



The Global South House at COP30

Lessons, barriers and the path forward

AN INITIATIVE OF



Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South



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1. Background

As a knowledge partner of [the Global South House](#), IIED documented and synthesized the key issues and agendas discussed during its inaugural edition, at the 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), or [COP30](#). IIED's analysis seeks to produce strategic knowledge based on the content, debates, and messages that emerged from the COP30 edition, the Manifesto, and the Global South House partners' contributions.

Guiding questions for the analysis included:

- What do the Global South House partners perceive to be the role, strengths and limitations of global South funds, particularly socio-environmental justice funds, to advance socio-environmental justice?
- How do the Global South House partners perceive, interpret, interact with, and influence the current international financing architecture and its key actors?
- What solutions have been tested by the Global South House partners in advancing the goals of the Manifesto and transforming the international financial architecture? What are lessons learned and key obstacles they encounter?
- What have been the main barriers and challenges to date for the Global South House partners with engaging in the international financing architecture? What changes do they wish to see in their relationship with international financial architecture?

2. Context

As the world faces multiple, overlapping crises, the people and communities most affected by climate, environmental, social, and economic shocks are often also on the frontlines of the solutions needed to strengthen resilience, preserve critical natural resources, mitigate the effects of climate change, and ensure a truly sustainable and just future. From villages in Indonesia, to rural areas in Mozambique, to Indigenous communities in the Amazon in Brazil, people are organising to respond to their needs and protect each other and the planet. Yet, they rarely have a voice neither in the design of the responses nor in the decisions on how to allocate the needed resources, which seldom reach them. Having historically borne the brunt of inequalities and exclusion, their ability to drive change and influence policy is hampered by a global financial architecture that is not designed to reflect their realities.

There are, nevertheless, financial mechanisms that have been set up to support communities and local, grassroots organisations. A diverse range of funds across the global South (referred to in this report as global South funds, global South funding mechanisms or funds for socio-environmental justice)¹ are channelling finance to local communities to drive social, environmental, climate, and economic solutions. With a focus on reaching historically marginalised groups — including women, racialised people, and Indigenous populations — these funds are pioneering ways to mobilise resources to advance socio-environmental justice by bringing resources to where they are needed the most and supporting locally led approaches that reflect the realities of each context.

¹ This report will make a distinction between global South funds and other finance actors. Global South funds will be referred to as global South funds, global South funding mechanisms or funds for socioenvironmental justice, while terms 'global financing structures', 'traditional sources of financing' or 'mainstream/traditional donors/mechanisms/finance institutions' will be used to encompass other more traditional finance actors, such as global North philanthropies, national governments, development banks, and multilateral funds for climate, nature and people.



Photo: Panel on how to strengthen Southern and Indigenous-led funds. © Sofia Hage/Ventos Do Norte

In the face of intensified socio-environmental crises, these funds offer an opportunity to drive effective change through bottom-up solutions that take advantage of the knowledge, resources, and capacities of the communities. This is particularly important in a time when traditional sources of funding such as overseas development assistance (ODA) are shrinking and a return to isolationism is putting into question international cooperation mechanisms. The OECD, for example, calculated that ODA dropped 23.1% in 2025, the largest contraction on record.² These cuts are impacting the countries with the lowest incomes and highest climate vulnerabilities the most.

The resulting need to ‘do more with less’ means that supporting effective solutions that are grounded in the realities of the people is critical. Calls for localisation in the past decade encouraged political commitments to fund local organisations and communities, but amounts remain extremely limited and the agenda is increasingly threatened by geopolitical shifts and changing donor priorities. A recent study from IIED found that, though reported funding for locally led climate finance had increased twenty-fold from 2016 to 2023, “only 0.17% of all reported climate funding purports to be locally led”.³ Additionally, those who are the frontlines of crises are the least likely to receive resources; by some calculations, only 0.22% of climate-related ODA reaches women’s rights organisations⁴ and less than 1% reaches Indigenous Peoples.⁵

The Global South House is a collaborative platform driven by organisations, networks, and coalitions that articulate and strengthen funding mechanisms from and for the global South, committed to advancing socio-environmental justice. The initiative seeks to position locally led financing solutions at the centre of global debates on climate, nature, and development. By bringing together socio-environmental justice funds from the global South and their partners, it promotes the

² OECD. “Official development assistance (ODA).” <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/official-development-assistance-oda.html>

³ Treichel, P, Joshi, R, Taylor, EN, Ridout, M, Mitchell, P and Acuda, A (2025). *Locally implemented or locally led? Tracking finance for community climate action*. IIED, London. [iied.org/22674iied](https://www.iied.org/22674iied)

⁴ Eyakuze, C (2023) *Through the Philanthropic Lens*, in Abbas, H (ed.) *Where is the money for Black feminist movements?* The Black Feminist Fund

⁵ Rainforest Foundation Norway (2021) *Falling short: Donor funding for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to secure tenure rights and manage forests in tropical countries (2011–2020)*. Oslo

exchange of knowledge on innovative practices, showcases solutions that challenge traditional models, and engages in global debates around climate, nature, and development finance. The Global South House is designed to centre the voices, experiences, and solutions of these actors, who are deeply connected to global South territories, Indigenous and traditional communities, and grassroots movements — including those led by women and youth — as well as to locally led initiatives in areas such as adaptation and resilience, ecosystem protection and restoration, and sustainable economic models.

Through dialogue, the production and sharing of evidence, and collective advocacy, the Global South House creates a conceptual — and physical — space dedicated to amplifying solutions grounded in the realities of frontline communities. By fostering the articulation of global South funding mechanisms as a collective within key global decision-making spaces, the initiative contributes to transforming international financial flows — from philanthropy, to national and regional banks, to multilateral finance — toward strengthening these locally led solutions.

The COP30 organised in Belém, Brazil, faced high expectations around issues like increasing adaptation finance, mobilising resources for forests and biodiversity conservation, and increasing the participation of civil society groups, particularly Indigenous communities, in global decisions on how to tackle the climate crisis. This provided the backdrop for the first edition⁶ of the Global South House, which brought together over 1,200 in-person participants representing approximately 500 organisations from 29 countries. Throughout more than twenty sessions, 109 panelists from across Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia provided a window into the wide-ranging experiences of the different funds represented in the Global South House. The sections below offer an analysis of the key messages arising from the discussions that took place, including key characteristics and lessons learned; challenges faced; and recommendations on how to transform the international financing architecture to make it more fit for purpose — ensuring that global South funds are key agents of socio-environmental justice.

Box 1. What is socio-environmental justice?

Socio-environmental justice calls for approaches that move beyond technical fixes toward a broader political transformation of the power relationships that shape whose knowledge is valued, who defines priorities, and how resources and financing are distributed. At its core is the recognition that social inequalities and ecological destruction are neither accidental nor inevitable, but are produced by extractive systems that exploit both people and the planet.

Socio-environmental justice therefore seeks to transform these systems by centring the realities, knowledge, and leadership of the communities and territories most affected by inequality, dispossession, and environmental degradation. It is grounded in the understanding that the ‘social’ and the ‘environmental’ are inseparable, since the communities most exposed to climate and ecological crises are often those that have historically faced political marginalisation, racial injustice, economic exclusion, and colonial violence.

This approach recognises that these communities are not only disproportionately affected by socio-environmental harms, but also hold critical knowledge, practices, and forms of stewardship for addressing them. Their relationships with land, water, forests, and biodiversity are often deeply connected to cultural identities, collective memory, and ways of life.

As such, socio-environmental justice requires not only the redistribution of resources and decision-making power, but also the political recognition of these communities as protagonists in shaping their own futures and protecting the planet.

⁶ Global South House. “COP30.” <https://theglobalsouthhouse.com/en/first-edition-cop30/>

3. The universe of the Global South House: key figures

Box 2. Defining the global South

Given the different interpretations on what is encompassed by the term 'global South', the Global South House points to a series of characteristics to define it:

“A geopolitical term, the global South refers to a group of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Oceania that share historical experiences of colonization and socioeconomic inequalities in relation to the global North. More than a geographical location, the global South represents a historical and structural condition, of marginalization in international systems of power, chronic underfunding, and the invisibilisation of local knowledge and practices.

By reclaiming the South as a starting point and space of political formulation, the Global South House affirms the protagonism of communities and organisations that resist, create, and propose other ways of living, caring, and funding collective life, rebalancing resource flows, democratizing decisions, and strengthening local responses to global challenges such as the climate crisis and inequality.” (From [The Global House online launch](#), 30 June 2026)

The Global South House is born out of a collaboration between Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (*The Socio-environmental Funds of the Global South*, or 'Alianza') and Rede Comuá (*Comuá Network*). **Alianza** is a network of 17 funds from Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia that promotes philanthropy in support of socio-environmental justice for communities within global South territories, with a current reach of 50 countries, and the **Comuá Network** brings together independent grantmaking organisations in Brazil working to advance socio-environmental justice, human rights, and community development. In its first edition, the Global South House's strategic partners also included the [Rede de Fundos Comunitários da Amazônia](#) (*Community Funds of the Amazon Network*) — a network of community funds across the Amazon focused on the climate leadership of Indigenous, *quilombola*⁷ and other traditional communities — and the [#ShiftThePower](#) movement, a “global movement of people and organizations working... toward a negotiated, participatory, and community-owned future”. In its first edition, the platform brought together 40 philanthropic funds for socio-environmental justice from the global South, along with hundreds of their partners across civil society, research, financing and advocacy spaces.

Key to the universe of the Global South House is the **diversity of the funds represented**, made clear throughout the sessions.⁸ Global South funding mechanisms encompass different typologies of organisations, including independent, socio-environmental, grassroots, activist, movement accountable or community-led funds or philanthropies, among other terms. Their diversity manifests in the evolution of the funds, their size, their sources of funding, as well as their thematic focus and the type of support they provide to communities and organisations. Nevertheless, common across all is the central objective to

⁷ The term quilombola refers to Afro-Brazilian communities descendants of enslaved people who established autonomous communities called quilombos, that were centers of resistance against the colonial *regime* and of cultural preservation.

⁸ The Global South House featured the launch of the report, "[Funding from the Ground Up: Inside the member funds of Alianza – the Socio-environmental Funds of the Global South](#)," a comprehensive mapping of the 16 funds that make up the Alianza network.

advance socio-environmental justice and “**shift power in the funding ecosystem, ensuring that decisions and resources flow from the ground up**”.⁹

Most of these funds from both Alianza and the Comuá Network were established in the 2000s and onwards, though they represent different trajectories; some arose as grant-giving actors from the beginning, while others began providing technical support or political advocacy and eventually developed into providing grants based on the needs from their communities. There is also great diversity in the size of the funds represented in the Global South House. Alianza members' level of annual disbursements range from less than USD 500,000 to between USD 1 and 5 million (with one exception of more than USD 5 million).¹⁰ Similarly, most funds in the Comuá Network disburse between BRL 250,000 and BRL 25 million (USD 50,460 and USD 5 million).¹¹ The ways these funds receive and disburse resources vary, from the mobilisation of resources within the communities, to the distribution of funds through mechanisms that often place them in a position of ‘bridges’ between the communities and financing actors.¹²

The majority of global South funds represented at the Global South House **provide direct support to groups historically left out of traditional decision-making structures and financing flows**, notably women, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities, young people, and LGBTQIA+ groups. The funds engage across a wide range of themes, including the defence of the territories, adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity, forest and agroecology, food security, climate adaptation and emergencies response. They do so primarily through the mobilisation of financial resources from different sources towards local communities, guided by the principle of direct access to funding as a core pillar of their operations. But their work goes beyond this; it also includes the provision of technical support and capacity strengthening for organisations and grassroots groups. In other words, bolstering civil society actors in their struggles for rights is a central objective of their support. Another defining feature of global South funds is their community-driven nature; their agendas reflect local needs and aspirations rather than donor priorities, developed through active listening with the groups these funds work with. Almost all of Alianza and the Comuá Network members — 94% and 87%, respectively¹³ — employ some form of inclusion of community members and/or movement representatives in their decision-making processes. The Network of Community Funds of the Amazon is similarly characterised by funds led by Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities themselves, currently with a focus on Brazil. High participation of communities in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of the funds' activities reflects the commitment to develop solutions for climate, nature and people that are grounded in the realities, needs, and aspirations of those at the frontlines, challenging top-down processes that tend to leave them behind.

Despite being relatively new, the universe of the Global South House is expanding rapidly — showing a great potential for further development. In 2024, Alianza member-funds had disbursed USD 14 million to grantees, almost twice the amount than in 2022.¹⁴ The Comuá Network shows a similar trend, with disbursements almost doubling from about BRL 104,919,828 (USD 21,183,500) in 2020 to BRL

⁹ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025). “Funding from the Ground Up: Inside the member funds of Alianza – the Socio-environmental Funds of the Global South.” Available at: <https://alianzafondosdelsur.org/2025/12/unveiling-funding-from-the-ground-up-while-celebrating-four-years-of-alianza/>

¹⁰ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025)

¹¹ Rede Comuá (August 2023). *Filantropia que transforma. Mapeamento de organizações independentes doadoras para sociedade civil nas áreas de justiça socioambiental e desenvolvimento comunitário no Brasil.*

¹² Gutter et al (2025). “Shifting climate adaptation finance to local communities through effective intermediaries” *International Institute for Environment and Development*. Available at: [iied.org/22654iied](https://www.iied.org/22654iied)

¹³ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025); Rede Comuá (August 2023)

¹⁴ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025)

193,372,985 (USD 39,042,400) in 2022.¹⁵ Nevertheless, these numbers are far less than what is needed and what could be done, and a key challenge faced by the funds is how to grow to meet the demands of their partners as well as their own. This is visible, for example, in the case of Fundo Casa Socioambiental (*Casa Socio-environmental Fund*), a member of both Alianza and the Comuá Network, as “on average, 65% of projects [submitted to them] qualify for receiving funding... but [they] only have enough resources to fund 25-30%”.¹⁶

Given the different roles that they play in supporting locally driven initiatives — with funding being only one element of a broad range of efforts — global South funds are defined **not as intermediaries but as ‘infrastructure’ to enable and strengthen community-led or locally led solutions**.¹⁷ The first edition of the Global South House at COP30 in Belém offered the opportunity to celebrate and learn from their diverse approaches, but also to better understand common successes and challenges, as a crucial step in developing a joint movement for a more adequate and fairer global financial architecture that can effectively galvanise global South funds’ efforts to drive transformative change.



Photo: Panel on lessons from global South-led funds for socio-environmental justice. © Sofia Hage/Ventos Do Norte

¹⁵ Rede Comuá. “Quem somos.” <https://redecomua.org.br/quem-somos/>

¹⁶ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025)

¹⁷ Alianza Socioambiental Fondos del Sur (November 2025)

4. Lessons from the Global South House on driving transformation in funding for climate, nature and people

The experiences showcased by the Global South House represent a constant effort to transform financing mechanisms for climate, nature and people to make them more fit for purpose. In a time where financing is being transformed and the climate and inequality crises are intensifying, learning from these experiences is more important than ever. Throughout the first edition of the Global South House at COP30, participants reflected on how mainstream global and national financing structures fail to effectively reach those at the frontlines, and how global South funds are acting to advance socio-environmental justice. Through their work, they contribute to challenging current systems in two main ways. Firstly, their funding and support helps tackle inequalities and legacies of discrimination, empowering communities in the defence of their rights and the reshaping of the social contract. Secondly, they demonstrate alternative ways of mobilising and managing resources, paving the path for rethinking financing for climate, nature and people. Their strategies reflect the principles that the Global South House actors believe should drive the global financing architecture (outlined in the Global South House Manifesto), but they are also grounded in ongoing, everyday practices of these funds that operationalise such principles. ***The following reflections and examples draw from the discussions and resources shared during the first edition of the Global South House, from 12–20 November 2026, in Belém, Brazil.***

Box 3. The Global South House Manifesto

The Global South House Manifesto¹ provided the basis for the discussions that took place at the first edition in COP30. The Manifesto lays out a series of characteristics that define the funds represented:

- **Innovation, effectiveness, and scalability:** Their funding mechanisms are democratic, accessible, and transparent, enabling rapid and efficient distribution of resources directly to those creating locally led solutions at scale.
- **Proximity:** Rooted in territories and social movements, they ensure community representation in resource allocation and connect historically excluded groups to financial resources that support proven local solutions.
- **Risk and cost reduction:** Their transparent governance and accountability practices enable efficient management models that reduce risks and costs while strengthening partnerships with public and private funders.
- **Adequate responses to needs and intersectionality:** They use innovative monitoring, assessment, and learning models and an intersectional approach to ensure resources address real community needs and reach historically marginalized groups.

4.1 A political project to tackle legacies of inequality and discrimination

What unified many of the funds for socio-environmental justice represented at the Global South House was that they were born from resistance, responding to the needs of groups of populations whose current systems were either overlooking or neglecting. These global South funding mechanisms operate in contexts of extreme inequalities, where those disproportionately affected by crises, from climate

breakdown to social and economic turmoil, have also historically been provided with the least resources — from public investment to formal financing flows — to adapt.

This is starkly reflected in the limited proportion of global financing that reaches the local level. Interventions at the Global South House stressed the critical funding gap that currently exists, as **the distribution of resources for justice-oriented initiatives for climate, nature and people is very limited and concentrated**. The Global South House inaugural sessions provided an overview of the current global financing landscape and the great financing gap. Presentations quoted figures estimating that “over 90% of civil society funding still goes to global North organisations, while less than 10% reaches organisations in partner countries”.¹⁸ Similarly, less than 0.5% global public climate finance is provided directly to the most vulnerable groups.¹⁹ Sessions exploring global trends in climate finance concluded that mainstream global financing structures remain guided by models based on immediate results and perceptions of low risk, often poorly grounded in local realities. A lack of understanding and trust also leads to the prioritisation of large intermediaries based in the global North, to the detriment of locally rooted, socio-environmental justice-oriented initiatives.²⁰

The challenge goes beyond financing and is also a result of structural conditions of disinvestment and political exclusion. Various panellists across sessions pointed to the fact that **global South funds often face legacies of a historically limited welfare state and limited access to public education, healthcare, and social safety nets**. These conditions are worsening in the face of waves of conservative and extreme right backlash, as well as an increasing debt burden on lower-income countries forced to reduce social spending. These processes continue to disproportionately impact communities at higher risk from climate and economic shocks (as well as exposure to violence, evictions and displacement). At the Global South House, women, members of Indigenous communities, young people and other participants reflected on how local communities therefore rely on their networks of support and solidarity to fill a gap left by public disinvestment, that in turn these global South funds seek to support and strengthen. This applies both to people and the planet — for instance, representatives of Indigenous funds also highlighted that Indigenous Peoples conserve a large part of carbon sinks and of the world’s resources, but are rarely provided support (or on the contrary, they are hindered) by governmental action and financing.

Additionally, these funds for socio-environmental justice work in situations in which **increasing shrinking civic space limits people’s access to spaces of influence and even criminalises their actions**. Not only are traditional sources of financing being stretched due to current geopolitical tensions, but such reductions in funding are also taking place in a time when civic freedoms are under threat in many countries. As explored in different sessions, this doubly exposes environmental and human rights defenders to risks, firstly by having to act in an increasingly hostile environment and secondly by doing so with fewer resources and support. With fewer safe spaces for deliberation, grassroots groups are less able to have their say in the way public resources are spent and how policies are monitored. Meanwhile, support for independent monitoring and efforts to ensure accountability is shrinking. In many cases, participants pointed out that those who are usually on the frontlines of environmental and humanitarian crises are sometimes directly targeted for their work.

¹⁸ Shift the Power Movement. 2024. Too Southern to be Funded: The Funding Bias Against the Global South, as quoted in the Global South House session, *“Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socioenvironmental Justice”*.

¹⁹ Global Landscape of Climate Finance (2023), quoted in Casa Socio-environmental Fund (November 2025). *“Where are the Resources for Climate? The Climate Finance Landscape for Civil Society in the Global South”*.

²⁰ The Global South House featured a presentation of the report, *“Where are the Resources for Climate? The Climate Finance Landscape for Civil Society in the Global South”*, by the Casa Socio-environmental Fund.

Despite these conditions, communities continue to drive the solutions that are most effective and responsive to the needs of each local context. Global South funds exist to support these efforts, not just by mobilising financial resources, but also by crafting a network of support that helps sustain locally grounded practices. **These efforts go beyond individual programmes or community activities; instead, they lay out the foundations for transforming society into one that takes better care of people and the planet.** Central to the work of global South funds, therefore, is challenging extractive and colonial models of cooperation and resource mobilisation and promoting alternatives grounded in solidarity and collective wellbeing.

"The first challenge is marginalization. Most rural communities are far from centres of power and financial decision-making. Climate and development debates happen on the periphery of society. Tindzila was created to shift this paradigm—to give voice, visibility, and power to those who live where the impacts are felt the most."

Alda Salomão, Fundo Tindzila (*Tindzila Fund*) (From the session, 'Funding for Communities Based on Local Solutions and Experiences from the Savannas and Pantanal with Global Impact')

Reaching those traditionally excluded from funding

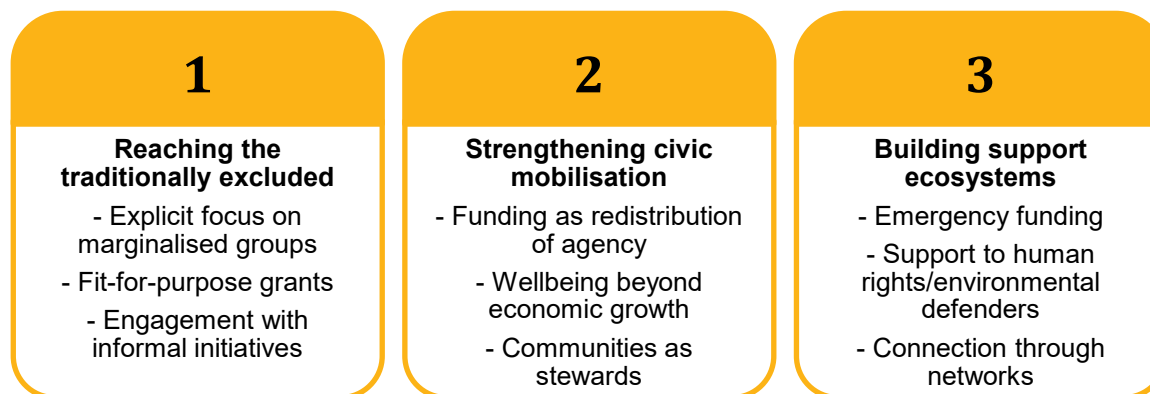
The funds and partners at the Global South House address a major gap in which those most in need of resources have the least access to them. **A key focus of global South funds is increasing both funding access and organisational capacity for these groups.** Most funds highlighted their commitment to directly supporting historically marginalised populations who would otherwise lack access to resources. From providing capacity strengthening to women farmers, to investing in young leaders, to protecting traditions from Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, the funds seek to redress legacies of colonial, patriarchal, and exploitative models that have invisibilised these groups. These funds also tend to work in **marginalised territories**, whether in rural areas, urban peripheries, majority black or racialised communities, or Indigenous territories that have historically received very little public investment but are nevertheless the most impacted by climate and economic shocks.

"Youth will be the most impacted by climate change, but they cannot be seen only as recipients. Young people — especially Black, Indigenous, and traditional community youth — are already doing the work with no resources, and perpetuating this dynamic is colonial. Supporting youth is not about reinventing the wheel; it is about strengthening capacities that already exist and recognizing that when women and youth occupy positions, it isn't tokenism — it is expertise and worldview."

Mahrayan Sampaio, Funbea (From the session, 'Global South Youth: Decolonizing Climate Finance from the Ground Up')

Various approaches were highlighted to support increasing access to resources. A key strategy of supporting communities directly is **providing fit-for-purpose grants**. Providing 'low-barrier', smaller grants to support community initiatives allows these funds to extend their reach. Others mentioned having specific funding mechanisms for families, or individuals with specific needs. Importantly, funds also often **engage with informal groups or non-formalised initiatives** in the territories, including informal settlement dwellers, customary associations or youth-led groups, by for instance facilitating **their access to fiscal sponsors**. As sessions on trust-based philanthropy, feminist funding, and youth-led initiatives highlighted, these mechanisms are facilitated by the deep connections of the funds with communities, as the relationships of trust with individuals and the knowledge of local contexts enable greater agility and flexibility in their provision of resources and support.

Figure 1. Tackling legacies of inequality and discrimination



Box 4. Examples from the Global South House

- **Fundo Ecos — Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza** (*Ecos Fund by the Institute on Society, Population and Nature, ISPN*) (Brazil) works with both formal and informal groups. Different funding modalities allow the Fund to support organisations at different stages; small projects (up to USD 35,000) are directed towards supporting community organisations with less experience; “consolidation projects” (up to USD 50,000) help strengthen organisations or to ensure their continuity; “strategic projects” (up to USD 100,000) are available to regional organisations; and an additional line of funding of grants of up to USD 1,500 allows individuals to strengthen family-based activities. (From the report, ‘Funding from the Ground Up’, presented in the session, ‘Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socio-environmental Justice’)
- **Red Comunidades Rurales** (*Network of Rural Communities*) (Argentina) provided a tier of small grants for grantees who were struggling to access other types of funds. Additionally, it adapted its funding and proposal timelines in line with the communities’ needs to ensure enough time for deliberation and so that the funding is mobilised at the time when communities need them most. (From the report, ‘Funding from the Ground Up’, presented in the session, ‘Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socio-environmental Justice’)
- The **Pan-African Climate Justice Network** (Africa) combines mobilising finance for climate with support to ensure young people have a say in regional policy-making spaces. It partners with the Pan-African Parliament to develop country resolutions on resilience, including in partnerships with the African Development Bank and the African Union. It also manages summer schools for young people to learn about climate justice and strengthen their advocacy skills. (From the session, ‘Reconfiguring Power: Networks Driving Fair Financing for the Global South’)

Strengthening civic mobilisation for a new social contract

At the heart of global South funds is the understanding that their project is political, extending beyond addressing a specific issue in society towards a broader vision of transformation driven by values of justice. In supporting grassroots efforts and building on strong linkages with social movements — including human rights and environmental defenders — these initiatives are nurturing a body of right-holders that can hold institutions to account. Participants reflected on the dual role of the funds in supporting direct implementation while also playing a critical broader function of **helping shape a social contract between communities (right-holders) and the state (duty-bearer)** through strengthening civic participation, collective autonomy, and processes of local governance and stewardship. Depending on the political and economic context, this labour might be one of direct contestation, where social and environmental movements are resisting repressive or violent acts against their communities; one of precedent-setting, where their work establishes systems of solidarity that are then institutionalised; or one of reparation, where communities demand justice for the continued violence and exploitation they experience, and push for their recognition as stewards of the planet and their own people. Ultimately, **it demonstrates that funding is never just a technical mechanism or a mere transfer of money, but a redistribution of power and agency that allows communities to shape new futures.**

These new futures are tied to **visions of wellbeing that go beyond mere economic growth and see communities as stewards of both people and nature.** Sessions on Indigenous funds, agroecology initiatives and food systems, as well as conversations on specific contexts like the Savannas and the Pantanal pointed to the way in which Indigenous forms of knowledge, the value of culture and ecological stewardship, and the deep connection between communities and the biomes they live in influence their way of approaching solutions for climate, nature and people. Global South funds are often driven by concepts of 'living well' — from *sumaq kawsay* (buen vivir) or *suma qamaña* in Latin America, to *ubuntu*, *eti uwem* or *ukama* in Africa, to *swaraj* in India. They also understand the work done by the communities, particularly in Indigenous territories — and particularly by women — as 'reparatory' work for humanity and for the planet. This also means that communities understand the impacts of climate disasters — as well as misguided adaptation efforts — in more than economic terms, but also as a threat to their cultures, their ancestry, or their essence.

"Today, it seems that money is the great bond of power. If we don't have the money, we have to submit to those who do. We want to break that logic; we want to make our own money. I remember a leader from the Waiwai People; we went to the territory, and he took us into the forest to show us the Brazil nut grove they have, and he told us: This is our bank, this is where we come to get oxygen, where we eat, where we hunt, where we drink water. This is the biggest bank, the most important bank, this is where we come to get life."

Josimara Baré, Fundo Rutí (*Rutí Indigenous Fund*) (From the session, 'Indigenous Funds of the Amazon: Results and Impacts on the Lives of Indigenous Peoples and Territories')

Box 5. Examples

- **Fundo Timbira** (*Timbira Fund*) (Brazil) was established following the mobilisation of the Apinajé, Krahô, Krikati, and Gavião peoples for long-term compensation for the impacts of the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant. The revolving fund provided through this mechanism not only is supporting projects focused on food security, culture, and territorial protection, but it also represents a recognition of Indigenous peoples as stewards of the planet. (From the session, 'Indigenous Funds of the Amazon: Results and Impacts on the Lives of Indigenous Peoples and Territories')
- The **Samdhana Institute** (Southeast Asia) worked with sea-dependent communities who resorted to usual root crops while waiting for emergency response from the governments after climate shocks, and helped document their practices in collaboration with women and young people. (From the session, 'Building a Just Ecological Transition: Funding Agroecology Initiatives Led by Workers and Local Communities')
- The **Rural Women's Assembly** (South Africa) approaches agricultural projects as a way to strengthening local resilience and rebuilding people's lives, supporting women in planting own seeds, and running feminist agroecologist schools to help produce climate resilient systems. (From the session, 'Feminist Funding for Climate, Economic Justice and Resilience: Successful Approaches from the Ground')

A support ecosystem beyond the money

Global South funds are both **contributors to and beneficiaries of the support ecosystems that exist in the communities and develop a crucial and unique chain of trust in the territories**. A critical mechanism highlighted by organisations, from Indonesia to Ecuador, is **providing emergency funding** in the case of disasters such as fires or floods or emergencies in the communities. Tied to this is the **support to human rights and environmental defenders**, central actors in the promotion of socio-environmental justice and a focus of various discussions at the Global South House. Facilitated by the relationships of trust built with the communities, emergency funding and immediate support can then reach those who need it the most in the most effective way.

"The community is always the first responder. Before any international aid arrives, it is the neighbour who saves the neighbour. Strengthening this local capacity is not just aid, it is building long-term survival."

Kazi Amdadul Hoque, Friendship (From the session, 'Trust-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Socio-environmental Solutions: Perspectives and Lessons from the Global South')

At the same time, global South funds build on the relationships and connections they cultivate in their territories of operation, as their rootedness in their supporting communities and movements is an integral part of how they function. The logics and practices associated with care work are central to the organisation of community life, as they are closely linked to solidarity, participation, and the maintenance of the social fabric — often carried out by women and taking place in spaces and times that extend beyond formal employment. In this context, support actors, including community members themselves and organisations providing complementary support are essential to ensuring the impact of initiatives.

The universe of the Global South House engages with this dimension, as global South funds go beyond financial resourcing and help weave and mobilise a whole ecosystem of support to communities in their struggles for defending their rights. This includes, for example, working in partnership with organisations

such as NGOs that assist in proposal development or provide legal advice to human rights and environmental defenders. The funds also rely on volunteers, community leaders, and members who contribute their time and, in some cases, their own resources to the design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes. Their teams mobilise their own networks and connections to strengthen these initiatives and expand their capacity to act. In this sense, these practices also contribute to strengthening cultures of giving within communities, fostering greater autonomy from external donors and reinforcing the social fabric.

Central to this support ecosystem, and a particularly important theme in the Global South House, is **the role played by networks**, whether nationally, regionally, or internationally. Networks of global South funds help drive fair financing by building connections across funds for socio-environmental justice and supporting the exchange of knowledge, but also by leveraging further financing from mainstream finance institutions, strengthening political advocacy and the protection of spaces for civil society to organise and develop joint influencing strategies.

Box 6. Examples

- **Fundo Casa Socioambiental** (*Casa Socio-environmental Fund*) (Brazil) was able to mobilise its networks to bring together groups of voluntary helpers or ‘brigades’ to respond to fires. Following their response, they were then trained by public authorities and created fire brigades that became a key structure to respond to fires, also helping reduce the public costs of these efforts. (From the session, ‘Adaptation in the Pan-Amazon: Community Responses to Climate Emergencies Supported by Agile Funding’)
- **Semilla Foundation’s** (*Fundación Semilla*) (Bolivia) Climate Emergency Support Programme (*Programa de Apoyo ante Emergencias Climáticas*) has operated since 2023 to help communities respond to forest fires and flooding. An emergency committee was set up to respond to communities’ demands, purchasing materials within 72 hours. Coordination with other initiatives also ensures that there was no duplication of resources. (From the session, ‘Adaptation in the Pan-Amazon: Community Responses to Climate Emergencies Supported by Agile Funding’)
- **Aliança entre Fundos** (*Alliance Between Funds*) (Brazil) was created by the Fundo Brasil de Direitos Humanos (*Brazil Human Rights Fund*), Casa Socio-environmental Fund, and Fundo Baobá (*Baobá Fund*) as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to build responses to the pandemic. It mobilised more than BRL 5 million (USD 948,100) to 68 *quilombola* organisations and 10 indigenous groups across the country, taking advantage of the different geographic presence of each fund. (From the session, ‘Collaborative and Innovative Arrangements to Ground Climate Finance in the Territories’)

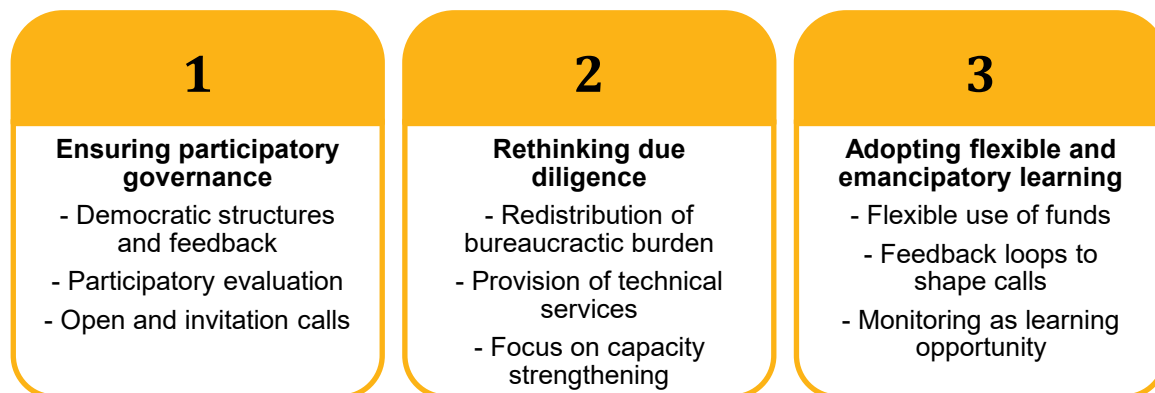
Getting resources to where they are needed the most is not just about shifting financing. The Global South House discussions shed light on a common political project of renewing the social contract by tackling systemic inequalities, repairing historical legacies of discrimination and exclusion, and centring care for people and the planet. As such, an alternative financing model is not only about access to resources itself, but about how making those resources available to communities genuinely supports their leadership in shaping their ways of life and resilience.

4.2 Crafting alternative forms of delivering finance

Current challenges in advancing objectives for climate, nature, and people are not only about the volume of financial resources allocated to locally led solutions, but also about the conditions through which these

resources are mobilised. This includes both how decisions are made regarding their distribution and implementation, as well as the expectations surrounding their management and the relationships established between providers of funds and recipients. Conversations at the Global South House pointed to the different ways in which mainstream financial institutions, at both national and global levels, are not designed to provide effective solutions to the issues communities' are facing nor to centre the experiences of those bearing the brunt of social and environmental crises, favouring models that do not reflect what is needed by local actors to reach impact at scale.

Figure 2. Alternative forms to deliver finance



Crucially, **little representation of marginalised groups in the leadership structures of financing institutions contributes to a mismatch in funding priorities.** From the boards of global North philanthropy to national and multilateral policy and financing spaces, it was pointed out that marginalised group voices are rarely present. This is then reflected in divergences between the needs and priorities of the people on the ground and the activities that are funded by donors. In global North philanthropies, for instance, the dominance of individual donors' (usually a founding member or a board) priorities in designing programmes may lead to the prioritisation of themes or types of support that do not respond to the actual needs of the local organisations that will be receiving the resources. In the case of actors like national institutions, national interests guiding financing decisions might not necessarily align with the wellbeing and environmental concerns of different communities, particularly in contexts of political volatility or antidemocratic regimes.

The Global South House participants also identified as a key characteristic of mainstream models they seek to challenge the limitations from **'set solutions', strict conditions, and complex bureaucratic processes that characterise mainstream financing processes.** Traditional donors often provide resources for specific agendas that recipients of funding must adapt to. These also come with conditionalities on how resources can be spent that in turn require heavy reporting, which not only instils a sense of mistrust between the donors and the organisations, but also places a large burden on the organisations — who often lack staffing capacity — to fulfil the donor requirements. With very strict models of working, the "burden of adaptation" is placed on those receiving funding, who must address the concerns of donors. A lot of staff time and resources are therefore spent on searching for funding opportunities, navigating eligibility requirements for donor calls, and conducting required reporting exercises — rather than on implementing their work.

Another important challenge mentioned by representatives of global South funds and partners is that **timelines and modalities of mainstream financing mechanisms do not align with the needs of the communities.** Firstly, rigid, short-term project cycles limit flexibility to respond to changing contexts and

opportunities. Additionally, the work done by the communities — from environmental stewardship to leadership development and institutional strengthening — requires long-term funding to achieve impact, which current mechanisms rarely provide. Mainstream financing mechanisms also fail to respond to the needs of communities in emergencies. Resources often arrive only after disasters, rather than supporting preparedness and early response, which is shouldered by the communities themselves.

As was explored throughout the sessions of the Global South House, other models of financing and implementing work for climate, nature, and people are possible. Global South funds have been challenging mainstream models by designing democratic, trust-based and flexible forms of support that fill the gap left by them, enabling rather than hinder the work of communities in addressing their issues and delivering socio-environmental justice.

“Support between us, Indigenous funds, and those we support happens horizontally. We’ve had enough of top-down decisions imposing their rules inside our funds, repeating colonialism. We’ve been saying ‘no!’ We need to reach dialogue to understand our shared agendas and ensure that simplification reaches our territories. Some of our relatives don’t even speak Portuguese — we go to very remote places. When we create bureaucracy, we exclude many relatives who don’t even have formal organizations. Processes like these allow us to look at these challenges and build the pathways we want as a network.”

Valéria Paye, Fundo Podáali (*Podáali Fund*) (From the session, ‘The Amazon Community Funds Network: Political and Financial Initiatives from the Territories, for the Territories, Facing Socio-environmental and Climate Challenges’)

Participatory decision-making to support community driven and context-specific solutions

A central characteristic of global South funds celebrated by participants is **their democratic structures** and **incorporation of community feedback**. The approaches mentioned across sessions varied widely — from advisory councils, community assemblies, mentoring networks, and peer exchanges, among others. Common to all, however, is a **shift in the direction of accountability**, where the funds are required to serve the needs of the communities, and where **listening is as important step in the financing timeline as other processes**.

Many examples also highlighted the importance of **participatory evaluation of projects**, through feedback spaces like public assemblies and focus groups. This also strengthens the legitimacy of the projects and ensures they have the desired impact. Another strategy for a more democratic form of giving is to work with both **open calls and invitation calls**. Open calls provide applicants to global South funds with more freedom to request the funding for whatever is most needed. In invitation calls, the funds work directly with existing partner communities to identify the best way of providing support. Working to strengthen existing partners or known communities facilitates their access to resources and the required support while presenting an opportunity to strengthen their future capacities to access funding from other donors.

Box 7. Examples

- **Fundo Podaali** (*Podaali Fund*) (Brazil) is an Indigenous fund in the Brazilian Amazon guided by an assembly of 9 leaders from the Indigenous regions where it operates. Its fiscal council takes care of accounts and internal bureaucratic processes, whereas an orientation council composed of indigenous and non-indigenous stakeholders (including funders, supporters, etc.) helps position the fund and provides advice. (From the session, '[Indigenous Funds of the Amazon: Results and Impacts on the Lives of Indigenous Peoples and Territories](#)')
- **Fundación Semilla** (*Semilla Foundation*) (Bolivia) combines a participatory and decentralized governance model, combining a Board of Directors with close relationships with grassroots actors to define strategic priorities. An Advisory Council provides information on the needs on the ground. (From the report, 'Funding from the Ground Up', presented at the session, '[Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socio-environmental Justice](#)')
- The **Environmental Justice Fund's** (South Africa) grant committee includes community activists, and allied actors from universities and NGOs to ensure that the decisions on grantmaking are grounded in experience from activists. Its governance model allows it to adapt their grant-making process to reflect the needs of the grantees. This meant, for example, developing a programme around water rights, an issue that was brought up frequently by the different communities in ongoing open calls but that had not been addressed properly by grants. (From the session, '[Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socio-environmental Justice](#)')

Rethinking 'due diligence' in favour of capacity strengthening

Whereas traditional donors have usually relied on a series of formalised, bureaucratic processes to ensure due diligence, the chain of trust that is built through the work of the global South funds helps adapt due diligence processes to reflect grantees capacities and needs. This allows them to develop a model that reduces bureaucratic processes with the objective of allowing communities and organisations to focus on the implementation of the work.

Many global South funding mechanisms **shoulder a lot of the bureaucratic burden** to act as bridges between the communities and other donors. This, representatives explained, also may involve **active searching of grantees** and understanding the needs of the communities they are seeking to serve, to absorb some of the administrative burden. Additionally, they **might work directly with the communities** to develop any requirements or facilitate relationships with auditors, instead of expecting the grantees or partners to do so before first contact with the fund. Furthermore, a fund may **provide grants for professional services**, which allows the organisations to identify the support they need while the fund manages the contracting and reduces the burden on community organisers.

While many funds still require some procedures to ensure due diligence and other forms of compliance and management, they **combine financial support with technical services to strengthen their organisations' ability to access and manage funds**. The money provided is however only one piece in a local (and often regional, national, and even international) net of support. Whereas the funds have a lot of focus on socio-environmental thematic areas, most place an emphasis **on capacity strengthening and organisational development**. Some ways of doing this include peer learning, workshops and seminars, activities to incubate new organisations, trainings in risk preparedness and anticipatory action, legal and administrative assistance, among others. Capacity strengthening and organisational development is **not seen as a cost but rather as an investment**. In this, the role of networks was identified as particularly important, as they allow for the exchange of knowledge and practices across contexts, and the nurturing of solidarity.

Box 8. Examples

- **Procomum** (Brazil) hosts the LAB Procomum, a citizen innovation laboratory that allows for the co-creation and prototyping of solutions to different issues of the communities. It provides office and creative spaces to foster collaboration, as well as resources like Internet and other materials for workshops and activities. (From the session, 'Defending Rights, Building New Futures: Climate, Nature, and People Funding Amid the Global Civil Society Crisis')
- **Fundo Ruti** (*Ruti Indigenous Fund*) (Brazil) seeks to support initiatives that already exist in the territories by strengthening their capacities. A first call of projects in 2011 mobilised BRL 2 million (USD 380,000) to support families, communities, and regional organisations working in agropecuary production, with grants as small as BRL 25,000 (USD 5,080). The type of support was demand-based, derived from assemblies. (From the session, 'Indigenous Funds of the Amazon: Results and Impacts on the Lives of Indigenous Peoples and Territories')
- The **Indigenous Peoples of Asia Solidarity Fund (IPAS)** (Indonesia) works with the communities and auditors to overcome any due diligence requirements through a direct support fund that simplifies the distribution of funds and reporting; People living in the villages are also assisted by indigenous support organisations or NGOs in developing proposals. The use of deliberative gatherings with the communities to decide how to use the funds also serves as a way to prove accountability to donors. (From the session, 'Learning and Co-Creating: Resourcing Southern Voices and Communities')

A flexible and emancipatory approach to monitoring and learning

Across global South funds, **flexibility in the use of funds is applied** through a constant contact with the organisations to review budgets and reallocate resources when necessary. This demonstrates the recognition that the political, environmental, and economic conditions under which communities live are in constant flux, and that programming needs to adapt to new or changing needs. In turn, **funds allow lessons learned from the monitoring and evaluation to shape their calls for proposals**; this might mean mobilising financing for a specific theme identified with partners, or providing a certain kind of capacity support.

A crucial lesson from the conversations was that **monitoring is not treated as a punitive act**, where resources might be taken away if the original objectives are not attained. Instead, it is employed **as an opportunity for learning**, with funds and those receiving the resources working together to understand how to shift programming to better reflect realities. Participants explained how this approach encourages, rather than punishes, testing new approaches to address socio-environmental issues in the communities. Activities that might otherwise be seen as a reporting requirement are transformed into spaces of **critical or emancipatory pedagogy**; the lessons drawn go beyond the timeline of a specific programme or project but serve to connect local efforts to structural challenges or drivers of inequalities and injustices. People engaged in these activities are thus involved not just in addressing local issues, but in the crafting of a source of political education in their communities.

Box 9. Examples

- **Pastor Rice Small Grants Fund** (The Philippines) collaborates on the Dare to Trust (D2T) programme, facilitated by NTFP-EP Asia, which provides financial support and flexibility for women to identify alternative livelihoods. It also allows women and the communities it works with opportunities to test different approaches, with space to change strategies when needed rather than regard these as failures. (From the report, 'Funding from the Ground Up', presented at the session, '[Funding from the Ground Up: Lessons from Global South-led Funds for Socio-environmental Justice](#)')
- **Fundo Dema (Dema Fund)** (Brazil), following more than 20 years of operations, incorporated agroecology into their programming after observing its importance for communities. (From the session, '[Building a Just Ecological Transition: Funding Agroecology Initiatives Led by Workers and Local Communities](#)')
- **Tierra Viva** (Central America) works on a demand-based format, and instead of proposing calls it draws from solutions that women leaders are already working on, supporting follow-up activities to strengthen their efforts. (From the session, '[Feminist Funding for Climate, Economic Justice and Resilience: Successful Approaches from the Ground](#)')

Overall, the sessions at the Global South House were rich in examples of the many ways in which global South funds and networks are challenging mainstream models of financing and programming to better respond to communities' needs and realities. The trust-based approach highlighted by the different organisations has important implications for how financing is done. Firstly, the close relationship with the partners ensures **funding serves the communities' needs and efforts to claim their rights**. It also allows for **faster turnaround** when communities don't have to wait for lengthy processes to be approved for programmes. **Staff time is used more effectively** for the direct implementation of activities when the communities don't have to spend too much resources on lengthy bureaucratic or reporting processes. It also **strengthens their ability to access other sources of finance** by pairing financial resources with technical support. Furthermore, through trust-based philanthropy, the bonds built therefore go beyond transactional interactions between a funder and a receiver of funds; instead, it **creates a space of joint learning, belonging, and collective mobilisation**.

4.3 Obstacles that remain

The discussions nevertheless also reflected the frustration of participants with obstacles that remain, and that hinder the ability of global South funds to achieve their full potential in bringing about transformation. Advancing their model requires time and investment in the global South funding mechanisms themselves to develop such structures of trust and support, to integrate the funds into the community and to allow for the flexibility, learning, and capacity strengthening to be done effectively. An enabling environment is therefore critical to support the transformation of the global finance architecture, including through greater and better funding.

The distribution of resources for climate, nature and people remains limited, concentrated, and opaque

Despite a slight surge in calls for localisation of finance in multilateral spaces, **finance for locally led initiatives for climate, nature and people remains limited and concentrated**. Despite the great impact global South funds have been able to achieve, they still struggle to access sufficient resources. Conversations on the current geopolitical context stressed the very low proportion of mainstream

resources directed to social and environmental justice issues — with increases in climate-dedicated finance being directed mostly towards the private sector. Participants also warned of cuts in funding from traditional donors like overseas development assistance, sources of support that are particularly critical at times of **repressed civic space and a wave of conservatism**. Furthermore, current structures to protect human rights and environmental defenders — key agents in the ecosystem of global South funds — are limited and deficient compared to safety protocols to respond to danger or crises in other more professional environments, increasing their exposure to risk and threats.

Difficulty in accessing resources is exacerbated by **opaque and exclusionary decision-making processes that make it difficult for global South funds and their partners to be aware of opportunities to engage with decision-makers and to influence processes**. In discussing territory-based philanthropy and how to increase access to funding for women, Indigenous Peoples, young and Afro-descendant communities, participants pointed to hierarchies of power as a key barrier that continue to hinder their work. Spaces for influencing global South funds' own donors and their priorities are very limited, and historically marginalised groups remain poorly represented. Even when participating in decision-making is possible, the funds and the partners and communities they work with find themselves with little support to understand how to navigate the different opportunities for engagement and influence. This can range from not speaking the language used by donors (as pointed out by many members of Indigenous funds), to facing security threats in their political engagement.

The discussions at the Global South House touched on the different harmful consequences of these dynamics for the work of global South funds. From a sustainability perspective, the more limited the pool of possible sources of finance are, the more likely global South funds are to find themselves at risk when a main donor changes priorities or decides to pursue other types of work, which is a common reality. Reduced funding can also mean that allocation of resources is concentrated in large organisations with greater bureaucratic capacity to manage donor relations and requirements — many of them based in the global North, and with little to no local roots — or those with a longstanding history of partnership with certain institutions, mirroring the inequalities within power structures. Reduced sources of funding with inaccessible governance mechanisms to access those resources leads to a further concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a few actors. In consequence, there is less ability for global South funds and civil society more generally — particularly the groups most affected by crises — to shape how societies should respond to their own needs.

The ways of working of the current financial architecture are inadequate to reflect the realities of global South funds

Despite the innovations highlighted to help resources reach the communities, the Global South House participants lamented that **excessive bureaucratisation continues to constrain the ability of global South funds to implement their work**. Even when these funds are able to access financing — often with great support from networks — the handling of the funding can also be a nightmare through burdensome reporting processes and other processes imposed by traditional donors. Global South funds and networks thus are required to navigate the costly and time-heavy bureaucratic procedures required by mainstream finance institutions — and sometimes are forced to pass on some of these requirements to the communities themselves, many of whom do not have paid staff or operate informally. Despite having a large advantage in knowing their communities and understanding key priorities and challenges, actors engaging in global South funds must invest a lot of effort in translating these into the proper channels for financing, and thus the 'burden to adjust' continues to be placed on the communities rather than the donors. Global South funds therefore risk spending more time navigating donor requirements than delivering results.

Notably, as global commitments by governments and multilateral institutions seek to expand finance for climate, nature and people, **complex accreditation processes and high financing thresholds remain a key obstacle for global South funds**, even those with largest budgets and disbursement capacities. Most climate and development resources are channelled through multilateral facilities like the Green Climate Fund (GCF). To become accredited to access these fundings, entities must go through costly and time-heavy bureaucratic procedures that require extensive staff time and expertise available to very few global South funds. Additionally, many of these mechanisms have minimum budget thresholds for accredited organisations. This results in a mismatch where, despite having very few resources for issues like adaptation globally, whatever funding is available is distributed in too large packets that can cause more work and challenges for global South funds operating at different scales.²¹

"Bureaucracy is the biggest impediment for the territories today. It is stunning how it is easier for a farmer to devastate an entire area than for a Quilombola territory to get a title or access financing to preserve. In our municipality, everything is extremely preserved, but no territory receives carbon credits. They don't want us to preserve. We live off our açai, our peach palm, our forest; we preserve because we need it. But without real investment, it becomes impossible. Preserving is not about stopping deforestation; it's about supporting those who genuinely care for the territory."

Emerson Douglas Trindade, Território Quilombola de Guadalupe (*Guadalupe Quilombola Territory*) (From the session, 'Guidelines for Climate Philanthropy and the Experience of the Quilombola Fund Mizizi Dudu Pointing to Futures')

Another important obstacle for global South funds and their networks is that **project-based approaches limit resources for core support**. There is a large need for unrestricted funding that allows Global South funding mechanisms to sustain their core functions, such as fundraising, financial management, and monitoring. This also includes mobilising adequate resources to sustain the crucial work of networks of socio-environmental justice funds. Nevertheless, most financial support is focused on short-term deliverables and stringent requirements that offer little resources and time for the development of capacities of the people participating in global South funds.

Furthermore, many participants reflected on how **expectations over delivery of concrete outcomes overlooks the long-term nature of the work of many global South funds**. These funds' vision for driving structural transformation is therefore often at odds with an international system that works through strict, technocratic and profit-driven approaches to address global issues. Another issue mentioned was how limited and inadequate metrics, usually focused on economic performance, also make it difficult to measure the impact of locally led and community-based work. This is for example evident in the economic metrics used in loss and damage financing mechanisms, which don't consider other non-economic aspects like culture, land or knowledge.

Lack of trust

The mismatch between the mechanisms of the distribution of funding and the realities, needs, and capacities of global South funds **leads to a lack of understanding of and trust in the ability of global South funds to deliver at scale**. Stereotypes and misconceptions around global South actors make global South funds be perceived to be 'riskier' by traditional donors — particularly holders of multilateral

²¹ Mitchell, P. (2025) "Scaling locally led adaptation: Closing the rhetoric–reality gap." *International Institute for Environment and Development*. Available at: <https://www.iied.org/22686iied>

climate finance such as development banks or national finance institutions, but also global North philanthropies — reducing their interest and steering resources towards top-down approaches driven by the priorities of the donors themselves. Furthermore, current financing mechanisms focus on “de-risking” programmes for the private sector, but do not provide equal support to global South funds and their partners in the communities. As a result, instead of the financing architecture enhancing the potential of global South funds and building on their strengths, it restrains them and leads to frustration and lack of trust, creating a dramatic missed opportunity.

“We need to redefine what 'risk' is. The financial sector sees risk in giving unrestricted money to a small organization. We see risk in not giving it, because without this resource the community remains vulnerable. The biggest risk is the inaction caused by distrust.”

Oswaldo Alvidez Bañuelos, GlobalGiving (From the session, [‘Trust-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Socio-environmental Solutions: Perspectives and Lessons from the Global South’](#))

Conclusion

The Global South House discussions allowed funds for socio-environmental justice and their partners to share common challenges they continue to face in their efforts to mobilise resources for climate, nature and people. Firstly, the distribution of resources remains limited, concentrated, and opaque, particularly in a context of shrinking budgets for international cooperation, increasingly closed civic space, and ongoing violence against human rights and environmental defenders. Additionally, even when resources are available, the ways of working of the current financial architecture are inadequate to reflect the realities of global South funds. Excessive bureaucratic procedures, complex accreditation requirements, and rigid, project-based approaches continue to present barriers to these funds and their networks in their efforts to drive transformative change.

Together, these dynamics reinforce structural inequalities in how resources are governed and distributed, limiting the ability of global South funds to operate sustainably and at scale. Without shifts toward more transparent, inclusive, and flexible funding practices, local efforts will remain constrained in their capacity to respond to urgent climate, development, and justice challenges. Supporting global South funds therefore requires not only resources, but also a fundamental shift in how relationships, implementation, and impact are understood and managed.



Photo: Discussion on funding resilient food systems in the global South. © Sofia Hage/Ventos Do Norte

5. Transforming ways of working with global South funds

Despite the breadth of experience, knowledge, and impact represented by these funds, networks and coalitions across the global South to support efforts for climate, people and nature, their work is hardly recognised and supported by national and global financing actors. The current international financial architecture has not been designed to recognise or support their efforts and does not have the proper mechanisms in place to enable global South funds to access the needed resources. This represents a key missed opportunity in addressing today's global challenges. Participants of the Global South House laid out the priorities for these funds and partners in developing a global financing architecture that better reflects the needs and objectives of communities they work with. The path forward requires that finance institutions, from mainstream and global North philanthropies, to multilateral financial institutions, to governments, rethink the way they do finance for climate, nature and people.

Box 10. Definition of the international financial architecture

For the purposes of this documentation exercise, we define the international financial architecture to encompass the **governance and delivery arrangements connecting financing, intermediary and implementing actors across local, national, and international levels** to advance global sustainable development objectives. This includes the dynamics that shape decision-making, funding allocation, financing structures, and feedback loops connecting local, national, and international actors engaged in advancing sustainable development.

5.1 Increased recognition of and partnership with the infrastructures created by global South funds

A key conclusion of the Global South House is that finance institutions working for climate, nature and people do not have to reinvent the wheel or impose external solutions, but instead recognise the wide range of initiatives that are already taking place and that have the legitimacy and knowledge required to be effective. There is a need to **develop equitable partnerships with global South funds that value and strengthen the social and care networks, local knowledge, response systems, creative solutions and support structures they have created and nurtured.**

“Investing in invisible infrastructures sustains transformations. What structures are these? Relations, time [...], emotional work and care work that sustain organisations, networks, discomforts and differences, and mutual trust, which is not static and must be nourished and reciprocal.”

Georgia Nicolau, Procomum (From the session, ‘[Defending Rights, Building New Futures: Climate, Nature, and People Funding Amid the Global Civil Society Crisis](#)’)

Crucially, the care and support networks they nurture, the relationships of trust they maintain, and the knowledge they gather and help produce cannot rely only on project-based funding or short-term support. As was made clear throughout the Global South House calls for action, **there is an urgent need for more long-term, reliable, and flexible core support** for finance and policy on climate, nature and people to truly shift the power. While some philanthropic and bilateral actors have begun to embrace such an approach, there is a long way to go in donors' willingness to embrace truly equitable partnerships based on trust rather than control, and focused on transformation rather than project delivery.

Box 11. Casa Socio-environmental Fund and Fundo Socioambiental CAIXA

An illustrative example of equitable partnerships is the collaboration between Casa Socio-environmental Fund and Fundo Socioambiental CAIXA (*CAIXA Socio-environmental Fund*) — the socio-environmental fund of the CAIXA bank, a public Brazilian bank — which demonstrates the power of different funding mechanisms coming together in an equitable and empowering partnership. The partnership is based on supporting “small projects of big impact,” a type of work that is sometimes not desirable to larger foundations. CAIXA’s support has however enabled Casa Socio-Environmental Fund to fund and support a greater number and wider diversity of initiatives focused on climate action, poverty reduction, and citizen action. The Teia da Sociodiversidade (*Fabric of Sociodiversity*) programme mobilised BRL 53 million (USD 10,050,000) to support 400 organisations through Casa Fund, representing the largest investment by CAIXA. The partnership allows to combine the participatory and co-production mechanisms of Casa Socio-environmental Fund with adequate capacity strengthening support to enhance the potential of bottom-up solutions. Additionally, the combination of knowledge and capacities built through this work allowed groups to explore innovations that could then be presented to the government, with Casa Socio-environmental Fund and CAIXA brokering the relationships. (From the session, ‘Unlocking Pathways: Collaborative Arrangements to Ground Climate Finance at Scale in the Territories’)

Additionally, the recognition of these funds for socio-environmental justice as key agents of transformation demands **reforming donors’ governance structures to ensure decision-making on finance for climate, nature and people is driven by local realities rather than top-down approaches**. Donors can learn from the diverse governance structures and trust-based philanthropy strategies that global South funds pursue to ensure their work reflects the priorities of the communities and is legitimised and monitored by them. The presence of some more mainstream finance institutions at the Global South House and their experiences demonstrated that some donors are already doing so, undertaking participatory decision-making processes and exploring options that work for their contexts and partners. Highlighting the experiences within the Global South House and opening avenues for its communities to influence other mainstream finance actors is an important contribution to advancing these goals.

Box 12. Instituto Itaúsa

The case of Instituto Itaúsa (*Itaúsa Institute*) shows a shift from fragmented philanthropy to a trust-based, community-focused approach. With origins in the private sector, the journey of the Itaúsa foundation has required understanding how foundations can be more effective by recognising and supporting existing work in the territories over implementing own projects. Itaúsa has in recent years collaborated with numerous funds to invest in strengthening the capacity of local groups. This is the case, for example, of the programme Raízes (*Roots*) — Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Fund for Climate Justice. The programme, coordinated by the Brazil Human Rights Fund providing grants to Indigenous peoples and local communities for the defence of their rights and the protection of natural resources. The programme also includes training and coordinating the participation of Indigenous peoples in socio-environmental policy debates. (From the session, ‘Collaborative and Innovative Arrangements to Ground Climate Finance in the Territories’)

5.2 Financing mechanisms that enable rather than hinder the potential of global South funds

Most global South funds achieve their work not *because* of mainstream financing mechanisms, but *despite* them. Enhancing their impact and scale requires changing the systems that distribute resources so that they are more easily accessed by local actors. As part of their climate action strategies, **global and national financial actors can test ways to provide better conditions to access finance**. On one hand, traditional financial institutions can design simpler accreditation pathways for global South funds. As was explained at the Global South House, for example, the Adaptation Fund has been developing mechanisms to make financing more accessible to local actors, including piloting national-level accreditation processes instead of international ones. In Brazil, the government then ran an open call and delegated accreditation screening to the national level. Funds such as Fundo Ecos/ISPN are now seeking Adaptation Fund accreditation to access its financing. Additionally, mainstream finance institutions — from larger global North philanthropies to banks — can also learn from the different models implemented by global South funds to make financing more accessible to local and community-based organisations, including through fit-for-purpose, smaller, or adaptable funding streams within their programming for climate, nature and people.

Box 13. Inter-American Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank

Multilateral banks are also starting to explore opportunities to work more closely at the local level. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) entered a partnership with the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (*Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica*, COICA) to establish an Amazon for Life (*Amazonia pela Vida*) fund of 10 million USD dedicated for Indigenous-led projects across the Amazon.¹ In Colombia, IADB's fund Sustainable Colombia (*Colombia Sostenible*¹) has lower thresholds than other funds, requiring only having operated a programme of USD 1 million (though this remains a high threshold for many global South funds). In Indonesia, a dedicated grant mechanism for Indigenous communities by the World Bank was operated by Samdhana and others, where USD 5 million were distributed across about 200 communities, encompassing 2 million hectares of forests and territories. Not only did the programme graduate with a highly satisfactory rating, but the communities managed to work with the World Bank to adjust the guidelines and solutions frameworks to adapt them to their needs. (From the session, 'Unlocking Pathways: Collaborative Arrangements to Ground Climate Finance at Scale in the Territories')

These opportunities to access resources and partner with global South funds exist, but they are very limited or even anecdotal. Furthermore, it is very difficult to identify them within the huge financial architecture for development and climate. A lot more work needs to be done to make these opportunities known as well as better financed and operational. It is important to monitor and showcase how these global and national mechanisms work to overcome issues of trust and perceptions of risk around locally led funding.

5.3 Explore different financing models that encourage collaboration and sustainability

Partnerships between different forms of philanthropy, governmental, and multilateral actors could explore **non-competitive, collaborative and/or revolving funds to encourage a different way of financing and value different economic and non-economic contributions**. The experiences of global South funds in this area, from open calls to pooled funds, have demonstrated the power of bringing together different actors towards a common goal.

“What we aim for is rebuilding ecosystems of collaboration — where people exchange not only funds, but knowledge, contacts, and support that strengthen trust.”

Daniela Cevallos, Fundación Ñeque (*Ñeque Foundation*) (From the session, ‘Popular Education and Climate Finance: Methodologies and Technologies for Socio-environmental and Climate Justice’)

Box 14. Alliances and collaboration between funds and partners

Alliances and collaboration between funds and partners can take place at the national, regional, and international level. Synchronize the Earth is a pooled fund based in the UK that brings together 11 funds to help scale up their activities through joint proposals, as well as mobilising emergency funds whenever necessary. While these forms of consortiums require a lot of coordination and trust-building, they can also be important spaces for philanthropic actors and their support organisations to work together. (From the session, ‘Collaborative and Innovative Arrangements to Ground Climate Finance in the Territories’)

Initiatives like the Global South House are a critical space to increase learning of the different forms of financing that can be explored to advance socio-environmental justice. As global South funds increasingly come together as a collective, it will be useful to not just document their experiences and lessons learned, but also understand the different typologies of financing and support that these funding mechanisms offer, to have a clearer understanding of the diversity of possible approaches as well as commonalities, and leverage these elements when negotiating for resources and support from mainstream finance institutions or establishing new partnerships.

Ultimately, in the face of uncertainty around financial flows and overlapping crises, financing actors — both mainstream and those represented in the Global South House — will have to **work together to combine sources, sizes, and timing of funding**. It will be important to establish cross-actor alliances that can identify when and how each different financial actor can contribute — through combining emergency funding with longer-term and reliable flows for capacity strengthening and organisational development; providing ‘bridge funding’ of lower amounts through regranteeing organisations; establishing revolving fund structures; and complementing public and multilateral sources of funding with independent, philanthropic resources — including by promoting cultures of giving — that build on rather than replicate efforts. Moving forward, showcasing examples of collaboration and training both donors and implementers on the role and advantages of different actors can help develop innovative forms of climate and development action that advances solidarity and collaboration.

6. Conclusion

In its first edition, the Global South House served to consolidate a community of locally rooted, independent, activist, justice-oriented funds that, despite having to operate in a global context of not just intensifying crises but also inadequate financing structures, are proving that a different model for action is possible. At the core of the operations of global South funds for socio-environmental justice is the construction and management of relationships. The physical proximity to territories, paired with the activists and grassroots origins of many of the funds, enables them to function through a deep, rich, and solid network of trust. This then enables them to develop trust-based approaches guided by horizontal and democratic partnerships, processes of constant feedback, and flexibility and agility in their work.

Figure 3. A vision for change

What is hampering the impact of global South funds:



Limited, concentrated and opaque distribution of resources



Inadequate ways of working of financial architecture to reflect global South realities



Lack of trust in ability of global South funds to deliver at scale



What could transform the finance architecture:



Enabling rather than hindering potential of global South funds



Recognising and partnering with infrastructures created by global South funds



Exploring alternative and collaborative financing schemes

The discussions laid out the wide breadth of initiatives that are changing people's lives and establishing systems of collaboration, trust, solidarity, and support. They also provided a window into the various challenges that they face as well as the creative ways in which global South funds and their partners, from philanthropies, to multilateral institutions, to research and support organisations, are seeking to overcome them. Nevertheless, existing finance models clash with locally rooted visions of development and obscure the transformative potential of grassroots work. As expressed in Belém, **rethinking the way financing for climate, nature and people is done also involves shifting from 'filling gaps' to 'building systems'**, where the global financial architecture does not seek to reinvent the wheel but instead invests in the strong networks and knowledge existing in the territories to drive transformation.

Moving forward, the Global South House will work to deepen the knowledge and continue to use evidence of the impact and potential of global South funds to advocate for transforming global financing

mechanisms and governance structures for climate, nature and people. This will only be effective with the collaboration of different actors and allies across sectors and institutions. Specifically, the strategic knowledge partnership with IIED will seek to document experiences and recommendations, convene different funding actors, and support joint advocacy efforts in key global spaces. IIED will continue to work with the Global South House with the goal to establish concrete partnerships and influence decision-making processes in the path towards building a global financing architecture that shifts the power and delivers more effective solutions grounded in local realities.



Photo: Members and partners of the Community Funds of the Amazon Network. © Sofia Hage/Ventos Do Norte

Find out more

The Global South House is a platform for **political articulation, mobilization, knowledge production and collaboration among philanthropic actors** from the global South. Its purpose is to **influence resource flows and power dynamics in favour of socio-environmental justice**, ensuring that local solutions are at the centre of global conversations on **financing for climate, nature and people**. Find out more at: <https://theglobalsouthhouse.com/>