Grassroots Women-Led Resilient Community Development

ANNUAL REPORT 2019
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2019 was an important year for the Huairou Commission. Throughout the year we worked together and organized our communities and allies, shared our tools and innovations in building resilience and claimed our places in decision making processes - locally and globally. Critically, we demonstrated the value of investing in grassroots women's resilience-building and leadership development efforts.

In 2019, we strengthened the capacities of our Governing Council to take decisions and oversee the programmatic work of our movement. This work supported women leaders from impoverished and under-resourced communities of the world to strengthen our collective ability to build resilience to all kinds of hazards and risks. Our efforts to mentor each other, plan and strategize together and to expand our networks to new communities forged a stronger and more agile grassroots women’s movement.

We could never have imagined how our 2019 focus on resilience building and disaster risk reduction was actually readying us to face the COVID pandemic.

The Huairou Commission took decisive action in response to the COVID crisis, sharing local COVID response strategies among member groups and providing critical financial support to enable our member groups to continue their organizing work and position themselves as leaders in local efforts to plan and recover from the pandemic. As a governing body, we reviewed applications from members and provided supportive clinics to aid response planning. The partnerships established in 2019 served as important instruments for planning and organizing through the crisis and will support future efforts to Build Back Better.

In 2020 we are celebrating our 25th anniversary as a movement. We reflect with tremendous pride on how our organization has evolved, as evidenced by this Annual Report.

We reflect with tremendous pride on how our organization has evolved, as evidenced by the 2019 achievements spelled out in this report. As grassroots women leaders, we are excited to lead the Huairou Commission to greater impact and influence in the year to come and invite all who are committed to building local resilience to join us in this all important work.

Violet Shivutse
2019 Highlights
Local Action. Global Influence.

The Huairou Commission (HC) is a global movement of grassroots women's organizations leading a transformative agenda for inclusive resilience and gender justice. We represent nearly one million grassroots women from rural, urban, and indigenous communities who are actively improving the resilience of their communities and coming together to shape the systems that govern development planning and finance in favor of greater equity and inclusion.

This report reflects on our progress in 2019, the fourth year of our partnership with Sida under a program called, “Grassroots Women-Led Resilient Community Development in Post-2015 Policy Implementation.” A selection of significant change highlights from 2019 include:

Increased local resilience at scale through flexible finance
In 2019, we increased our impact to over 3,500 households through the Community Resilience Fund (CRF), enabling members in 14 countries to access and leverage finance for collective local action to build resilience. Huairou member groups managed and leveraged Community Resilience Funds, a flexible finance mechanism designed over 10 years ago to demonstrate the innovation and financial management capacity of grassroots women’s organizations. Community resilience was enhanced through investment in climate-smart agriculture; land tenure security; conservation of natural resources; and livelihood diversification.

Filled data gaps on risk and vulnerability in under-resourced communities
In 2019, every member group either expanded their mapping to new communities or updated existing maps, sometimes using new tools and techniques. Risk mapping produces valuable insights into how women are affected by climate, disaster and man-made threats. This data highlighted the priority issues of grassroots women and was used to plan responsive and accountable interventions across communities and underpin partnerships between member groups, local authorities, and other development actors.
Center-staged grassroots women’s knowledge and authority in disaster and climate resilience

In 2019, Global Grassroots Academies supported grassroots women to transfer practical knowledge, identify collective advocacy messages, and highlight the contributions of grassroots women's organizations to community resilience on the global stage, situating grassroots women as key agents of change in global development. In 2019, 20 women from 12 countries travelled to Geneva for the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction. Ahead of the Platform, a Grassroots Academy and Community Practitioners Platform produced common messages pressing for implementation of government commitments to community-led inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction that were amplified by senior decision makers in formal plenary sessions.

Partnered with a multilateral development bank to localize climate finance

In 2019, HC launched the Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP) with Asian Development Bank in order to address the failure of climate finance to reach communities despite the rhetoric. HC will serve as members of their governance structure - a first for grassroots to be included as an equal partner in the governance of a Bank program. This represents an important milestone in HC's partnership with ADB, which has steadily progressed over the past six years. In its role, HC will ensure the Bank supports climate action planning and programming that partners with grassroots organizations and takes their priorities into account.

Put grassroots women’s poverty reduction priorities on the global agenda

Huairou Commission’s 2019 policy advocacy activities represent significant advancements in securing leadership roles for grassroots women's organizations in updating the global feminist agenda as expressed in formal Beijing +25 processes and realizing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and related frameworks. Achievements include: gaining prominent, ongoing advisement roles on policy implementation strategies, expanding and formalizing collaborative partnerships with key multilateral and regional development institutions, and establishing recognition that rural and urban grassroots women's organizations bring vital knowledge and authority to the call for urgent action to localize and finance climate adaptation at scale.

Placed grassroots women at the center of planning and decision making of a global movement

In 2019, HC convened The Global Grassroots Congress – the annual general meeting of Huairou membership. The Global Grassroots Congress is the operational and strategic structure through which the HC Governing Council and the HC Secretariat are accountable to HC membership and through which HC ensures full participation, transparency, and accountability to the communities it intends to impact. The 2019 convening brought together grassroots women's organizations from around the world (including virtual participation) to reflect on the progress and challenges of the past year and to chart a course for leadership development and resilience-building for the year to come.
Huairou Commission (HC) is a global movement of grassroots women’s organizations 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.

HC 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 organizations - all working on diverse, locally appropriate solutions driven by a common vision centered on the empowerment and leadership of women from under-resourced communities. NGO’s and founding networks, as HC members, demonstrate how grassroots-led action can be facilitated. HC 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 Huairou's mission to create a transformed world with balanced power relations and sustainable resilient communities, with grassroots women leaders and their groups at the center of decision-making, in which people lead lives free from poverty, inequality, violence, insecurity and all forms of injustice.

To achieve this global mission, our member groups are organized into a global movement which actively learns, strategizes, and plans together at local, regional and global levels to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The movement advocates for policy change, builds alliances, and organizes 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.

In 2019, leaders of grassroots women's organizations 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 organized around the Huairou Commission’s Theory of Change - the four-point Resilience and Movement Building Leadership Diamond.
Resilience Diamond

1. **Influence and change public policy and processes**

HC 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 organized 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.

2. **Strengthen grassroots women’s organizing and leadership**

HC 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. **Build networks and coalitions**

HC 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 organize and participate in multi-stakeholder platforms.

4. **Nurture grassroots women’s knowledge and good practice to promote gender-just and resilient development**

HC 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, livelihood 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.
Strengthening Grassroots Women’s Organizing and Leadership
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Strengthening grassroots women’s leadership is the cornerstone of Huairou Commission’s movement-building work. Our network’s 2019 program supported grassroots women to work collaboratively to build and enhance leadership skills through developing and sharing tools, peer-learning and mentorship. During this period, 780 grassroots women have been empowered to effectively engage government around priority issues and 184 women have taken on formal positions in local councils and government initiatives. HC’s leadership development tools have been consolidated into a regionally-driven initiative to train trainers and mentor emerging leaders. Collaboration in leadership development unites our members across the movement and, through their aggregated achievements, demonstrates the value of investing in leadership development.

Supporting women to assume leadership roles within their groups and networks
HC members invested Sida resources to strengthen leadership and governance within grassroots organizations, federations and networks. Women’s formal positions inside their groups and organizations increase awareness of their capacities, roles and responsibilities, and prepare them for engagements and negotiations with formal actors. During 2019, for example, Life Centre in Vietnam increased and expanded grassroots women’s leadership to include more women in local, district and provincial structures, including twenty grassroots women leaders who have been designated to work with their communities to document effective women-led resilient livelihood improvement practices and present them to local authorities.

Facilitating grassroots women’s engagement in public decision-making
Grassroots women’s presence in formal decision making structures is the step towards inclusive local decision-making. Participation in local committees creates opportunities to understand the power dynamics embedded in these structures and gain skills to advance grassroots agendas and build alliances to advocate for grassroots women’s priorities. For example, fifteen grassroots women leaders from DAMPA, a grassroots women’s federation in the Philippines, took up decision-making positions in local government in 2019. Among these, a leader in Cavite City has used her position to advocate for a City Urban Poor Alliance Office, a proposal now being considered by the city council.
Hosting grassroots women-led training on policy frameworks

Grassroots women leverage knowledge of global and national policy frameworks to persuade governments of the value of collaboration with grassroots organizations to deliver effectively on policy commitments. Additionally, familiarizing grassroots women with policy commitments enables monitoring of local policy implementation and greater accountability from government. Where grassroots leaders undertake teaching and training roles they position themselves as experts, placing grassroots women in positions of greater influence. For example, in Honduras, the grassroots women’s federation Plataforma Comunitaria Comité y Redes (WAGUCHA) describes how their leadership development work emphasizes national initiatives to implement global frameworks. This establishes familiarity with women’s rights and raises awareness of opportunities for grassroots women to engage in planning, implementation and monitoring of these frameworks.

Analyzing and acting on strategic opportunities

HC tools give grassroots women the capacity to map strategic opportunities and partners, creating and seizing opportunities to act and collaborate as they arise - skills that are particularly critical when engaging with external stakeholders. For example, in Jinja, Uganda, the Slum Women’s Initiative for Development (SWID), a network working to increase women’s access to land, housing and economic empowerment, reports that after analyzing opportunities to engage in local decision-making bodies, 15 women pursued and were elected to participate in decision-making positions. These leaders give voice to the needs and priorities of grassroots women on a number of platforms in Jinja.

Mentoring and nurturing new leaders

In 2019, HC groups refined and tested various approaches to mentorship. As a result, HC’s leadership development tools have been consolidated into a regionally-driven initiative to train grassroots women trainers and mentor emerging grassroots leaders. For example, in Latin America, advanced leaders from women’s networks across the region, including Las Brumas, FUNGUA in Guatemala, and GROOTS Peru, organized peer-to-peer learning and mentorship with the women of MUDECI in Mexico and La Red Pintadas in Brazil. As a result, Brazilian women put leadership structures in place to manage Community Resilience Funds in their countries. At the 2nd Global Grassroots Women’s Congress convened in Nairobi in 2019 – this mentorship approach was formally consolidated into a Leadership Support Program, which will roll out at larger scale in 2020.

“Through training women in leadership and organizing...women are given a platform to participate in decision making. At every local council meeting there must be women representatives who ensure that women’s agendas are pushed forward.

-Joyce, SWID, Uganda
Expanding women’s resilience network to increase impact and scale women-led solutions

In the disaster-prone Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, Life Centre has developed grassroots women’s leadership in climate change resilience and DRR strategies. Life Centre is a non-governmental organization comprised of 22 consolidated members that works in rural and urban areas to foster resilience and to address issues of HIV/AIDS. Despite their active engagement in farming and livelihood generation activities, women had never considered how climate change impacted their lives and communities. Together with the Women’s Union in Hau Giang, Life Centre formed the Women’s Resilience Network (WRN), a federated leadership network representing grassroots women and the Women’s Union staff from three provinces, to lead, advocate, and scale resilience building strategies.

In 2019, Women’s Union supported 20 grassroots women to map their risks and vulnerabilities for the first time, prioritizing interventions to address health and livelihood insecurities due to climate change. Grassroots leaders reviewed the findings and presented results and recommendations for building resilience to the local authorities through local dialogues. The recommendations were approved, confirming the value of the leaders’ inputs. The WRN membership has doubled from 20 to 40 women across three years.
Ntengwe, Zimbabwe

Empowered grassroots women leaders become climate change advocates and influence local adaptation planning

Ntengwe is a facilitating NGO supporting over 1,200 grassroots women members in self-help groups, federations, farmers groups, savings groups, and more. From 2016 - 2019, Ntengwe's grassroots women’s leadership in climate resilience has evolved in terms of scale, organizing structures, and their roles as peer educators, climate change advocates, and leaders. The number of women leaders and self-help groups (SHGs) has increased from 930 women in 58 SHGs to 1,475 women in 93 SHGs. Additionally, operations have scaled from three to seven wards in the Hwange district. As peer educators, women leaders have scaled their best practices through peer learning exchanges from the ward level to the regional level. Grassroots women, previously mobilized into ward-level SHGs and cluster level associations for training, learning and accessing credit purposes, are now federated at the district level and are able to participate in and influence public decision-making. Sixteen women leaders are involved in district level DRR and adaptation planning.

From using the Community Resilience Fund (CRF) for publicly demonstrating resilient practices to influencing the local government for gender inclusive planning and climate finance to support their initiatives, grassroots women’s roles have transformed from climate change practitioners to climate change advocates and leaders. Over the past two years, government officials have invited women leaders to provide inputs to local planning and government funding of grassroots-led enterprises and initiatives on numerous occasions.
Enhancing our analyses of risk and vulnerability

In 2019, every HC member group either expanded their mapping to new communities or updated existing maps, sometimes using new tools and techniques. Risk mapping produces valuable insights into how women are affected by climate, disaster, and man-made threats. These data are used to plan interventions across communities and to underpin partnerships with local authorities. Given the role that HC’s members played in shaping the internationally agreed Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, it is no surprise that risk and vulnerability mapping underpins our members’ efforts to demonstrate grassroots women’s knowledge and ensure grassroots women’s priorities inform policy and practice.

Member group risk mapping tools represent increasingly sophisticated analyses and articulation of climate related risks and vulnerabilities experienced by grassroots women. As grassroots women gain a more refined understanding of risk and vulnerability, they can apply this understanding to organize their groups and educate their wider communities and local governments in order to develop effective strategies to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

HC members worked collaboratively in 2019 to update their tools. Shibuye Community Health Workers, a community-based organization in Kenya, and Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), an NGO supporting 17 affiliated organisations in rural and peri-urban India, updated and tested new climate change risk assessment models and shared these during learning-by-doing peer-to-peer exchanges across the two countries. In Nicaragua, Las Brumas updated their Risk Mapping Training Model to include assessments of how climate change affects the rural communities where women live and farm. In Zimbabwe, Ntengwe for Community Development introduced a new seasonality dimension to their traditional approaches, producing village maps using communities’ lived experiences with natural disasters to identify the high-risk months.
“Building Community Resilience Step by Step” is a community risk mapping practice used by grassroots women groups in Peru for risk-informed planning. First, women meet and locate themselves in the context of their community. Then they map the community, identifying the physical and human capabilities and vulnerabilities in their neighborhoods. A timeline of developments in their town and the role women played in that process enriches the women’s understanding of their histories and the influence of grassroots leadership over time. Once they have a clear picture of community vulnerabilities and capacities, the women analyze the structure and legal framework of the National Disaster Risk System at national and local levels, and the participatory budgeting agreements of each town, to identify the functions of different development sectors and the role of disaster management authorities.

This methodology emphasizes the importance of recognizing grassroots women’s consistent contributions to the wellbeing of their communities and how these contributions ‘disappear’ from people’s memories. Recognizing grassroots women’s leadership in the face of adversity is a critical step in acknowledging the role of grassroots women as drivers of resilience and agents of change. In addition, the process allows women to see that when grassroots women groups identify resilience priorities and plans through participatory processes, it strengthens their ability to engage with and influence government.
Promoting Gender-Just and Climate Resilient Development: The Community Resilience Fund (CRF)
Promoting Gender-Just and Climate Resilient Development: The Community Resilience Fund (CRF)

The CRF is a flexible finance mechanism for channeling resources to women-led grassroots communities in order to support local resilience-building efforts. The CRF resources initiatives that promote gender-just and resilient development by placing flexible funds in the hands of grassroots women, enabling them to introduce risk-informed innovation and demonstrate leadership in combatting the effects of climate change and disaster risk.

In 2019, the CRF expanded its support to grassroots women’s organizations, women farmers, producer cooperatives, savings and credit groups, and informal settlement associations in 21 countries. Organizations used CRF funds to enable grassroots women to take public leadership in identifying and addressing risks, collaborate with local governments to leverage resources, and sustain and scale up grassroots-led resilience-building efforts. This year, the CRF invested in four clusters of risk-informed strategies – with several organizations investing in multiple strategies - demonstrating, the deepening and scaling up of grassroots-led climate resilience practices.
Climate-smart agriculture and collective management of local resources for food security

In 2019 groups continued to invest CRF in climate smart agricultural practices that enhance and stabilize agricultural productivity in the face of climate change, without over-exploiting natural resources, to ensure long term food and livelihoods security of communities.

In Kenya, Polycom, a grassroots organization working in urban informal settlements, made strategic investments in grassroots-managed smart gardens, smart urban farming, and food preservation, increasing local food production and food security and improving health and nutrition among 100 households. Enhanced food preservation techniques helped women store and use food often wasted during harvests, reducing food expenses overall.

In Ecuador, the national women’s network Luna Creciente, invested CRF funds in the revival of indigenous sustainable farming through recovery of ancestral seeds, agro-ecological production of food crops, and cultivation of medicinal plants and fruits through mixed farming in community gardens, thereby enhancing food sovereignty and holistic health for 656 women’s households facing climate risks.
Securing land ownership for enhancing access, control and use of assets

Land is an important asset that can cushion women and their families from adverse impacts of climate change. Underlying grassroots women’s efforts to optimize and protect land productivity and prevent land degradation to build and sustain food and income security is grassroots women’s ability to claim ownership and gain control over land.

In Uganda, the national women’s network Slum Women’s Initiative for Development (SWID), used the CRF to prepare and submit bundles of women’s land title applications, securing 30 women’s households’ ownership control over land, land-use and access to investment opportunities. The process for claiming titles is often fraught with corruption and procedural barriers, but collectively educating women and bundling applications reduces processing costs and corruption in land offices, as women are well informed on legal fees and procedures. Along with securing land for women, this practice has reduced land grabbing.

We fight for women to be owners of their own land that they have acquired through their spouse, inheritance or purchase, in this way we are economically empowering women.

-Haydee, Las Brumas

Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association (ZPHCA), a grassroots organization in Zimbabwe, secured access and control over communal land and water for 40 grassroots women’s households in Dema and Domboshawa through local to local dialogues with traditional leaders and authorities. Securing access and control over community land and water resources allows women to practice vegetable gardening to increase food security in the face of climate change.
Conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and reducing pollution

Nature based solutions and eco-friendly initiatives adopted by grassroots women have positive impacts on family, improve environmental health, and enhance biodiversity. These solutions protect and conserve local resources, reducing risk and vulnerability to climate change.

Women from Las Brumas, a national agricultural cooperative in Nicaragua, used diversified farming methods to protect the environment by implementing interventions such as the use of dead and living barriers, contour lines, irrigation ditches, organic fertilizer and insecticide. These practices reduced disaster risks and built climate resilience for 88 women’s households by protecting biodiversity through the use of sustainable resources. These water saving practices also have positive health impacts, as crops are cultivated organically, avoiding human and environmental contamination.

The Zambia Homeless and Poor People’s Federation (ZHPPF) planted trees using sack gardening made with recycled plastic materials, e.g. sacks and plastic containers, in order to green the environment. This methodology reduces soil erosion caused by rain and wind storms, lowers carbon emissions, and reduces the indiscriminate disposal of plastic waste particularly in slums.

Participatory Development Action Program (PDAP), an NGO working with 100 grassroots organizations in Bangladesh, organized waste management groups to educate, monitor, and promote proper waste management and segregation in communities. As a result, the government is now collecting waste from these informal settlements regularly, reducing harmful emissions as well as risks of flooding and flood-related diseases for approximately 300 women’s households.
With extreme weather events becoming increasingly frequent, grassroots women are diversifying their livelihoods, ensuring that some income streams continue when others fail. Grassroots women’s savings and credit groups enable members to access credit at low or no interest from their own pooled funds, enhancing women’s control of their resources and strengthening their ability to negotiate and attract external investments.

As part of continually expanding their grassroots base, the Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children’s Welfare (UCOBAC), organized 30 more women into village savings and lending associations, enabling them to access flexible funds for resilience building activities, increasing their earnings, providing regular opportunities to save, and giving the women great control over their households’ resources.

In Vietnam, Life Centre added value to locally available natural resources, supplementing the incomes of women living in high climate-risk areas of the Mekong Delta. Women’s enterprises such as selling soursop leaf tea, water-hyacinth pickles, and eel-raising with worm compost, have improved the incomes and community health and nutrition of 3,450 women’s households.
Flexible financing for climate-smart agriculture and clean energy

In 2019, against a backdrop of recurring floods and droughts, rising food prices, and health issues, grassroots women’s groups in Uganda’s Jinja district used the CRF as flexible financing for climate-smart agriculture and energy efficient stoves, to enhance food security, reduce the demand for firewood and improve air quality. Grassroots led demonstrations of climate adaptation and energy efficiency leveraged government resources to scale up these practices.

Eleven women’s groups adopted climate smart agricultural practices to increase farm productivity, incomes and food security, using: improved drought and pest resistant seeds, mulching, organic manure, mixed cropping, drip irrigation, silos for safe food storage and agroforestry, and conserving water and soil. Additionally, 60 households in the communities of Buwagi and Kibibi benefited from improved food and livelihood security thanks to the investment in silos for safe seeds storage and taplines.

100 households accessed energy-efficient stoves in three new communities in Butagaya rural sub-county. These energy-saving stoves have reduced expenditure on firewood and reduced health risks such as eye and respiratory infection caused by indoor pollution. The energy saving technology reduces carbon emissions and air pollution and the demand for wood and charcoal, thus reducing deforestation.
Investing in urban gardening and waste management

DAMPA invested the CRF in urban agriculture for food and nutritional security and waste management to prevent water logging. Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api (DAMPA) is a federation of urban, rural and peri-urban women working on Luzon and Leyte islands, Philippines, where climate change impacts like floods, droughts, and typhoons have resulted in food, health and income insecurities. In the typhoon-affected peri-urban region of Leyte, grassroots women are growing food on land donated by the Barangay officials, relying on these harvests to feed themselves and their families. Urban agriculture is emerging as a major urban greening and food security solution to counter the loss of forests and farmland as cities expand and provide a low-cost source of nutritious food to communities. Through collective urban farming, grassroots groups can recycle materials to grow plants and vegetables with very limited space. Their community gardens demonstrate techniques for growing a variety of nutritious foods, allowing women to learn, replicate, save money, and receive a steady supply of fresh, pesticide-free vegetables. These resilient practices translate into improved food security, increased savings, and reduced hunger and poverty for households.

In the densely populated informal settlements of Metro Manila, grassroots women also improved sanitation by segregating and recycling waste materials, exchanging these with barangays for rice and groceries and with the Republic Cement Corporation for cement bags. The cement is used to pave community roads and improve other public infrastructure. This composite of waste management strategies reduces water logging and the risk of diseases during floods, upgrades settlements, enhances food security and incentivizes waste management.
Building Coalitions and Networks to Gain Support for Gender-Just Development
Building Coalitions and Networks to Gain Support for Gender-Just Development

In 2019, our coalition building expanded and deepened peer to peer connection among member groups in order to build solidarity, sustain and grow HC’s global women’s movement, as well as build coalitions with allies to develop and pursue collective, multi-stakeholder strategies for advancing resilient and gender-just development. Internally and externally, our coalition building is driven by knowledge sharing strategies that establish mutual respect, trust and appreciation for the comparative advantage of respective actors. Coalitions of diverse stakeholders can articulate and pursue strategies that advance HC’s priorities. Knowledge-sharing strategies are fundamental to developing and sustaining coalition-building both within our movement and between our movement and its strategic allies.

Globally, coalition-building among poor people’s movements was supported by the 2019 convening of a Grassroots Academy at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction which advanced our efforts to build a critical mass to legitimize grassroots knowledge in reducing disaster risk and counter the hegemony of professional civil society actors. In other arenas, a coalition of grassroots social movements and influential climate actors came together to develop a joint strategy for devolving climate finance to local communities and positioning grassroots women’s groups as partners and claimants to climate finance.

Locally, our member groups built coalitions with self-help groups in other communities to broaden their membership and with other actors to advance a shared agenda for change. Across the network, members developed communication strategies to introduce grassroots women’s knowledge and practices to wider audiences and raise awareness for disaster risk reduction and other global agendas. Both the growth of our movement and its partnerships are advancing our strategic agenda to democratize policy making and implementation and ensure greater recognition of and financing for grassroots women’s resilience-building and DRR work.
The Grassroots Academy

Huairou’s 2019 Grassroots Academy was instrumental in transferring practical knowledge, identifying collective advocacy messages, highlighting grassroots women’s contributions to building community resilience and attracting new allies.

In 2019, Huairou Commission partnered with ActionAid Australia and the World Bank to convene a Grassroots Academy and Community Practitioners Platform Dialogue at UNDRR’s biennial Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. The Academy convened more than 20 grassroots leaders from HC, ActionAid, and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) – many of whom had not before participated in a Grassroots Academy. Mature HC leaders from Peru, Nicaragua and Honduras led sessions orienting new participants and building solidarity among them.

The Academy supported knowledge sharing among grassroots leaders - specifically, about their contribution to implementation of the Sendai Framework. Grassroots leaders were able to learn from peers about grassroots women-led disaster risk assessments, resilience practices, and negotiating government support. With a shared understanding of the contribution of each movement and the diverse groups within them, the grassroots leaders were able to develop shared advocacy messages which they presented to key policy making institutions, specifically the World Bank, CEPREDENAC, and UNDRR, whose senior leadership attended the Academy to better understand the positions and needs of grassroots women’s groups.

As a result, grassroots leaders were able to ensure their priorities were mainstreamed in the DRR conference proceedings as they and the Vice President of the World Bank amplified core recommendations from the Grassroots Academy in the plenary sessions of the Global Platform. Indeed, in her public remarks during the Platform, World Bank VP Laura Tuck, noted how impressed she was with the concrete actions and leadership the grassroots delegation shared. Following the Academy, grassroots affiliates from SDI and ActionAid initiated plans for continued collaboration with Huairou to advance shared grassroots priorities on disaster and climate resilience.
Strengthening partnerships to channel climate finance to the grassroots

Transferring power and transforming exclusionary policies and practises of global climate finance institutions is a key strategic goal of the HC. To meet this outcome, HC achieved an important milestone in 2019 by building a strong coalition with a fellow social movement and strategic new allies in the climate space around a common agenda to devolve climate finance to grassroots groups.

In 2019, HC re-invigorated its partnership with Slum Dweller’s International (SDI) around this agenda in order to aggregate the learning, impact and influence of grassroots groups and ensure a united grassroots coalition drives the agenda to devolve climate finance. Leaders of grassroots groups from both movements joined forces in global venues such as the Global Climate Action Summit, London Climate Week and New York Climate Week to develop and deliver joint advocacy strategies that demand changes in climate policy and financial systems in response to grassroots priorities.

The two social movements anchored engagements with the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) and drove a methodical coalition and strategy building process. This process enabled the partners to understand each other’s core priorities and expertise, build trust, and to articulate a joint strategy that leverages the comparative advantage and influence of each partner and respects the autonomy of grassroots organizations.

This strategy coalesced around a funded initiative to develop a Frontline Funds Accelerator, pursuing a two-pronged approach whereby grassroots organizations’ financial systems are strengthened to prepare them for engagement with climate investors, and climate investors are supported to understand how to best invest in and partner with grassroots people’s organizations and meet them half-way by adjusting their investment approaches and procedures. HC’s contribution to this was strengthened through its experience in negotiating its role in the governance of a new initiative of the Asian Development Bank described later in this report. These efforts now anchor the Local Action Track of the Global Commission on Adaptation, chaired by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Bill Gates and the President of the World Bank.
Expanding the grassroots base and building and strengthening alliances

Locally, members sought to build coalitions with other grassroots organizations and allies in government, academia and civil society. Grassroots-led learning and advocacy deepened relationships with allies, widened their knowledge networks, transferred and scaled up resilience strategies, expanded social demand and educated decision makers on grassroots initiatives.

In Zambia, ZHPCA initiated and strengthened a resilience building movement for grassroots women in a cluster of eight communities. 260 women participated in a series of exchanges on livelihood diversification to ensure food security, activities which continually attract women from surrounding areas.

Ntengwe, developed a partnership with the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and initiated discussions with the Japanese embassy to explore funding. Ntengwe was also appointed to the regional and national advisory bodies of the Global Civil Society Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, positioning them to educate other civil society allies on the role of grassroots women in resilience building.

SWID Uganda hosted HC’s regional assembly and facilitated the revitalization of HC’s Women’s Land Link Alliance, both of which provided valuable opportunities to build solidarity, reiterate the importance of protecting land, and identify common priorities for learning and advocacy.

In Honduras, WAGUCHA organized two multi-stakeholder dialogues on risk management including local authorities, municipal technical experts, civil society, and grassroots women, clarifying roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders to improve coordination.
Building a three-county coalition to rehabilitate more than 5000 acres of degraded land

In Shibuye’s operational area, climate change impacts and mining have degraded agricultural and forest land, impacting food and livelihoods security. To address these challenges, Shibuye mobilized new communities in three counties and, in 2019, hosted a three-county peer learning exchange. This enabled sharing of livelihoods and food security initiatives across three agro-climatic zones and reaffirmed women’s land rights as a pathway to resilience.

Collaborations with officials from the ministries of Agriculture, Climate Change and Forests, agriculture institutes, local chiefs, and NGOs resulted in the formulation of joint climate action plans. Also, dialogue with government departments and leaders of farmers unions led to partnerships that resulted in the launch of Climate Information Centres in all three counties. The CICs disseminate regular weather updates, allowing grassroots women trained in sustainable land use and management, including agroforestry, crop rotation, cross slope barriers and irrigated agriculture, to protect and rehabilitate over 5,000 acres of degraded land.
Influencing Public Decision Making and Policy

Grassroots & informal Sector
Huairou Commission’s 2019 policy advocacy represents significant advancements in securing recognition and roles for grassroots women’s organizations in realizing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Achievements include: gaining prominent advisement roles on policy implementation strategies, expanding and formalizing collaborative partnerships with multilateral and regional development institutions, and establishing recognition that grassroots women’s organizations bring vital knowledge and authority to the call for urgent action to localize and finance climate adaptation at scale. Our members’ growing capacity to engage and negotiate with decision-makers in these policy venues validates that our diamond methodology is maturing leaders’ skills and standing as key stakeholders that attract power holders responsible for reducing poverty, gender and other persistent inequalities.
Advocacy to ensure human settlements and cities value and empower women through pro-poor, gender responsive urbanization and local decision making processes

In 2019, HC reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring agenda-setting roles for grassroots women in policy arenas where member states and local authorities focus on inclusive and sustainable urbanization and decentralization, including UN Habitat’s first Habitat Assembly and the United Cities and Local Governments’ (UCLG) 2019 Congress and World Summit.

Protecting women’s empowerment and gender equality priorities in UN Habitat’s planning and governance arrangements

UN Habitat convened its new governing body—the Habitat Assembly—in May 2019 to recommend strategies for coherent implementation of urban and human settlements dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, and adopt resolutions pertaining to UN Habitat’s strategic plan. HC led civil society action in lobbying governments to sponsor and pass three resolutions that affirmed gender equity and women’s empowerment as key elements of programming and resource allocation and grassroots women’s leadership as central to guiding the implementation and monitoring of these resolutions.

Grassroots and professional representatives of HC also anchored numerous multi stakeholder policy and institutional advisement activities, including the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) and the Global Stakeholders’ Advisory Group (SAGE), giving grassroots women a voice in setting the strategic direction of the agency. HC was also recognized by governments as key advisors on the Global Land Tools Network 2019-30 Gender Strategy and the World Urban Campaign.
Ensuring women lead the 2030 Agenda implementation locally through advocacy and constituency building with UCLG

The UCLG Secretary General commissioned HC to prepare a Policy Brief on Women Leading 2030 Implementation Locally to be presented for review and adoption by their global membership at the 2019 Congress and World Summit. The paper was ratified in Durban, and an 80-person event was held with elected women mayors from Africa and Latin America and Huairou Commission grassroots leaders. Strong bonds were built among the Africans and joint planning, programming and messaging in advance of UCLG’s 2021 Afrus Cities Conference has continued to date, together with joint global planning.
Center-staging poverty, living conditions and grassroots constituencies in an updated feminist agenda

For decades, conservative forces have succeeded in blocking the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), despite ratifying two rounds of global policy commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality (MDG 3; SDG 5). This underscores the fear and misogyny surrounding the ‘feminist movement’ and the deep rooted obstacles to achieving women’s empowerment and gender equality. Recently, progressive forces, including the Swedish government, proposed a Beijing+25 initiative—the Generation Equality Forum—anchored by UN Women with key stakeholders as part of a forward moving strategy. As with the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women, Huairou was asked to play a leadership role ensuring the priorities of grassroots women's groups are at the center of the process.

Members of Huairou Commission’s Governing Council are leading policy advocacy in this area. Important engagements and benchmarks include Huairou’s Vice Chair presenting grassroots priorities at the Generation Equality Forum kickoff in Tunis alongside Sweden’s Deputy Prime Minister Margot Wallstrom and UN Women's ED. HC also holds seats in the UN Women’s Civil Society Chief's Advisory Group and the Generation Equality Forum Multi Stakeholder Global Steering Committee for Beijing +25, where Violet Shivutse serves as the sole grassroots representative alongside member states, philanthropists and other strategic actors. GC member Magdalena Garcia, serves on the Mexican GEF advisory group and has taken part in global decision making as a result. These roles enabled HC to take a lead in designing the Action Coalition strategy: a five-year results focused initiative to accelerate key dimensions of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
Ensuring policy platforms support grassroots leadership in local climate and disaster resilience

Global and regional advocacy and gains

The Huairou Commission organized a number of interventions in global policy debates on climate and disaster risk reduction and resilience building, spanning the UNDRR convened Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR), the UN High Level Political Forum, and the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction. Building on the momentum of participating in a year of regional and global activities associated with accelerating action on Climate Adaptation (associated with the Secretary General’s Commission on the theme), HC leaders anchored the 2019 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, supporting the Global Resilience Partnership and their sponsors DFID and Sida to hold a multi stakeholder gathering to build political will and a common agenda for investing in climate adaptation during the UN Climate Summit. Huairou secured two important gains at this gathering: Violet Shivutse, Chair of the HC Governing Council, offered compelling evidence and recommendations at the opening and closing panel and the Asian Development Bank announced the launch of its Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP), with Jhocas Castillo, HC grassroots leader from the Philippines, outlining our role in the initiative, described in more detail below.
Consolidating strategic regional policy opportunities in Asia and Central America

Creating new partnerships to resource grassroots women-led resilience building

HC is building alliances to advocate for climate finance to reach the communities where it is needed most. Sustained advocacy for the reconfiguration of climate finance architecture to channel resources to grassroots women gained momentum in 2019 when the Asian Development Bank invited Huairou to lead the workstream on building capacities of grassroots organizations and local government in its emerging Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP). The CRPP aims to substantially increase government investment in building the resilience of the poor and marginalized through capacity building, research, and leveraging financial resources.

This represents an important milestone in HC’s six-year partnership with ADB, as grassroots organizations in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam demonstrated capacities to advance disaster and climate resilient development in partnership with local governments. Grassroots groups influenced decentralized budgets, effectively delivered and shaped social protection programs, and transferred grassroots-driven practices across communities, contributing substantially to the evidence upon which the CRPP is built.

As this partnership evolved over the years, ADB’s opportunities to engage with HC leaders within and outside the Asian region have increased Huairou’s credibility as a reliable partner and key stakeholder in the emerging Community Resilience Partnership Program. As such, ADB has affirmed that the governance structure of the CRP will include HC and grassroots representation.
Formalizing joint action plans with CEPREDENAC

In 2019, HC formalized an MoU with long term partner CEPREDENAC (Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America), featuring joint actions that formalize grassroots women's organizations as essential stakeholders to implementing the Central American Risk Management Policy (PCGIR) and as recognized stakeholders in National Implementation Plans to realize the Sendai Framework.

CEPREDENAC and the Huairou Commission also functioned as strong allies at the World Bank's two-day Central American Regional Forum in February titled “Towards A More Resilient Central America,” where Huairou Commission assumed the role of technical expert and advisor on the centrality of formalizing grassroots women's leadership in order to achieve the Forum's stated objective. HC was asked to produce a pre-conference gender advisement paper and lead a presentation on Empowering Women to Lead Risk Reduction and Gender Responsive Strategies, anchored by HC grassroots and professional member leaders from Central America, HC’s Executive Director, and the World Bank's Senior Specialist on Social Development, Margaret Arnold. Consequently, the 65-page forum report contains numerous references to gender and women's leadership in DRR and the Central American unit has appointed consultants to determine if a program can be designed to meet practical and strategic needs. The Swiss Development Corporation, now funding our work in the region, is keen to realize these commitments, as are other GFDRR advisory group members who have repeatedly criticized the unit for weak follow through in this critical area.
Enhancing Governance of the Movement and Strengthening the Organization and Operations
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Building capacity and the decision making skills of Huairou’s Governing Council (GC) and member bodies

Significant, sustained investments to strengthen our governance systems were made and bore fruit in 2019. In mid-March, parallel to UN CSW Meetings, a Governing Council quorum held a two day board training and review of organizational business. Secretariat staff ran the training, focusing on: the core roles and responsibilities of GC members; specifics related to budget, financial oversight, and resource mobilization and the GC’s role in preparing and adopting the next Strategic Plan. The ISK findings were distributed and discussed along with suggestions for action to address the recommendations. Executive Committee members gave presentations on their work and authorized a member diagnostic survey as well as a multi-year Grassroots Leadership Development program.

Several months later, the Second Global Grassroots Women’s Congress – the annual general meeting of Huairou membership—was held over two days in Nairobi with additional virtual participation. Forty five organizations representing 70% of all eligible voting members attended. They reviewed annual progress reports on regional work undertaken by the members and their coordinating committee, GC committees (membership, audit etc) and the Secretariat’s work. Other sessions explored how to strengthen member engagement and fundraise collectively. Leaders’ skills in accounting for and analyzing their work over the two days illustrated the capacities and integrity of the movement and how associational and financial investments can grow these skills.
Strengthening staff and operations

In 2019, 3 new hires were undertaken to improve our financial and grants management and strengthen our development programming. The hiring of a new Financial Officer allowed us to clear specific ISK and Audit management findings and to provide accurate accounting information and record-keeping, a new Grants Manager similarly streamlined and updated tracking and monitoring systems and improved communications with implementing groups. The appointment of a former UNDRR staff member as Program Manager is enhancing coherence across our diverse programming and consolidating monitoring and assessment processes valuable for our new Strategic Plan and work planning. Lower level ISK findings associated with updating HC policies and procedures were drafted in 2019 but require legal and technical assistance to simplify and adjust to the nature and scale of our operations and ensure compliance with not for profit regulations. This process is underway but has been stalled by the onset of Covid.

Mobilizing resources for sustained action

In 2019, the Secretariat secured significant contributions to our 5 year Strategic Plan and took the lead in global coalitions raising, multi-year financing for community led climate resilience and economic justice/sustainable livelihood initiatives.

The Swiss Development Corporation issued a 3 year grant agreement starting Fall 2019 of $1 million USD to work on community resilience and DRR in 5 Central American countries and an existing donor—The Climate Justice Resilience Fund/New Venture Fund—contributed an additional $100,000 USD to Huairou’s advocacy work in May and has since committed an additional $200,000 USD in 2020, bringing our current 3 year agreement to over $1 million USD. Substantial contributions of of nearly $75,000 USD were also revised from banks, individuals, and member networks.

Equally promising are HC’s investments in coalition based resource mobilization in 2019. In the Fall, a cohort group of Sida partners championing community led climate adaptation (IIED, GRP, SDI, CJRF and HC) initiated dialogue during the Climate Summit where we jointly considered systems changed required to increase support for grassroots women’s organizations working to reduce climate and disaster risk. One year later the coalition is launching a collaboratively planned Frontline Funds program, with resources pledged for Fall 2020.
In June, HC was contacted by Oxfam Novib in the Hague to assess our interest in co-developing a five-year competitive bid to the Dutch MFA. After two planning meetings in the Hague and long distance collaborative writing, the MFA notified us we were among the 10% selected to submit a full proposal. If a full grant award is made by year end as planned, HC will secure a 3.7 million Euro contribution to a five-year initiative on resilient and gender just value chains and livelihoods.

Additionally, the Secretariat leveraged $100,000 USD for policy advocacy through negotiating and coordinating travel scholarships and honoraria for our member leaders and staff to participate in global and regional policy fora and expert group meetings. These audited in-kind contributions are a 10% match to Sida’s 2019 donation and the cumulative 4-year investment.