

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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# ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                                                         |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| AMwA   | Akina Mama wa Afrika                                    |
| CSOs   | Civil Society Organisations                             |
| GloPro | Global Programme VCA                                    |
| IIED   | International Institute for Environment and Development |
| IPLC   | Indigenous People and Local Communities                 |
| MoFA   | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                             |
| NAC    | National Advisory Committee VCA                         |
| NDC    | Nationally Determined Contributions                     |
| NGOs   | Non-governmental Organisations                          |
| PAC    | Programme Advisory Committee VCA                        |
| PMEL   | Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Learning             |
| PoV    | Power of Voices                                         |
| RT     | Regional Team                                           |
| SDGs   | Sustainable Development Goals                           |
| SDI    | Slum Dwellers International                             |
| SSN    | SouthSouthNorth                                         |
| TF     | Task Force                                              |
| ToC    | Theory of Change                                        |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change   |
| VCA    | Voices for Just Climate Action                          |
| WRI    | World Resources Institute                               |

# USE OF TERMS

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alliance/Partners        | Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Fundación Avina, Slum Dwellers, International (SDI), SouthSouthNorth (SSN), Hivos and WWF-Netherlands                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Local partners           | Civil society organisations that are sub-contracted by the Alliance Partners                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Locally-shaped solutions | Projects, activities, technologies, policies, or processes that help to combat (the effects of) climate change. Effective climate solutions work at the local level. They are often nature-based and embed local knowledge. Climate solutions co-created, led and implemented by local communities have higher social, economic, and environmental returns. |

# 8 PRINCIPLES FOR LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

Devolving  
decision making  
to the lowest  
appropriate level

Building a robust  
understanding of  
climate risk and  
uncertainty

Providing patient &  
predictable funding  
that can be accessed  
more easily

Ensuring  
transparency &  
accountability

Address structural  
inequalities faced by  
women, youth, children,  
disabled, displaced,  
Indigenous Peoples &  
marginalised ethnic groups

Flexible  
programming  
& learning

Investing in local  
capabilities to leave  
institutional legacy

Collaborative  
action & investment

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**VCA aligns with the Principles of Locally Led Adaptation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 (Climate Action) and other SDGs by promoting justice, equity and sustainability.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change impacts everyone everywhere, but not equally. Specific groups such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and marginalised ethnic groups are far more vulnerable to climate shocks. Yet these groups have little say in climate decisions at both the national and global levels. It is for this reason that the VCA Alliance came into effect in January 2021 to ensure that communities in **Bolivia, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Tunisia, Paraguay, and Zambia** play a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions.

As a first step towards this goal, **governance structures with equal representation** had to be put in place at all levels. The decision-making structures included: The Steering Committee (SC) and the Joint Programme Team (JPT), convened at the global level, and the Regional Teams (RTs), convened at the field level. All Alliance partners are represented on the SC and JPT, and no decisions are made in the absence of a partner. The RT has representation of Alliance partners in a specific region. To ensure bottom-up decision-making, joint program planning and reporting begin at the RT level. It involves negotiations among partners about the approaches and priorities for program implementation. Despite differences in interest, each Alliance partner's priorities were discussed and negotiated to align with the program's goals. These structures have laid a strong foundation for inclusive decision-making, transparency and accountability.

At the regional level, the alliance partners undertook a collaborative process to **refine the partner seeking and selection processes**. This was instrumental in establishing an expansive network of national and local civil society actors that connect and jointly act on the climate justice agenda. By the time of reporting, **75 contracts have been signed, 150 CSOs** (most of these are part of the coalitions that have signed the contracts) are receiving grants, and 21 are in the process of being contracted. In Brazil alone, 12 coalitions were subcontracted, bringing together over 64 civil society organisations, giving VCA a far reach throughout the country and enhancing the just representation of marginal groups.

Furthermore, **VCA connected CSO partners to the wider climate justice movements at both the local and global levels**. Examples of these movements include EarthPlus Africa, Girls for Just Climate Action, and We Are Tomorrow. The objective of the movement-building strategy is to shift power to women, youths, and IPLCs to co-create climate solutions, demand accountability, and secure access to climate finance and participation. In each implementing country, the alliance has **strengthened or established multi-stakeholder structures, processes, and connections** between grassroots local civil society and those at the national, regional, and global levels, thereby expanding the VCA ecosystem of influence. Evidence shows that working together, supporting each other, and developing long-term relationships allows the VCA to achieve far more than it could achieve alone.

Building on the successful setup of the programme's inclusive decision-making structures and a solid network of local partners, the VCA focused on **creating a shared purpose and understanding of the programme's priorities amongst the different players**. This was done through global and regional events, and topics included learning about how different communities understand key **VCA concepts**, such as movement building, just transition, and nature-based solutions, as well as strategic partnerships and local ownership. Another objective was to ensure that trusted allies were aware of the programme to have the broadest reach in all programme countries. Several **capacity-building** initiatives were undertaken, tailored for Indigenous people, local communities, and women and youth. For example, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) convened a Feminist and Transformational Leadership Training Fellowship as part of its flagship programme, the African Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI). The fellowship targeted **25 young women from Kenya, Zambia, and Tunisia**. The objective was to build their capacity to integrate a feminist approach into their climate action work. Participants reported shifts in attitudes and increased knowledge on the root causes of women's discrimination.

These are the crucial mechanisms for achieving VCA strategic interventions, including co-creating **and documenting compelling local climate solutions and positioning them for implementation within**

**national and international initiatives. The actions include defending environmental defenders and indigenous territorial rights, promoting nature-based solutions, ensuring food security, ensuring water and sanitation, and promoting renewable energy for enhanced adaptation and resilience,** among others. At the heart of this exercise was also the need to identify gender justice climate solutions. As a first step, the VCA local partners facilitated scoping exercises and participatory assessments to document communities' local climate action plans. These participatory processes ensure that these solutions are indeed tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the IPLCs. The evidence of their effectiveness, combined with the support and buy-in from the local community, can help build a compelling case for wider adoption and integration into policy frameworks.

As part of efforts to amplify the voices of local communities to change narratives about climate change and its impacts on IPLCs, VCA took several steps to facilitate participation in the discourse on climate change at the national and global levels.

**The VCA created spaces for indigenous people and local communities, especially women and youth, to participate in decision-making spaces.**

This included the presentation of the first shadow report on human rights by the President of FAPI, the pre-session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, the representation of Indigenous People at CoP 26, and the highlight being the opportunity for Txai Suruí from Brazil, who spoke at the opening session.



Txai Suruí at the opening session of COP26

Several respected local figures in Indonesia were invited to various global (COP26) and regional dialogues, including the Asia Pacific Climate Week 2021 and the Think Policy Festival. Youth also play a pivotal role in shaping the agenda. For example, Hivos and SDI supported the implementation of the Local Conference of Youth, both materially and by supporting side events and youth participation from informal settlements. These 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.

Another means the VCA employs to amplify the voices of marginalised communities is **alternative storytelling**. At the national level, offline multimedia/event-based campaigns became critical tools for shaping public narratives and discourse, specifically to reach non-conventional groups and amplify the challenges of climate justice and locally shaped climate solutions. This was achieved through **new forms of digital activism**, including media engagement and citizen journalism. Youth representatives spearheaded these efforts by creating podcasts and YouTube channels to raise awareness about climate change and food-related issues. At the global level, this was done by developing a communication strategy, creating a storytelling template to gather local stories of change, and designing a VCA logo and a 3-pager about VCA. These efforts were important in challenging dominant narratives and promoting deeper self-reflection and community connection by offering diverse perspectives on shared experiences.

For decades, climate-related decisions have been made far from the people they most affected, becoming irrelevant or repressive to communities most affected by climate change. With VCA support, the local partners sought to **block and amend these instruments**. For example, at least 5 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were revised/updated and submitted to the CBD Secretariat, with VCA Alliance Partners in Bolivia, Kenya, Tunisia, Paraguay and Zambia contributing in consultation meetings with the governments. In Brazil, the Alliance Partners mobilised at least 5,000 Indigenous women across the country to influence the National Congress on the Marco Temporal bill.

Globally, the fight against the climate crisis is not just about emissions or policies, but about sovereignty, power, and resources. It's a struggle over the **global financial architecture**: who controls the financial resources needed for climate action, and who decides how, when, and where they're spent, especially in the Global South, where communities continue to bear the brunt of the crisis. In the first year of the programme, Alliance Partners **began initial discussions on setting up the Next Level Grant Facility, worth Euro 3.5 million**, designed to challenge conventional donor systems by trusting local actors to define, drive, and implement their own climate solutions.

**Way Forward:** In 2021, the focus was mainly on establishing structures and processes and ensuring they work to meet the programme's demands. In 2022, VCA will continue implementing its bottom-up, inclusive, and participatory approaches – aligned with locally led adaptation principles- to ensure that communities secure just, resilient futures. Efforts will also be made to ensure that civil society's contribution to climate solutions is considered in public policies, business practices, and the allocation of public budgets by national and regional governments.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION



This is the first year of program implementation for the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program. This program is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) under the ‘Power of Voices’ (PoV) framework. It brings together organisations in the Global South and North, namely Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Fundación Avina, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), SouthSouthNorth (SSN), Hivos and WWF-Netherlands, who have established an alliance known as the Voices for Just Climate Action Alliance (VCA). The alliance unites 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 organisations.

The vision of this Alliance is that “by 2025, local civil society groups have claimed a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions.” These groups represent a broad spectrum of voices, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, urban poor, digital activists, and other marginalised communities often sidelined in climate discourse. The programme uses an inclusive and rights-based approach to create widespread societal support for locally shaped climate solutions. This includes building broad-based climate alliances at the country level, bridging divides (urban-rural, gender, youth), and amplifying voices in new, unusual ways. In addition, it influences national and global policies and financial flows (e.g., climate finance, private-sector investments) to support these locally shaped solutions. VCA aligns with the Principles of Locally Led Adaptation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 (Climate Action) and other SDGs by promoting justice, equity and sustainability.

This is the first program report submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It contains highlights of the activities and outcomes derived from the ToC (Annexe 1) and implemented in the period 1 January 2021 - 31 December 2021. The report gives a synopsis of the context in which the programme is implemented, as well as progress made against the set outcomes. The report also provides an update on challenges, risk mitigation, lessons learnt, and measures to sustain the programme. This report will not duplicate information already provided to MoFA in the detailed baselines report.

## 2.0 CONTEXT

The year 2021 witnessed a significant rise in climate-induced pressures in all the VCA implementing countries, including the Netherlands. Most countries in Africa continued to experience increased droughts, famine, flash floods and extreme weather conditions, including cyclones in Zambia and intense winds in Kenya. In Latin America, climate change has led to unusual floods and extreme droughts in the Amazon, affecting countries such as Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay. There was also an increase in reported forest fire cases, leading to the loss of human lives, livestock, and property. The extremes and unpredictability of weather and seasons continued to affect those reliant on the land, particularly smallholder and subsistence farmers who depend on rainfed agriculture. The climate-induced pressures continued to emerge and even became more meaningful as the world gathered in Glasgow for the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26).

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to wreak havoc in many countries, the VCA implementing countries were not spared from its health and economic impacts. The travel restrictions affected the implementation of some of the program activities. Furthermore, most countries in the South lacked access to vaccines, further inhibiting their citizens' ability to participate in planned activities domestically and internationally. On the political front, there have been positive and negative developments. Countries such as Zambia ushered in a new government, bringing in a lot of new optimism for civil society organisations. Prior to the elections, the civic and media space in Zambia was fragile and had been shrinking due to legal restrictions. In the Netherlands, the formation of a ruling coalition in 2021 led to a minor policy change, with greater attention to climate change and to complementary budgets for climate action. In Kenya, campaigning commenced in 2021 and has so far been characterised by, as with previous elections, shrinking civic space that more starkly affects women and marginalised populations, including Indigenous peoples. There is less focus on pertinent issues such as the environment and climate change, and more on tribal ideologies.

There is much anticipation/apprehension about the general election in Brazil in October 2022. Should the current president, Bolsonaro, be re-elected, this might result in further difficulties in the approval of laws and policies favourable to the programme agenda, as well as an intensification of the current agenda of opposition to civil society and local voices and a setback in environmental protection. However, in Tunisia, where there have been signs of tight controls, there has been greater consultation with citizens. A national consultation was launched on a digital platform, where citizens could share their opinions and suggestions to improve the economic situation, the well-being of all citizens, as well as service delivery and infrastructure. The prime minister announced, at the international level, a full commitment to support the green economy, fight climate change and ensure sustainable development. The government also committed in its 2022 budget to allocate funds to promote a green economy.

Brazil, Paraguay, Kenya, Tunisia, and Indonesia reported cases of threats against climate/human rights activists. In Brazil, one case related to VCA was the threats that Program Advisory Committee member Txai Suruí received after speaking at COP26 on the position of Indigenous peoples and the impacts of climate change. In Paraguay, activists, journalists, and academics critical of the government were subjected to cyberattacks, although there was no clear evidence that the government orchestrated them, e.g., the attack on a journalism initiative called Project Multatuli. Also, government officials have brought legal action against human rights defenders.

Land grabbing and unequal land division are major challenges in Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay. In Paraguay, at least 300,000 families are landless and branded as criminals even though they have the traditional right to occupy the lands. In the last months of 2021 alone, 11 community evictions took place, affecting more than 3,000 families. More than 50 Indigenous and rural leaders received warrants of arrest for occupying the land illegally. In Bolivia, there have been cases of land seizures by armed groups (e.g., Las Londras), intimidating journalists and civilians. This act of violence exposed corrupt manoeuvres by businessmen, peasant settlers, and public officials to distribute public land. Public scrutiny on the Las Londras case is starting to bear fruit as INRA (the head state office on land distribution) announced that more than 80% of the disputed lands will be declared “unavailable fiscal lands”, to recover these forest areas as the heritage of

of all Bolivians. In Brazil, the federal government increased the amount of public land up for grabs in southern Amazonas by shrinking rural settlements by 16%, just over 2,000 square miles, between 2015 and 2020. Large ranches are now absorbing that land.

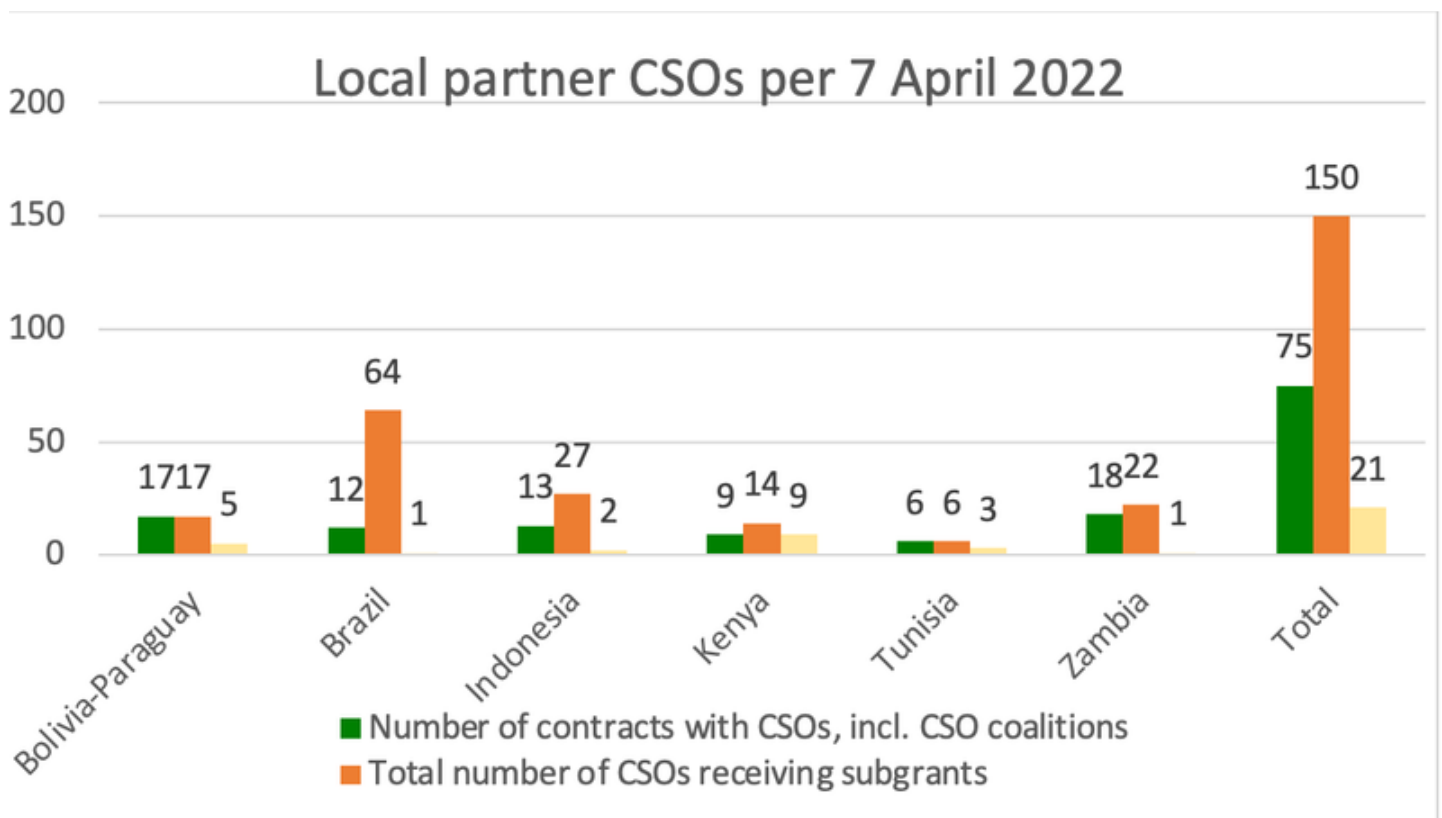
The economies of some VCA countries also have implications for programme delivery. For example, in Brazil, the low GDP growth and high inflation are problematic because they relegate environmental and climate issues to a lower priority. The Zambian currency, Kwacha, was on a highly volatile trajectory, with inflation rates reaching an all-time high of 24.6% in 2021. This resulted in rapid increases in the prices of goods, services, and electricity, which have also impacted the costs of project delivery.

The foregoing highlights the social, political, and economic context in which the VCA program operates. On reflection, there has been no significant improvement; climate pressures have continued unabated, political intimidation still restricts the civil society from fully operating, and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic further imposed restrictions on the degree to which the local community could gather and express their concerns. Furthermore, the economic situation in some countries was unfavourable. Nevertheless, progress has been made in delivering some aspects of the program. The following section seeks to demonstrate the achievements made against the outcomes in the face of these challenges.

## 3.0 MUTUAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR CO-CREATING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

The VCA program is driven by a unique Alliance comprising six partners with a range of competencies, making it fit for purpose. The Alliance Partners are diverse in nature, focusing on the following areas: bottom-up approaches, knowledge brokering, feminist leadership development and intersectional feminist approaches, social movement building for climate justice, youth, and nature-based solutions, and climate justice. These organisations have come together as an alliance under a shared agenda to address challenges posed by climate change for the benefit of both people and nature.

At the regional level, the Alliance Partners undertook a collaborative process to refine the partner seeking and selection processes. This was instrumental in establishing an expansive network of national and local civil society actors that connect and jointly act on the climate justice agenda (Annexes 2 and 3). The graph below shows the number of contracts with CSOs, the number of CSOs that have received grants and those that are in the process of being contracted as of 7 April 2022. In total, 75 contracts have been signed; 150 CSOs (most of whom are part of the coalitions that signed the contracts) are receiving grants, and 21 are in the process of being contracted. In Brazil alone, 12 coalitions were subcontracted, bringing together over 64 civil society organisations benefiting from the subgrants, giving VCA a far-reaching presence throughout the country. Individually, most of the local partners' organisations, i.e. environmental defender organisations and activists' coalitions, are very small and fragmented and do not have the power to engage with powerful opposing interests. Thus, working together, supporting each other, and developing long-term relationships in these coalitions and partnerships allow the VCA to achieve far more than it could alone.



**NB:** Coalitions comprise of several CSOs that are not directly subcontracted.

### 3.1 Capacity Strengthening

The events officially launching the VCA programme provided a platform for creating a shared purpose and understanding of the programme's priorities. The global event on 10 March 2021 brought together 138 participants from at least 23 countries and 30+ organisations. They learnt about different contexts on key VCA concepts such as movement building, transition and nature-based solutions. Another objective was to ensure that trusted allies were aware of the program to have the broadest reach in all program countries. Alliance Partners facilitated the attendance of local/Indigenous communities (traditional leaders, women, youth, Indigenous people) at COP26, giving them the opportunity to learn and participate in this important decision-making space. One thing to notice, however, was the general difficulty of indigenous people and Global South participants to participate due to vaccine inequality, increased border controls, challenges of visa processing, and high prices in the host country.

In 2021, the Alliance Partners actively participated in forums that sought to generate knowledge about co-creating locally shaped solutions. Amongst these are the locally led adapted solution webinars organised by the WRI and IIED. All Alliance Partners also gathered during the Annual Planning meeting with MoFa on 7 October 2021 to review the plans for 2022. WWF-Kenya funded a capacity-building workshop for 45 members from six nascent Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs) to revitalise and conserve natural water sources. To further strengthen capacity, an Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESSF) training took place with all local partners, and the Africa Women Leadership Training took place with 10 individuals from CSOs across Kenya. In Tunisia, a series of workshops/meetings/local climate coffee talks was convened to raise awareness of climate justice. The target groups included VCA partners, such as CSOs, women's groups, fisherfolk, farmers, local authorities, and climate experts. They discussed key topics such as capacities to advocate for the inclusion of climate justice within national climate policy, gender, and feminist approaches. Moreover, a webinar titled "Why the Climate Crisis is a feminist issue" was held. The VCA team also hosted a two-day climate finance and advocacy workshop with local partners. With support from NAC members, both contracted and potential partners analysed the advocacy context, and climate finance was stressed as a key priority area.

A focus on strengthening community livelihoods with a gender focus was added through the set-up of a regional programme focused on the Pantanal Chaco landscape (PaCha) of Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, with private funding from a Spanish textile company. The project aims to promote incentives for sustainable forest management led by IPLC women, empowering women by providing a female-generated income source. Alternative economic drivers will also help prevent deforestation and are seen as mitigation measures for threats to biodiversity and people in the landscape, such as forest fires and human-wildlife conflicts.

Coalition partners were engaged from the early stages of the program, including in the development of the country's ToC, which reflects goals, priorities, and expected impact to guide them throughout the program. This process will ensure their coherence during the VCA's implementation. The Global Annual Planning and Reflection meeting saw the attendance of 60+ people from 27 partner organisations from across the Alliance.

During the period under review, the Alliance Partners participated in two sessions on strengthening civil society, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing on strategic partnerships and local ownership. The commitments that were made during the strategic partnerships dialogue include: working better with the consortium partners, seeking to learn more about the people in the civil society partnerships and the work that they do, having open conversations about trust and potential pitfalls within the partnership, establishing feedback channels, and continuing with developing and strengthening the civil society. On local ownership, Alliance Partners examined approaches to the challenges and opportunities of local ownership and to shifting power dynamics. They delved into the meaning of local ownership, the envisaged shifts, the actions to be taken, and why that is important.

### 3.2 Climate Solutions (innovations) co-created for the benefit of people and nature



Social mapping and settlement profiling of around 150 hectares of urban residential areas conducted by the Women Federation

Building upon the capacity-strengthening efforts, the VCA local partners sought to gain a better understanding of the diversity of issues, and the implementing countries conducted scoping exercises in consultation with indigenous communities, youth, and women. For example, WWF-Indonesia and WWF Bolivia, together with their local partners, conducted participatory assessments to identify community concerns and local climate solutions on issues related to the local food system issues, drought and outbreak of fires, intellectual property, gender equality, conservation inclusion, customary land rights, coastal management, youth involvement, and climate resilience of IPLC. In addition, the local partners conducted studies on socio-cultural aspects, livelihood resources, tenure systems, and policies related to customary law. WWF ID's partners also conducted a rapid assessment to explore the status and role of women in the management of natural resources and ecosystem services.

The partnership between SDI and SPEAK Indonesia facilitated the Women Federation in conducting settlement profiling using geospatial mapping of WASH vulnerabilities. These studies provided insights into current social, economic, political, and cultural conditions and how they relate to climate action. In Kenya, workshops were organised for the youth from informal settlements to help them understand systems thinking, develop local solutions that respond to their own climate challenges, and think through how to influence policies and get involved in existing movements, including the Local Conference of Youth – Kenya (LCOY-KE). Youth in Chongwe District, Zambia, formed a Green and Clean Youth Platform to discuss and co-create innovative climate change solutions following a VCA awareness-raising engagement on climate change.

## 4.0 AGENDA SETTING AND MOVEMENT BUILDING ON CLIMATE ACTION

This section seeks to demonstrate the efforts of Alliance Partners to amplify the voices of citizens and civil society so they can shape a new narrative and public debate on a just climate transition and climate resilience in the future. The VCA's mission was to reshape public discourse and to build powerful, inclusive climate-justice movements. VCA 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.

### 4.1 Amplifying Voices through participation in decision-making spaces

**Women** play a key role in matters related to climate change and VCA. The climate crisis is not “gender neutral.” Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. As the VCA, we see women’s leadership as key to ensuring the voices of marginalised groups are heard. For us, the term “gender justice” best signifies our intersectional approach that centres the diverse needs, experiences, and leadership of people most impacted by discrimination and oppression. The VCA program works to ensure that the voices and narratives of those who have been most marginalised, specifically women, are central to climate discourse. Through adopting a feminist intersectional approach, we advocate for and prioritise the inclusion, engagement and participation of women and other minority groups in creating, developing, implementing, and monitoring policy responses to and plans on climate change and disaster relief. They participated in various forums that positioned VCA as a formidable force with thought leaders on the link between gender justice and climate action.

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), convened a Feminist and Transformational Leadership Training Fellowship as part of its flagship programme, the African Women’s Leadership Institute (AWLI). The fellowship targeted 25 young women from Kenya, Zambia, and Tunisia. The objective was to build their capacity to integrate a feminist approach into their climate action work. Participants reported shifts in attitudes, increased knowledge of the root causes of women’s discrimination, oppression, and stereotypes, deepening and grounding in feminism and transformational leadership, as well as a sense of transformation. By appreciating the structural causes of climate change, participants were effectively equipped to advance an intersectional and effective just transition and climate action that centres women and minoritised groups.

In Bolivia-Paraguay, the Indigenous women from the Chaco region (Paraguay) and the Amazon region participated in the virtual event as part of the Fifth Global Meeting of the Chaco (5<sup>th</sup> EMCHA). The Alliance Partners in Tunisia facilitated women’s participation in the following events: the 2021 Global South Women’s Forum on Sustainable Development, the People’s Summit for Climate Justice at COP26, and Africa Climate Week. As part of COP26, AMwA co-hosted a side event during the People’s Summit for Climate Justice, under the theme, For the People and the planet - Climate Justice means Social Justice. During this event, a Kenya-based representative from the feminist movement, Nala Feminist Collective, was able to articulate the call to integrate a feminist intersectional approach in the COP26 Glasgow outcome document.

The VCA facilitated the participation of **Indigenous communities** (including women and youth) at COP26, such as the VCA advisor Txai Suruí from Brazil, who spoke at the opening session. Furthermore, Indigenous local communities from Brazil, including Telma Taurepang from partner UMIAB and Toya Manchineri from partner COIAB/COICA, participated in a side event titled “Articulating and sharing Amazon-based solutions to promote Climate Justice”. The session aimed to share and reshape strategies to place Amazonian local climate solutions at the centre of the global climate action agenda. This was done through presentations on Indigenous peoples and multi-stakeholder initiatives that influence local, regional, and international climate policies and climate justice in the Amazon. Also in Brazil, partner association Comitê Chico Mendes,

a network for socio-environmental activists, met during Chico Mendes Week in December 2021 in Xapuri, Acre, under the theme, “Climate Crisis – Voices of forests in defence of territories.” Several respectable local figures in Indonesia were invited to various global (COP26) and regional dialogues such as the Asia Pacific Climate Week 2021, Think Policy Festival, Hivos x Kadin webinar: For a Sustainable Future: The Role and Resilience of Women in Tackling Climate Change. At these forums, they expressed their concerns and priorities related to climate justice, laying the basis for co-created solutions.

In Kenya, youth have been proactive in taking up space to present their issues. VCA partners have been instrumental in platforming youth voices at various national and global events and implementing youth-targeted capacity development. Hivos and SDI supported the implementation of the Local Conference of Youth both materially and by supporting side events and the participation of youth from informal settlements. Hivos played a linking role between youth activists and the Swedish Embassy in Kenya, leading to youth being invited to the Embassy’s launch of Stockholm+50, which the Government of Kenya and Sweden jointly co-hosts.

In 2021, the Global Program team further developed the strategy for the movement-building component, informed by dialogues with identified movements in both VCA sites and at the global level. The scope of the VCA movement-building strategy is youth, women, and IPLCs, and the themes of discussion revolve around mobilising local finance, enhancing participation in global policy processes, and identifying and recognising local climate solutions. The GloPro has contacted 51 groups and held two dialogue sessions with participation from 18 mapped youth movements. Going forward, the dialogue sessions will be convened bi-monthly.

## 4.2 Alternative Storytelling Amplifying Climate Justice Debates

The role of **media** is bigger than it has ever been, influencing our lives in many aspects. People rely on media for news and social interaction, and while some communities still struggle to connect to the internet, large parts of the world can now find whatever they want to know with the click of a button. For this reason, the VCA took several steps to facilitate participation in the discourse on climate change at the global level. This was done by developing a communication strategy, creating a storytelling template to gather local stories of change, and designing a VCA logo and a 3-pager about VCA. Next to this, a **VCA website**, is now live, and the first two VCA newsletters have been published, see [here](#) and [here](#). These initial steps were critical and laid the basis for defining, profiling, and branding ourselves to be well-positioned to contribute to the discourse on climate change as a unified alliance.

In Indonesia, several media outlets covered locally based climate solutions stories in 2021. In Kenya, more visibility and awareness around climate change were created in the build-up to COP26. Social media conversations on climate change and climate justice also showed increased engagement, including those

Youth also play a pivotal role in shaping the agenda. They have actively participated in the discourse on climate change through VCA. In Indonesia, a successful network mapping of youth groups was conducted in 14 villages and municipalities in East Nusa Tenggara Province. This network mapping is used as a baseline study and source of insights to create youth hubs for climate action in the province. The network forum is expected to strengthen joint campaigns, especially led by the youth communities for just climate actions. As part of VCA, SPEAK Indonesia – SDI’s local partner– and SDI conducted a climate change festival involving youth and women in Penjaringan, Jakarta. The festival, initiated and managed by the community, successfully engaged youth and increased children’s awareness of climate action through local artworks rooted in local wisdom.

As part of efforts to build the capacity of the media to influence the narratives on climate change at the regional level, the Bolivia VCAt team mapped the media ecosystem, generated tools for capacity building, for example 1) analysing/dismantling hegemonic climate narratives and 2) developing community-based journalistic content to bring the perceptions of the people in the region closer to other actors(e.g., urban groups, donors, academia, mainstream media, etc.).

El Surtidor, an alternative media house in Paraguay, published 17 reports on current issues such as forest fires, the drought of the Paraná River, and the rise in meat prices, explaining, with various data sources, the underlying causes and how they are derived from the climate crisis. El Surtidor also expanded the publication of Futuros, which covers the climate crisis and focuses on youth. Futuros adapted and disseminated information on social networks to reach young audiences (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). Also, extensive reports were published on the El Surtidor website, with interactive elements such as maps, photographs, and infographics. Partner Mingara has been working with Indigenous people’s community radio journalists. A planning workshop to identify key capacity-building activities was held at Pai Puku Radio on 16 December.



Women's groups in Kenya speaking out on the need for the inclusion of women and youths in climate discussions and negotiations

organised by VCA partners, who also report more interest by their audiences on climate justice issues. With co-funding from VCA and UKAID, WWF-Kenya produced four videos on climate change that were highlighted at COP, receiving a lot of attention from different stakeholders. In addition, WWF-Kenya supported two post-COP events convened by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry through the Climate Change Directorate. The aim was to chart a way forward for engagement in COP27 and to draw a roadmap to implement key resolutions from COP26. As climate change impacts were particularly severe in 2021, the VCA team took media representatives to Garissa to highlight these challenges, thereby drawing public, government, and international attention to them.

The media is a key target for the program in Tunisia, which has taken action to bring the media on board as partners in VCA. Innovative project proposals were submitted to shape public debate and bring a new narrative at the national level. The media was supported in connecting with international experts from Alliance Partners. Next to this, a media fellowship call resulted in more mainstream and alternative media communicating around climate justice. VCA documented and disseminated knowledge products such as the podcast *A feminist conversation on the climate crisis*. The podcast has been instrumental in facilitating feminist climate justice awareness-raising and stimulating a shift in the thinking, ideology, language and behaviour of gender justice actors, climate, environmental, and human rights defenders towards centring the most marginalised people and local solutions in climate action.

In Zambia, the media have also been actively engaged. Through media training, grassroots women and youths are confidently voicing their concerns on climate change through various media platforms, including online radio, TV, and print media. This has resulted in grassroots receiving media coverage. Local Governance Committees can speak out on various media channels by voicing their opinions on climate change and how they will get involved in various mitigation measures.

In the Netherlands, Hivos and WWF have developed clearer ambitions related to media engagement and getting stories into newspapers, involving Dutch politicians and engaging in direct lobbying with like-minded organisations, engaging with others in public climate activities (such as the climate march), and involving our supporters in the debate with content sharing. The two alliance partners have engaged with their own constituencies and shared stories of local rights holders on their platforms. Some examples include the dissemination of stories of change in which we interviewed partners and NAC members, and articles highlighting the issue of climate justice and VCA's work in this space. Furthermore, the stories of climate and nature defenders in both WWF-NL magazines: the *Youth* and *Be One with Nature* editions. VCA has also engaged with the media, where possible. As part of a broader Hivos end-of-year campaign focusing on climate justice, VCA published in *VPRO Gids*. Hivos has also published on the Dutch broadcaster *Human's* website and co-signed (with other Dutch NGOs) articles published in the Dutch newspaper, *Trouw*. As part of the 3FM campaign by WWF, VCA supported the documentation of IPLCs' interventions to defend the Amazon.

## 5.0 JOINT LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY TO MAKE POLICY AND FINANCE RESPONSIVE TO LOCALLY SHAPED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

This section seeks to highlight the efforts to influence policy, practice, and investment. The aim is to ensure that these are more locally inclusive and impactful to reflect the new reality.

### 5.1 Avail concrete evidence to governments at all levels

In collaboration with the Government of the Netherlands, VCA facilitated a fruitful discussion at COP26 on the inclusion of local voices in decision-making. The well-attended event brought together powerful speakers from the local and global levels, including Tracy Kajumba, a researcher at IIED; HRH Chieftainess Muwezwa from Zambia; Laetania Belai Djandam, a 20-year-old Indigenous youth activist from Indonesia; and Kitty van der Heijden, Director General of International Cooperation at the Dutch MoFA. At the core of the discussion was the community's comprehensive approach to climate action and how to work towards a system suitable for community-led climate solutions across many issues, such as health and food. The speakers all pointed out: without involving communities in decision-making, climate action will not work.

The VCA Alliance also invited COP26 attendees to join the conversation shaping Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' (IPLCs) engagement with the Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) concept at the WWF-Pavilion. The event aimed to provide a space for participants who feel obscured in the NbS debate to speak from the heart about their critical perspectives on the technical and political strategies that aim to position nature as a solution to social and ecological challenges. Three inspiring and diverse thought leaders on NbS shared their perspectives and initiated the discussion. The event had 30 in-person attendees and nearly 300 online participants.

Also, around the COP, at least 150 Indigenous peoples and environmental organisations from 50 countries, including VCA partner from Bolivia-Paraguay, FAPI, sent a joint statement calling on world leaders to integrate human rights into environmental policy at COP26. This came after the Paraguayan official national position at COP26 favoured large-scale agricultural production and was critical towards organic and family farming. In November 2021, the coalition of CSOs "Por los Bosques" (For the Forests), formed by 39 CSOs, among them WWF and partners such as FAPI, OPADES and PCI, agreed on a common position that dissents with the chapter on family agriculture. The Ministry of Environment (MADES) is now opening dialogue sessions on small-scale agriculture, which VCA and partners co-organise with the Ministry.

In Brazil, the Alliance Partners mobilised at least 5,000 Indigenous women across the country to influence the National Congress on the Marco Temporal bill. This piece of legislation sought to remove the rights of Indigenous Peoples over their territories. Indigenous young women Jaciara Borari and Darly Tupinambá teamed up with Senator Kátia Abreu, who publicly declared that she "would not act against the Amazon" by serving as the rapporteur for the bill.

In August 2021, VCA Zambia undertook a 'Vote climate change' campaign in the run-up to the elections. At least five political parties and several mayors made commitments for stronger climate change action. The Alliance also lobbied for the creation of a standalone pillar in the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), dedicated to climate change and environmental management, as well as for a reform of the institutional framework. Next to this, VCA received high-level support from the vice president, ministers, and diplomats, including from the Dutch Embassy. The Alliance Partners in Zambia oriented and strengthened the capacity of 24 Members of Parliament (10 women and 14 men) on the VCA program. At this meeting, the MPs resolved to form a Parliamentary Caucus on Climate Change through the Alliance's work. So far, the MPs have connected VCA to lobbying and advocacy opportunities with the National Assembly, for example, through policy and budget submissions. In the Netherlands, collaboration

among CSOs focuses on increasing attention to the climate crisis and climate justice. It is specifically geared towards changing domestic and international policy (and financing) in favour of climate action and increasing the supporters' base for these policies. The CSOs joined forces in public outreach activities such as the Climate March and the Klimaatwake during the formation of the new government coalition. Hivos and WWF-NL have engaged with the Klimaatcrisis coalition, which brings together a diverse group of individuals, environmental organisations and NGOs. Hivos has also given a lot of input to the organisers of the Klimaatwake, which, as a result, has incorporated climate justice and the international angle in all its outreach. WWF-NL joined forces with Hivos and Dutch youth CSOs in outreach activities to their constituencies and networks during the livestream, *Inhabitants of the Forest*, dedicated to climate activists from IPLCs in the Amazon, featuring VCA Program Advisory Committee member Txai Suruí's story, among others.

## 5.2 Use climate finance data to influence

At the global level, Hivos commissioned a study to collect information on local communities' financial needs and approaches, and on how financial mechanisms should be designed to serve them. This study is based on earlier work by SSN on local finance in the context of local COVID-19 responses. The draft report "Making global climate finance work for local solutions" was shared as background to the COP26 panels, and the insights collected from the panel sessions were used to finalise the report.

In Zambia, the VCA Alliance engaged the Ministry of Finance to propose a debt-for-nature swap in light of the country's unsustainable debt levels, which compromised the government's ability to fund local climate action programs with domestic resources. In response to this, the Zambian government has issued a letter of intent to pursue the proposed debt for nature swap with the anticipation of using savings to promote climate action and environmental sustainability.

In one panel session at COP26, VCA joined forces with Andes Resiliente, Helvetas, and the Governments of Ecuador and Peru to amplify the message that climate finance should be a means of justice that leaves no one behind. At the event, watched online by 660 people, speakers from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe discussed the challenge that only a fraction of climate finance reaches local communities and is rarely shaped around their needs. As Tiza Mafira, VCA's advisor, highlighted, *"Most of the time, finance is already defined for them [communities], and they are forced to craft a narrative that fits the finance criteria, instead of finance meeting the needs of the community."*

At this panel session, Dr Anju Sharma explained the structural challenge that needs to be changed: *"We have just continued to treat climate finance as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and use the complex ODA rules and systems. But it is a different cup of tea. It is harm that has been caused to communities. It is not communities that need to be accountable to funders. We need to turn it around. It is funders that need to be accountable to communities."*

## 5.3 Revise NDCs to recognise the importance of climate solutions

At the commencement of the program, Alliance Partners committed to contributing to the revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to incorporate climate solutions. In Bolivia, Alliance Partners participated in consultations that led the government to present the updated version of its NDCs to Alok Sharma, President of COP26, during his visit to Santa Cruz. In addition, urban Indigenous people in the region became a relevant actor in subnational climate policy making and the implementation of the Santa Cruz climate change strategy. In Paraguay, the Alliance Partners mobilised Indigenous peoples to contribute to the inclusion of NbS in the NDCs. This culminated in the Ministry of Environment launching the revised NDCs in July 2021. In Kenya, the Alliance Partners contributed to key policy processes, including the Kenya NDCs, using the WWF checklist. It was noted that the criteria for inclusiveness and participation were not elaborated sufficiently. In addition, the document does not delve into the details of how adaptation and mitigation actions align with the SDGs. This provides an opportunity to engage the duty bearers to ensure Kenya meets its targets and, at the same time, push for stronger GHG targets in the next NDC. The Alliance Partners also supported the development of a Green Procurement roadmap with representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

Tunisia submitted their updated NDCs to the UNFCCC Secretariat in September 2021, which included several improvements on intersectionality and mitigation ambitions. Tunisia committed to reducing GHG emissions by 45% (reference year 2010), up from the previous objective of 41%. Resilience to climate change is a key component of the NDCs, and Tunisia has begun elaborating the 2050 low-carbon and climate change resilience strategy, in accordance with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. The last version will be approved in 2022. In Zambia, there was a successful mobilisation and coordination between CSOs and the government, leading to the revision of the NDC targets. Furthermore, with support of the VCA Alliance, the government has revised the national policy on environment (2007) and the national water policy (2010). The Alliance influenced government stakeholders to review the two policies and provided technical support for this review.

## 5.4 Develop the Next Level Grant Facility- a grant mechanism for making a difference for the hard-to-reach groups

In the program's design, funds were allocated to deliver the Next Level Grant Facility. Key parameters that will guide the Alliance in this process are as follows:

- Rethinking the role of intermediaries/changing ourselves (intentionally): VCA subscribes to a shift in power, which critiques a model in which decision-making power and control over funding remain concentrated in the global North.
- Moving beyond traditional intermediation (intentional): The focus is on moving beyond a traditional intermediary role toward creating a more equitable power dynamic, ensuring local communities and Southern CSOs have more agency in defining their own goals and strategies.
- Local groups possess essential knowledge, are on the front lines of climate change impacts, and are best positioned to identify and implement adaptation strategies that align with their specific needs and priorities.
- Decentralisation and collaboration with local groups help to redress power imbalances by putting them at the centre of decision-making processes and giving them equitable access to finance.
- Creating systemic change: NLGF works with local organisations, fund managers, and knowledge institutions to collectively build better funding practices and scale up solutions that are grounded in community needs. This collaborative effort also helps to simplify the process of applying for climate finance, making it more accessible for local project proponents.

In consultation with the Regional Teams, the purpose, beneficiaries, governance, roles, process, and budget, including the Risk mitigation document, will be defined at the beginning of the new year.

## 6.0 COLLABORATIONS



### 6.1 Collaborations with other PoVs

The alliance benefits synergistically from other programs in the same funding line from the MoFA. It will continue to harmonise, collaborate and coordinate to improve the quality and effectiveness of the POV program. In the Netherlands, the VCA meets quarterly with the coordinators of the GLA, GAGGA, and AACJ alliances. These meetings provide valuable learning and exchange, serve to collectively strategise on key issues such as joint lobbying and advocacy towards COP, provide collective feedback to the Power to Voices policy framework, and identify opportunities to engage Dutch civil society in just climate action.

### 6.2 Strategic Partnerships with MoFA and Embassies

The Alliance Partners in Kenya have an open, collaborative relationship with the Embassy of the Netherlands, which frequently reaches out to both Hivos and WWF for information-sharing and other purposes, including site visits and stakeholder linkages. The VCA Kenya focal point has participated in several Embassy meetings on PoV partnerships, and Hivos, SDI, and WWF met with the Ambassador and other colleagues in a one-on-one meeting early in 2021. In addition, Hivos held a side event at Africa Climate Week, at which the Deputy Ambassador participated as a panellist.

VCA will seek to deepen the strategic partnerships with the different departments of MoFA and the embassies. The VCA Partners identified ways in which this collaboration could be enhanced:

- Collaborate in the development of annual plans/national climate action plans to ensure synergy of programmes in the respective countries. Note: All Embassies were invited to the Annual Consultation Planning Meeting between VCA and MoFA, organised by the Secretariat. This is an important platform for all embassy representatives to gain insight into plans developed for their countries and to appreciate what other countries are doing.
- Regular update on the programme implementation- at least two face-to-face/Skype/MS Teams meetings per annum
- High visibility through targeted communication using various channels such as the VCA Newsletter, website, videos and podcasts
- Convene National Dialogues/Webinars on topical issues. The Alliance Partners are keen to engage their respective embassies to ensure strong networks and partnerships that extend beyond the individual activities and ideally have a long-term perspective.
- Networking events organised by the Embassies
- Joint Monitoring missions/field trips (at least two per year) by the embassy team and VCA team to selected sites and witness what is being done on the ground.
- Engage the embassies in the MTR and ETE

## 7.0 COMMUNICATIONS



Communication and advocacy are closely linked, and activities in the annual plans are therefore created with communication efforts being central. In the first year of the program, the VCA established a global communication task force with representatives from the alliance partners. Their role is to support program implementation through strategic communication; advise and guide on how to position and communicate the program; and align comms messages and outputs within VCA. A communication plan was developed.

To realise this communication plan, we use the following methods:

- Embrace innovation, facilitate partnerships within the Comms task force, Alliance, and local partners, and strategically place communicators.
- Key messaging framework. The design of a global messaging framework needs to allow
- For customisation according to the local needs and context, whilst keeping the fundamental structure and core key messaging.
- Inclusive storytelling: Build storytelling capacity through comms packages and tools, including the branding and comms guidelines, provide learning and storytelling workshops, get the local stories in media at an international level, open call for stories - identifying and co-creation.
- Movement building. Support in connecting existing movements and creating space for knowledge exchange and harvesting.
- Lobby & advocacy: Based on the stakeholder mapping from RTs and the global program for financial and policy actors, develop communication packages for engagement- masterclasses with external experts on climate finance, civic space, locally led (nature-based) solutions, etc., presence at key events: COP 26, CBD, etc. Events treated like a momentum: by country and region. To position the program, showcase our work, but also support teams and partners to become ambassadors/spokespersons for the program (capacity building)
- Media: Engage traditional off and online media to amplify local narratives (e.g. draw attention to the issue of how climate change affects vulnerable groups most and how locally-led climate action has a global impact), e.g. via media training, international exchanges, media partnerships at international level, open call to journalists to cover the item, collecting and producing information in necessary formats to be shared with journalists and influencers, compiling and data analysis to be evaluated and used as material for journalists.

## 8.0 COMPLIANCE, INTEGRITY, RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

Being an Alliance focused on social and climate justice, we have set ambitious standards for our own social responsibility and integrity, and we have a zero-tolerance approach to misconduct. We have endeavoured to ensure that our internal policies and procedures are in line with the Ministry's requirements as reflected in the ORIA. The grievance mechanism is in place, with a log register and a communication plan developed and disseminated across the Alliance. Alliance Partners' own grievance mechanisms are also in place and advertised on partners' websites. By the time of compiling this report, no incidents of misconduct or sexual abuse were reported by any of the Alliance Partners. Webinars on Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESSF), Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) have been conducted.

The Alliance has monitored and updated the risk matrix regularly, using relevant information from discussions within each Alliance organisation, the Joint Programme Team, and the Steering Committee. Section 2.0 on context elaborates on the environment in which the program has operated over the past year.

The program started during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Alliance Partners' measures to mitigate workplace risks have proven effective. By the time this report was compiled, the severity of this risk had been reduced, and restrictions were being eased in most countries – a situation we hope will continue throughout 2022.

Risks related to environmental activists generated greater apprehension in 2021. Appropriate mitigation measures were also adopted to reduce the risks posed to environmental defenders and climate activists. For example, in Brazil, the team reinforced structured work on security management as a key issue that should permeate the program's lifespan. The severity of this risk on environmental defenders remained high at the time of compiling this report. Safety and security remain an issue in some parts of Kenya. Partners working in areas such as Lamu and Marsabit Counties are insecure due to inter-clan clashes and terrorist attacks, respectively. As a result, activities in these areas were put on hold until the security stabilised. This mitigation measure has worked as it meant that the program staff were not susceptible to attacks. In Zambia, political risk has decreased to low due to increased commitment from the new government administration. Overall, no new risks were observed in 2021.

## 9.0 LESSONS LEARNT AND NEXT STEPS

During the first year of implementation, VCA Alliance Partners regularly reflected on how it's been to work as this new consortium; what it is like to work on climate justice issues; and how the program involves an array of actors at different levels (local, national and international).

It has taken time and resources to build this strong alliance. Even so, alliance members still feel that there is a lot to learn from each other. It is important to ensure that VCA continues to work in a complementary way towards the program's collective principles and aims, whilst managing expectations of each member's contributions.

Contracting and onboarding of partners takes time and effort for all to experience shared ownership of VCA. Building on our learnings in 2021, we will maximise efforts to connect partners, including local climate action groups, CSOs, and climate champions. This will be done through learning exchanges, joint forums, bootcamps, knowledge-sharing, and capacity strengthening in movement building, localising climate finance, and lobbying and advocacy, among others, in 2022. This will enhance the partnership approach and local ownership within and between the VCA Alliance and local partners.

Building on the successful set-up of the program's inclusive decision-making structures, the next step is to document and synthesise the diverse local climate solutions that can be implemented at scale. The multi-stakeholder processes will be used to facilitate the co-development of a pipeline proposal that can be promoted for funding. Leveraging additional resources amounting to 100 million euros to implement local climate solutions will also be undertaken collectively by the Alliance partners.

To further achieve greater language and inclusion, there is a need for sustained efforts to translate key documents and provide translation services at events. This will be a priority for VCA in 2022.

Each of the five Alliance Partners is quite different in terms of approach and activities, and in the way they are institutionally organised. Yet, they recognise the complementarity among them, with each organisation strengthening the Alliance through its specific expertise and knowledge. VCA links rural and urban communities and engages youth in effective advocacy through SDI's involvement and leadership. VCA confronts gender inequity and supports women leaders through AMWA's leadership and intersectional feminist approaches. VCA increases the access to and utility of information and helps different groups identify shared interests, due to SSN's leadership in knowledge brokering and climate finance. VCA implements horizontal leadership and collaborative approaches due to AVINA's influence and leadership. VCA can test local and nature-based solutions using scientific knowledge because of WWF's experience. VCA links advocacy networks, supports activism, and designs effective PMEL at different levels, drawing on Hivos' experience. VCA is able to link the local to the global because GloPro VCA's efforts will be amplified by MoFA's convening and diplomatic power in areas of policy synergy.

# 10.0 SUSTAINABILITY

There are various ways in which VCA can ensure sustainability of its structure, processes and impacts.

- Focus on changing policies, finance, and the voice of local organisations: As a result of the VCA program, the political context should be more supportive of including those local voices. Project support would not lead to this change of power relations.
- Partnering with grassroots organisations: Sub-grantee partners have incorporated sustainability aspects into their programs. By working with grassroots organisations, the program's main outcomes will continue to be realised beyond the VCA's lifetime.
- The creation of National Advisory Committees (NACs) helps establish our vision more widely.
- Sustainability is deeply rooted in the strategies and objectives of the Global Programme, with the key goal of mobilising people and funding, and the strong intention to have a lasting impact beyond the lifetime of the VCA program.
- Making connections at the global and regional levels, which are strongly linked to the local level. This has been born out of long processes of engaging with VCA Alliance Partners and local partners in the countries. Here, we have learned to work together, growing as civil society organisations and as a partnership.
- As a global team comprising all Alliance partners, the GloPro has been pushing to integrate the objectives and learnings of VCA into our organisations, thereby strengthening sustainability beyond VCA's lifespan and geographical scope. An example of this is our engagement with the Locally Led Adaptation concept, which we spend ample time thoroughly analysing to create coherence.
- Engaging with universities as knowledge associates to work with the programme's local partners in bridging the knowledge and theory gap for the long term and producing transformative new knowledge.
- Research studies: Alliance Partners are undertaking various studies that will inform interventions to engage stakeholders and unlock barriers to meaningful engagement in the climate change space now and in the future.
- Strengthening organisational capacity for local communities and organisations by finding other funding opportunities, coaching them on financial reporting, and brokering a network towards other stakeholders. By doing so, they will be able to implement strategies beyond VCA goals and scale up to create a program replication model for other regions.

## 11.0 CONCLUSION

In this first year of program implementation, the focus was mainly on establishing structures and processes and ensuring they work to meet the demands of this large-scale and complex program. Establishing and building partnerships with local actors was also an integral and innovative component of the program that has gained traction. The Alliance Partners recognised from the outset the importance of bringing together unusual partners, including voices that are often not heard, strengthening Southern leadership and local ownership, and using new technologies to enable collaboration between civil society actors. In 2022, VCA will continue strengthening the operational structures that support the program's execution. The Alliance will continue to leverage its institutional and collective strengths to add value not only to project delivery but also to use the Alliance as an opportunity to enhance capacity more broadly. Special attention will also be given to structures such as the VCA Communication Task Force (internal and external communications) and the planning, monitoring and evaluation methodology.

Another important innovation in this program centres around the development of locally shaped, often nature-based, climate solutions and the role of local organisations, including women, youth, and Indigenous communities. VCA will further develop and help implement grant mechanisms that ensure funds reach the lowest levels where they are needed most. To achieve this, VCA will continue implementing its bottom-up, inclusive, and participatory approaches - aligned with locally led adaptation principles- to ensure that communities secure a just, resilient future. Efforts will also be made to ensure that civil society's contribution to climate solutions in the program's implementing countries is taken into account in public policies, business practices, and the allocation of public budgets by national and regional governments.

Engagements and horizontal learning exchange opportunities among community networks need to be scaled up to support climate change advocacy in the global constituency. The collaboration with the Dutch embassies and other Power of Voices (PoV) Alliances working in the regions can still be strengthened by maintaining regular communication and an active approach to identify potential mutual agendas.