Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)
Annual Narrative Report
January 1st – December 31st, 2016
Introduction

The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) is a five-year programme that sets out to strengthen and unify the capabilities of grassroots groups and movements to lobby and advocate (L&A) with and for women to claim their rights to clean water, to food and to a clean, healthy and safe environment. GAGGA was launched in 2016 as a consortium led by Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), based in Nicaragua in collaboration with Mama Cash and Both ENDS, both based in the Netherlands, and through the support and strategic advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA). The alliance works directly with a wide range of women’s rights and environmental justice local and regional funding organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and grassroots groups in more than 30 countries across Latin America, Africa and Eurasia.

This report provides progress on the GAGGA programme from January 1st to December 31st, 2016. This period was the inception year of the programme, and as such encompassed two areas of work:

1. Establishing and strengthening the relationship with and amongst GAGGA partners; for this, GAGGA alliance members focused on: identifying local needs related to women’s rights and environmental justice across the different regions GAGGA works in; identifying partners and the work they will be doing under the GAGGA framework; supporting and strengthening GAGGA grassroots funds, NGOs and grassroots groups, also beyond financial resources; and building connections and links between GAGGA actors for further learning and coordination.

2. Setting the base structures of GAGGA for effective programme management and coordination: this included fine-tuning the programme organisational structure & coordination processes; carrying out the baseline study for the programme; developing internal Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes (PME&L), including the IATI approach for GAGGA; establish the GAGGA International Advisory Committee; developing the GAGGA Influencing Donor Strategy; and strengthening the relationship with the MFA, related departments as well as the Dutch embassies that are based in or covering GAGGA countries.

The following sections in this report will provide information on the enabling environment GAGGA actors have been working in based on their experiences in 2016; the programme’s progress on building the capacity of GAGGA actors for L&A and the direct L&A effort in 2016; reflections on the cooperation and ownership amongst GAGGA actors in 2016; and key lessons learned based on the first year of implementation.

Enabling Environment for L&A on Women’s Rights and Environmental Justice

Within the context of GAGGA’s work, the enabling environment to conduct effective L&A on women’s rights and environmental justice is severely affected by closing civil society spaces. This includes restrictions placed on foreign funding (funding challenges), onerous regulations for registration (legal and policy challenges), interference in civil society organisations’ internal affairs (political challenges), as well as other forms of harassment, such as imprisonment, physical attacks and even assassinations (security risks for organisations and activists - in this case, women environmental human rights defenders and the organisations they work with). The 2016 State of Civil Society Report by CIVICUS has stated that civil
society space has worsened appreciably in recent years and several GAGGA actors have indicated that indeed their work is affected by a limited space to engage and take forward their L&A activities.

GAGGA is particularly concerned about the growing security risks activists and organisations who lobby and advocate on women’s rights and environmental justice face. One of the main cases GAGGA worked on early in 2016 was the denouncement of the murder of Berta Cáceres and the Agua Zarca Project, which at the time was being co-financed by the Dutch Development Bank FMO (they have suspended funding and are looking at options for a responsible exit to the project). This case is a clear example of how closing civic space and related security risks for human rights defenders are not only caused by governments and actors from countries and regions where these activists are working in, but also by decisions made by northern governments and private sector as well as intergovernmental organisations. With this in mind, GAGGA took forward two parallel approaches to address the different needs that were arising from the case. Firstly, GAGGA provided rapid response funding to support Berta’s family members as well as other indigenous women activists from the same community. Secondly, GAGGA advocated for an independent investigation of the role of the FMO in the Agua Zarca project in collaboration with other consortiums in the Dialogue and Dissent Framework.

The Berta Cáceres case is a clear example of the types of dangers women environmental human rights defenders face when taking forward this work. We have also received reports from one of the grassroots groups in Eurasia supported by GAGGA, indicating that there has been an increase in the interference of private militia and state military in the rural communities they are working in, which has resulted in deaths, threats and injuries of peasant women human rights defenders.

Another challenge affecting the enabling environments GAGGA actors work in is the lack of political will to engage with civil society for the development and implementation of policies related to women’s rights and environmental justice. One of the groups supported by GAGGA, which has been advocating against a large energy project supported by an international financial institution being developed nearby their community, has been actively involved in public community hearings. The women of the group express their concerns and questions in these spaces. However they indicate that their views are not taken into account and they do not receive any answers to their questions from the company and governmental representatives leading the meetings.

It is important to highlight that even though there is a clear indication of closing civil society spaces, GAGGA actors are still able to find opportunities and spaces to advocate for their rights. For example, in Africa, one of the groups working towards increased access to land and natural resources for women has been able to expand its reach to more rural women and provide the support needed for effective participation in public hearings on Land and Mining bills in their country. This increase in numbers has led to more confidence amongst the group to influence policy making at different levels and has seen positive results, such as traditional leaders giving land to single women.

3 Global Witness, in their 2015 report stated that there have been 185 killings across 16 countries, which is a 59% increase on 2014.
4 Berta Cáceres was a prominent Lenca indigenous woman and a strong activist for the environmental, land and human rights of indigenous peoples in Honduras and the Central American region. In 2015, she was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her work in campaigning for the rights of the Lenca indigenous peoples in relation to the hydroelectric project Agua Zarca. On the 3rd of March 2016, Berta Cáceres was murdered by two unknown subjects that entered her home. Although more than a year has passed following her murder, the Honduran civil society as well as international organisations are still demanding for a transparent and independent investigation into her death as well as a complete halt to the Agua Zarca project.
5 As indicated in the “Progress” section of this report (page 3), GAGGA does not publish data that might pose a risk to the safety or security of any individuals, groups, partner organisations. For this reason, this report provides information at the regional level and does not include names of organisations and individuals.
I. GAGGA Actors Overview

GAGGA prioritizes reaching grassroots organisations that are working at the local level, with little access to funding and operating with smaller budgets. GAGGA alliance members do this directly; or through a re-granting mechanism in partnership with women’s and environmental funds based in the different regions GAGGA is working in; or through national or regional NGOs that specialise on environmental justice thematic, technical and/or legal support. All these organisations provide financial and tailored capacity building support to grassroots group and GAGGA believes these are the most adequate organisations to do so, as they have expert understanding of the needs and opportunities of the communities they serve.

In 2016, GAGGA worked directly with, and provided funding support (in total €4,073,164\(^7\)) to a wide range of grassroots women’s rights and environmental justice organisations as well as national and regional funds across Latin America, Africa and Eurasia:

- Six environmental funds (three in Latin America, one in Africa and two covering the Eurasia region);
- 13 women’s funds (four in Latin America – including FCAM, three in Africa, four in Eurasia and two working at the global level – including Mama Cash);
- 28 non-governmental organisations (eight in Latin America, six in Africa and 13 in Eurasia) supported directly by Both ENDS:
- 292 grassroots groups were supported by the national and regional funds (through small grants and capacity building support) as well as the NGOs (through technical and legal advice as well as capacity building support) working with GAGGA. This includes 104 groups in Latin America, 82 groups in Africa and 106 groups in Eurasia.
- GAGGA worked together with Global Green Grants Fund and Prospera – International Network of Women’s Funds as strategic allies to the programme. With GAGGA support, they were able to continue the work they have been taking forward together on ensuring more funding to the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice.

II. Progress on Capacity Building for L&A

GAGGA works towards building and strengthening the L&A capacity of women’s rights and environmental justice groups, women and environmental funds as well as NGOS. For this capacity building, GAGGA focuses on two main elements: strengthening the support and capacities needed to achieve the L&A agendas of these organisations, and facilitating linking and learning between the two movements to build knowledge, share strategies and develop joint L&A agendas.

Outcomes 1-5 of the GAGGA M&E Framework indicate GAGGA’s specific objectives in relation to the capacity building for L&A\(^8\). The following section provides information on the progress made per outcome.

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\(^6\) The information included in this section is the consolidation of data collected by the three alliance members from the different organisations they have partnered with in 2016 for the GAGGA programme (funds, NGOs and grassroots groups). Partners’ data was collected through the institutional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems of each alliance member and then consolidated for GAGGA, based on the programme’s outcomes and relevant M&E indicators. It is important to note that GAGGA alliance members work closely and follow up regularly with their partners, which provides continuous and first-hand information on the context partners are working in, the progress made and the learning from their experiences.

\(^7\) GAGGA 2016 Consolidated Financial Report.

\(^8\) As mentioned in the previous section, GAGGA does not publish data that might pose a risk to the safety or security of any individuals, groups or partner organisations. For this reason, this report provides information at the regional level and does not include names of organisations and individuals.
**Outcome 1: Grassroots groups have developed the skills and infrastructure to conduct L&A for women’s rights and environmental justice.**

Forty-one per cent (119 out of 292) of grassroots groups that were supported in 2016 by GAGGA alliance members or partners have reported increased knowledge on L&A and the successful use of advocacy tactics. This included 62.5% of groups in Latin America (65 out of 104 groups), 15.9% of groups in Africa (13 out of 82 groups) and 38.7% of groups in Eurasia (41 out of 106 groups). The groups involved in GAGGA have experienced this increased knowledge in a variety of ways. For example, different groups working in the African region indicated they have a deeper understanding about energy, climate change, food and water issues from a women’s rights perspective, as well as the importance of lobbying and advocacy. They indicated that women feel less isolated and are learning about the struggles of women in relation to the environment and environmental justice in other areas of their own countries. In Eurasia, one of the groups that GAGGA worked with indicated that through the support of GAGGA they were able to expand their reach of target populations, working with youth groups at community level. This has led to a higher level of youth participation in community actions in relation to forest rights and the documentation of claims.

The most common advocacy tactics used by grassroots groups was community dialogue, which encompasses consultation with and awareness raising of community members as well as lobbying people in positions of authority. For example in Central America, one of the grassroots groups supported by GAGGA was able to lead advocacy processes at the local and national level through direct dialogue and debate with representatives of governmental institutions, with the aim of ensuring their right to self-determination and resources management, particularly in relation to land and forests. Through this community dialogue and direct advocacy with government representatives, it has now been decided that a working group will be established within the central government’s legal department. This working group will work towards finding solutions for the restoration of the forests found within the territory of the community the grassroots group is representing. The other advocacy tactics commonly used by grassroots groups are networking and/or forming alliances for joint advocacy as well as coordination with local and or national governments.

Twenty-four per cent (70 out of the 292) of grassroots groups that were supported by GAGGA in 2016 reported having developed their financial and human resources to deliver on L&A objectives. Regionally, this was significantly higher in Latin America and Eurasia, 41.4% (43 out of 104) and 25.5% (27 out of 106) respectively, in comparison to Africa (1.2%, 1 out of 82). Through the support provided by GAGGA, grassroots organisations have been supported to sustain their operating costs as well as strengthen their capacities, improve what they are already doing, but also tackle new issues and expand their reach to other communities and/or target populations. More specifically, in Latin America for example, this additional support has contributed to the strengthening of new leadership amongst young female environmentalists. These groups have been able to further develop their technical expertise, restructure their work and organisation and ensure effective planning for the activities they lead on. In Eurasia, we have seen organisations set up a legal office to assist women in communities affected by mining developments that are financed by international financial institutions.

**Outcome 2: Grassroots Funds and NGOs demonstrate the capacity to identify and support grassroots groups pursuing L&A on women’s rights and environmental justice**

On average, 39.5% of the programming budget of funds involved in GAGGA went directly to grants for grassroots groups pursuing L&A on women’s rights and environmental justice. When looking at the regional breakdown, this was higher for those funds working in Latin America, with 51%; in Eurasia it was 35% and in Africa 32.5%.

Seventy-four per cent (215 out of 292) of grassroots groups reported being supported by funds and
NGOs to build their capacity on L&A for women’s rights and environmental justice. When assessing the regional breakdown, this number was higher amongst grassroots groups in Latin America (95.2%, 99 out of 104 groups), followed by Africa (73.2%, 60 out of 82) and then Eurasia (52.8%, 56 groups out of 106). In Africa for example, a grassroots group that has been advocating against the construction of a mega hydro dam for over 12 years, was able to strengthen their advocacy efforts. This support allowed developing the skills needed to apply a gender lens to informational campaigns and legal rights training, highlighting gender differentiated issues faced as well as solutions. Another example, which goes beyond the direct financial support provided to grassroots groups, is from one of the women’s funds in Eurasia. They were able to conduct a specific capacity building programme on lobbying and advocacy to local governments bodies such as municipalities, police and media for the different grassroots groups they support. In this case, environmental justice was introduced to the training programme as a crosscutting issue, through which they were able to jointly identify the environmental problems that have been affecting local communities and develop targeted actions plans.

**Outcome 3: Grassroots groups supported by GAGGA are articulating common political agendas on women’s rights and environmental justice**

A total of 94 women grassroots groups started to include environmental justice issues in their activities, objectives and/or strategies. This includes 64 groups in Latin America, 15 in Africa and 15 in Eurasia. In Latin America this included amongst others: access to land and water, climate change mitigation plans, support to women environmental human rights defenders, hydropower and mining, mono-crops and indigenous peoples territories. In many cases, many of these women’s groups have been working on these environmental issues prior to GAGGA, given their local realities (for example, the increased investment being led by governments and the private sector for the development of large-scale and the extractives industry). In Africa, women’s rights groups are focusing on forest laws, the implementation of a legal framework and laws in response to large infrastructure projects, as well as the importance of women’s participation in the decision-making on climate change budgeting and resource allocation at the national level.

Seventy-seven environmental grassroots groups have started to include women’s rights issues in their activities, objectives and/or strategies. This includes 19 groups in Latin America, 13 groups in Africa and 45 groups in Eurasia. For example, through the support of two NGOs in Eurasia who organised gender trainings, environmental organisations were able to link up with GAGGA-supported women’s rights organisations. Through this work, the environmental organisations involved recognised that working on women’s rights issues is new to them and many local partners are not sensitized and informed on women’s rights and resource justice issues. They are looking to further strengthen this.

**Outcome 4: Grassroots Funds and NGOs supported by GAGGA are articulating a common political agenda to donors about the importance of funding the grassroots to advance women’s rights and environmental justice**

In 2016, two joint publicly available documents were produced between GAGGA-supported funds. This included:

- The article “From rape to disasters, climate change a threat to women funders” available here: [http://news.trust.org/item/20160520144607-yi719](http://news.trust.org/item/20160520144607-yi719), which was published for the Women Deliver Conference.
- The article “Berta’s struggle is our global struggle...” available here: [https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/ndana-bofu-tawamba-kate-kroeger-tatiana-cordero/berta-s-struggle-is-our-global-struggle](https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/ndana-bofu-tawamba-kate-kroeger-tatiana-cordero/berta-s-struggle-is-our-global-struggle)

Both articles contribute to the aim of influencing funders to provide more and better funding to the nexus of women’s rights and environmental justice at the grassroots level.
Twelve of the 13 women’s funds supported by GAGGA in 2016 advocated for environmental issues. For some funds this has meant establishing an institutional programme on women’s rights and environmental justice that goes beyond GAGGA support. As such they are gradually building their knowledge and capacities on environmental justice to ensure they are providing effective programmatic support to their local partners but also strengthening their institutional practices. For others it has meant becoming more actively involved in national, regional and/or international advocacy campaigns on environmental justice. Three of the six environmental justice funds (one fund per region) reported advocating for women’s issues. In the case of the fund in Eurasia, this has meant emphasizing the role of women in natural resources management and decision making processes and supporting more women-led projects.

Out of the 28 NGOs GAGGA partnered with in 2016, 14 NGOs reported advocating for environmental justice and women’s rights issues, with the majority being in Eurasia (76.9% of NGOs, 10 out of 13). In Latin America it was 22.2% of NGOs (2 out of 9) and in Africa 33.3% of NGOs (2 out of 6).

**Outcome 5: Grassroots groups supported by GAGGA will have built alliances with other groups – between women’s rights and environmental justice groups and between the local, the national and global**

Seventeen per cent (49 out of 292) of grassroots groups supported by GAGGA in 2016 have reported starting to build new alliances to enhance their work. This was higher amongst Latin American groups (28.9%, 30 out of 104 groups), followed by Africa (12.2%, 10 out of 82 groups) and slightly lower in Eurasia (8.5%, 9 out of 106 groups). These alliances have allowed grassroots organisations to learn from the experience of other groups working in different communities or countries, build their knowledge on the environmental issues impacting women’s lives and rights and vice-versa, gain technical advice, jointly define advocacy and awareness-raising plans such as launching publications and letters, as well as joint participation in international fora with key decision makers.

For example, one of the NGOs working in Africa organised a focus group discussion for women impacted by forced evictions caused by a project financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the African Development Bank. Fifteen women took part in the discussion, with the aim of understanding women’s experience with forced evictions and informing the women about the EIB policy concerning resettlement and public consultations, including the gender aspects. In the end of the meeting, a group of women decided to form a Women’s Committee for the purpose of consultations on a Resettlement Action Plan.

In one of the countries in Central America, a GAGGA-supported grassroots group has started collaborating with a regional indigenous network to map environmental violence in the different communities they are working in, with the aim of supporting the work that is being done at the national level.

In addition, stemming from the different global and regional alliance events organised by GAGGA, linking and learning is taking place amongst actors. For example, different funds and NGOs in Latin America have been working together since September 2016, building a joint advocacy campaign on women’s rights to clean water, which will be carried forward in 2017.

**III. Progress on Direct L&A**

In addition to building the capacity of grassroots groups, environmental and women’s funds and NGOs, GAGGA supports these organisations to conduct direct L&A. This can include L&A agendas that address...
societal norms behind the exclusion, threats to and violations of women’s rights (outcome 6); for policy development and implementation, in which women’s rights and environmental justice groups monitor and participate in local, national, regional and international policy processes (outcome 7); and for targeting international donors and international financial institutions (outcome 8).

The following section provides information on the progress made by GAGGA actors on direct L&A in 2016. The information provided is based on outcomes 6-8 of the GAGGA M&E Framework and related indicators.

### Outcome 6: Respect for women’s rights to water, to food and a clean, healthy and safe environment are part of societies’ norms and values systems through more favourable public opinion and greater attention to these issues at all levels of society

Eight per cent (24 out of 292) of grassroots groups supported by GAGGA reported changes in community attitudes towards women’s rights to water, to food and to a clean, healthy and safe environment. It is important to note that changing community attitudes is a long-term process and many groups that reported on their 2016 progress had only been working on this for the past 6-8 months. For many of the groups that reported changes in community attitudes, this may be linked to previous work they had been taking forward.

When looking at the regional breakdown, Latin America and Eurasia had a higher number of grassroots groups reporting changes in community attitudes than in Africa (14.4%, 15 out of 104; 7.6%, 8 out of 106; and 1.2 %, 1 out of 82 respectively). In Latin America, one grassroots group was able to involve 185 families from the communities they work in, in learning and knowledge exchange sessions about ancestral practices on the use of land. This has led to the community recognizing the importance of these practices. Another group in the region has been able to work with their community, changing perceptions and increasing awareness about the impacts of coastal erosion, raising sea levels and climate change at the local, particularly in the area the community lives in. In Eurasia, a group of women, who aim to revive and strengthen their weaving livelihoods through reforestation activities, has been working with the male members of their community to change their attitude regarding the value of women and why violence in social relations should not be considered “normal”. Another group has been working on building women’s strength and in getting the cooperation of the customary leadership to accept lands being registered in the names of women. They are doing this through public discussions in the tribal areas and this is proving to be successful.

### Outcome 7: Grassroots groups and NGOs successfully influence policies on women’s rights and environmental justice

The direct L&A work that GAGGA-supported grassroots groups and NGOs have done on influencing policy development and implementation in 2016 has contributed to four policy changes at the national level and three at the international level. For example, at the national level, we have a group, working in the Eurasia region, that has submitted a draft policy on occupational health and safety and rehabilitation of silicosis victims, who are mostly mining women workers exposed to silica dust. Through lobbying efforts with the government along with the national alliance, this policy is being reviewed in the budget sessions and some of the recommendations of the policy have started to be implemented, such as conducting medical investigation of mine workers for detecting silicosis. Another strong example is by a group from Latin America that is fighting against the passing of a national law that will restrict the rights recognised in the International Labour Organisation Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Although they are still working on this, if they are able to completely halt this law from passing, this will be a gain for the group and the indigenous peoples of the country.

At the international level, one NGO has been particularly successful in contributing to influencing the
implementation process of specific projects. The first is on the development of an “urban-slum upgrading” project, which is being implemented in 150 cities in Eurasia. Through their L&A work and effort, the project designers and implementers are paying close attention to the environmental and social impacts of their work, which in turn has meant that the project has proceeded at a measured pace. The same NGO did significant L&A work on another large project, which as a result, was re-assessed after civil society were able to provide inputs at a policy making meeting. This meant that the multi-development bank funding the project reconsidered the environmental and social impacts of the project. This led to a significant reduction in investment by the multi-development bank and the recipient government, as well as a plan to roll the project out slowly and cautiously.

In addition to contributing to the influencing of policy development and implementation, GAGGA actors are active participants in policy monitoring bodies and implementation processes. In 2016, 16.4% (48 out of 292) of grassroots groups and 42.9% (12 out of 28) of NGOs are participating in such bodies and processes. Amongst the grassroots groups, there was higher participation from groups from Latin America and Eurasia (15.4%, 16 out of 104 and 26.4%, 28 out of 106, respectively) than from Africa (4.9%, 4 out of 82). Amongst NGOs, there was a much higher participation from organisations working in Eurasia (76.9%, 10 out of 13) in comparison to Latin America (22.2%, 2 out of 9 organisation) and Africa, where none of the NGOs were involved in these processes.

Four different NGOs (three working in Eurasia and one in Latin America) participated in the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board Meetings held in the year. Their participation enhanced their engagement with the GCF decision-making process and connected them to the main stakeholders, including the active civil society group and the secretariat. Another example comes from a grassroots group working in Latin America. They are an active participant of their country’s National Committee for Environmental and Social Safeguards of REDD+; the Latin America and the Caribbean Normative Board of the UN-REDD+ Program; the Network of Indigenous Women on Biodiversity of Latin America and the Caribbean; and the Global Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Climate Change.

Outcome 8: International financial institutions and donors working on environmental justice have more gender- and grassroots responsive policies and financing mechanisms.

GAGGA members, partners and allies were very active in influencing international financial institutions and the donor community. As an alliance, GAGGA alliance members organized different sessions (panels, workshops, presentations, etc.) involving multi-level GAGGA partners in the following spaces:

1. EDGE Funders / Global Giving Conference (Berkeley, USA – April 2016)
2. Women Deliver Conference (Copenhagen, Denmark – May 2016)
4. AWID Forum (Salvador de Bahia, Brazil – September 2016)
5. International Funders for Indigenous People Latin America Conference (Lima, Peru – October 2016)
6. Gender and Climate Action Innovation Forum (Marrakesh, Morocco – November 2016)
7. UNFCCC 22nd Conference of the Parties (Marrakesh, Morocco – November 2016)
8. Global Summit for Community Philanthropy (Johannesburg, South Africa – December 2016)

In addition, different environmental funds specifically focused on ensuring a better understanding amongst the funding community on the importance of integrating the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice in their funding practices. This included talking to around 13 donors such as The Oak Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. As such, in 2016, nine funders provided funding to
the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice as a result of the direct L&A work by GAGGA actors. This amounted to a total funding amount of €924,617\textsuperscript{10}. A larger portion of this was managed through an international pool of philanthropic foundations for local NGOs affected by mining in Asia. This means that €860,400 will be used in Eurasia and the remaining to be used at the global level.

In addition to the work done on the donor community, GAGGA actors were able to lead on 37 direct interventions to ensure gender and grassroots responsiveness by International Financial Institutions. For example, Both ENDS attended the 14th board meeting in the GCF headquarters in South Korea and was actively involved in the drafting of inputs presented to the board during official meetings. They specifically focused on the accreditation strategy, consideration of accredited entities, proposals, the simplified approval process and gender (this participation was co-funded by the Strategic Partnership FGG). Another example is the involvement of two NGOs in Eurasia in the investigation of the gender impact of the development of a hydro-plant in the region, through financial support by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Asian Development Bank and other international financiers.

Cooperation between GAGGA and local organisations

I. Programme Participation and Ownership

A major component of the GAGGA programme is facilitating the space and opportunities for mutual linking and learning about L&A on women’s rights and environmental justice at different levels. This includes organising and/or supporting opportunities to meet, exchange views and experiences, collaborate, develop joint L&A strategies as well as reflect on progress and challenges.

In 2016, GAGGA organised the GAGGA Global Inception Meeting in Amsterdam (May) and the GAGGA Regional Meetings, which were held in Brazil (September), Uganda (October) and Sri Lanka (December)\textsuperscript{11}. From these meetings, GAGGA actors at the regional level were able to: learn more about the work that is being done by the diverse group of actors in each region; further understand the importance of this nexus and how they have a key role to play in it; start to link up and identify bilateral collaboration; and define regional GAGGA action plans for 2017, which will complement the work that is already being carried out by partners in 2016 and 2017. This includes collaborative working on and advocating for: women’s effective participation in relevant decision-making processes, the right to clean water and women environmental human rights defenders (for Latin America); land rights, the extractives industry, water and women’s effective participation (for Africa); and the extractives industry as well as natural resources and reforestation (for Eurasia). Around these advocacy issues, actors of each region are coming together to collaboratively define activities to take forward in 2017 such as further research, capacity building sessions and workshops, and/or joint advocacy campaigns.

Through the above-mentioned spaces but also through other spaces facilitated by various key actors working on the intersection, GAGGA actors have indicated that they are starting to work together with organisations or people they usually do not work with. For example, this is the case of Prospera – the International Network for Women’s Funds, one of GAGGA’s strategic allies. They have started working with two environmental NGOs in Eurasia to explore potential collaborative work with members in the region. This is also translated at the programmatic level, as some local grassroots groups started engaging with actors that they previously did not engage with, for example working with traditional women healers in the case of an indigenous community empowerment programme.

\textsuperscript{10}This figure is based on the 2016 GAGGA institutional progress report from Both ENDS.
Other organisations have seen that through GAGGA they are being introduced and participating in spaces they are not familiar with or are uncommon in relation to their field of work. GAGGA partners have indicated that their participation in these spaces has an added value to their work as they are able to show and share their struggles in new spaces and at different levels, learn about new ways of working, but also identify that there is collective support for women’s environmental justice struggles and that women are not and should not feel isolated in these struggles.

II. Addressing the most marginalised groups

Given the nature of the work the programme is taking forward and that through the women’s and environmental funds we are able to reach local communities that are often the most marginalised groups, GAGGA is supporting various grassroots groups and organisations that are made up by indigenous, rural, tribal or afro-descendant populations, with a particular focus on promoting the rights of women and girls within these groups. A recurring work seen in the programme is the capacity strengthening of indigenous women to advocate for their rights, as gender inequalities tend to be a barrier to their equal and effective participation in resource governance and management processes within their communities. For example, four local indigenous women’s associations working in Central Africa were provided with grants to create a joint platform to share problem analysis and seek common solutions in their efforts to strengthen their legal rights and improve the capacity for joint coordination to conserve the local forest that they live in and subsist on. In Latin America, many groups work on strengthening the voice and influence of rural and indigenous women in decision-making spaces on access to land, water and productive resources.

Learning

I. GAGGA Alliance Members

During the first year of implementation GAGGA alliance members regularly reflected on how it’s been to work as this new consortium; what it is like to work on the nexus of women’s rights and environmental justice; and how the programme involves an array of actors at different levels (local, national and international). The following section provides key points from this reflection:

Working in this consortium or alliance structure

- The three GAGGA alliance members, although quite different in terms of approach and activities – fundraising, grant making, doing lobbying and advocacy themselves – and the way they are institutionally organised, recognise the complementarity amongst them, with each organisation strengthening the alliance through their specific expertise and knowledge (FCAM has extensive knowledge of the realities at the grassroots level and expertise and experience working with and supporting women human rights defenders; Both ENDS has the knowledge and experience of working on environmental justice, linking local to global and vice-versa and leading direct L&A at the international level; and Mama Cash has extensive experience on donor education and influencing as well as identifying and building on new opportunities).

- It has taken time and resources to build this strong alliance. Even so, alliance members still feel that there is a lot to learn from each other. It is important to ensure that GAGGA continues to work in a complementary way towards the collective principles and aim of the programme, whilst managing expectations of the contributions of each member. GAGGA is working on this for 2017, in particular by introducing internal quarterly learning sessions amongst alliance members.
member organisations and their staff and ensuring substantive content discussions in our routine programmatic meetings.

- Communication is key; amongst the GAGGA alliance members it is open, direct and honest, which allows for knowledge exchange and learning as well as open discussion, when needed for clarifications or misunderstanding.

- Working in GAGGA has allowed alliance members to expand their work in new areas. For both FCAM and Mama Cash this has meant establishing a specific programme or grant-making portfolio on women’s rights and environmental justice. For Both ENDS this has allowed for a more systematic integration of women’s rights issues in their and their partners’ work.

Working on the nexus of women’s rights and environmental justice

- A key lesson learned from the work taken forward in 2016 was the realisation that it is not enough to just bring together groups from the different movements and expect mutual learning and exchange and the development of joint L&A efforts. In practice, the first step is to facilitate a space where actors can get to know each other, share their views and expertise, identify common ground and overlapping agendas, and understand that there are differences but also complementarities amongst each other. It is only then that organisations may understand the roles and responsibilities of each actor involved and show interest in collaborating with other actors. Most importantly, GAGGA realised that the roles within the collaborative actions has to be defined by the actors themselves and cannot be imposed upon them.

Working with an array of actors at different levels (local, national and international)

- A key relationship that is being strengthened further is the one between GAGGA alliance members and the MFA. Particularly for the lead, this is a new relationship involving continuous learning, as FCAM is not based in The Netherlands. For all members, it has been a relationship built on direct communication; first-hand support from all parties involved; and trust in the work being taken forward by all GAGGA actors. This is particularly evident with those representatives of the departmental divisions that are directly involved with the programme.

That being said, working on the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice and continuously understanding the challenges faced when working on different themes with an array of actors, GAGGA is hoping that women’s right issues will continue to grow and become truly embedded in relevant departments of the MFA, such as the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG), the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) and the Human Rights Department (DMM), amongst others. This is important, not only to ensure that the programme is supported by the right departments within the MFA, but also to assure that L&A for the rights of women is key and relevant to other thematic areas of work.

- GAGGA plays a key role in connecting the dots between the local and global and vice versa. It is important to recognise that GAGGA actors have different roles, particularly linked to their capacities and expertise and should be taken into consideration when working on the link between the local and global L&A spaces. A key example is when we aim to bring the voices of grassroots organisations to international spaces and facilitate their participation. Grassroots organisations sometimes lack the capacity, skills and interest to directly engage in these spaces. GAGGA alliance members are effective at identifying those organisations that are best positioned to participate at that specific point in time and act as a ‘bridge’ between the
international policy level and the local level, or provide the support needed for partners, who may not usually participate in these spaces, to build the skills needed.

- GAGGA is aware that there are already strong existing efforts, initiatives, organisations and networks that are and have been working on the nexus of women’s rights and environmental justice. GAGGA needs to ensure that it is complementing these efforts. This is something GAGGA aims to further build upon, by planning strategic approaches in collaboration with other organisations and networks working in this field.

- The specific action taken forward by GAGGA on the denouncement of Berta Caceres’ assassination and follow-up with the Dutch Development Bank FMO has provided positive learning to all alliance members. By working together amongst the alliance members, with other relevant GAGGA partners at the local, national and international level as well as other non-GAGGA actors (particularly other Dutch NGOs), a strong link was able to be formed between what was happening locally (through FCAM and its contacts in the region and link with the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative) and the information flows at the international level, particularly in the Netherlands. Both ENDS and Mama Cash were able to present the messages and information to the MFA and FMO and follow-up directly when needed.

It is important to highlight here the pivotal role that the MFA and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Costa Rica had in ensuring information flows between civil society involved and state actors in Honduras and The Netherlands. Their understanding of and quick response to the concerning situation was an asset to ensure that the different dialogues were had. GAGGA hopes to continue this work in alliance with the MFA and the Embassy.

II. GAGGA strategic allies and partners

GAGGA strategic allies and partners were also able to share their key lessons learned from their involvement in this first year of implementation particularly on integrating women’s rights issues in the work they are taking forward on environmental justice or vice versa and linking and building alliances with different actors. The following section provides key points from their reflection:

**Integrating women’s rights issues in the work they are taking forward on environmental justice or vice versa**

- It is important to recognise women not only as vulnerable to the negative impacts of environmental degradation, but also as key actors leading in the struggle, providing support, developing initiatives for adaptation and restoration and demanding measures that diminish the impacts and damages. Women should be able to exercise their rights, not only based on national law, but also through society in general.

- It is common to think of advocacy effort as an external activity, however it’s also important to advocate internally, changing organisations’ and groups’ own attitudes and behaviours respecting the rights of women and the environment.

- When integrating environmental justice issues into women’s rights organisations’ work, it is important to move away from simply understanding the “science” behind the issue (climate change, pollution, soil degradation) and ensure that organisations are approaching this from a justice lens. This will also support GAGGA organisations in identifying where there are intersections (based on justice struggles) and where work can be taken forward collectively.

**Linking and building alliances with different actors**
• Language used is key to ensure that all actors understand one another’s terminology. In the case of GAGGA it may be worthwhile looking into how different groups define their work and how this falls under the GAGGA structure.
• In the case of GAGGA, it is clear that it is taking more time and investment to truly understand one another’s theories of change, approach and objectives. Something to consider is the provision of practical tools such as case studies or webinars with information on how to build a partnership between women’s rights and environmental justice organisations, starting from outreach, to building support and ownership and to ensuring a sustainable relationship.
• As GAGGA moves into the second year of implementation, it is important to start linking with research institutions or organisations, who lead on research related to the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice. It is important to start building evidence-based information to take forward L&A efforts.

Concluding remarks

Looking back at the first year of implementation and the progress made, GAGGA is entering this second year with a focus on consolidating the programmatic work with all actors involved and strengthening the operational structures that support the programme’s execution. In particular, GAGGA will:
• Continue building the relations and links established in 2016 between GAGGA members and partners, however with a particular focus on ensuring understanding amongst actors from the different movements;
• Provide the support needed to take forward collaborative regional and cross-cutting advocacy work identified by partners as a priority;
• Based on the experience from 2016, identify the most relevant and appropriate L&A and influencing donor spaces for the programme (for example for 2017, GAGGA is focusing on influencing the development of key policies of the GCF. In addition, GAGGA has developed a strategy for 2017 around which donors to approach, in what spaces to be in and with which specific aims);
• Further strengthen current structures, such as the GAGGA PME&L methodology and external communications approach, through the support of external consultants;
• And finally, build upon the collaborative work done in 2016 with the MFA, with a particular focus of liaising more with the Dutch embassies based in or covering GAGGA countries.