

VCA

VOICES FOR JUST CLIMATE ACTION



ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2023





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ABBREVIATIONS

AACJ	African Activists for Climate Justice
AMwA	Akina Mama wa Afrika
Avina	Fundación Avina
BASE	Building Approaches to fund local Solutions with climate Evidence
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FloCCA	Financing Locally Led Adaptation Fund in Kenya
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
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
LCOY	Local Conference of Youth
JPT	Joint Programme Team
L&D	Loss & Damage
LLA	Locally-led Adaptation
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NCQG	The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLGF	Next Level Grant Facility (direct access and emergency funding within VCA)
PMEL	Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
POV	Power of Voices (policy framework by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
RT	Regional Team (Regional VCA Alliance)
SC	Steering Committee
SCS	Strengthening Civil Society Framework
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 Alliance
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WWF-NL	World Wide Fund for Nature Netherlands

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.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last three years, the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) Alliance has worked with underrepresented groups and local civil society organisations in **Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Tunisia, Kenya, Zambia, and Indonesia** to amplify their voices for just climate action. 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 mutuality of capacity development in VCA is evident in its extensive engagement with networks, where relationships are defined by equality, trust, and long-term commitment. In 2023, the six Alliance Partners had **203** active subcontracted local partners. By joining and participating in the VCA network, local and Alliance Partners have contributed and used their complementary roles, knowledge, locations, expertise, and capacities to strengthen their collective power. As these actors came together under VCA's auspices, a shift occurred. What were once pockets of isolated interventions evolved into a united front for climate justice, proving that synergy drives lasting change. In addition, there were **88 new and/or expanded collaborations with existing and emerging gender-responsive climate justice** movements across the globe; examples include the Amazon Alliance campaign (Brazil), The Bolivian intergenerational Alliance for the Escazú Accord (Bolivia), the Women Collective of the Great Chaco (Bolivia- Paraguay), the Coalition Por los Bosques (Paraguay), the Citizen Journalism Network (Indonesia), and the African Women and Gender Constituency (Kenya).

By the end of 2023, **188 of the 203 VCA subcontracted CSOs strengthened their capacities**. Capacity strengthening in the regions is shifting from institutional strengthening in previous years, towards thematic knowledge building (local climate impacts and adaptation strategies, climate justice, feminist leadership, UNFCCC processes and policies, advocacy tools, methodologies, and exchange). By the end of 2023, **21 CSOs and networks have been directly equipped and supported to adopt and apply an intersectional, diverse, gender and feminist frame of analysis**. This fostered an understanding that gender was not just a binary definition, but that it involves the complex and intersecting experiences of people living with disabilities, indigenous communities, and those in rural or informal settlements. Prior to this initiative, inclusion existed in name but rarely in practice, with many gender initiatives stopping at mainstreaming rather than embracing deeper, transformative approaches grounded in equity and justice. As a result of capacity strengthening, youth and women in VCA countries are taking on the roles of local champions, trainers, and facilitators.

In addition to strengthening capacity, VCA has supported **51 communities, groups, or individuals to be included in different decision-making processes** for climate policies or programmes at the global, national, and sub-national levels. These decision-making spaces included village governments (Indonesia), the Environmental Participatory Front-Climate Working Group of the Chamber of Commerce and the Chico Mendes Extractive Deliberation Council (Brazil), the Africa Climate Summit (Kenya), and the third summit between the European Union and the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC).

The positive impacts of strengthening CSOs led to changes, adoption, rejection, or influence on the implementation of **78 laws and policies by the end of 2023**. Examples include the first draft of the Lusaka Development Plan in Zambia, which recognised climate action priorities within urban planning initiatives, and the Waste to Rivers Nairobi River Action Plan, which recognised the role of youth in decision-making. These examples show that indigenous and local communities are no longer passive observers but conscious participants, influencing the issues that matter most to them. The intention is to ensure that the plans reflect the needs and knowledge of the people on the ground.

VCA recognises that for climate justice to take root, the people on the frontlines must become the storytellers, narrating their own experiences, amplifying their knowledge, and influencing decision-making spaces. Numerous platforms were used, including media, activism, 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) have been established, connecting movements, communities, and activists across regional and national borders. Creative storytelling through these means has expanded the programme's impact by reaching diverse stakeholders and creating accessible platforms for decision-makers and local communities to understand and advocate for climate action.

The VCA marked a turning point in how climate action is imagined and implemented. Rather than introducing foreign solutions, VCA amplified what communities already knew, trusted, and practised. It acted as a bridge, linking indigenous knowledge with critical resources, creating networks of collaboration, and giving visibility to grassroots innovations that had long gone unnoticed. VCA initiated and advanced the piloting of **74 local solutions, contributing to climate adaptation, nature restoration, water and sanitation development and food security**. Examples of such solutions include the provision of safe water access for 200 households in the Mathare slums in Kenya, promoting traditional water storage methods in Tunisia, the establishment of community seed banks to safeguard diverse local crop varieties in Rufunsa, Zambia, reforesting the headwaters of the Tucavaca River in the Pantanal, Bolivia, the rehabilitation of the Claracuta Lagoon in Bolivia and prevention, control, and management of forest fires in Guyra Paraguay Eco Pantanal. Additionally, the VCA network is positioning its pipeline of initiatives strategically for funding at various levels.

VCA has continued its research, lobby and advocacy efforts to ensure that **climate finance policies and/or institutions at sub-national and national levels in VCA target countries, as well as International Finance Institutions (IFIs)**, introduce or include

mechanisms that enhance access to finance for locally-led climate action. In 2023, **11 climate finance policies** were influenced, including the outcomes of the 6th Technical Experts Dialogue on the **New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance**, which strengthened the global response to the threat of climate change by making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. VCA has lobbied governments, negotiating blocks such as the **Africa Group Negotiators and C77, and international financial institutions, including the World Bank**, to adopt strategies and policies that would increase the accessibility of funds for local communities and marginalised groups. Fundación Avina successfully secured **USD 10 million** from the Green Climate Fund to advance local, nature-based climate adaptation solutions in the Brazilian Amazon. A first scoping at the end of 2023 indicated that an estimate of **7.8 million euros had been leveraged** by Alliance and Local Partners from funding sources such as the Green Accountability programme with WRI, World Bank and Hairou Commission (Indonesia), Global Water Challenge & CARE (Zambia), RVO -Dutch Enterprise Agency (Bolivia), IDRC (Kenya) and EU (Paraguay), ARPA (Brazil) and the Africa Development Bank (Kenya and Zambia).

By the end of 2023, the implementation of the VCA finance mechanism- NLGF had progressed. At least **Euro 1 million of the Euro 3.5 million was disbursed to the VCA local partners managing the funds - SDI Kenya, Communa (Bolivia) and Codehupy (Paraguay)**. Local partners in 3 implementing countries had already identified fund managers, i.e., **Brazil (Fundo Casa), Indonesia (Samdhana), and Tunisia (AIHR)**, and the contracting will be finalised by the end of Q1 2024. This is a flexible granting mechanism that offers predictable funding to indigenous and local communities through devolved, transparent, and accountable structures.

VCA's success and progress are attributed to its network of local partners and **its collaboration with various entities, including research institutions/universities, governments, local authorities, and embassies**. Special attention has been paid to **strengthening regional networks, collaborating strategically, and following co-designed agendas and joint advocacy strategies**. Examples of successful collaborations include the Women's Life and Wellness Foundation (WLWF) and the Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW) on local food systems; SDI Kenya with the national government on the Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor Project, and; VCA Bolivia and the Dutch Embassy on advocating for the establishment of a National Climate Change Coordination Council as well as exploring opportunities for financing value chains in the Chaco and Pantanal (including Chiquitania) region.

VCA Partners are continuously seeking opportunities for **learning at various levels, i.e., country, cross-country, and with global partners**. Learning is facilitated on both programmatic and thematic topics. Examples of exchange include the Indonesia Women's Federation and SPEAK Indonesia; women from Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay during the Trinational Meeting of the Women's Collective; VCA in the Partos Community of Practice on Climate Justice; and VCA and IIED on LLA.

Way Forward: VCA is achieving the important progress of ensuring that local civil society groups play a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions. In 2024, VCA aims to further consolidate the numerous results achieved thus far for a just, resilient future.

2. INTRODUCTION

The VCA programme is being implemented by an alliance of the Worldwide Fund for Nature-Netherlands (WWF-NI), 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". The VCA programme is active in Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Indonesia, and has a global team working to bring voices from these sites to international policy arenas. It works towards the meaningful inclusion of civil societies and underrepresented groups in national and global climate action. Advocating for inclusive, rights-based approaches, VCA works with civil society to build widespread support for locally led climate solutions. Through mutual capacity-strengthening strategies, strong regional alliances are formed and empowered to influence local, national and global climate policies and financial flows. By facilitating unusual and innovative partnerships, alternative and generally marginalised voices are amplified, diversifying the public debate and narratives on climate justice. Through this climate justice approach, the programme aims to expand civic space, enabling civil society voices, particularly those of Indigenous and marginalised people, to be heard on climate action. 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 report summarises the progress made in VCA's third year of programme implementation. Since its inception in 2021, the VCA has made significant progress towards meeting its 5-year strategic objective: 'By 2025, local civil society groups have claimed a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions.' The programme's outcomes are presented in Chapter 2 and grouped as follows: mutual capacity-strengthening strategies, amplified voices contributing to public debate and policies, co-creating local solutions for the benefit of people and nature, and financing locally led solutions. Collaboration, networks and Southern Leadership are reflected upon separately. In each chapter, examples from the regions are shared. These examples are only a fraction of the countless activities and initiatives undertaken within the VCA network and can never fully represent the richness of our programme.

Political, Environmental and Social Context update

2023 was the warmest year on record. Extreme weather events continued to increase in frequency and intensity, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations around the world [1]. In addition, the effects of El Niño could be felt across the globe, leading to severe droughts or heavy rainfall and floods, threatening livelihoods, water and food security in the countries where VCA operates. For example, El Niño induced changes in Zambia's 2023-2024 rainy season have led to a loss of 1 million hectares from 2.2 million planted crops, almost half the country's planted area. Similarly, in Kenya, after emerging from the worst drought in decades, the country grappled with incessant rain and flash floods associated with the El Niño phenomenon, which left at least 170 people dead and displaced more than 600,000 [2].

Last year, the worst droughts in the Amazon's history struck the Tapajos region in Brazil, while severe floods affected the regions of Para and Acre, causing major material and personal losses, isolating communities, and destroying biodiversity. The prolonged drought in the Chaco region of Paraguay led to the declaration of a state emergency. Forest fires in Bolivia severely affected the daily lives of both rural and urban society. Temperature increases in Tunisia are leading to reduced and more variable precipitation patterns, while rising sea levels are causing salt intrusion. This has led to such severe pressure on Tunisia's water sector that water supplies were heavily rationed in 2023.

The disasters mentioned here are merely a fraction of the numerous events that occurred in 2023, prompting an increasing number of people worldwide to call for immediate climate action. Climate justice movements are growing and uniting across the globe, actively protesting, campaigning and lobbying for change. However, in 2023, activists faced increasing pushback as many states are deliberately collapsing spaces for (climate) activism [3]. Also, in VCA-implementing countries, civil society spaces continued to shrink. In Paraguay, a proposal by the senate to increase control of non-profit organisations has been raising concerns, as its implications limit opportunities for civic engagement. In Brazil, where the inauguration of President Lula presented promising changes, conservative and regressive regimes still pose threats and exert violence against Indigenous Peoples, CSOs, movements, and activists working in the Amazon. CSOs in Indonesia went through a tumultuous year in the run-up to the controversial presidential elections of February 2024. The victory of former military general Prabowo Subianto, who has been accused of human rights violations in the past, has raised concerns about Indonesia's democratic future.

These developments underscore the need for an active, empowered civil society and stress the importance of equipping and strengthening CSOs with the tools, connections and resources to navigate these challenging contexts. The elections in the Netherlands at the end of 2023 saw a radical shift towards right-wing and populist ideologies. A new government, that is still being formed, is likely to dial down climate and development investments and commitments that have been made by the Netherlands in previous years. As the exact implications to Dutch foreign policy and funds are still largely unknown, the VCA will continue to make a case for international collaboration on climate action and the importance of locally-led approaches.

[1] State of the Global Climate 2023. World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 2024. <https://library.wmo.int/records/item/68835-state-of-the-global-climate-2023>

[2] <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/death-toll-from-kenya-floods-almost-doubles-to-120-/7374002.html>

[3] State of Civil Society Report 2024. Civicus : [state-of-civil-society-report-2024_en.pdf](https://www.civics.org/state-of-civil-society-report-2024_en.pdf) (civics.org)

On a positive note, political and social contexts have also created opportunities for VCA in 2023 to leverage and influence. In Tunisia, while political progress on climate change may seem relatively stagnant, civil society is stepping up to fill the gap by responding to the needs of the vulnerable communities on the ground and advocating for government plans, such as regional climate change action plans. In Kenya's new government system, climate change discussions attracted a lot of interest. With the Climate Summit and the UNFCCC Africa Climate Week being hosted in Kenya, leaders and investors from and outside Africa were brought together to share experiences and solutions to increase adaptation efforts and resilience of the continent. The announcement of COP30 being hosted in Brazil in 2025 has sparked a movement of CSOs strategising and partnering to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives in the debates and agenda. This is inspiring movements in other VCA countries to do the same, while the VCA Global Programme will increase its efforts in helping VCA partners and allies navigate UNFCCC spaces. Compared to previous hosting countries, as host of COP30, Brazil is expected to generate significant opportunities for meaningful civil society engagement in global climate agendas.

Relevance of the TOC

While conducting the Mid-Term Review (MTR) throughout 2023, the VCA alliance critically reflected upon its TOC. The MTR concluded that the TOC is still valid and relevant, yet recognised that repetition across the pillars and ambiguous formulations resulted in outcomes being interpreted differently across the regions. With a growing database of outcomes, these increasingly posed challenges to consolidating regional outcomes into a strong global narrative. This report addresses this by presenting results thematically, showcasing the impact of our work on the ground.

To further address this problem, the alliance formulated a set of targets to simplify its narrative and use for strategic communication. By 2025, the VCA aims to achieve targets on climate finance, gender and diversity, and locally-led nature-based solutions. The targets are presented in Annex I.

The rationale behind creating these targets was to sharply define the legacy of VCA after its five-year period, as the TOC was deemed not to have reflected this strongly enough. The TOC continues to guide and justify the work of the VCA, both at global and regional levels.

Mid-Term Review

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) conducted in 2023 provided the VCA programme with a valuable opportunity to assess its progress, challenges, and overall trajectory critically. The evaluation, led by an independent global consultant and supported by regional experts, offered insightful recommendations to strengthen the programme's strategic impact and enhance its effectiveness in driving climate action and amplifying local voices. The VCA reflected on the valuable lessons and insights gained from the MTR, recognising the importance of integrating these learnings into the design of future initiatives to sustain and amplify the positive changes initiated during the current programme. At the beginning of 2024, VCA developed a management response to the MTR and this was presented to and discussed with the Ministry. Since then, further actions have been taken, and these are highlighted in this report and a summary in Annex III. In addition, the MTR findings and recommendations will guide the next remaining phase of the programme.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF VCA IN 2023

This chapter highlights the substantial achievements of the VCA programme in 2023, 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.

3.1 MUTUAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The strategy on mutual capacity strengthening remains a core component of the VCA Theory of Change in all countries. Capacity strengthening activities aim to enable VCA partners in their work by improving a solid base of essential skills, tools, and methodologies.

In 2023, the VCA had **203** active subcontracted partners (figure1). The mutuality of capacity development in VCA can be seen in VCA's extensive engagement in networks, where relationships are defined by equality, trust and long-term commitment. By the end of 2023, **188** of the **203** VCA subcontracted CSOs strengthened their capacities. Capacity strengthening in the regions is shifting from institutional strengthening in previous years (e.g. financial administration, project management, monitoring and planning) towards thematic knowledge building (local climate impacts and adaptation strategies, climate justice, feminist leadership, UNFCCC processes and policies (including Loss & Damage and Climate Finance), advocacy tools, methodologies, and exchange.

Increasing the contextual understanding of the effects of climate change within the regions is significantly enhancing our local partners' position in influencing local, regional and national climate agendas. The youth and women in VCA countries are taking on the role of local champions, trainers and facilitators, as is reflected in the examples included in this chapter.

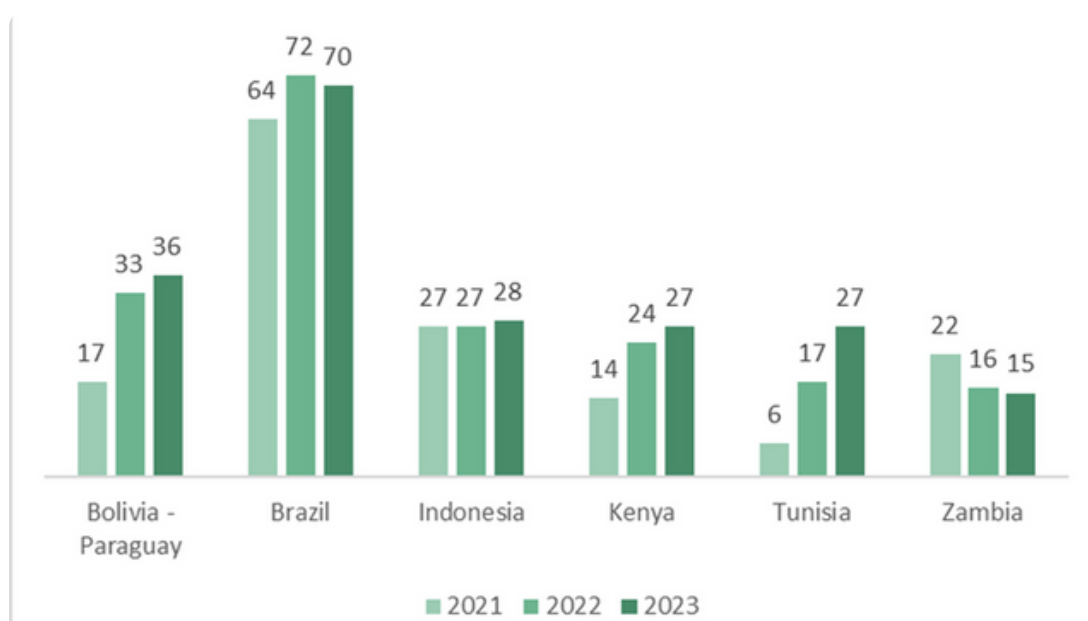


Figure 1: Number of subcontracted partners in VCA in 2023 and previous years. In 2023, VCA worked with in total 203 subcontracted partners (SCS Basket indicator 6). More details on SCS06 in Annex VII. To provide more insight into the work done by the many local partners in VCA, the Comms TF created [this publication](#), which provides a snapshot of the variety of projects carried out in the VCA countries.

Integrating Climate Justice in Arts and Education in Tunisia

The organisation Collectif Creatif works together with the VCA Tunisia team to mainstream climate justice and environmental rights in education by fostering unique collaborations with artists, climate change advocates and youth. In 2023, an art teacher from ISBAS, the Fine Arts School of Sousse, attended their 12-month training programme on climate justice, after which she was able to embed a course on climate justice within the curriculum of ISBAS. She engaged **70** students in this course, which resulted in a unique in-situ exhibition and a new generation of activists.

By joining and participating in the VCA network, local and alliance partners have contributed and used their complementary roles, knowledge, locations, expertise, and capacities to strengthen their collective power. For example, AMwA's intersectional approach that centres the diverse needs, experiences, and leadership of people most impacted by discrimination and oppression; Avina's capacity to foster southern leadership and local action; Hivos' approaches to climate justice; and SDI's citizen's science and lessons of engaging youth are being replicated in a number of sites by all partners. SSN is enabling the VCA network to mobilise coherent knowledge and evidence used in position papers collectively, and the WWF NbS sessions and practical discussions at various forums have enabled us to see the diverse ways of achieving NbS as a climate justice approach. This has paved the groundwork for results in all three TOC pillars of the VCA, with around 30% of reported VCA outcomes being attributable to capacity-strengthening efforts.

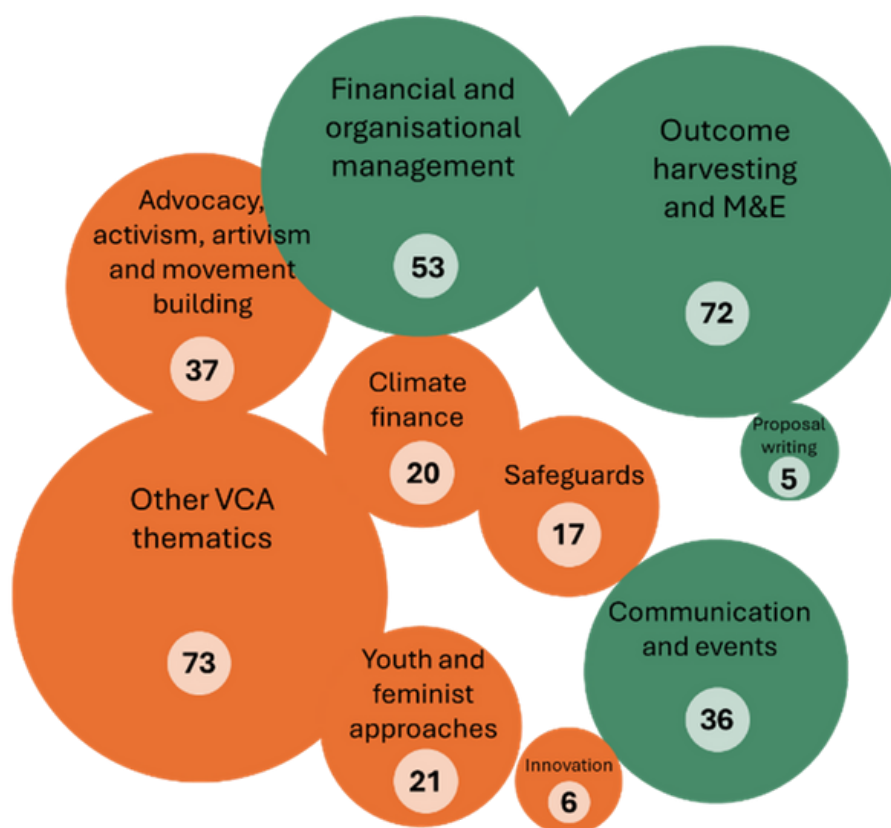


Figure 2: A total of 188 subcontracted partners reported their capacities strengthened in 2023, with many reporting multiple capacities as strengthened. The figure shows how often a capacity had been strengthened. Colors indicate capacities related institutional strengthening (green) and thematic or aimed at improving lobby and advocacy (orange). Compared to previous years, this year more thematic capacities were strengthened than institutional capacities.

Increase in Knowledge on Policies: How to Effectively Engage at COP28

VCA, Impulsouth and Resilience Hub hosted an informational webinar on the relevance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the opportunities for delegates and civil society advocacy. This webinar, which provided an introduction and advice for new participants, aimed to increase the knowledge and capacities of key actors with respect to the opportunities offered by participation at COP28 to achieve effective engagement, promote the effective participation of representatives from the global south and democratise knowledge and opportunities. With presentations from key negotiators and leading civil society actors, it aimed to familiarise delegates and participants with the proceedings and issues to be addressed during COP28. [attendees: 94 / Youtube views: 163]

Rethink! Space on Feminist Perspectives on Climate Finance

To commemorate Earth Day, VCA Kenya organised a "Rethink! space" under the theme "*Rhetoric to Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Climate Finance*". The space inspired a deep reflection on the current climate finance architecture from an intersectional feminist perspective, invoking the sharing of compelling stories on the impact of deeply gendered and unequal climate finance structures and offering critical solutions to further influence climate policies and discussions from local to global levels.

The space took a nuanced and multidisciplinary approach to explore new ways of thinking about reshaping the current approach to climate finance and ensuring that it is gender-responsive, anti-colonial, debt-free, long-term, flexible, and anti-capitalistic in its structure and mode of delivery.

The space brought together feminist thinkers, academia, women's rights activists, social justice activists, and climate justice actors, the majority of whom are part of the African Feminist Task Force on COP and the VCA.

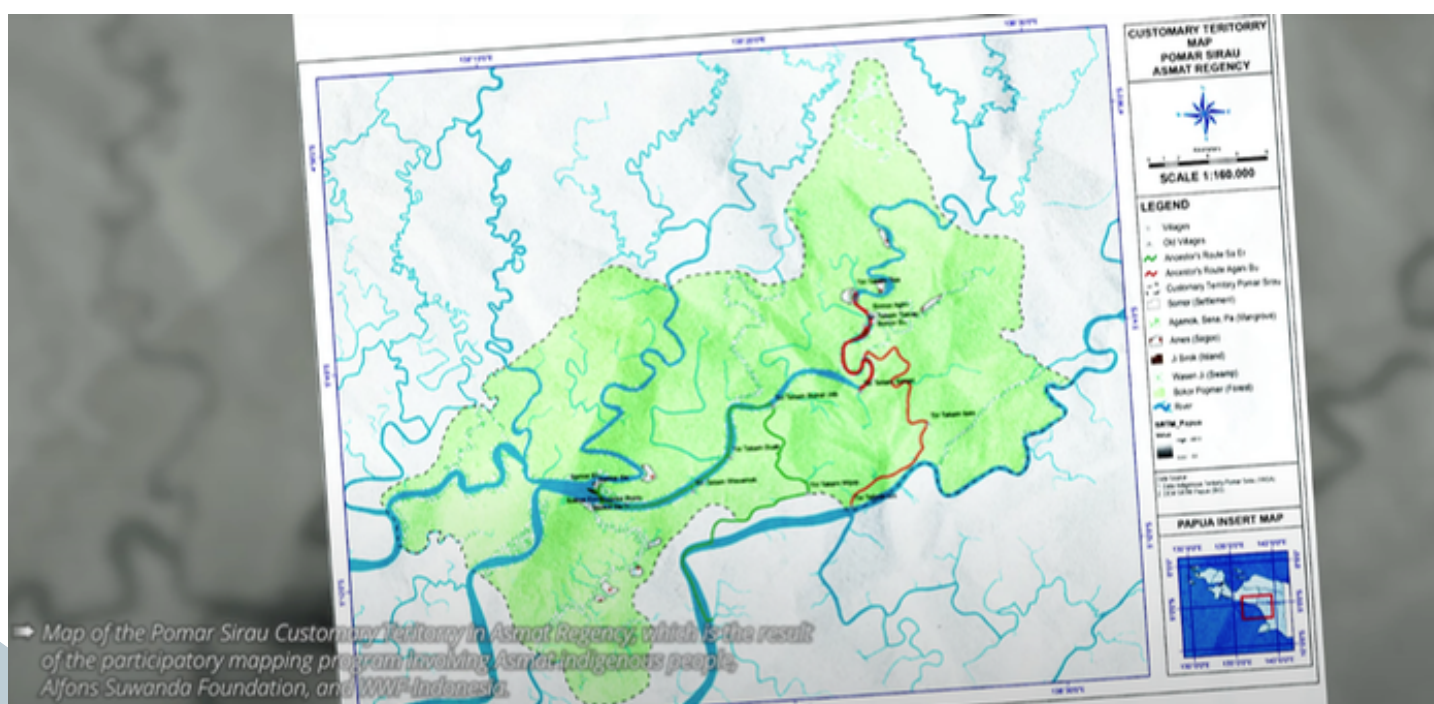
Participatory Mapping for the Recognition of Customary Areas for the Asmat in Papua, Indonesia

The Asmat Regency, located on the south-western coast of Papua, is the largest tidal delta of Papua. Its unique ecosystem of tropical forest, countless rivers and muddy flats is home to the Asmat People.

Their way of living is increasingly threatened by overexploitation and logging by foreign actors. Foreign producers are easily getting permits to exploit the area and are violating the rights of its Indigenous inhabitants. This is because the right-wing government is prioritising a development model based on extraction.

In June 2023, VCA capacitated 9 local facilitators to mobilise local communities to engage in a participatory mapping exercise. By gathering social and spatial data, the customary area was visualised in an indicative map of the territory, covering 119,995.3 ha. The development of this map has been critical to support the recognition of these customary areas, which is highly needed to protect the Asmat people against producers. This was possible due to the collaboration within the VCA Network in Indonesia. It is important and urgent that all IP rights in Indonesia are secured.

Further efforts will be made to connect the IPs in Indonesia with those in the Amazon as an important strategy for collective lobbying that maintains pressure on governments.



3.2 AMPLIFIED VOICES INFLUENCING POLICIES AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE PUBLIC DEBATE

The VCA (Voices for Just Climate Action) programme set out to influence the public agenda in 2023 by raising public awareness about climate change and its impacts, centring and mainstreaming climate justice debates and demands, and involving local people and communities, as well as minoritised groups in policy and decision-making processes.

Amplifying Voices through Participation in Decision-making Spaces

In 2023, VCA's contribution has focused on shaping collectives, facilitating VCA partners to participate in discussion groups, proactive contributions to policy formulation processes and organising knowledge and skills workshops for local partners. To achieve this, the VCA prioritised creating opportunities for voices to come together, exploring synergies and defining common positions. The VCA facilitated inclusive spaces to strengthen and broker new and unfamiliar coalitions on shared climate agendas, for example, across rural-urban divides, shared interests on water justice and building solidarity (e.g. young urban activists and indigenous peoples in the Amazon). These spaces strengthened inclusiveness and legitimacy as the shared agendas are led by women, indigenous people or young people from both urban and rural communities.

Furthermore, VCA has succeeded in supporting **51** communities, groups or individuals to be included in different decision-making processes for climate policies or climate programmes at global, national and sub-national level. The decision-making processes include village governments (Indonesia), the Environmental Participatory Front-Climate Working Group of the Chamber of Commerce and Chico Mendes Extractive Deliberation Council (Brazil), the Africa Climate Summit (Kenya) and the third summit between the European Union and the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC). Getting youth, women, and indigenous peoples to be part of the conversation has been an achievement in countries where information may be censored, and perspectives of affected communities are regularly side-lined.

Over the course of 2023, VCA has increased its efforts in furthering its youth engagement strategy. Today's youth are our global leaders of tomorrow. Through the Power of Voices platform, regular youth dialogues are facilitated around advocacy strategies. In 2023, the platform was coordinated by a YOUNGO representative, which significantly increased VCA's alignment and collaboration with that constituency. Furthermore, several regional teams have been involved in organising Local Conferences of Youth (LCOYs), or have supported youth-led partners to attend these spaces. LCOYs are impactful spaces for facilitating joint agenda-setting and exchange amongst youth in the VCA regions. Finally, consultations with several youth-led organisations in the Netherlands have led to a strengthened youth-engagement strategy for 2024.

By the end of 2023, **21** CSOs and networks have been directly equipped and supported to adopt and apply an intersectional, diverse, gender and feminist frame of analysis and have enhanced the engagement and representation of women, youth, gender-expansive persons, and indigenous peoples in their climate justice interventions. In **88** instances, civil society organisations within VCA participated in new and/or expanded their collaborations with existing and emerging gender-responsive climate justice movements across the globe, including the Amazon Alliance campaign (Brazil), The Bolivian intergenerational Alliance for the Escazú Accord (Bolivia), the Women Collective of the Great Chaco (Bolivia- Paraguay), the Coalition Por los Bosques (Paraguay), the Citizen Journalism Network (Indonesia), and the African Women and Gender Constituency (Kenya).

Inclusion in Decision-making Spaces

The Women's Collective of the Gran Chaco Americano influencing the Third Summit between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

Bernarda Pessoa, Indigenous leader of the Qom IP, participated in the CELAC summit, representing the Women's Collective of the Gran Chaco. She spoke about the experience of the women of the American Chaco and digitalisation. She mentioned the importance of connectivity in rural and indigenous territories as a tool to strengthen research, defend access to land, access to water and management with public institutions and organisations. She recalled the need for funding to reach more territories and the need for technological equipment. She pointed out that we must continue to focus on youth and women. As an essential element, she emphasised Indigenous autonomy as a human right to be fully respected.

African Youth Influencing the Africa Climate Summit

The African continent has the youngest population in the world, yet their inclusion in regional climate decision-making is not at the speed and scale required. During the Africa Climate Summit, the African youth demonstrated the importance and value of Youth inclusion in a detailed declaration which informed the final Nairobi declaration. The key asks presented by the youth that was adopted by the African presidents included:

- Oblige all key stakeholders to recognise, promote, and invest in the African Youth Climate Assembly's decision to establish itself as the principal forum for consolidating and meaningfully enhancing the coordination of youth engagement in climate governance across Member States.
- Urged the Stakeholders to institutionalise youth participation in all climate-related decision-making at continental forums and institutions for the inclusive, effective, and active empowerment of young individuals to contribute to Africa's climate action agenda.
- Strengthen young people's capacity for climate change mitigation efforts by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and funding required to participate actively in the green growth agenda and establish climate investment mechanisms.

COP30 Advocacy Forum- Brazil

The Saude e Alegria Project and organisations from the Voices of Tapajós Coalition, with support from VCA, held the Voices of Tapajós Seminar for the COP in the Amazon. This event was the starting point for the creation of the forum, aimed at broadening participation and discussion on environmental and climate issues in the region. The forum will build proactive strategies, seeking more effective participation in decision-making processes on the environment and social justice in the Amazon region, no longer dependent on the convening of decision-making bodies. This forum will play a critical role in rallying other stakeholders, especially IPs, to participate in the COP30 to be held in Brazil.

Influencing Policymakers from The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, VCA collaborated with several lobby groups including the Internationale Klimaatcoalitie, de Groene 11 and Partos to influence policy makers. Hivos initiated a letter, and this culminated in it being signed by five Dutch political parties, addressed to the President of the Brazilian Senate, expressing their concerns about bill PL490 that would have disastrous impacts on Indigenous Land Rights. The bill was rejected by the Brazilian legislators, marking a key milestone in the efforts made by civil society organisations.

The positive impacts of these spaces led to the change, adoption, rejection or influence of the implementation of **48** laws and policies in the first half of the year. In the rest of 2023, an additional **30** policies, laws and financial mechanisms were influenced as well. This demonstrates that VCA is succeeding in generating the urgency needed and capturing the attention of actors with high influence to address issues related to climate change and livelihoods.

Influencing strategies in this programme centre around the recognition of civil society's views in the development and implementation of climate-relevant (public and private) policies and practices. Advocacy has emerged as a potent catalyst in confronting climate change, effectively bridging the chasm between problems, policy and implementation. It galvanises the pursuit of social equity, mobilising an array of stakeholders to instigate profound, transformative shifts. The number of policies that have been changed or adopted in the last period, if implemented well, will continue to contribute towards climate adaptation and the reduction of vulnerabilities faced by underrepresented communities.

Laws and Policies Influenced, Adopted or Rejected

Legislation Adapted: Justice for the Evicted Farmers of Marina Kue, Paraguay.

The Asociación de Familiares y Víctimas de Marina Kue" is a grassroots organisation that was formed after the historic conflict known as the "Massacre of Marina Kué" took place in June 2012. More than 300 police officers arrived in the area to conduct a violent eviction of 60 campesinos. This conflict resulted in the death of 17 people (11 campesinos and 6 police officers). Since the beginning of the programme, VCA Paraguay has supported the Asociación de Familiares y Víctimas de Marina Kue' to engage with government institutions and civil society organisations to work on the draft law for land expropriation of the area in favour of the community's inhabitants. In 2023, Mario Abdo, Paraguay's former president, signed the law enabling them to develop sustainably and inhabit the territory legally. As a result, **1,748 hectares** of land were transferred to INDERT (National Institute for Rural Development).

Influencing Decisions in Local Bodies: 18 Youth Participating in the Nairobi Rivers Commission, Kenya

The Nairobi River is the backbone of the city's blue and green infrastructure; however, it is severely polluted, badly affecting the city's urban environment and quality of life. SDI Kenya and Muungano wa Wanavijiji gathered group-profiling data to understand better the significant contributions made by local climate action groups in rehabilitating and reclaiming the river-basin. This data was used to inform the Waste to Rivers Nairobi River Action Plan. As a result, 18 youth members from local climate action groups have been included in the Nairobi River Planning sub-committee, giving them a seat at the decision-making table.

Influencing the Lusaka Development Plan, Zambia

The submission by the Zambia Homeless and Poor Peoples Federation (ZHPPF) and Public Policy for People in Zambia (PPHPZ) regarding the Lusaka spatial development framework was successfully incorporated into the first draft of the Lusaka Development Plan. This incorporation signifies the recognition of climate action priorities within urban planning initiatives.

The draft plan received validation from 60% of the ward councillors, indicating widespread support for the proposed spatial development framework. Following this validation, PPHPZ and its grassroots movement were tasked with leading the subsequent process of climate-proofing the development plan. The climate-proofing process presents a significant opportunity to ensure that climate action-related projects are included and financed within the development plan. By integrating climate resilience measures and sustainable practices into urban development initiatives, the plan will contribute to enhancing the city's capacity to adapt to climate change impacts and mitigate associated risks. Furthermore, the development plan will outline key projects that should be prioritised for funding through the Constituency Development Fund. This prioritisation ensures that climate action projects receive the necessary resources and support to be implemented effectively, ultimately contributing to the resilience and sustainability of Lusaka's development.

Amplifying Voices through Alternative Storytelling, Influencing Public Debates on Climate Justice

By amplifying the narratives and stories emerging from the regions, CSOs raised awareness of the injustices perpetrated against local people and highlighted the impactful actions to combat climate change. Numerous platforms were used, including media, documentaries, film festivals, events, climate-camps, workshops and multi-stakeholder dialogues. Furthermore, innovative digital platforms have been established, connecting movements, communities and activists across regional and national borders. VCA widely supports 'artists', who generate powerful artistic projects influenced by the effects and injustices of climate change. Such projects have the potential to inspire unconventional audiences, significantly widening VCA's reach and impact. Furthermore, innovative digital platforms such as the Plantaformas Movement (Brazil), and the Chaco Network of Digital Content Creators (Paraguay) have been established, connecting movements, communities, and activists across regional and national borders, significantly widening VCA reach and impact. Thus, the VCA local-to-global approach coordinates and bridges the gap between global policy and local implementation.

Pesta Raya Flobamoratas Climate Festival in Indonesia

Over 1500 people participated in the Pesta Raya Flobamoratas Climate Festival in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This festival came about through a collaboration between Humanis/Hivos, the KOPI Coalition, Pangan Baik (The Good Food Coalition), the Adaptation Coalition and numerous communities, artists and youth-based organisations.

The festival hosted exhibitions, performances, beach cleanups, mangrove planting efforts and numerous other activities. This all contributed to raising awareness of climate change and the potential of locally shaped climate solutions in the region.

Alternative Storytelling in Tunisia

The alternative-media group Nawaat produced numerous media outlets in 2023 addressing climate-related issues. Impactful publications included a dedicated magazine exploring the ramifications of climate change, specifically within Tunisia's context, as well as a mini-documentary on agricultural challenges. In addition, Nawaat facilitated thought-provoking debates and events, convening members of the civil society and increasing calls for adequate action by governing bodies.

The content produced reached over 100,000 individuals in Tunisia and abroad. Combined with other efforts from RT Tunisia, these media campaigns attracted the attention of the National Minister of Agriculture, who paid field visits to the challenged site of Ouled Amor. Local authorities provided water tanks to affected communities, and national debates were stirred on Tunisia's climate policies.

Lessons Learned

The VCA is increasingly using evidence-based strategies to underpin and strengthen lobby and advocacy. Evidence is gathered through storytelling, community maps and profiles and the documentation of climate solutions. By presenting compelling evidence and factual analysis, VCA aimed to strengthen the credibility of community voices and advocacy messages and enhance their persuasive power. Additionally, VCA adopted a more strategic approach to targeting decision-makers and stakeholders.

Instead of relying solely on broad outreach and mass communication tactics, VCA focused on identifying key influencers and opinion leaders within the policy-making arena. By tailoring advocacy efforts to specific individuals or groups and leveraging evidence-based arguments tailored to their interests and priorities, VCA aimed to maximise impact.

3.3 CO-CREATING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF PEOPLE AND NATURE

Different civil society groups under the VCA programme are collaborating on shared climate agendas because they face shared risks, challenges and opportunities around climate and development. VCA supports communities and CSOs in developing climate solutions that are locally led, shaped or supported by citizens and civil society in a way that effectively and appropriately addresses their fundamental rights and needs. VCA is part of the growing movement for locally led adaptation (LLA), advocating for a paradigm where local actors and communities lead decisions over how, when and where to adapt. LLA recognises the value of local knowledge and expertise to address climate risk and ensures that local actors on the frontlines of climate change have equitable access to decision making spaces and resources to build resilience.

Providing evidence and ideas to transform policy and practice is key to the VCA. Action research with local actors and partners in the implementing countries facilitates the development of practical solutions that support grassroots communities. In 2022 and 2023, many of the VCA countries conducted scoping studies to identify opportunities for locally-led solutions. These were conducted through baselines in Bolivia, Paraguay and Kenya; research studies in Kenya and Indonesia; socio-ecological assessments and grassroots profiling and mapping in Kenya and Zambia; and documenting case studies and best practices. The information gathered through these scoping studies enabled the local grassroots communities to influence policymakers at the local and regional levels. For example, city officials now rely on data provided by organised slum dwellers in Zambia and Kenya in urban planning. Slum dwellers have been formally recognised as partners with information and ideas for making changes that benefit cities and informal settlements. In Bolivia, an association of women from the community of Motacusito worked with monitoring centres to carry out a series of studies, which led to the declaration of a municipal protected area in the Bolivian Pantanal RAMSAR Site.

Chapter 2.2.1 highlighted the efforts being made to amplify the voices of marginalised groups through inclusion in decision-making and influencing policies. Such advocacy successes have led to creating the enabling environment for implementing and strengthening practical solutions to adapting to climate change. VCA Partners and their local partners initiated or advanced the piloting of at least **74 local solutions** to improve biodiversity conservation, food security and water and sanitation. Together, these solutions are expected to have a direct and indirect impact on a total of more than **420,000 hectares** and provide benefits for an estimated **1.6 million people** in the coming years. VCA harvested **82 outcomes** related to locally-led solutions, around **33%** of all outcomes harvested in 2023



Women of the Motacusito Community succeeded in the recognition of 880 ha to be destined for conservation, the protection of water sources and eco-tourism development. Having this area protected by law provides the community the legal tools and guarantees for the sustainable management of the area and equitable benefit sharing.

Local Solutions Contributing to Biodiversity & Nature Conservation

In recent years, the use of nature and natural ecosystems to mitigate and adapt to climate change has come to the forefront of discussions around meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement. Nature-based solutions are key to many countries' and companies' plans to achieve net zero in the coming decades. However, the approach has drawn criticism, especially from communities in the Global South, who view this as '*conservation-centric, colonial, elite, vague and open to deliberate misuse*' [4][5].

VCA recognises that if designed, implemented, and managed effectively and justly, Nature-based Solutions could provide synergistic and integrated approaches to address climate change and biodiversity loss while supporting sustainable development and the livelihoods of people across the world. To achieve climate mitigation and adaptation, any intervention must consider whether it is inclusive and sustainable in the long term. Of the **74 local solutions** VCA supported in 2023, **16** were classified as Nature-based or restoration projects specifically, while others may have positive effects on biodiversity as well.

Reforestation of the headwaters of Tucavaca River in the Pantanal Bolivia

VCA Bolivia worked with the municipal government of Robore and leaders of the Ipias, Ramada and Entre Rios communities to restore over 4 hectares surrounding the headwaters of the Tucavaca River. The 3 communities planted over 3000 seedlings of native tree species. This activity resulted from careful studies conducted in the 3 zones inhabited by the communities. In addition, 116 children, young people and adults were trained in the proper management and conservation of natural resources, in the importance of rainwater harvesting as well as environmental regulations and legal aspects. The project is set to increase its reach to 9 hectares in the coming two years. This will benefit the conservation of forests and ecosystems, which contribute to the improvement of socioeconomic and environmental conditions of the 1276 local population and provide opportunities for replication in other territories of the country.

Rehabilitation of the Claracuta Lagoon in Bolivia

VCA Bolivia worked with biology students, the Noel Kempff Mercado Natural History Museum and other CSOs to collectively restore the Claracuta Lagoon in Bolivia. Following data collections on the local ecosystem and water quality, over 400 volunteers participated in restoration efforts in the area. Large scale cleaning events were organized, wherein 4 tons of garbage was collected. Aquatic filtering plants were planted, and the area was reforested with 1000 seedlings of native species, creating a corridor to facilitate eco-tourism in the future. In addition, 200 residents of the lagoon received training on the importance of protecting the lagoon, its wildlife and ecosystem services. In 2023, 4 hectares were restored, but efforts are expected to reach 8 hectares by the end of 2025. Already, about 200.000 people indirectly benefitted from this initiative.

Prevention, control and management of forest fires in the Pantanal Chaco region- Paraguay

This region experienced the largest uncontrolled fire event in 2019, devastating more than 300,000 hectares, affecting natural areas, biodiversity and communities. In some areas it persisted until 2023. Since then, significant efforts have been made to address these challenges and establish a local response mechanism in the Pantanal region, leading to the formation of the Jaguarete brigade. This brigade is made up of local people and indigenous communities, with the support of VCA local partners, Eco Pantanal and Guyra Paraguay. The Jaguarete brigade has been actively involved in capacity building for fire management, control, and prevention. They have also conducted local awareness campaigns to promote fire prevention measures. In addition, collaborative efforts have been initiated in the region with Bolivia and Brazil to monitor hot spots, establish a local contingency table and develop an action protocol for effective response strategies.

[4] Melanidis, M. S., & Hagerman, S. (2022). Competing narratives of nature-based solutions: Leveraging the power of nature or dangerous distraction?. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 132, 273-281.

[5] Rees, A., & Doyon, A. (2023). Unsettling NbS: A pathway towards shifting colonial power relations in nature-based solutions research and practice. *PLOS Climate*, 2(11), e0000307.

Local Solutions Contributing to Food Security

The threat to livelihoods, food and nutrition security through crop failures resulting from climate impacts (droughts, floods) is a reality that many communities in the Global South face. To address this challenge, many VCA partners have adopted the concept of Climate-smart Agriculture (CSA). This is a holistic approach to end food insecurity and promote sustainable development while addressing climate change issues.

VCA Partners are implementing a set of agricultural practices and technologies which simultaneously boost productivity and enhance resilience. These range of practices and technologies are tailored to specific agroecological conditions and socio-economic contexts. Examples include the adoption of climate-resilient crop varieties, conservation agriculture techniques, agroforestry, precision farming, water management strategies, and improved livestock management. In 2023 **19** of VCAs outcomes were reported to contribute to enhancing food security in our sites, and **20** of the local solutions contribute to food security.

Establishing community seed banks to safeguard diverse local crop varieties in Rufunsa, Zambia

VCA Zambia supported the establishment of community seed banks in the Rufunsa district. Maintaining diversity in local crop varieties is an important strategy for increasing the resilience of subsistence farmers to climate change. The seedbanks provided access to at least 396 farmers, 253 of which were women, and 24 were youths. The seedbanks also played an important role in creating awareness of climate-smart farming. Furthermore, a farmer exchange visit to community seed banks between the Chikankata and Kafue communities was conducted with the participation of 40 farmers for mutual capacity strengthening. It is envisioned that this project will be replicated in other sites to support community access to crop diversity for food security in a changing climate, as well as galvanise government support for such innovations.



Florence Tembo Chaporo shares with the visiting journalists from Lusaka during a field trip in Rufunsa that planting local seeds brings many advantages for sustainable agriculture. Picture credit: Kondwani Thindwa.

Local Solutions for Access to Water and Sanitation

Many communities in VCA countries struggle daily to access safe drinking water. Prolonged droughts, this year exacerbated by El Niño, ravage the forests of the Chaco and large parts of Zambia, Kenya, and Tunisia. Strengthening the resilience of natural freshwater systems while ensuring communities have equal access to these resources is a key priority for VCA. In addition, urban-poor communities are increasingly facing hardships caused by insufficient and unsafe water infrastructure, resulting from improper waste management and damages caused by extreme flooding events.

In 2023, VCA regional teams increased their actions on supporting urban communities by leveraging their proposed solutions, successfully providing them with a seat at the table in decision-making spaces on several occasions. In 2023, **7** outcomes related to efforts securing access to water through influencing policies and leveraging local water solutions, while **25** of the local solutions supported by VCA relate to water and sanitation issues.

VCA Partners petitioned governments and lobbied for policies underscoring the need to fulfil the basic human right of access to safe and clean water and sanitation, including solid waste management. For example, community representatives from Nairobi County petitioned the Nairobi County Assembly to provide community water tanks, clear drainage systems, and collect garbage in the Wards.

This outcome demonstrates the empowerment of excluded voices and the successful amplification of citizens' concerns in the public sphere. In Tunisia, VCA partners actively collaborated with the Observatoire Tunisien de l'eau, which successfully blocked the progress in the adoption of the Draft Water Code. Their collective efforts were aimed at addressing concerns about the code's lack of inclusivity, water governance, social aspects, justice and human rights-based approach.

Securing Safe Water Access for 200 Households in the Mathare Slums, Nairobi, Kenya

The water catchment system that serves the residents of Nairobi is degrading alarmingly due to climate change. Inhabitants of informal urban settlements are the first to suffer. In the Mathare slums, VCA partner the Youth and Urbanism Organisation has been at the forefront of advocating for equitable access to water. They intensively collaborated with young people to design and implement diverse water solutions for their communities. These solutions include installing water storage tanks to cope with rationing periods and establishing ponds for greywater reuse. These efforts have successfully provided approximately 200 households with a consistent water supply, alleviating the effects of prolonged rationing lasting up to one week. Additionally, an equivalent number of residents can now utilise the recycled water from the ponds for essential sanitation purposes such as flushing toilets and cleaning. This achievement was documented and amplified during the UN water conference in New York in 2023.

Promoting traditional water storage methods in Tunisia

Feskias are a traditional water storage method used by communities in the Tunisian Kerkenah Islands. Feskias are underground water-storage reservoirs lined with impermeable materials to capture rainwater. During dry periods, these reservoirs serve as reliable water sources for agricultural communities. The VCA team in Tunisia, together with the agricultural and fishing women of the Kerkennah, successfully secured funds from the GEF Small Grants Programme to design and implement locally-led solutions in the region. As a result, 4 Feskias were constructed, and 1 more was rehabilitated in 2023. Providing water security to 4 farming families.

These and other efforts have led to the confidence that the VCA network can collaborate with governments and donors to lobby for funding for the ideation, development, and piloting of at least 7 VCA locally-led solutions that can be implemented on a large scale. The aim is to ensure that the VCA network is recognised by governments, donors, the private sector, movements, and NGOs as one of the key sources of good practice for developing just, equitable, locally-led climate solutions and NbS. For example, the Zambian government is setting up a special purpose vehicle for the restoration of the Lukanga wetland as NbS, and in Bolivia, the Asuncion municipality is being supported by VCA to establish a network of water reserves in the Chaco-Chiquitania and Pantanal landscape.

Lessons Learned

One key lesson is that it's essential to prioritise evidence-based approaches, especially when it comes to local solutions and practices. This avoids the contradictions or false solutions that can result from relying only on theoretical or abstract concepts. By basing our strategies on practical evidence, we can ensure that our interventions are effective and sustainable.

3.4 FINANCING LOCALLY LED SOLUTIONS: JOINT LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY TO MAKE POLICY AND FINANCIAL FLOWS RESPONSIVE TO CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

The link between climate justice and climate finance is undeniable, as underscored by the profound repercussions of insufficient funding on global adaptation efforts and economic stability. Despite this recognition, current climate finance frameworks fail to address the needs of frontline communities grappling with the effects of the climate crisis. By 2030, projections indicate a staggering demand for 4.3 trillion USD in the Global South alone to mitigate the most severe consequences of climate change, a figure expected to rise substantially in subsequent years. Moreover, the gap in adaptation finance stands at an alarming USD 194-366 billion annually, highlighting the urgency for comprehensive action^[6]. To address these pressing challenges, the VCA has sharpened its targets on climate finance (Annex I), aiming to influence climate finance policies and institutions at (sub) national and global levels as well as to implement adequate climate finance delivery mechanisms to ensure funds flow to the most local levels.

The VCA Global Programme (GloPro) spearheaded lobby and advocacy at international levels, actively lobbying governments, negotiating blocks such as the Africa Group Negotiators and C77, and international finance institutions, including the World Bank, to adopt strategies and or policies that would increase the accessibility of funds by local communities and marginalised groups. Members of the GloPro are part of working groups providing input to the Loss and Damage Fund Facility and the Green Climate Fund. In addition, GloPro commissioned various studies and evidence materials that resulted in policy briefs on local climate solutions and associated financing models across the 7 countries of the project to provide proof of concept for financing locally-led climate actions or solutions.

All regional teams have successfully been leveraging funds through the VCA. By September 2023, an estimate of **7.8 million euros** had been leveraged by the alliance and local partners from funding sources such as the Green Accountability programme with WRI, World Bank and Hairou Commission (Indonesia), Global Water Challenge & CARE (Zambia), RVO -Dutch Enterprise Agency (Bolivia), IDRC (Kenya) and EU (Paraguay), ARPA (Brazil) and the Africa Development Bank (Kenya and Zambia). This amount is based on a first scoping that was done in October 2023 and was attached to the Annual Plan 2024. In 2024, the Alliance is strengthening its mechanisms for mobilising and tracking leverage.

Securing Funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

In October 2023, Fundación Avina successfully secured **USD 10 million** from the GCF to advance local, nature-based climate solutions for adaptation in the Brazilian Amazon, thereby complementing the efforts of local VCA partners in the region, aiming to broaden climate discussions with civil society to facilitate access to investments. Blended Finance with technical assistance and multi-stakeholder engagement is a focused strategy for the sustainable development of the Legal Amazon. Blended finance can create an environment that adapts and organises supply and demand for investment with scale, assertiveness, institutional stability, and legal certainty, aiming to mobilise **USD 121 million** over the next three years to finance bio-economy solutions in the region.

Through lobby and advocacy efforts, VCA has developed, piloted, and/or advanced 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.

For example, investments may focus on activities that support livelihood diversification or community-level preparedness for multiple risks. Depending on what communities prioritise, investments may also promote water conservation and more efficient use of water, support for natural resource management, rehabilitating degraded lands, or promoting early warning systems as well as defending environmental defenders. The approach of these funding mechanisms to prioritise citizen engagement and local leadership in climate action also aligns with the LLA principles.

^[6] The Adaptation Gap Report. UNEP. 2023 ^[1] Melanidis, M. S., & Hagerman, S. (2022). Competing narratives of nature-based solutions: Leveraging the power of nature or dangerous distraction?. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 132, 273-281.

Tapping into Existing Funding Opportunities: FloCCA

VCA teams and partners tapped into existing funding mechanisms to finance numerous local solutions. Through FLoCCA, in Kenya, 500 hectares were reforested with (fruit) tree seedlings, benefitting over 40.000 people in Nakuru County. Also, through FLoCCA, local women were financed to lead on mangrove restoration in Lamu County, impacting restoring about 10 hectares and reaching over 100 groups. In addition, Indigenous movements, organisations and communities in the Amazon continued to access funds from the Podáali fund set up by the Amazon Indigenous Movement, led by COIAB. This financial mechanism is a channel for guaranteeing autonomy and increasing the bargaining power of these actors in climate finance processes.

Another result was the influence of the funding and budget allocation from village funds and local government budget for climate action in Indonesia. A sum of **Euro 15,000** was allocated for improving food production and installing safe water and sanitation facilities in East Flores District, North Jakarta City and Jayapura District, Papua Province. These funding and budget allocations were the results of representation and advocacy by civil society and marginalised groups through village and district/city government. Their advocacy process used data derived from urban profiling and mapping results, regulation, as well as needs assessment on the local food utilisation and renewable energy. Besides the outcome of funding and budget allocation, this process could also leverage the position of civil society and marginalised groups to be heard and be strategic partners of the government.

The NLGF & BASE as Viable Finance Delivery Mechanisms

The VCA **NLGF** (Next Level Grant Facility) funding mechanism disbursed **Euro 1 million** to the VCA local partners managing the funds - SDI Kenya, Communa (Bolivia) and Codehupy (Paraguay). Local partners in Brazil (Fundo Casa), Indonesia (Samdhana) and Tunisia (AIHR) have been contracted in Q1 of 2024. The recipients are small informal organisations that do not have the capacity to apply and report on more formal grants but that represent local rights holders and work on local climate solutions. Moreover, some of them cannot operate openly for security reasons, let alone showing a 'track record'. In addition, VCA Partners have also been using this grant mechanism to help take LLA to scale. An overview of the kind of projects funded under the NLGF in 2023 include climate emergencies, defence of defenders, water and soil conservation, flood mitigation measures, mangrove restoration, waste management, and riparian reclamation/ river restoration.

BASE (Building Approaches to Fund Local Solutions with Climate Evidence) was launched to promote more and better access to climate finance for local communities by testing alternative approaches to develop the climate rationale of projects with more speed, simplicity and in a manner that resonates with communities. This is a collaborative initiative coordinated by Fundación Avina as part of its Resilience and Climate Transition Programme and integrated by a diverse plenary of partners and aligned initiatives. BASE launched its first call in February 2023 to offer a one-year grant of **\$40,000.00 USD** for the development of 8 climate solutions led by local communities or organisations focused on tropical forest management in the Global South. For this inaugural call, more than 70 local organisations (including VCA partners) applied.

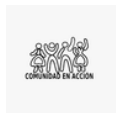
NLGF Fund Managers



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 a positive impact on diverse territories, investing in the lives of those who care for them, and establishing connections between communities and organisations.



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 to make them a daily practice that guarantees human dignity for all, without discrimination. It also aims to spread the culture of human rights, its principles and standards, and to educate about them by building knowledge, proposing policies, developing legislation and institutions, and strengthening 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 CODEHUPV 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.

These models of devolved climate finance support the governments in VCA implementing countries to translate 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. These financial mechanisms are instrumental in fostering and leveraging local innovations to reach scale, to become eligible for climate finance, supporting governance innovation to less well-established organisations and movements to raise their voice and share their concerns and solutions, strengthening joint agendas, and amplifying local voices to influence public debate and policy and enlarge civic space. Also, the capacity of local organisations is strengthened to leverage external funding to foster and scale local innovations.

Lessons Learned

One of the important lessons learnt is that NLGF is emerging as another catalyst for spurring regional collaboration and creating a local 'civil society ecosystem'. The RTs are working together to design, launch and publicise the initiative, to support successful grantees throughout the duration of the granting cycle, and to collect lessons on what has worked well about the initiative this year and what challenges have been faced. This will be critical for shaping future rounds of the small grants initiative. These are the 'champions' who ensure local communities and organisations working on climate change issues have access to the initiative and are supported to submit their applications. In 2024, the VCA will compile lessons learnt, which will inform current and future funding mechanisms and could shape the discourse on the risk appetite that donors are willing to take for high-risk facilities such as the NLGF.

4. COLLABORATION, PARTNERSHIPS AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Since its inception, the VCA programme has built and facilitated a fast-growing network of local partners, allies, and movements realising climate justice in many ways. By the end of 2023, over 200 local partners were funded through the VCA. Meaningful, equal, innovative, and diverse collaborations characterise the strength of the VCA. At the same time, the alliance is continuously learning how to collaborate effectively, challenging existing power structures in collaborations on climate transitions as well as internally in our alliance and organisations.

The VCA has started exploring tools and methodologies, bringing out the value of its many collaborations and networks. In development, projects and programmes come and go, and it should be acknowledged that many of our (local) collaborations preceded the VCA programme. As the programme moves closer to the end of 2025, we are seeking to understand and convey the value of the partnerships we have built and the effects at local and regional levels that persist even when the programme leaves.

One of VCA's key strategies is linking partners and allies to larger and global movements so that they can forge new partnerships and expand and capitalise on joint advocacy strategies. By 2025, VCA aims to realise that **150 civil society organisations** within the VCA have participated in new and/or expanded their collaborations with existing and emerging gender-responsive climate justice movements across the globe. In 2023, VCA partners were involved in at least **88 collaborations** with such movements.

Local Networks & Creating Local Ownership of the VCA Programme in the Sites

The VCA is working towards a structure where local partners increasingly determine the direction of the programme. Local ownership will increase the resilience and sustainability of our alliance, forging strong relationships at local and regional levels.

How local ownership is organised and interested varies per implementing country and context. For example, the bottom-up, participatory coalition-focused model adopted by the VCA RT in Brazil has proven to be effective in promoting inclusion, reducing power asymmetries, and allowing collaboration amongst diverse organisations. This model has strengthened the resilience of organisations in the national VCA network of Brazil against the challenging political context of the past years. The face-to-face and digital partner forums facilitated by RT Brazil are crucial spaces for building network strategies and joint advocacy campaigns, as well as for learning and exchange.

Many examples of diverse, locally driven partnerships leading to climate action and policy changes are now emerging from our regions. In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a collaboration was formed between the women's federation of Gedongkiwo, three universities, a media organisation and four local government agencies and policymakers. The collaboration aimed to help the Yogyakarta Province to overcome waste problems at village levels. The collaboration started with an assessment of the problem, followed by a collectively established intervention roadmap, and led to the initiation of formulating local policies on waste management.

Lessons Learned

Over the years, we have learnt important lessons on building local partner networks and local ownership. For example, power imbalances between CSOs continue to require attention. Furthermore, building coalitions is hard work and takes time. In certain contexts, regional teams expressed a preference towards encouraging organic collaboration between partners as opposed to this being facilitated by an external party. Political challenges and regimes can be powerful contexts in which partners unite and are motivated to collaborate on joint advocacy strategies (e.g. in Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia). However, differences in approaches, activist styles and priorities may also lead to hesitation (e.g. in Tunisia). This has led to different approaches in each regional team, and this is in line with the core values of our programme, where local partners should be the initiators, implementors and guardians of the alliance.

Collaboration for enhancing local food systems in Zambia

Grassroots communities in Zambia collaborated with the Women's Life and Wellness Foundation (WLWF), Community Technology Development Trust Zambia (CTDT), and the Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW) to organise an Ecofeminist Food Systems Symposium in October 2023.

This symposium sparked a deep reflection on Zambia's food systems through an intersectional feminist lens, highlighting compelling stories of patriarchy and unequal food systems. Practical solutions were proposed to the government for fostering feminist visions in food systems.

This collaboration resulted from unusual, locally driven partnerships and shows the potential of leveraging local expertise to engage broader audiences.

CSO – Government Partnerships Established

VCA Partners strive to engage with government stakeholders at both local and national levels to influence policy formulation and implementation, thereby contributing to more effective and inclusive climate action. Limited civic space in many countries often forces partners to focus at the local level, where collaboration with government is easier. Partners have sought broader coalitions to stand stronger and reduce their individual vulnerability. Examples of successful collaboration with governments and policy successes emerge in all our sites and are shared in different chapters of this report.

SDI Kenya successful partnership with the Government of Kenya

SDI Kenya is collaborating with the national government through the state department of housing and urban development on the Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP) program. BCRUP is a global initiative launched by Kenya during the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019 in New York, on behalf of the global community. The program's implementation strategy was then launched at the Africa Climate Summit in 2023 in Nairobi. The goal of the program is to enhance the adaptive capacity and build resilience of the urban poor against the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, both locally and globally. In Kenya, the program aims to build resilience for 3 million urban poor in hotspot cities and other vulnerable urban areas by 2025, and a total of 9 million by 2030. SDI Kenya and Muungano wa Wanavijiji are critical partners in this initiative, prioritizing community organising and engagement for effective decision-making.

Lessons Learned

The relationship with governmental entities is considered significant, requiring attention to the diversity of local partners and movements, as well as the unique advocacy lens of the VCA programme. The VCA aims to foster more inclusive approaches, placing local communities, authorities, and stakeholders at the core of a just transition.

VCA Strategic Partnerships with MoFA and Embassies

In 2023 the partnership between VCA partners, the different departments of MoFA and the embassies was further strengthened. Through a grant of Euro 30,000, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) enabled the VCA to participate at the UN Water Conference. Through the RVO grant, VCA was able to facilitate 16 local representatives to attend the conference. VCA spread key messages and raised awareness on pressing water issues prior to and during the conference. VCA representatives participated in multiple events and contributed to the open letter by civil society, calling for greater accountability, ambition and rigour in the Water Action Agenda.

In Bolivia, contacts and collaborations with the Dutch Embassy proved valuable, for example, in supporting efforts to advocate for the establishment of a National Climate Change Coordination Council in Bolivia and exploring opportunities for financing value chains in the Chaco and Pantanal (including the Chiquitania) region.

Collaborating on security, defence of territories, and protection of socio-environmental defenders in the Amazon remains a priority in Brazil. Several engagements and field visits were organised with Dutch (and German) Embassy representatives, creating opportunities for the Brazil RT, coalitions and local partners to engage in dialogue with the representatives, conveying their local realities and advocacy plans. Connecting the Dutch private sector to the Amazon to address climate finance and support, including mechanisms of reporting cases of violence, can be an important outcome of RT Brazil and the Dutch embassy cooperation.

Furthermore, a fruitful visit organised by the Kenya RT to Nakuru county facilitated a dialogue on climate funds and support for informal settlements. The RT Indonesia collaborated with the embassy on a just transition campaign. Moreover, through encounters facilitated by the embassy, VCA Indonesia was able to engage with and secure the services of Samdhana Institute as the NLGF Fund Manager for Indonesia.

In 2023, the Tunisia, Paraguay, and Zambia teams encountered challenges in collaboration with the Dutch embassies for different reasons. However, plans are in place to actively address these in 2024.

Finally, on a global level, the VCA alliance will increase its efforts in documenting and sharing lessons on locally-led adaption, local ownership and southern leadership in climate adaptation and is looking forward to continuing exchange and learning on these issues with IGG.

Collaboration with other POVs

The alliance benefits synergistically from other programmes in the same funding line from the MoFA and will continue to harmonise, collaborate and coordinate to improve the quality and effectiveness of the POV programme.

In the Netherlands, the VCA meets quarterly with the coordinators of the GLA, GAGGA, and AACJ alliances. These meetings provide valuable learning and exchange and serve to collectively strategise on key issues such as joint lobbying and advocacy towards COP (28,29 and 30), provide collective feedback to the Power to Voices policy framework, and find opportunities for engaging Dutch civil society in just climate action.

Deeper collaborations between the different POV partnerships have also emerged, on global levels, in the Netherlands, and in regions where POV implementation overlaps. For example, several exchanges between GLA and VCA have taken place to strengthen the implementation of a strong youth engagement strategy in both alliances. This resulted in probable joint efforts in organising youth events such as an LCOY and climate camps in Bolivia and Indonesia in 2024.

Together with AACJ, VCA established the Power to Voices Digital Platform in 2022, connecting activists globally and creating spaces for learning and designing joint advocacy strategies. In 2023, numerous thematic dialogues were facilitated through the platform, maintaining an active and vibrant community that extends beyond the networks of the VCA and AACJ.

Also, in Zambia, the RT collaborated with AACJ. VCA partners collaborated with PACJA and the Zambia Climate Change Network in establishing the Nairobi Summer School on Climate Justice. This multi-stakeholder platform united civil society actors in strengthening their understanding of climate justice and identifying opportunities to engage local youth partners. Action plans were developed to kickstart youth movement building. Following this successful collaboration, the NSSCJ will become an annual event.

Furthermore, partnerships with the Africa Feminist Task Force, Africa Women and Gender Constituency, PACJA, the Africa Group of Negotiators, and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) have provided platforms to formalise the voices of African women and marginalised groups in UNFCCC processes. Through these partnerships, VCA developed and advocated common positions on the impacts of the climate crisis on Africa, contributing to more inclusive and effective climate policies at the global level.

Lessons learned from these collaborations emphasise the power of collective action and solidarity in advancing climate justice agendas on both local and international scales.

Engaging the Private Sector

Collaborations with the private sector had not yet been established in the first two years of the programme. However, as the work in the regions is evolving and regional alliances are growing stronger, in 2023, we have seen these emerging. Actors from the private sector are increasingly engaged in VCA events and initiatives. As the programme accumulates more evidence on locally-led approaches, opportunities to engage businesses and investments arise.

The Zambia RT collaborated with women leaders during the Zambia Investment Forum, supporting the Zambia Homeless and Poor Peoples Federation in pitching their local solutions to potential investors. This collaboration resulted in assurances of business partnerships with retail companies like Pick and Pay, demonstrating the potential for economic empowerment through climate-resilient initiatives. Also reflected in section 2.4, VCA Brazil has been systematically participating in talks with the Amazônia 21 Institute to influence the creation of an investment facility. This facility should facilitate a blended finance strategy for the sustainable development of the legal Amazon. It aims to mobilise 121 million USD over the next three years for financing bio-economy solutions in the region.

The Amazonia 21 Institute is a civil society organisation initiated by business people from the Brazilian Amazon, with the support of the National Confederation of Industry and the nine industry federations of the states of the Legal Amazon, which seeks to promote sustainable business in the region and contribute to its sustainable economic development.

Collaboration with Research & Academic Institutions

VCA has also engaged in countless other collaborations. In many regions, regional teams worked with universities and research institutions to conduct studies on the implementation and impact of local climate and/or nature-based solutions, formulating policy models, determining El Niño effects, socio-economic impact studies and many more. These studies then underpin lobby and advocacy actions. At the same time, regional teams also succeeded in embedding courses on climate change and justice into the curricula of several universities and educational institutes (e.g. in Tunisia, Bolivia and Indonesia).

Lessons Learned

The diversity in approaches to collaboration with different stakeholders has proven beneficial for advocacy efforts and underscores the importance of extending ownership and leadership beyond traditional partners. Additionally, the programme has identified new themes and issues during implementation, suggesting opportunities for future collaboration. Climate justice narratives are frequently amplified through educational programmes and capacity-building initiatives. Implementing partners of these programmes regard academics as strategic stakeholders due to their neutrality in political interests and business cartels.

Besides, their expertise and networks among universities can potentially reach the global level. Collaboration with other movements, such as the feminist movement and human rights movement, is critical since the climate justice perspective needs trans-disciplinary perspectives, and we need to build alternative narratives to dismantle current social-political-economic imbalances.

Collaboration within the Alliance & Southern Leadership

The VCA alliance comprises unique partners with strong in-house capacities and expertise, all being well embedded in regional as well as global networks. When joining forces, Hivos, SSN, AMwA, SDI, Fundación Avina and WWF_NL have all it takes to address the inequalities caused by the global climate crisis in a truly intersectional way. The value of this unique alliance particularly stands out when bridging divides like the urban-rural gap, generational gaps, or gender inequalities.

Since its inception, alliance members have benefited from each other's skills and approaches. However, working in an alliance requires time. Time is needed to build trust and to understand each other's priorities, values and institutional processes. Looking back on 2023, we can proudly conclude that we have matured as an alliance.

Enhancing Transparency, Collective Planning and Use of Resources amongst Alliance Partners

All alliance partners recognised the critical role of transparency, accountability, delineation of responsibilities as well as fairness in enhancing sound collaboration. Thus, WWF_NL, SSN and Hivos, the alliance partners with budgets for the Global Programme, shared information on expenses and balance of funds. This gave room for developing a joint strategy at the global level, with all six partners contributing to decision-making, prioritisation and implementation.

Effective collaboration can also be attained if all alliance partners dedicate adequate staff time and resources to deliver the programme. Inadequate staff and budget allocation for the Communications and PMEL Task Forces created challenges in delivering priority tasks on time. To address this challenge, additional resources were allocated for the PMEL Global Coordinator role at the regional level. Alliance partners appointed a dedicated PMEL contact person in each regional team (RT). Since the MTR, Hivos has contracted a new employee to the VCA PMEL team, addressing part of the capacity gap.

Capacity for the learning component was also increased. SSN agreed to allocate additional staff time for the Global Learning Facilitator. Efforts will be made to strengthen the capacity of the Communications Task Force. Alongside permanent working groups (e.g., PMEL, and communications), the ad hoc working groups have enabled a more efficient response to the programme's new and emerging needs and brought together staff with complementary expertise from alliance members, strategic allies, and partners. With these changes, VCA has the strong structure needed to achieve our goals.

Enhancing Southern Leadership and Local Ownership in the Alliance

From the beginning of the programme, the VCA set out to actively challenge hegemonic power relations within the development and climate adaptation sector. Hereto, critical reflection on our own systems appeared pertinent. The same disparities in North-South relations that VCA aims to address exist within our own institutions and alliance governance systems. A consultant was engaged to assess the different perceptions and approaches to Southern Leadership within the alliance. The consultant conducted a series of in-depth interviews with members of the alliance at all levels and facilitated multiple group discussions. Recommendations include exploring ways of fostering southern leadership in each alliance partner and opening up more spaces for collaborative learning and strategising. The introspective process has proven extremely valuable in building trust and reflecting on our way of working so far.

5. ADVANCING THE LEARNING AGENDA

A key component of the VCA adaptive management approach is the VCA learning agenda. The VCA learning agenda guides and drives learning within our alliance. The richness and diversity of our alliance pose many opportunities for cross-country and cross-partner learning. Learning is facilitated on both programmatic and thematic topics. Learning related to assumptions within each RT's Theory of Change is embedded within their annual reflection and reporting cycle. Periodical sessions with the regional teams and other bodies of the Alliance are also organised to reflect on key VCA concepts linked to programme implementation.

Learning activities in 2023 were largely focused on the Mid Term Review, comparing country successes and learnings on approaches. This took up a significant amount of time and resources across the different teams, so learning activities on more thematic topics were limited in 2023. However, larger alliance-wide learning sessions have been facilitated by SSN and the Global Programme online. These sessions were open to alliance members, local partners and allies and focused on topics such as alternative storytelling, understanding locally-led solutions, exploring key lessons and messages to share for the UN-Water conference on locally-led water solutions, understanding climate finance and knowledge sharing sessions on MDB finance reform and loss and damage finance. Finally, a VCA-wide learning and reflection event focused on the process and outcomes of the MTR took place in January 2024.

In-Country Learning

Alliance partners convened annual partner meetings in all the implementing countries, which are the main vehicle for collating and sharing lessons in-country. These meetings brought together all the implementing partners with the aim of enhancing collaboration and promoting synergy and learning amongst partners. Through these spaces, partners were able to collectively develop joint action plans and focus on specific thematic issues relevant to their regions, such as food and seed systems, water justice, or the defence of territories.

All VCA-implementing countries conducted outcome-harvesting workshops and knowledge brokering sessions and provided a platform for programme partners to showcase their actions, highlighting opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and synergies. A summary of the key data and findings coming from the outcome harvesting is available for each of the VCA countries.

Learning with Netherlands Based Organisations

As part of the Partos Community of Practice on Climate Justice, VCA has been engaged in several learning sessions on mainstreaming climate justice in programme development and implementation. An important focus here is to increase awareness and participation of 'green organisations' on this issue.

VCA participated in an expert session organised by Tropenbos International titled 'In search of locally owned solutions'. In attendance were selected front-running Dutch-based organisations. The session explored the designs and implementation of locally owned approaches. The session sought answers to what makes a solution local, what it implies when it is locally owned and how it is effective and equitable.

Learning with Global Partners

On a global level, VCA continuously seeks opportunities to advance learning on LLA. VCA alliance partners SDI and SSN are part of the Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation Grant, a large partnership funded by MoFA and co-implemented by IIED. The inception phase focused on getting to know the LLA core partners and the Dutch partners with the aim of creating synergies and identifying opportunities for future collaboration.

In advancing our knowledge and impact on devolving finance to the most local levels, the VCA has sought numerous opportunities in 2023 to learn from direct financing initiatives. For example, VCA has participated in virtual learning roundtables on grant-making at the local level hosted by IIED through the People and Conservation Learning Group (PCLG) and organised an exchange with the VOICE programme implemented by Hivos

Country to Country Learning

Mahila Milan exchange between Indonesia and India

Four members from the Indonesia Women Federation travelled with SPEAK Indonesia to Mumbai, India, to meet with the Mahila Milan Women Group. Over 40 members of Mahila Milan participated in the exchange. The women exchanged experiences on topics including advocacy for water supply, their roles in waste management in urban areas, and the challenges they face in realising women's empowerment and participation. The Women's Federation of Indonesia particularly learned lessons on strengthening its organisation and management, women's participation in public spaces, and fund management.

Inclusive spaces for shared agendas: Tri-National Meeting of the Women's Collective

VCA supported the organisation of the [Trinational Meeting of the Gran Chaco Women's Collective](#), bringing together more than 150 indigenous, rural, and urban women leaders from three countries (Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina) in the Gran Chaco Americano region. The participants developed a common agenda, showcasing the programme's commitment to fostering regional collaboration and amplifying diverse voices in climate advocacy efforts. The support from VCA played a crucial role in amplifying the [reach of the Women's Collective Network](#). Apart from coordinating the in-person meeting, the team arranged two virtual preparatory events in May and June.

Lessons Learned

VCA operates in many different contexts. Perceptions of key concepts like local ownership, collaboration, gender-sensitive approaches, etc, are regarded and implemented differently in each of our sites. Exchange on such topics is incredibly valuable and brings out the richness of our programme; however, generating joint advocacy strategies or key messages on global levels remains challenging.

Following the MTR, the VCA aims to increase its focus and efforts on cross-regional learning. In 2024 and 2025, we particularly aim to create more opportunities for local partner exchanges.



6. COMMUNICATION

The VCA seeks to amplify the voices of the unheard. As stated in the foregoing, various tactics continue to be used, i.e., lobbying, advocacy, and movement building. The tactics used here include a key messaging framework customised to the local context, inclusive storytelling, and online and offline media. In addition, the VCA has a communication plan that seeks to raise awareness about the programme and its purpose, as well as the positioning of the alliance (and its members).

In collaboration with country teams and their comms representatives, discussions were initiated on how best to align our communications, leading to the expansion of our social media platforms. In addition to the Voices for Just Climate Action [website](#), the "Voices in Action" [bi-monthly newsletter](#), the [@WeAreVCA X](#) (formerly Twitter) account, the [LinkedIn page](#), and [the YouTube channel](#), we have expanded our communication platforms to include [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

From January to December 2023, the website had 3.8k users, 3.7k of whom interacted with the website for the first time. The 'Voices in Action' newsletter, a testament to our growing impact, has seen significant growth. Since the time of our last report, newsletter subscribers have grown from 463 to 820. Four editions were published in 2023. [Our latest edition](#) reflects on the programme's activities and achievements in 2023.

At the time of our last report, our LinkedIn page had 727 followers. From April to December 2023, the page had 1,904 page views and 780 unique (new) visitors. Currently, there are 1,838 followers. Since joining in 2022, followers on our X account have increased to 1,530.

The last report reflected that the YouTube channel had a total of 1,192 views and 35.1 watch time hours and had gained 64 subscribers. Channel analytics for the period January to December 2023 show a remarkable rise in views, watch time hours and impressions.

Since joining Instagram and Facebook in May 2023, our page followers have grown to 666 and 476, respectively. Furthermore, VCA has continuously shown the programme's progress and impact in various ways, such as videos or podcasts. By communicating our successes effectively, we are generating greater support and commitment from stakeholders and the wider community.



7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS (ESSF)

The VCA has continued to implement the Environmental Sustainability and Social Responsibility Framework (ESSF), with notable progress made and several best practices emerging across the alliance and the partners. The EESF convenes different viewpoints across the landscape, including those of women and marginalised communities.

Local partners were supported to draft their own safeguard standards in a participatory way to ensure there is buy in from the constituents. New partners also received ESSF training as part of the onboarding process. This yielded positive results with stakeholder Engagement Plans developed in the landscapes of the programme. By conducting social profiling and involving community members in decision-making processes such as project planning and implementation, VCA has not only ensured that projects are aligned with local community needs and priorities but also fostered a sense of ownership and long-term commitment to sustainability goals. Additionally, efforts were made to integrate environmental and social considerations into the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

Lessons Learned

One challenge faced in incorporating ESSF standards into activities was that safeguards were initially seen as stand-alone, with specific personnel to ensure compliance. From the lessons learned in the first two years, the best way to ensure compliance and incorporate ESSF is to ensure that it's mainstreamed in all the activities and that every person involved in project implementation is tasked with ensuring compliance.

8. MANAGING RISKS

An update on the risk matrix is attached in Annex V. New risks related to the programme and organisations emerged in 2023. These relate to irregularities by the Tunisian Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (TIPCS), a local partner for AMwA in Tunisia. Another relates to fraud involving several Hivos Partners in Zambia. The Ministry was duly informed and updated according to contractual agreement requirements. (Full details in a separate report submitted to the Ministry).

Both cases were reported through the VCA Grievance mechanism, signifying the relevance of this platform for the programme. While most of the planned activities in Zambia were met, delays were experienced for Hivos as this case necessitated the suspension of activities while the forensic audit was on course. In addition, three partners were dismissed. Nevertheless, all operational and management-related risks were proactively addressed, resulting in no significant issues.

Specific actions/mitigation measures that were taken by the alliance partners include a thorough process of unveiling the irregularities, correcting the amount unaccounted for in the 2023 financial – and audit report to the Ministry and steps to recover the funds. Other efforts to minimise programmatic impacts included assigning other staff to manage the VCA programme during the transition period. Hivos paid additional costs for the MTR consultant to cover Hivos and continue local partners' input into the process.

Lessons Learned

Several lessons have been learnt and will be implemented across the alliance:

- A review of due diligence formats and processes, leading to a revised/renewed process. This will include background checks on directors and social media presence, strengthening risk mitigation and partner monitoring in the Internal control framework (ICF).
- Improved conflict of interest measures—starting with an inventory of Conflict of Interest disclosures (globally), followed by a strengthened conflict of interest registration process and awareness raising on following up on potential fraudulent behaviour.
- Increased emphasis on integrity policy within Hivos and its partners and Whistleblower for staff and partners - including disclosure through management or the external whistle-blower facilities needed to facilitate detection of breaches.
- Transparency in reporting suspected fraudulent cases ensures adequate technical expertise is provided promptly from within the respective alliance partner, the WWF Netherlands, and the Ministry. Recognising the implications on credibility and sustainability and the responsibility to bear the costs in the event funds are not recovered, such matters are prioritised and shared.

Important lessons also emerged from the active listening of demands, coalition governance, field actions, and other urgencies to request support. For example, trust and openness among RT Brazil coalitions allowed the RT to deal with a few cases that did not have serious repercussions. Those situations include challenges in transferring resources, meeting deadlines for delivering reports, mobilisation, and excessive workload. Those criticisms were acknowledged, and most of them were solved with the support of mediation and collaborative dialogue for mutual learning.

8.1 CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE, AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT (SEAH)

VCA has a zero-tolerance approach to misconduct such as sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). VCA alliance partners have internal policies and procedures that are in line with the Ministry's requirements. VCA took note of the new MoFA requirement, which involves pre-employment screening. As the SEAH (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment) policy is relevant to all organisations linked to VCA, this was communicated to all the alliance partners and local partners in all the programme-implementing countries. No cases of sexual exploitation were reported in 2023.

9. CONCLUSION

VCA is an added value in relation to the countries where it is being implemented, to the challenges on the ground, other programmes and/or important initiatives. VCA is achieving the important progress of ensuring that local civil society groups claim a central role as empowered innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions. As shown in this report, various tactics and local-to-global approaches are employed to achieve this. This allows us to take ambitious steps towards addressing three key – interrelated – global challenges: growing inequality, environmental degradation and climate change. Our successful collaborations demonstrate the added value of the VCA as a strong alliance with other like-minded programmes. Through VCA, networks have been built for wider and deeper impact and sustainability.

The year 2024 marks the fourth year of the programme. The VCA aims to consolidate further the numerous results achieved thus far through online exchanges and sharing approaches and lessons learned between partners and others who may be interested. There is an intention to advance local ownership, and southern leadership approaches to ensure that they are embedded in alliance partners' way of working and that power shifts accordingly. At the Annual Partners Meeting in May 2024, VCA will discuss the next steps or potential programmatic extensions which could roll out through a new Power of Voices proposal or through another project. It is intended that the meeting will outline the VCA's strategic vision and ambitions for the post-2025 period.



Part of the international VCA Delegation at COP28, where the Alliance hosted an official UNFCCC Side Event on the democratization of decision-making spaces.