



# STORIES FROM THE GROUND: APPLYING THE LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION PRINCIPLES

Voices for Just Climate  
Action Program 2021-2025



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The content of this document reflects the work of local communities, initiatives, and grassroots organizations. We extend our gratitude to all the partners who trusted WWF to collaborate and co-create, as well as to those whose shared vision and support enabled meaningful co-design and collaboration that brought these examples to life. We also thank like-minded donors, such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their support.





© Laura López, WWF-NL

# INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of climate adaptation across the world heavily relies on the leadership and active participation of local actors, who bring knowledge, experience, and understanding of what solutions work best in specific contexts. Often, decisions about adaptation are made remotely, without input from those directly affected. This disconnect can lead to missed opportunities for innovation and implementation of measures. To strengthen climate adaptation strategies, it is essential to empower local actors to co-design and drive solutions that are both effective and sustainable. This approach is at the core of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA).

LLA is about shifting power and resources to those closest to climate impacts, who are best placed to co-design and lead solutions that last. This means recognizing the knowledge of local communities, building mutual trust and creating space for co-creation between civil society and institutions at all levels. Without civic engagement and local leadership, adaptation will risk being disconnected from the realities on the ground. This is why WWF-Netherlands endorsed the 8 LLA Principles in 2021, together with over 130 governments, leading global institutions, and other local and international NGOs. The eight principles are:

# PRINCIPLES FOR LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

- 1 Devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level
- 2 Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled and displaced people, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised ethnic groups
- 3 Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily
- 4 Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy
- 5 Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty
- 6 Flexible programming and learning
- 7 Ensuring transparency and accountability
- 8 Collaborative action and investment

Developed by the Global Commission on Adaptation

Communities around the world have been addressing the realities of climate disruption for decades. Many have mobilized to restore degraded lands, protect coastlines, adapt agricultural practices, manage water resources, and shape national climate policies. WWF, through the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) program, has been implementing the principles of LLA in practical scenarios. WWF supported over 70 locally led initiatives across Kenya, Tunisia, Indonesia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Zambia. These solutions have reached over 1.4 million people and helped manage more than 470,000 hectares of land. Through movement building, co-creation, and mutual capacity-building. In addition, the program has facilitated 45 multistakeholder fora that elevated local climate voices and

stories to higher levels and co-built awareness campaigns that reached 3.5 million people. These initiatives demonstrate the potential of community leadership in making adaptation efforts more grounded, inclusive, and resilient.

Within the scope of the VCA program, the LLA principles have been put into practice over the past five years across seven countries. The examples below are not meant to capture the full scope of the program's impact. In many cases, they do not align exclusively with one principle, and some illustrate only certain aspects of a principle even when they are not directly tied to a specific adaptation initiative.

# EXAMPLES OF LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION IN PRACTICE ACROSS THE VCA PROGRAM

## PRINCIPLE 1

### DEVOLVING DECISION-MAKING TO THE LOWEST APPROPRIATE LEVEL

*Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed, and implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.*

© Hayet Baccouche / WWF Tunisia

© Hayet Baccouche / WWF Tunisia

## 1.1 - EMPOWERED WOMEN LEAD THE WAY IN TUNISIA'S KERKENNAH ISLANDS

Women groups in the Kerkennah islands of Tunisia have claimed decision-making power and leadership by co-organizing the first women-led group in the archipelago for the Development of Fisheries and Agriculture (GDPA) in 2023. Climate change is intensifying the effects of coastal erosion in the Kerkenah archipelago while also raising the salinity levels in the water tables. Consequently, the ability to cultivate crops is diminishing due to the increased salinity worsened by dry periods and a lack of available freshwater resources. Local communities are highly dependent on small-scale fishing and face challenges competing against large-scale actors. The decline in agriculture, combined with restricted access to fresh water, amplifies the difficulties encountered by many, particularly women, who are already struggling with high unemployment and limited economic opportunities.

The women's group, now counting with the active participation of over 100 women, has been pivotal in identifying their priorities for capacity building and enhancing skills in communication, advocacy and leadership. Thanks to this process, a dedicated community space was secured, becoming a platform for peer learning and exchange. This has enabled members to share experiences with other groups, attract new members, receive essential equipment from various stakeholders, and implement locally led climate solutions. One example is the preservation and restoration of traditional palm groves with four climate-resilient varieties, which are planted to slow coastal erosion and retain soil moisture. Restoring the palms has also been critical to revitalize the traditional *Charfia* fishing method, which uses wooden structures made of palm fronds embedded in the seabed to create a triangular barrier, blocking the path of the fish, and pulling them into capture chambers. Promoting this tradition not only helps create new opportunities for women to take up primary fishing activities but also promotes sustainable natural resource management.



As a result of this experience, the group developed its first policy brief addressing water issues in Kerkennah and was able to mobilize more external funding to implement additional solutions using *Feskia*, a traditional water storage method unique to Tunisia and critical to climate adaptation. During dry periods, these reservoirs serve as reliable water sources for agricultural communities. A total of three *Feskias* have been constructed so far, and one more has been rehabilitated.

Local partner: Association de continuité des générations (ACG)



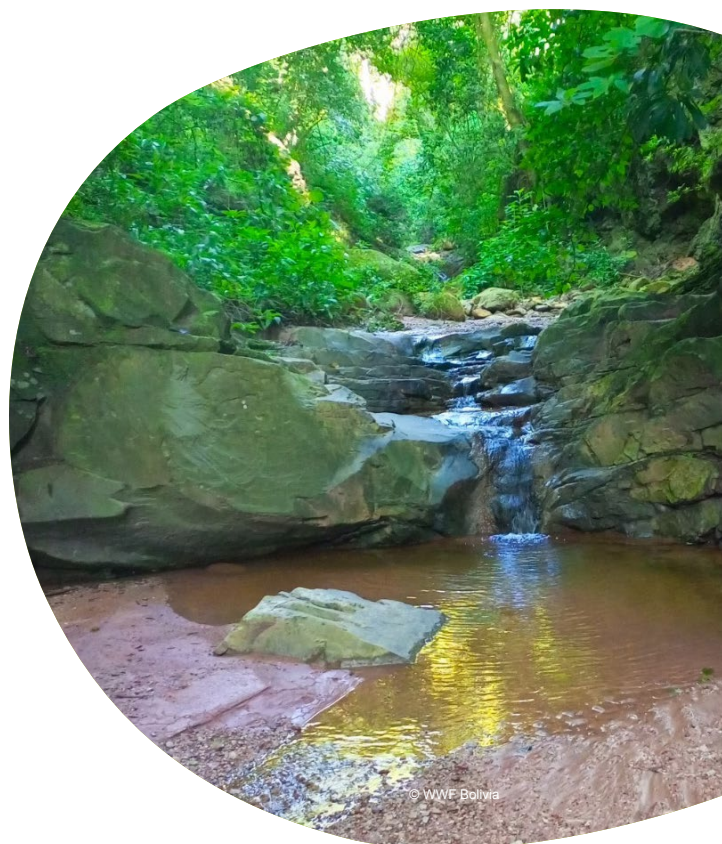
## 1.2 -AYOREO VOICES SHAPE FOREST FUTURES

The Ayoreo communities in Bolivia are one of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chaco-Pantanal region, and their livelihoods depend on the conservation of their forest, which also holds great spiritual value due to their ancestral connection to their territory. The Pantanal is the largest tropical wetland, spanning Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay. In Bolivia, it is situated in the eastern part of the country and comprises a significant portion of the Ayoreo's traditional territory. Particularly for those living in voluntary isolation, the Ayoreo communities face growing threats from the encroachment of infrastructure projects and deforestation due to agricultural expansion and cattle ranching, as they are critically dependent on forests for their livelihoods, medicine, and shelter. And yet, these communities often lack adequate decision-making control over what happens to their territories.

The Pilay and Manantial Ayoreo communities, in particular, have faced challenges in participating in decisions about their forests, as logging companies managed to secure concession contracts written only in Spanish. These communities do not speak Spanish, nor have they been provided with an adequate process or transparency over what these companies intend to do in their territories.

With the support of the VCA, in partnership with Organización de Apoyo Legal y Social (ORE), a forestry committee was established to represent the voices of the Pilay and Manantial communities and co-create fair rules to ensure that profits and benefits from the forest are distributed equally and to prevent exploitation of their natural resources.

This process started by providing advice and legal assistance on forestry policies and administrative processes. A two-day legal



training was held in Zamuco, a dialect of the Ayoreo language. In a collaborative way, the community worked on a new model for a community-led contract, which clearly outlines what is allowed, what must be paid, and how the community must stay informed through a thorough process of *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent* (FPIC). The contract now protects their rights and improves their ability to negotiate with the concession companies.

This forest committee is a stepping stone in providing community members with a seat at the decision-making table. These communities have faced generations of exclusion, and now they are taking action on their own terms to lead the management and protection of their forests and resources.



Local partner: Organización de Apoyo Legal y Social (ORE)



### 1.3 - BRINGING BACK CAROB: COMMUNITY-LED RESTORATION IN TUNISIA

Nefza, in Béja Governorate, has endured repeated wildfires and a growing drought in recent years, resulting in significant loss of tree cover and exposing soils to erosion and decline. Smallholder farmers and forest-dependent households in the region have been seeing grazing lands shrink, water retention fall, and local incomes fade as forests burned and regeneration stalled.

Local associations ASNEDNN and Atlas, supported by WWF-NA within the scope of the VCA and co-financed by the *Agence Française de Développement*, mobilized a community-led reforestation effort. Communities identified degraded and burned sites, sourced seedlings from nearby nurseries, trained volunteers, and carried out planting and early care. Between 2022 and 2023, a total of 2,250 carob trees were planted across three priority sites: 500 in Jbel Kef Labiadh Tebaba, 1,000 in Jbel Damous Tebaba, and 750 in Jbel Kraimiya.

The Carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*) was selected for its native status, drought resilience, low nutrient requirements or soil fertility needs, and capacity to stabilize soils and capture scarce rainfall. This species also offers market opportunities, such as small-scale seed sales, carob flour and syrup (kharroub molasses), green pod markets, among others. Local communities led the selection of the sites, the tree plantation process and their maintenance. The VCA program provided capacity building in restoration techniques and funded seedlings and logistics to launch the initiative. In the years that followed, tree cover increased and local actors showed renewed interest in native species as a climate-adaptation strategy. Next steps include expanding nursery capacity and strengthening market links to convert ecological gains into reliable incomes for Nefze-Béja communities.



*Local partner: Association de Sauvegarde de la Nature et de l'Environnement de la Direction de Nefza*

## PRINCIPLE 2

# ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES FACED BY WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN, DISABLED, DISPLACED, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MARGINALISED ETHNIC GROUPS

Integrating gender-based, economic and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.

The Amazon rain forest. Loreto region, Peru © Brent Stirton / Getty Images

### 2.1 - YOUTH OF THE AMAZON: RISING UP FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

In the Amazon region, the Cuida! initiative has been spearheading a movement to empower young people and women as climate leaders. Advocacy is crucial in this region, as the Amazon faces increasing environmental pressures that impact both local and global ecosystems. Without practical advocacy skills and capacity-building opportunities that align with the realities of women and youth from the Amazon, climate action may be limited. VCA has been supporting bottom-up and youth-centered advocacy initiatives since 2021 to ensure that these emerging leaders can effectively champion their communities' needs and influence national policy processes.

Between July and December 2024, the program collaborated with Cuida! to organize workshops and facilitate direct engagement with policymakers, including impactful visits to Brazil's Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. These experiences provide participants with an understanding of climate policy and enable them to actively contribute



to shaping national adaptation strategies. In addition, they emphasize grassroots voices and ensure that the realities and demands of local communities are represented in critical discussions and decisions.

This initiative has brought together 38 young people and women from the nine states of the Legal Amazon for climate advocacy training. Participants engaged in lectures, workshops, and dialogues with both legislative and executive branches in Brasília, covering essential topics such as climate justice, environmental racism, and the impacts of climate change in the Amazon.



Local partner: Cuida! Incidência Amazônica pelo Clima

## 2.2 - MAPPING TERRITORIES: INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS IN PAPUA, INDONESIA

In Indonesian Papua, communities are facing rapidly shifting pressures from expanding logging and extractive industries, alongside rising coastal hazards that intensify risks to their livelihoods and cultural ways of life. In this context, Indigenous groups sought to secure the legal basis for their customary territories so they could steward the landscapes that provide critical climate buffers.

Working with WWF-Indonesia and national and local partners, Indigenous communities led participatory mapping processes to record customary boundaries, seasonal land use, and governance systems. Technical teams provided mapping tools, training, and legal guidance, while villages validated boundaries through inclusive consultations. The combined effort produced the official recognition of 206,641 hectares of forest as ancestral territory and contributed to mapping 5.3 million hectares across the region. This effort continuously creates key evidence for spatial planning, as well as for multi-level advocacy that informs Customary Forest designation, Indigenous Territory Decrees, and village regulations.

This approach is fundamental for climate change adaptation because secure land tenure enables the conservation and sustainable management of ecosystems. When land rights under customary or indigenous governance systems are legally recognized, communities are better able to prevent land grabbing, deforestation, and illegal logging, which can degrade watershed functions, reduce soil stability, and increase exposure to flooding, erosion, and coastal saltwater intrusion.

*Local partners: PIONER, PERDU, Panah Papua, Pt. PPMA, Ingger Wewal and Customary Territory Registration Agency (BRWA)*



Indigenous Communities in Asmat, Regency © Delph Farlin Mamori, 2023

Beyond ecological benefits, the mapping process reinforced customary institutions and improved communities' ability to engage with village, district, and provincial authorities. Inclusive validation continues to contribute to reducing boundary conflicts and helps clarify stewardship responsibilities. For the Asmat and other Indigenous groups, formal recognition is a critical pathway to address historical exclusion and inequalities, as well as to strengthen rights that underpin resilience. This process translated into clearer management arrangements and greater capacity to respond to episodes of flooding and issues of salinization. Regionally, mapped territories now serve as platforms for bottom-up conservation action and locally led, nature-based adaptation initiatives.



## 2.3 - STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINES: INDIGENOUS JOURNALISM IN BOLIVIA

The Gran Chaco is one of the world's largest dry forests and the second-largest forest region in South America after the Amazon. Historically, the state has been absent from this remote region: lack of governance and low enforcement, insufficient policies, lack of infrastructure and limited investments in the public sector. A large number of local inhabitants are vulnerable due to low incomes, lack of property rights, limited land tenure, inadequate access to drinking water, restricted access to public health and education services, and poor basic infrastructure. Indigenous peoples are a critical group in this region.

Creating narratives that are more representative of the realities lived by the Indigenous communities of the region is crucial not only to raise awareness of local experiences and knowledge but also to strengthen accountability from governments and to mobilize more action locally and nationally. In this sense, the VCA program in Bolivia has supported the School of Indigenous Journalism by co-creating courses and workshops aiming to capacitate young people's skills in communication and media regarding climate change and environmental

rights. It has trained over 100 people and supported them in the creation of short films, campaigns, and articles.

VCA decided to focus on indigenous-led journalism, not only in recognition of communication as a human right that allows communities to exercise their right to freedom of expression and to be informed, but also in recognition that such forms of journalism center the voices and knowledge of the communities on the frontlines of climate change and most affected by climate (in) action. Through the work with the local partners *Organización de apoyo jurídico y social (ORE)* and *Centro de Educación Alternativa para Jóvenes y Mujeres Indígenas (Arakuarenda)*, students at the School of Journalism can now receive certificates endorsed by the Ministry of Education, which opens doors for them to access job opportunities linked to the defense of their territories through communication.



Local partner: *Organización de Apoyo Legal y Social (ORE)*



## 2.4 - CONNECTING THE CHACO: WOMEN BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the heart of the Gran Chaco, Indigenous women are at the forefront of addressing one of the major climate threats in the region: water scarcity. The Women's Collective of the Gran Chaco Americano is a movement comprising individuals, groups, and organizations of indigenous, rural, small-scale producers, artisans, peasants, and migrant women that promotes the strengthening of their local organizations.

At the core of this initiative, in collaboration with Redes Chaco, is empowering local communities through territorial connectivity by establishing and strengthening 45 community radio stations, 12 telecenters, 5 monitoring centers, and 6 antennas across the region. More than providing internet alone, this project has focused on empowering women's groups to adapt to climate change, conduct community-led climate and biodiversity monitoring, and overall foster resilience in the region. These telecenters and platforms, managed by rural women themselves, are

equipped with the needed facilities for online training workshops on climate, digital literacy, and market strategies. These groups are now alerted about floods, fire, droughts, and other risks, benefiting over 5,000 people from 40 isolated communities.

VCA's support has been instrumental in five of these remote communities within the Chaco region. This work has been crucial for communities to learn how to map risks and adaptation practices, keeping them safer from climate hazards and creating new income sources. More than 200 grassroots women's groups have joined the Gran Chaco network and are using the digital centers to sell their local products and crafts, access pension schemes, apply for funds and scholarships, among others. This is part of the Redes Chaco's participatory and inclusive model: promoting the reintegration of traditional and equal decision-making. The telecenters and radios serve as powerful spaces for community accountability and monitoring.

*Local partners: Redes Chaco & Colectivo de Mujeres del Gran Chaco Americano*



Indigenous School of Journalism, Bolivia © EPI, 2023

# PRINCIPLE 3

## PROVIDING PATIENT AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING THAT CAN BE ACCESSED MORE EASILY

Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity and institutions through simpler access modalities, as well as longer term and more predictable funding horizons to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.

© WWF Bolivia

### 3.1 - NEXT LEVEL GRANT FACILITY: POWERING GRASSROOTS ACTION

One of the VCA program's goals between 2021 and 2025 was to target the significant challenge of funding mechanisms often inaccessible to small, grassroots, and informal organizations due to their bureaucratic nature and rigid requirements. To address this, the Next Level Grant Facility (NLGF) was established within the VCA program as an innovative, small grant mechanism to channel finance to marginalized groups and promote community-led decision-making. With an initial budget of €3.5 million, the NLGF has targeted and provided funding to small grassroots organizations, community groups, activists and individuals who often do not have access to traditional funds due to their limited capacities and informal means of operations. For this facility to be most responsive to the local context, Regional Teams localized the funding framework, adapting it to suit the target groups in their regions. Local fund managers were contracted to manage the fund and ensure decentralized decision-making.

In all regions, the NLGF has had two funding cycles: one for climate emergencies, serving as a rapid response mechanism for disasters in the region, and another for climate opportunities. This funding supported 503 projects directly benefiting 7.3 million people, including 142 environmental and human rights defenders.



© Saúde e Alegria Program, 2024

Fund Managers:





# PRINCIPLE 4

## INVESTING IN LOCAL CAPABILITIES TO LEAVE AN INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY

Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.

© Comitê Chico Mendes, 2024

### 4.1 - FROM RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ACRE

The state of Acre, in the far west of Brazil bordering Peru and Bolivia, has already lost over 40,000 hectares of forest due to land cover change in 2024 (MapBiomas). And yet, local youth continue to preserve forests. In 2021, WWF-VCA partnered with the formalized Chico Mendes Committee, which is rooted in the legacy of socio-environmental leader Chico Mendes. This new alliance sought to contribute to strengthening territorial defense across the Chico Mendes Productive Reserve (Resex).

By providing funding and organizational support through the VCA program, the Committee has expanded the outreach of Resex, with a strong focus on young people. From this support grew the Rede ComunicAtiva de Jovens (CommunicActive Youth Network) and later the Coletivo

Varadouro: a well-trained and territorially engaged group of youth who transitioned from visibility to organized collective action, also securing a seat on the Resex's Deliberative Council, which guaranteed young people a voice in decisions directly affecting their lands and livelihoods.

Since then, the organization has matured. It now operates independently on the global stage, has approved more than eight medium-sized projects, increased its visibility within Brazil's political landscape, and integrated climate justice into its own advocacy agenda. The result is a strengthened, youth-led organizational base that continuously works to transform resistance into institutional power, while ensuring local voices shape conservation and development decisions across the Reserve.

Local partner: Comitê Chico Mendes & Coletivo Valadouro



Comitê Chico Mendes

# PRINCIPLE 5

## BUILDING A ROBUST UNDERSTANDING OF CLIMATE RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

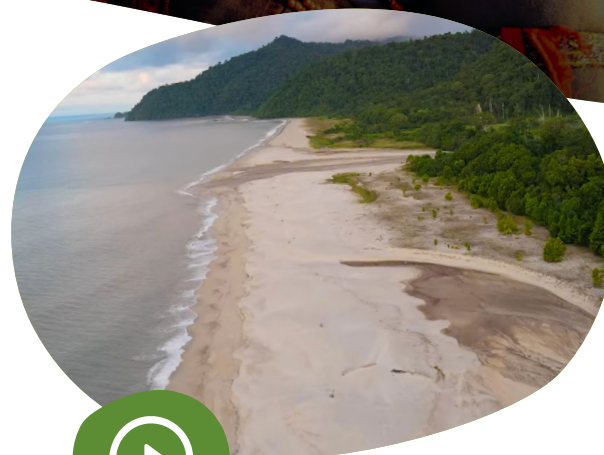
Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, traditional, Indigenous, generational, and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.

Indigenous Yessa clan members in Tambrau Regency, Papua © Julian Hahne, 2023

### 5.1 - SASI: REVIVING TRADITION FOR ADAPTATION IN PAPUA

In Papua, Indonesia, across the Tambrau district, Indigenous People of the Yessa clan are working with the VCA program to revive Sasi, a traditional system of nature conservation enforced through customary law. **Sasi** refers to the practice of temporarily restricting the use of natural resources to allow ecosystems to regenerate. When enforced, the community agrees to protect and refrain from harvesting resources from the designated location. The duration and timing of the Sasi are determined collectively, often in accordance with the seasonable availability of resources, increasing the community's capacity to adapt to climate change.

As a coastal area with critical marine ecosystems, this customary agreement has been crucial to protect 6,740.64 hectares of marine ecosystems along Jeen Yessa Beach. This arrangement has not only revitalized traditional ecological knowledge but also enabled the community to benefit from ecotourism, which features attractions such as leatherback turtles and bird-winged butterflies.



Click to play the video

The recognition of the Sasi practice is critical to empower local actors in protecting their ecosystems. Through the VCA program, local communities collaborated with village, district, and provincial governments to secure the legal recognition of Sasi, formalizing the practice of over 600 people within local and provincial ecosystem governance systems. To encourage wider adoption, the community in Tambrau also produced [a video](#) explaining the Sasi conservation method and shared it with other villages and districts, enabling them to replicate the approach while adapting it to their customs.

Local partners: PERDU, and Territory Registration Agency (BRWA)



## 5.2 - THE RAMAT MODEL: RESTORING KENYA'S DRYLANDS

In Marsabit County in central north Kenya bordering the eastern shore of Lake Turkana, local communities face increasing rates of erratic rainfall and drying grasslands due to the growing intensity of droughts. Climate change is eroding key natural resources and placing ever-greater demands on risk management strategies and resources, including herd mobility and drought reserves. These phenomena modify the availability of natural resources, forcing pastoralists to change their migration routes and the timing of herd movements, which has led to community conflicts and weakened traditional mechanisms for resource governance.

For this reason, the VCA has worked to strengthen traditional governance and empowerment by engaging community members to plant and maintain indigenous trees to restore their lands. Communities have planted over 13,000 indigenous trees in the year of 2024 and about 3,878 the year before. The restoration of the landscape with indigenous acacia trees is a solution to climate adaptation, as the acacias have complex

roots that penetrate deep enough to reach the water table, thereby helping to prevent desertification of grasslands and providing the necessary source of water for essential grassland species. These activities follow the model of *Ramat*, which was introduced by Nature and People as One (NAPO), a WWF-Kenya partner part of the VCA program. *Ramat* (which in the local language Samburu means "communal activities") is a model consisting of a farmer-managed natural regeneration method whereby local communities identify and select indigenous trees that are known for not being affected by drought or other severe weather patterns and after identification, tree plantation follows. In addition, this initiative targets women particularly. These women have formed a movement called Urbisa, which is in charge of the acacia seed banks for large-scale rangeland restoration.

The *Ramat* model has now received recognition by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration as a locally led and co-created model for rangeland management and governance by the Indigenous Samburu people.

Local partner: Nature and People as One (NAPO)



Marsabit County, Kenya © Chris Kirimi, 2024



© Baringo County Conservancies Association, 2025

## 5.3 - THE CASE OF THE KIBORGOCH COMMUNITY CONSERVANCY IN KENYA

The Endorois community is an agro-pastoralist indigenous community of around 45,000–60,000 people residing around Lake Bogoria. The Endorois have been historically connected to this lake and its waters through community rituals. To the Endorois people, Lake Bogoria is a prayer site and an area of great economic value given the fertile grazing fields and the abundance of trees for timber construction and firewood. Particularly since 1973, when the Kenyan government decided to evict Endorois people from their homelands, this community has faced ongoing denial of access to land, restricted access to natural resources and other rights violations. This has left the community in a precarious situation, with no government assistance to help internally displaced people. Moreover, these indigenous lands are also often neglected and underdeveloped in terms of market and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

This situation continues to worsen during the last decade with the rising water levels of Lake Bogoria, which has swallowed 60 square kilometers of land traditionally inhabited by the indigenous Endorois and displaced countless numbers of people. While climate change effects contribute to the raising water levels, environmental issues affecting Lake Bogoria

are also directly linked to deforestation for charcoal burning, an activity perpetuated the more the Endorois (and other communities in the region) face marginalization, poverty and high unemployment rates.

To address this, VCA has worked with this community to restore 10 acres of land through reseeded and establishment of seed banks that will act as a buffer to control extreme flooding. The introduction of deep-rooted, native grasses and pasture plants helps stabilize soil and absorb excess water, reducing the frequency and intensity of flooding in the wetland area. Grass seed banks are areas of communal land turned into green grasslands that also serve the purpose of harvesting these grasses. The grass seed banks are managed and maintained by local community groups. Therefore, grass seed banks offer economic benefits for local communities while restoring degraded land and enhancing climate resilience. By centering on the cultural and environmental needs of the Endorois, this initiative has impacted 8,240 people and 1,648 households, exemplifying how integrating local knowledge into climate adaptation and land restoration can lead to sustainable and equitable solutions.

*Local partner: Community Representatives from the Endorois Welfare Council (EWC) & Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association*





## LA INSTALACIÓN DE ESTE TANQUE FUE POSIBLE GRACIAS AL PROYECTO:

“Fortalecimiento de capacidades de líderes y lideresas, defensores/as indígenas de las organizaciones miembros de la FAPI para participar e incidir de forma efectiva desde la cosmovisión indígena y propuestas propias, en la definición de políticas, programas y proyectos relacionados con el territorio, bosques y cambio climático”.

Fundación Avina



VAC

VACA PARA LA ACCIÓN CLIMÁTICA JUSTA



Federación de Asociaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos del Paraguay

©WWF Paraguay

## 5.4 - HARVESTING RAIN: WATER SECURITY IN PARAGUAY

In Paraguay’s Chaco region, a bottom-up approach to addressing water scarcity has transformed rainwater from an ephemeral resource into a sustainable supply. Historically, the semi-arid Chaco has faced perpetual droughts, exacerbated by a lack of effective state interventions. In 2019, the initiative by Pro Indigenous Communities (PCI) and SENASA initiated a turning point by leveraging local knowledge inspired by livestock reservoirs to create a locally led rainwater harvesting system.


This initiative harnesses gravity to filter rainwater through natural layers (stone, gravel, sand and charcoal), and thus ensuring potable water reaches remote communities economically and sustainably. This system, instead of endorsing complex technology and

top-down decision-making, empowers local communities by involving them directly in its implementation and maintenance: not only were communities part of its design, but also, they led the establishment of water councils for operations.

This initiative, supported by WWF-VCA in Paraguay, demonstrated successfully a high-impact, low-cost model. Currently, four large-scale plants serve nearly 4,000 people, transforming previously insecure water access into a well-established community right and better understanding of risks, adaptation needs and solutions regarding water access and use. This success in the Chaco underlines the importance of solutions to climate adaptation that allow for community agency to take a front seat.

Local partner: Pro Comunidades Indígenas





PRINCIPLE  
6

## FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING AND LEARNING

Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems and flexible finance and programming.

### 6.1 - THE CASE OF PARTICIPATORY GRANT-MAKING IN PARAGUAY

Between 2023 and 2025, the Next-Level Grant Facility (NLGF) in Paraguay demonstrated how flexible programming and rapid learning can address unpredictable climate and rights-based emergencies. Managed by CODEHUPY in partnership with WWF Paraguay, the fund was intentionally redesigned for Paraguay's realities: a rolling, continuously open application process; minimal bureaucracy for applicants lacking formal registration or bank access; and a 72-hour target for emergency decisions. This agility allowed the fund to respond to a wide range of urgent needs: from temporary relocation and legal or psychosocial support for threatened environmental defenders to rapid water interventions, wildfire equipment for volunteer firefighters, and travel support to enable Indigenous leaders to defend territorial rights in Asunción. Between 2023 and 2025, 129 grants were approved and a total of 93,621 people were reached directly (over 229 communities), from different sides of the country, especially from rural and indigenous communities.

The Paraguayan model embraced adaptive management. As requests surged, particularly for water access in the arid Chaco,

CODEHUPY paused immediate disbursements to commission technical assessments, hired a water-systems specialist, and reconfigured monitoring trips to verify solutions on the ground. A Consultative and flexible review structure enabled contextualized, case-by-case decisions, while territorial monitoring visits and photo/invoice verification enabled accountability despite severe connectivity and logistical constraints. These iterative adjustments illustrate how rapid-response finance can pivot from immediate relief to more durable, technically sound interventions when learning mechanisms and locally grounded approaches are embedded.

CODEHUPY and WWF's willingness to iterate continuously (by adding technical expertise and pausing to reassess) turned the implementation into a living example of flexible programming and learning that balances speed with adaptive, evidence-informed decision-making in complex and high-risk contexts.

*Local partner: Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay*

**CODEHUPY**  
Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay

# PRINCIPLE 7

## ENSURING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Making processes of financing, designing and delivering programs more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.

© Laura López, WWF-NL

### 7.1 - WOMEN LEADING THE WAY: PROTECTING MOTACUSITO IN BOLIVIA

In Puerto Suárez, Bolivia, the Motacusito community has been working since 2019 to ensure robust and transparent multi-stakeholder governance for nature protection and climate adaptation.

In 2019, four female leaders from the community (Quidian Roman, Ana Maria Tomichá, Marisol Román Méndez, and Dayana Espinoza) spearheaded efforts to secure the official recognition of Motacusito as a protected area. The campaign and efforts to legally recognize Motacusito have led to the legal recognition and public policy support for 880 hectares of the Pantanal's wetlands. This initiative has not only safeguarded precious ecosystems but has also equipped the local community with the legal tools necessary for sustainable resource management.

Through advocacy efforts and locally led monitoring, a legislative framework was developed that encourages community-led conservation efforts and ensures transparent governance structures that incorporate

community input and oversight. Their work has helped shift the local economy's focus from primarily agriculture and livestock to sustainable tourism, water source protection, and environmental education. The community's leadership, supported by WWF-Bolivia, the Bolivian Society for Environmental Law (SBDA), was instrumental in raising community awareness and collaborating with the municipal government to design the legal framework and ensure transparent decision-making.

The declaration of this protected area not only secures essential water resources and wildlife habitats but also establishes collaborative management with local authorities and opens new opportunities for sustainable and community-driven development.



Local partners: Sociedad Boliviana de Derecho Ambiental & Fundación Socioambiental SEMILLA

## COLLABORATIVE ACTION AND INVESTMENT

### PRINCIPLE 8

Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds, etc.) support each other, and their activities avoid duplication to enhance efficiencies and good practice.

### 8.1 - THE CASE OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES BENEFIT SHARING BILL IN KENYA

While Kenya is blessed with some natural resources, the country has always faced challenges in ensuring that benefits derived from these resources are shared in an equitable manner. Often, the host communities have complained that they are getting the shorter end of the stick. The Natural Resources (Benefit Sharing) Bill 2022 seeks to solve this challenge by establishing a system for sharing the benefits.

The Bill envisions both direct and indirect participation of the local community through the local community benefit sharing forums and election of representatives to the county benefit sharing committees, respectively. This is to ensure that their views form an integral part of the decisions undertaken by the local governments in the determination of payable royalties.

The Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative (DLCI), in collaboration with VCA alliance members and partners, played a crucial role in the Bill's progress. Through strategic meetings with the Pastoralist Parliamentary Group (PPG), they provided support and led to the Bill's successful passage in the Senate in 2024. This collaborative effort highlights the power of strategic partnerships and collaborative action to advance equitable and sustainable policies.

*Local partners: Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative & Pastoralist Parliamentary Group*



## 8.2 - WATER LAW FOR RESILIENCE: A STORY OF VICTORY IN BOLIVIA

In December 2024, the Municipal Government of Cuevo enacted the Law No. 002/2025 to protect the Mandiyuti community's water reserve, an initiative led by local actors with technical and financial support from the VCA's local partner *Fundación Socioambiental SEMILLA*. Community leaders identified springheads and feeder streams as critical for drinking water, agriculture and ecosystem health, then used participatory mapping, water-quality monitoring and community consultations to build evidence for a locally owned legal instrument. VCA supported partners by funding capacity-building workshops, supplying legal and technical guidance for policy drafting, and facilitating a multi-stakeholder dialogue between

municipal officials, water users, Indigenous representatives and civil-society groups. This assistance strengthened local advocacy, ensured the law reflected community priorities, and helped secure municipal commitment for enforcement and resourcing.

The law establishes protected zones around springs, rules for land use and restoration actions, as well as mechanisms to channel municipal and external funds toward nature-based solutions and green infrastructure. By creating a clear regulatory framework, it opens pathways for climate finance and coordinated investment in resilience measures.



Local partners: *Fundación Socioambiental SEMILLA*



**Why we are here.**  
To stop the degradation of the world's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

wwf.nl

