.

Socioeconomic crises compounded these challenges. Bolivia faced fuel shortages, soaring food prices, and a failed military coup attempt on June 26, followed by protests demanding President Luis Arce's resignation ([Al Jazeera, 2024](#)). Corruption scandals, including the arrest of the Environment and Water Minister, and mass firings at SERNAP (later reversed under civil society pressure), exposed governance fractures. Complaints against Chinese firms for socio-environmental violations doubled ([Dialogue Earth, 2024](#)). Tunisia's fiscal crisis and banking restrictions delayed international fund transfers, stalling project timelines ([Carnegie Middle East Center, 2024](#)).

Despite these headwinds, 2024 saw a surge in climate activism. Kenya's youth-led movements gained traction through protests and digital campaigns, amplifying climate justice demands ([ICJ, 2024](#)). Indonesia's VCA program integrated climate justice into policy frameworks via cross-organisational efforts post-Indonesia Climate Week. Paraguay's CSOs lobbied against the asset-seizure law, while Brazil's government engaged civil society in bodies like the National Council on Climate Change—a stark contrast to prior administrations. These gains, though tempered by political unrest and economic strain, reinforced VCA's mission. Adaptive strategies, such as Kenya's focus on grassroots leadership and systemic equity, have sustained impact amid a volatile landscape.

2.0 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF VCA IN 2024



Stop Pollution protest in Tunis, Tunisia, credit: Stop Pollution

This chapter highlights the substantial achievements of the VCA in 2024, illustrating the strategic relevance of our work, the tangible outcomes realised, and the valuable collaborative efforts undertaken with local partners and communities. The key achievements are presented through four thematic lenses, each playing a vital role in VCA's Theory of Change.

2.1 Mutual capacity strengthening for co-creating alternative solutions.

In 2024, our programme made remarkable strides in advancing mutual capacity strengthening, a cornerstone of our mission to amplify diverse voices in the fight for climate justice. This year, we deepened our commitment to fostering equitable partnerships, empowering local leadership, and facilitating collaborative learning across alliance partners and civil society actors worldwide. We enabled a dynamic exchange of skills, knowledge, and resources that transcended borders and contexts by addressing power dynamics, promoting local ownership, and building on existing capacities. From South-South to South-North collaborations, our efforts harnessed collective strengths—blending local and Indigenous insights with technical expertise—to drive impactful advocacy and meaningful change. This section highlights the achievements and lessons learned as we worked together with communities and partners to strengthen their voices and influence in shaping a just and sustainable future.

2.1.1 Capacity strengthening

The program has built an extensive alliance comprising 215 partners in 2024 across the seven countries (see Figure 1). These partnerships continually evolve as new members join, reflecting the program's adaptive and inclusive approach. The direct beneficiaries of these partnerships are women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, urban poor, digital activists, and citizen journalists, among others. As an alliance of a strong network of civil society organisations and actors that unite behind a common agenda, with improved strategic lobbying and advocacy capacities and a supportive public debate, we can no longer be ignored by decision-makers.

In 2024, we continued to build capacities of local CSOs to enable them to implement strong advocacy strategies, participate as equal partners regardless of their identities, including gender (by addressing power relations), promote local ownership and equip them to use their combined resources (skills, knowledge, networks and funding) to strengthen their voices, influence and impact. Mutual capacity was directed towards more transversal (thematic) topics such as effective policy influencing, gender equality and women's leadership, rural-urban linkages, climate adaptation strategies, nature-based

solutions, climate justice, movement strengthening, conflict analysis and mediation, digital storytelling, and security/cyber activism. We harnessed different perspectives and applied social inclusion strategies at various levels to achieve our objectives.

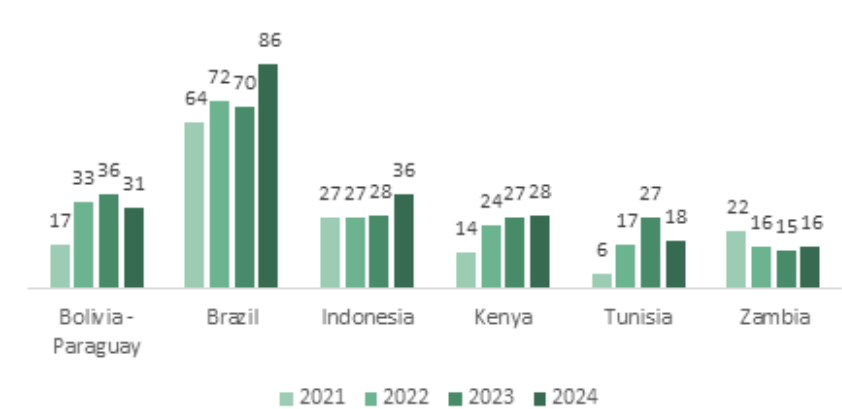


Figure 1: In 2024, VCA had 215 partners under subcontract, bringing the total number of local partners involved in VCA to 249. More details on SCS Basket Indicator 06 can be found in Annex I)

Increased capacity on feminist and intersectional approaches for gender, diversity, equity, and inclusion

Existing climate interventions do not adequately account for the interaction of gender-specific realities and needs and the downstream climate impacts. Women, young people, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalised groups are acutely affected by climate disasters and community-level stress caused by climate change, with women disproportionately affected. In 2024, we continued to build the capacities of these groups to reinforce their position as ‘agents of change’. We see harnessing diverse perspectives as key to ensuring the voice and representation of marginalised groups. In countries such as Indonesia, Kenya, Paraguay, Tunisia, and Zambia, participants had the opportunity to network, exchange experiences, and further their understanding of key issues at the intersection of climate justice and gender equality, improving their knowledge of sustainable farming, human rights, and climate justice.

120 knowledge products, such as the Gender Audit Tool, CDF Guidelines for Locally Led Adaptation and the Intersectional Feminist Guide on Climate Action have been developed, increasing knowledge around equity, women and youth vulnerabilities and their lived experiences. Such vast stories and research findings emerging from the CSO partners have capacitated them to enhance intersectionality in their projects. We developed 51 knowledge products to promote the adoption of processes and approaches that have proven effective in enhancing CSO capacity around gender inclusion. Over the last 4 years, 409 partners and others CSOs have indicated increased capacity in applying the gender and feminist frame of analysis in their climate justice interventions in all the program implementing countries. In 2024, the total was 179. This capacity building has ensured that climate policies and actions are inclusive and equitable, addressing the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups and promoting social equity in climate governance.

In Kenya, the Intersectional Feminist Climate Justice Learning Space trained over 40 participants, and key climate justice knowledge products were developed, amplifying the voices of women. Partnerships with national, regional, and global climate movements including AWID, the WGC, and the UN Tax Committee strengthened feminist engagement in climate advocacy. We also collaborated with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) to advance feminist intersectional climate actions in Kenya, ensuring that gender justice remains central in climate advocacy efforts. In line with our mutual capacity-building initiatives, we facilitated a training on feminist climate justice for African National Gender Focal Points on climate change. The aim of the training was to equip the gender focal points with feminist and intersectional analysis tools and knowledge to effectively contribute to ongoing processes within the UNFCCC as part of their work on gender-responsive climate finance. Further, the training aimed to advance information and knowledge to effectively inform the review of the Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan at the global level.

As part of efforts to “change ourselves”, staff in our alliance partner organisations were trained on intercultural relationships, Indigenous issues, and creating a gender-diverse and trans-inclusive workplace. Guidelines were developed to expand the organisation’s diversity and inclusion agenda. Incorporating a gender perspective into our initiatives has led to greater inclusion of minoritized groups and expanded our work to uphold their human rights.

Increased capacities on climate finance

As part of efforts to enhance advocacy work, we created awareness on the intersection of debt and climate financing in Africa through collaboration with AFRODAD (African Forum and Network on Debt and Development). Women were empowered to critique the harmful reliance on debt to finance climate responses, advocating instead for decolonial and feminist financing alternatives. We led research efforts that also led to increased capacities of local civil society organisations. A paper, “10 Decolonial Feminist Principles to Unlock Climate Finance in Africa!”, critically examined the politics of climate finance, drawing from extensive reflections, rethinking, and reimagining processes since 2022. It highlights biases within the current climate finance landscape and underscores the necessity of a Pan-African and Global South feminist perspective. The paper situates the climate finance architecture within its colonial roots, exposing how deindustrialization, wealth extraction, indebtedness, and shrinking fiscal spaces perpetuate dependency on external financing – an analysis absent in technocratic, policy-based civil society discourses. The Carbon Markets Roadmap was also developed. This roadmap provides a feminist, intersectional Pan-African critique on carbon markets, shaping the discourse on their implications for Kenya. It articulates the VCA Kenya Alliances stance on carbon markets, shedding light on their actual impact on local communities and ecosystems beyond the dominant market-driven narratives.

Increased capacities on Nature-based Solutions

Through various platforms, we also increased knowledge on nature-based solutions (NbS) to enable local communities and Indigenous Peoples to advocate and lobby for just, resilient futures. Nature-based Solutions are central to our climate action approach. If designed, implemented, and managed effectively and justly, NbS offer win-win solutions that build upon synergies and address climate change and biodiversity loss while supporting sustainable development and the livelihoods of people across the world. NbS are thus encouraged by VCA and its grant scheme as it offers benefits on multiple fronts, such as mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, food security, water, and sanitation.

An Ambitious Campaign to Save the Bolivian Pantanal!

The lack of clear and accessible information has led managers, authorities, and society to pay insufficient attention to the fragility of this ecosystem. Aware of this reality, journalists in Bolivia undertook an ambitious campaign to make the vulnerability of the Bolivian Pantanal visible. They set out to generate multimedia content with accurate and simple information that would inform and inspire people to act. They knew that to protect the Pantanal, it was necessary for everyone – governments, communities, and citizens – to understand its crucial role in the generation of fresh water and the environmental balance of the country. The massive dissemination of this content on digital platforms and traditional media achieved an unprecedented impact. Over 1.5 million people were reached through Meta, while interviews in media such as Red Erbol, with 800,000 listeners nationwide, took the message even further. The campaign not only raised awareness but also promoted sustainable tourism and the active participation of communities in the protection of the Pantanal. The results speak for themselves. This campaign also won second place for the Nature Report of the Year 2024, organized by the NGO Conservation International. Thanks to this initiative, more people understood the urgency of preserving the Pantanal and conservation policies were strengthened. The Pantanal water factory still faces challenges, but today, more than ever, it has a society that is more informed and committed to its protection.

In Paraguay, an environmental education program the Eco Pantanal – Guardians of the Pantanal” program which promotes Pantanal's natural and cultural heritage was implemented. The program created educational materials like “Sabiduría del Pantanal” game cards and the “Cómo ser un buen Pantanero” pocket guide to encourage sustainable habits. In partnership with Tte. Iro Adolfo Rojas Silva School, it is conducting environmental workshops for students in Bahía Negra to raise awareness about protecting the Paraguayan Pantanal. The workshops cover key topics like biodiversity and forest fires, aiming to connect students with their ecosystem.

Through a process led by WWF, in collaboration with our partners, we convened local and regional conferences on youth (LCOY and RCOY) in Bolivia, Indonesia, Paraguay, Tunisia, and Zambia, to build capacity of the youth with skills on nature-based solutions. These sessions provided technical and methodological knowledge for the formulation of projects focused on ecosystem conservation and restoration, promoting initiatives led by local communities. These collaborations strengthened the autonomy and local climate action of Indigenous youth, positioning them as key actors in the restoration and environmental protection of the key sites for biodiversity conservation and livelihoods. As a result, the capacities of community actors were strengthened to design and implement effective climate adaptation and mitigation actions, aligned with the objectives of the VCA programme.

Increased capacities in journalism with a purpose

In 2024, we continued to provide training to journalists and media professionals. Training was provided on climate justice reporting, ensuring a wider reach of advocacy efforts. Journalists were trained to tell stories with depth and diverse perspectives, thanks to collaborative initiatives with key partners. These efforts are helping to expand coverage of critical issues tied to sustainable development and the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Journalism for Climate Action, an initiative of VCA partners in Paraguay that combined training, mentoring, and funding for investigative journalism across the country, ended. The objective was to promote journalism committed to the environment and sustainability. Several workshops were conducted, i.e. 'Necessary Coverage: Tools to Cover Disinformation and the Climate Crisis,' 'The climate crisis from the Chaco' for local journalists and communicators. After the training, journalists were able to develop proposals were chosen, mentoring, and funding were received to develop their reports. Three of these proposals were recognised during the National Environmental Journalism Award, which received 31 applications from all over the country.

Increased capacities on urban-rural linkages

Climate change movements have traditionally operated in isolation, with rural and urban interventions addressing similar challenges in fragmented ways. To address this challenge, we have promoted the concept of rural-urban linkages as a strategic approach aligned with the VCA Theory of Change (ToC). This approach, spearheaded by SDI, is intended to foster increased collaboration between rural and urban grassroots communities and create a space for these communities to engage business leaders and other influential stakeholders.

Advancing the concept of rural- urban linkages in Zambia

In Zambia, four rural-urban linkages have been established and sustained to enhance peer-to-peer learning, support inclusive grassroots movement-building, and strengthen the voices of rural and urban communities by building on their existing capacities. PPHPZ, the Zambian affiliate of SDI, has supported the advancement of this concept across Zambia by working to ensure that local civil society organisations (CSOs) have the capacity to facilitate learning and collaboration between rural and urban communities. PPHPZ conducted five learning exchanges between urban and rural groups, including:

- Lusaka-Mazabuka: Training on bokashi compost, community gardens, and climate advocacy.
- Chongwe-Lusaka: Data collection for an NLGF-funded water project.
- Luangwa-Lusaka: Women-led exchanges on land rights and health.
- Youth engagement: Mobilised 50+ rural youth for the Regional Conference of Youth (RCOY), ensuring their inputs reached COP.
- Urban federations trained rural groups in SDI methodologies (e.g., savings, enumerations), enabling them to design bankable projects.

The rural and urban groups adopted SDI practices on savings and data collection. Their ability to collect community data enables them to engage local leadership to hold them accountable, and their savings give them the leverage to attract climate finance by demonstrating their effort to mobilise resources that can be used for adaptation projects.

2.1.2 Climate solutions (innovations) co-created for the benefit of people and nature

In 2024, the VCA programme celebrated significant achievements in co-creating innovative climate solutions designed to benefit both people and nature. This year, we embraced a collaborative approach, bringing together diverse stakeholders – local communities, Alliance partners, and civil society actors – to develop practical, sustainable innovations rooted in mutual respect and shared vision. By integrating local knowledge, citizen science, and cutting-edge ideas, we fostered solutions that not only addressed pressing climate challenges but also enhanced community resilience and preserved ecosystems. From grassroots initiatives to scalable models, our efforts prioritized equity, adaptability, and long – term impact, ensuring that the benefits reached those most affected by climate change. This section highlights the inspiring outcomes and transformative potential of these co-created innovations as we continue to champion a harmonious balance between human well-being and environmental stewardship.

In 2024, we continued to embark on researching, co-creating and piloting of locally led solutions. We have done this as part of the growing movement for locally led adaptation (LLA), we are advocating for a paradigm where local actors and communities lead decisions over how, when, and where to adapt. LLA recognizes the value of local knowledge and expertise to address climate risks and ensures that local actors on the frontlines of climate change have equitable access to decision-making spaces and resources to build resilience. The previous chapter demonstrates how VCA strengthens local and often marginalized groups. These efforts have led to creating an enabling environment for implementing and strengthening practical solutions to adapting to climate change. Solutions that are locally led, shaped, and supported by citizens and civil society in a way that effectively addresses fundamental rights and needs. The benefits of locally led climate action enable highly contextualised and integrated development responses that benefit from critical local knowledge, yield greater and more inclusive social and economic returns, have greater local ownership and are more sustainable overall.

As at end of December 2024, we had embarked on a total of **490 local initiatives (nature-based solutions, food security, water, and sanitation)** directly contributing to improved resilience of communities to climate stressors through climate adaptation practices. Of these, 130 were funded by the main grant, while an additional 360 received grants through the Next Level Grant Facility, a VCA climate finance mechanism whose impacts are elaborated in [chapter 2.3.4](#). In the following chapters however, the impact numbers presented refer to the 130 main-grant solutions. In 2024, 62 new initiatives were identified and are being implemented. Together, these local solutions are directly and indirectly impacting an estimated 2 million people. More than 485,000 hectares of agricultural land and natural ecosystems are impacted through improved sustainable management, crop diversification, reforestation, water-, and resource management. As VCA efforts in 2024 increasingly focused on piloting and scaling local solutions, several solutions gained recognition by local and national state actors and managed to secure external funding for continued implementation.

Nature-based Solutions for adaptation and resilience

Just as climate change causes numerous risks to vulnerable people, nature and biodiversity are susceptible to its effects. The continuing loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems weaken their ability to provide essential services that many communities depend on. This is why we work on Nature-based Solutions, which aim to address major societal issues, while also strengthening natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and human well-being. In 2024, we continued implementing solutions for people and nature, with at least 24 innovative solutions considered nature based. They cover a broad range of interventions; restoration of natural ecosystems, protection and management of communal lands, conserving wetlands, coastal ecosystems to reduce flood risks, and protecting water sources for continued water availability for people and nature. In 2024, our nature-based solutions contributed to the protection, improved management, or restoration of an additional 14,888 hectares of land and coastal ecosystems and improving the climate resilience, water access and food security of more than 169,400 people¹.

IN 2024 **24** NEW NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS
IMPACTING CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF
169,415 PEOPLE
14,888 HECTARES

In Bolivia, the management of the Landivar Lagoon through the propagation of native aquatic plants benefitted 1,170 community members by filtering the water and raising awareness among families dependent on the lagoon. In the Korborgoch wetland in Kenya, communities contributed to the restoration of 10 acres of degraded land by establishing seed banks. These wetlands help control flooding and provide alternative livelihood options for the Endorois Indigenous community, directly benefitting 8,240 people. In December 2024, the Global Land Initiative provided \$15,000 in funding to upscale these restoration practices.

In collaboration with Sanggar Seni Robongholo (SSRH), a sago maintenance and restoration activity was conducted in the sago forest located in Sereh Village, Indonesia. At least 750 sago seeds were planted over 2.59 hectares of land. Six Robongholo members were introduced to the Reconnect+ app and now have basic knowledge of how to use it to monitor the growth and survival rate of newly planted sago trees. VCA provided skills in community-based monitoring, technical assistance, facilitation, and networking. There is now increased knowledge about various sago species and their benefits for human well-being and the environment. In Kenya, we embarked on river restoration and water point mapping to prevent flooding and establish biological greywater management systems.

Reclaiming drylands in Kenya

In Kenya's northern drylands, communities are coming together to reclaim their land from degradation. In Marsabit County, community members have planted over 13,000 Indigenous trees in a year, thanks to a novel form of farmer-managed natural regeneration called *Ramat*. In the Samburu language, *Ramat* means to "take care of". The approach was introduced to the community by Nature and People. Using *Ramat*, the Samburu community established by-laws outlining how to identify Indigenous trees that need to be conserved, and how to mark them with red paint across their landscape. The community also introduced fines for members who breach these by-laws, particularly by cutting down the marked trees. Before the *Ramat* model was introduced, the area was bare. But after planting and caring for the trees, the community has seen significant improvements – even in air quality – and an increase in wildlife such as elephants, zebras, and giraffes.

The Ramat Model has been recognised and promoted by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030. In June 2024, the initiative – led by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – highlighted Ramat as a locally led and co-created climate solution for rangeland management and governance by the Indigenous Rendille and Samburu peoples. The Ramat model globally recognised as a good practice example for developing just, equitable, and locally led climate solutions, including Nature-based Solutions.

Construction of Check Dams in Zambia

Supported by CUTS and WWF Zambia, we constructed a local check dam in the Mwanachingwala area of Zambia, to enhance water security, climate resilience, and agricultural sustainability amid persistent drought challenges. The check dam increases water retention and reduces runoff, ensuring year-round water availability for agriculture and domestic use for 3000 community members.



Construction of local check dam in Zambia: Courtesy RT Zambia

Food security for improved livelihoods

Twenty innovative solutions were implemented that apply sustainable agricultural practices and technologies to boost productivity and enhance resilience, benefitting an estimated 35,044 additional people. These practices and technologies are tailored to specific agro-ecological conditions and socio-economic contexts.

Many VCA-supported food security solutions are nature-based and rely on replanting native, productive species. For example, in Santarém, Brazil, açai seedlings were cultivated and distributed to support reforestation efforts while addressing local families' production needs. In the municipality of Roboré, Bolivia, Indigenous community facilitators were trained in the establishment and management of native almond fruit tree plantations — a species that offers protection against wind, drought, and frost in the region. Similarly in Tunisia, resilient carob trees were used for reforesting in Nefza-Béja.

Other solutions that contribute to food security include; the establishment of kitchen gardens and the distribution of vegetable seedlings to communities and schools in Kenya, community-based seed banks for drought-resistant crops in Kenya, and the recovery of native corn varieties in Bolivia. In Zambia, women and youth began practicing conservation farming using biochar, an organic charcoal that improves soil health by retaining soil moisture and increasing productivity. All these efforts contribute to upholding the right to be free from hunger and to have an adequate standard of living, including access to sufficient, nutritious food.

Women take on climate change in Zambia

VCA's partner, the Green Agriculture Youth Organization, provided a training on conservation farming for women's groups in Lusaka, Zambia. As a result, the women mobilized and formed the Kasenga Tiyende Pasogolo Women's Club, a climate-smart gardening group. Since then, the women have begun practicing climate-smart gardening and are now supplying a variety of vegetables to the local market. This initiative has enabled them to benefit from the produce both through household consumption and financially, thereby improving their livelihoods. Similarly, VCA's partner ZAMCOM provided a training for 1,200 women and 800 men, leading to the formation of the Lukanga Women's Club. This has strengthened their climate resilience while securing their livelihoods. [Read the story of Lucy Dende, a smallholder farmer in Lusaka, who has applied her knowledge and skills to combat the effects of severe drought and depleted soils.](#)

**IN 2024 20 NEW SOLUTIONS IMPROVED FOOD
SECURITY
IMPACTING CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF
35,044 PEOPLE**

Access to water and sanitation for improved health and hygiene

VCA partners continued to implement local climate solutions that address essential services such as access to water and sanitation, particularly in informal settlements and slum areas. In 2024, access to clean water and improved sanitation increased through 19 new initiatives, benefiting an estimated additional 66,197 people. These gains were made possible through a democratic governance model that fosters win-win collaboration across multiple sectors and integrates both social and technological innovations.

In Tunisia, we 9 historical public water cisterns (Feskia) were rehabilitated on Djerba Island, preserving the region's cultural heritage while improving water conservation and management. This solution will provide water access to around 1,350 people living on the island. The project is co-financed by VCA, WWF (with funding from the French Development Agency (AFD)), and an additional contribution from the German organization 'Maarifa for Transition UG'. WWF, with the additional funding from the AFD, is continuing the initiative in Midoune, contributing to both piloting and scaling efforts.

In Remansito, Paraguay's lower Chaco area, a demonstration site has been installed through an agreement between VCA's partner PCI and a local water treatment company. The facility enables comparative analyses of ecological water treatment systems and monitors river water flow rates to ensure correct distribution to 3,000 families. This initiative complements ongoing efforts by PCI, in collaboration with SENASA and the IDB, to bring drinking water to 50 Indigenous communities in the Chaco. In those communities, VCA is building capacity to establish and strengthen local water commissions.

In Bolivia, ancestral knowledge of water management held by the Guarayo people has been harnessed to recover and conserve 8 natural water springs. These efforts are supported by the development of surrounding community gardens, cultivated using ancestral techniques, and complemented by studies on water quality and potability. Community participation has been strengthened through fairs and competitions. The initiative brings direct and indirect benefits to over 3,000 Guarayo people.

The Village Government of Gedongkiwo, Indonesia, allocated budget and carried out organic waste management training for the community, promoting the use of biopore infiltration holes. In 2024, 648 organic waste biopores were distributed to the community, targeting all 14,016 residents. By 2025, the government aims to reach an additional 500 households, with the ultimate goal of reaching 100% household coverage for independent organic waste processing. 30 members of the Women's Federation actively participated in development of the local Annual Development Plan, where they emphasized the importance of waste management programmes, water source protection, the preservation of the Winongo River, and the importance of sustainable food security programmes on limited land. This engagement was made possible with source data regarding water quality and trainings provided by VCA.

In Paraguay, water and sanitation commissions were strengthened or newly established in 20 communities through regional multi-stakeholder platforms, aiming public policy for access to potable water. In Zambia, proper waste management and the promotion of safe water practices (e.g., chlorination and boiling) contributed to the absence of cholera outbreaks in several cholera-prone communities, benefiting 8,000 people across five communities.

These efforts represent tangible progress in expanding the right to water and sanitation by helping communities organize and expand their capacities. The collective efforts contributed to making urban spaces more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally conscious. Grassroot communities are testing and leveraging these climate solutions as evidence and vehicles for financing locally led community initiatives that catalyse achievement and inclusiveness. As an advocacy tool, VCA is engaging with public and private finance mechanisms to share lessons learned and evidence that could support changes to climate financing practices for local communities, as well as explore concrete strategies for scaling up funded solutions through access to traditional finance.

IN 2024 **19** NEW SOLUTIONS IMPROVED ACCESS
TO WATER AND SANITATION
IMPACTING CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF
66,197 PEOPLE

2.2 Agenda Setting and Movement Building on climate action.

In 2024, our program marked a transformative year under the Agendas Set, Movements Built, and Strengthened section, driving forward our mission to reshape public discourse and build powerful, inclusive climate justice movements. We successfully set agendas by amplifying new civil society perspectives, forging coalitions that bridged rural-urban divides, and elevating the voices of women, Indigenous Peoples, and youth to influence policy debates and public awareness. Through innovative spaces like creative labs and stakeholder dialogues, we fostered solidarity around shared climate priorities – such as water and food security – while strengthening research, citizen science, and local narratives to underpin advocacy with credible, community-owned knowledge. Our efforts expanded civic space, empowered Southern-led dialogues at local, national, and global levels, and leveraged media alliances and digital activism to reach new audiences. This section highlights how these achievements galvanized societal support, built resilient movements, and laid the groundwork for lasting climate action impact in 2024.

Civic space is shrinking globally and nationally, limiting the voice and influence of civil society, including on climate action. Although civic space is shrinking, it may also shift, opening new, often digital, arenas with new opportunities for amplifying voices and influencing decision-makers. In 2024, we continued to influence the public agenda by raising public awareness about the threats faced by environmental/human rights defenders, climate change and its impacts, centering and mainstreaming climate justice debates and demands, and involving local people and communities, as well as minoritised groups in policy and decision – making processes. We have used the power and influence of the Alliance and its partners to create or enter new spaces, reach new audiences, and build new coalitions to add and merge insightful and strengthened locally-led narratives on climate action. This has bolstered rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly by local and marginalised group (civic space) to both raise awareness about human rights and exercise human and other rights in climate action.

2.2.1 Amplifying Voices through participation in decision-making spaces.

We developed and (or) increased effectiveness of forums and networks as vehicle to amplify the voices of CSOs and marginalised group related to climate change. Multi-stakeholder forums (MSFs) and networks were developed or strengthened in implementing countries to provide platforms for marginalized groups to influence policies, advocate for climate justice, and secure budget allocations. A total of 45 outcomes were reported of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups included in decision-making processes or structures for climate policies and programmes at the local, regional, and global levels.

In Paraguay, we are supporting an interinstitutional Roundtable on Water for the Chaco, organised at the senate, with participation of different stakeholders: governmental institutions, academia, CSOs. Several solutions were presented to mitigate the water crisis in the Chaco, as well as a diagnosis of the main problems was made. In Tunisia, the first National Water Forum was held engaging policymakers, experts, and civil society actors in a national dialogue on water governance. In Indonesia, at least eight multi-stakeholder forums (MSF) were used as the vehicle to advocate the key leaders to prioritise climate justice issue in policy and budget allocation.

We facilitated participation of Indigenous communities in regional and global events such as the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum (FOSPA) and COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan respectively reinforced the participation of Indigenous women in spaces of climate advocacy and human rights, making visible their struggles in the defence of Indigenous territories and their role in the conservation of biodiversity. This allowed their demands to be heard globally, strengthening climate justice with a gender perspective. The III Regional Meeting of Youth from the Gran Chaco Americano took place in Boquerón, Paraguay, gathering 150 youth from Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. They discussed climate justice, biodiversity, and regional environmental challenges. The proposals generated will be presented at COP30 in Brazil in 2025. The meeting concluded with the creation of the Trinational Youth Network and a declaration urging authorities to enforce environmental laws and ensure youth participation in decision-making. We also co-organized a global youth-led event on Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) for climate justice at COP29. This was led by WWF in collaboration with the We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership (WAT-GP) and Youth and Environment Europe (YEE).

Key messages included the need for greater youth inclusion, funding access, and South-North solidarity in NbS implementation. Stakeholders from public and private sectors joined the dialogue to explore collaborative action and resourcing opportunities. A major milestone was the launch of the Global Youth-led NbS Programme to strengthen youth networks toward COP30.

We enabled two Indigenous Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) to participate at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) session held in Banjul, The Gambia. Their participation in the ACHPR session has strengthened their advocacy efforts, enabling direct engagement with policymakers and influencing discussions on Indigenous land rights, environmental justice, and climate-related human rights violations. By expanding their networks, these WHRDs are now better equipped to collaborate with like-minded organizations, enhancing movement-building efforts to push for stronger legal protections and policy reforms. Additionally, their visibility at ACHPR increased awareness on Indigenous issues within global advocacy spaces, and legal backing for Indigenous-led climate justice initiatives. In the long term, their participation contributes to greater inclusion of Indigenous voices in decision-making processes, ensuring that climate policies reflect the lived realities and rights of Indigenous communities. We participated in SB60 in Bonn, as an observer in negotiation agenda items on Arrangements for Intergovernmental Meetings (AIMs). As part of the Women and Gender Constituency, we made a submission advocating for more accessible participation mechanisms and equitable representation, underscoring the need for institutional reforms that foster inclusive and just climate governance, particularly in reallocating more badges to Global South observers.

2.2.2 Alternative Storytelling Amplifying Climate Justice Debates

We continued to strengthen communication on local narratives. To ensure recognition of perspectives and knowledge needs, we support citizen science, i.e., the voicing of 'non-traditional' knowledge (for example Indigenous knowledge and practices, oral traditions, etc.) and support validation of knowledge by local stakeholders. Numerous platforms were used, including media, documentaries, film festivals, events, climate camps, workshops and multi-stakeholder dialogues. Furthermore, innovative digital platforms such as the Plantaformas Movement (Brazil), and the Chaco Network of Digital Content Creators (Paraguay), Citizen Journalism and Data Collection Initiatives (Kenya), Power of Voices Platform (globally), Know your city TV (KYC TV) and Urban Voices podcast (Zambia) have been established, connecting movements, communities and activists across regional and national borders. These platforms have widened our reach and impact, reaching 3.5 million people. The strengthening of 14 telecentres in Paraguay and 6 in Bolivia has provided community spaces run by women with internet connections. Digital literacy has been key to strengthening women's groups, advocacy, and product sales.

Media Coverage in Paraguay

In Paraguay, partners El Surtidor, Global Infancia, together with Emancipa, AVINA and WWF collaborated to develop an initiative to improve media coverage on climate justice. Journalists from mainstream and alternative media, and local and Indigenous communicators from the Chaco were trained. In total, 11 grants and mentoring have been awarded for the development of journalistic proposals. In addition, on 1 October, the National Climate Action Journalism Awards ceremony took place, awarding 3 winning entries and offering the public an interactive exhibition with the work of 10 finalists. The exhibition remained at the Juan de Salazar Cultural Centre for a month.

Documentary making in Bolivia and Tunisia

In Bolivia 17 graduates from the Environmental Journalism School (EPI) completed a specialization course in Indigenous journalism focused on territorial and environmental advocacy, funded by PEW. Certified by the Ministry of Education, they produced TAREMA, a medium-length film about the climate crisis in Indigenous communities. This initiative strengthened their skills in environmental storytelling and provided them access to national and international platforms to amplify their voices and bring visibility to their stories.

In Tunisia, the program produced over 10 podcasts and documentaries, amplifying climate justice narratives and fostering public debate. Journalists and media professionals received training on climate justice reporting, ensuring a wider reach of advocacy efforts.

TEDxToborochoi, organised by SBDA on November 28, with the support of WWF Bolivia under a TED license, brought together 20 inspiring voices from the Pantanal, Chiquitanía, and Chaco regions for the “Voices for Change” conferences. Following the TEDxCountdown format, the event promoted solutions to the climate crisis and highlighted stories of community leadership, social participation, and environmental conservation. Key topics included the role of Indigenous youth, women's empowerment, and the importance of biodiversity knowledge in addressing climate challenges. Held at the Spanish Cooperation Training Center (AECID) with more than 150 participants, the event featured the participation of women leaders, youth, Indigenous representatives, defenders, activists, scientists, and communicators, among others. “We believe that ideas have the power to transform realities, and each story shared at TEDxToborochoi is a step toward change for the conservation of our resources,” said Alfonso Llobet, interim representative of WWF Bolivia.



VCA Participants at TED X Toborochoi, credit: WWF Bolivia

We supported civil society organisations that contribute to narrative shifts, movement and campaigns, and advocacy using the activism approach. Art is the tool to communicate what science alone cannot communicate, addressing both human cognition and emotion through imaginative ways in its ability to link localised, cultured, and gendered human experiences to natural realities and abstract concepts. In VCA, we use art as a mirror to society, as political expression, protest, and art as a catalyst for social change. Importantly, art can be an important mechanism to allow different minorities, often excluded from decision-making processes, to make their voices heard.

Festivals and climate weeks have also been an important platform for amplifying local voices, raising awareness about climate justice and sustainable climate change solutions. For example, in Indonesia, four (4) art pieces from Indigenous communities were put on display at the EXPY FEST, Paragi. These pieces used storytelling and nature to evoke deep appreciation and unique experiences, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

Through Hivos and Dutch streaming platform Cinetree, we hosted the second edition of the Tomorrow Climate Film Festival, bringing inspiring stories to audiences in physical and online settings to shape financing for local climate actions. The activity, which aimed to showcase local climate innovations and solutions to climate action in the Global South, reached slightly over 600 people offline in the DeLaMar theatre in Amsterdam, including policy makers and implementors from the Netherlands. *“A lot of the news is negative; there is so much going on in the world. But if you point the camera a bit differently, you see there is also lots of beautiful things happening. There are pioneers and thinkers out there. That gives me hope.”* Cinetree highlighted different hopeful stories about climate and conservation for two weeks on their streaming platform.

Through Foundation Avina, in collaboration with WINGS and SSN, we held an event at the Resilience Hub, titled “The Path to Resilience: Transforming Climate Finance for Indigenous and Local Community-Led Action.” This session highlighted the challenges Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities face in accessing climate finance and the need for equitable, flexible, and community-centred financing. Key participants included Fundo Casa, one of the NLGF fund managers, and Adaptation Fund Board Chair Lucas Di Pietro, who reflected on some of the challenges and opportunities in getting finance to communities.

2.3. Joint lobbying and advocacy to make policy and finance responsive to locally shaped climate solutions

Current climate governance and finance do not adequately support inclusive and integrated planning, and locally shaped climate solutions are often not integrated. The political and social realities that create unfavourable conditions for inclusion in climate action also mean that women, girls, and other marginalised/ vulnerable groups rarely have a say in climate decision-making. Locally shaped climate solutions and inclusive climate policy starts with engaging women and girls, as they disproportionately feel the impacts of climate change, due to entrenched social norms, gendered division of (land) rights, decision-making power, and access to and control over resources such as financial services, technology, and social capital.

Joint influencing of climate-relevant policies and climate finance at all levels has been our priority to ensure that civil society actors have a seat at the decision-making table and their voices are heard. Influencing strategies in VCA centre around the recognition of civil society's views in the development and implementation of climate-relevant (public and private) policies and practices. Policy influencing in this program covers a wide range of activities to influence decision-makers in the public and private sectors at international, national, and local levels towards our overall aim of a just climate transition. A few examples are highlighted below.

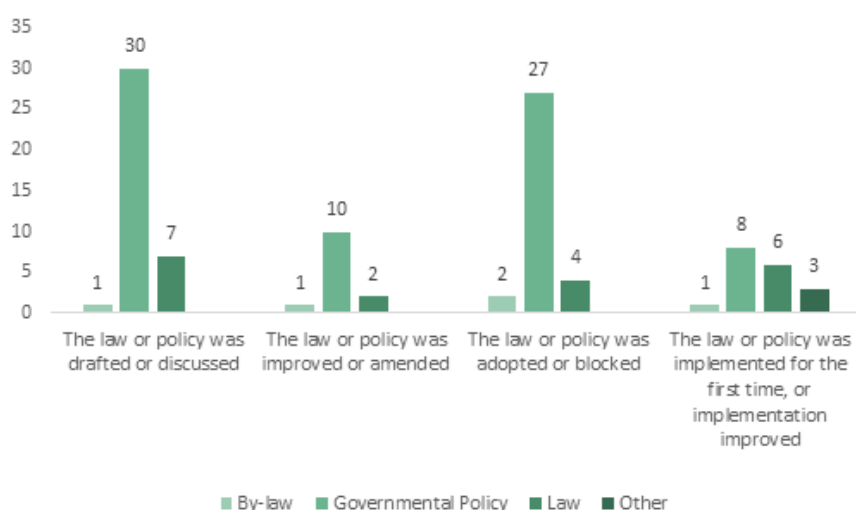


Figure 2: between 2021 and 2024, the VCA programme influenced 99 governmental policies, laws, and by-laws.

As a result of strengthened local capacities for advocacy concerning climate solutions, contributing financial resources, and bringing together social capital, we have been able to influence the amendment, blocking, adoption, or implementation of an additional 51 national, and local development plans, policies, and laws since our last reporting during the Mid-Term Review. This brings the total to 99 laws and policies being influenced by VCA for sustainable and inclusive development during the entire programme (Figure 2).

2.3.1. Review of national and regional policies and development plans

We continued to influence the revision of NDCs. In each implementing country, our alliance partners and local partners facilitated the collective construction of contextual intelligence, positioning, and strategic vision to ensure countries met the reporting requirements of the Paris Agreement by the end of 2024 and to influence countries to deliver an enhanced 1.5 degree-aligned NDC. We also contributed to the NDCs by fighting for the participation of marginalised groups in the formulation of the targets, with specific focus on topics like inclusion, intersectionality, the mitigation ambitions, and Nature-based Solutions. The desired end results are NDCs that have fully embraced climate justice and acknowledge/ respect the rights of local communities/ Indigenous Peoples as well as ensuring that climate actions meet local needs and have meaningful long-lasting impacts. NDCs can address and support development beyond mitigating the impacts of climate change. These national climate plans can double as national investment plans and national development plans, and help countries make a transformative shift to development that is greener and more sustainable.

We also contributed to the process of developing and implementing national adaptation plans to identify and assess the negative effects of climate change and produce measures to manage and mitigate them. Young people from the Legal Amazon, Brazil participated in a dialogue with the Ministry of the Environment, actively contributing to the development of the Climate Plan. The Climate Plan is a guide for Brazil's climate policy until 2035 that has two pillars: the National Mitigation Strategy, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the National Adaptation Strategy, to reduce the vulnerability of cities and natural environments. Through their personal narratives and territorial contexts, the young people were able to propose concrete and contextualized contributions, which enriched the formulation of public policy. In Indonesia, VCA contributed to the development of the national development planning document through a series of hearings with the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF).

In Kenya, development of the Kisumu County Climate Change Fund Regulations was successful. The Regulations established the Kisumu County Climate Change Fund, its management, operation procedures and it is winding up procedures as well as the promotion of climate change programs. Furthermore, county climate change regulations were also reviewed and developed for Kajiado (County Climate Change Act 2020) and Homa Bay (County Climate Change Amendment Act, 2024) respectively. Brazil, Kenya, and Indonesia have indispensable regulatory frameworks in place to ensure local economic planning is geared toward building resilience and solidifying an inclusive and sustainable development model.

Use of VCA Kenya accountability tools by Ward Climate Change Planning committees (WCCPC)

The East Africa Community of Practice, the Environmental Committee of the County Assembly of Marsabit and Horizonte 3000 adopted Mulika Tracking Tool which PACIDA developed as their accountability tool. The Turbi WCCPC also used the tool to petition the Marsabit County Government on the status of planned versus implemented projects in the county using data from the Mulika Tracking Tool. In Kisumu County, 35 Wards utilized the Ward Climate Finance Scorecard tool developed by SUSWATCH to petition the Kisumu County Government on the status of planned activities versus implemented projects.

Gendered climate action is yet another moving piece that was widely on the horizon in 2024. Acknowledging the profound impact climate change has on women of the global south, an ambitious goal of reviewing the Lima Work programme and producing a new gender action plan for climate action by CoP 30 in Brazil was set. Nonetheless, the realization of gendered action plan depends on its localization to the national levels. Accordingly, countries such as Kenya embarked on undertaking development of their gender action plans to implement their national climate change action plans and by extension their nationally determined contributions. Our focus for 2025 will be on shaping the national and global dialogues on gender action plans for climate action as a low – lying opportunity for intervention.

We also contributed to the blocking of a law that was deemed unconstitutional by the Brazilian government. In 2021, the State of Tocantins in Brazil approved a law that put the environment, household farms, and territories belonging to Indigenous and Quilombola communities at risk by weakening environmental oversight. This also increased the risk of negative environmental impacts, such as indiscriminate aerial pesticide application and deforestation. In 2024, the Supreme Federal Court upheld the lower court's decision and declared State Law No. 3.804/2021 unconstitutional. The ruling that the law was unconstitutional strengthens legal protections for the environment, household farms, and Indigenous and Quilombola communities, as it reverses attempts to expedite environmental licenses for activities that could potentially pollute or degrade the environment, such as aerial fumigation and deforestation of large areas, in defiance of federal regulations. This would have increased the risks of negative socio–environmental impacts, including pesticides contaminating the air, soil, and water and affecting human health. The ruling of the highest court in Brazil not only curbs environmental damage, but it also proves that the judicial branch plays a key role in halting abuses and protecting the environment when governments try to adopt measures that threaten the public interest and the common good.

In Zambia, a key achievement was the review of the adopted Climate Change and Green Economy Bill, where CSOs provided inputs to strengthen climate governance, financing mechanisms, and community benefit – sharing frameworks. Additionally, CSOs made recommendations to the Green Growth Strategy, ensuring that climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and just transition principles were effectively integrated into Zambia's development agenda. Further contributions included submissions to the National 2024 Budget under the Environmental Sustainability Pillar, advocating for increased climate finance allocation, enhanced disaster risk management, and investment in renewable energy. CSOs also played a coordinating role in aligning non – state actor contributions towards the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), facilitating multi – stakeholder engagement to prioritize inclusive, climate – resilient, and community – driven development approaches. These efforts reflect the growing influence of CSOs in policy formulation, ensuring that national strategies incorporate climate justice and sustainability principles.

2.3.2 Formulation and revision of plans at local and sub-national level

In Tunisia, partners have actively contributed to local climate action planning by developing practical guides to support municipalities in designing their climate action plans. These efforts have been positively received by the government, recognizing civil society's role in strengthening municipal capacities and advancing the implementation of Tunisia's NDCs. Local climate planning serves as a key approach to enhancing climate resilience, enabling communities to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to climate impacts in a structured and locally driven manner. By integrating climate considerations into municipal planning, this approach empowers local actors to develop context – specific strategies that align with national climate commitments while addressing the unique vulnerabilities of their communities.

At the sub-national level, village regulations were introduced in 4 villages in Indonesia. These regulations strengthen and protect the traditional Muro Practice, foster community – based mangrove management and waste management. In addition, a regional bill (Raperda) for the protection of local food and commodity – based business development was approved by the regional authorities. The regional bill addressed the importance of protecting sago and other identified local food as part of local values and healthy diet.

After intensive lobbying from the local communities/Indigenous communities, a Municipal Law for the Protection of the Water Reserve in the Mandiyuti Community, Municipality of Cuevo was enacted and adopted in Paraguay. The law establishes the protection of the water springs and streams that supply water to the community, ensuring their conservation as a vital resource for life and the sustainability of the local ecosystem. It also enhances access to climate financing for local solutions by establishing a regulatory framework that enables the allocation of municipal resources and the facilitation of external funding for the conservation and restoration of the water reserve. Additionally, it creates opportunities for investment in green infrastructure and nature – based solutions, ensuring the sustainability of the water ecosystem and strengthening the climate resilience of the Mandiyuti community.

In Bolivia, seven (7) Indigenous communities in Roboré approved their own norms and procedures to strengthen territorial governance and ensure the protection of their natural resources. These regulations establish self – governance mechanisms and rules for the sustainable management of Indigenous territories within the municipality of Roboré. These customary norms and procedures enable communities to access funding for conservation and sustainable land management projects. Additionally, they strengthen the communities' capacity to manage/ access national and international funds aimed at ecological restoration and the implementation of nature – based solutions, ensuring climate resilience and territorial autonomy.

In The Netherlands, we continued to engage Dutch Parliamentarians on several topics including the need for more climate finance, a fair transition, the need to protect some climate activists, inclusion of Indigenous and women's voices and climate contexts of VCA countries. Discussions were held with youth organizations and political parties in The Netherlands. As part of the PARTOS Initiative, we were also engaged in various Campaigns and protests. In July 2024, we co-launched the Triodos initiative calling for an international treaty that bans fossil fuel.

2.3.3 Financial flows are responsive to climate solutions.

In 2024, we achieved significant milestones under the Lobbying and Advocacy on Policy and Climate Finance, advancing our goal of securing a meaningful seat for civil society at the climate decision-making table. This year, we intensified our efforts to influence climate-relevant policies and finance mechanisms by fostering strategic dialogues, building unexpected alliances with private sector entities, faith-based organizations, and media, and amplifying locally shaped, nature-based solutions. Despite shrinking civic spaces in our target countries, we empowered national and local civil society organizations – often with support from international partners – to counter resistance, enhance civic space, and bring technical expertise and compelling examples to policymakers and finance professionals. Our advocacy sparked inclusive public debates, challenged vested interests, and drove tangible progress in aligning policies and funding with the needs of communities most affected by climate change. This section highlights the impactful strategies and successes that defined our lobbying and advocacy efforts in 2024.

With escalating climate risks and more frequent natural disasters, climate finance is a crucial element that must be accessible to frontline communities affected by climate change. Access to climate finance enables the implementation of locally – led climate solutions, supports community resilience, and ensures equitable resource allocation. To advance climate finance for just climate action, we carried out several interventions, such as actively lobbying to increase accessibility of funds to local communities and piloting our own climate finance delivery mechanisms. Since our last reporting during the Mid-Term Review, we influenced an additional 7 laws and policies that influenced access to finance, bringing the total to 19, and piloted or advanced a total of 8 financial mechanisms.

Engagement with the World Bank Gender and Climate Finance department

As the largest multilateral financier of climate action in developing countries, the World Bank Group (WBG) is committed to tackling climate change as part of its mission to alleviate poverty and boost shared prosperity in developing countries. Accordingly, the bank, considering the dwindling climate finance, has led from the front, advancing of innovative climate finance instruments and approaches to maximize the impact of climate finance through mobilizing and deploying concessional finance. However, the nature of some of these instruments presents challenges for countries with limited fiscal space coupled with climate vulnerability, poverty, and narrow fiscal space.

To this extent, through Akina Mama wa Africa, we co-convened (with other like-minded partners like Christian Aid, Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ), The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), Economic Justice for Women Project, Zimbabwe amongst others), a session with the Bank to present evidence on the need to reform new and innovative climate finance instruments to ensure that they are contextual and applicable to countries facing multiple crises (debt, loss of biodiversity, pollution and climate crisis) and ensure that climate finance structure and mode of delivery are inclusive, just and sustainable. The session provided options for consideration by the WBG to bring its climate finance plan and the broader global finance architecture in line with gender, economic and climate justice interlinkages. Accordingly, from April 2024 onward, the World Bank focused on aligning its climate finance with gender, economic, and climate justice interlinkages, including releasing a common approach for measuring climate results, enhancing accountability and transparency, and supporting locally led climate action.

We also engaged with **Green Climate Fund Regional Representative for Southern and Western Africa**. Developed with the intention of facilitating climate action in the global south, the Green Climate Fund has faced several criticisms. Partly, these criticisms have risen from the fact that the communities, for whom the mechanism was established to serve, benefit the least given the bureaucratic and complex access processes associated with the mechanism on one end and on the other end, least accreditation of local institutions with knowledge of local landscapes and circumstances. Accordingly, under the auspice of the African Civil Society Organizations Actors on Climate Finance, we undertook to engage the Green Climate Fund with key issues including enhancing access modalities to civil society, establishing robust monitoring of the actions and impacts of the fund, and simplification of the application process. Through the engagement, the GCF made simplifications to its access modalities and committed to advancing accreditation of local institutions to the fund in line with its strategic plan. Restructuring of the window of application for CSOs was deferred to the Board meeting.

Influencing financial mechanisms

In 2024, we continued to pursue multiple climate finance delivery mechanisms in line with the LLA principles. These models of devolved climate finance support the governments in VCA – implementing countries in translating their ambitious climate agendas into scaled – up action on the ground. The funding mechanisms take a broad view of resilience and recognise that communities are aware and experienced in managing multiple risks simultaneously. Considerable progress was made in 2024 on several financial mechanisms further elaborated in this chapter, while VCA's own Next Level Grant Facility is further elaborated in 2.3.4.

In 2024, delivering a **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** on finance that was affordable, accessible, adequate, and additional climate finance was a major priority for the UNFCCC Secretariat. This would ensure climate justice to local communities and Indigenous people of the global south. Accordingly, throughout the year, our efforts were channeled into, amongst others, technical expert dialogues and negotiations to achieve this goal. We engaged with several actors within civil society, and government to advance locally led proposals to inform the outcome. Specifically, led by SSN, we developed a non – paper on the NCQG on climate finance which consequently informed engagements with the Africa Group of Negotiators, and G77. We also published an op – ed in regional media outlet Daily Maverick, emphasizing the equity concerns at the heart of NCQG negotiations and expectations for COP29, raising public awareness of the importance of the new climate finance goal. We also prepared a bottom-up position paper for COP29, emphasizing the negotiation agenda items on finance, gender and ACE and the importance of including local, global south voices on each of these agenda items. At the end of the year, a new collective quantified goal finance goal was agreed by parties amounting to USD 300b, contrary to the science backed 1.3 trillion. We will continue to lobby and advocate for a just and equitable NCQG.

In Bolivia we engaged on the Fund for the **Management of Protected Areas**, an open fund for the 5 protected areas of AIOC Charagua Lyambae territory, which totals 5 million ha, through the mobilisation of local actors, dissemination of information, training, and support to contribute to the transparency of the process. **The Brazilian Amazon Indigenous Fund – Podáali**, is a financial mechanism that is created to support the plans and life projects of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organisations, which reinforce self-determination and protagonism, value cultures and ways of life, strengthen sustainability and promote the autonomous management of territories and natural resources. This is the first financial mechanism capable of channelling resources to Indigenous movements, organisations, and communities in the Amazon, guaranteeing autonomy and increasing the bargaining power of these actors in climate finance processes. The Fund is an achievement of the Amazon Indigenous Movement, led by the Coordination of Indigenous Organisations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), supported by the VCA program through a partnership with Hivos in the "Indigenous Peoples' Advocacy for Climate Justice" coalition.

The LoCAL Climate Adaptive Facility of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). In line with the Paris Agreement, the LoCAL Facility recognising the local and sub-national dimensions of adaptation needs and implementation has supported vulnerable countries' efforts to enhance their adaptative capacity and strengthen resilience. Since its establishment in 2011, the LoCAL Facility, through the LoCAL Mechanism, has contributed to reducing vulnerability and enhancing the resilience of local communities by establishing a standard and internationally recognised country-based mechanism to channel climate finance to local government authorities for adaptation efforts. The LoCAL Facility supports the implementation of the LoCAL Mechanism, which enables the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) through decentralisation and local-level implementation strategies. LoCAL Facility contributes to the achievement of climate resilience. It supports addressing loss and damage by working directly with the people on the ground by facilitating access to climate finance for local governments.

Since 2022, VCA has been partnering with Avina in the implementation of the first phase of the grant mechanism **Building Approaches to fund local Solutions with climate Evidence (BASE)**. The initiative supported the implementation of eight climate projects in tropical forests of the Global South, while working alongside local researchers of developing a novel approach to develop the projects' climate evidence. In collaboration with VCA, the initiative funded a project in Brazil titled “Barraginhas” as a strategy to strengthen the adaptation of agroecological system to climate change in the amazon region state of Maranhao, Brazil” The system implies constructing in 3 communities, five small earth

dams, that preserve the soil and promote the recharge of the water table which supplies springs, streams and rivers. **Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA)** is a five-year Government of Kenya initiative supported by the World Bank and donors, including the Netherlands, that decentralises climate finance to deliver locally led resilience. Implemented through the National Treasury's Program Implementation Unit and County Climate Change Units, it blends performance-based grants with capacity-building to strengthen local institutions. Participatory Climate Risk Assessments (PCRA) guide Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs) in prioritising investments, from water security to ecosystem restoration, while a Grievance Redress Mechanism ensures transparency.

In 2024, VCA's Kenya influenced to improve how FLLoCA is being implemented, ensuring alignment with VCA principles of inclusion, transparency, and community-driven decision-making and therefore enhancing its impact across eight counties—Homa Bay, Marsabit, Kisumu, Nakuru, Isiolo, Siaya, Kajiado, and Makueni—embedding equity and accountability. VCA ensured marginalised groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples, secured meaningful representation in WCCPCs. Training empowered committees to develop bankable proposals, conduct high-quality PCRA, and adopt climate finance tracking tools, strengthening county-level policy frameworks.

FLLoCA's devolved finance model, paired with VCA's focus on inclusion and accountability, proves that community-led solutions deliver lasting resilience. In 2024, VCA ensured climate finance empowered those most affected, setting a replicable standard for climate justice.

Making a case for Public Grant-Based and Additional Climate Finance

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement provides a framework for international cooperation to enhance ambition and action on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Carbon markets and carbon finance are two mechanisms that aim to mobilise financial resources to support low-carbon development and climate action in the global south. However, their impact is not straightforward and depends on several factors, such as the design of the market rules, the quality of the carbon credits, the level of ambition of the mitigation targets, and the availability of complementary funding sources, etc. Furthermore, carbon markets have also been criticised for causing injustices, such as environmental, social, and economic harm to vulnerable communities and countries.

Nonetheless, in the build up towards the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) in UAE, a lot of emphasis was put forward to activate carbon markets through such platforms as the Africa Climate Summit, the Africa Climate Week, the United Nations General Assembly and finally, the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week without a clear and most critical analysis of the impact this might have on public grant based and additional climate finance for implementation of the Paris Agreement. Consequently, led by Hivos, we conducted multi-country research involving Kenya, Brazil and Indonesia to put a case for public grant-based additional climate finance. Through the research and its policy brief, we aim to lobby; from an evidence standpoint, for replenishment of public grant-based mechanisms and instruments such as the Adaptation Fund (not through contributions from carbon markets proceeds but voluntary contributions by developed parties), the Green Climate Fund as well as VCA's instruments; BASE and Next Level Grant Facility (NLGF).

Nakuru County: A Blueprint for Systemic Change

VCA's advocacy catalysed the Nakuru County Climate Change Act 2021, mandating 1.5% of the county budget for climate action. In 2024, Nakuru allocated Ksh 88 million to WCCPCs, supplemented by Ksh 188 million from FLLoCA. With gender-balanced leadership, fifty-five ward committees designed projects like the Njoro River restoration, securing Ksh 2 million to support the Indigenous Ogiek community. Advocacy training led to a county pledge to raise climate funding to 2.5% from FY24/25. Magdalene Khaemba, Kaptembo WCCPC chairperson, noted, "As a woman, I felt honoured to lead grassroots solutions for the first time."

Marsabit County: Empowering Pastoralist Communities

VCA partners supported four WCCPCs to secure Ksh 1.4 million from donors for local projects. The election of VCA partner PACIDA as Marsabit's FLLoCA CSO representative bolstered social accountability, ensuring community priorities shaped climate actions. Four VCA partners—SUSWATCH, ALIN, SIMUN, and PACIDA—were elected CSO representatives in Kisumu, Nakuru, Siaya, and Marsabit, driving broader collaboration.

Homa Bay County: Upholding Accountability

In November 2024, VCA-backed climate activist Evance Oloo filed a lawsuit against Homa Bay County for mismanaging Ksh 358 million in FLLoCA funds, citing environmental violations, forged permits, and the exclusion of vulnerable groups. The pending case, which will be heard in December, has spurred stricter national oversight, reinforcing VCA's commitment to transparency.

2.3.4. Next Level Grant Facility (NLGF) – making a difference for the hard-to-reach groups.

The **NLGF** solidified its role as a game-changing funding mechanism, channelling resources directly to marginalised communities and grassroots organisations. With a **€3.5 million** budget, the NLGF has broken down barriers to climate finance, prioritising accessibility, flexibility, and local leadership to empower those hardest hit by climate change yet often overlooked by conventional funding systems. The NLGF has proven its worth as a lifeline for grassroots climate action, disbursing **€1.41 million** to the hard-to-reach groups across Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Indonesia, Kenya, Tunisia, and Zambia. This funding supported 503 projects directly benefiting **7.3 million people**. The projects foster local ownership, address climate emergencies, including the defence of environmental/human rights defenders (**143**) and co-creation of locally led climate solutions for adaptation and resilience (**360**). The local communities are supported by a Country Fund Manager, who is rooted in the community and has strong capacity to administer and monitor the grant in a transparent, fair, and just manner. Fund Managers include:



Fundo Casa Socioambiental is an organisation that promotes environmental conservation and sustainability, democracy, respect for socio – environmental rights and social justice through financial support to civil society initiatives and by strengthening their capacities in South America. They have pioneered the debate on socio – environmental philanthropy in Brazil since 2005. Their mission is to generate positive impact on diverse territories, investing in the lives of those who care for them, and establishing connections between communities and organizations.



The Arab Institute for Human Rights is an independent Arab non-governmental organisation based in Tunisia. AIHR works to promote human rights in the Arab region and make them a daily practice that guarantees human dignity for all without any discrimination. It also aims to spread the culture of human rights, its principles, and standards, and educate about them by building knowledge, proposing policies, developing legislation and institutions, and developing the capacities of civil society organisations and national and governmental institutions.



Comunidad en Acción or COMUNA is a national network of more than 50 civil society organisations and institutions, created in 2009 to contribute to the defence of Mother Earth and the human, economic, social and environmental rights of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and Bolivian society, contributing from a vision of climate justice and gender equity to respond to the challenge of the climate crisis.



The Samdhana Institute is a group of activists and practitioners, working alongside Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) to achieve social and environmental justice in Southeast Asia. Their mission is for communities to have land rights for their territories and full recourse to the rule of law; through a combination of independent leadership and organisational support, they will be responsible for their development and well-being.



Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay (CODEHUPY) is the national network of civil society organisations that promote the defence of human rights in Paraguay. It is made up of 39 networks and organisations. Their main objective is to defend and promote the fundamental rights of the human person, demanding compliance and implementation by the Paraguayan State of the commitments established in international and national legal instruments relating to human rights.



Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a global network of slum dwellers driving a collective, bottom-up change agenda for inclusive and resilient cities. SDI seeks to transform slums into resilient neighbourhoods and inclusive cities by collectively driving women-led, bottom-up change agenda for securing tenure, and increasing access to basic services, housing, and livelihoods.

Key Lessons from NLGF

The implementation of the NLGF has highlighted several key lessons and innovative approaches that have enhanced its impact. One of the most significant takeaways is that **local ownership is essential**. By adopting a decentralised management approach, the NLGF ensures that funds align directly with community priorities. This approach has strengthened the effectiveness of interventions, as communities are best positioned to determine their own needs and solutions.

Another critical insight is the importance of **flexibility in funding mechanisms**. Traditional grant application processes often exclude informal groups due to their complexity. The NLGF has addressed this barrier by streamlining its application procedures, making it easier for grassroots organisations and marginalised communities to access much-needed climate finance. This flexibility has enabled innovative and context-specific climate solutions to emerge at the local level.

Additionally, **peer learning has proven to be a powerful tool for strengthening impact**. Cross-regional exchanges have provided opportunities for communities to share best practices and lessons learned, fostering a culture of adaptive learning. By facilitating knowledge sharing between different regions, the NLGF has enhanced the resilience and effectiveness of climate initiatives across diverse contexts.

Looking Ahead

The NLGF's success underscores the vital role of community-led climate finance in driving equitable resilience. Moving forward, the programme aims to build on its achievements and expand its reach in several key ways.

First, there is a strong commitment to **scaling successful models**. The approaches that have proven effective in one region will be adapted and replicated in others, ensuring that more communities benefit from localised climate finance.

Second, the NLGF will continue to **advocate for systemic shifts in climate finance structures**. By demonstrating the effectiveness of community-led grant mechanisms, the program seeks to influence broader funding systems to become more inclusive and accessible, particularly for marginalised groups.

Finally, **deepening partnerships will be a priority**. Strengthening collaborations with local organisations, governments, and international allies will help sustain and amplify grassroots climate action efforts. These partnerships will play a crucial role in ensuring long-term support for community-driven climate initiatives.

The NLGF is a testament to the transformative power of localised climate finance. When resources are directed to the frontlines of the climate crisis, communities do not merely endure its impacts – they take the lead in developing solutions that drive real and lasting change.

2.3.5. Leveraging finance for locally led climate solutions and other VCA goals.

In 2024, all VCA implementing countries strengthened mechanisms to leverage funds for implementing local solutions and achieving VCA goals, including beyond the programme period. We define leveraged finance as VCA-external finance from public, private, and philanthropic sources, which we contributed to through active engagement, building on the VCA narrative and experiences. Leveraged funds have contributed to our work in one of the following ways:

- Funds have gone or will go directly to VCA Alliance members or local partners.
- Funds have gone or will go directly to VCA-supported projects.
- Funds now contribute to concepts or themes that VCA supports, due to VCA's efforts.
- Better or faster delivery of existing funding towards VCA target groups.

By the end of 2024, the Alliance and local partners had leveraged an estimated 47.8 million euros (Figure 3) towards the VCA Target that "By 2025, USD 100 million of climate finance is leveraged/mobilised for scaling locally-led solutions in VCA target countries.

Other details, such as the level of commitment (from proposal to formal commitment to implementation), the origin and recipients of the funding, and the years during which the funding will become available, have been tracked.

This finance is leveraged through all the regional programmes. A huge additional potential for leveraging comes from the systematic participation of Avina in a space for talks at the Amazônia 21 Institute on creating an Investment Facility, as a blended finance strategy for the sustainable development of the Legal Amazon. This facility aims to mobilise 121 million USD over the next years to finance bioeconomy solutions in the region. While still in the development stage, it offers a scaled impact by promoting sustainable business while focusing on the value of Amazon's social, environmental, and economic diversity.

More common, however, are numerous funding opportunities at the local scale that were made possible through direct support of the VCA. For example, on 15 occasions, VCA enabled village funds to be used for climate adaptation projects and local solutions in Indonesia, ranging in size from several hundred to several thousands of euros. For instance, the Women's Federation of Gedongkiwo received a budget to fund the river cleaning and conservation activity, urban farming training, and youth training, with a total budget of 2100 euros. In total, Indonesia leveraged 1.2 million euros for the local solutions they support, with most of the funds (969.000 euros) coming from non-government sources.

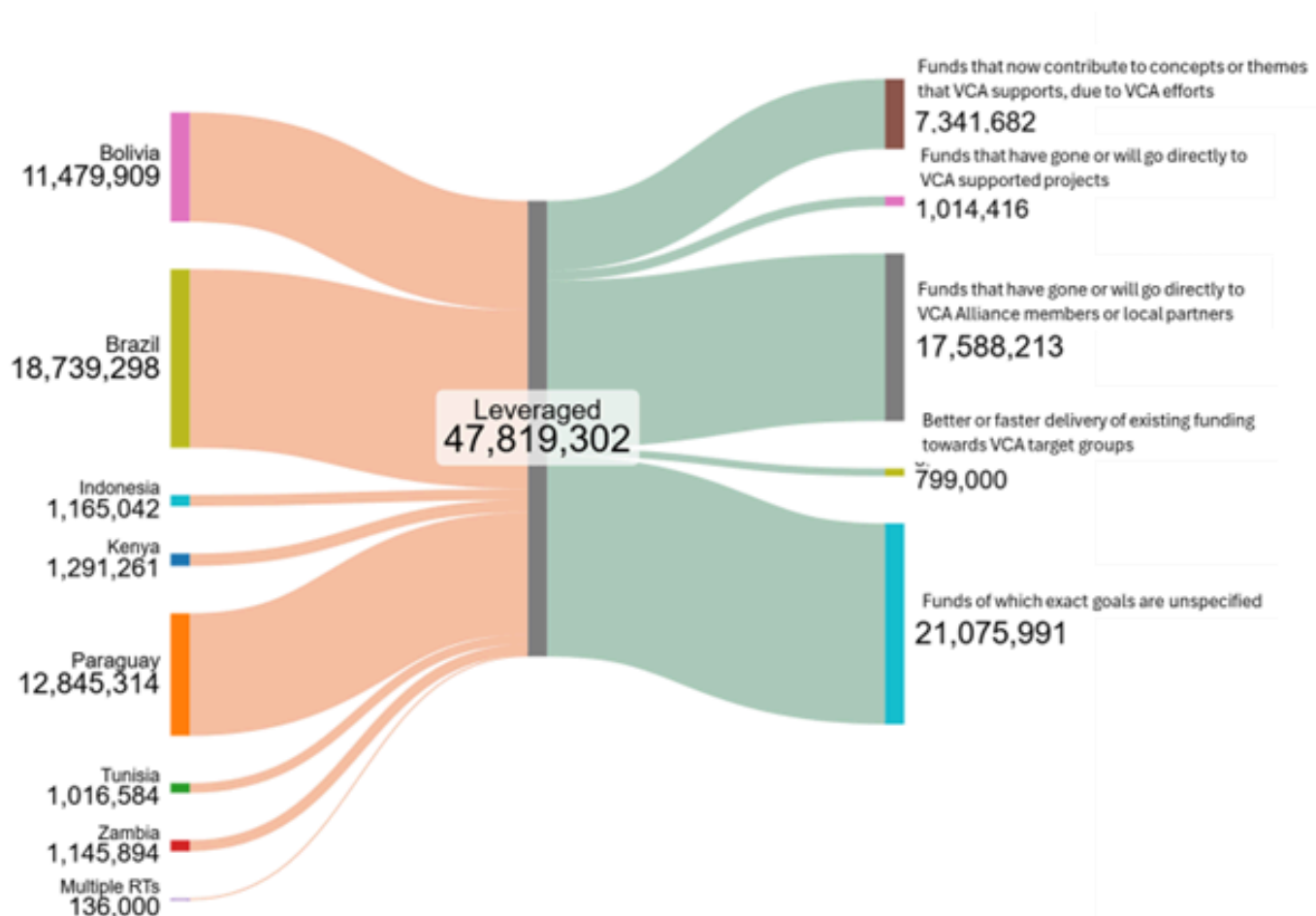


Figure 3: Over the duration of the program, VCA leveraged an estimated 47.8 million euros through different pathways for VCA partners, projects, and goals.

3.0 COLLABORATIVE PATHWAYS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



In 2024, the VCA programme demonstrated the power of collaboration as a cornerstone for advancing just climate solutions across seven implementation countries. By fostering partnerships with local communities, governments, embassies, international alliances, and other stakeholders, VCA amplified marginalised voices, influenced policy, and built resilient networks capable of addressing complex climate challenges. We highlight key learnings and examples from these collaborative efforts, underscoring the importance of trust, inclusivity, and strategic engagement in driving sustainable impact.

Strengthening Local Partnerships

Collaboration with local partners proved essential in enhancing ownership, building capacity, and sustaining climate action. In Brazil, the coalition model enabled diverse organisations to access resources and reinforce networks through flexible financing mechanisms like the Emergency Fund. At the same time, the VCA Brazil Partners Organisations Forum fostered dialogue and strategy-sharing. Similarly, in Kenya, co-creation and joint planning with local partners in counties like Homabay and Kisumu optimised resources. They bolstered advocacy, with initiatives like the Climate Boot Camp amplifying grassroots voices. Indonesia's Penta Helix collaboration model bridged local partners, universities, and private actors, exemplified by the KEHATI Foundation and Panah Papua's joint efforts to influence food security policies in Teluk Bintuni Regency. Across Bolivia/Paraguay, local partners independently forged collaborations beyond VCA's scope, demonstrating the lasting value of trust-based networks. Key lessons include the need for continuous capacity-building (Tunisia) and the empowerment of traditional leaders (Zambia) to ensure community-led solutions endure.

Engaging Governments for Policy Impact

Strategic collaboration with governments at local, national, and regional levels yielded significant policy advancements, though challenges like political instability required adaptive approaches. In Brazil, the Regional Team's CUIDA training facilitated dialogue with federal deputies and IBAMA during a Solemn Session honouring Chico Mendes. At the same time, coalitions like Vozes do Tocantins shaped regional legislation as Amicus Curiae. Kenya's partners influenced county-level policies, such as the Kisumu County Climate Change Fund Regulations, by aligning community priorities with government frameworks. Zambia's advocacy led to a breakthrough with the National Assembly's adoption of Community Development Agreements in the Climate Change Bill 2024, driven by sustained

engagement with ministries. In Indonesia, collaboration with sub-national governments laid the groundwork for influencing national climate policies in 2025. Lessons learned highlight the value of engaging internal champions (Kenya) and permanent staff (Tunisia) to effectively navigate political shifts and align priorities.

Leveraging Diplomatic Support

Engagement with embassies provided critical resources and amplified VCA's advocacy on international stages. Brazil's Regional Team maintained dialogue with the Dutch Embassy, sharing progress and exploring opportunities at COP and G20 events. Mathare Youth Advocates secured funding from the Embassy of Portugal for flood response in Kenya, while Zambia tapped the European Union Mission for renewable energy projects. Indonesia collaborated with the Dutch Embassy during Indonesia Climate Week, aligning with just energy transition priorities. Bolivia's VCA followed embassy guidance to explore financial partnerships with FIE and Rabobank. A recurring lesson is the importance of aligning advocacy with diplomatic priorities to unlock sustained support and networking opportunities, as seen across all countries.

Bridging Diverse Stakeholders

Collaboration with academics, civil society, and the private sector expanded the reach and impact of climate initiatives. In Brazil, partnerships with the Climate Observatory and Fundación Avina enriched advocacy and resource mobilisation, while local coalitions mediated with private actors for solutions like water filtration in Tapajós. Indonesia's collaborations with UPN Yogyakarta and Singapore Polytechnic advanced urban farming and women's climate leadership, with private sector proposals emerging in Jakarta. Kenya's multi-stakeholder synergy prevented duplication, while Zambia's partnerships with CSOs and private actors scaled solar irrigation solutions. Tunisia's academic and CSO engagements bolstered advocacy, emphasising the need to align strategies with stakeholder interests for effective mobilisation.

Fostering International Alliances

Cross-regional and global partnerships enriched VCA's advocacy and knowledge exchange. Brazil's collaboration with VCA Paraguay and SSN Cross Regional Grants connected Tunisian and Brazilian organisations, fostering mutual learning for COP30 strategies. Kenya's ties with feminist climate networks across Africa and Latin America amplified intersectional perspectives at global forums. Indonesia highlighted Indigenous knowledge at the World Water Forum, while Tunisia's partnerships with the Working Group for Energy Democracy advanced just energy transitions. Though Zambia lacked formal international alliances, cross-regional youth exchanges with SSN Zambia partners signalled the potential for future collaboration. A key lesson is that international alliances thrive on shared storytelling and peer learning, as seen in Brazil's Voices Magazine contributions and Kenya's feminist advocacy at COP.

Looking ahead, the collaborative pathways forged reveal both the potential and the challenges of inclusive climate action. Flexible financing, trust-building, and strategic alignment with diverse stakeholders emerged as critical drivers of success, yet political instability, resource gaps, and the need for sustained engagement remain hurdles.

4.0 SOUTHERN LEADERSHIP



VCA member advocating at COP29, credit: Hivos

The VCA Alliance was set up to realise climate justice and to bring about structural change within the sector, empowering southern, local organisations to take the lead in tackling climate solutions on their terms. In 2024, the Alliance continued its strong commitment to fostering a deliberate and thoughtful shift in power dynamics between Global North and Global South civil society organisations. The Alliance recognised that it could only legitimately advocate for this if it led by example, reflecting the structures it wishes to see globally within its organisational set-up.

The foregoing has highlighted some of the measures taken towards achieving southern leadership. For example, we created value by applying innovations to challenge the systemic social and environmental issues underlying and supporting our ToC. The different facets of innovation that we have employed in this program include, bringing together unusual partners, including voices which are not heard, strengthening southern leadership, supporting local communities to access climate finance, changing the ways things are done- diverse alliances with budget responsibility and flexibility, citizen science as well as shifting paradigms i.e. prioritising non-traditional partners, thus changing narratives. Hence, local communities and Indigenous communities are change agents. We have also created new horizontal connections at the local levels amongst the non-government players that have acted in separate ways for the past few years. We have positioned southern feminist movements to be in the lead and prioritised the use of Indigenous knowledge. Our bottom-up, participatory processes ensure that those with no voice are equally engaged.

Here, we outline key developments in the programme's governance, global programme work, and commitment to Southern leadership. These internal strengthening processes are crucial for ensuring the effective and impactful delivery of the VCA programme and for laying a robust foundation as we approach the end of our initial strategic phase.

Enhanced Governance and Joint Programme Team Effectiveness

In 2024, the Steering Committee's role was refined to provide timely and strategic advisory support to the Secretariat and the Joint Programme Team (JPT), particularly on critical areas such as leveraging opportunities in the Global South. To optimise decision-making within the JPT, a revised workplan was implemented, clearly assigning responsibilities to each member to ensure coherent delivery across all program milestones. Furthermore, JPT members strengthened their role as focal persons for specific regions, strengthening support and communication with the regional teams.

Focused Global Programme Work through OKRs

The Global Programme (GloPro) Team undertook a strategic review, consolidating previous work into a more focused and goal-oriented approach. Adopting the 'Objectives and Key Results' (OKR) collaborative methodology facilitated setting ambitious yet measurable goals. The initial four workstreams were strategically collapsed into two overarching strategic objectives with clearly defined, measurable results aligned with the VCA Global Targets. Corresponding actions and budget allocations were revised to support the achievement of these key results.

Reorienting capacity and capacity strengthening

Reorienting capacity and capacity strengthening ensure that the programmes are re-rooted in the capacity that exists in the global South. The Alliance sought to address staff limitations in the task forces. A full-time team member at the global level was assigned to coordinate the PMEL TF, support OH practice and analysis, data collection on targets and ETR preparations. A dedicated full-time staff member within the Regional Team was appointed to lead and coordinate efforts focused on reflection and learning. WWF and Hivos allocated dedicated staff to support the Regional Teams, and SSN provided a full-time staff member as the Global Learning Coordinator. Each alliance partner explored the possibility of 'outsourcing' to a local partner with the requisite skills and expertise in ME. Alliance partners, i.e., Hivos, assigned additional staff to the Comms Task Force.

5.0 ADVANCING THE LEARNING AGENDA AND LESSONS LEARNT



The CUIDA training in the Brazilian Amazon, credit: CUIDA

In 2024, the VCA programme solidified its commitment to advancing climate justice by harnessing the power of localised action, coalition-building, and adaptive strategies across Brazil, Kenya, Indonesia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Tunisia, and Zambia. The VCA learning agenda has been a cornerstone of this effort, driving innovation, fostering local ownership, and bridging country-level insights with programmatic goals. Through annual partner meetings, outcome harvesting workshops, and global learning sessions – culminating in the alliance-wide event on 30–31 January 2025 – the programme has synthesised critical lessons that not only reflect its achievements but also chart a path for future climate initiatives as it nears its close in 2025.

5.1 Learning Agenda

The VCA learning agenda has **catalysed adaptive management by embedding reflection into annual cycles and facilitating cross-country and cross-partner exchanges**. **In-country**, annual partner meetings served as vital platforms for collaboration, with Brazil's coalitions refining advocacy through joint action plans, and Zambia's workshops uniting 22 CSOs to integrate gender-responsive strategies. **Globally**, VCA's participation in events like the Resilience Hub panel at COP29, alongside partners such as SSN and Fundacion Avina, advanced learning on devolving finance to local levels, drawing from innovations like the NLGF.

The 2024 alliance-wide learning session, facilitated by SSN and the PMEL Taskforce, explored five key topics: mutual capacity strengthening, local ownership, alliance collaboration, sustainability, and advocacy strategies. **A learning consultant**, contracted early in the year, compiled a draft report through participatory methods – document reviews, stakeholder engagement, and qualitative analysis – offering recommendations such as streamlined digital platforms and increased grassroots funding. These efforts underscore VCA's role as a blueprint for community-led climate action worldwide.

5.2 Lessons Learnt

By synthesising experiences from the six regions, we have distilled actionable insights aligned with our ToC, emphasising local empowerment and strategic influence.

1. Mutual Capacity Strengthening: Empowering Local Leadership

Targeted capacity-building has proven transformative. In Brazil, the "CUIDA" training empowered 38 young people and women to influence the national Climate Plan, while Zambia's agroecology workshops, led by Kasisi Agriculture Training College, equipped women to drive 61% of climate-smart initiatives. Tunisia's sketch-noting sessions enhanced storytelling for advocacy, illustrating how tailored, collaborative learning builds resilience and positions local actors as change agents.

2. Agenda Setting and Movement Building: Amplifying Diverse Voices

Strategic communication and networks have elevated marginalised perspectives. Kenya's "Hands-Off Our Acacia Trees" youth campaign leveraged digital media to broaden reach, while Bolivia/Paraguay's Climate Action Journalism initiative united partners like WWF Paraguay to spotlight community communicators. Indonesia's climate resilience hubs and digital campaigns further amplified grassroots realities, proving that creative, pluralistic outreach fosters collective momentum across local and global scales.

3. Lobby and Advocacy: Scaling Impact with Evidence

Locally rooted advocacy, paired with adaptive tools, has driven policy wins. Brazil's Voices of Tocantins Coalition secured a Supreme Federal Court decision, and Zambia's advocacy embedded Community Development Agreements in the 2024 Climate Change Act, ensuring carbon credit benefits for communities. Kenya's Mulika Tracking Tool enhanced climate finance accountability in counties like Kisumu, while Tunisia's policy briefs supported farmer-led initiatives. These examples highlight the potency of combining local ownership with evidence-based influence.

4. Local Ownership: The Foundation of Sustainability

Empowering communities to lead has anchored VCA's impact. In Indonesia, community-driven solutions ensured long-term relevance, while Bolivia and Paraguay's NLGF flexibility enabled agile responses to floods. Kenya's county-level partnerships in Homa Bay avoided duplication, building critical mass for advocacy. The lesson is clear: locally led efforts, like Brazil's Indigenous Peoples Advocacy Coalition sharing climate knowledge, foster resilience and ownership essential for lasting change.

5. Adaptive Strategies: Navigating Complexity

Flexibility has been key to sustaining momentum. Kenya pivoted to digital advocacy amid civic unrest, while Bolivia/Paraguay extended timelines to address structural barriers like misinformation. Tunisia adapted by supporting the Local Conference of Youth when municipal partnerships faltered, and Zambia scaled biochar farming despite funding delays. These adjustments underscore that agility and strong coordination ensure relevance in dynamic contexts.

Key Lessons for Future Programming

- 1. Capacity Strengthening Creates Legacies:** As in Brazil and Zambia, investments in skills empower local actors to secure resources and influence policy sustainably.
- 2. Collaboration Magnifies Reach:** Alliances, like Indonesia's ICW 2024 partnerships and Paraguay's PAC initiative, accelerate progress across sectors and generations.
- 3. Local Roots, Global Reach:** Advocacy grounded in community needs, as seen in Brazil's COP30 engagements and Kenya's finance tools, gains traction when linked to international platforms.
- 4. Adaptability Sustains Impact:** Flexible approaches, such as Tunisia's sketch noting and Kenya's relief pivots, maintain momentum amid crises.
- 5. Gender Equity Drives Transformation:** Zambia's women-led interventions and Tunisia's grassroots mobilisation highlight the need to prioritise inclusive governance.

In 2024, we advanced our learning agenda by proving that climate justice thrives when local voices lead, supported by robust networks and adaptive strategies. From Brazil's Amazonian coalitions to Zambia's policy victories, these lessons offer a roadmap for a just, resilient future. As the program evolves, enhancing digital collaboration, securing sustainable funding, and fostering South-to-South exchanges—building on Zambia's regional efforts—will ensure its legacy endures beyond 2025.

6.0 AMPLIFYING IMPACT THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION



Who we are ▾

Voices ▾

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News and Views

Speak to us



Effective communication is paramount to the VCA programme's success. Our integrated communications strategy strategically leverages information dissemination to shape public narratives, foster informed decision-making, encourage civic engagement, and mobilise citizens towards just climate action. The consistent growth in our online presence and engagement across various platforms underscores the program's increasing visibility and influence since its inception.

6.1 Expanding Digital Reach and Engagement

Our knowledge and communication channels have demonstrated significant growth in the past year, as evidenced by the following key indicators:

Website Performance

- **User Engagement:** The [VCA website](#) experienced a substantial increase in user activity in 2024. Total active and new users rose to 5,600, compared to 3,800 in 2023. Notably, we also saw the emergence of a returning user base, with 1,560 individuals revisiting the site in 2024. This indicates expanded reach, growing interest, and sustained engagement with our content.

Newsletter Engagement

- **'Voices in Action' (Mailchimp):** Our dedicated newsletter continues to be a vital tool for disseminating program updates and insights. The subscriber base on Mailchimp saw a notable increase from 820 in the previous reporting period to 1,124 by the end of 2024, representing a **37.1% growth**.

- **Key Newsletter Editions:** In 2024, four newsletter editions of the 'Voices in Action' newsletter were published. Our October 2024 COP29 edition spotlighted the Global Programme's preparations for the conference and related online events. This edition focused on critical themes such as strengthening local voices in climate action, global climate advocacy efforts, and a key position paper advocating for the meaningful inclusion of local perspectives in global climate decision-making processes leading up to COP29.
- **'Voices in Action' (LinkedIn):** Extending our newsletter reach, the 'Voices in Action' newsletter space on VCA's LinkedIn page, launched in March 2023, has garnered significant traction, reaching 1,252 subscribers by the end of 2024. This demonstrates the programme's ability to engage professional audiences on this platform.
- **Overall Newsletter Growth:** The combined growth in subscriber numbers across Mailchimp and LinkedIn platforms clearly illustrates global audiences' increasing interest and engagement with the VCA programme's activities and insights.

LinkedIn Presence

- **Follower Growth:** Our LinkedIn page experienced substantial growth in 2024, with the follower count increasing significantly from 727 at the time of the 2023 report to 3,540 by the end of December 2024, representing a **387% increase**.
- **Page Views and Unique Visitors:** Alongside follower growth, the page also recorded 2,246 page views and attracted 1,160 unique (new) visitors in 2024, indicating increased visibility and interest in the program's content among LinkedIn users.

Twitter (X) Engagement

- **Subscriber Growth:** Twitter (X) remains a valuable platform for real-time communication, engagement, and amplification of VCA content and news from our alliance organisations and local partners to a global audience. Our subscriber base on X grew from 1,530 reported in 2023 to 1,885 by the end of 2024, demonstrating continued reach and connectivity.

YouTube Channel Impact

- **Viewer Engagement:** Our YouTube channel serves as a crucial repository for visual content highlighting local climate action, lobbying, and advocacy efforts from our implementing countries and the Global Programme. In 2024, the channel garnered 4,176 views, accumulated 147.8 hours of watch time, and gained 50 new subscribers.
- **Year-on-Year Growth:** Comparative analytics between 2023 and 2024 reveal a significant increase in key metrics, including views, watch time hours, and impressions, highlighting the growing impact and reach of our video content.

The substantial growth across our website, newsletters, social media platforms, and video content indicates a growing global interest in our work and the increasing influence of our messaging in shaping narratives and fostering action towards just climate solutions. These communication efforts are instrumental in amplifying the voices of local actors and contributing to a more inclusive and impactful climate movement.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS



People living in harmony with nature, Brazil, credit: Rogerio

In 2024, we continued to prioritise the integration of ESSF across its operations, ensuring that climate action initiatives remain inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable. The programme safeguarded vulnerable communities, upheld human rights, and mitigated adverse social and environmental impacts by embedding safeguards into project design, implementation, and monitoring.

7.1 ESSF Implementation: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Across the VCA countries, 2024 saw robust efforts to align activities with ESSF standards, often through capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and localised solutions. In Brazil, the VCA Brazil Emergency Fund, in partnership with Fundo Casa, supported 22 threatened environmental defenders – 41% of whom were female leaders – through rapid-response grants addressing protection, security, and legal needs. Additionally, seven climate emergency grants bolstered collective resilience, while a public call supported 18 community-led projects, with 67% coordinated by women. These efforts demonstrate how safeguards can empower marginalised groups while addressing climate vulnerabilities in the Amazon.

In Zambia, the Makumucha Springs Restoration Project exemplified community-led, nature-based solutions under ESSF principles. By involving traditional leaders in participatory decision-making, the project minimised land-use conflicts and enhanced local ownership, while initiatives like sustainable cookstoves in Chongwe reduced deforestation and firewood dependency. Similarly, Kenya supported partners like the Baringo County Conservancies Association (BCCA) in drafting safeguard policies, enabling them to secure funding by meeting donor prerequisites – a testament to how ESSF compliance can unlock resources.

Indonesia integrated ESSF through capacity building, embedding safeguard clauses in subgrantee contracts and developing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) guidance, ensuring respect for Indigenous rights. Meanwhile, Bolivia and Paraguay adopted medium-risk categorisations under WWF's ESSF screening, developing Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs) to maintain inclusive dialogue, alongside Paraguay's draft Gender Plan to address equity. In Tunisia, proactive monitoring and risk analyses, such as those for renewable energy projects, ensured alignment with local needs and sustainability goals.

Challenges persisted, however. Zambia faced delays due to limited partner capacity for Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), particularly in school-based climate-smart gardening initiatives. Similarly, Tunisia struggled with inconsistent ESSF application across alliance members, while Brazil highlighted the ongoing resource constraints threatening the continuity of safeguard-focused actions.

7.2 Grievance Mechanisms: Strengthening Accountability

In 2024, the VCA programme's grievance mechanisms remained critical tools for transparency and trust-building, with varied approaches tailored to local contexts. In Brazil, the Regional Team reinforced the mechanism's availability through virtual forums and bilateral dialogues, resolving a gender equality violation by supporting a prevention course and removing the offender from leadership—a model of responsive action. Indonesia leveraged existing organisational mechanisms alongside a public grievance channel, exemplified by Panah Papua's advocacy with Ombudsman Indonesia, which unlocked government support for Wapakaramui's community programs.

Kenya emphasised peer learning and refresher training, with SSN and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs resolving a partner issue before escalation, highlighting proactive coordination. Zambia localised mechanisms through traditional leaders, enhancing cultural relevance, though hesitancy to use formal channels and bureaucratic delays with external stakeholders posed challenges. In Bolivia, Paraguay and Tunisia, grievance mechanisms were publicised but saw no formal use, suggesting either effective prevention or underutilisation, underscoring the need for greater awareness.

A common lesson across countries was the value of informal dialogue complementing formal systems. Brazil's trust-building conversations and Indonesia's safe spaces fostered partner confidence, while Zambia's multi-channel reporting (digital, in-person) improved accessibility. However, challenges like delayed reporting (Zambia) and fear of backlash (Brazil, Zambia) highlight the need for stronger sensitisation and protection measures.

7.3 Addressing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH)

We maintained a zero tolerance stance on SEAH in 2024, with no reported cases across the six countries, a testament to robust prevention efforts. Best practices included Zambia's mandatory SEAH training and partnerships with women's rights organisations to raise awareness, alongside Kenya's focus on fostering safe reporting environments. Indonesia supported capacity building on SEAH safeguards, sharing procedures among partners, particularly for Indigenous women and marginalised groups. At the same time, Brazil emphasises ethical protocols and attentive listening to protect vulnerable participants in the Amazon.

Tunisia reinforced awareness by raising clear reporting channels and ensuring ethical conduct, while Bolivia and Paraguay relied on organisational policies to maintain vigilance. Challenges included monitoring SEAH policy implementation (Indonesia), ensuring rural awareness (Zambia), and addressing cultural barriers to reporting (Zambia). These underscore the need for continuous training, confidential mechanisms, and localised sensitisation to sustain a safe, inclusive programme environment.

Looking Forward

The VCA programme's 2024 experience reaffirms that effective safeguards require adaptability, community ownership, and sustained investment. The programme can deepen its impact by scaling best practices—like Brazil's emergency funds, Zambia's nature-based solutions, and Kenya's policy mainstreaming—while addressing capacity gaps and cultural barriers. As climate vulnerabilities intensify, integrating ESSF, responsive grievance systems, and SEAH prevention will remain central to delivering just and equitable climate action in 2025 and beyond.

8.0 MITIGATING RISKS AND SUSTAINING IMPACT AMIDST CHALLENGES



VCA's Finance Taskforce

In 2024, our programme navigated a complex landscape of risks across different implementation countries. These risks were categorised into contextual, programmatic, organisational, and technology/data-related challenges and elaborated on in Annexe III. While some risks were anticipated in the annual plan, others emerged due to evolving political, economic, and environmental conditions. Through proactive mitigation strategies, the programme ensured that these risks did not significantly derail planned activities and outcomes.

One of the most pressing challenges in 2024 was the **shrinking civic space** in various countries, exacerbated by political transitions, restrictive legislation, and social unrest. In Indonesia, for example, the election process triggered widespread demonstrations and governance delays, leading to a slowdown in policy implementation. In Kenya, after youth-led protests, the Finance Bill 2024 saw increased scrutiny and threats directed at civil society organisations (CSOs). Similarly, in Tunisia, legal restrictions such as Law No. 54 continued to limit freedom of expression and advocacy efforts. To counteract these challenges, the VCA program strengthened engagement with key stakeholders, used secure digital platforms for coordination, and leveraged coalitions and media partnerships to amplify messages and safeguard civic actors.

Political instability also posed a significant risk to programme implementation. In Brazil, municipal leadership changes resulted in a lack of commitment to climate-related policies. At the same time, Paraguay and Bolivia saw heightened tensions between power groups and grassroots organisations over resource governance. Likewise, in Zambia, funding delays and administrative bottlenecks slowed down the execution of climate resilience initiatives. In response, the program adopted flexible implementation approaches, such as extending project timelines, strengthening local advocacy efforts, and enhancing collaboration with government officials and other CSOs.

Environmental risks were another major concern in 2024, as extreme weather events – including droughts, wildfires, and floods – affected project timelines and community resilience. In Indonesia, El Niño-induced dry conditions increased the threat of forest fires, while Brazil faced severe droughts that hindered agricultural and conservation efforts. In Bolivia and Paraguay, natural disasters disrupted livelihoods and economic activities, prompting the VCA program to invest in early warning systems, adaptive strategies, and community-led disaster responses. Similar climate-related disruptions in Zambia, particularly droughts, impacted water availability and food security. To mitigate these

challenges, the programme supported climate-smart agricultural practices, water conservation projects, and environmental advocacy to push for stronger climate policies.

Additionally, **digital security and financial risks** emerged in 2024. Several VCA partners reported cyberattacks that threatened their operations, particularly in Brazil. To enhance digital safety, organisations engaged in capacity-building efforts around cybersecurity and developed protective measures for data security. Financial risks also became evident in Tunisia, where some partners struggled to receive international bank transfers due to regulatory restrictions. The program responded by allowing alternative banking arrangements and implementing no-cost extensions to ensure that partners could continue their work uninterrupted.

Organisational and programmatic risks, such as power imbalances among alliance members, friction between partners, and knowledge gaps in climate governance, were also addressed through ongoing training, dialogue sessions, and co-creation processes. In Kenya, for example, continuous capacity-building efforts were undertaken to enhance the understanding of climate issues among community-based organisations (CBOS). Similarly, in Indonesia and Brazil, efforts were made to ensure that advocacy strategies were inclusive, evidence-based, and strategically aligned with political realities.

Despite these challenges, the VCA programme remained resilient and adaptable. The programme successfully mitigated threats through proactive risk management, strong partnerships, and a commitment to climate justice while advancing its objectives across multiple countries.

9.0 EXIT AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR A LONG LEGACY



The Varadouro Collective; young people from a traditional community that guide public policies, credit: Regional Team Brazil

The VCA's Theory of Change (ToC) anchors our exit and sustainability strategy in a transformative vision that ensures enduring impact beyond the programme's timeline. By fostering civil society leadership, particularly among women, youth, and marginalised groups, we empower local actors to co-create and advocate for inclusive, locally shaped climate solutions that resonate with ecological and human rights imperatives. Our focus on building unusual, disruptive coalitions across rural-urban divides and enhancing digital activism equips local civil society with the tools, networks, and legitimacy to influence policy and redirect climate finance long-term. As outlined in our ToC, capacity strengthening and knowledge democratisation cultivate self-sustaining ecosystems of innovation and advocacy, reducing dependency on external support. By prioritising inclusive governance and amplifying marginalised voices, VCA ensures that climate actions remain equitable and resilient, embedding a legacy of empowered communities capable of driving just transitions independently.

As our programme nears its conclusion in 2025, the VCA alliance is fully committed to executing a strategic, responsible, and sustainable exit. **Our goal is to ensure that the locally led, gender-responsive, and climate-just outcomes we have worked so hard to achieve remain impactful long after the programme officially ends.** By weaving our core principles into the fabric of our partners' strategies, bolstering local capacities, and securing vital resources and relationships, we are laying the groundwork for a lasting influence on climate justice advocacy and community-driven solutions.

Clear and purposeful objectives guide our Exit and Sustainability Plan. We are focused on orchestrating a seamless closure of all VCA-funded activities while embedding the programme's foundational principles – Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), and climate justice – into the long-term visions of both alliance members and local partners. A significant part of this effort involves equipping local partners with the tools and skills to independently carry forward advocacy efforts, maintain networks, and drive climate action initiatives. Beyond that, we are determined to safeguard the relationships, knowledge, and resources cultivated throughout the program's journey and to strategically position VCA's achievements for future funding opportunities and potential scaling.

Our progress in 2024 (Annexe IV) is a testament to the strength of our **six key strategies**. First, we have approached programme closure with scrupulous attention, ensuring funds are disbursed responsibly, conducting a thorough end-term evaluation, and completing audits after June 2025. We have kept local partners integrally involved, fostering transparency and collaboration as we navigate staff transitions and wind down operations. Second, the heart of VCA – its commitment to locally shaped climate solutions – has been woven into the strategic frameworks of our organisations. Tools like the Inclusive Conservation Playbook and guiding pillars such as Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) are now cornerstones of ongoing and future programs, including the Coastal Communities Initiative and the 2030 Roadmap, ensuring our principles live on.

Third, the robust partnerships we have built across the alliance are set to endure beyond 2025. In regions like Indonesia, Kenya, and Zambia, we are actively exploring ways to sustain the innovative approaches we have developed together, reinforcing the networks that have been so vital to our success. Fourth, we have harnessed the power of storytelling and knowledge preservation by curating a rich collection of resources – training manuals, frameworks, podcasts, and videos. These materials, alongside compelling impact stories like those of the Motacusito women, are safeguarded in the VCA legacy website and other digital archives, serving as enduring proof of the transformative potential of locally led climate action.

Fifth, our unwavering support for local partners continues through joint fundraising efforts, ensuring community voices remain at the forefront of climate dialogues. Finally, we are laying the groundwork for the future by pursuing new funding opportunities to sustain and expand VCA's agenda. To date, alliance members and local partners have collectively secured over 47.8 million Euros, and we are working tirelessly on joint proposals to tap into both public and private climate finance, keeping our momentum alive.

We are also prepared to address risks that could challenge our transition. To prevent a loss of momentum after 2025, we are embedding VCA principles into partner strategies and sustaining partnerships. Funding gaps are tackled through active fundraising and diversified sources, with the Dream Team leading the charge. To avoid knowledge dilution, we are consolidating our learnings into digital repositories and structured transfer processes. To ensure no one is left behind, our transition plans prioritise inclusivity, keeping marginalised groups at the heart of decision-making.

Regionally, our efforts are tailored to local contexts. In Kenya, governments and NGOs have adopted tools like Mulika (a community-led climate finance tracking tool) and restoration practices, with funding secured to carry them forward. In Indonesia, locally led initiatives are being integrated into government programmes, supported by strengthened networks and additional resources. In Paraguay, advocacy continues through other initiatives, with alliance partners highlighting VCA's results to attract future funding.

Looking beyond 2025, we are confident that VCA has sparked lasting change in climate justice, local leadership, and rights-based conservation. Through careful sustainability planning and a responsible exit, the alliances, methodologies, and community-driven solutions we have nurtured will continue to influence climate governance at every level. Our collective work ensures that the voices amplified by VCA remain a powerful force in shaping a just, inclusive, and sustainable future. With consultations already underway and the fundraising team driving fundraising efforts, we are poised to explore a potential follow-up phase, ready to meet the ongoing challenges of the climate crisis with renewed energy and purpose.

End-Term Evaluation Update: In October 2024, the VCA Reference Group, which consists of internal and external experts, was formed. It was tasked with reviewing and approving key outputs from the end-term evaluation. From 33 proposals, the VCA Reference Group selected the consultancy firm Southern Hemisphere to execute the evaluation. Following the guidelines from IOB, the Terms of Reference include evaluation questions that relate to all six OECD-DAC criteria. A specific focus will be placed on outcomes, impact and effectiveness. The assessment inception phase for the evaluation kicked off in February 2025 with an inception workshop and Theory of Change workshop, aimed at further developing the aims of the evaluation and demonstrating the VCA team's mutual understanding of the global Theory of Change. The project is on track, with the inception phase completed and data collection to run through May – July 2025. The final report is expected by the end of this year (2025). The findings will be critical in informing future program strategies.

10. CONCLUSION



Zulma, an Indigenous woman activist in the Chaco, Regional Team Paraguay

In 2024, amidst record-breaking global temperatures and shrinking civic spaces, the VCA demonstrated the transformative power of locally led climate initiatives. Across our seven implementing countries, VCA empowered 215 partners – prioritising women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised communities – to become agents of change in the climate justice movement.

Our ToC proved resilient as we made significant progress across all three pillars: mutual capacity strengthening supported 490 local initiatives that improved the resilience of over 2 million people and restoring over half a million hectares of land; innovative storytelling and movement building reached more than 3.5 million people through diverse platforms; and strategic advocacy influenced 51 policies, bringing our program total to 99, while leveraging €47.8 million for community-driven climate action. The NLGF exemplified our commitment to accessible climate finance, disbursing 1.41 million Euros to 503 grassroots projects benefiting over 7.3 million people. Meanwhile, our robust safeguarding mechanisms, environmental protocols, and learning agenda ensured that equity and inclusion remained central to our approach.

As we enter the final year of our five-year strategic partnership in 2025, and against a backdrop of global political shifts and environmental urgency, VCA remains steadfast in its vision: ensuring local civil society groups lead transformative climate solutions. Our exit strategy – focused on knowledge preservation, sustained networks, and continued fundraising – will secure the program's legacy while empowering communities to drive a just and resilient climate future.

The stories and achievements detailed in this report, along with the comprehensive annexes, testify to the power of collective action in advancing climate justice. In a world of uncertainty, VCA's commitment to systemic change through justice, inclusion, and innovation burns brighter than ever.