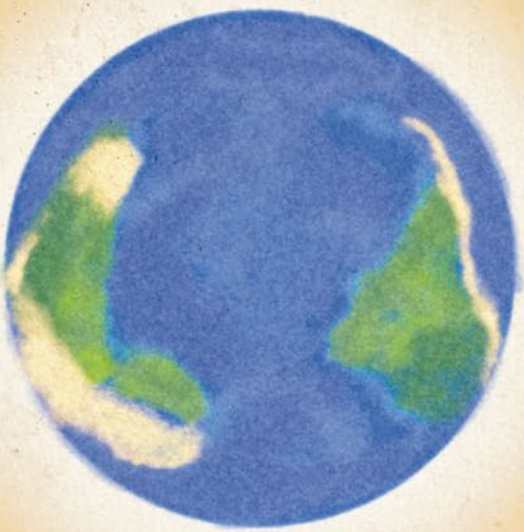
CLIMATIC EXTREMES, MENTAL HEALTH AND CARE

Global south Women's Role in Sustaining the Earth



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CLIMATIC EXTREMES, MENTAL HEALTH AND CARE

Global South Women's Role in Sustaining the Earth

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Introduction

The book was borne out of global discussions around the role of Global south women in themes such as macroeconomics, climate emergences and development funding, started in 2022, brought together and integrated by two international cooperation initiatives, one of them is called *Voices for Just Climate Action* (VAC) and the other, *Our Feminist Futures*, both led by Hivos in Brazil. This is the context where – along with a partner Brazilian organization, *Equit Institute – Gender, Economy and Global Citizenship*, and in preparation for the G20 2024 encounter held in Rio de Janeiro – we incorporated the fight against environmental racism to this discussion, bringing in African women leaderships with their proposals and histories. In this journey, we observed common positions that could be strengthened by dialog within an ensemble of voices, and realized we were bridging a gap of discussions and proposals. As such, before we ended this cycle of international cooperation, we decided to register the legacy of these discussions and proposals in order to increase the debate, looking for more women leaders, women who are either knowledgeable of climate solutions and/or providers of "climate solutions", ready for a "face-off", who are also leaders in public policies in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

So, this publication is intended to showcase some decolonial and feminist responses to the climate crisis that pervades all Humanity. We are **twenty-three Global south authors** gathering here for the first time, **from eight different countries** (Senegal, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Tunis, Indonesia, Colombia and from all the Brazilian regions), bringing our contributions, knowledge, experience, ideas and solutions for the countless crises we go through. What are those crises? We will speak of wars, poverty, violence, fascism, chauvinism, colonialism, capitalism, all further aggravated by these climate emergencies.

The issues all authors try to elaborate in the book include: Why and how local solutions that have been co-created Global south women can collaborate to reducing the impacts of climate change for public policy purposes? What are their pillars, and are there any common elements? Why ought Global south women to be prioritized in order to receive climate funding? Can we state that the reproduction of colonial, racist, classicist and patriarchal practices and actions perpetuates and aggravate the climate crisis?

In addition to these issues in a world of climate emergence, military wars between countries, war between and against Big Techs, the role of care, one that is mostly played by women, continues being rendered invisible. I have the honor of presenting here reflections and cases about the role of women in the global south. This booklet you now have in your hands shares reflections about this important care work, care for humanity, care for the earth. Are there any common elements between the solutions brought about by those women in the different regions of the country and the global south? Brazil, Colombia, Zambia, Kenya, Tunis, Senegal and Indonesia? Discussing decolonial ecofeminist approaches, we try to outline common pillars between the various experiences.

In a scenario of extreme aggravation until 20250, an estimated 158 million women and girls may be pushed to extreme poverty – 16 million more than that of affected men and boys. Furthermore, some 236 million women will be facing food insecurity, according to UN Women data (2024). Intensification of this condition is directly linked to the absence of effective measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Despite the urgency of the crisis, only 0.04% of the global climate resources are geared for the promotion of gender equality, unveiling a structural short-

fall in understanding the connection between climate justice, resilience and gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative).

An assessment was made of the realities experienced by different women's rights activists and climate justice environmentalists who are active in colonized countries who have influenced, to date, climate change actions and policies. The effort is intended to analyze, recognize and focus on the role women (many of whom are Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities representatives) in the research territories play in the protection of the planet by means of their environmentally sustainable actions as guardians and caretakers in the defense of life.

HOW IS THE BOOK DIVIDED?

We have brought together Brazilian and African authors, including some from Indonesia and Colombia. From the inner lands of our Amazonian State of Acre to the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro, including the babassu coconut breakers in Maranhão and the peripheries of Belém! We have noticed aspects in common, and we have been addressing them in our seminars to date.

From the science of birth delivery, the truthful and innate female science, practiced by Baré midwives, an ethnical group from the northern part of the Amazonas State, to the hinterlands of Acre State guardian rubber tappers! From small farmers in Zambia to the babassu coconut breakers in Maranhão! From Senegal's energy transition experts to the environmental concertation agents Jandyras and Belém! From Caraguatatuba's mussel catchers to Indonesia islands fisherwomen. From seed traders in Tunis's imminent desert to caretakers in the Quilombo di Maria in Bahia State's capital city of Salvador! They are the ones who already bring solutions to look after Humanity and the planet. We wish to be vocal, we wish to be visible, spoken of, involved, protagonists and leaders.

The first part of the book offers some theoretical reflections about the themes we address: climate extremes, care, mental health, the role of women, climate justice. The first chapter is written by **Graciela Rodrigues**, sharing elements to show how neoliberal macroeconomy exploits both nature and women labor. The ecofeminist view is presented as an alternative to the neoliberal logic, placing life and care (not profits) in the center of human activity. The entire book states that the fight for climate justice and the fight of gender equality are indissociable, and they include criticism against this model and for the defense of an economy based on the care of the commons.

Marina Cortez discusses the concept of **care**, which is essential for the economies and the generation of wealth in the countries as well as for the reproduction of life and household harmony and peace (which is reflected on the streets, cities and countries) and is extremely overburdened in the context of climate emergency.

In the subsequent chapter, **Vivian Braga** argues that fighting the climate crisis and hunger requires *dismantling* the agro-industrial model and adopting women led agro-ecological approaches, which put life, care and community in the center, rather than profit and exploitation.

Carla Antelante da Cruz and **Sayonara Bezerra Malta** discuss the intertwining between mental health, community care and climate emergency, stating that the climate crisis profoundly affects mental health, particularly in periphery and racialized communities. They propose an intersectional and community approach to live up to those challenges, valuing ancestral knowledge and collaborative practices, and conclude that mental health needs to be central in public policies focused on the climate crisis. Then, **Sayô Adinkra** proposes that we reflect about the responses given to the climate crisis from the perspective of a specific epistemological place: **the ancestral cosmology of women**, particularly that of traditional midwives. The author argues that their cosmologies and practices offer complex and effective ways to understand and inhabit the women, ways that are essential to fight the current emergencies.

And then, drawing attention to female protag-

onism in the midst of climate crisis, with a technical approach to the concept of adaptive capacity, **Danielle Almeida de Carvalho** argues that women play a central role in the construction of that capacity, especially in the context of the climate crisis, despite the fact that this protagonism is often rendered invisible.

In her turn, **Vanessa Neco** brings the powerful voice of the Babassu Coconut Breakers from Medium Merim, bearing witness to how the collective organization of women, based on traditional knowledge and on a care relationship with nature, is a powerful force of resistance and resilience in face of economic, environmental and social threats.

Activist **Lucia Santalices** explores the profound connections between art, culture and the climate crisis, arguing that both agricultural and cultural monocultures are a destructive force that threatens socioenvironmental diversity and resilience, underlining the power of engaged art to bring climate injustice to light, to strengthen territorial belonging and to revitalize traditional knowledge.

Lastly, my colleague **Faith Lumoyo** and myself bring up the Intersectional Feminism approach in response to the Climate Crisis, providing step-by-step instructions for implementation towards the renegotiation of unequal rights, reimagining and recovering a balance between people and nature. At the end, they indicate that this will only be possible as a result of civil society leadership and responsibility, including potentialized local climate solutions, particularly those led by women as we shall se in **Part II of this book**.

So the second part of the book will provide **Case Studies** that often highlight the pillars of EcoFeminism. We will see how was it that, in **Vila Nova Conquista**, in the city of **Imperatriz** (**Maranhão**), with intergenerational engagement, the women actually managed to value autonomy in the management of community knowledge to "build a territory of resilience" by connecting knowledge with the local reality, thus creating a Point of Culture.

At the same time, **midwives** in **São Gabriel da Cachoeira** (**Amazonas**) develop wisdom that interweaves knowledge of today's rainfall, flowering and fruit bearing patterns with gestation, childbirth and breastfeeding on account of the climate changes to be fought.

If climate changes are coming and looming before the eyes of populations across Brazil, many women have already become environmental architects as they weave together networks that bring their agendas to bear upon a large number of states, including the Amazonian ones, such as the **Rede Jandyras**, who have created **Belém's Municipal Climate Change Forum,** and **Acre's Rubber Tappers**, who **look after households and standing forest**, holding the fort on their own.

From fallen banana tree leaves, the **Josinas da Terra** have found the possibility of boosting their creativity in arts and crafts to increase the value of their labor (a craftswoman's sentence is to be added here).

In the **Quilombo de Maria, in the periphery of Salvador** (Bahia), their collective has been experiencing a radical affirmation of their existence, showing the regenerative capacity and the vital power of the bodies that pulsate with memories, fights, affections and the knowledge of their population and territories.

Meanwhile, **periphery garbage collectors from the Greater São Paulo** have taught us how valuing their everyday practices helps construct visions of future sustainable alternatives, to which they themselves will be the agents.

Similarly, **women from São Paulo's coastal Praia da Cocanha** seek to sustain family care while maintaining the *caiçara* tradition, valuing traditional livelihoods that include taking care of the sea, the dining table and the memory, just as their *sisters* look at and care for the same settings as the space of origin, home and refuge, aware that the knowledge of *rezadeiras* and *curandeiras* (healers) is a key to look after the community along with nature in return.

In the **metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro**, a Future Feminist project, "Sisters – Young Leaderships moving the world for Climate Jus-

tice", has surfaced that climate justice is profoundly connected to race, gender and territory, because black periphery women are the ones who are most impacted by extreme events and also the first ones to organize solidarity networks. Climate solutions are connected with traditional Afro-Indigenous knowledge, such as **Cure** (North Zone), **Quilombo Branco de São Benedito** and **Casa Memória da Mulher Kalunga**. Periphery and traditional territories are seen as spaces of power. Youth vision is one where their knowledge, leadership and right to *buen vivier* are recognized, strengthened and funded as pillars of climate justice.

From our neighboring **Colombian city of Narino, Natalia Luna** reveals her care work with social transformation, somewhat of a regenerative activism that seeks to restore missing connections between persons, territories and knowledges by means of the lost link between urban and rural. Through a new women-led Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, Natalia represents a generation that looks after the future as they integrate science, ancestrality and innovation.

In the African Diaspora, we shall find great parallels with histories recounted by African women, such as that of Randa, from **Senegal's municipality of Tambacounda**, told by Sheila Oparaocha. Randa's work includes creating women-led organizations who fight against energy poverty. The case at hand reports on women entrepreneurs in the field of renewable energy, bringing about technologies such solar pumps and clean stoves that have altogether transformed rural communities. The debate underlines that the energy transition has to be just, inclusive and women centered, and emphasizes that success is not to be measured only in megawatts but rather in real advancements in terms of gender equality and social justice.

In norther Africa, women's connection with the land and the water in **three Tunis regions – Takelsa (Nabeul), Djerba** and **Gafsa** – is not only economic but emotional, cultural and ancestral, as a matter of identity, dignity and survival, all pervaded by traditional knowledge. They use traditional knowledge such as the conservation of indigenous seeds with ash, crop rotation and planting on dry land. They are organized in cooperatives to strengthen food sovereignty and to resist environmental degradation. However, though they lead in sustainable practices and promote just ecological transition, with a focus on dignity, equity as well as climate and gender justice, they are excluded from decision making spaces and are bestowed only half the heritage that men are.

In southern African Zambia, our colleague **Mangiza Chirwa** indicates that extreme climate impacts are disproportional for the women in that country, due to the roles they play in farming, collecting water and caring for their families. During droughts and floods, they face food insecurity, they are overburdened with work and subjected to greater gender related violence. On the other hand, ancestral practices preserved by women, such as the conservation of seeds with ashes and smoke, are passed down from generation to generation and help preserve biodiversity while maintaining community seed banks and strengthening food security and climate adaptation, enforcing the Gender Action Plan for Climate Change, which recognizes the importance of female inclusion in climate policies and in resilient farming.

In **Kenya's Makueni County, Ndinda Maithya** tells us that, though only 25% of the women possess agricultural land while representing 80% of the rural workforce – in addition to their traditional unpaid care responsibilities – they fend off some environmental challenges by employing their traditional ancestral knowledge, such as purifying water with ash, using herbs to repel pests, and preserving indigenous seeds. Also in Kenya, **Cynthia Omondi** tells us that, despite facing historical and social inequalities, local women are currently transforming local farming with sustainable practices and community leadership. Though they represent up to 65% of the country's agricultural workforce, they are excluded from political decisions and suffer with

no access to land, funding and technology. Using a feminist, ecofeminist and decolonial approach to recognizing the role of those women as agents of change, they propose that the future of food belongs to those who feed us – and it is high time we let them lead the way (according to the recently published book Harvesting Equality).

Lastly, from Asia, our colleague **Trisa Lusiandari** brings us the history of **Indonesia's Kupang region**, which suffers from extreme events such as the Seroja Cyclone (2021) that impacts fishing practices and increases livelihood costs. Essential to the fishing chain, the women are not officially recognized, which increases difficulties when it comes to accessing benefits. From a collective called Majelis Nelayan Bersatu, Yasinta helps women secure the KUSUKA card so they can have access to services. From her early childhood on, she has pitched in efforts to recover mangroves and is now a volunteer in the coastal guard – mostly female jobs that are rendered economically invisible.

This book seeks to analyze whether the fights and justifications of indigenous, peasant, black, women, transgenders and diverse gender persons out of global south minorities confirm that colonial powers have not disappeared but rather continue to expand. As such, this research seeks to unveil narratives, theories and alternative solutions to fighting the development challenges arising out of neoliberalism, capitalism and neo-colonialism – which are not only restrictive to peoples' rights but also continue to destroy cultures and ecosystems! In this publication, along theory chapters and case studies from countless partners in global south women groups, we seek to underline the necessary and undeniable ever-increasing connection between climate and care. That means that public policies around care and the agenda of adapting to the climate emergencies must interact and liaise through an agenda of candid and intense dialog.

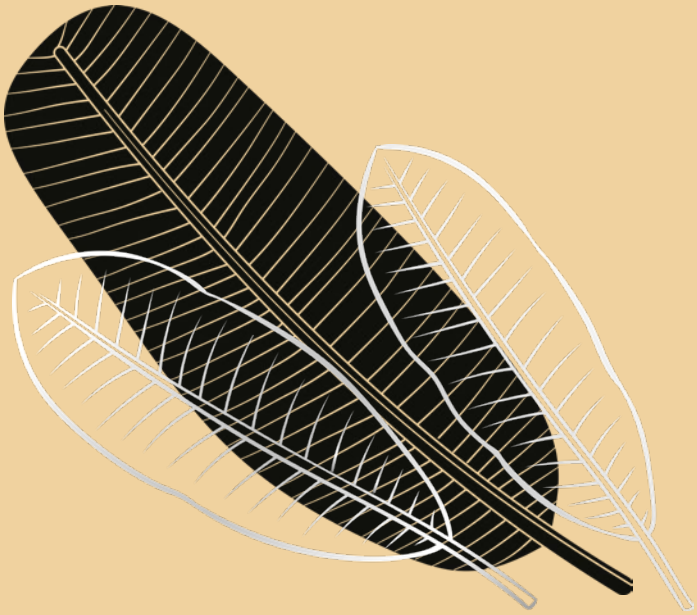
As such, it is meant as a contribution to recognizing care services as a climate adaptation need and the inescapable link with climate funding. We invite readers to peruse chapters and case studies all the way to the conclusion. Let the wisdom of your ancestors guide you through this reading – and let it touch your heart! If you are a decisionmaker about climate funding, please use this robust literature to steer you towards global south women, who have dedicated their efforts to the often-invisible care work for centuries.

I hereby express my gratitude to the various women authors and to the indigenous author Robson Baré for having embraced this registration effort to increase our exchanges and for believing in us and in our common dreams. To the editor, artist, writer and reviewer Lucia Santalices, without whom this feat would not have been achieved. To Mark Schleedoorn, for having increased our dialog to reach Senegal and Colombia. To Hivos, for having believed in this idea and for having provided for this endeavor from the protagonism of global south women. Let many more such initiatives come so that we have greater pro-care, pro-women and, particularly, pro-racialized women dialogs and public policies,

At last, I would like to dedicate this publication to those who came before me, who looked after me and thus enable my existence and that of my children. To my grandmother *Dona* Chiquinha, who let go of her dreams to go study so she could take care of her 6 children and grandchildren. Particularly, to my mother, professor Telma, who has, with the tender support of *Dona* Chiquinha, bravely – and sternly – reconciled her family care work with her teaching career.

Enjoy your reading!

Paula Franco Moreira
Brazil Manager – Hivos



ARTICLES

Neoliberalism, care and climate change in women's lives

Graciela Rodriguez[1]

[1] Master in Sociology, with studies in gender, coordinator of the EQÜIT Institute – Gender, Economy, and Global Citizenship; Co-coordinator of the Gender and Trade Network Latin America; Coordinator of REBRIP – Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples, since 2020; Global Coordinator of IGTN – International Gender and Trade Network, 2006–2010. She participates in several social movement concertations and networks as well as the feminist movement, in Brazil and Latin America, focusing on macroeconomic issues related to globalization, trade and investment agreements, regional integration processes, BRICS and G20, climate negotiations, etc., and their gender impacts.

Studying the links between women's everyday lives and global economic policies – in other words, examining how neoliberalism, driven by multilateral financial institutions, has shaped women's lives in their territories over the past decades – is both necessary and important to foreground. Systematizing these insights requires effort, but the deep and far-reaching connections have already transformed women's daily realities at an accelerated pace.

The decline of globalization, the expansion of ultra-neoliberalism, the imposition of sweeping fiscal adjustments as the sole tool of economic control, the increasing precarization of labor, the impacts of climate change and environmental crises, the protracted global health emergency (particularly since the pandemic), the worsening of food insecurity and loss of sovereignty, the mounting violations of human rights, and the impoverished right to care – these are among the main challenges currently shaping women's lives.

This exposes the failure of the globalization paradigm promoted in recent decades. Policies of the so-called Global North[2] – particularly those of G7 countries – and, above all, the trade and investment liberalization agenda led by the United States, have only reinforced the global hegemonic power it consolidated after World War II.

Since the 1980s, economic globalization has driven intense and often violent changes in the economic model. It was key to the establishment of a new phase of capitalist accumulation. In this context, international trade gained central importance because of its role in the circulation of goods, as defined through trade agreements and the World Trade Organization[3] (WTO). Goods could now be produced anywhere in the world and consumed in any country, reinforcing the global circulation of commodities as a pillar of this new order.

However, this model of free trade and liberalized investment flows has failed to deliver on globalization's promise of development. In most cases, it has, instead, produced "impoverishing growth," marked by wealth concentration and rising global inequality and poverty. Its contradictions extend beyond the economic sphere, multiplying social and political consequences. These trade policies, coupled with the liberalization of capital flows, also facilitated the rise of intense international financialization.

TRADE AND LIBERALIZATION OF INVESTMENT FLOWS

Indeed, the accelerated internationalization of production, initially concentrated in the Global North, led to the transfer of manufacturing facilities to several countries in the Global South[4]. This process not only expanded the transnational reach of corporations but also triggered profound disruptions in the organization of production. Global supply chains became fragmented, with specialization and complementarity spread across multiple countries and regions. At the international level, the unequal division of labor – already present both between and within countries – deepened, and it further consolidated developed economies, while impoverished nations, especially the former colonies, remained largely providers of raw materials. This reinforced a world marked by sharp asymmetries between countries and regions.

This process generated significant productive expansion, fueled by the relocation of companies to countries with lower wages – especial-

[2] Global North is the so-called group of countries with higher levels of development or wealth, many of which compose the G7: Germany, Canada, United States, France, Italy, Japan and United Kingdom.

[3] The WTO was created in 1995 and was preceded by the GATT - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade - which, since the post-World War II period, promoted rounds of negotiations aimed at liberalizing international trade through market opening, eliminating or reducing trade barriers and tariffs among the nations participating in the agreements.

[4] Global South is the so-called group of developing countries, or least developed countries, particularly those with a history of colonization and persisting inequalities and socioeconomic challenges.

Mudanças climáticas como resultantes do modelo produtivo

Since the 1960s and 70s, we have heard of climate change as a serious problem. It stems from rising global temperatures caused by the concentration of polluting gases in the atmosphere – gases released by human activities, particularly over the past centuries. Human action has been emitting gases that come primarily from economic activities intrinsically linked to the prevailing productive model. To meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and transportation, this model generates large volumes of goods resulting in significant emissions of polluting gases. However, emissions have risen sharply as consumption has expanded, not only of superfluous goods but also of inherently polluting products. Their production relies on energy sources that release the so-called greenhouse gases (GHG). As the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere increases, they trap more heat, which in turn leads to global warming.

This brief contextualization aims exactly to clarify that it is the prevailing **production model** – not simply "human activities", as it is often said – that drives global warming. This model relies on fossil fuel, deforestation and slash-and-burn practices, large-scale livestock farming, industrial processes, and other practices. Together, these activities have fueled **the trend of global warming**, which in turn is causing **climate change**.

It is important to recognize that the pursuit of **unlimited economic growth**, as we know it, has become **unsustainable**. What drives global warming is not human activity in general, but specifically the persistence of productive systems that generate warming, fueling climate extremes and the **socio-environmental emergency** we now face. At the same time, different peoples in their territories, through their traditional ways of life, have much to teach us about more harmonious ways of living intrinsically with the Earth.

ly women's wages – which many governments used as an incentive to attract investment. Yet, the growing consumption of goods, based on a logic of infinite commodity expansion, soon revealed its unsustainability on a planet of finite resources. The result was an acceleration of climate change.

Thus, the current global geopolitical situation is largely the result of expanding global value chains under globalization. This was preceded by the intense process of colonization over previous centuries, which established production systems based on the extraction of raw materials. More recently, it has taken the form of irrational plundering of both natural and human resources in the Global South, further intensified by ultra-neoliberal globalization.

In recent decades, the supply of raw materials to the wealthier and more developed Global North, along with the internationalization of production and distribution, has become a crucial aggravating factor of climate change.

This way, we can see how the rapid expansion of global trade in goods – which has greatly increased the production and consumption of goods and services – has also enhanced climate change, marked by a persistent rise in global temperatures. The export-oriented productive system – with commodities and services flowing mainly from the Global South to the Global North, and manufactured goods and services moving from the Global North to non-industrialized countries – has been a defining factor in global trade flows. This occurs for several reasons, including the increasing use of fossil fuels in air and maritime transport, large-scale deforestation for livestock expansion, and extensive land use practices – all of which are ma-

And here we must pause to reflect on the effects of this climate emergency on people's daily lives, on domestic activities, and on the so-called **reproductive work** generally performed by women, which sustains life through the essential tasks that keep us alive, healthy, and able to play, study, and work each day.

For several years, feminism has relied on the "care economy" concept to highlight, and above all to revalue, reproductive and unpaid care work performed by women in domestic settings, which sustains both daily life and the labor force.

To understand the relationship between care, paid productive labor and unpaid reproductive work in a globalized world, it is essential to examine trade agreements. The advance of trade liberalization and the free movement of capital have also played a central role in negotiations on services, both in the WTO and in bilateral agreements. Clearly, negotiations on the liberalization of services have frequently led to the **privatization** of companies and sectors, including those that deliver essential public services.

The availability of water, sanitation, energy, education, health and other services is directly tied to care policies, and negotiations over these services can profoundly affect women, both in the home and in their jobs. In this sense, it is even possible to anticipate the effects of climate change on daily life, which is strongly shaped by the presence or absence of accessible public services.

jor drivers of global warming. In short, despite its proclaimed potential to foster national development, trade and capital liberalization has failed to deliver positive economic results – let alone equitable ones!

The current trade war – initially between the United States and China and later involving many other countries – exposes the failure of the free goods and capital trade model. Among other reasons, it has proven incapable of overcoming the deep historical inequalities between global North and South.

At present, the rise of tariffs – such as the "tariff hike" imposed by Trump on Brazil and other countries – reflects a protectionist strategy aimed at restoring the United States' staggering hegemony[5]. This approach, however, is generating significant disruptions.

Indeed, conflicts over markets and natural resources have intensified, sharpening long-standing rivalries and competition among countries. This dynamic, in turn, has deepened poverty and inequality within nations, including persistent gender inequality. From a **feminist perspective**, this raises key questions: What are the main reasons for such discouraging outcomes? And how do gender inequalities contribute to capitalist accumulation and its multiple impacts – including **climate change** and a declining quality of life, particularly for women?

[5] Globalization has helped displace US manufacturing facilities to lower-wage countries, thus reducing their productive base. However, this de-industrialization eventually increased their dependence on foreign industrialized products, which caused the country to gradually increase its now unsustainable foreign debt and, eventually, contradictory protectionist taxation (rising import barriers) against various countries, particularly China, through a never-ending "trade war", and some others, including Brazil.

WHAT PRIVATIZATIONS HAVE TO DO WITH CLIMATE IMPACTS ON WOMEN

The rise of female labor in global factories, driven by the hiring of women at very low wages and under precarious conditions, is a reality of globalization. Numerous studies have shown that export-oriented production in developing countries has gone hand in hand with the feminization of paid labor.

Significant gains in export performance during the years of productive relocation to Global South countries were closely tied to the large-scale incorporation of female labor. At the same time, women in these countries continued to shoulder the heaviest share of domestic responsibilities, while public policies to support care work fell far short of meeting the needs and demands of women workers.

Evidently, many services that are public in nature are closely connected to care policies and to trade liberalization negotiations that have driven the privatization of public provisions. This has had profound impacts on women, affecting both unpaid domestic work and paid care work in sectors such as health, education, water, energy, transport, and others.

In one of the cases studied in the city of Manaus, in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, we observed that expansion strategies of the French Suez company, which privatized water and sanitation services, produced a series of negative impacts on the population of urban peripheries. These negative effects – including health impacts, reduced time for paid work, exhaustive labor and others – fell most heavily on women. Furthermore, in subsequent research conducted in Manaus and other cities, we found that "the increasing indebtedness among women reflected the impact of rising costs for water and electricity services delivered by privatized companies."[6]

Thus, neoliberal policies and fiscal adjustment, which have become the guiding principles of economic policy in Latin American countries, have contributed to the dismantling of governmental structures and severely reduced their capacity to provide essential public services. This has led, in recent years, to the erosion of support that women would otherwise have received from public services for the provision of care in both domestic and community settings. In addition, the link between access to these services and improvements in living conditions, as well as the reduction in vulnerability and poverty, has been widely demonstrated.

In this sense, we can affirm that **the privatization of services, negotiated through trade agreements aimed at the progressive liberalization of services**, including public and essential ones, is a component of macroeconomic policy that has **reinforced gender inequalities**, particularly among the poorest sectors of the population.[7]

It is now evident that there is a correlation between these macroeconomic policies, which also encompass the liberalization of financial and environmental services, and the risks of climate change. Intertwined with conditions of poverty, these risks are dramatically exposing the destructive effects of climate extremes – especially droughts and floods – on the lives of women, particularly Black, racialized and marginalized women in urban peripheries. Thus, it is essential to emphasize and **value the role of public care policies**, particularly those connected to the provision of essential public services, both in addressing poverty as well as inequality and in **strengthening climate change response**, improving women's quality of life and advancing gender equality.

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[6] *Endividar-se para viver: o cotidiano das mulheres na pandemia*. An EQUIT Institute research. Rio de Janeiro. 2022. *In*: https://www.equit.org.br/novo/?p=3490 . Accessed on May 2025.

[7] PONTE, N. B. *Trade and development in Latin America: the order of factors changes the product*. CIEDUR – IGTN. Montevideo, Uruguay. 2009

PRODUCTION FOR EXPORT

The export-oriented productive model based on agricultural commodities – such as soy, coffee, sugar and beef, as well as mineral resources like iron ore, oil and now rare earths – requires the constant expansion of productive frontiers. This expansion threatens biomes such as the *Cerrado* and forests, which are vital sources of water, rainfall, and food for domestic consumption. The greatest impact of greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil comes precisely from land-use patterns – namely, vegetation removal, burning and deforestation.

In fact, the expansion of large-scale agribusiness through soy monocultures, eucalyptus plantations and cattle ranching is undermining diversified family farming. It is producing major changes in land and water use and cover, often encroaching on preserved Indigenous territories, while generating polluting impacts and high greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change. By contrast, small-scale family farming – which produces most of the food consumed daily by the Brazilian population and is carried out by peasants, and especially by women in productive backyards – together with agroforestry management practiced by **Indigenous peoples and traditional communities**, who have developed, over many generations, deep knowledge of tropical forest management and conservation, highlights the land struggles and social conflict that are also inherent to the model of this sector.

Climate impacts have become evident in Brazil and across the world, particularly through the growing incidence of **droughts and floods**, both of which have severely negative effects on production and on the lives of communities in their territories. Beyond the direct effects on territories affected by floods, or the lack of water for human consumption, crops and livestock during droughts, we must also consider the **decline in food production**. In both extremes, this has led to **rising prices** and growing **family indebtedness**, along with adverse health outcomes as further consequences.

EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE ON CLIMATE

One last factor among the many aspects of climate change that may further affect people's lives – particularly women's – is the effects of **transportation**. In this regard, we wish to highlight **maritime freight**, a dimension that is rarely addressed.

We know that the **non-renewable energy sector**, based on fossil **fuels such as oil, gas and coal**, is the **largest source of greenhouse gases** driving global warming. These fuels have countless uses, a most significant one being the transport sector, which is highly contaminating. With its global production chains, the current international trade system moves enormous volumes of cargo, including fuels, and has therefore become a major polluter. Designed to exploit cheap labor anywhere in the world to manufacture goods or their components for consumption everywhere, especially in large urban centers, **global-scale production fails to account for environmental costs** such as the atmospheric and marine pollution caused by fossil-fuel-based shipping. This is one of the most striking problems of polluting emissions: the failure to account for contamination generated costs, along with the systematic erasure of how nature is being used, which is taken for granted as being at the service of "man" - **particularly transnational corporations that exploit raw materials** from both sea and land.

For this reason, we argue that caring for nature must be recognized as part of the broader set of care actions humanity needs to adopt. Women have long been rendered invisible caregivers of life in close relationship with nature, playing a fundamental role in defending territories placing life at the center of human activity, rather than profit pursued at the expense of nature, at the center of human activity. Thus, trade must be reformed and reorganized, grounded primarily on small-scale production and local markets. It should avoid absurd dynamics such as sowing potatoes in Peru, shipping them to London to be

processed into French fries, and then sending them back to Peru to be consumed from aluminum-coated cardboard tubes after a long journey.

CLIMATE, CARE AND ECOFEMINISM AS A WORLDVIEW

Finally, within this necessarily limited list of contributions we seek to add, and drawing on the struggles waged by women in defense of daily life at the local level and in territories affected by the predatory logic of capital and large corporations, we must also include the struggles to defend the so-called "commons" that women have successfully advanced.

The commons are not only material goods but also shared social practices, and women have been at the forefront of these practices and even of struggles in both rural and urban spaces. Their efforts seek to guarantee common use of resources such as water, biodiversity and air, as well as immaterial commons like popular and traditional knowledge, the defense of native seeds, the cultivation of medicinal herbs, and the preservation and free use of babassu palm groves and Brazil nut forests, among others.

Appropriation of the commons has taken place through multiple mechanisms. Legal mechanisms include free trade agreements, investment protection, and intellectual property rights advanced in international organizations such as the WTO. Economic mechanisms involve land grabbing and private appropriation of territories, the expulsion of Indigenous communities, forced removals for megaprojects, and the carbon market. Technological mechanisms include GMOs, restrictive systems of access to culture, and limitations on digital rights, among others.[8]

All these phenomena are part of an untold story of our time: enclosure of the commons[9], a process that goes beyond privatization to encompass the deprivation of rights, expulsion, and social fragmentation.

The phrase "no to privatizing the river," coined by women resisting the construction of the Belo Monte complex, and the well-known babassu coconut breakers' call for "free babassu," perfectly capture the strength of this defense of the commons that women have been able to articulate.

Rio de Janeiro

July 2025

[8] RODRIGUEZ, G. Ecofeminism: overcoming the nature/culture dichotomy. In: **Women at Rio+20: diverse visions contributing to the debate.** ISBN 978-85-60794-16-4. Instituto Equit. Rio de Janeiro. 2013.

[9] FEDERICI, S. **Caliban and the Witch - women, the body, and primitive accumulation.** Ed. Traficante de Sueños. Spain. 2010.

Dishwashing Never Ends: Women and Care Holding the Fort, the Home and the Economy

Marina Cortez[1]

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Cleaning the house, cooking, washing and ironing clothes, taking out the trash, arranging for or even performing house repairs, paying bills, planning and managing the household budget, grocery shopping, researching the best food prices, medicines, clothes and shoes, caring for infants and toddlers, dressing, feeding and bathing children, dependent elderly people and sick individuals, administering medications and treatments accompanying people to health services, taking and picking up children from daycare, school and extracurricular activities, supervising schoolwork, caring for herself, nurturing family and kinship ties, guiding and protecting children and young people, providing emotional and material support to relatives, neighbors and friends, planning birthday parties and other celebrations, organizing and participating in collective work efforts and solidarity initiatives in the neighborhood, demanding improvements to the community, defending residents' rights before public authorities and the private sector, fetching water when there is no supply, tending a productive backyard and sharing food and seedlings with neighbors as well as family members, caring for domestic animals, protecting local water sources, soil, seeds, plants and animals.

This extensive range of tasks exemplifies care activities that involve bodies, households, communities and territories. All of them are indispensable for people's health, well-being and production, for the habitability of territories, for the balance of ecosystems and for the flourishing of human and non-human life. Equally significant, this set of initiatives ensures the functioning of national economies and wealth generation: production, distribution, consumption, and accumulation of goods and services locally, nationally and globally, are only possible because there is this set of tasks being performed in every home and community, across the world, on an every-single-day basis. *In short, care work ensures the reproduction of life, yet it remains largely invisible, receiving minimal recognition and often little or no pay.*

The need for such tasks renews itself throughout the day, daily, weekly, or sporadically. *In a certain sense, it is work that never ends.* Either actions such as directly meeting the needs of others (tending to the health, hygiene, nutrition and clothing of children and dependent elderlies as well as the sick), or activities directed at the well-being of the family group or the community, but which do not involve direct handling of others' bodies (cleaning, organizing, and provisions) involve moving between home, street, forest and river, between one's own place and urban centers; they imply circulation throughout the territory. Both in urban and rural areas, care responsibilities often intertwine with family livelihood activities, which may involve home-based enterprises or subsistence farming in productive backyards or small plots. Beyond physical effort, these tasks demand both mental skills (for example, planning family demands) and emotional abilities (such as affective care), which are fundamental for family harmony and community relations.

Even when unfamiliar with concepts such as '*reproductive labor*' and '*care work*', terms used in feminist economics to designate this type of activity, girls and women worldwide recognize this list of chores: they are traditionally assigned to them and socially labelled as so-called '*women's tasks*'. Commonly, when men engage in these tasks, the assumption is that they are merely "helping" their partners, mothers or daughters. The rationale for treating these tasks as women's responsibilities typically rests on claims such as *'it's natural,' 'it's always been this way,' 'men don't know how to do it,' 'this isn't a man's job.'* In other words, women performing these activities is taken for granted, as innate responsibilities, skills and preferences. Girls are trained, from a very young age, for gender roles. They are *taught and compelled* to do beds, help in the kitchen, care for younger siblings and clean the house. The education of boys, on the other hand, follows other stereotypes that exclude the provision of care: they receive care but are not encouraged to give any.

The naturalization of this unjust sexual division of labor is linked to a form of social orga-

nization that confines women to the household and to reproductive work, while men circulate in the public sphere and devote themselves to productive labor. However, even though women's confinement to the household has been and remains a powerful social norm, their presence in public spaces has steadily expanded – be it in the jobs market, politics or urban life!

At the same time, power dynamics and hierarchies within families have undergone profound changes in recent decades. Statistical evidence points to a diversification of family arrangements, with notable growth in same-sex families, female-headed single-parent households, and households where women serve as heads even when partnered with men. Fertility rates have been declining steeply decade after decade, reaching 1.55 children per woman in the 2022 Brazilian Census – below the replacement level of 2.1 – while women's educational attainment has risen sharply, surpassing men in higher education graduation rates since the 1990s.

Even though these profound social transformations are underway, and women are increasingly rejecting economic dependence and submission to men – whether by choice or necessity – male participation in household care tasks has not kept pace with the historic rise in women's participation in paid work. The burden of women's double or triple shifts has not been shared by men, whether Black or white, who devote on average only 11.3 hours per week to unpaid care work, compared with 21 hours for Black women and 19.5 hours for white women.[2] In other words, what we have observed is the opposite trend: an increasing abdication by men of the responsibility for maintaining families. At the same time, more and more women, especially Black and brown women, have become the main or sole providers for their families, while men's contribution to household care work remains at the same low levels.

Intersections between gender, race/ethnicity, class and place of origin form the mosaic of inequalities that shape care arrangements in Brazil. Historically, care work in the country was shaped by chauvinism and racism, with enslaved Black women forced into domestic labor and into caring for the children and other dependents of the white slaveholding elite. Today, domestic work is still haunted by the legacy of violence and dehumanization that structured Brazil's colonial period: Among economically active women, the largest occupational category is domestic work (12.6%), totaling about 5,165,000 women, compared with 480,000 men (0.9%). Of these domestic workers, about 3,435,000 are Black and 1,688,000 are white. Moreover, domestic work remains a highly precarious and poorly remunerated occupation, characterized by striking levels of informality: 76.6% of Black women and 72.7% of white women in this sector are employed without formal contracts.[3].

It is important to stress that the social organization of care in Brazil – that is, the way society responds to the inescapable need for daily care provision – mirrors the historically constructed social markers of difference in the country: a situated subjugation of women as well as Black and Indigenous peoples, and of peripheral and rural communities. In other words, Brazil's specific historical, social and economic formation has produced two complementary dynamics: the heavy dependence of middle- and upper-class families on paid domestic work, and the reliance of working-class families in peripheral and rural areas on community-based care and solidarity networks. What is common to both upper- and lower-class families is the predominance of a family-based model of care provision, in which the family is the primary entity responsible for meeting its members' care needs – often outsourcing this work, whether paid or unpaid, either within the household or externally!

[2] Source: BRAZIL. Continuous PNAD (update: June 20, 2025). DataCuidados. Available at: https://infogov.enap.gov.br/datacuidados

[3] Idem.

It becomes evident, however, that this model reproduces inequalities and entrenches the sexual and racial division of care work. Addressing care provision thus requires recognizing it as a shared responsibility across families, the State, communities, and the market – understood both as an employer responsible for promoting work-life balance and as a provider of private care services. Family, State, community and market, together, form what the literature has termed the '*care diamond*'.

The State, in turn, plays the constitutional role of promoting justice, equity, dignity and the well-being of all people, as well as other fundamental citizenship rights and guarantees. It is therefore obliged to implement public policies that relieve families and women of the care overload, especially those in vulnerable conditions. Reducing women's mandatory burden of unpaid care provides them not only with time to pursue professional training and enter the jobs market, but also with opportunities for self-care, socialization, and moments of rest, leisure and free time. For decades, the feminist movement and women's groups have demanded recognition of care through struggles for childcare and full-time education, among others. Equally essential is the guarantee of the right to provide care, to self-care, and to receive care – secured through policies such as maternity leave, family health leave and disability support. At present, Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 14 of 2024 is being debated in Brazil's House of Representatives, aiming to enshrine care as a social right in Article 6 of the Federal Constitution.[4]

The State plays a crucial role not only in advancing public care policies but also in guaranteeing essential infrastructure and services – including running water and cisterns, electricity, public transport, sanitation and garbage collection – whose absence greatly increases the care work burden. Such deficits are a daily reality in peripheral urban areas and rural settings and are even more outstanding during extreme climate events linked to climate change. Floods, landslides, droughts, wildfires, severe storms, windstorms, heat and cold waves, and frosts destroy essential infrastructure (water, energy, health). In their aftermath, women disproportionately shoulder the burden of caring for the sick, securing water and food, and substituting for closed public services such as daycare centers and health clinics. The loss of housing, appliances, furniture, food, hygiene items, medicines and other items – compounded by loss of work and income – pushes families into deeper indebtedness, who therefore fail to meet basic needs such as food, health and clothing.

Passed in 2024, the National Care Policy and the National Care Plan – now being formulated by the National Secretariat for Care and Family (Ministry of Social Development) as well as the National Secretariat of Economic Autonomy and Care Policy (Ministry of Women) – constitute key milestones in the recognition of care as work, a social need, a right and a public good in Brazil. At its core, the Policy seeks to guarantee universal access to care, to secure dignified conditions for paid care workers, and to promote recognition and fair redistribution of unpaid care work, which continues to fall heavily upon women. Its priority groups are children and adolescents (with special attention to early childhood), the elderly, people with disabilities, and care workers themselves – paid and unpaid – with domestic workers at the center.

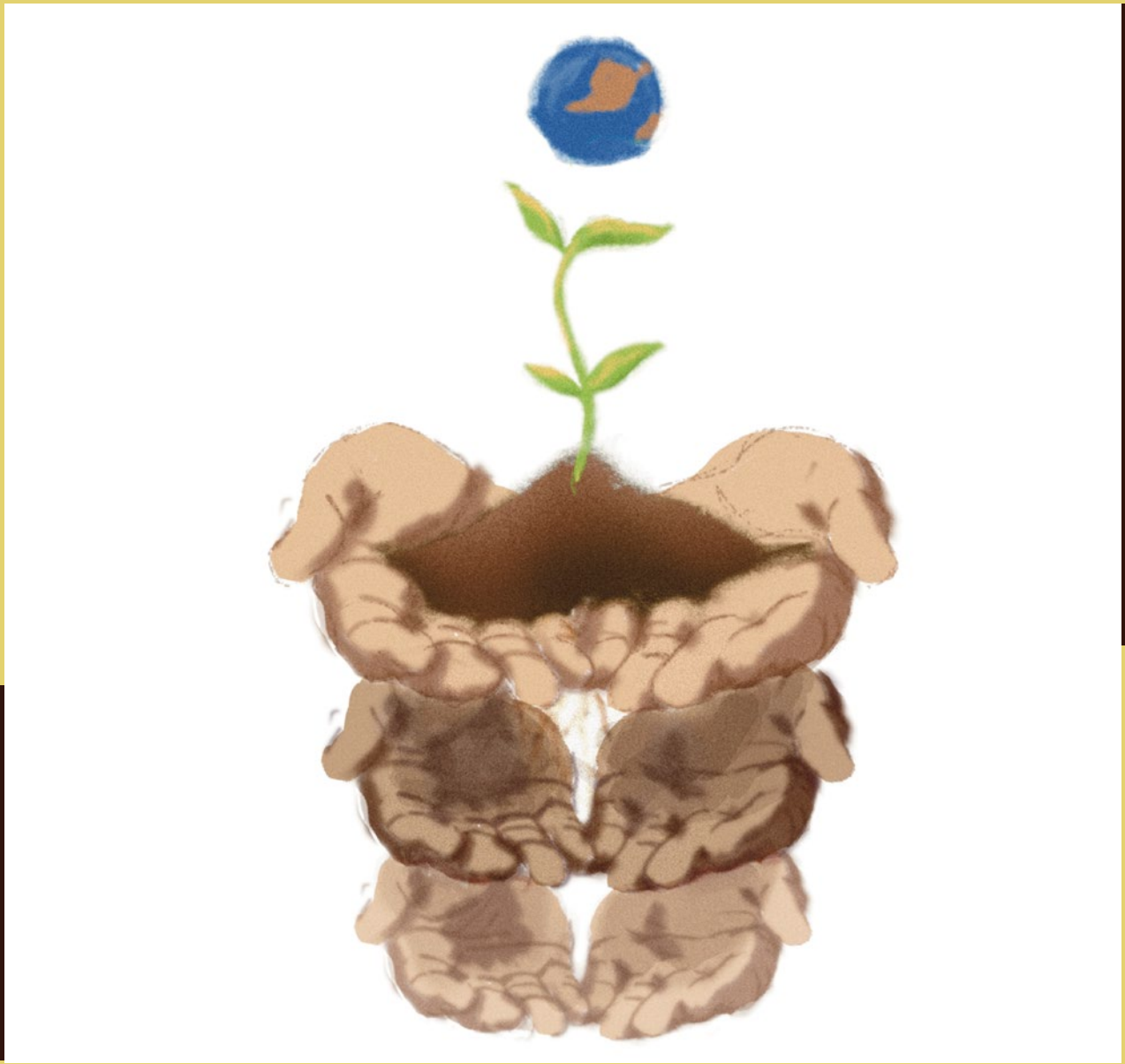
This promising federal government initiative – arriving significantly later than in other Latin American countries that have had care policies or public care systems for years – will face implementation challenges such as underfunding and a possible lack of coordination among sectoral policies, underscoring the urgency of making care a priority on Brazil's public agenda.

[4] PEC No. 14/2024 is an initiative presented by Deputies Flávia Morais (PDT-GO), Maria do Rosário (PT-RS), Soraya Santos (PL-RJ), Talíria Petrone (PSOL-RJ), among others. https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=2410715&filename=PEC%2014/2024

Finally, it is important to stress that, while recent advances in care policies in Brazil mark valuable gains for the feminist movement, for Brazilian women and for society as a whole, their lack of integration with the climate agenda exposes a critical strategic gap. Climate change is already increasing demands for care – as a result of rising illness, water shortages and population displacement – placing a disproportionate burden on poor and Black women who uphold these networks. The Brazilian government must weave the climate dimension into care policies as a matter of urgency, treating them as inseparable fronts of the same struggle: building resilience amidst the environmental crisis. This means creating daycare centers and shelters prepared for extreme events, incorporating caregivers into emergency responses, and turning the ecological transition into a care revolution – just, feminist and anti-racist! It is only through such integration that we will be able to confront the twin crises of our era: the invisibility of care work, and the climate emergency.

Gender Inequality, Climate Crisis and Food Insecurity: The Other Side of Industrial Monoculture Agriculture

Vívian Braga[1]



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1. THE PARADIGM OF INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURAL MODERNITY

In the contemporary Western social mindset, modern agriculture is often depicted through images of scale and efficiency: men working intensely, vast uniform monoculture fields, the imposing presence of giant harvesters, the abundance of full silos, aerial spraying by planes, and upward curves on productivity graphs. While this perception does reflect a real increase in global food production, it deserves a deeper and more critical analysis of its foundations and consequences.

Since the second half of the 20th Century, the Green Revolution has shaped our dominant agricultural production model. Rooted in seed improvement, the *seed-centric*[2] view became the heart of this productive system. Another techno-biological feature of this model is the combination of seeds with the intensive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. On the one hand, this synergy has boosted global production of grains and cereals by up to threefold. On the other hand, it has resulted in severe consequences: soil depletion, water contamination, and deep alterations to natural ecosystems – results typically made invisible in conventional efficiency calculations!

Within this context, weaving together gender and climate change, and their correlations with food and Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security[3] allows us to expose the underside[4] of a supposedly productive effectiveness of the global agro-industrial model. By doing so, we reveal what has been sustained and at what cost, exposing what has been overlooked or rendered invisible. This is an analytical exercise that highlights not only the losses but also the urgency of quantifying the "hidden" or real costs (*True Cost Accounting*) [5] embedded in this industrial monoculture-based agrifood model.

2. MONOCULTURE: EROSION OF BIODIVERSITY AND THE WEAKENING OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY

One of the most significant and undeniable losses of this model lies in biodiversity. There is robust scientific consensus and reports from international organizations indicating that 75% of traditional plant varieties have been lost since the beginning of the Green Revolution. In some crops, such as rice, the decline is even more dramatic, with up to 90% of traditional varieties disappearing.[6]

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[2] See the concept of *Seeds Centric* by Rattan Lal in *Our degrading soil may be aggravating climate change, feels soil scientist, Rattan Lal*. The Week, July 12, 2024. (https://www.theweek.in/news/biz-tech/2024/07/12/our-degrading-soil-may-be-aggravating-climate-change-feels-soil-scientist-rattan-lal.html)

[3] The concept of Food and Nutrition Sovereignty (FNS) has been widely discussed and deepened by the FAO (https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Cocept_Note.pdf), and the concept of Food Sovereignty (FS), by Via Campesina (https://viacampesina.org/en/what-is-food-sovereignty/). The approach used here anticipates the complementarity of these concepts in understanding and addressing the underlying problems of the global industrial agri-food chain. It goes beyond food production, encompassing access, availability, use and stability, along with sustainability and the autonomy of states regarding their public policies and of peoples in their self-determination over what and how to produce, distribute and consume food.

[4] The word in Portuguese is *avesso* (translated here as underside for context, where *lining* or *opposite* would be more literal options) alludes to tailoring, where the *avesso* does not mean "the opposite" but rather the inner side of a fabric, the opposite of the right or outer side used in a garment. It is the side usually unseen, where construction elements like seams are found.

[5] *The State of Food and Agriculture 2023: revealing the true cost of food to transform agrifood systems (SOFA 2023).* This report explains the concept of hidden costs and the TCA (True Cost Accounting) methodology and quantifies those costs globally, estimating them at over 10 trillion USD annually (in 2020 purchasing power parity), encompassing environmental, health and social impacts. (https://www.fao.org/publications/fao-flagship-publications/the-state-of-food-and-agriculture/en)

[6] This information is frequently cited in articles and analyses on the impacts of the Green Revolution, with references to

The expansion of monoculture is a primary driver of this erosion. It replaces complex ecosystems with simplified agricultural landscapes, drastically reducing the diversity of habitats for wild flora and fauna.[7] Moreover, the intensive use of pesticides not only targets pests but also has a devastating impact on non-target organisms that are crucial to ecological balance – such as pollinators (bees, butterflies), natural pest enemies, soil microorganisms and birds. The resulting decline in pollinators, for example, directly compromises the reproduction of many plant species and the stability of food production systems.[8]

In Latin America, a region of vast biodiversity, the impacts are particularly severe. Massive deforestation of rich biomes is being driven by the expansion of agricultural frontiers to accommodate monocultures of grains (such as soy and corn) and livestock production. This includes widespread destruction of ecosystems such as the Amazon and the *Cerrado* in Brazil, as well as the Atlantic Forest and other forest formations across South America.[9] Imposing a technological package of "improved" seeds (hybrid or genetically modified) and chemical inputs has led to the abandonment of thousands of traditional crop varieties (maize, beans, potatoes, and so on) cultivated by Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities.[10] This results in an irreplaceable loss of agrobiodiversity and ancestral knowledge. Additionally, intensive use of nitrogen-based chemical inputs and fertilizers eventually contaminates rivers, lakes and aquifers, and also contributes to soil health degradation, affecting both microbial and macrofauna biodiversity.

In the context of climate crisis, biodiversity – both that which remains and that which can still be restored – emerges as a fundamental pillar for mitigation and adaptation strategies. Reversing the homogeneity of agricultural landscapes, expanding forest cover[11], recovering and valuing traditional crops and knowledge, and strengthening social groups that, for centuries, have coexisted with and conserved nature represent the most promising approaches for minimizing global warming and its consequences.[12] More than that, such approaches could ensure a genuinely diverse food future, with "real food" for all, moving away from dependency on flashy technological innovations that, paradoxically, have intensified the production of ultra-processed

studies by FAO and organizations like Grain: https://123ecos.com.br/docs/revolucao-verde-impactos/ - which summarize the impacts.

[7] This information is frequently cited in articles and analyses on the impacts of the Green Revolution, with references to studies by FAO and organizations like Grain: https://123ecos.com.br/docs/revolucao-verde-impactos/ - which summarize the impacts.

[8] The FAO has numerous reports addressing the importance of soil biodiversity and pollinators for agriculture and food security, as well as the impacts of intensive farming. The 2019 report *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* is a key source detailing biodiversity loss associated and not associated with food production. (https://www.fao.org/brasil/noticias/detail-events/en/c/1181587/)

[9] Biodiversity loss: in 50 years, wildlife in Latin America and the Caribbean has declined by 94%. While this data is not exclusively about the Green Revolution, intensive agriculture is cited as one of the main causes. In: https://www.modefica.com.br/perda-biodiversidade-america-latina-caribe/. Accessed June 2025.

[10] Studies by agroecologist Miguel Altieri and Indian thinker Vandana Shiva are essential references. Shiva's book *Monocultures of the Mind* directly addresses the loss of biodiversity and traditional knowledge from the Green Revolution. (see: https://www.ufsm.br/cursos/pos-graduacao/santa-maria/ppgd/wp-content/uploads/sites/563/2019/09/4-3-1.pdf).

[11] According to Rattan Lal, of the 5.2 billion hectares currently used for global agriculture and livestock, half should be returned to nature by 2100. He stresses this as ambitious but achievable, if the world focuses on soil health and large-scale implementation of sustainable farming practices. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369703069_Farming_systems_to_return_land_for_nature_It%27s_all_about_soil_health_and_re-carbonization_of_the_terrestrial_biosphere

[12] IPCC's AR6 Synthesis Report (2023) provides the scientific basis for all climate policies and integrates information from the three Working Groups (physical science, impacts/adaptation, and mitigation), often discussing implementation means. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/

foods that pose high risks to human health and planetary well-being.

3. CLIMATE AND HUNGER: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Given this framework, we cannot limit our understanding of these problems to the physical and chemical phenomena of the atmosphere, soil and water. The damage caused by the industrial agri-food system – across all stages of its production, distribution and consumption chain[13] – is reflected back at us through the climate, affecting us in disproportionate ways. There are, therefore, fundamentally ethical and political issues, because there are people on this earth and under this sky – many of whom, at this very moment, are not living, but merely surviving, ravaged by hunger![14]

The concepts of food sovereignty and security, as well as climate justice[15] [16], are foundational pillars for a broader debate on development. By highlighting the fact that social groups and territories – especially those in the Global South – are not primarily responsible for climate change yet are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events[17], we expose the "underside" of an outdated system. This unveils the socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities that preexisted global warming, generated within a framework of capitalist domination and exploitation that underpins the current development model.

Given the current conditions imposed by the climate crisis, new and complex challenges arise for the design and implementation of public policies. For example: how do we address the "new hungers[18]" of those who experience sudden impoverishment after losing their crops and homes to extreme weather events? Those who are most burdened by the impacts of climate change include women living in impoverished rural and urban peripheries – especially Indigenous and Afro-descendant women. Many of them are smallholder farmers who face multiple forms of discrimination and gender-based violence, which are further intensified by climate impacts.

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[13] The energy sources used in agriculture and food distribution chains – such as oil, coal and natural gas – are major GHG emitters. Whether through machinery, the use of agrochemicals that pollute soil and water – which subsequently impact wildlife in general – significant carbon dioxide release in the wake of deforestation practices or the large number of vehicles required for long-distance transport chain between production, distribution and consumption, these processes degrade biodiversity and impact the global climate.

[14] Around 733 million people went hungry in 2023, which is 1 in every 11 people globally and 1 in every 5 in Africa, according to the latest SOFI report (*The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*). https://www.fao.org/publications/fao-flagship-publications/the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world/en Also see: https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2025/

[15] Climate Justice, a concept coined by social movements worldwide, refers broadly to the fact that the burden of climate change is disproportionate, posing specific and amplified risks to livelihoods, health, safety and protection of those facing vulnerabilities related to gender, race, class, age, (dis)abilities, and so on. Vulnerable populations must be equally protected from climate impacts, and decarbonization policies must not exacerbate poverty or inequality. (https://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/5554/1/BRU_n4_justica.pdf)

[16] The AR6 Working Group II Report (Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability) includes discussion of climate justice, especially in chapters dealing with social dimensions of climate change. (https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/)

[17] The climate crisis wasn't created by humanity as a whole, but by sectors of capitalist economies that advocate for and implement development models based on profit and unsustainable, unjust, exploitative production. See: *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason W. Moore.

[18] MENEZES, F.; ALEIXO, J. *As novas fomes e a emergência climática. In:* https://www.cartacapital.com.br/opiniao/as-novas-fomes-e-a-emergencia-climatica/

4. GENDER INEQUALITIES: THE DISPROPORTIONATE WEIGHT OF CLIMATE CRISES ON WOMEN'S LIVES

Women are disproportionately affected by the extreme events[19] triggered by climate change—this is supported by conclusive scientific evidence. In disasters, women are fourteen times more likely to die than men[20], a result of historical inequalities in access to information, training, mobility and decision-making power. This translates into lower access to evacuation protocols, emergency assistance and post-disaster support, perpetuating a vicious cycle of vulnerability and threatening their livelihoods and well-being.

Climate-related stress is also directly linked to gender-based violence (GBV), including physical and sexual abuse in shelters or during forced migration. Climate impacts intensify pre-existing socioeconomic tensions, with projections indicating a 28% increase in femicides during heatwaves.[21]

Climate change is a central threat to food sovereignty and security, and to women's lives, exacerbating their vulnerability to droughts, floods and biodiversity loss. Today, 47.8 million more women than men face severe food insecurity. In an extreme scenario, by 2050, the climate crisis could push 158 million women and girls into extreme poverty (16 million more than men and boys) and 236 million into food insecurity[22]. Without emission reductions, this scenario will worsen. Yet, despite the urgency, only 0.04% of global climate funding targets gender equality[23], revealing a critical failure to recognize the intersection of gender-based violence, resilience and climate justice.

These inequalities, rooted in pre-existing social structures, are intensified by the climate crisis, demanding policies with an intersectoral gender perspective[24]. Climate impacts are not uniform: gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination, deepening power imbalances. In food production and access, women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of securing essential resources (food, water, fuel). Water scarcity increases this burden, requiring more time and effort, often leading girls to drop out of school, thus perpetuating structural disadvantages.

The care economy is central here: women's unpaid labor is routinely ignored in public policy. Silvia Federici (2017)[25] argues that the precariousness of women's lives and their reproductive and caregiving labor is intrinsically linked to land expropriation and the exploitative logic of capital. Thus, the climate crisis is also a crisis of social reproduction, one that hits women's bodies and territories first.

The burden women carry in securing resources, and the gender gap in agriculture – especially in land access[26] – are rooted in social constructs

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[19] Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to IPCC's 6th Assessment Report. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/chapter/chapter-11/

[20] CARE - *Climate migration report – evicted by climate change confronting the gendered impacts of climate - induced displacement. In:* https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CARE-Climate-Migration-Report-vo.4.pdf

[21] UN News. *La crisis climática provoca un aumento de la violencia de género. In*: https://news.un.org/es/story/2025/04/1538196. Accessed June 2025.

[22] UN Women. *Progresso nos Objetivos do Desenvolvimento Sustentável: resumo de gênero 2024. In*: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024-en.pdf. Accessed June 2025.

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[24] The climate crisis poses heightened risks for Indigenous and Afro-descendant women and girls, elderly women, LGBTQIA+ people, women and girls with disabilities, migrants, and those living in rural, remote, conflict-prone and disaster-prone areas.

[25] FEDERICI, S. *Calibã e a Bruxa: mulheres, corpo e acumulação primitiva*. Transl. Coletivo Sycorax. São Paulo, Elefante, 2017.

[26] Globally, only 13.8% of agricultural landholders are women, even though 38.7% of employed women work in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. See: *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in Agriculture – Closing the Gender Gap for Development – FAO.*

and power relations. Climate shocks exacerbate these systemic vulnerabilities, making women and girls disproportionately susceptible to poverty, hunger, violence and health crises. This demands that climate action and food security strategies be explicitly gender-sensitive and transformative, addressing the root causes of inequality – not just the symptoms! A gender-neutral approach only perpetuates disparities.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture and guaranteeing equal economic and legal rights for women could increase global crop yields by up to 30%, alleviate hunger for 150 million people, and feed an additional 45 million annually by optimizing production and reducing environmental degradation[27]. In other words, investing in gender equality – ensuring land rights, education, access to finance, technology and decision-making – is not just an ethical and political imperative; it's also a crucial strategy for building climate resilience, strengthening food security, and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a systemic lever for positive change.

5. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP: COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSES TO THE FOOD AND CLIMATE CRISIS

However, vulnerability is not synonymous with passivity. Women, across their diverse territorialities, are also active protagonists in resisting and dismantling the current model, grounding their actions in decolonial development proposals. Aymara-Bolivian sociologist and historian Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2021)[28], a defender of *ch'ixi* thinking, invites us to observe the forms of resistance emerging from Indigenous and peasant peoples. By maintaining their agroecological practices, defending their native seeds, and protecting their territories from deforestation and monoculture, Indigenous and peasant women are at the forefront of the struggle for food sovereignty and climate justice. They embody an ethic of care for the land that counters the dominant extractivist logic.

The struggles of Indigenous women, as highlighted by Cusicanqui, illustrate resistance against *megaprojects* that have invaded their ancestral lands and livelihoods. They advocate for a development paradigm that values and safeguards nature as an equal, and upholds Indigenous and gender rights. This underscores the urgency of grassroots agroecological approaches that empower local communities and integrate traditional knowledge, reframing resilience as a process forged through socio-environmental conflict, centered on contestation and negotiation.

Historically, women have been the primary guardians of seeds, ancestral agricultural knowledge and household food security. Yet their essential contributions are often rendered invisible or undervalued. As Emma Siliprandi (2015)[29] points out in her work on family farming and gender, the sexual division of labor in rural areas places a disproportionate burden of responsibility on women, while limiting their access to resources such as land, credit, and technology.

This intersection also points to systemic roots and calls for justice. Gender fundamentally regulates access to, use of and control over resources – labor, land and strategic decision-making. Nancy Fraser (2008)[30] proposes a global justice framework that encompasses economic redistribution (equal share), cultural recognition (equal respect) and political representation (equal voice).

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[27] FAO. *When you think farmer – think female! In*: https://www.fao.org/climate-change/news/news-detail/When-you-think-farmer-think-female!/en. Access June 2025

[28] CUSICANQUI, S. R. *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: uma reflexão sobre práticas e discursos descolonizadores*. Transl. Cássio Ricardo Ibiapina. Buenos Aires, Tinta Limón, 2021.

[29] SILIPRANDI, E. *Gênero e agricultura familiar: desafios e perspectivas para a produção agroecológica*. São Paulo, Expressão Popular, 2015.

[30] FRASER, N. *Scales of justice: reimagining political space in a globalized world*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008.

While her framework is broader in scope, it is foundational for thinking about climate justice and the global food system. Social movements advocating food sovereignty and climate justice likewise emphasize democratic participation and the confrontation of social inequality within food systems.

The struggles of Indigenous women against *megaprojects* and in defense of development that values nature and Indigenous rights reveal how global economic models, power structures (including gender systems) and historical legacies (such as colonialism) actively produce and perpetuate socio-environmental vulnerabilities. This scenario is magnified by what South Korean economist Ha-Joon Chang (2004)[31] describes as "kicking away the ladder." According to this thesis, developed countries that once ascended through protectionist policies and state intervention now impose free trade and deindustrialization rules on the Global South.

Such impositions prevent these nations from building sovereign productive bases, locking them into cycles of dependency that exacerbate climate and food vulnerabilities – especially for women and local communities. Truly transformative solutions demand a challenge to and reform of the underlying economic and political systems that fuel inequality and unsustainable resource exploitation. This means advocating for development paradigms (such as agroecology) that prioritize ecological and social well-being over profit, empowering local communities (especially women) as key agents of change, and ensuring their meaningful participation and representation in decision-making processes. It calls for a fundamental shift from a "development" model rooted in colonial extractivism to one grounded in justice, equity, and respect for diverse knowledge systems and ways of life.

In this context, food sovereignty goes beyond local autonomy in food production. It becomes a political and cultural project requiring the decolonization of knowledge, the valorization of traditional agriculture, equitable access to land and water, and the full and effective participation of women in decision-making. It is an unavoidable call to recognize that solutions to the climate crisis will not come solely from high technology, but fundamentally from resilience, the wisdom in maintaining biodiversity, and the organizing capacity of communities that live with and care for the land.

This scenario calls for the co-production of knowledge that includes the active participation of those most affected or vulnerable to the climate crisis in decision-making processes. How climate-related decisions are made, and by whom, will shape today's global uncertainties about the future. Community-based perspectives and the strengthening of Indigenous peoples' and traditional communities' rights – consistently recognized as the foremost stewards of biodiversity – are gaining increasing traction in the global climate debate, alongside the emerging concept of the Rights of Nature and its recognition as a political player.

In this context, the community experiences of culturally and biologically diverse countries like Brazil, Mexico, India, Indonesia, Australia and the Democratic Republic of Congo demonstrate important capacities for producing solutions to the complex task of climate adaptation policy and action. Recognizing who we are, how we are, and the multiple worldviews and ways of life across territories is crucial. Within this diversity, adaptive capacities and opportunities to reduce climate-driven vulnerabilities emerge.

Protecting people, life forms and their ecosystems must be a global goal – grounded in a community- and ecosystem-based logic and in risk-reduction capacities. Still, it remains urgent to reduce socio-environmental vulnerabilities broadly and globally – not only in the name of adaptation but also in matters of mitigation and finance. Identifying critical gaps, as well as

[31] CHANG, Ha-Joon. *Chutando a escada: a estratégia do desenvolvimento em perspectiva histórica*. Transl. Maria Luiza X. de A. Borges. São Paulo, Editora UNESP, 2004.

the advances and setbacks of policies and programs developed in recent years, and ensuring a gender and human rights lens in the face of the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis, is an urgent task.

Towards Climate Justice: intersectional ecofeminism, deconstruction of gender inequalities and decolonial principles for climate funding

Paula Franco Moreira[1] and Sarah Nannyondo (Okello)[2]

AN INTERSECTIONAL AND DECOLONIAL ECOFEMINIST APPROACH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The ecological and climate crisis undoubtedly comes from exploitation and mercantilization, both of nature and of society's marginalized groups, rendering it an ethical and moral issue, beyond human rights. If we are to live up to this global climate crisis – which is heavily affecting society's marginalized people – global, regional, national and local initiatives ought to find feasible and sustainable solutions to fend off the crisis and its effects. Enhanced by climate change, inequalities around the globe require us to look back so we can understand their historical roots, which have increased dramatically in the past 200 years. We shall soon review that this situation is mostly an outcome of colonialism and industrialization, which were the main drivers of economic growth in Europe, at the same time they smothered the growth of their colonies all over the globe. Inequality increases disenfranchised social groups exposure to the adverse effects of those extremes (S. Nazrul Islam & John Winkel, 2017). Climate changes have enhanced the existing inequalities against women and other minority groups on the basis of gender, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, nationality, capacity, sexual orientation and age.

Despite the current scenario of countless concomitant crises, there are huge opportunities for change. We need to renegotiate unequal rights as well as to reimagine and revive the humanity-nature balance. This may be secured by the leadership and responsibility of a civil society that is rooted in their territories, and potentialization of local climate solutions, particularly those led by women. We therefore need to adopt an innovative approach to intersectional climate justice as well as solid partnerships for just climate action, bring together societies of multi and transdisciplinary knowledge from the north and the south of the country.

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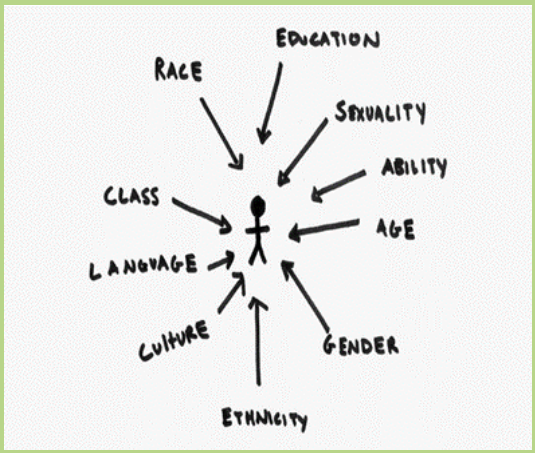
[2] Sarah Nannyondo (Okello) is a program director at Akina Mama wa Afrika, an organization that dedicates to women freedom and gender justice in Pan-Africa. With a background in statistics and economy as well as a vast experience in monitoring, evaluating, accountability and learning, she is firmly engaged in leading the feminist research, creating innovative solutions and training emerging leaders within the feminist movement.

Understanding the impacts of climate change is a complex social issue that must be analyzed on the basis of a intersectional climate justice approach. This approach affords an understanding of the interconnected nature of social categorizations, such as race, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and gender, once they all apply together to a certain individual or group. An intersectional analysis goes to say that the climate crisis ought not to be approached as a single theme crisis but rather as the intersection of many different crises.

Women, in average, tend to be less educated, poorer, less movable and more long-living than men – all climate change factors of risk and vulnerability (*Women's Environmental Network*, 2010). Furthermore, since women play major biological and cultural roles in the human reproduction work and livelihood, gender related differences have great impacts on humanity as a whole.

To address the climate crisis is therefore to address strategies that will attack the profound causes of inequalities, transform power relations and promote women's rights in this context, on a par with what is shared by the Human Rights Council (2021).

Intersectionality recognizes that the complexity of every individual and every identity has an impact on the way they are implied in and affected by climate changes. And this means recognizing the importance of power relations, of individual contexts for different individuals, and how social groups affect material results. It is crucially important to recognize the centrality of gender, interconnected to all other social and economic factors that accelerate vulnerability. Women represent half of humanity; therefore, disproportional climate change impacts on women have to be addressed as a matter of urgent equity, across the globe. As such, strategies intent on transforming power relations and promoting women's rights in the context of climate crisis are of utmost importance (Anna Kaijser & Annica Kronsell, 2014).



Understanding the eco-intersecctional feminist approach in the context of climate crisis (AMWA 2023, p. 83)

For feminist organizations, an intersectional analysis of the climate crisis is important to define our advocacy proposals. We would therefore like to present the 9 intersectional feminist proposals for climate justice, from the partner Pan-African and Feminist Global South organization Hivos, Akina Mama wa Afrika, as well as the principles to decolonize climate funding, totally applicable to Latin America, with which we totally agree. The proposals below use feminist and transformational gender approaches to deconstruct and transform gender inequalities in different contexts:

a) Deconstruction of patriarchalism and power structures

Transformation means changes to or renewal of the patriarchal system that are intended to recognize women's rights. It appeals to society so that it will change its concepts about the social legitimacy of the patriarchal regime. That means disputing traditions that have become consistent obstacles to women's rights accomplishments. Patriarchal systems that are harmful to women and to men may be transformed and deconstructed for the benefit of all. The patriarchal system operates by creating and perpetuating privileges and oppressions (Elaine Neuenfeldt (2015). Reforms are supposed to create equity and prepare women to conquer their rights: to land, for one. And this requires delving deep into

patriarchal structures in order to deconstruct them, to reconceptualize notions of access, control and propriety, distinguishing them from positive aspects and advocating where it makes more sense for the women. It is therefore clear for us that patriarchalism is the main obstacle to the advancement and development of women (Sultana, A., 2012).

b) Social inclusion and intersectional analysis

Women and girls are not a homogeneous group. A variety of other factors – social, economic and cultural, including age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, education, localization and intersection with gender – will determine the capacity to fully enforce or enjoy or deny their rights. Those factors shall guide the inception of public policies and programs based on intersectionalities to ensure nobody is at a loss.

c) Self-organization and agency among women

Feminist movements believe the world can be changed, and so can be the life of women across the world. Focusing on the union of women is therefore necessary for a common agenda, be it in the women-only groups or in different and mixed groups and platforms, where specific spaces have to be created for them. In addition to the gathering of this book's authors, Brazil boasts a few examples of that, that include but are not limited to the Liaison of Brazilian Women (AMB), an organization called March of Black Women, the Conference on Public Policies for Women. In Pan-Africa, the Akina Mama wa Afrika organization has created such spaces, which include training for the women to become regional leaderships.

When safe spaces are created, women can safely discuss problems, share experiences, develop new skills and establish a political plan for changes, indicating avenues for advocacy and proposals. Feminists believe the only way to respond to these challenges is through alliances, coalitions and networks with other progressive social movements, for encounters in spaces of political concertations that will help towards the collective construction of a political, economic and social project of the world we want (WEDO, 2021). We briefly indicate the other proposals for the deconstruction of gender inequality brought about by Akina, which include: d) strengthen the leadership potential of women; e) innovate and increase the best practices; f) collaborative partnerships; g) strategic partnerships with indigenous gender equity organizations and/or women's rights; h) influence on the enforcement of legislation and public policy frameworks; and i) development of women's self-esteem.

THE 10 DECOLONIAL FEMINIST PRINCIPLES FOR CLIMATE FUNDING:

Just as all other development challenges at the macro level faced by the Global South, the climate crisis is the result of systems and structures that also influence exposure to vulnerabilities as well as the exposure of some individuals, insofar as people are capable of adapting or remaining resistant to the crisis. Effects of those systems are far-reaching and continuous, because they keep affecting political and social institutions as well as those of Global South governance.

Concerning how future climate funding will be directed, or how the current ones will be reformed, we use this opportunity to reinforce and share the recommendations of our Pan-African partners Akina Mama wa Afrika (Amka, 2024), the 10 Decolonial Feminist Principles to unlock climate funding for Africa, applying hereby to the Global South, which have brought about a series of transformational principles of this type of funding, such as:

1. Gender Transformation: climate funding shall challenge patriarchal norms and empower women as decisionmakers;
2. Intersectionality: funding shall approach overlapping systems of oppression – race, class, disability, age, among others;
3. Anticapitalism: rejecting profit-oriented

models that exploit people and nature; funding shall prioritize collective well-being;

4. Decolonialism: recognizing and showing colonial power structures in the governance of climate funding;
5. Restauration: supporting cure and justice for communities harmed by the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change;
6. Reparation: climate funding shall include reparation of historical and continuous injustices;
7. Long Term and Flexible: overcoming short term project cycles; allowing communities to define their own priorities;
8. Public Funding First: climate funding shall be led by public institutions, rather than private interests;
9. No Debt and Subsidy-based: avoiding loans that will enhance debt; prioritizing subsidies and unconditional support; and
10. New and Additional: climate funding shall be new – not reuse aid – and estimated to meet real needs.

So far, we have outlined the fundamental principles for climate funding to be feminist and just. Still on the basis of climate justice, we recommend that: 1) resources shall be made available in a timely manner; 2) access shall be broad and prioritize the more vulnerable groups; 3) concession criteria shall be transparent; 4) funding instruments shall be adequate for the context; 5) power dynamics and political issues shall be handles with care; and lastly 6) feminists, promoters of gender justice, human rights defenders, environmentalists and civil society shall keep close track of fund implementations, ensuring funder accountability as well as the protection of human rights and sustainability during the performance of climate actions.

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Mental Health, Climate and Community Care

Carla Antelante da Cruz[1] and Sayonara Bezerra Malta[2]

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[2] Sayonara Bezerra Malta (Sayô Adinkra) is a historian, manager, consultant, and doula. She serves as Coordinator of *Escritório de Projetos Esmeralda* (Emerald Projects Office) and is a member of the cultural hubs *Casa Preta Amazônia* (Black House Amazon) and *#QuilomboDiMaria*.

Mental health is not an easy topic to address, largely because of the wide range of understandings about what it means. This diversity of concepts can be one of the first barriers to building a broad and adequate reflection on the issue. There is still a prevailing culture that associates mental health exclusively with psychiatry, restricting the debate to clinical diagnoses and specific pathologies. However, this narrow view ignores that situations such as constant stress, frequent insomnia, or daily emotional overload are also important indicators of mental health imbalance. Overcoming this reductionist approach is one of the main challenges in raising collective awareness about caring for psychological well-being in any context – including the current scenario of serious climate concerns, which have generated anxiety and mental health problems, while little debate has been built around minimizing harm and repairing losses.

The experience of #QuilomboDiMaria, an itinerant collective for community health and Black culture based in Salvador, Bahia, brings, from the research of its founder and coordinator Carla Antelante, the formulation of the term *pandemic of mental, emotional and spiritual health*. This concept emerges as an alert to a critical scenario that intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic but is still little discussed, recognized, or mobilized. From this perspective, the priority is to engage in a process that reveals the multiple layers of suffering and illness affecting bodies, minds and spiritualities, especially in peripheral and racialized territories.

When climate crisis is analyzed from the standpoint of social justice and its impacts on mental health, it becomes clear that it is one of the greatest contemporary challenges. The increase in global temperature – already approaching the critical limit of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels – intensifies extreme events such as droughts, floods, wildfires and storms. These phenomena not only cause material destruction and forced displacement but also deeply affect the emotional and psychological well-being of impacted populations.

This scenario has increased what is known as *climate anxiety* – mental distress triggered by feelings of anguish and helplessness in face of the severity of the environmental crisis and uncertainty about the future, often combined with guilt and frustration over not doing enough to improve the planet's situation. However, it is important to highlight that while the effects of the climate emergency reach everyone, they are not experienced equally. The impacts fall more heavily on historically marginalized populations, making it essential to integrate the concept of climate justice into these discussions. Issues such as environmental racism and gender inequality are central to understanding the unequal distribution of harm and to building more coherent and effective responses.

In this context, discussing mental health demands a territorialized approach that recognizes the multiple layers of oppression already faced by peripheral, racialized and impoverished communities. From this perspective, it becomes urgent to address not only climate anxiety but also other emotional and psychological burdens increasingly affecting these populations. Only with this intersectional view will it be possible to build pathways for care, listening and resistance in the face of overlapping crises.

To be anxious is to be worried. To be anxious is to anticipate an imminent danger – and this can, to some extent, help in preparing for what is coming, whether by avoiding or reducing damage, including psychological harm. What we are experiencing now is the uncertainty of what to do with the unpredictable nature of upcoming news and the observable facts in the realm of climate crises. And this is the kind of worry that becomes harmful. Stress, anxiety and excessive concern are producing physiological reactions (typical of such disorders) such as insomnia, fear, suicidal ideation, palpitations, cardiovascular disease, and rash, ill-considered life decisions – always involving discouragement, pain, disheartenment, and a lack of hope.

Consciously dealing with climate crisis and emergency situations requires observing these

issues and immediately understanding the importance of new protocols of care, relationship, and protection within communities and territories. What is happening to the planet will demand regeneration – and as science shows, the planet itself will carry out this process, as it has many times before. What we must do is change our perspectives on life and on the interconnectedness between humans and the planet; only then can we change and regenerate together, linking *buen vivir* with body, mind, emotion and the spiritual dimension.

Beyond climate anxiety – a relevant and necessary concept, especially in regions affected by extreme events such as floods, droughts and wildfires – it is essential to consider the systemic everyday context in which environmental destruction worsens living conditions. The environmental crisis seeps into people's routines and bodies, directly affecting physical, mental and emotional health – particularly because there is no "outside" to the body: the body is part of a natural life system; and if that system is being destroyed, the body will inevitably be impacted. We are part of nature, yet we still tend to speak of it as if it were something "outside" ourselves.

Some of the most visible signs in Brazil in the past year include the worsening of air quality. Beyond the well-known urban pollution caused by vehicles and industries, we have witnessed increasingly frequent and alarming episodes in which entire cities are blanketed by smoke from forest fires – a direct effect of deforestation, predatory land use, and the agribusiness model that dominates the country. This smoke carries a particularly toxic mix of fine chemical particles that surpass traditional urban pollution in harmfulness. Breathing this contaminated air poses an ongoing and silent health risk, affecting children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing respiratory illnesses most severely. Beyond physical impacts, it also triggers emotional distress, such as anxiety, a sense of suffocation and insecurity – creating a state of both physical and symbolic vulnerability for entire populations, especially for those without the privilege of staying indoors with air conditioning while smoke lingers for weeks or even months.

Another critical issue is the crisis in the quality and availability of drinking water. Many communities and entire cities face scarcity or contamination of water sources due to industrial waste, untreated sewage, or the excessive use of agrochemicals in agriculture. Water – which should be a basic right and a source of well-being – becomes instead a source of insecurity. Additionally, there has been a noticeable decline in safe, clean natural public spaces such as rivers, beaches, streams and green areas, which once served as places of leisure, socializing, relaxation and collective restoration. Their absence or degradation impoverishes daily life, depriving the body of regenerative contact with natural elements, while intensifying confinement, exhaustion and discouragement.

The constant rise in temperatures also has direct effects on body and mind. Extreme heat is not merely uncomfortable: it acts as a physiological stressor, causing chronic fatigue, irritability, sleep disorders, reduced productivity, and the worsening of mental health conditions. When we combine these factors – polluted air, scarce or contaminated water, the absence of restorative spaces and ever-higher temperatures – we see a framework of structural destruction that directly affects bodily integrity, emotional stability and the quality of social relationships.

Recognizing these connections between environment and mental health is essential for rethinking public policies and care practices that take the environmental dimension of life into account. The body feels environmental collapse before it is even fully named, and it is from these sensations that we must build more sensitive, interdisciplinary and place-based responses.

This intersection between climate crisis and mental health has severe consequences and demands attention. As we face the threat of surpassing the 1.5°C limit, we must acknowledge that population mental health is an essential political and resilience agenda. Mental-emotional care must be an integral part of climate

crisis response policies. Alongside reducing carbon emissions and mitigating global warming, nations urgently need to establish support networks for the population. Confronting the climate crisis must also mean strengthening our collective ability to care for one another in face of the uncertainties of a planet in crisis – uncertainties that can greatly intensify the context of individual and collective trauma.

While this reflection must inform public policy on mental health, it is equally essential for community-based, territorial and networked contexts to strengthen and improve their own strategies for care – both individually and collectively! In this perspective, the principles of ancestral technologies, collaboration, natural medicines and traditional cultural practices become essential in establishing an important dialogue between climate crisis and mental health, valuing knowledge that has historically enabled communities to face and overcome crises of many kinds.

In times of collapse, connecting with elements that offer the foundations of life – such as medicinal plants, chants, prayers, dances, and quality collective living practices – can serve as an emotional and psychological anchor. Such connections help give meaning and relevance to the experience of existence in a world reaching record levels of depression and suicide.

Collaboration is an essential principle embedded in many communities and networks, and it must be strengthened and expanded from the perspective of creating or reinforcing support systems as a way of life – systems that become indispensable in times of crisis. In many traditional communities, the idea of collective survival is deeply rooted: the well-being of the group is prioritized, and resources and knowledge are shared for the benefit of all. Collaboration and mutual support create spaces where people can share experiences, collectively process feelings of loss and fear, and organize to rebuild together, reinforcing a sense of community and belonging.

Moreover, collaboration between different forms of knowledge – such as ancestral sciences, traditional practices and mental health approaches – can pave the way for new care methodologies, where each territory or community generates its own responses through collaborative, community-based actions. However, this will only happen if each place's organizational plans and movements are actively engaging with mental health as a central and non-negotiable priority, including in-depth discussions about which approaches they wish to pursue.

Given this scenario, it is urgent to understand that mental health cannot be treated as an isolated or secondary issue in discussions about the climate crisis. Environmental collapse already deeply impacts our bodies, territories and relationships, demanding responses that are simultaneously political, sensitive, and rooted in the everyday lives of the most affected populations. Recognizing the value of community practices, ancestral knowledge and care networks is central to a new paradigm of response – one that views psychological well-being as a collective, inalienable right.

Only with this expanded and intersectional vision will it be possible to build truly transformative strategies that address both the structural causes of environmental destruction and its subjective and spiritual effects, reaffirming the commitment to the dignity and sustainability of life in all its dimensions.

Women's Mainstreaming in the Face of the Climate Crisis: Women and Adaptive Capacity

Danielle Almeida de Carvalho[1]

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The climate crisis is changing the world at an accelerated pace, bringing prolonged droughts, increasingly frequent floods, food shortages, biodiversity loss, and direct impacts on people's health and lives. These effects, however, do not occur in isolation – they layer onto pre-existing inequalities such as poverty, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, racism, income and gender disparities, and failures in governance systems. In the most vulnerable communities, these challenges become even more severe.

In this context, one concept is gaining traction: **adaptive capacity**. It refers to the ability of individuals, families and communities to respond, adjust and find solutions in the face of changes and threats. It may sound technical, but in practice, it is something many people already engage in every day. Adaptive capacity is our way of "making do": changing habits, reorganizing routines and finding ways forward when everything seems to be falling apart – whether it's a farmer planting during a drought, a shellfish harvester facing mangrove pollution, or a mother reinventing her family's livelihood after losing a job.

And in this art of adapting to reality, **women** are at the forefront.

WOMEN WHO ADAPT, NOURISH AND TRANSFORM

Around the world, countless stories show women turning adversity into opportunity. In **Tamil Nadu, India**, for example, women farmers developed post-harvest food processing methods to extend shelf life. They clean, dry, store and package traditional seeds more efficiently, ensuring food security for many families in times of disaster or scarcity. This is a community-based food security strategy designed and implemented by women, with few resources but a wealth of ingenuity.

In the **Sahel region of Burkina Faso**, women lead reforestation and agroecology initiatives using the *zaï* technique, which restores degraded soils and strengthens community resilience to climate change. In Nepal, women's cooperatives manage microcredit systems and collective savings funds, providing rural families with access to financial resources in times of crisis.

In Brazil, the situation is no different. In **fishing communities** in southern states like **Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina**, women play a crucial role. While men are often recognized as "the fishermen," it is women who, behind the scenes, keep fishing viable: repairing nets, cleaning and drying fish, packaging, selling at markets or door-to-door – and, in some cases, heading out to sea alongside their husbands. All this is done without labor protections, rights, or often even pay.

Brazilian women strengthen community resilience across diverse contexts. In the **Northeast's semi-arid region**, "women of the *caatinga*" lead seed banks of traditional (*crioulas*) varieties, ensuring agricultural diversity and food security during severe droughts. In the **Amazon**, babassu coconut breakers in Maranhão and Tocantins form cooperatives to market oils and flours sustainably, protecting the biome while generating income. In **urban areas**, waste picker women, such as those in the National Waste Pickers' Association (ANCAT), transform discarded materials into livelihoods, reducing environmental impacts while confronting gender inequalities in the sector.

These are just a few examples among thousands across rural, urban, riverine, Indigenous and quilombola territories – women who care for the land, the waters and the people; who organize collective work days, plant community gardens, exchange seeds, run shared kitchens, lead associations, and take the lead in environmental stewardship. And they do all of this while continuing to shoulder most domestic and caregiving responsibilities.

INVISIBILITY AND INEQUALITY: THE FLIP SIDE OF THE COIN

Despite their unquestionable contribution, women's work remains invisible to public policies, decision-makers and, often, even within their own communities. This occurs because, in most cases, these activities are classified as "**informal**" or "**domestic**," meaning they are not considered "real" work. Such labeling reinforces historical inequalities, devalues women's efforts, and hinders their participation in decision-making processes concerning territory, the environment, and natural resources.

This inequality is also reflected in the data. According to Brazil's IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), women earn, on average, **about 79.3% of men's wages** for the same role. When factoring in race and social class, the gap widens. **Black women**, for example, perform an average of **18.6 hours per week of unpaid domestic work**, while **white men average about 10.4 hours**. This reflects the sexual and racial division of labor, which pushes women – especially Black women – into roles related to care and the maintenance of life, but rarely into decision-making positions or positions of power.

Beyond the sexual and racial division of labor, the workload imbalance has concrete consequences. In crisis situations, such as floods or droughts, women are usually the ones responsible for keeping the family fed, fetching water, caring for the sick and protecting children. In many cases, they are the last to eat and the first to forgo their own rights.

Overall, the impacts of the climate crisis affect women more severely. According to UN data (2015), **70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide are women**. In natural disasters, women and children **are 14 times more likely to die** than men. This disparity does not happen by chance, but rather as a result of social and economic structures that fail to prioritize them.

WHAT CAN (AND SHOULD) CHANGE

Recognizing the role of women in building adaptive capacity is urgent. This does not mean merely listening to them but ensuring that they have access to the means of production, natural resources, credit, land, technical training and decision-making spaces. It means acknowledging and valuing their knowledge, labor and lived experience.

Some progress is beginning to emerge. In **September 2024**, the Brazilian government launched the **National Plan for Pay and Labor Equality Between Women and Men**, with a **R$17 billion budget over four years**. The initiative aims to address wage disparities, increase women's participation in the labor market and curb gender-based discrimination.

It is essential to design **public policies with a gender lens** – that is, policies that take into account the different realities experienced by men and women. They should include:

- Collect sex- and race-disaggregated data;
- Strengthen women's associations in local communities;
- Invest in training and expand access to technologies for women farmers and fishers;
- Ensure women's presence in environmental and urban management councils and committees;
- Recognize and remunerate informal and care work.[2]

CLIMATE JUSTICE BEGINS WITH GENDER JUSTICE

What we refer to as **climate justice** will only be possible when we directly confront the

[2] National Care Policy, passed on December 23, 2024. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2024/lei/L15069.htm

inequalities that shape women's lives. After all, they are the ones who sustain, care for and keep life going in the midst of chaos. They are the ones who hold the world together when it begins to fall apart.

Strengthening communities' adaptive capacity is not simply about "including" women – it is about recognizing that they have, for centuries, been the **invisible maintainers of collective resilience**. Their bodies, minds and emotional labor operate as safety nets: in times of crisis, they reorganize scarcity, turn fragments into possibility, and keep alive the "unseen threads" connecting food, care and memory. When women are at the center of decision-making, responses are more holistic, solutions more just and results more lasting.

The path forward is not merely to "add" women, but to dismantle the hierarchy that separates "work" from "care," "productive" from "reproductive." Paying for their labor is a form of historical reparation, but the real adaptive leap lies in honoring their knowledge: women – especially the marginalized ones – have long acted as **informal risk managers**, anticipating vulnerabilities and weaving survival strategies that institutional logic often overlooks. Their knowledge – about medicinal plants, informal economies and conflict mediation – constitutes **social technologies** as complex as any formal management model.

Here lies the key: when women are valued, the entire community benefits. Groups with female leadership tend to prioritize redistribution, education and preventive health – pillars that strengthen not only crisis response but also the ability to anticipate it. Their work is inherently cross-sectoral: a community garden run by women is, at the same time, food security, a therapeutic network, and an informal school of agroecology.

True transformation, however, demands going beyond individual recognition – it requires collectivizing this "making do". What has historically been an overburden must become structured power: cooperatives, gender-parity assemblies and credit systems that recognize women's role as social investors. Adaptive capacity is not measured solely in disaster response, but in the everyday roots of resilience: in how a grandmother teaches grain storage, in a young woman mobilizing a *favela* to map flood zones, or in a shellfish harvester who cleans and preserves mussels for her family's table and for sale.

To honor this work is to understand that resilience has a woman's face – but it only becomes true community strength when it stops being romanticized and becomes public policy, shared resources and the core of a new social contract.

The future of adaptation is female, ancestral and collective.

Babassu Coconut Breakers: knowledge, resistance and networks in Medium Mearim

Vanessa Cristina Silva Neco[1]

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In central Maranhão, in the Medium Mearim region, the relentless movements of women coconut breakers have been calling attention. With the straw baskets, axes, banana tree fibers and a lot of grit, they have been developing innovative actions that are both environmentally and economically sustainable. Nationally acclaimed as the territory with the largest babassu forest in the country, Maranhão hits the headlines on account of these women mobilizations and the affectionate relations they maintain with the palm trees.

This connection is exactly what has contributed to the standing forests, a plight in which they – both the women and the palm trees – are the protagonists. This relationship, which is often presented as maternal, has existed since the 1980's, a period of intense land conflicts where coconut breakers posted their own bodies to defend the palm trees and their territory.

The struggle to maintain life – the life of the palm trees, of the women and their families – has led to the formation of various social organizations that took on importance in the process, such as the ACESA (Community Association for Education in Health and Agriculture, the ASSEMA (Association of Settlement Areas in the Maranhão State), the RAMA (Maranhão Agroecology Network) and the MIQCB (Interstate Movement of the Babassu Coconut Breakers.

However, after a few decades have gone by since the collective creation of those organizations, the coconut breakers continue to fight the power of large estates and their devastating effects, such as deforestation of the babassu natural growth areas, the fences that keep them from accessing the babassu groves and the use of pesticides that hugely affect sociobiodiversity. The fight has remarkably never stopped and, as such, they seek to build, through collective actions, support networks to build strength in face of those challenges. Furthermore, by means of direct relations with nature, they build human and spiritual strength while they elaborate themselves as agents who possess the knowledge and flavor of their territories; guardians of the land, the seeds and their community memories that are passed down from generation to generation.

> *I tell you: Keep the seeds as you would treasure! We are seeds. So long as our dreams are alive in us, we will continue to fight. It is a long journey, but we have to move on. Whatever we can teach, we have to teach it. To speak of what we do is to keep our territory. People think it's only the trees, the waters, the animals that are threatened with extinction, but we too are under the same threat: we do not live without any of these elements. We feel as if we are destroyed when a palm tree is felled or poisoned, because we belong to them too.*
>
> Ivanessa, *São Bento do Juvenal* Quilombola Community

> *In the straw baskets, we carry everything. We used to feel ashamed of saying we are coconut breakers. But now, with the current movements, we are proud to say so. Everywhere we say: a coconut breaker can be everything. A lawyer, a teacher... everything! We are now president of organizations, even after years of fighting, but we never refrain from saying we are coconut breakers.*
>
> Lila, *Centro dos Cocos* Community

It's the women who first feel changes in their territories and the threats from their antagonists, and they too are the ones who first try and find strategies for the fight. In the territories where ACESA is active, they have joined groups that gather coconut breakers, small agricultural producers and craftswomen whose practices express other forms of relating with nature that are based on respect and affection.

Women from the communities of Centro da Josina, Centro dos Mouras, Claridade, Centro dos Cocos, the Santa Cruz Quilombo, located in the municipality of São Luís Gonzaga; the Catucá Quilombo, in Bacabal-MA; and in Marmorana, at Lago Verde, are now liaising with one another and have formed the *Elas em Rede* (Women in Network). That collective has allowed them to build resistance practices, to share knowledge that will strengthen agroecology and fight the different types of violence they have been submitted to on a daily basis, such as those practiced by large development and real estate projects that violate their territories, and by the State when it fails to enforce public policies and laws. In this new space, they also feel strengthened to fight against violence waged within their communities and households, generated by chauvinism that excludes them from decision-making around their production and political participation. As such, the *Elas em Rede* has provided care and cuddling, and they go on together along the network movement, supporting one another.

> *In women's groups, we also learn to defend ourselves. This week, this woman came to tell me her PIX number and said, "Elizângela, do Reinaldo", and I said, "No, he is his, and I am mine". This is so because of the encounters, the women's group workshops. And there's one thing: respectfully, we will make it anywhere; there is no speaking correctly or not. We've got to let go of this fear of speaking. [...] We do not want wealth; we want recognition and appreciation of our work.*
>
> Elisângela, Centro da Josina community

> *I am like Saint Rita, nobody shouts behind me! I've never been ruled by anyone; I've never bowed to any man. The women's husbands used to call me "delusionary", because I would open the women's eyes. It took us 13 women to do that vegetable garden; we did everything, from cleaning all the way to cutting wood and plucking roots.*
>
> Bonequinha, Catucá Quilombola Community

> *We, women, play a crucially important role encouraging our partners not to give up on our mission. When we have a group, we are stronger; it is your power that comes up to me, while mine goes up to you;*
>
> Conceição Furtado, Santa Cruz Quilombola Community

The term "climate change" was unknown to the women, but they already felt and discussed its impacts. In 2022, by means of workshops, seminars and conversations developed by the Agroecology Coalition for the Protection of Amazonian Forests (supported by F. Avina/VAC), they started to connect changes to their body-territories with discussions on climate changes mentioned in those political spaces. That has contributed to furthering the organization of our struggle and to connecting those changes with the impacts generated by large projects that have always been a threat.

So, the women started to understand that networking was important for the maintenance of life, and it could bring about significant transformations to their organizations and communities. With that, the process of carefully exchanging and keeping seeds was enhanced, and the agroecological production was valued; social strategies and technologies to reduce temperatures on the crops were adopted; waters and marshes with fountains that are sacred places were preserved. Their knowledge and experiences have been able to offer effective solutions in the various realms of their lives, and they have contributed to maintaining nature and their territories.

Women need to be heard; their demands and pains need to be tended to; the knowledge they

bring in their memories and hands needs to be valued. They teach us that the answers to many social and environmental problems are in nature, in the sustainability of healthy and respectful practices. This is why we need to protect this nature that gives us so much without asking for anything in return, because there is no capital in this world that will survive without it.

> *It is only after it becomes a mother [banana tree fibers] that they grow strong. Pull it, and it won't break. It's like us. After we become mothers, we gain power that we were totally unaware of. And there's more: we can only use that banana tree again after it has become a mother; so it is only cut down after it has run its cycle. Then, it will come up and become one of those beautiful things, made by our hands and by themselves. We work with what nature gives us; the buttons on handbags are either banana or babassu fibers, or even cajá (Spondias mombin). We use creativity together with nature.*
>
> Nice, Claridade Community

> *When we used to slash and burn, we scared the animals away. In recent years, with no more burns, the animals came back: agoutis, grey-necked wood rails, margay cats...*
>
> Bonequinha, from the Catucá Quilombola Community

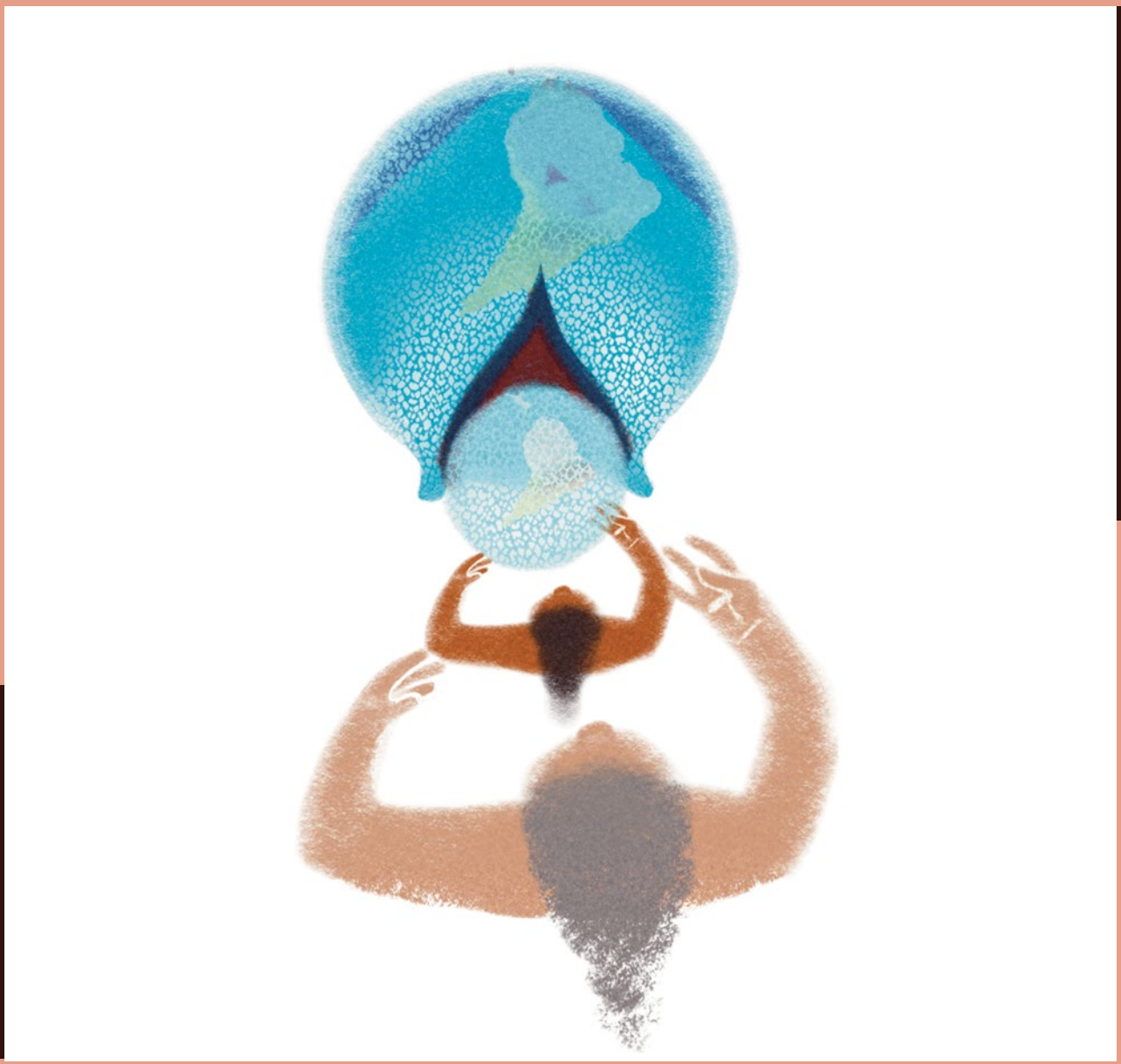
And so the coconut breaker women continue, like the palm trees: they resist and remain on their feet, even in the midst of so many violations. They take it upon themselves to defend and fight for poison and threat free territories. They go on, organized in collectives, strengthened in their groups and communities, and in whatever space, because, as one of the coconut breaker songs go:

já chega de tanto sofrer,
[enough of suffering]
já chega de tanto esperar,
[enough of waiting]
a luta vai ser tão difícil
[it's going to be a difficult fight]
na lei ou na marra, nós vamos ganhar,
[by law or by force, we will win]
a luta vai ser tão difícil
[it's going to be a difficult fight]
na lei ou na marra, nós vamos ganhar.
[by law or by force, we will win]

Quem gosta de nós somos nós,
[We are the ones who love ourselves]
e aquele que vem nos ajudar,
[whoever comes to help]
por isso confia em quem luta,
[because they trust those who fight]
a história não falha, nós vamos ganhar
[history never fails, we will win]

Ancestral Cosmologies, Women and Climate Emergencies

Sayonara Bezerra Malta (Sayô Adinkra)[1]



[1] Sayonara Bezerra Malta (Sayô Adinkra) is a historian, manager, consultant, and doula. She serves as Coordinator of *Escritório de Projetos Esmeralda* (Emerald Projects Office) and is a member of the cultural hubs *Casa Preta Amazônia* (Black House Amazon) and *#QuilomboDiMaria*.

When writing the title of this text, I am immediately struck by its power and complexity. I ask myself: how many people reflect on climate emergencies from a perspective that weaves cosmology and gender together? When these three elements – ancestral cosmologies, women and climate emergency – are brought together in the same sentence, we clearly see a distinct horizon, one that invites us to occupy a specific epistemological place. A place of knowledge production rooted in wisdoms that structure complex ways of understanding the world, time, the body, nature, social processes, and even spirituality! It is about sustaining a political-existential philosophy that affirms other ways of living and resisting, deeply connected to the experiences of women and their heirs who guard ancestral knowledge.

This text is therefore written from the recognition I have developed for my mother and for so many women whom, over at least these past twenty years, I have learned to see, listen to and bow before – women of unnamed but absolutely real and important mastery. This is a piece whose "structuring reference" is not anchored in theories, but in direct experience, in the bonds of community life, in the practice of orality.

To locate our starting point for reflection, I choose the ancestral centrality that runs through the history of all cultures: the science of traditional midwives. It exists in practically every people in the world, though it has been most strongly preserved among African, Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous and other original community traditions. Even so, in many contexts, this science has been harshly attacked, silenced, delegitimized, or even eradicated by colonial processes, patriarchy and the medicalization of life.

Reflecting on birth – on the ways of being born today, on what is preserved and honored when a new life arrives in the world - is, at the very least, an exercise in re-educating ourselves to inhabit the planet more consciously. Yet beyond being a theme with the potential to humanize us, the science of traditional midwives, as we still find in Brazilian contexts of Black and Indigenous heritage, refers to a kind of knowledge that escapes the systematizing logic that is typical of Western production. Midwifery is a science rooted in orality, in the mastery of knowledge passed not only from generation to generation, but also through spiritual channels and sensitive relationships with life – including non-human life!

These are systems of knowledge whose complexity involves codes, conduct, practices and foundations that often operate as secrets, accessible only through very specific hierarchies and trajectories. In this sense, it is grand, mysterious and perhaps, to a large extent, untranslatable to the parameters of Western reason. To acknowledge it is to affirm the power of other ways of existing, caring and knowing – but above all, it is to recognize the importance of women's roles.

It is worth noting that the science of midwifery resides in many people, some unnamed or unrecognized, but who carry in their life experience the systems of knowledge and conduct of an older midwife. Such is the case with Maria do Socorro Bezerra, my mother. She is heir to a midwifery tradition passed down from my great-grandmother from Ceará, Maria das Dores Leite, who died in 1972 at the age of 98. *Dona* Socorro, her granddaughter, also from Ceará and honored as a citizen of Ilhéus for her example of community life, carries and updates this ancestral legacy as a master herbalist, healer and prayer woman – as any midwife's heir can be, if she chooses to continue this science. Throughout my life, I have witnessed *Dona* Socorro preparing herbs, cures, blessings, medicines infused with dew, sun and moon, burying remedies in the earth, feeding her community, and caring for it with joy and commitment, serving as a guardian of her territory through joyful bonds that promote life, generosity and local care.

Being in the presence of traditional midwives and their heirs has always impacted me profoundly. Over a decade ago, I heard the midwives of the Tupinambá community, in southern Bahia, express deep concern about the impact of hospital settings on childbirth. They highlighted that, in their tradition, birth accompanied by midwives was a ritual imbued with meaning:

the newborn's placenta was buried at the foot of a tree, establishing a symbolic link between the person and the land from which they came. This act was not only spiritual but also a way of anchoring identity and memory. When that person, as an adult, felt lost or disconnected, returning to that tree represented a path back to themselves and to their origins. With the medicalization of childbirth and the distancing from traditional practices, however, this rite has been interrupted. Today, placentas are routinely discarded as hospital waste, which for these women represents a symbolic and emotional rupture from ancestral knowledge and from ways of caring for the beginning of life.

More recently, in April 2025, Masters Ermina and Álvara shared stories of remedies, blessings, births and care in the *Quilombo* of Barra de Aroeira (Municipality of Santa Tereza, Tocantins), where we once again witnessed that midwifery is not about performing a function at birth: it is a living expression of an ancestral cosmology that integrates body, territory, spirituality, community and hierarchy. When asked if she wished to leave a piece of advice for the community, 86-year-old Master Álvara, the oldest in the *quilombo*, was clear: "That people know how to listen to the elders."

One of the most relevant issues here is undoubtedly the relationship of otherness around the figure of the midwife – especially when she is an elderly, rural, Indigenous, or Black/quilombola woman. Recognition of her uniqueness and knowledge often presents a challenge, even within her own community. I clearly remember a striking account, recorded about 15 years ago, from midwife Maria dos Anjos of the *Quilombo* of Ingazeira, in the lower south region of Bahia. She recounted how the arrival of the public health clinic (SUS) contributed to the devaluation of traditional knowledge, distancing people from older forms of community care:

"In my time, we solved our own problems. Today, researchers come to the *quilombo*, take the plant to the laboratory, people go to the clinic, stand in line for a consultation, get a prescription from the doctor, and then go to the city – at great effort – to buy the medicine made from the plant that's right here in my backyard."

As times of climate crisis and various artificialities advance, we will need even greater skill to preserve and learn from natural care protocols, to master the domains of life and to sustain it. Many of the answers we seek for the current context already exist and live on in the living ancestral present-past.

Despite the countless challenges faced both inside and outside their communities, traditional midwives remain as matriarchal authorities of a time that is neither past nor obsolete. They persist in the face of subtle and explicit forms of oppression. Thinking from the standpoint of matriarchal authority, ancestral heritage, women's science and territorial care practices compels us to shift our gaze from theory to the living learning of wisdoms that offer deep and coherent responses to today's dilemmas, such as the climate crisis.

Reflecting on midwives is recognizing women who not only assist births but also promote life, organize communities, and sustain civilizational modes that regenerate bonds essential for the continuity of existence. While we project high expectations onto world leaders and international agencies, it is important to consolidate a restorative foundation of values and knowledge grounded in the wisdom of these women – midwives and their heirs – whose work weaves authentic and refined networks.

Midwives are, without doubt, among the most necessary and indispensable references for keeping life's paths open. They offer us practices and wisdoms fundamental to sustaining life and inspiring assertive responses from communities and their territories.

Where Monoculture Cannot Take Us: An Essay on the Relations Between Art and Climate

Lucía Santalices[1]

[1] Singer, poet and dancer, engaged in a research path that has unfolded since early childhood. She collaborates with the ecofeminist organization, Eqüit Institute - Gender, Economy and Global Citizenship, where she works as project coordinator and communications advisor. Lately, she has been researching the relationship between art and climate, while also paying attention to the intersections between new subjectivities, virtuality and communication, especially through the project *Na Piracema das Mudanças Climáticas*.

This text was developed from the rich and fertile implementation of the project Na Piracema das Mudanças Climáticas: mulheres e jovens na Amazônia nadando contra a Corrente (In the Spawning Season of Climate Change: women and youth in the Amazon Swimming against the Tide), which, over the course of more than three years, enabled our political, collective, ethical and aesthetic opening to the profound relationship between art and climate. The project was coordinated by partner organizations: Instituto Eqüit; Centro de Direitos Humanos Pe. Josimo; Coletivo Maravaia/ Coletivo de Mulheres do Xingu; Dandara – Movimento de Mulheres Negras da Floresta/Fórum Permanente das Mulheres de Manaus. The project was part of VCA Brazil – Voices for Climate Action – and had the support of Hivos. I am deeply grateful for all the exchanges we had that allowed me to write these lines.

(Even if) they could clap an artificial anus in the hollow of my hand and still I wouldn't be there, alive with their life, not far short of man, just barely a man, sufficiently a man to have hopes one day of being one, my avatars behind me.
Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

Art is part of the realm of culture, which arises as a kind of "constant response" to the natural realm. That is to say, the realm of things that exist, and the realm of that which we create from our relationship with what exists and with what we feel is missing. This dialogue, this absence, constitutes the cultural realm. This does not mean that such a relationship is linear, according to which "man would progressively transform nature into culture through the process called 'history'."[2] On the contrary, it is more of a circular relationship, in which...

> *man transforms nature into culture through the process of "production," culture into waste through the process of "consumption," and waste spontaneously transforms back into nature through the process of "decomposition." The current problem is waste: it keeps growing, and its decomposition back into nature is slow (nuclear waste, plastic materials, etc.). The accumulation of waste slows down the circulation of history, and history stagnates.*[3]

This *circularity* that exists between nature / culture (and waste), as we understand it, allows us to say, to a certain extent, that culture is human nature, and that the distinction between nature and culture does not really hold. Along this line, we may affirm that ecology should not be understood merely as the science of nature, but rather as an archaeological science, addressing both natural and cultural environments. For thinkers such as Flusser, ecology must incorporate human deeds and interferences, which in some way means saying that the realm of culture is also the realm of nature and, in this sense, he purports the existence of an ecology of culture and communication.

The very idea of nature conservation seems mistaken precisely because it assumes a static relationship – one does not preserve nature like sardines in a can – and not a dynamic one, a view that in some way believes in a virgin forest, an untouched romantic maiden, free from the evil of human hands. Yet we understand, for example – much the other way around, and it is increasingly accepted – the theory that the Amazon forest is in fact the result of human management, that is, the Amerindian relationship with nature,

[2] FLUSSER, 10/11/1982, p. 7 apud. DADBAD, R.; BAITELLO JR, N.; MENEZES, J. E. O. "The Craters of Itabira". Correspondence between Vilém Flusser and Rodolfo Geiser on Ecology. Electronic Journal of the Master's Program in Communication at Faculdade Cásper Líbero. Year XXIII - No. 45, p.16. JAN / JUN. 2020. Available at: https://seer.casperlibero.edu.br/index.php/libero/article/viewFile/1153/1079. Access on Jun.15, 2025.

[3] *Ibiden.*

their dialogue or, in other terms, their culture. Phrases such as "where there is a standing forest, there are women" make clear this deep relationship that still persists in territories whose culture has not yet been totally devastated by the devouring neoliberal frenzy. That is to say, our culture is shaped largely by the environment, by nature, by our relationship with our surroundings, just as our culture interacts and offers a human world, which inevitably alters nature and engages in dialogue with it. And this dialogue can be harmonious and sustainable, or a nefarious destructive monologue producing excessive waste, depending precisely... on the cultures of each people (including their respective productive systems).

In this sense, the relationship between culture and nature is structuring. We might even risk saying that culture, and more specifically art, one of its branches, are the human dialogue with the earth and the cosmos.

In truth, we may find countless connections between these themes: art to speak about climate, arts that depend on natural resources in order to be created (and if we take it literally, all art depends on them, because life itself depends on them, and because a guitar requires wood, drums require ferrous elements and refined petroleum, and a painter's canvas is made of cotton), the influence of environmental degradation on the production of artistic works (whether in the difficulties it brings to the daily lives of artists, or in the content of their works), or the influence of agribusiness on Brazil's top ten songs and on what the public "wants". The imbrications between climate and art, nature and culture, are complex and go back as far as our imagination can reach.

It is no coincidence that "culture" (from the Latin *cultura* – the participle of the verb *colere*, to cultivate, to inhabit – that which has been cultivated, the result of labor) is a word with two eloquent meanings. It can be the broad and multiple designation of a set of values, knowledge, norms, beliefs, customs, technologies, and arts of a given social group; and it can equally mean specifically (agri)culture or the cultivation of plants (or even animals). Planting is a most ancient trait of culture. To plant and to harvest culture. Hence, culture extended to the broad spectrum of habits, behaviors, ways of acting and thinking of each society. In other words, everything that a society plants, harvests and feeds upon, far beyond what we chew and what the intestine digests – "what are you hungry for?"[4]

WHY DO WE CHOSE TO GO FROM WATER PLANTERS TO DESERT MAKERS – "COMPUTERS MAKE ART"[5]?

The aesthetics of patriarchy is built according to its own interests. We know that patriarchal values are maintained through the violence imposed daily on bodies and territories, but also through cultural persuasion, which legitimizes misogynistic, restrictive and hierarchical behaviors among lives, alongside other dubious principles. In the course of history, art has been a great disseminator of values and a consolidator of cultures. For this reason, and in spite of today's hegemonic culture being a great producer of subjectivities, it is essential that countercultures seek to dispute the aesthetic narratives that must be dismantled, in order to replace dominant patriarchal values with others rooted in greater tenderness and respect for life and the commons. Art created by the community – that is, by us and for us – can achieve profound transformations.

Today's hegemonic art is an arm of today's culture, which blatantly claims to be "the culture industry," unveiling its mass perspective. The classic Fordist industry does not produce diversity – that is precisely the hallmark of craftsmanship, where each piece is unique. On the contrary, the interest of industrialization is precisely the

[4] FROMER, M.; ANTUNES, A.; BRITTO, S. **Comida.** Do álbum Jesus Não Tem Dentes No País Dos Banguelas, 1987.
[5] ZERO QUATRO, F.; SCIENCE, C.; NAÇÃO ZUMBI. **Computadores fazem arte.** Do álbum Da lama ao caos, 1994

large-scale reproduction of the same product, repeated endlessly, identical, at accelerated speed, even if this means loss of quality. In recent decades, we have witnessed a transformation of the industry, which has shifted towards ever greater diversification and customization of its products. On the one hand, this has not ended the first format of mass production, which continues to exist, and massively so; on the other, in general terms, these niche-oriented (and class-oriented) products, though varied in color and form, still fall within the spectrum of maintaining profit and the *status quo*, where consumption itself is the object of desire.

In the cultural industry, we see a very similar process: the global and massive reproduction of certain (increasingly less) artistic materials, and (increasingly more) products of entertainment and marketing, to be consumed through media stimulus that entails the inscrutable injection of financial resources to promote certain artists – reproducers of this *status quo* – in which having outweighs being, and "my being" is always better, more beautiful, and more powerful than "yours." Countless names and constant novelties can be found in the field of so-called business music, for example; at the same time that musical formats are increasingly similar and limited, be it in terms of duration, themes, instrumentation, costumes, the objectification of women, the decline of bands in exchange for solo artists or, at most, duos... that is, variations of the same, instead of the diversity of the real.

Another striking expression is the famous slogan "agribusiness is pop." In an attempt to clean up its toxic image (which is what happens when one deals with so much poison), the national rural elite sought to make a joke, associating its mass production with a musical and visual style that, "coincidentally", also aims to reach the masses. However, in between the lines, one can read the cultural intentions of agribusiness. And here we are not talking about cultivating soybeans, but perhaps we can indeed speak of a *soybean culture*.

MONOCULTURE BREEDS MONOCULTURE

The *soybean culture*, to our sorrow, goes far beyond the millions of hectares with a single plant species, soybeans, in a form of soil exploitation that is both ignorant and incessant. It represents monoculture not only in its form of food production in the fields but increasingly seeks to interfere with what feeds our minds. And not by chance, agribusiness has been investing heavily in "agromusic", whose songs exalt the use of crop-dusting airplanes, the chauvinistic cowboy and the objectification of women, individual enrichment above the commons, among other degrading themes and values – even hijacking narratives from the peripheries (such as hip hop), which in another context speak about finding a place in the sun, about "making it" in life and getting rich against all odds. The agroboys present themselves as victors who struggled hard to attain their crop-dusting airplanes. What the lyrics conceal are the massive resources injected into this sonic production and distribution so that it becomes a passion, or rather, a national fever (and fever is not itself a disease, but a symptom that something is wrong). As I once heard BNegão say in a podcast, if *sertanejo* music once narrated the exploits of rural working people from the *sertão* and the *pantanal*, it now seems to speak of the desires of the landowning boss.

In the increasing transformation of art into entertainment and into an armed wing of hyper-techno-neoliberal communication, it is part and parcel of what affirms, legitimizes and guarantees the stability of what is hegemonic. It provides moral and emotional foundations, it persuades populations in completely different territories that the neocolonial and patriarchal form of the hegemon, however alien to local needs, philosophies and physiologies, is the best for them... monocultural art opens gates, as clichés open big doors[6].

[6] ASSUMPÇÃO, I.; GUARÁ, R. Chavão abre porta grande. From the album *Sampa Midnight*, 1986.

On a motorbike or on a fast boat, rushing the conversation to fit these pages, it is worth mentioning another efficient form of capturing subjectivities that rightwing has grasped and has been deploying forcefully today: conspiracy theories. That's not art, or just about. According to Paolo Demuru, besides offering simple answers to complex and frightening problems such as climate change, the mechanisms of conspiracism and its narratives provide a pinch of wonder in the face of frustrations and the harshness of the competitive and individualistic world in which we live (in isolated, depressed, anxious, individualized lives). Those who believe in such theories do not find concrete data, but they do find enchantment, a sense of wonder. At first, we may tend to strictly link this uplifted state to "good" or "positive" things and, as such, reject the idea that conspiracy theories seduce through enchantment rather than rational arguments. But that which is nefarious can really cause this enchantment! I dare say that much of Christian structure is precisely founded on the constant danger of demonic enchantment to which one must not succumb, to cite a millennia-old marvel at the nefarious... and I even dare ask whether power itself – and men's incessant pursuit of power – might not be a kind of spell or enchantment with the nefarious, dragging us across the centuries and chaining us all, even those who do not cultivate it.

In recent times, the left seems so occupied with "putting out fires" (real and symbolic), and so concerned with not losing its "small democratic share" (hard-won, it is true), that it apparently forgoes wonderment, enchantment, dreams, and possible futures. And, in recent years, the far right has been very successful at doing it. That is to say, it is not through social change or real data that it has been convincing populations of its nefarious project and maintaining their support; it is, above all, through fantasy, through literature. Although this is an old and reheated formula, knowing of a hidden truth, revealed to me as one of the "chosen ones" – since not everyone understands The Truth – allows people to feel special, to find a purpose and to feel part of a "select community." That is, it activates struggle and a sense of community (purposes still latent in our bodies, even if new mandates devalue them and replace them with idolatry of the self, distorting the communal into the sectarian), while at the same time segregating between those who know (the chosen) and those who don't know (the ignorant masses).

For all these reasons, we see the importance of the left and of popular social movements joining their struggles with the work of artists engaged with and sensitive to the commons. We must once again look at life through poetry, through dreams. Not merely postponing the end of the world, but investing in the future, returning to sketch out what future we want – and not only the one we do not want!

Art, in itself, can be a weapon against inequalities and dominations, since it may play an eye-opener role. The power, speed and depth of art's communicative, affective, physical and psychological impact cannot be underestimated by social movements. Monoculture in the fields generates monoculture in the minds, and this opens the gate for the cattle to pass through.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTER-HEGEMONIC ART

Art is a central tool for transforming reality. As Vladimir Safatle says, "sensitivity is a battlefield": it defines or may redefine what experience is, how each subject experiences art and even life. Art is a kind of pressure upon reality, not an escape valve, that forces reality to be different from what it actually is; art puts reality into motion. It disputes culture andwhat will be planted; it therefore disputes futures and hopes, presents dreams, and remembers – it is memory! Art is a battlefield for the struggle over imagination. It is also a powerful communication tool, operating untraceable synapses and, in a single verse, it may touch us deeply and change our vision; it is a vector of sensitive transformation that we cannot allow to continue being instrumentalized by this hegemonic dragnet.

Art can be an ally in denouncing climate change, for instance, as it may be engaged in a way that renders the issue explicitly visible. But it is also, in itself, a pillar that keeps forests standing. Cultures strengthen the population's sense of belonging; certain cultural traditions teach us to sustain a deep respect for nature. Art bears considerable influence on the way we think and on the way we are, and native local cultural traditions alive: the dances and songs of a people, their gastronomy, their myths and rituals are a significant part of what gives them a sense of belonging strong enough to foster care for that territory. Art is collective (because even the most solitary artist needs an audience in order to truly exist) and, in this sense, it can contribute to strengthening community relations; it is also a channel to young people, therefore a gateway to dialog with this fundamental segment that must be re-engaged in social struggles. And finally, art can be understood as mental health and care of the soul, a "transversal organ" of human vital drive for the production of new thoughts and, consequently, profound social transformations.

The essay must end, and it is good to know that the conversation does not end here. The fact that not everything I had to say fits within these pages means it must continue, and I am glad. So, to close by opening, clarifying in order to confuse and mixing it all up in order to clarify, as Tom Zé so beautifully did and still does with my mind since I was small, a little girl – and for all these reasons hereby – we propose to develop and cultivate the concept of an *ecology of culture*. Perhaps not so much in Flusser's theoretical standards, but one that contemplates a pragmatic view geared for daily struggles and creativity. In other words, a cultural proposal (in terms of public policies, but also ethics and aesthetics) that is in harmony with diversities and climate, with the sustainability of human and non-human lives on this planet; a culture that is less market-driven and hegemonic, and more caring; a culture that is less monocultural and more agroecological, whose public policies are not so vertical and do not replicate an elitist and patriarchal logic but rather incorporates the voices of territories in the prior construction of cultural plans.

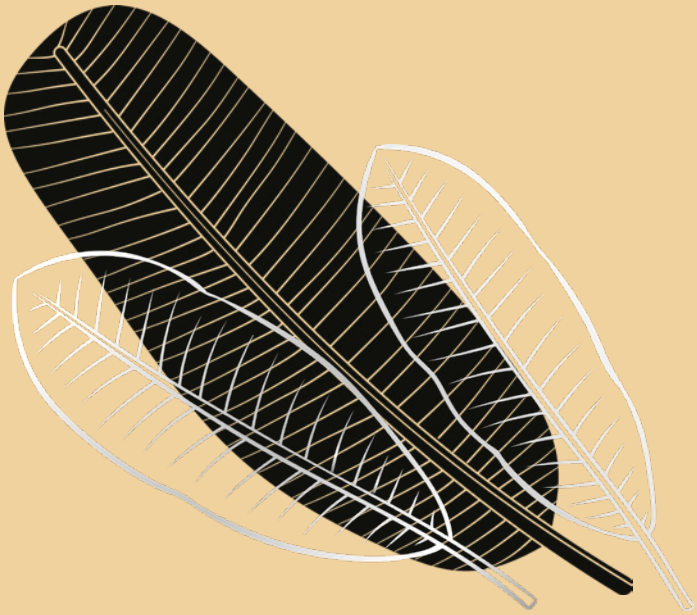
To understand how culture can be more ecological and less devouring, in an attempt to value and respect cultural diversities, producing less waste, guided by the rhythm of decomposition and not by the greed of factory composition and hyper productivity; a culture that does not require billions of dollars to happen, that is democratic, for everyone all year round; a culture that opposes mega-events whose budgets devour cultural offices in hundreds of small cities across Brazil, leaving wasteland behind as they pass and preempting the cultural scene for the rest of the year, keeping populations from accessing leisure and artistic fruition – which are balms of *buen vivir* and drivers of critical thinking!

And wherever the concept may reach, let the seeds of other fruit, from every land, be exchanged and incorporated, imbricated with the realities and needs of each territory, because each will have its own culture and ecology. We must collectively resume dreams, subjectivities, the future, desire, and the capacity for imagination... let us plant art!

The Piracema Manifesto[1]

We are nature and culture.
As part of nature and from it, we create our cultures.
For thousands of years, the biodiverse culture of our ancestors has helped cultivate the Amazon with their own hands:
The largest forest in the world is not only the work of nature – it is the fruit of the human cultures that have passed. Stewardship created the composition that now exists
We are part of nature's actors, not its spectators, but we have apparently lost our memory and are staging a great tragedy
If we want a future, we must collaborate now.
We come together – women, youth, and artists in the Amazon – to say yes to the piracema and to its vital abundance
We can no longer only extract, dry out, suck, and then ask nature to provide us with solutions.
The solution lies in breaking with the current paradigms of destruction and exploitation of biomes and minds, of the very life on the planet.
Monoculture (in the fields) breeds monoculture (in the minds).
And the Amazon may become a desert:
Because agribusiness is not pop; culture is not industry – and together they are deforesting our territories and our minds
The creature that neither sings nor dances turns dreams into desert – and the land as well.
We cultivate biodiversity and the arts in counter-flow to the commodification of life and to climate change.
We believe in art as a collective piracema – that makes life persist, seep through, and SPROUT.
Culture is human nature.
Let us plant art!

[1] Manifesto drafted from the project *Na Piracema das Mudanças Climáticas: mulheres e jovens na Amazônia nadando contra a Corrente* (In the Spawning Season of Climate Change: women and youth in the Amazon Swimming against the Tide), which sought to bring together art and climate in order to raise awareness among populations about the socio-climate emergency in three territories: Altamira (Pará), Imperatriz (Maranhão) and Manaus (Amazonas). The project was developed in partnership with local organizations (Xingu Women's Collective, Maravaia Collective; Human Rights and Pe. Josimo Center, and the Permanent Forum of Manaus Women), all in exchange with local young artists, triggering a boom of ideas, social and cultural activities in the territories, and creating a variety of artistic work.



NATIONAL CASES

The Nova Conquista Occupation: A Territory of Resilience in Imperatriz

Conceição Amorim[1]

Amid ongoing climate and social challenges, the urban occupation *Nova Conquista*, in Imperatriz (MA), emerges as an inspiring example of empowerment and self-management. With support from a project called "In the Piracema of Climate Change: Women and Youth in the Amazon Swimming Against the Current", the occupation has not only faced severe difficulties – such as extreme heatwaves and the threat of eviction – but has also built resilient pathways, cultivating a dignified and sustainable present. It has consolidated itself as a territory of resilience, driven by the strength of its people – especially the women of the community.

The Tocantins region of Maranhão, where the project takes place, is facing increasingly harsh climate conditions. In 2024, Imperatriz registered a staggering **102 days of extreme heat**, with temperatures reaching 39.6°C (103.3°F). Combined with irregular rainfall and water scarcity between June and September, this intense heat directly impacts human health, work capacity and agricultural production – such as that of Nova Conquista's community garden. These events are not isolated; they represent an ongoing threat to public health, food security and the overall quality of life in the region.

But it is precisely in this adverse context that the strength of the community becomes visible. Coordinated by Instituto Eqüit and the Pe. Josimo Center for Human Rights with support from the Voices for Climate Action (VAC) program, the project has become an essential and urgent response to this socio-climatic emergency. More than a reaction, it helped shape a **territory of resilience**, where life continues to flourish in spite of adversity.

Standing in solidarity with the community in its fight against yet another eviction and for land regularization, the Center – through the political and material tools of the Piracema initiative – was able to offer workshops fostering the sense of belonging, human rights and housing. It also recovered the community's legacy of care and environmental promotion – an opportunity not often provided by public authorities!

VICTORY AGAINST THE TIDE OF EVICTION: STRENGTHENING THE TERRITORY

Since 2015, the Nova Conquista occupation has been engaged in a relentless struggle for dignified housing, facing three violent evictions. The most recent threat, in November 2024, brought along the fear of total destabilization of the territory they had built. At this critical moment, Piracema – with the legal expertise of the State Public Attorney's Office and the unwavering commitment of the Human Rights Center – acted as a protective barrier.

The mobilization of resources and tireless advocacy efforts culminated in the long-awaited suspension of the eviction order. This decision, which echoed as a decisive moment of support for the community, not only prevented the forced removal of countless families, but also kindled hope for land regularization. For the young wom-

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Event commemorating March 8, International Women's Day, at the Nova Conquista occupation, Imperatriz, MA

en and all residents, the suspension was a victory for human dignity – a testament to the power of unity and the conviction that, together, the tide of injustice can be reversed. This achievement helped solidify the territory of resilience, allowing the project's seeds to take deeper root.

WOMEN'S MAINSTREAMING AND THE MARIA MÁXIMA CULTURE HUB: PILLARS OF THE TERRITORY

The Piracema project has been a catalyst for deep transformation, particularly in gender and intergenerational relations, positioning the community as the lead player in shaping its own development.

The empowerment of the women in Nova Conquista is one of the most compelling stories to emerge from the project. Through **agroecology workshops and tree-planting *mutirões* (collective actions), women took the lead in managing environmental and food initiatives**, especially through the creation of the **community garden in the town square** – a living testament to their initiative. They not only challenged stereotypes but also became key agents of food security and territorial transformation.

Craft workshops also became symbols of autonomy. The project not only supported these efforts but encouraged the recognition of the residents' own "other knowledges," with women committing to carry on the workshops independently. The most eloquent result of this synergy was the birth and consolidation of the **Maria Máxima Culture Hub**. Conceived and brought to life by the community itself, the hub is a beacon of autonomy, where women have become both masters and guardians of knowledge – weaving not only crafts but also a support network and a space of female empowerment that strengthens the entire territory.

The voices of the women of Nova Conquista have reached broader stages. The community's

Women united in the Nova Conquista occupation

selection as the host for the **Municipal Women's People's Assembly on International Women's Day (March 8)** was a profound acknowledgment of their strength and resilience. Additionally, participation in the **Municipal and State Environmental Conferences** has ensured that their previously overlooked perspectives and needs are now being heard and considered in the formulation of public policies. These women have moved from a place of vulnerability to one of influence and representation, solidifying their role in territorial governance.

INTERGENERATIONAL SYNERGY: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY TOGETHER

The project demonstrated a remarkable commitment to intergenerational inclusion. Children and youth were actively engaged in every stage of the activities, through hands-on and playful approaches. In agroecology workshops, tree-planting *mutirões* and the creation of a community garden, younger participants learned from older generations about land stewardship and environmental challenges through direct experience and collaborative action.

This practical engagement fostered in children and youth a sense of belonging and responsibility for their territory, affirming that their contributions matter. Ongoing inclusion ensures the transmission of values such as environmental justice, gender equality and community resilience – preparing future generations to become conscious and active leaders. Collective activities also strengthened family and community bonds, building a more cohesive and resilient local support network.

THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE: KEY DIMENSIONS IN SHAPING THE TERRITORY

For people living in situations of extreme vulnerability, the project's actions meant more than just learning opportunities: they served as a lifeline and a catalyst for dignity, consolidating the area as a territory of opportunity. Professor Maria de Lourdes, a Nova Conquista resident, summarizes this impact:

> *"For us, the activities brought to the community by the Piracema of Climate Change project were of great importance. Until then, we had only heard about climate change on TV or social media; we didn't connect it with our suffering from extreme heat and heavy rain. The project held workshops with experts on the causes and consequences of climate change, citizenship and housing rights; it also offered workshops on handicrafts, tree planting, agroecology, organic composting, and encouraged the*

In Nova Conquista, the community expresses itself and makes collective decisions. Imperatriz, MA, Brazil.

> *creation of a public square and the Maria Máxima Culture Hub – a space for promoting popular art and culture!"*

Professor Maria de Lourdes' words perfectly illustrate the multidimensional value of these actions in constructing a territory of resilience:

- **Connecting knowledge to local realities:** The project translated the abstract concept of "climate change" into the community's daily experiences, linking it directly to their struggles with extreme heat and rainfall. This understanding is a first step toward adaptation and local solutions.
- **Empowerment through knowledge and land stewardship:** Workshops with specialists on climate impacts, agroecology and organic fertilizers offered practical tools to address environmental challenges and enhance food security directly within the territory.
- **Income generation and cultural valorization:** Handicraft workshops provided not only income alternatives but also celebrated local knowledge, strengthening self-esteem and autonomy among women.
- **Building civic spaces within the territory:** The public square and the Maria Máxima Culture Hub are more than physical locations – they are spaces for gathering, learning, cultural expression and community bonding, essential to the resilience of a population fighting for territorial recognition.
- **Belonging and dignity:** By involving residents in building their own public spaces, people who once felt marginalized became the architects of their surroundings. This increased their sense of ownership, dignity and belief in their ability to transform their reality, thus consolidating the community.

HARVESTING RESULTS AND LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY

Suspension of the eviction, the rise in environmental awareness, the strengthening of

community ties and the establishment of the Maria Máxima Culture Hub all exceeded expectations. The autonomous management of knowledge – exemplified by the self-run handicraft workshops – is the clearest evidence that the project cultivated long-lasting capacities for the territory.

The key lesson learned is that true social and environmental transformation is not a project done for the community, but one done with and ultimately done by the community itself. Autonomy, co-creation, integration of causes and the valuing of local knowledge and culture are the keys to building resilience and a more just, sustainable future.

Future challenges include the **ongoing need for legal security** through land regularization, the **sustainability and expansion of autonomous initiatives** (such as the Culture Hub), and the **maintenance of intergenerational engagement and environmental awareness** in the **territory**. To meet these challenges, the project will strengthen legal defense, seek support for autonomous management and create ongoing engagement mechanisms – such as the Youth Environmentalist Club!

Piracema stands as living proof that even in face of adverse climate conditions and persistent social challenges, the strength of the community – in combination between strategic and democratic support – can generate extraordinary impact. Nova Conquista is blooming, proving that resilience is woven day by day, by the hands of all who, together, swim toward a more dignified and sustainable future, consolidating a true territory of resilience in Imperatriz.

Fiber Josinas: Environmental Sustainability in Handmade Production

Vanessa Cristina Silva Neco[1]

In the *Centro da Josina* community, located in the municipality of São Luís Gonzaga, in the Brazilian state of Maranhão, relentless coconut breaker women movements have been drawing attention. With baskets, axes and a lot of clout, they have developed innovative actions, both environmentally and economically sustainable.

In that Center, politically organized women started sparing banana tree fibers for handicrafts. Their mobilization is nothing new, as they have always engaged in the defense of life and natural resources. Since they are not always keen on community demands, they usually spot upcoming threats early on and can therefore anticipate subsequent impacts. However, their actions are not limited to identifying problems and subsequent effects, since they also seek to develop mechanisms to cope with them.

As one way to curb the impacts of practices that can be harmful for the environment and for the climate, they have raised local awareness and incentivized sustainable actions, such as the use of natural agricultural defensives for pest control in vegetable gardens and correct stewardship of natural resources. These alternatives are good to preserve local forests and rivers that are threatened by the workings of deforestation and the airborne chemical spraying of neighboring farms. In face of the ever so scarce native plants and water, it is clearly necessary to preserve the

Vanessa and community women's group from Catucá, Bacabal.

[1] Sociologist, babassu coconut breaker and feminist. Technical Assistant to the Community Association for Education in Health and Agriculture (ACESA) and a Maranhão Agroecology Network's Women's WG (Rama).

few remaining sources that are used for household consumption and crop irrigation.

The productive activities they develop include cultivating bananas, extracting babassu coconut, planting greens, breeding small domestic animals and producing handicrafts. The babassu coconut is a native fruit growing spontaneously in massive quantities across the communities – there is no need to plant it! The women collect it from private properties as well as from public areas, which means there are no property requirements to it, and this is why it's been crucial for the livelihoods of the poorer families for a considerable amount of time. Due to this long-standing extractivist practice, women have developed quite a lot of knowledge associated with its potential uses.

As *Dona* Maria Senhora puts it:

> *...from the babassu, we extract the coconut, the oil, the straw to make the houses, the fan; we make baskets and use the coal for cooking, we make porridge; and, after the mother plant dies and leaves the compost behind, we use it so we can plant stuff to eat. Everything is used; nothing is lost. It has been – and still is – the livelihood for many of us in our communities. The palm tree is our mother; [she] gives it all to us for free, and we love [her] like a mother.*

Planting bananas has been a common practice for quite some time, but it's not so old as extracting babassu. This is why, even when they knew the planting and stewardship, women couldn't use all of its potential. After seeing that banana peel was discarded and piled up in their backyards, they awakened to the possibility of using it.

Early movements started in 2015, when *Dona* Maria das Graças (aka Gracinha), *Dona* Nice and other nearby community sisters who are under the guard of the ACESA (Community Association for Education in Health and Agriculture) looked them up to share their interest in increasing the activities they were already developing. In addition sharing about extractivism, agriculture, the work they did in the productive yards and the efforts of looking after their children and their households, they let ACESA know of their desire to become craftswomen.

They were inspired by the *Agroecological Based Family Agriculture: building equality* project, developed by the Association, which sought to highlight the importance of the work done by the babassu coconut breakers. So, amassing the knowledge acquired from the lessons they had received on equity, autonomy and visibility of the productive female work done in the realm of the project, they started to seek alternatives to make the best use of the fibers and to test new materials and techniques.

Initially, they got together and created a group named *Josinas de Fibras* (Fiber Josinas) after *Dona* Josina, known as someone who lived for and defended the community, and who is pictured by local residents as a fierce groundbreaker woman. The group is composed of 10 women from the following communities: *Centro da Josina, Quilombo Santa Cruz, Claridade* and *Centro dos Mouras*, all of which are located in the municipality of São Luís Gonzaga, in the Brazilian state of Maranhão.

Though they didn't use all of the organic matter from the banana trees, they were already in the habit of using the fibers to replace strings or even plastic to tie green sprouts together (lettuce, coriander, onion, and *cuxá/vinagreira*, which are local dishes prepared with an also local variety of hibiscus), and they used the stem of the fruit to fertilize their crops. With that, new destinations for the fiber piling up in their backyards were enabled by the traditional knowledge they already had in the back of their minds, with the added training they received that presented them with further alternatives.

As reported by Elisângela, one of the *Josinas de Fibra* coordinators:

> *The group was started after this desire to reuse the totality of whatever banana trees we have in our backyard, the babassu coconut we break, and all the other trees we have. Particularly for us, women, so we can have our moments of therapy, to cool down and refresh our minds! So we get together to do our handicraft work, but we have our laughs here too, we talk, we cry, and we help one another. So, at first, we were intent on just getting together, on becoming stronger as a collective and on producing without doing any harm, on using and reusing the stuff, and on discovering the creativity lying within each and everyone of us.*

The group has organized a variety of educational activities that have enabled group members to learn new techniques and to enhance the ones they had already been putting to practice, in addition to testing new materials, such the fiber in okra and in the babassu straw as well as that in sugarcane and in the *cuxá/vinagreira*. Another point of interest here is the innovation they bring about in their craft processes by adding new pieces made of the babassu coconut, such as paper and biojewels (earrings, necklaces and so on).

In the beginning, they learned how to produce but a couple of pieces with banana tree fiber, and they are now producing more than twenty different pieces, including hand bags and tablecloths. They adorn their production with other elements from the babassu as well as pits from *cajá*, *ingá* and *açaí*, in addition to other trees and plants right out of their backyards. The key piece in those crafted utensils is diary book covers made of banana tree fiber, which are then sold in farmer markets but can also be commissioned by local and regional customers.

For many of them, it means rediscovering their potentialities, as can be observed in *Dona* Oneide's statement: "Not in my entire life had I ever thought this hand here could do such beautiful things! I could never, ever, have thought that, at my age today, I would be making paper out of banana tree fiber".

Centro da Josina's women initiatives have inspired women from the *Quilombando e Semeando Arte* group, from the *Quilombo Catucá*, in the municipality of Bacabal. Those exchanges have enabled them to share knowledge and techniques; so much so that, in those two territories, their best practices have been disseminated in compliance with the agroecological principles. They share a common reality and very similar wishes; so, in the babassu extractivism, in the planting of bananas and in family farming as a whole, they find their own ways to secure autonomy and financial independence.

Their initiatives contribute to developing gender equality and social inclusion as well as to using local biodiversity in a sustainable manner. To reuse banana tree fibers is to sustainably tap from the local resources, and also to implement

one fruitful alternative for diversified family income. Their efforts have called attention for local action and perspectives on the stewardship of those resources and on the strategies they eventually put in place in order to enhance their livelihoods.

Social organization was the way those women found to ensure political participation and to augment their economic gains. That also contributes to reapplying and disseminating the best practices in compliance with agroecological principles. It is therefore not only a space for production and income generation, but also for fighting for a more just and equitable society.

Since 2021, the group has had more visibility, which has increased member self-esteem, as the result of their long collective strides. During this very same year, *Dona* Nice, both a group founder and an ACESA partner, has become the first elected woman president of the organization, after 36 years of their existence. Most group members attended that historical inauguration moment and reinstated their commitment to continue occupying spaces and seeking support.

By means of a project with the Avina Foundation, *Josinas de Fibra* have now engaged in discussions on themes such as climate change and other related issues. As such, they are now naming the changes they already felt in their bodies/territories. Themes such as climate change and environmental racism have enabled them to identify the major crisis triggers in the territories and to more clearly see and value their productive and care work around the land, the seeds and the backyards, considered to be essential for defending against and living up to climate change.

> *We already knew it, but maybe we couldn't fathom that our usual efforts tending to our crops, kitchen, livelihoods, cook ovens, knowing the palm trees and everything around us were important for the land and for ourselves. We learned that the way we plant and our craftmanship are social technologies.*

The women's handicraft production has been under increased demand, both locally and regionally. This is of great relevance, because handicrafts have never been so much appreciated in either communities or urban spaces.

The *Josinas de Fibra* group has secured ever more acceptance across the community and the women's families. Their children and husbands have learned to weave fiber in order to help the group meet the growing demand. And this has significant repercussions in the women's self-esteem, which has become ever so strong among partner networks, in ACESA, in the Maranhão Agroecology Network's Women's WG, in the various associations and also by means of the support given to social projects:

> *We are now more united and stronger. We have met many women along this journey, as well as partners and projects that have contributed to one another, but none of that would have happened if we had not awakened to one another, if we had not held one another's hands, even in face of utmost difficulties, where we cried together just as we laughed together. We still have a long way to go, we have challenges to face; but together we'll get there. Our house is nearly all built. A house, my people! Who would've thought, back in those early days, that we would have a house? That's the result of our sales, of products made by our very hands. How could I ever anticipate something like that, when I was even afraid of opening my mouth? How would I ever be here, and as one of the coordinators? Even today I tremble in fear, but I am not alone. All 10 of us stick to this effort together. I was closed out from the world, I used to live exclusively for my household and for my family. When I first saw the world out there, because of this group's movements all around, that's when I started to love myself and to go out more! I even flew to Recife once.*

The group is a role model, showing that agroecology is the way forward. In addition to the handicrafts they so lovingly produce, that has also been increased demand for the greens they plant, for their palm oil, for their bananas! Their production does not involve poisonous substances and it reflects the tenderness with which they do it as well as the respect they have for their communities and for their families as well as for nature as a whole.

Women from Cocanha: Hands that Sustain the Sea, the Table and the Memory

Danielle Almeida de Carvalho[1]

The sun hasn't yet warmed the sand on Cocanha Beach when *Dona* Maria is already on her feet, cleaning shellfish in the shed. It's Saturday, the sky is clear, and the smell of the sea blends with the sound of shells clinking in buckets. Earlier that morning, her son Leandro set out by boat to the Mussel Farm, where he harvested the shellfish she's now cleaning and sorting – part for the family's sustenance, part for sale!

"Some days I go with him, you know? I really like the part that's out at sea," says 70-year old *Dona* Maria, with a smile that time hasn't worn away. Daughter of *Seu* Estevam Mattos, one of Cocanha's most traditional fishermen, she carries the living memory of the community in her hands. "My mother used to walk back and forth with a bucket full of shellfish she picked from the rocks. Nowadays, you don't see shellfish on the rocks anymore... it's rare."

FROM THE FARMLAND TO THE SEA: A TIME WHEN EVERYTHING WAS EXCHANGED

Cocanha was once very different. When *Dona* Maria was a child, the community lived off the land, farming, fishing and bartering. Children went to school in the morning and spent the afternoons helping their parents hang fish to dry or plant cassava and beans in the backlands, near the edge of the Atlantic Forest. The men went out to sea in simple canoes. The women stayed with the children, cleaned fish by the rivers and tended the crops. Life was rooted in strong bonds – with the land, the sea, and one another.

But in recent decades, everything changed quickly. Real estate speculation intensified in Caraguatatuba, on the northern coast of São Paulo, and Cocanha witnessed the spread of land parceling, tall walls and vacation homes. Rivers were filled in, mangroves shrank and, with them, the natural encounter between fresh and salt water disappeared and it no longer provides the necessary nursery for marine species. Today, whatever's left of the mangroves can barely support larvae and fingerlings. Hunting, farming and fishing have been gradually banned as protected areas were created with no informed consent from those who had always cared for that territory.

WHERE THERE'S A NET, THERE'S A WOMAN

Even so, the women carry on – steady and unwavering – with their hands immersed in the labor of the sea. At dawn, Tereza and Ângela open the fish market facing the ocean. That's where they sell the fish brought in at daybreak by their husbands and sons. They start off by carefully cleaning the catch, just as they learned from their early ages.

"I learned from the women who used to clean fish for my father, you see! Back then, we cleaned

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Cocanha Beach, Caraguatatuba, São Paulo. On the left, the fishermen's and shellfish farmers' shed – a meeting point and workplace! On the right, a view of Cocanha Beach, with Cocanha Island visible in the foreground. The island shelters the Cocanha Marine Farm, the largest in the state of São Paulo. Source: personal collection..

them down there under the bridge. It was the women who really did the cleaning," recalls a now 65-year old Tereza while she swiftly removes scales with practiced ease.

Zenaide, 49, also works in fish processing. Her husband harvests shellfish from the sea, and she prepares them for sale.

"I don't do any other job. I help him. I can't go out to work, you know? I have to care for my daughter, cook lunch, keep everything in order for her," she explains.

The women's time stretches thin – between putting food on the table, caring for their families and preserving ancestral traditions.

FROM MARINE CULTURE TO THE KITCHEN: THE FLAVOR OF RESISTANCE

In recent years, a new project has brought hope: the *Vila Turística da Praia da Cocanha*, a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) initiative created by MAPEC (the Cocanha Fishers and Shellfish Farmers Association[2]). The goal is to present the territory through local experience, emphasizing the *caiçara* way of life (T.N. – coastal inhabitants in southern Brazil, mostly of indigenous descent). In so doing, the project has opened space for women to expand their income sources through shellfish-based cuisine[3].

"Now there are more women working. Before, it was just the men. In cooking, one brings the other. I bring my sister, my sister-in-law... When we have to make breakfast or dinner, all the women pitch in: cousins, sisters, everyone helps," says Selma, 53, who now makes a living from mussel-based gastronomy, an activity that has grown significantly thanks to the CBT initiative.

The network is broad and family-based. *Dona* Maria, an excellent cook, is the sister of Isabel, who runs a kiosk. Isabel is Selma's aunt, and Selma is Zenaide's sister-in-law. All of them are *marisqueiras* (shellfish cooks), as they proudly say. Their work includes cleaning, sorting and preparing shellfish alongside their husbands, brothers or sons. They are mothers, grandmothers, caretakers and cooks, all at once – and still, they face structural barriers every single day.

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[2] "*Vila Turística de Caragua concorre a prêmio internacional*" (The Caraguá Tourist Village runs for an international award). Access at: https://globoplay.globo.com/v/11795541/.

[3] The Caraguatatuba Municipality webpage promoting the Tourist Village. Access at: https://www.caragua.tur.br/atrativos-turisticos/de-base-comunitaria/.


Processing the fish adds value to the product to be sold. On the left, Tereza cleans the catch at the fishing depot. On the right, at the fishers' and shellfish farmers' shed, Zenaide selects mussels for cleaning and later sale. Source: personal archive.


Mussel cuisine as a form of resistance and adaptation. On the left, Dona Maria proudly presents her famous bolinhos de mexilhão (mussel fritters), a Cocanha community staple dish. On the right, Selma prepares her delicious lambe-lambe, a traditional dish made with rice and fresh mussels harvested directly from the Cocanha Marine Farm. Source: personal archive.

LACKING INFRASTRUCTURE, BRIMMING WITH WILLPOWER

Despite the growth of community-based tourism, infrastructure remains precarious. The women still lack a proper kitchen and adequate bathrooms to welcome visitors.

"We need a kitchen, something nice. We need a space of our own to sell all these goodies, so people know this is a place that cultivates mussels," says *Dona* Maria, with the conviction of someone who knows the value of her work.

The challenge now is to ensure the minimum conditions for *caiçara* culture not just to resist, but to flourish, to ensure that mussel recipes are passed down from generation to generation, to ensure that young girls can see their mothers and grandmothers as role models for strength and wisdom, and to ensure that the territory is respected as a home – not just as a backdrop for photos!

WOMEN WHO HOLD THE TERRITORY

The women in Cocanha carry more than their families – they carry the culture, the history and the very existence of their community! Often rendered invisible, their work is what keeps artisanal fishing, shellfish farming, local cuisine, childcare and traditional knowledge alive. Even in the face of climate crisis, urban pressure and government neglect, they persevere: united, organized and courageous.

What they ask for is recognition: a dignified space to cook, to sell, to teach. A territory where they can live and work without fear of being displaced or silenced!

And while that space has yet to come, they continue doing what they've always done: caring — for the sea, the table and the memory!

The #QuilomboDiMaria Experience: care practices linking health and culture as a field of community-based public policy

Carla Antelante da Cruz[1] and Sayonara Bezerra Malta[2]

The Itinerant Collective for Community Health and Black Culture QuilomboDiMaria was founded on March 3, 2019, by its coordinator Carla Antelante da Cruz, in the Cosme de Farias neighborhood, in Salvador. Though it celebrates six years of formal existence in 2025, its coordinator has dedicated a lifetime to building the foundations that enabled the fulfilment of their mission – which is rooted in both sociocultural and ancestral perspectives. Learning, experiencing and understanding the movements of life and collective organization through the lens of ancestry has always been – and still is – a guiding and vital principle for the work of #QuilomboDiMaria, which draws strength from the intertwining of memory, care, organizational strategy and resistance.

Predominantly led by Black women – the driving force behind the collective – #QuilomboDiMaria is structured around a relational ethic that, while not excluding or neglecting the presence and importance of men and masculine knowledge, affirms a commitment to holistic care as a political, social and community-based practice. This emphasis on "*qualifying the way we relate to one another*" is a solid foundation that cuts across all dimensions of the collective's experience: from interpersonal relationships among members and their bonds with families and communities, to their connection with the territory, nature, its riches and beauty – but also its pain, imbalances and ailments.

The collective recognizes and is guided by a philosophy of connection, affection, and co-responsibility – both organizational and systemic – through practices that value the research and training of best conduct, grounded in the recognition of interdependence and the centrality of learning from the foundations of life in all its expressions. In this sense, it strongly echoes the teachings of quilombola thinker Nego Bispo, whose philosophy offers guidance and inspiration: "Relate to the environment! It's not about preservation – it's about relationship... Preserve? The environment doesn't need our care. The environment takes care of us, and we relate to it."

This is why addressing environmental issues is, above all, a movement of returning to a philosophical place of meaning and sensing – a territory both internal and collective that must be continually revisited! We are ecosystemic beings, immersed in a complex and interdependent system of life, though we often alienate ourselves from this reality. We go on like small creatures who have yet to learn how to bow in reverence and humility before the grandeur of the systems

[1] **Carla Antelante** is an educator, researcher, systemic therapist, producer, and community cinema director. Master and founder of *#QuilomboDiMaria*.

[2] **Sayonara Bezerra Malta (Sayô Adinkra)** is a historian, manager, consultant, and doula. She serves as Coordinator of *Escritório de Projetos Esmeralda* (Emerald Projects Office) and is a member of the cultural hubs *Casa Preta Amazônia* (Black House Amazon) and *#QuilomboDiMaria*.

Assembly to approve the Statute of the Collective that formalizes itself as a community association, March 2024. Photo: Paulo Gabriel.

that sustain us. Acknowledging this limitation is a vital step toward restoring our connection with the natural world – not through a logic of control, but through attentive listening, belonging, and deep respect!

From the ancestral knowledge that guides us in facing climate crises, emerges a field of wisdom that, when shared ethically and respectfully, can offer powerful and resilient pathways. Among these, we highlight the exploration of the human body's regenerative capacity – across its physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental layers – as a core axis for re-enchanting life. Recognizing and activating this vital force that dwells in the body is an educational and sensitive process – not built through linear or objective methods, but through circular, spiral movements, always in dialogue with an ancestral temporality that dissolves the boundaries between past, present and future. This time, which pulses through bodily and collective memory, teaches us that regeneration is not merely the repair of damage, but the recovery of life's rhythm in communion with the Earth and its forces. It is within this territory of sensing that we can begin to build more rooted and coherent responses to the climate crisis and its impacts on bodies and territories.

The centrality of the body reveals itself, for us, as a sacred crossroads – a strategic point of re-existence where we refuse to allow life to be diminished or trivialized by the multiple crises of our times. On the contrary, we reaffirm the body as a territory of expanded responsibility, capable of sustaining enchantment and the foundations of life in its fullness.

In this sense, living is a political, spiritual and everyday gesture of radical affirmation of existence. From the body, we wage a systemic counteroffensive against the devices of destruction and death that sustain the logics of domination in

this world. It is through the body – not despite it – that we are capable of resisting, regenerating and reinventing livelihoods that are aligned with dignity, beauty and the continuity of life.

The point we have reached in placing the body at the center of our attention and practice is, above all, that of sustaining a confrontation with what we call a pandemic of mental, emotional and spiritual health – a term coined by the coordinator and researcher Carla Antelante – which threatens our bodies, our homes and our collective. We recognize that this crisis is not merely individual, but systemic, and that it demands responses that integrate knowledge, emotions and practices. For this reason, we invest in ongoing formative processes – both internal and external – that foster the development of practices of care, attentive listening and welcoming, across both individual and collective dimensions. These processes not only strengthen the community fabric but also restore the body's original role as a sensitive radar, a living territory and a tool for regeneration. They re-establish each person's connection to their capacity to feel, name and process challenging experiences – so that contexts such as the climate crisis do not become triggers for re-traumatization or widespread psycho-emotional collapse.

The #QuilomboDiMaria Collective is a grassroots organization that was born and continues to resist through the everyday confrontation with environmental racism. It is rooted in lived experience with its impacts for over 30 years – the time that Carla Antelante and her family have lived in the Salvador neighborhood of Cosme de Farias, in the State of Bahia. The Collective's journey is deeply interwoven in the construction of strategies to engage with vulnerable territories, where urban transformations have historically deepened inequalities rather than improved quality of life. In the city's outskirts, one observes the gradual extermination of green areas – a direct consequence of the absence of public policies committed to ecological and equitable urban planning. The lack of tree cover and preservation of microclimates essential for thermal regulation has drastically exacerbated urban heat islands. In Salvador and in Brazil more broadly, a significant rise in temperatures and heat waves[3] is already being observed – with thermal sensations in the peripheries being even more severe, due to the precarious infrastructure and disorganized construction density. This context not only generates discomfort but also results in illness, dehydration, sleep disorders, worsening of chronic diseases, and intensification of mental and emotional suffering. On top of that, rising levels of violence emerge as another consequence of environmental unsustainability and urban disorganization – transforming climate and territory into vectors of exclusion and suffering!

The centrality of energetic, emotional and bodily care constitutes one of the key pillars guiding the effective work of the #QuilomboDiMaria Collective. These forms of care extend beyond the collective space, reaching the homes of each member, their families and their individual contexts. It represents a continuous commitment to harm reduction and to strengthening socio-psycho-emotional skills in the face of daily adversities.

Over the past four years in particular, this perspective has led to the development of community-based protocols of care and safety – ar-

[3] Notes on Heat Waves

A report from Climate Central, an American meteorological monitoring organization, indicates that the capital of Bahia has the fifth-highest temperature increase in the entire country, compared to the historical average. Source cited in Correio da Bahia in March 2024: https://aloalobahia.com/notas/salvador-e-a-quinta-cidade-mais-aquecida-do-pais-nos-ultimos-tres-meses-revela-estudo?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Studies on the increase in heat waves in Brazil. Heat waves: the impacts of the 'silent emergency.' Deaths attributable to high temperatures may be greater than those caused by landslides. https://www.gov.br/mcti/pt-br/acompanhe-o-mcti/noticias/2025/03/ondas-de-calor-os-impactos-da-2018emergencia-silenciosa2019?utm_source=chatgpt.com

ticulating *buen vivir* practices with therapeutic, social and political dimensions of self-care and mutual care. Forged through the lived experience of collective life and the urgencies of the territories – whether traditional or peripheral – these protocols not only reinforce the collective's internal bonds but have also become tools for territorial advocacy.

The mission of #QuilomboDiMaria, in this sense, is to equip and share this knowledge within spaces that genuinely uphold the principles of community health, guiding them through an endogenous logic of care – rooted in the specificities of ancestral lineages, cosmoperceptions, and the unique needs of each territory!

All along this journey, #QuilomboDiMaria came to understand itself as a collective whose role also includes research, the construction of knowledge, and learning processes in the formulation of community-based public policies. Moreover, it recognized itself as a community composed of many smaller communities – represented by the families of its members.

Community public policies take on greater relevance within the collective as a counter-hegemonic logic against what structural and environmental racism systematically denies to the peripheries and the so-called "minorities" – in truth, the Afro-Indigenous majorities in Brazil and Latin America, as well as all original peoples across the planet: the authorship of a strategic, political, and organizational thought rooted in *buen vivir*. This logic contrasts with the prevailing perspective, in which the State often treats these populations merely as respondents to official public policies – policies that are shaped by exclusionary bureaucratic processes detached from the lived realities of communities!

At this moment – advancing toward the written formulation and institutionalization of its community protocols as legitimate community policy – the #QuilomboDiMaria Collective moves toward the symbolic milestone of its seventh anniversary, to be celebrated in March 2026. For us, reaching this first seven-year cycle is far more than marking a date: it is the reaffirmation of a cycle of continuity, of constant renewal. #QuilomboDiMaria is not just a collective – it is a movement, a living organism in perpetual transformation, pulsing with the memory, struggle, affection and wisdom of its members and the territories that sustain it.

Internal care meeting, 2024. Photo: Luís Soarez.

Its trajectory, marked by itinerancy and the active listening of the contexts in which it operates, reveals that there is no true care without deep bonds – nor legitimate transformation without movement! Amid the multiple crises of our time, we continue to weave paths of re-existence that are both possible and necessary – where health is understood as a living relationship between body, territory, ancestry and social justice!

The call for our 7-Year Celebration Congress emerges from this place: it is a call for more people, collectives and territories to unite in the construction of community public policies – where

health and culture are not treated as separate spheres but as integrated and fundamental dimensions for the collective reclaiming of our bodies, our stories, and – though we cannot foresee our futures – we may, at the very least, learn to broaden and better inhabit our present.

Race, Gender and Territory: Young Women Confronting the Climate Crisis

Marcela Toledo[1], Mariana de Paula[2] and Mariana Galdino[3]

In the second half of 2024, the *Instituto Decodifica* engaged in a partnership with Hivos Latin America to develop a project called *Manas – Jovens Lideranças por Justiça Climática* (Sisters – Young Leaders for Climate Justice), which is a training initiative focused on citizen data generation and on strengthening the socio-environmental awareness of black peripheral 16-24 year-old girls from the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region. These young women led all stages of the project – from choosing the research methodology to drafting the final report. Conducted through in-depth interviews, the research addressed themes such as connection to territory, ancestral practices and environmental justice. Importantly enough, citizen data generation is grounded in the active participation of marginalized populations in the creation, analysis and use of data for decision-making and actions that directly affect their communities.

Participant narratives revealed a deep emotional bond with the land, water and ecosystems, often associating them with memory, spirituality and ancestry. Many described the environment as a place of origin, a home and a refuge. At the same time, anthropocentric views also emerged, framing the environment as a resource for human well-being. This diversity of views reflects both the influence of the urban context – which limits direct contact with nature – and the effects of socio-environmental inequality and fast-paced routines that reduce this contact to occasional leisure.

In times of climate emergency, the most powerful responses come from backyards, community spaces and traditional knowledge systems. Women from the Global South have long sustained resistance practices through ancestral knowledge – ecological observation, spirituality, medicinal herbs and community care. Initiatives such as CURE (*Coletivo Urbano de Ervas* – Urban Herbs Collective) based in Rio de Janeiro's North Zone and led by an Indigenous woman, have had a strong impact in this space. By cultivating and sharing medicinal herbs in urban areas, the collective revives the wisdom of traditional healers

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[2] Mariana de Paula is Co-founder and Executive Director of Instituto Decodifica. She holds a degree in Production Engineering from UNIRIO (Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro), with specializations in management and organizational knowledge. She previously served as coordinator of BNDES Garagem and founded the coalition "O Clima é de Mudança" . She is a fellow of the BMW Foundation and the Columbia Women's Leadership Network, in addition to serving as a board member for the Rio de Janeiro City Council and the Racial Equity Committee of the Rio de Janeiro Public Defender's Office.

[3] Mariana Galdino is Co-founder and Advocacy Coordinator at Instituto Decodifica. She is currently pursuing a Law degree at UERJ (State University of Rio de Janeiro) and holds a specialization in Project Management from FGV (Getulio Vargas Foundation). She is currently serving as a board member for the Rio de Janeiro City Council and is a member of the networks A Ponte and Mulheres Negras Decidem (Black Women Decide). She works with the coalition "O Clima é de Mudança" ("The Climate is Changing"), focusing on racial, gender, and climate justice, as well as territorial rights.

Manas pesquisadoras

and faith practitioners, while connecting health, spirituality and food sovereignty. In territories like *Quilombo Branco de São Benedito* and the Kalunga Women's Memory House, women practice sustainability through techniques such as natural dyeing and recycling, merging ancestral knowledge, income generation and environmental care.

These forms of knowledge traverse generations, linking matriarchal leadership with the emergence of young leaders like the *Manas*, who advocate for environmental education grounded in community memory and Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions. That is not alternative knowledge – it is actually an ensemble of ancestral technologies that may live up to the climate crisis through coexistence with the Earth, collective memory and care.

Community organizing for territorial protection begins by recognizing local knowledge. The *Manas* project experience shows that peripheral youth are capable of proposing solutions and organizing collective actions based on their lived realities. According to the participants, environmental education must be territorialized, accessible and emancipatory – not just informative. It is a collective process of listening, engaging in dialog and exercising protagonism, grounded in citizen data generation and in acknowledging local culture and wisdom as a legitimate source of both insight and solutions.

They emphasize the importance of valuing popular knowledge of their own territories and listening to their demands – connecting climate action with fundamental rights such as health, adequate food, leisure, well-being and *buen vivir*! They also stress the need for community organizing to include an intersectional approach that recognizes inequalities across gender, race, class and territory, and promotes the participation of historically marginalized groups.

Gender inequality also shapes local responses to crises. Led by *Instituto Decodifica*, the *Retratos das Enchentes* (Flood Portraits) project revealed that black women are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events. Focus groups conducted with women in Rio de Janeiro and Recife found that black women are especially vulnerable to the impacts of flooding – due to where they live and to the care burdens they carry. They are the first to respond, to care for others, and to organize support networks. Yet, their leadership remains undervalued in public policy, especially in regard to effective care strategies for these women and their communities. These focus groups underscored the need to recognize

and include this knowledge and experience as part of climate adaptation strategies, ensuring the active presence of women in disaster planning and response efforts.

As the *Manas* highlighted, community organizing is strengthened by the value placed on local knowledge and critical environmental education. During the training sessions, participants proposed a "Future Vision" for their communities: one in which education does not treat people as passive recipients of information, but as agents of transformation. They called for environmental education starting in early childhood, integrated to the school curriculum and extended beyond the classroom by offering public workshops held in squares, community gardens and collective dialogue. They envision an education rooted in the territories and informed by Afro-Brazilian traditions, healthy eating practices, embodied knowledge and connection to the land. This vision is guided by a strong sense of belonging, ancestral memory and the urgent need to cultivate a transformative and active youth.

They also pointed to the urgency of structural change: public policies with defined budgets, community input, genuine public participation, and intersectoral coordination among health, education and urban planning.

A desirable future is one in which climate justice is taken seriously at the local level – not only during international events such as the COP. A future in which the protagonism of *favelas* and peripheries is respected and incorporated into climate strategies through an intersectional lens that reflects the realities of gender, race, class and territory!

From the voices and experiences of the *Manas*, it becomes clear that peripheral and traditional territories are not only spaces of vulnerability – they are spaces of power, where concrete solutions are already being constructed! These young women demand a future in which they can fully exercise their rights to the city and to *buen vivir* – and to remain in their territories with dignity! More than that, they affirm that this future has already begun – built by them, it is now in need of recognition, support and funding.

Amid climate extremes, the actions of women from the Global South reveal that it is through care, memory and collectivity that we keep the Earth alive.

Climate Forum

Peripheral Waste Pickers and Climate Justice: Knowledge, Resistance and the Care Economy in Times of Crisis

Nanci Darcolléte

In Brazil's urban peripheries, women waste pickers constitute a social group whose work goes far beyond economic survival. Often informal and undervalued, their labor is embedded in complex dynamics involving care, environmental sustainability, territorial defense and daily resistance, given the multiple dimensions of the climate crisis.

Through the collection and sorting of recyclable materials, these women not only ensure their families' livelihoods but also play a strategic role in the circular economy and the mitigation of environmental impacts. Yet their leadership and contributions are rarely acknowledged in public policy design or in dominant narratives surrounding sustainable development and climate justice.

Living in territories historically marked by socio-environmental vulnerability – with limited access to infrastructure, sanitation, healthcare and transportation – these women experience the impacts of climate change in particularly acute ways. These transformations manifest in the rising costs of basic needs – food, energy, water, medication – and in the intensification of extreme events such as floods, droughts and landslides.

The everyday practices of these women reveal a deep relationship with local ecosystems and with traditional knowledge, often inherited through family and community practices. Their understanding of natural cycles, use of medicinal plants and observation of weather patterns as well as a spirituality rooted in the land represent ways of reading and acting upon the territory that stand in contrast to conventional technocratic solutions.

These forms of knowledge give rise to adaptation and resilience strategies that range from rainwater harvesting and household composting to the mobilization of solidarity networks to confront scarcity and precarity.

Their work is also shaped by a gendered perspective that strongly influences their responses to crisis. The sexual division of labor places them as primary caregivers for the children, the elderly and the sick – roles made even more difficult in the context of climate and economic instability! At the same time, this centrality of care positions them as informal leaders in their communities, organizing collective cleanups, environmental awareness campaigns, community gardens, urban reforestation projects and the defense of common goods.

In the face of climate emergency, these women articulate visions of the future rooted in dignity, food sovereignty, access to housing and recognition of their practices. Their perspectives incorporate an ethical and political understanding of care, grounded in the belief that responding to the climate crisis requires a deep restructuring of social, economic and ecological relations. As the framework of climate justice proposes, it is not enough to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without addressing the structural inequalities that render some bodies and territories more vulnerable than others.

If we are to more clearly understand the role of peripheral waste picker women in the climate agenda, we will certainly have to recognize their knowledge systems, strengthen their collective organizations and integrate their experiences into public policies for adaptation and just transition. They are not merely victims of the climate crisis – they are key agents for the construction of sustainable alternatives rooted in care, solidarity and respect for life in all its forms.

MANDÍ: 10-Year Retrospective Version

Dalissa Cabral[1] and Lígia da Paz[2]

Living and existing in Amazonian cities is intrinsically linked to the rivers – this is where our story begins. In 2016, a group of young women, still university students at the time, came together driven by the desire to spark change in the relationship between people, water and urban life.

Over our first years, through targeted activities, we directly impacted **938 people** through our projects and events, while also reaching more than **43,000** people via **digital** platforms. As our work expanded, we felt the need to strengthen our internal structure. In 2020, during the painful and challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, we challenged ourselves further and officially became a non-governmental organization. This formalization aimed to better organize our efforts and chart a new course toward regional outreach and engagement with new, previously unexplored agendas: climate change and women's leadership.

That same year, **we began our climate action journey** through the launch of Piracema – Mul-

1st Special Session on Climate Change - Belém City Council

1 Dalissa Cabral is an advertising professional and communication manager at Organização Mandí. She holds a degree in Social Communication from the University of the Amazon (Universidade da Amazônia). With over six years of experience in environmental communication, she is an advertising professional who works at the intersection of art, culture, and the environment. For the past four years, she has been working at Organização Mandí, with the mission of designing and planning activities that foster reflections on the territory through its waters.

2 Lígia da Paz, a native of Pará state, is a socio-environmental activist, holds a Sanitary and Environmental Engineer degree from UFPA, an MBA in Project Management from USP, and a Master›s degree in Sustainable Use of Natural Resources (IFRN). She currently serves as Administrative Director of Mandí, where she focuses on basic sanitation and climate change agendas in urban contexts. She works with social mobilization, project management, advocacy, and research, conducting studies on sustainability indicators for urban watersheds, ESG monitoring for public sanitation management, and the impact of climate change on access to water.

Action on the banks of the Tucunduba River, Belém

tipliers Program. This initiative aimed to share tools for critical environmental education and social mobilization around basic sanitation and climate change, engaging **25 young people** aged 18 to 20 from across the state of Pará in our **first** free, **online training**. The project was awarded the **Green Diplomacy Environmental Award**, granted by the Delegation of the European Union, the Embassy of Portugal in Brazil, and Camões – Portuguese Cultural Center in Brasília.

Building on that experience and with the goal of further advancing the climate agenda in Belém while strengthening women's participation in political debate, we launched a new project that led to the creation of the Jandyras Network. This initiative marked a turning point for Mandí, not only by connecting different fields of action but also by uniting women committed to the defense of their territories and gaining recognition for our organization.

The Jandyras Network emerged in 2021 from the Environmental Articulators Network project, designed **to strengthen and expand women's participation in Belém's environmental policy discussions**. The process began with a free online training led by Mandí for **40 women** – mostly non-white, aged 18 to 35 – from the Belém Metropolitan Region. Notable achievements include the creation of **Belém's Climate Agenda** (2021) and the inclusion of the proposal to establish a **Municipal Climate Change Forum in Belém's 2022–2025 Multi-Year Plan** (PPA).

This process culminated in a historic milestone: in collaboration with *Coletivo Moara* and *Clima de Política*, we launched the Municipal Climate Change Forum of Belém in 2023, making Belém **the first capital in the Brazilian Legal Amazon to establish such a forum**. Since then, the Jandyras Network has operated autonomously, with approximately **six active women** continuing to lead and influence the climate agenda beyond Pará's capital.

Mandí continues to **work** closely with **women, youth and urban peripheral communities**. Along these lines, we are currently empowering and training a new network of girls aged 16 to 24 to lead inclusive climate actions and influence equitable climate policies in their territories. To date, we have conducted **five training programs**. Across all our initiatives, approximately **2,215 people have been directly impacted**, we've produced **118 educational media materials**, mobilized **57 youth members in our networks**, reached around **453,489 accounts** on digital platforms, and currently participate in five regional networks and coalitions.

After nearly ten years, Mandí has finally secured a physical space. For the first time, we have rented fixed headquarters to accommodate our team, safeguard our history and materials, and – most importantly – enhance our capacity for organizing and training with greater infrastructure and stability. Our headquarters now serves as a hub for political and emotional connection in Belém, hosting not only Mandí's activities but also initiatives by partner organizations, collectives and social movements in the region.

From the source to the outflow of all our activities lies our desire to reframe the relationship between water and cities. Our thematic pillars promote dialogue, the inclusion of diverse social actors, active listening, appreciation for multiple forms of knowledge and practice, and the collaborative and participatory construction of solutions for our territory.

Through our projects and initiatives, we aim to **influence improvements in sanitation indicators in major municipalities of the**

Brazilian Legal Amazon, with a focus on **social justice and urban resilience to climate change**. We pursue this mission through four core approaches: educational experiences, social mobilization, political advocacy and the production of local knowledge.

Our journey follows the rivers – after all, they are the heart of our city! They are life, livelihood, transportation, food, and even home, making the entire city our collective dwelling. **To speak of rivers is to speak of territorial rights and resilience, basic sanitation, climate, education, urban mobility, culture and leisure**. And on this course, we continue to believe in the power of collective movement – especially one led by women!

Mandí meeting.

Women, Climate and Territory: Rubber Tappers

Angélica Mendes, Hannah Lydia and Angela Mendes

Before resisting, denouncing, planting, or preserving... we are born.

And being born – by the riverbank, in the heart of the forest, among boiled cloths and whispered prayers – is a sacred act. No one is born alone. Life begins in the hands of another woman. Midwives, umbilical mothers, milk mothers! Names that carry ancestral gestures passed down through generations. The umbilical mother was the one who cut the cord. The milk mother was the one who nursed when a mother's breast was not enough. And among them, among so many others, an invisible network was formed to sustain the community. A web made of care, knowledge and presence. A child is born, and so is a network – of affection, protection, and support!

This invisible web, which binds body, territory and memory together, is woven by women's hands.

For a long time, this network was what kept Amazonian extractivist communities standing. A force that came through tending crops, raising children and looking after the elderly, and through the preservation of ancestral knowledge. But also through community organizing, education and struggle.

How could we forget women like Dona Conda, a grassroots teacher who taught hundreds of rubber tappers to read and write deep in the Amazon rainforest?

Petite, kind and resolute. She taught with a firm hand by lamplight. She turned her students' words and drawings into teaching materials. She planted words in the heart of the forest.

These women have long sustained not only their households, but also the forest, the climate, and their livelihoods. They are the ones who harvest, manage, heal and preserve – who defend the land with both body and spirit! And yet, many do not see themselves as "workers" or "defenders."

Patriarchal society still claims that only "hard labor" or formal negotiation counts as real work. As if what they do were not part of the struggle!

But the truth is different.

Women have always been on the front lines.

They just rarely appear in the photos – or sign the documents!

It was a woman, Valdiza Alencar, who left the rubber forest on her own in search of knowledge, and went on to found the Rural Workers' Union of Brasiléia.

Her legacy crossed generations and now lives on in the hands of Francisca Bezerra dos Santos, who currently chairs the Union and trains many others – both inside and outside the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve.

They do not resist alone. They resist in a network: as mothers, midwives, educators and leaders.

As global climate collapses and territories come under constant threat, it is women who, in their daily lives, build alternatives.

They organize, they plant, they speak out.

They keep spirituality and knowledge alive.

They are still holding the world together – with their bare hands.

Wherever the forest stands tall, there is a woman in struggle.

And the long-overdue visibility of these women's leadership is the seed of a possible future.

Climate Change Impacts the Work of Indigenous Midwives

Robson Baré

Climate change has deeply affected the work of midwives in Indigenous territories, impacting not only maternal and infant health but also the cultural practices and traditional ways of life of these communities. Indigenous midwives play a vital role in prenatal, childbirth and postpartum care, relying on ancestral knowledge passed down through generations. However, extreme climate events such as prolonged droughts and intense floods have disrupted natural cycles and the environmental conditions needed for these practices. The scarcity and contamination of drinking water sources hinder access to essential resources for hygiene and childbirth care.

Dineva Kayabi, Treasurer Coordinator of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) and a member of the Kaiabi people, emphasizes that food insecurity is also a major concern:

"Access to the city worries me a lot; it disrupts our food systems. Yes, we do have traditional food, but with everything happening in our territories today, people find it easier to buy food instead."

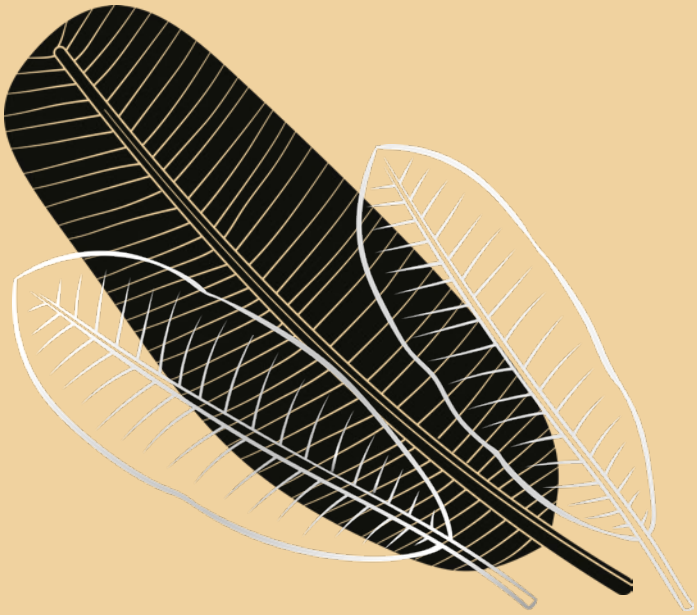
This disruption is directly linked to childbirth outcomes, with noticeable increases in miscarriages, the birth of babies with disabilities, and premature deliveries. Such outcomes may also be caused by pesticides that poison rivers flowing through Indigenous lands, close to farming areas, and by toxic waste from illegal mining activities—such as the mercury contamination found in the breast milk of Munduruku Indigenous women!

Dineva also reflects on how climate change is disturbing Indigenous peoples' way of life:

"There's the ecological calendar that we've always followed through rainfall patterns and the blooming of plants. But with climate change and deforestation, we lose track. The rain no longer comes at the right time, and sometimes crops don't ripen when they should. This throws our entire calendar off balance."

She further highlights that Indigenous women are caretakers of life in their territories. They actively think about the collective health of their villages and lands, and they co-create strategies with organizations to improve women's quality of life during pregnancy and beyond. She concludes with a powerful reminder of their symbiotic relationship with the environment:

"For us, water is life. Without water, there is no life. The Earth is our mother, and that's why we must take care of her."



INTER NATIONAL CASES

The Earth Speaks and the City Listens: a Story of Reconnection

Ana Carolina Benítez[1]

Quintais produtivos, Colômbia.

Sometimes, all it takes is a closer look to truly understand the value of things. For Natalia Luna, that moment came when she reconnected with her roots.

Born in the southern Colombian town of Nariño, Natalia grew up surrounded by the peasant and Indigenous wisdom passed down from her grandparents. Although she went on to study chemical and biological engineering and began her career as a coffee quality analyst, it was her direct connection to rural life that introduced her to another kind of science – the one that sustains life through relationships.

AN ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURAL MODEL

That revelation came through her involvement with the network of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), an innovative and deeply human model gaining ground across Colombia. CSAs are built on supportive, direct agreements between farmers and consumers – known as co-farmers – who commit to paying a regular fee, usually monthly, that ensures stable income for farmers throughout the season. In return, they receive fresh local agroecological produce straight from the farm. No middlemen, no by-passes!

This model not only enables better planning and reduced waste, but it also promotes sustainable practices and builds meaningful relationships between those who grow food and those who eat it. Many CSAs even encourage exchanges of letters, postcards and messages between farmers and co-farmers, where they share stories about the land, the climate, the planting cycles and the real value of food. With that, consumption is no longer anonymous. It becomes a living, conscious and transformative act.

[1] Based in Ecuador, Ana Carolina Benítez works as Linking, Learning and Communications officer for the Urban Futures program. She is driven by a commitment to developing real solutions to today's urgent social and environmental challenges. She has a background in teaching and knowledge management, and she uses her experience to foster collaborative learning and to design peer-exchange mechanisms.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN LIFE

Today, as the communications director of the Colombian CSA Network, Natalia is helping spread this alternative model of trade and nourishment as a real solution to systemic challenges: the disconnect between rural and urban life, the volatility of rural incomes, the loss of connection to where food comes from, and unhealthy eating patterns in cities.

What once seemed like a utopia – fair prices, stable incomes, less waste, lasting relationships – is becoming a reality. Young people like Natalia are proving that another way of inhabiting food systems is not only possible, it's already underway.

"Very few of us have the chance to look the person who grows our food in the eye," says one co-farmer. And that shift in perspective is already transforming cities.

CARE, RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY

CSAs are growing in Colombia, shortening food chains, improving rural livelihoods, and offering urban residents healthier, more responsible ways to consume. It's social innovation responding to global challenges with deeply local solutions, grounded in care, mutual responsibility and community.

Natalia belongs to a generation that is no longer afraid of returning to the land or using their knowledge to serve regenerative models. Young professionals who, like her, move fluidly between the ancestral and the urban, between science and emotion!

Her vision is clear: "I imagine an urban future with cities more connected to themselves, to the land and to each other. Cities that make conscious choices, that know what nourishment they get and whom they get it from. Also, a countryside with guarantees, where young people want to stay and can make a good living from their work."

Natalia represents the essence of Hivos' Urban Futures Program: young leaders rooted in their territories who blend knowledge, memory and innovation to transform systems from within. They remind us that the future is not a distant promise, but an active possibility cultivated from the ground up, with intention, meaning and deep roots.

ABOUT URBAN FUTURES

Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the changemakers of today. When nearly half of the world's population are under the age of 30, their perspectives are crucial for shaping policies, economies and societies. As cities confront the growing challenges of food insecurity and climate change, Hivos' Urban Futures program both involves youth and harnesses their ideas and solutions. Through initiatives in ten cities and urban regions in Latin America, Southern Africa and Indonesia, the program provides them with platforms for collective learning, advocacy and action, reinforcing their critical role in shaping urban climate change resilience.

The Climate Care Story from Tunisia: Women Farmers Saving Seeds, Sustaining Futures

Essia Guezzi[1]

CONNECTION TO LAND, WATER AND ECOSYSTEMS

In Tunisia, rural women form the backbone of the agricultural sector. They represent **from 35% to 40% of the agricultural workforce** and make up **over half (50.4%) of the rural population** (INS, 2024). Despite their essential contributions, these women face precarious working conditions and limited land rights. Their connection to the land is not just economic: it is emotional, cultural, and ancestral. In regions such as **Takelsa (Nabeul), Djerba, and Gafsa**, women describe their relationship with the land and water as **a matter of identity, dignity, and survival**.

In places like **Segdoud (Gafsa)**, where access to clean water is a daily struggle and industrial extraction takes precedence over smallholder needs, women farmers view the degradation of natural resources as an **assault on their right to live with dignity**. They are keenly aware that **climate change, water scarcity, and social injustice are interconnected**, and they position themselves on the frontline of resistance and adaptation.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Women farmers in Tunisia rely heavily on **intergenerational knowledge systems** passed down through ancestral and communal practices. In **Djerba**, for example, a woman farmer has successfully conserved **seven indigenous wheat varieties**, relying on local ecological observations and traditional methods of crop selection adapted to Tunisia's drylands.

These women use **ash and natural smoke to preserve seeds**, a method known across the region for keeping indigenous seeds viable across seasons. They practice **crop rotation, intercropping, and dryland farming**, techniques adapted to Tunisia's semi-arid climate. These practices are not only rooted in ecological wisdom but also reflect a profound **respect for biodiversity and land stewardship**.

Their work is a living archive of ecological memory. By **saving seeds, processing local herbs, and producing traditional condiments** like the award-winning **Harissa** made by the GDF in Baddar/Takelsa, they resist the industrial homogenization of food systems.

PROTECTING TERRITORIES

In the face of climate uncertainty and marginalization, Tunisian women farmers are self-organizing into **formal and informal structures**. One notable example is the creation of the ***Groupement de Développement Agricole Féminin*** **(GDF) in Baddar/Takelsa**, bringing together over **170 women farmers**. These women collaborate to **conserve indigenous seeds**, **share farming techniques**, and **co-produce value-added products** that strengthen both their incomes and local food sovereignty.

[1] Essia Guezzi is a climate justice advocate from Tunisia. She coordinated the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program in Tunisia, working with movements, civil society, and artists to advance climate justice, gender equality, and civic rights through inclusive and creative approaches.

Female farmer from southern Tunisia. Photo: Nomado8

In **Segdoud (Gafsa)**, women have formed their own cooperative to **promote local produce, advocate for equitable access to water**, and **build solidarity with other southern farmers**. They actively participate in local fairs, networks, and training sessions, creating **bottom-up solutions to climate challenges**. These community-based responses reflect a **feminist agroecological vision** rooted in collective care for land, seeds, and people.

GENDER ISSUES

While gendered labor divisions often confine women to invisible or unpaid agricultural roles, these same roles have positioned them as **key players in adaptation and resilience**. Women are the primary actors in **seed preservation, household food security, and ecological farming practices**.

Yet, they continue to face **systemic exclusion from decision-making spaces** and limited access to land. In Tunisia, **only a small fraction of women hold legal ownership of agricultural land**, despite their active labor contributions (FAO, 2011; GLTN, 2020). This inequality undermines their autonomy and resilience.

Despite these structural barriers, women have become ***de facto* environmental leaders**, organizing around agroecology, sustainable transformation of farm products, and climate education. Through training on **climate adaptation, sustainable practices, and market access**, they are not just adapting – they are **transforming the system from below**!

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE IN FACE OF CLIMATE CRISIS

Tunisian women farmers aspire to a **just ecological transition** grounded in **sovereignty, dignity, and intergenerational equity**. Their vision is not just about survival – it's about **thriving**! They want policies that **recognize their expertise**, **ensure access to land and water**, and **support agroecological alternatives** that respect traditional knowledge.

They believe that **climate justice must go hand in hand with gender justice**. Whether it is through the **production of local Harissa from indigenous seeds**, or the **preservation of cereal diversity in Djerba**, or the **fight for clean water in Segdoud**, their everyday actions are blueprints for a resilient, feminist, and locally rooted future.

These women do not wait for change – they **create it with their hands, seeds, and solidarity**! Their care for the land is a **care for humanity**, and their stories are a powerful call to **reclaim resources, narratives, and rights** in the climate era.

Women from Oued Sbeyhia: Guardians of Land, Water, and Ecosystems

Essia Guezzi[1]

CONNECTION TO LAND, WATER AND ECOSYSTEMS

Women in the Gafsa region, especially in the rural and agricultural communities of Oued Sbeyhia, embody a profound and multifaceted connection to their environment. For these women, the land is not just a physical space but a living heritage intertwined with their identity, culture, and survival. Their relationship to water sources – whether seasonal streams, wells, or traditional irrigation channels – is both emotional and practical. They view the natural cycles of rainfall, drought, and harvest as rhythms that govern life itself. Environmental degradation, such as soil erosion, water scarcity or pollution, is experienced not only as loss of resources but as an assault on their dignity, autonomy, and the future of their families. This connection fuels a deep sense of responsibility to protect and restore the fragile ecosystems that sustain them.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Women in Oued Sbeyhia are custodians of invaluable traditional knowledge, passed down through generations, about how to live in harmony with scarce and fragile natural resources. Their expertise in rainwater harvesting techniques – such as small-scale cisterns and terracing – and time-tested irrigation methods ensures that crops receive vital water during dry spells. They maintain and exchange heirloom seed varieties, which are adapted to local conditions and more resilient to climate variability. Their understanding of crop rotation, companion planting, and soil preservation plays a crucial role in maintaining soil fertility and preventing land degradation. This knowledge is not static: women continuously innovate and adapt, integrating ancestral wisdom with new challenges posed by climate change.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES

Beyond individual stewardship, women actively participate in collective efforts to safeguard biodiversity and promote sustainable agriculture. Through seed exchange networks, they strengthen social ties and build resilience by sharing diverse locally adapted seeds that support food sovereignty. Women's involvement in community gardens creates spaces for experimentation with agroecological methods, such as organic fertilization and pest management, which reduce reliance on harmful chemical inputs. Events like JOSAE (*Journées de Sensibilisation à l'Agriculture Écologique*) provide platforms for women to raise awareness, advocate for environmental protection, and educate others about the importance of biodiversity. These gatherings are also vital for reinforcing women's leadership in grassroots environmental movements.

[1] Essia Guezzi is a climate justice advocate from Tunisia. She coordinated the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program in Tunisia, working with movements, civil society, and artists to advance climate justice, gender equality, and civic rights through inclusive and creative approaches.

GENDER ISSUES

Gender roles in Oued Sbeyhia shape how women engage with farming, water management and household care. While these roles often restrict women's access to formal decision-making spaces – such as village councils or agricultural cooperatives – they position women as central actors in practical adaptation strategies. Women lead the protection of seed diversity and manage household food supplies, and they transmit ecological knowledge within families and communities. Their daily labor – tending crops, fetching water, preparing food – makes them uniquely aware of environmental changes and vulnerabilities. Despite systemic exclusion, women's informal leadership in adaptation and resource management is critical to community resilience.

JUST AND EQUITABLE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

Women from Oued Sbeyhia articulate a vision of ecological transition that brings food sovereignty, environmental justice and intergenerational equity to the center. They advocate agricultural and environmental policies that recognize their contributions and respect their rights. Their vision includes securing land tenure, improving access to water and agricultural inputs, and promoting sustainable farming practices that protect biodiversity and ecosystem health. They emphasize the importance of integrating gender perspectives in policy frameworks to ensure that women's knowledge, leadership and needs inform decisions at local, regional and national levels. Ultimately, these women aspire to a future where their communities thrive in balance with nature, where cultural traditions and ecological integrity are preserved, and where young generations inherit a healthier, more just environment.

The Care-Climate case from Zambia: Women against climate change, caring for humanity

Mangiza Chirwa[1]

Women in Zambia face a disproportionate burden from climate change due to their reliance on natural resources and their roles in agriculture, water collection, and caregiving. According to reports, women make up an estimated range of between 45% to 80% of small-scale farmers in Zambia. Therefore, in cases of droughts and floods, they are more affected as their livelihoods are threatened leading to food insecurity and economic hardship. Further, climate change has intensified deforestation and water shortages making women, particularly those in rural areas, have to walk long distances to find firewood, water, and food. This increases their exposure to health risks and gender-based violence. The VCA partners in Zambia have been providing support to women through organizing them into cooperatives and training in adaptation skills in agriculture by promoting agroecology and in energy by promoting use of traditional cook stoves that do not require firewood.

Due to lack of knowledge, some rural households believe that climate change is a result of non-adherence to spiritual beliefs and superstition and therefore a punishment. Therefore, in trying to combat climate change effects, they evoke ancestors to intervene. Besides this, various traditional practices are passed on from generation to generation by preserving and using traditional practices in ensuring food security and biodiversity. Women act as custodians of native seeds, passing them down through generations and using them in sustainable farming practices. They preserve seeds by using ashes and smoke from cooking fires to prevent seeds from rotting. These techniques help maintain seed viability for future planting seasons. Indigenous seeds are often more resilient to local climate conditions as they conform to the natural biodiversity in the communities. Recently, there have been a mushrooming of projects with support from local and international NGOs on promoting women-led community seed banks as a way of building smallholder farmers access to reliable seeds.

The government has realized the need for women empowerment programs as key in addressing local climate adaptation. Thus, they have set up a policy framework called the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP). This national framework ensures that climate policies are gender-responsive, promoting women's participation in sustainable agriculture, water security, and disaster risk reduction. It has ensured women participation at local level in leading community-driven efforts to protect their territories against climate change. Various initiatives aimed at sustainable development, ecosystem restoration, and financial support for women-led environmental projects have been supported. These initiatives promote knowledge transfer by facilitating platforms where women teach younger generations how to farm, prepare land, and preserve seeds, ensuring that traditional ag-

[1] Mangiza Chirwa is a trained policy analyst and researcher working as a project Manager at Hivos Southern Africa. She has been working in the development sector for over 20 years on various local and international projects on climate change and food systems. Her expertise include promoting diversified income sources for vulnerable populations, especially women, to mitigate the effects of climate change, sustainable food systems, governance, informality through multi-stakeholder processes.

ricultural knowledge continues to benefit future farmers.

Women's adaptation strategies are deeply rooted in traditional knowledge, community collaboration, and innovative practices. Being the primary caregivers and responsible for food security and nutrition at household level, traditional women teach to grow drought-resistant crops and practice off-season farming, and use organic composting to maintain soil fertility. These practices are passed on to the younger generations as methods for catering to food security at household level. Also, women are primarily responsible for collecting water, and thus become key players in water conservation efforts. They adopt rainwater harvesting and community-led irrigation systems to ensure water availability during dry seasons. In some areas women-led initiatives help communities prepare for climate-related disasters by organizing early warning systems and reconstruction efforts, ensuring better resilience against floods and droughts. They also support alternative livelihoods by supporting community cooperatives in economic empowerment programs such as aquaculture interventions. This has improved women's access to resources, technology, and climate-resilient practices and enhances women's economic independence by strengthening their ability to adapt.

The hope for the women in Zambia to be more resilient to climate change depends on the will for sustainable development. This has already been widely accepted by government and now brought momentum for various stakeholders to make women leaders in environmental conservation efforts and climate feminist capacity building efforts. Various local organizations support women's leadership in combating climate change and have strategies focusing on empowering women leaders, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing community resilience. Various initiatives in promoting women participation in Zambia's transition to clean energy will further create economic opportunities for many women. Further, there is also momentum in advocating for policies that integrate gender-responsive climate solutions, ensuring that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Guardians of the Land: Kenya women Leading in Climate Action

Ndinda Maithya[1]

Gulleys in Makueni County

Despite Kenya's 2010 Constitution provisions granting all citizens equal rights to land ownership, many women in Kenya are still prevented from owning land or movable assets. Yet, they are entrusted with the care and management of these very resources. According to the Kenya Demography and Health Survey 2022, only 25% of women own agricultural land, even though they constitute 80% of the agricultural labor force, in addition to their traditional and unpaid responsibilities in the society.

This imbalance undermines women's ability and willingness to invest in climate action. Most climate solutions – like tree planting, soil conservation, and water harvesting – require long-term commitment and secure land tenure. The intersection of gender inequality, restricted access to land and natural resources, and climate change has dire implications, threatening women's livelihoods, health, safety, and security.

Climate change in Kenya has led to rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, flash floods, shrinking water sources and unpredictable weather patterns. These environmental changes have heightened resource conflicts – not just among communities, but also between humans

[1] Ndinda Maithya is a dedicated gender champion with a strong focus on grassroots and minoritized communities. She is experienced in community organizing and evidence-based advocacy, particularly around land rights, sustainable livelihoods, and climate justice. At Hivos East Africa, she serves as the Programs Manager for *Voices for Just Climate Action*, an initiative that strengthens the capacity of local civil society and underrepresented groups to lead as creators, facilitators, and advocates of inclusive, community-driven climate solutions.

and wildlife – especially in fragile ecosystems where access to water and pasture is vital. The burden to ensure there is peace and equitable sharing of these resources befalls on women, as they are the majority users of these resources.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Kenyan women possess a rich heritage of ecological observation and traditional practices, passed down through generations. While they may not use scientific terminology, they clearly recognize and articulate local climate changes – from changes in seasons and rainfall patterns to more forest fires, flash floods and pest outbreaks, among many other occurrences.

To cope with these changes, women are:

- preserving and exchanging indigenous seeds, using traditional seed-saving methods;
- purifying water with ash to remove visible impurities;
- using local herbs to repel pests and mosquitoes;
- consulting seers and elders (albeit discreetly due to societal taboos) for insights on weather and agricultural cycles.

Though often undervalued or misunderstood, these practices represent a deep and adaptive ecological intelligence rooted in lived experience.

TERRITORIAL PROTECTION

Despite limited resources, women are not passive victims of climate change. They have actively organized to protect their territories and promote environmental stewardship. A compelling example is a group called Joyful Women, in the Makueni County, which has:

- mobilized their community to combat gully erosion by constructing small gabions;
- established a community tree nursery, planting trees along riparian zones to combat soil degradation.

These grassroots actions demonstrate how women can lead local environmental restoration with creativity and determination, even in the absence of formal support or recognition.

GENDER ISSUES

Women's roles as caregivers, food providers and knowledge keepers position them at the heart of community resilience. Despite structural barriers, they have shown remarkable leadership in:

- water conservation and riparian land restoration;
- promoting clean energy through the adoption of improved cookstoves;
- forming economic support systems like *table banking* to fund small-scale water harvesting, kitchen gardens and micro-enterprises. For instance, the Joyful Women, a group comprising 30 members aged between 30 and 75 years, has a revolving fund of €700.

Their resilience strategies are often rooted in traditional knowledge, including:

- seed banking and preservation of drought-resistant crops;
- cultivation of indigenous medicinal plants;
- mentorship and knowledge-sharing with younger women.

Through formal and informal organizing, women foster environmental education, social cohesion and economic resilience.

VISION

Kenyan women envision a future of gender equity and environmental justice. In places like the Mbowe village, in the Makueni County – where they continue to face challenges such as gender-based violence, illiteracy, and lack of land control – their dream is a society where men and women live in harmony and where women's contributions to climate action are recognized and celebrated.

They believe that climate resilience can only be achieved by including the most vulnerable and historically excluded – especially women.

The Joyful Women group with their elected Member of Parliament

Empowered women are key to building adaptive, sustainable and thriving communities in the face of the climate crisis. They also think about supporting their own rise to political leadership. This will ensure that they have someone of their own who can stand up for their causes.

Harvesting equality: rural women cultivating change in Kenya

by Cynthia Omondi[1]

Today I'm headed for Makongo Village, about a hundred kilometers northwest of Nairobi. After an hour or two of punishment on muddy roads cut across rocky terrain, I step out to stretch, gazing at the undulating green hills – a testimony to hard, unseen labor. Women in colorful wraps are bent over their fields, tending to beans, maize and potatoes, their laughter mingling with the chirping of birds.

Then, walking through Makongo, it's once again striking to see how many of the hands tilling the earth are women's. Yet, I wonder, how many of these women own the land they work? How many have a say in the agricultural and climate policies or the land laws shaping their livelihoods?

THE BIGGER PICTURE: WHY IT MATTERS

These are not idle questions. According to *Harvesting Equality: Gender, Governance, Stewardship and Decolonial Futures in Kenyan Agriculture* – a groundbreaking book from Hivos in partnership with Kabarak University Press, SeedChange, and Global Affairs Canada – Kenyan women provide up to 65% of agricultural labor. Yet they remain locked out of decision-making spaces, are denied secure land rights, and are sidelined in access to finance, technology and training.

The book unpacks the deep historical roots of this imbalance, tracing them back to colonial policies that dispossessed communities, formalized male land ownership and pushed women to the agricultural margins. But it doesn't stop at critique. It draws on feminist, ecofeminist and decolonial frameworks to champion women as agents of change, recognizing their unique knowledge systems and their crucial role in building climate-resilient sustainable food systems.

As one quote in the book provocatively goes, "Can we build a just agricultural future while the very people feeding the nation remain excluded and invisible?" That the answer to this question is no, is illustrated by the experiences of Beatrice, Esther and Benadine.

FROM ROCKY SOIL TO ROOTED OWNERSHIP

Beatrice Wangui Mwangi (54), Gilgil, Nakuru County

Nestled in Nakuru County, Gilgil is a semi-arid area with rocky terrain and unpredictable rainfall. It's the kind of place where farming requires grit, strategy and community – qualities that Beatrice Wangui Mwangi embodies to the full extent. "My name is Beatrice Wangui Mwangi, from Langalanga in Gilgil, Nakuru County. I'm a smallholder farmer and a proud custodian of indigenous knowledge. I founded our community seed bank, where we preserve and distribute indigenous seeds, precious genetic material that's often overlooked in modern farming," she began.

[1] Cynthia Omondi is a passionate grassroots storyteller and communications professional dedicated to amplifying community voices across Africa. With a background in journalism, she has authored compelling stories of human interest and produced documentaries featuring resilience, gender advocacy and climate solutions, inspiring action and change. At Hivos, she serves as the Regional Communications Officer, spotlighting the impact of Hivos' work across East Africa.

"In fact, we literally bought soil to start our kitchen gardens," she added with a smile. "Now we sell indigenous vegetables, and they fetch even better prices than the other crops. Saving seeds has not only given us food security, but it's also become our source of livelihood."

What began with a small idea grew into a thriving enterprise. With support from Seed Savers and market linkages, Beatrice and her group formed a Savings and Credit Cooperative. Little by little, she saved consistently. Today, she owns her own piece of land, registered in her name. "There is no big or small money, it's how you plan for it," she said. "Now, no one can dictate how I use my land."

Her story is not just one of resilience but of redefinition, moving from a landless woman to a landowner, leader, and example in her community.

TURNING DROUGHT INTO DEMONSTRATION

Esther Musali Musimi (45), Kitui East

Kitui County is no stranger to the wrath of climate change. Seasonal rivers dry up fast. A missed rainy season here spells disaster: no crops, no water, no livestock feed. For Esther Musali Musimi, a smallholder farmer and community trainer, this reality is deeply personal. "When there's no food, children don't go to school. Everything stalls," she said.

However, Esther now stands as a source of inspiration and practical solutions in her village. "Through agroecology classes, I learned how to make the most of what little we have. For instance, I recycle household water; after a day, I add ash to purify it and then use it to water my kitchen gardens, which are planted in sacks," she explained.

"Because of that knowledge and consistency, I was able to establish a demonstration farm. Today, it supports 10 farmer groups with 178 members. We are now in the third year, and most women in these groups no longer buy vegetables: they grow their own."

"I'm lucky to have joint land ownership with my husband, and that has allowed me to plan better and think long-term. I've started planting fruit trees, and I continue training others in agroecology, because when we share knowledge, we grow stronger together." Esther represents what's possible when knowledge is shared, and land is respected as a resource for generational change.

HOPE IN HOSTILITY

Benadine Kochei (38), Baringo County

"I'm Benadine Kochei from Baringo County. In my community, farming is about survival," she began. "We've faced constant insecurity and banditry. In many cases, men flee to towns, leaving behind women, children and the elderly to fend for themselves. The land is often unclaimed, grazed upon, or fought over. And because of these hardships, we see many young girls pushed into early marriages. FGM is still practiced in some areas, and displacement is a harsh reality for many."

"But I chose a different path. I call myself a change-maker because I believe we can rewrite this story. Through support from local networks and agroecology training, I've mobilized women in my area to start kitchen gardens and diversify their food sources. With farming, women can now afford food and school fees, and begin to reclaim their place in society, despite the insecurity."

Her testimony sheds light on the multiple battles women in Baringo are confronted with, and on how simple, affordable and community-driven agroecology can offer a lifeline.

A MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE

Through our Rural Women Cultivating Change program, Hivos invited women such as Beatrice, Esther and Benadine to share their stories at Kenya's National Agroecology Symposium. And while in most symposiums panels end with

Training in agroecology organized by the Rural Women Cultivating Change program, from Hivos.

probing questions, this time the room fell silent... to then erupt in applause! There were no questions. Only admiration!

The stories of women farmers are a reminder that if agroecology is to succeed, it must be rooted in lived experience. And when women farmers take the mic – not just as beneficiaries, but as changemakers – we move closer to systems that are not only sustainable but truly inclusive. As the symposium concluded, one message rang clear: the future of food in Kenya belongs to those who feed us, and it's time we let them lead.

ABOUT RURAL WOMEN CULTIVATING CHANGE

The Hivos-led Rural Women Cultivating Change program (RWCC) in Kenya supports rural women, female-headed households and gender-based violence survivors. Through the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology, women develop leadership skills and learn to advocate for land rights and reduce gender-based violence. The project partners with local organizations to strengthen climate-resilient food systems, improve women's livelihoods and increase gender equality in rural communities.

Scan the QR code and download a copy of Harvesting Equality:

https://hivos.org/harvesting-equality-a-groundbreaking-call-for-change-in-african-agriculture/

Harvesting Equality is more than a scholarly work; it's a call to action. It invites policymakers, researchers and global citizens alike to rethink how we value women's labor, land and leadership. Through compelling research, vivid case studies and the voices of women from Baringo, Kitui, Nakuru and beyond, the book calls for a reimagined agricultural future – one where women's indigenous knowledge is recognized, their land rights secured and their contributions fairly rewarded.

The missing piece in the clean energy transition

Sheila Oparaocha[1]

I'm honored to write about Fatou. She is a remarkable woman that I have had the privilege of getting to know. Fatou is from Tambacounda, which is a rural town in Senegal. Like me, Fatou is a mother and was also raised in a farm.

Unlike me, however, Fatou does not take her energy supply for granted. When she comes home after a hard day's work, she does not have the luxury of flipping a switch to turn on the lights in her house. The stove that she uses to cook meals for her family has not been seamlessly integrated into the design of her kitchen. Instead, she spends up to 10 hours every week collecting firewood just to meet the basic needs of her family.

When Fatou and I were sharing stories about our children, I was disheartened to hear from her that the clinic where she delivered her four daughters and her two sons had no electricity. And the midwife that attended her had to use a kerosene lamp during her deliveries.

Now, sadly, Fatou is not the only one with that type of background. Her story mirrors the struggles of 2.4 billion people worldwide who have no access to electricity or clean cooking fuels. This is what we refer to as "energy poverty".

Energy poverty leads to the death of 3.2 million people every single year due to diseases caused by exposure to indoor air pollution, which disproportionately impacts women and children. Now, what is also tragic is that, after my 23 years of engagement in intergovernmental processes in the United Nations, I continue to struggle with the fact that when we are not in the room, the harsh realities of women's energy poverty are simply not prioritized – to the extent that they should be in the global political dialogue on sustainable development and climate change! The mainstream narrative envisions a transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, largely driven by the deployment of large-scale renewable energy. This assumes that people already have access to energy and simply need to shift to cleaner and more sustainable alternatives. What it fails to acknowledge is that one in every three individuals on our planet does not have access to any form of modern energy.

So the key challenge that we have – also the key question – is: Why is it that we fail to prioritize women's energy poverty in developing countries, and also fail to recognize it for the global crisis that it is?

This is a question that I have been grappling with for a long time. And I've come to the realization that one of the key reasons is that the energy sector is male-dominated and marginally representative of diverse and inclusive perspectives. Now, why do I say this? Research from the International Energy Agency shows that women account for only 15 percent of the workforce in the energy sector. When it comes to leadership positions, women like myself – that is, women of color – are few and far between. We also know that gender-blind energy policies also contribute to the failure of the prevailing narrative to recognize that it's women like Fatou who are the cornerstones and the agents of change to abolishing energy poverty.

But here's the good news. A revolution is already underway. And this is a revolution that is being spearheaded by women grassroots organi-

[1] Sheila Oparaocha is the International Coordinator and Program Manager of the Hivos-hosted ENERGIA program. During her more than two decades at ENERGIA, Sheila's work has contributed to put gender on the international agenda, inspiring colleagues, partners and stakeholders to advocate for a more gender equal energy sector.

zations. These organizations have been disruptive and are stepping up to lead the way from the current crisis to a sustainable energy future – which is more possible and even closer than many of us realize! These women grassroots organizations embrace an approach that is referred to as *leaving no one behind*. An approach that prioritizes universal access to reliable, affordable, sustainable energy as essential for livelihoods, for adaptation to climate change, and for building resilience.

Now, what does this mean in practice? These initiatives are empowering smallholder women farmers, like Fatou, with decentralized renewable energy technologies. These are technologies such as solar water pumps, mini-grids, clean cooking technologies that are equipping millions of women – who produce, to say the least, 80 percent of the food in developing countries, with clean energy to irrigate their crops, to process their produce, to power agriculture equipment, while that, at the same time, enables them to adapt to climate change crises such as water shortages, and also reduce their reliance on expensive diesel generators!

I'm immensely proud to share that, in no more than 10 years, three women-led organizations – including ENERGIA (my organization), Solar Sister and Frontier Markets – have supported more than 42,000 women entrepreneurs who are operating in underserved markets where commercial distribution networks are inadequate. These women entrepreneurs have already fueled local economies in their communities by providing renewable energy services to over 21 million consumers.

This is testament to the real-time impact and the tangible results that are achievable when women organizations take the lead. For us at ENERGIA, addressing this crisis and this challenge goes beyond providing energy services. A game changer for us has been gathering grassroots women we collaborate with into associations. One rural woman standing alone has limited opportunities to change policies. But forming a group of 200 women leverages their collective

Fatou and the initiative's solar panels

agency to engage in the formal economy, and also to be present in energy decision-making spaces that were previously closed to them. Together, this group of women can articulate their own issues. They can voice their own demands, advocate for themselves and even influence the political landscape, fostering national policies and regulations that champion gender equality.

In order to scale up these transformative impacts, new pathways of financial support that direct intentional investments to grassroots women's organizations are absolutely necessary. It is a scandal that only six percent of climate finance for energy currently goes to address energy poverty. And a mere nine percent of climate sector development finance is tagged for gender equality. Is this really the best we can do to engage women in the energy sector? My response is a clear no. Now, let's think of a transformative energy transition that measures success not only by the supply of energy units, but rather by the significant strides that we make on gender equality and social justice! The energy future that we should all be moving towards is one that calls us to be collectively responsible for ending energy poverty. It is about providing women from developing countries with the opportunities to claim their power as leaders, drivers of a just and inclusive energy transition. For me, the call to action is clear. Let us all be the architects of change, shaping a future where no one is left in the dark, and where women are at the forefront of a brighter, more sustainable world!

HIVOS AND WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women's entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of social and economic change, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Across the globe, women are breaking barriers, leading businesses and transforming industries. Yet they continue to face systemic challenges such as gender discrimination and limited access to resources, to training and to decision-making spaces. Programs like Rural Women Cultivating Change (RWCC), Energizing the Power of Women in Central America, and ENERGIA work to dismantle these barriers by equipping women with the skills, financial resources and the leadership opportunities needed to thrive as entrepreneurs in the renewable energy and sustainable food sectors.

ENERGIA's Women's Economic Empowerment Program supports women entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector who run clean energy businesses or sell clean energy appliances. Acknowledging the multiple challenges women entrepreneurs face, the program has an integrated approach. It provides not only training and individual support, but it also connects women entrepreneurs to suppliers and markets, facilitates capital access, builds partnerships and advocates for gender-responsive policies.

The life of fisherwomen in Indonesia facing the climate crisis

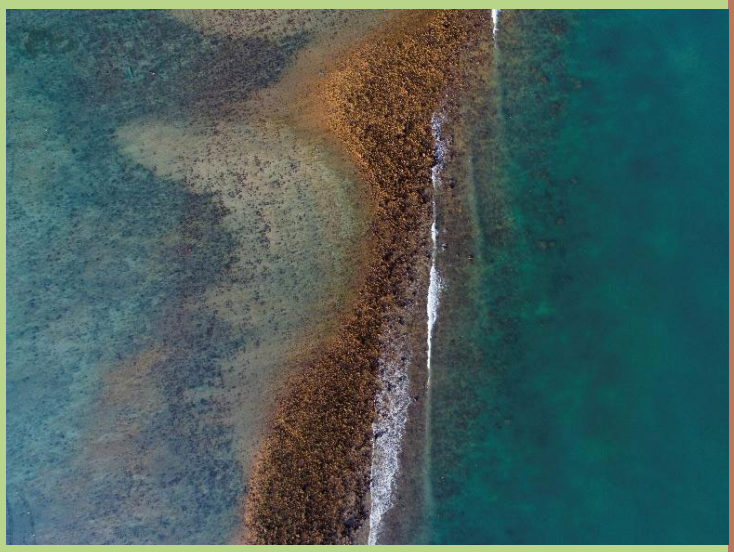
Trisa Lusiandari[1]

In Indonesia, an archipelagic country, marine resources make an important contribution to local rural livelihoods for both food and security. Kupang City, in the East Nusa Tenggara Province, is one of the areas that has become a marketing center for marine fish. Small scale fisheries typically involve men in catching and women in post-harvest, with overlapping roles. Both activities contribute to household livelihoods.

Yet, marine fish and fishers face growing challenges from coastal hazards and climate change. An example is the Seroja Cyclone, which hit the region in 2021. This cyclone is rated in the category of hydrometeorological disaster, which has been the case for all disasters in Indonesia for the past ten years and is frequently triggered by extreme weather, an remarkable impact of the climate crisis.

The severe impacts of climate change are resulting in significant ecological disturbances across this large marine ecosystem. It has forced small scale fishermen to lose their territories and source of livelihood. They have to sail farther because fish have become scarcer, which eventually increases travel costs. Coastal communities also face more frequent and higher tidal floods than before.

Yasinta, a fisherwoman in Kupang City's Pasir Panjang, was a victim of the Seroja Cyclone. Her boat and all the fishing gear were gone due to the disaster, an experience many of her fisherfolks have also been through, causing them to restart their livelihoods from scratch.



Pasir Panjang Region

"It was a difficult situation; however, we must adapt in order to survive. Some of my friends decided to go to Malaysia or Kalimantan to work in palm oil plantation", admitted Yasinta.

The impact of climate change is not gender neutral. In general, livelihoods of women may be disproportionally affected, particularly in coastal communities. The climate crisis has been affecting the overall economy and the income of fishing families; as a result of that, women are most vulnerable to various forms of gender-based violence. Furthermore, for fisherwomen, the economic strain is particularly hard. They are the ones who will try to diversify their income sources by engaging in multiple roles such as peddling goods in the streets and making souvenirs while continuing to fulfill their household responsibilities, and are thus left with multiple burdens.

[1] Trisa Lusiandari is a project officer of *Voices for Just Climate Action* program at Humanis Foundation (affiliated with Hivos) in Indonesia. A professional with social science and international humanitarian affairs education background, Trisa is passionate about building a fairer and more sustainable world.

Yasinta, a fisherwoman from Kupang, in the Pasir Panjang region, serves on the Council of Fishermen United for the rights of fisherwomen and fishing communities.

"As we no longer have a boat, my husband works as a taxi driver, and I switched to sell grilled fish or other marine-based food products along with other women in order to get some income. And I also make chips from seaweed".

Small-scale fishers and other players in that supply chain are highly dependent on marine resources for their livelihood, and they can only rely on inherited local practices to deal with climate change.

"Since I was kid, I often helped my father to plant mangroves and Waru tree (commonly known as the sea hibiscus) on the coast. My father told me these trees are useful as a watershed", said Yasinta who was born into a fisherman family in Pasir Panjang

She felt the benefits of these planting efforts a few decades later, together with other coastal communities. During high tides, her food stall and many boats anchored along the coast were safe because of the sea hibiscus. She continues to apply this invaluable knowledge and those acquired practices that build resilience in a changing climate. Yasinta encourages coastal communities to leave the trees intact – and even to plant more – to protect the community from disasters!

In fact, the sea hibiscus not only minimize the waves but also prevent the coastal area from going dry, and are commonly used by the fishermen as shelter where they can calmly wait for the water to recede.

Even though reality has shown women's significant role and involvement in the fisheries sector, in coastal areas they are often not recognized as fishers because of gender segregation in society and also due to the narrow regulatory definition of the fishing activity. Based on Law N. 7 of 2015 regarding the protection and empowerment of workers in the fishing and saline industries, fishermen are those whose livelihoods involve catching fish. On the other hand, extensive research shows that women are involved in every stage of the fisheries value chain: before, during and after they catch the fish. It is therefore hard for women to be acknowledged as fishing professionals in their national identification card and to access various development programs set up for the fishing community.

Herself a mother of three, Yasinta – and other fisherwomen in Kota Kupang – is currently active in Majelis Nelayan Bersatu (United Fisherfolk's Council) that unites fisherfolk groups in several coastal areas of Kupang City. This association was supported by the SIPIL Coalition under the VCA program, and it actively advocates for fisherfolk rights, including fisherwomen. The Council also helped its members to get the Fisheries Business Actor Card (KUSUKA) issued by Kupang City's Fisheries Department, which also includes fisherwomen. The card provides access to public services for the fisherfolks and fisheries business players.

In order to strengthen her marine protection advocacy efforts, Yasinta has become a volunteer member of Kupang City's sea guards department (RAPALA) since 2024. This committee was formed by the Maritime Security Agency to protect the coast and its marine environment.

For Yasinta, taking care of the environment is not only a care-work role, for care-work is part

of the often-invisible infrastructure of all life. It is largely carried out by women and other marginalised groups, and it involves communities and societies. As such, care-work goes beyond caring for the household; it reaches out to living environments. This kind of work is often performed "in-between spaces" (between fishing, selling and household chores; between work on the sea or in the marketplace; or organizing events and looking after community facilities) and "in-between times" (before and after household or coastal chores). It is clear that care pervades the private and public spheres. For instance, Yasinta often takes care of her 11-year-old son, and she involves him coast clean-up chores as well as in stopping people from littering. She also teaches her husband to make pots out of used clothes.

In their individual capacity and in collectives, women dedicate to their environmental work to help lift the boundaries of the public (community spaces, formal workplaces) and private (home). Therefore, that kind of work is often ignored in formal accounts, and the economic activity is mostly underrepresented. Systemic changes ought to be implemented in order to highlight care-work, which is often determined by gender, ethnicity and class.

The men have their obligations too, which include environmental responsibility and care by providing local climate solutions and making "green" choices.

Yasinta is wishing that women in the Fisherfolks Council continue to speak out about climate change and local initiatives, including adaptation and mitigation, to protect the ecosystem as their main source of livelihood. This includes advocating for fisherfolk rights and their priority issues, so that they can get support from the fisheries service.

Nurturing and fulfilling the basic needs of households and communities is related to caring for both humans and the environment. We should focus on sharing and collectivising care-work at the same time as we strive to meet the environmental goals.

Final Considerations

Paula Franco Moreira[1] and Graciela Rodrigues[2]

This publication sought to provide an intersectional approach between ecofeminism and climate action at the global, national and community spheres, in order to warn that, if they are to be adopted, climate solutions need to include actions that will transform the profound causes of the climate crisis and the inequalities faced by Global South women as well as other minorities.

However complex and diverse the analyses in these chapters and histories, all texts composing this book somehow point at this general and common sense: adopting a perspective that interweaves *ecofeminism* and *climate justice* may lead to the development of local and global climate tools and actions in order to: 1) avoid adding to women and community workloads; 2) refrain from destroying traditional Global South cultures and systems; 3) stop reinforcing the colonial and imperialist influence of the past; and 4) strengthen solutions arising from and out of the Global South and the communities.

As such, the ecofeminist basis underlying articles and case studies in our publication becomes self-evident. Indeed, since the early 1970's, many feminists, particularly the ecological ones ("*ecofeminists*"), have advocated that the environment is a feminist issue. But what is it that renders the environment (or the ecology) a feminist issue? Is there any relation, and what is it, between the domination of women and the domination of nature? How and why is it that recognizing these connections becomes important for feminism? Ecofeminism largely seeks to answer these questions.

We therefore need to think about the many "women-nature" connections, because they present to us a variety of perspectives that will help us understand ecofeminism. So let's recall that, just as there is no single feminism, there is also no single ecofeminism. One of these connections that has been nurturing the most widely disseminated ecofeminist perspective in Brazil (and in other countries) is the responsibility to care for nature that women have taken upon themselves. In popular territories everywhere, this strict relation and the presence of women ahead of the main efforts towards the preservation of nature and also their leadership in situations caused by climate disasters.

A second rationale has connected women's enclosure to the enclosure of nature, and found important links between both denominations, structured as they are by wealth accumulation interests of patriarchalism, widely known to women for quite some time. The patriarchic vision, hegemonic across the world and strength-

[1] Paula liaises Global South women in efforts towards a just, decolonial, inclusive, sustainable and feminist society. She also seeks to increase local climate solutions and urban planning in light of climate justice, and is currently a manager for Hivos Brazil's program *Voices for a Just Climate Action (VAC)*, which strengthens civil society in 9 Global South countries (Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Zambia, Kenya, Tunis and Indonesia) intent on advancing the climate justice agenda. With a degree in Law, Paula holds a PhD in international relations in transnational Global South activist networks (UnB) and a post-doctorate degree in participatory hydroelectric monitoring in the Amazon Basin (from the Federal University of Tocantins in conjunction with the Florida University) and another one in energy planning in light of Human Rights (Unicamp).

2 Besides holding a master's degree in Sociology, with studies in gender, Graciela is the Coordinator of the EQÜIT Institute – Gender, Economy and Global Citizenship; a Co-coordinator of the Latin America Gender and Trade Network; a Coordinator of REBRIP – Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples (since 2020); a Global Coordinator of the IGTN (International Gender and Trade Network. 2006-2010). She is also active in various concertations and networks of the civil society as well as the feminist movement, in Brazil and Latin America, to focus on macroeconomic issues related with globalization, trade and investment agreements, processes of regional integration, BRICS and G20, climate negotiations and others, and their gender impacts.

ened as it has been in recent centuries by capitalism, has been the common outlook on bodies and territories, on women and nature.

Finally, but without exhausting the countless interpretations of the nature-culture relation, so have women been able – as shown in all 17 case studies contained in this publication – to establish harmonious relations with nature as well as to protect natural resources so they can be used by future generations, and to put ancestral knowledge to practice in the fight against climate change.

Furthermore, through the texts in this publication (developed by organized Global South groups of women, Hivos partners), we have sought to underline the ever increasing necessary and undeniable connection between *care* and *climate*. That means care policies and the climate emergency adaptation agenda have to converse, hinged on to each other by means of an engaging agenda. It has come out clear that the so-called care economy plays a central role in the context of climate emergencies, while women's unpaid labor remains free and invisible in public policies across the 7 countries brought to light here. Likewise, neglect of care and human reproduction work is profoundly interweaved with processes of territorial expropriations and with the predatory logic of capital. As such, we have also seen that the climate crisis also comes through as a social reproduction crisis, affecting mostly women's bodies and territories.

The next mandatory step is to have care services recognized as a fundamental need if we are to achieve climate adaptation, and they ought to be included in climate funding. Therefore, we must connect the theme of care economy with climate funding as well as of loss and damage agendas, which will certainly be a theme of discussion during the 30th UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (or *COP 30*) to be held next November in the Brazilian city of Belém. These texts hereby, authored by 27 women from 7 Global South countries, are a robust rationale of needs and demands conducive to the development of paradigm shift proposals to the climate funding system: so that it can be originated from the territories, in light of justice, gender equity and care.

As article #4 here says, there are great opportunities for change. If we are to seize those opportunities, we must overcome inequalities and reinstate a balance between people and nature. This will only be possible through the leadership and responsibility of civil society in the territories and through the enhancement of local climate solutions, particularly those led by women. And through innovation in conjunction with traditional and counter-hegemonic knowledge, with a climate justice approach and strong partnerships towards just climate action, we will have to bring societies with their multiple and transdisciplinary types of knowledge together from the north and the south of the planet.

Alternative forms of fighting the impacts of climate change already exist and are being implemented by racialized Global South women, though they often remain invisible. These practices range from reorganizing community care systems, through using community radios to disseminate weather alerts, to establishing community preservation seed banks based on ancestral techniques, to implementing collective vegetable gardens and to consolidating women's mutual support networks. Swapping creole seeds, for instance, can be a crucial tactic to curb agrobiodiversity losses and food insecurity. This publication is an urgent call for the recognition that solutions to the climate crisis are not restricted to technological innovation, and that they largely depend on ancestral knowledge, on the preservation of biodiversity and on the organizational power of communities that live off and care for the land, and – particularly – on organized Global South women!

Gender equity is a powerful lever for climate resilience. In order to maximize its impact, managers and institutions ought to adopt an approach that will increase women's access to land and proper land titles, to credit and to technology, and they also ought to value the already existing knowledge and community actions. More

than social justice, this is a crucial strategy for systemic transformations that is also included in UN Women's feminist climate justice proposal (2023). For greater impact, managers and institutions ought to primarily adopt a triple approach: increase women's equity-bound access to resources (technology, land, credit); value local knowledge by means of participatory methodologies, thus strengthening capacities that already exist in the communities; and incentivize equitable participation between men and women and all genders in decision forums.

And lastly, we call on policy makers, funders and civil society to adopt these principles in order to ensure that climate funding will really benefit those who are affected by the biggest impacts – particularly Global South women and marginalized communities.

If climate change is here to stay, as populations across the country clearly realize, many women have already become environmental networkers as they liaise around a large number of environmental agendas across many Brazilian states and various other worldwide regions. As we have seen here, with special highlights to women's organizations in the Amazon, such as the Jandyras Network, responsible for the creation of Belém's Municipal Climate Change Forum, Acre's Babassu Coconut Breakers and Rubber Tappers, who look after their households and keep standing forests, or the indigenous women of Baré, who ensure human reproduction through humanized deliveries – as a whole, from south to south, all of them are holding the world together with their own hands.

We are well aware that, here, we are planting many seeds for a possible future!!!

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