



HUIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community



Grassroots Women-Led Resilient Community Development

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Contents



About Us

Huirou Commission is a global movement of grassroots women's organisations leading a transformative agenda for inclusive resilience and gender justice. Member groups are building the leadership capacity of grassroots women, enhancing the resilience of their communities, and advocating for change in the systems that govern development planning and finance.

Huirou represents nearly one million women from rural, urban, and indigenous communities. Our member groups are networks, cooperatives, federations of self-help groups, and women-led community based organisations, all working on diverse, locally appropriate solutions driven by a common vision centered on the empowerment and leadership of women from under-resourced communities. As Huirou members, grassroots women's organizations, facilitating NGOs and founding networks demonstrate how grassroots-led action can be facilitated. Huirou members are supported by a small professional Secretariat, while a grassroots-led Governing Council serves as the decision-making body for the global movement.

Our program pursues Huirou's mission to create a transformed world with balanced power relations and sustainable resilient communities in which people lead lives free from poverty, inequality, violence, insecurity and all forms of injustice, with grassroots women leaders and their groups at the center of decision-making.

To achieve this global mission, member groups are organised into a global movement that actively learns, strategizes, and plans together at local, regional and global levels to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda and Paris Climate Change Agreement. The movement advocates for policy change, builds alliances, and organises Global Grassroots Academies and the Global Grassroots Women's Congress to build strong coalitions in support of local action.

On the ground, member groups use tools such as peer learning exchanges, community mapping, leadership support, Community Resilience Funds, local-to-local dialogues and watchdog groups to build sustainable, resilient communities where grassroots women are recognized for their expertise and bring their priorities to the center of decision-making.



Picture credit: Ntengwe, Zimbabwe

Huairou Commission's Resilience Diamond

1

Strengthening grassroots women's organising and leadership

Huairou member groups advance grassroots leadership by mentoring, training, and advising less experienced grassroots groups on strategies for building community resilience. Women learn to take on new leadership roles that position them as experts and leaders in the community (as trainers, mobilizers, risk mappers, monitors, fund managers, grassroots advocates). Together, they develop and/or apply tools to facilitate collective analysis of key development issues and collective strategies to address them.

3

Building networks and coalitions

Huairou member groups federate, linking women's groups together, and forming networks that plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and learn together. Knowledge and practices are shared with new groups through peer to peer learning exchanges and Grassroots Academies. Partnerships are advanced with government officials, donors, researchers, and NGO leaders who are prepared to collaborate and/or champion grassroots women's roles in advancing community resilience. Grassroots women's groups organise and participate in multi-stakeholder platforms.

Nurturing grassroots women's knowledge and good practice to promote gender-just and resilient development

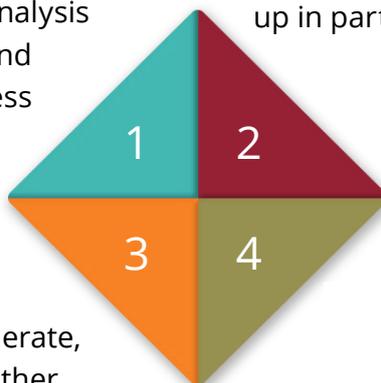
Huairou member groups build an awareness of who and what are vulnerable, identify resources and design and invest in collective actions to improve housing, infrastructure, basic services, livelihoods linked to sustainable agriculture, food security and natural resources. These grassroots women-led solutions demonstrate innovation and expertise and become the foundation for scaling up in partnership with local authorities and other actors.

2

Influencing and changing public policy and processes

Huairou member groups identify and engage decision makers and allies who recognize grassroots women as resilience experts through holding joint training programs and other activities. Action-research on resilience is organised and the findings and recommendations are presented to officials. Agreements with the government describe the role of grassroots' women's groups in planning, implementing, scaling up and monitoring resilience initiatives. Government resources and budgets for grassroots initiatives are secured.

4



In This Report

In 2020, leaders of grassroots women's organisations demonstrated their ability not only to drive resilience-building locally, but to lead a global movement, introduce innovative ideas and advance their agenda to influence development partners and negotiate strategic systems-change. Throughout the year, they showed how learning, planning and working collectively and collaboratively produces measurable results in food security, increased income, tenure security and autonomy, and dispels outdated stereotypes about the capacity and agency of grassroots women.

This report provides an overview of the achievements of our member groups and the movement as a whole. It is organised around the Huairou Commission's Theory of Change: the four-point Resilience and Movement Building Leadership Diamond. In addition to the four sections aligned to the dimensions of the Resilience Diamond, this year's report includes a fifth section that presents Huairou's accomplishments, challenges and insights in relation to Covid-19, an unprecedented global crisis that catalysed efficient and strategic responses from grassroots women's groups across the network. This report reflects on our progress in 2020, the fifth year of our partnership with Sida under a program called, "Grassroots Women-Led Resilient Community Development in Post-2015 Policy Implementation."



Picture credit: MUDECI, Mexico



Picture credit: UPWD, Cambodia

Resilience in the Face of Covid-19

Resilience in the Face of Covid-19

While the Covid-19 pandemic cast its shadow over every domain of Huairou Commission's work in 2020, this section of the report focuses on grassroots-led efforts to confront challenges specific to the pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a test of grassroots women's leadership and capacity **to protect their families and communities** from the devastating impacts of this unprecedented crisis. In various countries, lockdowns cut off access to food, markets, incomes and livelihoods, creating severe shortages in everyday essentials and preventing access to services, while multiplying women's caregiving responsibilities. In the face of this, grassroots women rapidly organized themselves to address the most pressing needs of their communities.

At the onset of the pandemic, Huairou members and the Governing Council agreed that swiftly getting money to grassroots organizations was critical to managing and reducing community risks and to positioning women as essential partners in emergency response, relief and longer-term recovery. Members met and collectively established action priorities; and the Governing Council approved a budget and operational plan to support both experienced and less experienced members to manage resilience program funds.

A member-led committee assessed proposals based on agreed-upon criteria (with Secretariat support) and 27 first time small funds were awarded to women-led community groups. Review clinics and peer-mentoring activities were provided to this cohort group to enhance their program effectiveness. Experienced members already implementing resilience programs were also supported to revise their activity plans and budgets to address pandemic related priorities. Both groups took part in virtual peer learning and advocacy workshops over time and contributed their ideas and priorities to outlining HC's Grassroots-Global Resilient Recovery Platform.

To reduce pandemic impacts in the community, grassroots-led member organizations focused on the following strategies.

Leaders repeatedly stated that past investments in grassroots women's leadership, organising, networks and partnerships were key drivers of their collective response to the Covid-19 crisis. It is not only the skills, knowledge, practices and partnerships that grassroots women have acquired over time, but also the personal and public authority and recognition they gained from collectively working to reduce disaster risk and address development challenges that caused grassroots groups' individual and collective leadership and impact to grow. The social capital women created over the years allowed members to act decisively when others could not.

Demonstrating Grassroots Leadership in Resilient Recovery: Strong Collaborations with Government

Grassroots women leaders demonstrated strong leadership during Covid-19 through collective and coordinated emergency response in partnership with their local and national governments, positioning themselves as credible, reliable partners to the government. Grassroots groups and governments worked together to identify and support communities' immediate needs such as access to health information and healthcare services, promote health protocols to prevent infections, and link vulnerable families to government resources through social protection programs. These collaborations were significant for the grassroots groups and provided important opportunities to reflect on and strengthen overall strategies for partnering with the government to build long-term resilient recovery.

Many groups focused on accessing and reframing social protection/assistance. **Groots, Trinidad and Tobago** partnered with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Office of the Prime Minister's National AIDS Coordination Committee (NACC) and other institutions to identify and link vulnerable people with social assistance programs to address their food security needs. The **Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), Benin** partnered with the Ministry of Health for Covid-19 sensitization and distribution of prevention equipment like soap, gloves and masks and similarly, **CO-Multiversity, Philippines** partnered with the national Social Amelioration Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Other groups focused on impacting local planning priorities and budgeting. **Urban Poor Women Development (UPWD), Cambodia** supported community access to basic health services, successfully integrating their Covid-19 priorities into the Commune Investment Plan for the 2020-21 year in ten communes. In Zimbabwe, the Hwange Rural District Council's department of Social Services established formal partnerships with four women's groups from **Ntengwe**, ensuring the inclusion of grassroots federation members in formal decision-making processes.



Picture credit: AWARE, Uganda

Community Caregiving: Supporting the Dignity, Wellbeing, Safety and Security of Grassroots Women and the Most Vulnerable Amidst the Pandemic

Women self-organised to collectively ensure basic needs (food, water, medicine) and supplemental health, child and elderly care and support were available for neighbors and members; compensating for limited or no government support, while ensuring women's safety from heightened levels of domestic violence through partnerships with the police, referral services, rescue operations, legal support and shelter.

To ensure access to nutritious food, housing and basic services, women leaders of **GROOTS, Trinidad and Tobago** and **Action for Women and Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE), Uganda** supported people living with HIV and their families by providing 'Dinner on



Picture credit: Himawanti, Nepal

Wheels' and emergency medication. Stipends and protective gear were provided to home-based caregivers, significantly reducing deaths from HIV/AIDS-related illnesses.

To respond to and curtail Gender Based Violence, **Katuba Women's Association, Zambia** and **Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resources Management Association (Himawanti), Nepal** engaged women leaders to create a support system for victims of domestic violence by providing them shelter, transport and food. Groups created safe spaces for women and children, partnering with the local authorities to assist and protect women from domestic violence.

To monitor health conditions and facilitate access to treatment, **Asociación Alianza de Mujeres Costarricense (AMC), Costa Rica** formed brigades of Women Health Promoters to refer families with infected individuals to health centres and provided food and other essentials to those in isolation. Similarly, the **International Women Communication Centre (IWCC), Nigeria** formed community watchdog groups to monitor community health in 50 communities.

Adapting Food and Livelihoods Security Practices

Flexibility and agility are hallmarks of resilience. Grassroots women demonstrated these capacities by rapidly mobilizing all resources at their disposal, including women's collective savings, Community Resilience Funds, stored and harvested produce, and by pooling scarce but essential supplies.

Mujeres, Democracia y Ciudadanía A.C. (MUDECI), Mexico established five community kitchens to provide low-cost nutritious food to 250 at-risk women who lost their livelihoods. By directly purchasing and marketing produce from women farmers in the community, this strategy provided livelihoods for women and strengthened local value chains.

Grassroots groups partnering with **Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)** in India used monies from their community savings to mentor jobless migrants as vendors of local farm produce. Women also recouped losses from unsold organic produce by harvesting and storing organic seeds in seed banks and selling them for cash income as needed. Today, seed banks are a permanent feature of the network of women producer's food security and livelihood strategies.

In Indonesia, women's groups linked to **YAKKUM Emergency Unit** modified their waste banks by investing the profits (normally generated by collecting, segregating and selling household waste and distributed among group members) into urban vegetable gardens. They sold and donated the harvests locally, and used harvested vegetables to supplement government-supported children's feeding programs.



Picture credit: MUDECI, Mexico



Picture credit: SSP, India

Women-managed Vegetable Gardens for Food and Livelihoods Security

Twenty-two member organizations introduced or strengthened their kitchen, backyard or community gardens to provide home-grown nutritious food and small incomes for women and their families who lost their jobs during the pandemic. Over the past several years, grassroots organizations across urban, rural and indigenous communities have been addressing food, nutrition and livelihood insecurity by maximising the use of limited spaces - small agricultural plots, backyards, communal or public lands - to grow short cycle organic food crops. Groups also leveraged connections with local governments to provide women with access to water supply, seeds, training and land for growing food.

Organización de Mujeres Indígenas y Campecinas Sembrando Esperanza (OMICSE), Ecuador provided 850 women with seedlings to improve family gardens with vegetables and medicinal plants, partnering with the church and the government of Toacazo to access farm inputs to sustain kitchen gardens and ensure food supply. **Best Practices Foundation, India** trained three women's groups from the Women's Federation in Mysore to plant vegetables, make compost, and develop business plans with the agreement that they would share their harvests with vulnerable groups. **Seke Rural Home Based Care (SRHBC), Zimbabwe** used Community Resilience Funds (CRF) to provide water supply for vegetable cultivation, increasing grassroots women's income opportunities during the pandemic. In **Madagascar** local authorities donated land to women from **Fikambanan'ny Vehivavy Tantsaha Mandoto (FVTM)** for food production and reforestation. Thanks to this, the women now have a nursery with approximately 10,000 seedlings. Together these initiatives are all contributing to long-term gender-just resilient recovery for grassroots women and their communities.

Mastering Digital Platforms to Initiate and Sustain Organizing and Advocacy

Leaders rapidly learned and applied new forms of communicating, organising and learning by utilizing social media, virtual meeting platforms, and online public information hubs to access available resources and publicly register and advance community women's needs and priorities.

Grassroots women of **Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, Nepal** learned to use online platforms to offer trainings, mobilize Covid-19 responses from medical doctors and city teams, conduct regular meetings with 31 women's groups, and learn and implement programs, all of which received significant attention and requests for replication in cities across Nepal.

Luna Creciente, Ecuador installed the Luna Creciente Zoom Platform and internet headquarters in the town of Shuar Arutam, with 80 provincial and national grassroots women leaders now trained in managing virtual networks. Fifteen of these leaders were also trained to produce short videos capturing their demands and advocacy messages. **Ntengwe, Zimbabwe** supported the community to embrace technology, with women using tele-health services and online platforms to communicate and share messages on infection prevention and climate smart agriculture methodologies. Due to limited avenues for selling products locally, **Rede Pintadas, Brazil** created the website 'Online Counter' and trained grassroots women to market agricultural and agro-industrial products online to increase their incomes.



Picture credit: PDAP, Bangladesh

Asia

Covid-19 Small Funds

Bangladesh
Rupnagar Akota Cluster

Cambodia
UPWD

India
Best Practices Foundation

Nepal
Himavanti

Papua New Guinea
Wodai-Groots PNG

Philippines
Lihok Philippina

CRF Core Funds

Bangladesh
Rupnagar Akota Cluster

India
SSP

Indonesia
Yakkum

Philippines
DAMPA

Nepal
Lumanti

Philippines
PDAP

Philippines
CO-Multiversity

Vietnam
Life Cente

Africa

Covid-19 Small Funds

Benin
ICA Benin

Ghana
GSF

Kenya
MLHARA,
KEPOFA

Madagascar
FVTM

Nigeria
IWCC

South Africa
HBCA-SA

Uganda
AWARE,
Kawempe Home
Based Care Giver's
Alliance,
Ecological Christian
Organisation,
LUCOHECO

Zambia
Katuba Women's
Association

Zimbabwe
SEKE Rural Home
Based Care

CRF Core Funds

Kenya
Shibuye Community
Health Workers,
Polycom

Uganda
SWID,
UCOBAC

Zambia
ZHPPF

Zimbabwe
ZPHCA,
Ntengwe

Latin America & Caribbean

Covid-19 Small Funds

Brazil
Pombos Brazil
Women's Center

Ecuador
FONDOS/OMICSE

Jamaica
Groots

Mexico
MUDECI

Groots Trinidad &
Tobago

Nicaragua
DESATEPIN

Panama
FUNDERPROM U COOP

CRF Core Funds

Brazil
Rede Pintadas

Costa Rica
AMC

Ecuador
Luna Creciente

Guatemala
Fundación

Honduras
WAGUCHA

Nicaragua
Las Brumas

Peru
GROOTS Peru

Picture credit: YEU, Indonesia



Strengthening Grassroots Women's Organizing and Leadership

Strengthening Grassroots Women's Organizing and Leadership

Strengthening grassroots women's leadership is central to Huairou Commission's movement building work. Across the Huairou network, leadership development has a two-fold purpose: to shift grassroots women's self-perception, empowering them to initiate, drive and organise collective action; and to shift the perception of grassroots women by their families, communities and governments. The Covid-19 crisis triggered rapid responses from grassroots organisations across our network, demonstrating their confidence and capacities to drive collective action in the face of adversity. Progress in strengthening grassroots women's leadership and shifting grassroots women's relationships with government were evident in three areas:

- **Entering Local Government Bodies and Local Committees:** Grassroots women **gained authority** by entering formal decision making committees and local government bodies
- **Coordinating and Collaborating with Government to Manage Risk and Vulnerability and Negotiate for Resources:** Grassroots organizations collaborated with governments to **manage risk and vulnerability** including through improved access to government resources and
- **Localizing Global and National Policy Frameworks:** Grassroots women supported governments to deliver on global and national commitments by **localizing implementation** of these frameworks

Entering Local Government Bodies and Local Committees

Grassroots women's public leadership in ongoing climate and disaster resilience efforts, along with their organised response to the pandemic, resulted in appointments to several formal committees and local government bodies. In 2020, **183 grassroots women were elected to formal positions**, giving them the authority to drive and monitor implementation of government programs and generate grassroots women-responsive policies, plans and programs.

Four women leaders from **Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID), Uganda** were elected as Councilors in Walukuba-Masese Division, Jinja City, enabling grassroots leaders to voice women's needs and priorities at City Council meetings, participate in budget processes, and monitor government programs in Jinja City. In **Vietnam**, grassroots women leaders from **Life Center** were formally appointed to political bodies mandated to protect women's rights and supervise government programs and activities.

These appointments give women the power and opportunity to review and influence agendas and annual work plans and advocate for budget allocations to support women-led resilience work. In Bahia, **Brazil**, women leaders from **Rede Pintadas** were elected as councilors in municipal chambers and as State Deputy in the Legislative Assembly, giving them the power to vote against bills that encourage gender inequalities, discrimination and/or human rights violations and influence and approve policies promoting the rights of marginalised groups to access labour markets.

Coordinating and Collaborating with Government to Manage Risk and Vulnerability and Negotiate for Resources

Grassroots women's groups partnered with local governments to convene **151 local to local dialogues over the past year**, increasing access to formal resources through local advocacy efforts. These dialogues facilitated collaborative and coordinated risk reduction and allocation of government resources to grassroots women's groups including access to land, extension services such as seeds and farm inputs, technical training, food and hygiene kits, and social protection.

In Zimbabwe, local-to-local dialogues and negotiations hosted by **Zimbabwe Parents of the Handicapped Children Association (ZPHCA)** enabled 54 grassroots women to receive government-sponsored agricultural inputs, with 32 women allocated land and water access for a group garden. In **Indonesia**, a dialogue between women's groups from **YAKKUM Emergency Unit**, and the Small Medium Enterprises Department (SMED) of Yogyakarta City familiarized communities with available training programs, such as waste bank urban agriculture training, offered in partnership with the Department of Agriculture.

Ongoing advocacy by **PDAP, Bangladesh** resulted in local government support for upgrading footpaths, drainage and waste management to reduce flood risk in urban poor communities, as well as local government resources for food and hygiene kits in response to the Covid-19 crisis. In **Kenya**, grassroots women's groups from **Polycom** joined multi-stakeholder platforms in Kibera and Kendubay to coordinate with local government on their pandemic response, ensuring vulnerable groups' access to food and hygiene kits and linking women with disabilities to the government's social protection program.



Picture credit: SWID, Uganda

Fundacion, Guatemala

Engaging with Government towards Certification of Grassroots Women as Resilience Experts

As a result of continued advocacy and engagement through the Community Resilience Practitioners Platform (CRPP) in Guatemala, **38 grassroots women leaders of Fundacion received formal training and regional certification** this year as Resilience Experts in Community Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction from CEPREDENAC, the specialized institution of the Central American Integration System for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response. This training enables grassroots women to ensure inclusion of grassroots priorities in agenda-setting processes and negotiate for incorporation of these priorities into joint work plans with the local government.

The CRPP in Guatemala provides strategic opportunities for grassroots and indigenous women to communicate with government agencies, institutional partners, and civil society organisations to collectively develop and design municipal policies and plans to build climate resilience. **Fundación** partnered with the Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres (CONRED), the Guatemalan Civil Protection Agency, that recognizes grassroots women as community resilience experts, liaises with them during emergencies, and trains women in the use of GPS for community risk mapping. In addition to this work with CONRED, a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) resulted in Ministry-sponsored training for grassroots women on native seed generation and conservation, an important component of resilient and sustainable agriculture.

Localizing Global and National Policy Frameworks

In 2020, member organisations expanded and strengthened their leadership base by educating a cadre of new leaders on global policy tools and frameworks. Localizing global and national policies, tools and frameworks enables grassroots women leaders to analyze contributions to successful implementation and support governments to uphold commitments, leverage contributions, and negotiate more effectively.

In **Zimbabwe**, **Ntengwe** supported 30 grassroots women's groups to understand and scale up local implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), enabling groups to engage with district governments to advocate for inclusion of grassroots women and their resilience priorities in local and district decision making committees. In **Honduras**, **WAGUCHA** collaborated with the Ministry of the Environment, the Public Prosecutor's Office, representatives of the Honduran National Institute for Women, and the Municipality of Trujillo to train 30 grassroots leaders on inclusion of grassroots and indigenous women's priorities in the gendered perspective on DRR and the Sendai Framework. A dialogue between grassroots women from **Lumanti** in Butwal City, **Nepal** and locally elected women representatives supported identification of priorities related to the local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and explored strategies for influencing the National Agenda on SDGs.

In Kenya, the **Shibuye Community Health Workers** worked in collaboration with the Farmers Training Institute, community leaders, and county government to localize the Climate Change Act and land governance related to sustainable land use management in fulfilment of the Kenya Government's commitment to pursue the African Union's Agenda 2063 focused on agriculture and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, enabling local government and civil society to implement global policy frameworks at the local level.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog, India

Sakhi Task Force at the Frontlines of the Covid-19 Response

SSP India empowers grassroots women by investing in entrepreneurship and networks to build resilience against climate risks such as floods, droughts, cyclones and tsunamis. In response to Covid-19, **3,000 grassroots women leaders from 500 villages demonstrated exceptional leadership** by organising into a special village-level Sakhi Task Force, a grassroots response team that partners with the local government to support distribution of government relief and resources, build community awareness of Covid-19, and disseminate health information to more than 10,000 people across four Indian states.

In response to the urgent need for incomes and livelihoods, grassroots leaders provided financial assistance from their Community Resilience Funds for farming, supported off-farm businesses with local marketing opportunities, promoted online marketing in partnership with the private sector, and facilitated access to cash-for-work through government programs. The task force surveyed migrant families, assessing access to basic services and distributing food grains, hygiene kits, food relief packages and other daily essentials to community members, migrant workers, daily wage earners, widows and the poorest families. Through community kitchens and vegetable cultivation on their farms and homesteads, women leaders ensured food security of community members and returning migrants without incomes, linking them to the government's Public Distribution System for accessing free food grains.



Picture credit: SSP, India



Picture credit: ZHPPF, Zambia

Mapping Vulnerability to Promote Risk-Informed Actions

Climate resilient practices adopted by grassroots women leaders are informed by a systematic risk assessment of climate change impacts on grassroots communities. These risk assessments help communities identify and capture their priorities, engage with the local government for planning, and monitor local actions, repositioning grassroots women as knowledge holders and experts able to leverage government resources to build resilient solutions. In 2020, **151 risk maps were updated** to reflect the realities and priorities of grassroots communities affected by ever-changing climate and disasters such as Covid-19. Grassroots leaders created new tools such as community and household surveys, risk mapping, and seasonal calendars to collect data on Covid-related risks and adapted existing tools to include data on the spread and impact of Covid-19 in their communities. In some cases, risk mapping information was digitised for wider outreach and use by the government and other stakeholders.

In **Uganda**, **SWID** trained twenty grassroots women from three new groups in risk mapping in order to analyse risks and vulnerabilities related to women's right to access, own and control land in Jinja City. This enabled the women to work with land department officials to mitigate against land grabbing and exploitative land title processing fees by middle-men. In Harare and Mashonaland East in **Zimbabwe**, **ZPHCA** supported 300 grassroots women to conduct risk mapping in eight new communities to identify those most vulnerable to the combined impacts of Covid-19 and climate change. Findings were shared widely with other stakeholders, resulting in the creation of programs that incorporate practical solutions to diversify and build grassroots women's incomes, profits, food sources and entrepreneurship skills.

In **Kenya**, **Polycom** conducted risk mapping in Kibera slums, engaging 30 local stakeholders, including government and civil society, to verify and adopt mapping data, raising awareness of community risks such as open sewers and unsafe waste disposal. As part of this work, Polycom created an online database of all disaster risks and interventions in Kibera, offering accurate information to inform government and service provider interventions. To visit the database, click here: <http://mdata.polycomgirls.or.ke/>

Grassroots leaders from **Luna Creciente** in **Ecuador** conducted risk mapping in six provinces to identify vulnerabilities of women due to Covid-19, such as increase in domestic violence, loss of livelihoods and income, and increased labour burden. Results of the risk mapping were shared with the wider communities through seminars, conferences and virtual meetings to increase awareness and create action strategies to address the issues identified.

Twenty six grassroots leaders from **YAKKUM Emergency Unit**, **Indonesia**, collaborated with the local government to develop four new risk maps that identify potential impacts of disasters. These tools drew from grassroots women's experiences and formed the basis of prioritized action plans that included solutions such as installation of evacuation route signs for use during climate disasters and production of hand-sanitizer and disinfectant to prevent the spread of Covid-19. These new tools addressed the limitations of previous government-facilitated tools which could not be updated with new information, causing them to become outdated quickly.



Picture credit: Ntengwe, Zimbabwe



Picture credit: Fundación Guatemala

Community Resilience Funds: Advancing Gender-Just and Climate Resilient Development

Community Resilience Funds: Advancing Gender-Just and Climate Resilient Development

The Community Resilience Fund (CRF) is an innovative flexible financing mechanism that supports grassroots women's groups to implement locally-led climate resilience initiatives. The fund empowers grassroots women by enabling them to drive context-specific resilience practices. In addition to addressing crises emerging from natural hazards in 2020, CRF funds as well as food and incomes generated from existing CRF practices were key to withstanding the impacts of the pandemic. During the last year, the CRF continued to be used to advance the following resilience strategies:

- **Enhancing food and income security through climate-smart agriculture:** This year, grassroots groups leveraged existing practices to ensure food and income security during Covid-19.
- **Diversifying and enhancing livelihoods:** CRF was used to combat grassroots women's increased livelihood insecurity by providing resources to diversify livelihood activities through enterprise development and other innovations.
- **Community infrastructure, nature-based solutions and environmental protection:** Groups invested the CRF in upgrading and maintaining community infrastructure and protecting the environment in order to improve the quality of everyday life in impoverished settlements and enhance resilience.
- **Securing land ownership for enhancing access, control and use of assets for building resilience:** Securing formal documentation of land ownership offers opportunities for grassroots women to invest in the land in ways that build resilience and protect the environment.

Enhancing Food and Income Security through Climate-Smart Agriculture

While climate-proofing food and farming systems continued to be a priority for grassroots women's groups, this year groups also leveraged existing practices to ensure food and income security during the Covid-19 crisis. CRF investments were made towards creating agro-ecological gardens for diversifying food crops and cultivating medicinal plants and herbs to secure food and incomes during disasters.

GROOTS Peru invested the CRF in home gardens for 86 women and their families, who were also encouraged to cultivate medicinal plants, herbs, fuel, fodder and flowers to reduce household costs and supplement incomes.

ZHPPF, Zambia made strategic investments in backyard gardens to improve food and nutrition security of 100 families in urban slums during droughts and lockdowns related to Covid-19, training women in organic agricultural practices to ensure their abilities to sustain their backyard gardens and secure food for their families. Grassroots groups from **Rede Pintadas, Brazil** used CRF to demonstrate agroecological practices in farmer field schools, enhancing sustainable food and farming systems and strengthening local solidarity economies. This included reducing food and livelihood insecurity by diversifying income sources through livestock rearing and shifting farms from single cash crops to nutrition-rich traditional food crops, thereby optimising productivity of family-owned farms.



Picture credit: Rede Pintadas, Brazil

Ntengwe, Zimbabwe

Shifting to Climate Compatible, Short-term Food Crops

Extreme heat waves followed by floods led to severe food insecurity in Zambia's Hwange district in 2020. **Ntengwe** supported Hwange grassroots women groups to shift to climate-compatible foodgrain cultivation such as Amaranth and red sorghum--heat-resistant super food crops that are cost and labour saving and can be harvested within weeks.

Ntengwe partnered with the Department of Agriculture (AGRITEX) and the Tugwi Mukosi Multidisciplinary Research Institute of Midlands State University to provide training and awareness on Amaranth cultivation to 55 self-help groups in Monde. Amaranth grain and seeds were procured and distributed to 55 women farmers as start-up seeds. Women groups developed an effective irrigation system in Monde village to assist 400 households to cultivate amaranth in their homestead gardens. In addition, the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises assisted in creating market linkages and providing value chain opportunities to process and sell amaranth. Women have now begun to see themselves as custodians of their own food and livelihoods security and development. They have also gained the confidence to identify other priorities and engage multiple stakeholders to advance sustainable, resilient community development.

Diversifying and Enhancing Livelihoods

Climate change increasingly affects the livelihoods of grassroots women. To combat this, women must continuously diversify their livelihood practices to stabilize incomes and minimise risks. This year, livelihood risk and losses were exacerbated by the disruption of value chains, closing down of markets, and loss of mobility due to Covid-19. CRF was used to build resilience by diversifying livelihood activities, exploring new local markets, enterprise development, adapting activities to deal with the pandemic, and restoring livelihoods through innovations, with many women's groups investing in equipment or practices to add value to agricultural products and sell products locally.

Groups from **UCOBAC, Uganda** used CRF to procure diverse seed varieties for the planting season and buy machinery for value addition and processing of maize and nuts, reducing women's labour time and increasing sustainable income sources. In **India, SSP** partnered with private sector actors to support grassroots women farmers and dairy entrepreneurs with digital marketing and value-addition through cold storage technology, supporting the installation of 150 vegetable coolers to keep produce fresh while maintaining nutritional content. Fifty grassroots women from **PDAP, Bangladesh** were supported with CRF investments in small businesses like poultry farms, tailoring, sale of prepared food, grocery shops, and vegetable stalls that generated livelihoods through cooperative marketing at local outlets in urban areas. PDAP members in rural areas used the CRF to plant trees and rear livestock, assuring income during climate and Covid-19 emergencies.

DAMPA SOFP, Philippines

Grassroots Food Banks to Secure Food and Livelihoods during Covid-19

Grassroots leaders from **Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api Solidarity of Oppressed Filipino People, Inc (DAMPA SOFP), Philippines** used CRF along with their community savings to pilot food banks in four communities (Manila City, Leyte, Quezon City and Samar), providing easy access to food for 802 grassroots households during the Covid-19 pandemic. Food banks, which are small local grocery shops that supply rice, coffee, pig feed, chicken feed, and vegetables from backyards, allow community members to buy essentials locally at affordable prices without having to travel to the market. This reduces women's travel time and costs and promotes safety by reducing social contact, while at the same time empowering women to collectively manage the food banks. In addition, shares of the food bank profits support disaster preparedness and emergencies, social services, management of the initiative, and ensure the sustainability of the food banks.



Picture credit: DAMPA, Philippines

Community Infrastructure, Nature Based Solutions and Environment Protection

Groups invested the CRF in upgrading and maintaining community infrastructure in order to improve the quality of everyday life in impoverished settlements and enhance resilience. Improved infrastructure reduces risks caused by extreme weather events like hurricanes, floods and droughts, and reduces health risks associated with unsafe water and improper waste management. Additionally, grassroots women recognise environmental protection as a fundamental resilience building activity. Over the past year, groups developed and implemented sustainable and eco-friendly practices to improve the environment and reduce risks associated with climate stressors.

WAGUCHA, Honduras partnered with COPECO, the national civil protection agency, investing the CRF in construction of two seawalls in areas at risk of hurricane, winds, and strong tides in the coastal communities of Cristales and Barranco White, protecting local mangroves from extreme rainfall and strong tides which in turn protects the local economy of the people. In the **Philippines, CO-Multiversity** facilitated the construction of a low-cost, sustainable foot bridge, making it possible for people to safely move around the community during and after flooding caused by heavy rainfall. In **Kenya, Polycom** partnered with local stakeholders to provide 25 water barrels to old women in Kibiri Ward, Homabay County and set up rainwater harvesting systems to reduce exposure to diseases resulting from drinking contaminated water.

ZHPPF, Zambia and **Groots, Peru** used CRF to promote eco-friendly practices that minimize flooding incidents by reducing disposal of harmful plastic waste, training women to use recycled plastic and sand for the production of driveway and walkway pavers and conducting workshops on recycling, environment and home gardens to secure food and income.

Grassroots leaders from **Shibuye, Kenya** rehabilitated 555 acres of degraded land after receiving training in soil rehabilitation and management. In addition, 105 grassroots women engaged in agroforestry and conservation agriculture practices, while **Polycom** organised and engaged women in land rehabilitation, set up a tree nursery and organized a campaign to plant over 2500 trees in local schools. **ZHPPF** capacitated and supported 100 women to establish sack gardens and tree planting initiatives, supporting ecosystem restoration and creating environmentally friendly green spaces.



Picture credit: CO-Multiversity, Philippines

Securing Land Ownership for Enhancing Access, Control and Use of Assets for Building Resilience

Secure land tenure offers opportunities for grassroots women to invest in the land in ways that build resilience. In 2020, key strategies that **secured land tenure for 2243 women** include mapping and community validation of land boundaries, organising local dialogues with the government and local stakeholders, and securing formal land ownership documentation. Resilience investments span growing organic food crops and restoring soil nutrition to sustain productivity, both of which are critical for a decent quality of life for grassroots women and for building resilience to multiple disasters.

Through the use of participatory land information tools, more than 1000 women from **ZHPPF** in both rural and urban areas of **Zambia** mapped their land boundaries, validated the information with community members, and presented their reports to the local government to secure land rights, enhancing women's ability to generate incomes in communities where the majority of women rely on land for their livelihoods. **UCOBAC, Uganda** supported the mapping and marking of land boundaries by grassroots women, making it possible for those without land to lease plots for farming, thereby creating an additional source of income for the women. In addition, clear documentation of land ownership enabled grassroots women to access loans from financial institutions to invest in their small enterprise and agricultural activities, further boosting household incomes.

In **Zimbabwe**, **ZPHCA** hosted local to local dialogue meetings that engaged traditional leaders on issues related to women's land rights and informal justice delivery. This led to the appointment of thirteen grassroots women to traditional village councils in the rural areas of Domboshawa and Dema and to group land allocation for 32 members in Dema. In addition, 260 grassroots women were granted land and water access rights, making it possible for them to cultivate plants to generate incomes.



Picture credit: ZPHCA, Zimbabwe

Picture credit: DAMPA, Philippines



Building Coalitions and Networks to Gain Support for Gender-Just Development

Building Coalitions and Networks to Gain Support for Gender-Just Development

In 2020, networking and coalition building continued to be a key dimension of Huairou's movement building, focused strategically on expanding and deepening the impact of grassroots-led resilient development. Four main strategies increased both scale and impact of grassroots women-led resilience initiatives:

- **Expanding Grassroots Networks:** Member organizations broadened their constituencies to reach new communities.
- **Entering Multi-Stakeholder Platforms, Coalitions and Collaborations:** Members joined coalitions and platforms, collaborating with civil society organizations, researchers, development professionals, government and other stakeholders to access resources, learn new skills, and collectively advocate for their priorities.
- **Consolidating Grassroots Knowledge for Dissemination, Advocacy and Scaling:** Grassroots women consolidated knowledge to convey grassroots women's expertise, strengthen collective learning, and attract support of external actors, strategically positioning grassroots women as knowledge producers, innovators and teachers.
- **Collaboration and Learning Using Digital Technology:** Grassroots leaders invested in learning and using new communication technologies to stay connected with their membership, reaffirm trust and solidarity, coordinate actions, promote information sharing and learning, and engage government through digital platforms.

Expanding Grassroots Networks

Based on demands from grassroots leaders, member organisations expanded their constituencies and scale of operation, reaching new communities who enriched collective learning and agenda-setting by contributing new contexts, capacities and priorities to existing networks.

In **Zimbabwe**, **Ntengwe** expanded its operations to include fifteen self-help groups in Songwa Village, Lupote Ward, following requests for support from grassroots women to adapt to climate threats and confront challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. In **Zambia**, **ZHPPF** collaborated with local community based organisations, Lilanda Women's Cooperative and George Savers, to design and implement a grassroots women-led awareness-raising campaign on Covid-19. Twenty grassroots women leaders and ten youth leaders from **Bangladesh** joined the network of grassroots women's groups affiliated with **PDAP**. PDAP organized trainings on leadership, risk and opportunity mapping, and waste management for fifteen urban poor community groups, all of whom agreed to build community savings in order to provide crisis credit and emergency assistance to members. In **Costa Rica**, **AMC** worked with new communities from the San Jose, Limon and Puntarenas provinces to support them with food staples, Covid-19 prevention and monitoring equipment through collaboration with the National Institute for Women (INAMU).

Entering Multi-Stakeholder Platforms, Coalitions and Collaborations

Members joined multi-stakeholder platforms, coalitions and networks to connect with grassroots and civil society organisations, research institutions, local government, and other stakeholders to build support for grassroots efforts, direct additional resources and learning opportunities to grassroots leaders, and deepen the impact of their advocacy.

GROOTS, Peru collaborated with regional, district and neighborhood-based agencies to address health emergencies, manage disaster risk, and increase food safety and joined the metropolitan food security department to promote a multi-stakeholder collaboration addressing increased food insecurity resulting from Covid-19. In **Uganda**, a national civil society and government dialogue on climate change brought together women leaders from several Huairou members - **UCOBAC, LUCOHECO, Kawempe Home Based Care, SWID, Nakawa Home Based Care, and AWARE** – with international NGO **Climate Action Network Uganda** to identify common priorities to address climate and Covid-19 challenges. In the **Philippines**, **DAMPA SOFP** signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement, the Barangay Council, and the Bolusao Farmers Association for the implementation of an Oxfam supported project to develop adaptive livelihoods for emergency readiness in four municipalities. Learning exchanges organised by **Fundacion, Guatemala** facilitated grassroots leaders from five communities to share strategies on CRF management, implementation, and scaling up of resilience practices with representatives of the Gender Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA). Impressed by the exchange, MAGA indicated their interest in allocating formal resources and training spaces for future exchanges.



Picture credit: UCOBAC, Uganda

WAGUCHA, Honduras

A Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Agreement on Joint Reforestation

In Honduras, WAGUCHA signed an agreement with the Association of Research for Socio Economic Ecological Development (ASIDE) for reforestation of precious woods and other agroforestry activities in coordination with the Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment. The collaboration addresses long term community resilience and sustainable development for the region as well as inter-agency coordination of emergency response with indigenous communities and government institutions. The agreement includes joint reforestation in areas where WAGUCHA members or partners own land, and on Garifuna land where WAGUCHA has a guardianship role. WAGUCHA will be responsible for providing the labour and doing the physical work of preparing the soil and planting, tending and monitoring the saplings. ASIDE will be responsible for covering project costs, preparing nurseries and planting sites, maintaining the tree plantation sites for seven years, and completing the plantation certification process of the National Institute for Conservation and Development of Protected Areas and Forests.



Picture credit: WAGUCHA, Honduras

Consolidating Grassroots Knowledge for Dissemination, Advocacy and Scaling

Members consolidated learning and insights emerging from over five years of work to create a series of knowledge products using different media to target relevant audiences. Products disseminated within and across grassroots networks showcased grassroots women's roles and approaches and transferred grassroots practices. Several knowledge products were recognized and endorsed by local governments, serving as useful resources for advocacy, reference and replication of initiatives.

In **Nepal**, **Lumanti** produced short videos for internal training, showcasing their resilience building practices for livelihood recovery. Lumanti's print materials are formally recognised and used by the government, and their livelihoods recovery and reconstruction work is published in a volume by Nepal's National Reconstruction Authority. In addition to this, **YAKKUM Emergency Unit, Indonesia** developed knowledge products to address multiple crises related to climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, providing information on infection, prevention measures, and vaccinations as mandated by the Indonesian government, while videos on climate resilient practices, such as the waste bank and home-based farming, were documented and distributed to new groups and local governments as training materials and knowledge products. To promote land rights of women and youth, **Shibuye, Kenya** developed community driven land lease guidelines. Women leaders organised local-to-local dialogues with county assembly committees and Ministries of Land and Agriculture, calling for formal adoption of these guidelines.

Collaboration and Learning Using Digital Technology

Covid-19 related lockdowns, social gathering restrictions, and social distancing requirements prevented grassroots women from connecting face-to-face with their leaders and with external partners. Yet, it was critical for grassroots women to stay connected to their trusted networks to reaffirm their solidarity, coordinate actions and engage other stakeholders to convey grassroots perspectives and priorities. Realizing this, member organizations invested in learning and using new communication technologies to communicate within and outside their networks.

At the local level, grassroots women's organisations built their capacities to hold regular online meetings and collaborate with other stakeholders. In the **Philippines**, **DAMPA SOFP** held regular virtual meetings with community organisations to reaffirm solidarity and ritualize community savings across the network. As a result, each community has an expanding community fund easily accessible in emergencies. In **Costa Rica**, **seventy women from AMC** joined a WhatsApp group to coordinate with local emergency committees and municipalities to address gender-based violence. Women used the platform to make referrals to care institutions, and liaised with the Police Women's Commission, National Institute for Women (INAMU), and other local support networks. In Indonesia, 35 women from **YAKKUM Emergency Unit** applied their recent training in video production by making short videos for an online training on family health and Covid-19 prevention attended by local community members as well as local government.

In Latin America, a regional online exchange **seven grassroots organisations from Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil, Honduras and Peru** came together to learn and share their strategies and approaches to combat the Covid-19 crisis. Members who received Covid-19 funds shared innovative practices to ensure food, nutrition and livelihood security of community members, as well as the partnership strategies with government and other stakeholders that strengthened the impact of their locally-led actions. This gave groups receiving funds for the first time an opportunity to gain insights and experience from more mature groups within the network on managing and implementing CRF-supported practices. As follow-up to this exchange, further meetings were arranged to deepen practices and organise learning and training sessions. Members reflected that this exchange contributed to the empowerment of grassroots women to see themselves as learners, champions and teachers in leading resilient practices.

At the global level, Huairou’s engagement in the **14th annual Community Based Adaptation Conference (CBA14)** convened by the International Institute for Environment and Development, UK (IIED) was Huairou’s first experience collaborating with partners to host, organise and facilitate an online event highlighting grassroots women’s leadership in advancing climate adaptation. Despite the challenges of involving grassroots leaders with poor internet access and the absence of translation for non-English speakers, Huairou Commission and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) together ensured that grassroots leadership was showcased effectively. Our session on grassroots impacting policy, facilitated by Corazon Soliman, former Secretary of the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development, received positive feedback and led to an invitation to organise a similar session at Climate and Development Days organized as part of The World Bank convened [Understanding Risk Forum 2020](#).

Panel



Violet Shivutse
Grassroots leader, Founder and Coordinator of Shibuye Community Health Workers Kenya and Chair, Huairou Commission



Ibu Roniatun
Grassroots leader from YEU, Secretary of Family Welfare Group, Ngalang Village in Indonesia and member of the Huairou Commission



Nancy Njoki
Community/grassroots leader from Kenya & member of the SDI Management Committee



Kabir Arora
National Coordinator of the Alliance of Indian Waste-pickers and member, WIEGO



Arghya Sinha Roy
Senior Climate Change Specialist (Climate Change Adaptation), Asian Development Bank

Session Facilitators



Corazón "Dinky" Soliman
Former Minister, Philippines and Lead Person, INCITEGov



Suranjana Gupta
Advisor to the Huairou Commission




Picture credit: Huairou Commission



Influencing Public Decision Making and Policy: Pre and Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

Influencing Public Decision Making and Policy: Pre and Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

Over five years, the Huairou Commission has evolved a policy agenda that is unwavering in its focus on expanding the public recognition of organized groups of grassroots women as agents of change and local sustainable development. 2020 was on track to be a key policy assessment period as it marked the 25th year since the Beijing Platform of Action was agreed upon and the 5th year since UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and Sendai Framework for Action.

In the last five years, Huairou's policy advocacy has aligned to key SDGs, particularly SDGs 5 and 11, the Sendai Framework for Action, COP, the New Urban Agenda, the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) and the Beijing Platform for Action commitments. In the first two months of 2020, members participated in a range of in-person policy deliberations with more than 15 Huairou members and staff serving on high level panels and gender advisory bodies during the 10th World Urban Forum and the UCLG partners' retreat afterwards.

In the gender equality sphere, UN Women led the Generation Equality Forum and the CSW preparatory processes and commissioned two of our Governing Council members to finalize the aims and outcomes of the Action Coalition framework at the invitation-only Design Sprint workshop. Also, three Huairou leaders were invited as expert practitioners to the UN Women's 5th Global Leaders Forum on Safe Public Spaces in Morocco, institutionally validating this sub-theme as a key part of the GBV Action Coalition priorities. Regionally, five leaders (three Governing Council and two other members) formed a Huairou Latin America and the Caribbean delegation to impact the CSO preparatory consultation and the subsequent intergovernmental Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) meeting, sponsored by UN Women in Santiago, Chile. The Huairou delegation aimed to ensure grassroots community groups and local authority interests were included in the outcome document presented at CSW 65; which were actively resisted by some professional NGO advocates.

As 2020 progressed and Covid-19 infections escalated world-wide, the global movement quickly adapted to the new world of unabated, virtual policy and program consultations held locally to globally throughout the year. As in the past, our 2020 policy agenda was directed by ongoing dialogue across our membership and a commitment to center-staging grassroots women's leadership in development policy and implementation across our thematic priorities (e.g. climate and disaster resilience; scaling women's economic empowerment, access to and control over productive resources and engendering local governance). Huairou Commission's long-standing work on securing recognition for women's roles as caregivers (originating in the HIV-Aids pandemic in Africa) reclaimed center-stage during Covid-19, as the onerous responsibilities grassroots women assumed to care for their families and communities commanded the world's attention.

In the virtual policy advocacy world, members sustained and leveraged our well-established UN policy platforms, accepting more than 80 agency invitations to share expertise and advice on local, national and global policies and programs. New and less familiar policy arenas were also explored and, as the year advanced, it was clear that the Huairou Commission was garnering new levels of respect and recognition in the global feminist movement, especially from those focused on economic and climate justice. Significant gains were made in international advocacy, through intergovernmental processes and local advocacy and alliance building. By year end, Huairou had created new policy strategies associated with consolidating and advancing a Global Grassroots Women's Covid-19 Recovery Platform.

The following sections highlight key advocacy gains in 2020 attaching to:

- Holding policy makers and financing bodies accountable to immediately increase support to local-level adaptation, including committing flexible resources to grassroots women's groups to enable them to lead and scale up community resilience;
- Embedding grassroots priorities in the plans and priorities of global action coalitions on economic justice and empowerment, and ensuring that women's access to and control over land and property and redressing gender-based violence through safe city and settlement approaches are preserved as key priorities;
- Ensuring that urban development and human settlement policy commitments are implemented via strategies and program investments that formalize grassroots women's leadership roles in settlement and infrastructure planning as well as community economic development.



Picture credit: Huairou Commission

Placing Grassroots Issues at the Center of the Global Feminist Agenda through Global Action Coalitions

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF), a multi-stakeholder event convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico with the leadership and partnership of civil society, was organized with the aim of launching and financing specific plans to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment via multi-stakeholder, Action Coalition partnerships to deliver practical and strategic results in a five-year period.

Across the GEF planning and implementation modalities, Huairou Commission has secured positions of influence and garnered the respect of the UN, governmental, donor and CSO colleagues for the caliber and capacities of the movement's leaders participating in sponsored activities. Huairou's merits and strategic alliances allowed us to claim influential steering positions for grassroots women—most prominently for Violet Shivutse, Governing Council Chair who has served on the GEF Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee with government, donors and power holders and through Strategic Planning invitations and our engagement in the wider Civil Society group. Huairou's major achievement was our appointment to lead in two Action Coalitions:

Economic Justice and Rights; and the Gender Based Violence Action Coalition focused on the sub-theme of Inclusive Safe Space and Cities for Women and Girls.

Within the Action Coalition of Economic Justice, Huairou Commission positioned itself as a thought leader in the sub-themes of Productive Resources, Decent Work and the Care Economy, championed and embedded grassroots priorities in work plan goals and activities and defended the critical importance of retaining access to and ownership over land and property as a central focus of the Productive Resources sub-theme. Positioning ourselves on the Drafting Committee—and working alongside MFA, foundation, and UN staff—allowed us to claim multiple prominent speaking and issue framing roles at high level UN sponsored GEF events on the critical importance of women's land rights; mainstreaming grassroots women's groups through digital access and virtual markets, and more. Huairou leaders anchoring the GBV Action Coalition theme with a focus on Inclusive and Safe Public Spaces and Cities for Women and Girls also claimed prominent planning and issue framing space, and set itself apart as a unique approach to promoting the safety and security of women especially those living in poor communities .



Picture credit: Huairou Commission

Advancing Land Tenure Security Advocacy in Tandem with the Economic Justice Action Coalition aims

Grassroots women's access to and control over land drives resilience by providing a productive asset critical for securing food and income and promoting conservation of natural resources. Our 2020 program report on grassroots led Covid-19 relief efforts vividly documents these connections and underscores a core Huairou aim: to promote grassroots women's awareness of land rights and governance and build their capacities to negotiate and secure land for themselves and other women.

Building on 14 years of work to secure property rights for thousands of landless women, Huairou Commission members from Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria, with support from the African Women's Development Fund, have been collaborating to build a diversity of good practices and tools through which women can negotiate control of public and customary land, lease and save to purchase land, and create strong returns on their investments (including those resulting from environmentally sound stewardship).

Huairou's position and standing in global land alliances and expert practitioner groups itself produced an active 2020 advocacy agenda spanning our role in the steering committee of the Stand for Her Land (S4HL) Campaign as well as our involvement in the Land Momentum Group - a coalition of civil society and multilateral organisations - through which Huairou helps monitor the progress of governments commitments on SDGs land related targets and indicators such as 1.4.2¹ and 5.a.1&2². Our 2020 re-election as the Vice Chair of the Global Land Tool Network Steering Committee (supported by UN Habitat) also produced ongoing consultative planning during the year, including co-convening a GLTN Partners Meeting where we successfully mainstreamed grassroots agendas across the network, gaining strong traction in the rural cluster work plans. We produced similar results in our advisement on the International Land Coalition's five year strategy (supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development IFAD).

¹SDG Indicator 1.4.2: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure

²Target 5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Indicator 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure. Indicator 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control

Coalition Building to Secure Immediate Support for Local Level Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Financing that Enables Grassroots Groups to Lead and Scale Resilient Actions

In 2020, the Huairou Commission worked with Slum Dwellers International (SDI) to frame and implement a multi-year advocacy alliance with the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Global Resilience Partnership. The initiative, Frontline Fund Accelerator, aims to transform climate and development finance by engaging climate finance institutions directly while simultaneously building the governance, operational and financial management capacities required to prepare grassroots organizations for new institutional engagements.

Through investments in partnership building early in the year, Huairou Commission and SDI, as global grassroots social movements, were able to negotiate and establish principles to guide our collaboration with the donors, research institutions and others in the initiative. This enabled the development of a shared agenda, common messages, and a strategy for leveraging the niche roles of alliance members.



Leveraging the role of Sheela Patel as Commissioner in the Global Commission on Adaptation, Huairou Commission was able to advocate strongly for commitment to local action through the Commission's work more broadly. This resulted in agreement by the Commission to develop "Principles for Locally-led Adaptation", which were strengthened through consultation with our members. By January 2021 the principles were endorsed by over 40 partners including Irish Aid and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), though the demonstration of these commitments has yet to be realized.

Over the last year, Huairou Commission also supported the consolidation of evidence of the value of grassroots women's resilience building. Huairou's members used venues such as the 14th Community Based Adaptation Conference to share their experiences and advocate for new ways of working with and supporting grassroots women-led action. To prepare themselves to partner more effectively with climate finance institutions, Huairou members

initiated a program of assessing their financial management capacity. This work is ongoing and will include capacity building for system strengthening and for negotiating better terms with climate finance institutions. Already in 2021, Huairou Commission members were invited by the Green Climate Fund to review the functioning of their window for Enhanced Direct Access.

To further advance the goals of localizing investments in resilience, in 2020 Huairou Commission leveraged its role in the Steering Committee of the UN Major Group and Other Stakeholders, serving as co-chairs (together with GNDRR) of the officially recognized Sendai Stakeholder Group. Through this role we were able to secure a speaking role in formal sessions of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Limota Gorosa-Giwa, grassroots leader of IWCC, Nigeria and member of Huairou Commission Governing Council, and to organize a special event, in coordination with the Major Group of Youth, focused on the leadership of grassroots women's organizations in advancing local strategies for disaster risk reduction.

These positions were further reinforced in the sectoral paper submitted to the HLPF by the Sendai Group which emphasized how risk-informed development can be advanced through decentralizing and localizing decision making and resource allocation for disaster prevention, response, recovery and preparedness.

The evidence presented at the HLPF and in other 2020 policy engagements consistently reinforced the leadership and innovation of women in poor urban, rural and indigenous communities. This was the case in the Understanding Risk Conference convened in Costa Rica where 14 Huairou members were supported by the World Bank to share their expertise as mappers of local risks and vulnerabilities and as effective partners in planning local risk reduction strategies together with national and local disaster management authorities.

Likewise, grassroots organisations from five countries in Central America leveraged support from COSUDE (Swiss Development Cooperation in Central America) to support localization of the Sendai Framework for Action, advocating through a multi stakeholder process involving the Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CEPREDENAC), National Civil Protection Agencies, Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and other partners.



Picture credit: Huairou Commission

Promoting Recognition of Grassroots Women’s Roles and Priorities in Human Settlements Policy and Planning

Huairou’s advocacy in the human settlements and local governance arena in 2020 continued to press for formal recognition of grassroots women’s groups, collaborating with local government to implement a gender-just pro-poor New Urban Agenda, and the urgent need for policymakers to embrace grassroots women’s organizations as key partners in shaping human settlements policies and programs.

Strategically using our multiple formal positions in the UN Habitat convened platforms and advisory groups, we focused our attention on influencing: UN Habitat’s Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Responsive Inclusive Cities; and leveraged our roles as Co-Chairs of UN Habitat’s World Urban Campaign (WUC) and its Women’s Partner Constituency Group. Each space enabled us to protect and expand the recognition of grassroots women’s groups as central agents in realizing a pro-poor, gender just implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

At the Tenth World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in early 2020, 16 Huairou delegates, 75% of whom held UN-Habitat scholarships as expert practitioners, spoke in High Level Panels, Assemblies and Roundtables; and worked in tandem with SDI and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) to ensure that the Abu Dhabi declaration recognized women and girls as agents of transformative change in cities and committed to effectively engaging us in public decision making (an outcome we achieved).



Picture credit: Huairou Commission



Picture credit: Life Center, Vietnam

Enhancing Governance of the Movement and Strengthening the Organization and Operations

Enhancing Governance of the Movement and Strengthening the Organization and Operations

As a global movement committed to the empowerment of grassroots women organizations, the transition to a more grassroots and member driven governance process has meant developing capacities, structures and processes that enable our member-led Governing Council to lead a global movement, set agendas reflecting grassroots women's priorities, and develop strategies for collective action across the membership and with partners. In 2020 we celebrated 25 years of movement building since the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995, we set course for the next five years, and we organized the 3rd Global Grassroots Women's Congress.

25 years of Grassroots Women Organizing Globally: From Beijing to Covid-19

Huirou Commission celebrated its 25-year milestone anniversary by taking stock of the maturity of our global movement of grassroots women's organizations (in size and strengths of our constituencies); our impact in enhancing the lives and level of development of women and their communities; and the effectiveness of our global social movement in supporting leaders to generate knowledge, partnerships and solidarity to increase local to global decision making and economic power of grassroots women. In addition to these notable achievements, we also looked at the challenges and hardships that have limited our impact.



In a way the grassroots tent at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) was the first grassroots academy though we didn't call it by that name."- Jan Peterson (Reflection Session 1 Peer Exchanges)

A stock taking survey, completed by 72% of our 42-country membership, reflected how grassroots groups felt they had increased their power and development impact, counted their key gains, and short listed their biggest challenges over the past 25 years. Results were analyzed and aggregated and a member wide discussion was organized to disseminate key findings. Members proposed to organize seven deeper reflection sessions where leaders of grassroots women's organizations, facilitating NGOs and partners could jointly take stock of issues such as global organizing at the UN, grassroots women's position in the feminist movement, resilience building and land and housing as well as reviewing our approaches to partnerships, peer-learning and organizing leadership and decision-making. Partners participating in the reflection series highlighted Huairou's ability to transform institutions and people around them to create more impactful and democratic space by calling out typical donor assistance models in order to ensure grassroots women are resourced and valued as partners.



Picture credit: WAGUCHA, Honduras

Setting Course for the Next Five Years

Just before the beginning of the pandemic, the Huairou Commission Governing Council launched a process of exploring priority areas of the next strategic plan. For several months, members met weekly with great commitment to task teams focused on sharpening Huairou's Resilience Diamond as our pathway to change, formulating an updated political vision, and developing an integrated development impact framework focused on leadership, resilience, land, social protection and economic empowerment. The Governing Council then deferred further discussion to 2021 when the insights of our Five-Year Strategy Review could be analyzed, and the impact of the pandemic on recovery and sustainable development processes could be better gauged.

Third Global Grassroots Women's Congress (GGWC)

Since Huairou Commission's 2018 governance transition, the Governing Council has organised annual Global Grassroots Women's Congresses as a collective decision making space to guide our work. The Third Congress, chaired by Violet Shivutse, Chair of Huairou's Governing Council, was organized virtually in 2020 and convened 165 leaders representing 83 member organisations. In preparation, regional coordinating committees caucused with members to organize their priorities and participation and fed into a global process of agenda setting which analyzed how members associate and take decisions and identified new strategic avenues, building on existing strengths. In order to ensure broad participation despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic, the Secretariat organized Zoom training and provided technical support to participants.

Reports from each region clearly demonstrated the maturing of grassroots women's leadership and their ability to mobilize large constituencies and create adaptive and resilient behaviors - particularly through the pandemic. Recognizing the role of crisis and disasters in their communities, the Congress prioritized expanding the range and depth of grassroots-led strategies to build resilient communities. In addition, the main elements of grassroots women's priorities for recovery in the context of Covid-19 were also set out by the Congress.

Strengthening Staff and Operations

Despite the daunting challenges presented by the global pandemic, the Huairou Commission succeeded in delivering on an ambitious global program while taking on additional Covid-19 program support and advocacy initiatives and simultaneously managing the personal and household stresses that Covid-19 introduced in rolling waves.

The core elements of our agreed 2020 work plan are delivered, as reported here. However, members collectively agreed to defer two significant activities. Owing to the pressures of the pandemic, roll out of the Leadership Development Program which prioritizes in-person association and interaction, has been postponed and is included in Huairou Commission's approved Sida budget for 2021. Members also decided to defer adoption of our next five-year Strategy, pending completion of the external Five-year Strategy Review in 2021.

The Huairou Commission Secretariat was also able to hire a new full time team member. Molly Vallillo, serving as Global Member Coordinator, is based in New York and supports key member-led processes including the Global Grassroots Women's Congress and the Governing Council, and coordinates member-led initiatives such as the 25th Anniversary reflection series.

Taking the lead in raising multi-year financing for community-led climate resilience and economic justice / sustainable livelihood initiatives, the Huairou Commission Secretariat secured significant contributions in 2020, including:

- The Climate Justice Resilience Fund committed an additional USD \$200,000 in un-earmarked, core funding, bringing our current three year agreement to over USD \$1 million.
- Substantial contributions of nearly USD \$31,000 were also received from banks, individuals, and member networks. Another USD \$264,000 were raised in in-kind contributions.
- At the end of 2020, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded a five-year, EUR 71,616,549 grant to the Fair for All Consortium, which includes Oxfam Novib, SOMO and Third World Network Africa, to strengthen and mobilize civil society to demand and contribute to more inclusive and resilient value chains. As part of the coalition, the Huairou Commission is awarded EUR 3,791,464. Owing to delays in the Ministries planned disbursement schedule, year one funds for the Huairou Commission, anticipated by end of 2020 did not arrive in Huairou accounts until 2021.



Picture credit: Shibuye, Kenya



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