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Climate Justice Strategy



A Global Crisis Demands Inclusive Solutions

While the world grapples with the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to changing environmental conditions, environmental defenders—those best placed to mitigate the impacts of climate change—are frequently harassed, jailed, or worse.

Current adaptation strategies also fail to acknowledge and resource the critical role of local communities, particularly women and Indigenous people, in stemming the crisis. If, as Audre Lorde argued, “the master’s tools will not dismantle his house”, then we are going to need new tools—other than extractive capitalism and technocratic solutions—to address the existential threat posed by climate change.

Partners and allies of the Fund for Global Human Rights are transforming the climate landscape by creatively and sustainably addressing the root causes and human rights impacts of the climate crisis. While often portrayed as passive victims, these activists—for example, from coastal communities, Indigenous groups, and ethnic or caste minorities—are taking action to hold those in power to account and to lead the charge for change. With more than 20 years of experience resourcing social movements, the Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR) invests in the deep wisdom and community-based power of these groups to adapt to and reverse climate change.

Our Climate Justice Strategy

The Fund for Global Human Rights enables climate activism by investing in the power of activists and movements whose work is geared at dismantling the intersecting forms of oppression that have generated the current climate crisis, and whose analysis is grounded in a lived experience of exclusion. Drawing on our experience in intersectional grantmaking and movement-building, FGHR is resourcing groups to build collective power and address the causes and impacts of the climate crisis through collaboration, learning, and sustained innovative activism.

Ultimately, we need communities who live most closely with the consequences of the climate crisis to see their efforts enhanced and uplifted rather than criminalized. Such a shift, based on the demonstrated knowledge and systems of these groups, will help secure long-term, transformational change at both the local and systemic levels. FGHR works to amplify the voices of frontline activists and to document and demonstrate their learnings and impact. We elevate stories and learnings from the movements that FGHR grantee partners work within, and, in doing so, seek to encourage a broader set of donors to resource movement-centered climate activism at scale. Our goal is to defend human rights and transform climate philanthropy.

To tip the balance of power in climate debates to the communities most affected by global warming, the Fund for Global Human Rights shifts resources and facilitates cross-movement, cross-regional learning and advocacy for activists addressing the crisis in the regions of East Africa, Latin America, North Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and West Asia.

The Fund for Global Human Rights' intersectional climate justice work has three main pillars:

I. We Invest in Power



II. We Bolster Resilience



III. We Operationalize Inclusion





I. We Invest in Power



We invest in the power of communities to govern the places they live and work in and to lead the transition to a sustainable economy. FGHR supports groups working to preserve access to water and forests, resisting fossil fuel extraction and exploitative extraction of transition minerals, and pushing for government action to meet their international commitments on carbon emissions. We also invest in the enhanced power of unions, collectives, and communities to push for land rights, including access to forests, coasts, mangroves, and livelihoods that do not depend on the exploitation of the earth.

FGHR supports groups who provide the necessary scaffolding for successful community action: lawyers' collectives working on strategic litigation in support of communities; groups providing core movement support in the form of trainings, health services, or legal empowerment; and coalitions working together, across borders, to hold governments and private companies accountable for their contributions to the climate crisis.

We know governments adopt increased security laws and use surveillance technologies and narratives that present climate activists as threats to economic growth, energy security, or sovereignty. FGHR invests in the power of groups and initiatives who address criminalization, unjust litigation, and other security risks facing climate activists as well as efforts to expose and challenge governments' abuse of security laws and frameworks as a driver of closing civic space for climate activism.



Climate Justice, Power, and Securitization

The push for climate justice highlights the tension between those who see land as a commodity for profit generation, and those who see land as part of our shared natural environment. As a result, much climate justice activism inherently upsets the power status quo, resulting in violent backlash and attacks against defenders. Authorities in many places abuse security laws to criminalize those working for land and water rights. Numerous groups work to counter this securitization of civic space for environmental defenders, including the **Philippines Democratic Futures Collective**, **Action Group on Free Civic Space (Nigeria)**, **Coast Civil Society Network for Human Rights (Kenya)** and **Legal Defense Fund (India)**.



Climate Justice, Infrastructure, and Labor

Climate change places added stress on human infrastructure, disproportionately affecting urban mass settlements, informal workers, and those living near the sea. Across the globe, community groups, labor unions, and advocates for access to water, housing, and sanitation ensure continued and equal access to public infrastructure.

Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia carries out essential legal aid work in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina, to counter soil and air pollution. **Nomad08** in Tunisia focuses on equal access to water in urban environments, as well as in phosphate mining zones. Fishing communities from Asia to the Americas are successfully pushing back against mass development projects exacerbating environmental degradation, while adapting their businesses and work to align with possibilities.



II. We Bolster Resilience



The climate crisis can feel overwhelming and hopeless. There are powerful narratives at play that distract, defame, and deny the possibilities of a more just system and a safer world, which can generate feelings of overwhelm and division within movements. Drawing on extensive research on the relationship between narratives and change, FGHR supports work that shifts public narratives toward inclusion, joy, and care, countering messages of fear and division. Alongside grantee groups, we challenge the perception that climate activists are extremists, terrorists, and anti-development by promoting values-based narratives of environmental and human security and sharing success stories of communities advancing just climate laws and policies.

We understand the benefit of cross-movement and peer-learning spaces and celebrate the resilience-building power of community support. We invest in local knowledge production, in the space and time for cross-movement reflection, and in participatory research, all of which advance mutual understanding of impact and community support. We fund groups to enhance well-being, second-line leadership, cross-movement convenings, and dedicated respite and reflection space: in our experience, these elements are not just nice-to-haves, but essential to long-term resilience and success.



Climate Justice and Narrative Power

Across the world, communities are coming together to formalize and share local wisdom—both ancient and new—about ecology, the earth, and how we live with it. In India, **Bajkul Gram Bharti** co-created a communal education system that is rooted in the sociocultural and ecological context of the Indigenous community in North Bengal (India), leading to a returned sense of ownership of the land and its health. In the Philippines, **Active Vista** has developed a Climate Story Lab to support young film producers and directors to create cultural content carrying climate stories, ultimately generating an alternative narrative of the possibilities of change. And in the Philippines, the youth-led climate movement **Angat Generation Climate (Angat GenC)** challenges dominant narratives that individual actions, such as a person's carbon footprint, are largely responsible for climate change. Instead, Angat GenC works to hold corporations accountable for causing the vast majority of climate impacts.



III. We Operationalize Inclusion



While the climate crisis affects everyone, it does not affect everyone equally. For example, workers—especially in the informal sector—have already experienced income insecurity, distress migration, job losses, and deteriorating working conditions due to climate change. This is just one of the ways in which intersecting forms of oppression amplify the vulnerability of individuals to the climate crisis. At the same time, the people who are most exposed to the negative effects of climate change conversely possess the most adaptive knowledge and latent transformative power to turn the crisis around. In recognition of this truth, FGHR invests in national, regional, and international coalitions, led by historically marginalized groups—including Black, Afro-descendent, feminist, gender-diverse, migrant, and Indigenous communities—to share effective strategies, join forces to address the root causes of climate change, and call out when so-called solutions have negative impacts on local communities. We enable inclusion by sharing networking power, resourcing groups to join larger environmental networks.

FGHR is acutely aware of the generational aspect of the climate crisis. We invest in youth power as a vital force of climate movements, driven by the sobering reality that the youth will inherit the consequences of today's decisions. Youth leadership, creativity, and resilience fuel a global call for systemic change, which often is amplified by the rediscovery of ancient wisdom and sustainable practices that are now seen in a new light as essential to our survival. By bridging generations and uniting diverse voices, intergenerational and intersectional movements are crafting a powerful, hopeful vision for a just and sustainable future.



Climate Justice and Movement Power

The link between climate justice and movement power is deeply rooted in the history of social justice struggles, where communities have long fought for their rights and the preservation of their environments. Climate justice is the latest chapter in this ongoing fight, one that demands an intersectional inclusive approach. In Guatemala, the **Tz'ununija' Indigenous Women's Movement** brings women from different Indigenous tribes together to use community organization, legal tools, and methods informed by their cosmovision to defend their land. In Morocco, the youth group **Prometheus Institute for Democracy and Human Rights**—already on the forefront of intersectional pro-democracy work—leads a recently created youth coalition on climate justice bringing together young people for the first time on this issue. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, communities and lawyers are working with academia to hold mining companies to account for the extraction of transition minerals.

How We Work

The Fund's model of long-term, flexible support has strengthened frontline movements and organizations and built deep trust and partnerships with and among more than 1,100 human rights organizations around the globe. Across the three strategic pillars of our climate justice strategy, FGHR is leveraging its 20+ years of experience in reaching and resourcing grassroots activism and building transnational movements to deploy time-tested approaches as well as to develop new ways of working in the context of the climate crisis. Locally rooted human rights movements have the potential to redefine climate debates and ensure justice and human dignity prevail.

Generating systemic change requires sustainable action over time, with a diversity of actors and leadership that is continuously renewed. We invest in the ability of activists and groups to renew themselves and work together through convenings, coalitions, cross-movement learning, and care-based work.

Moving forward, we will continue to invest in the power of the over 250 activist groups and movements we already partner with, working on climate justice, land rights, access to water, and for an inclusive, sustainable economy. These groups are taking innovative action to save the planet, highlighting the intersecting impacts of climate change with economic rights, migration, and labor, and engaging in sustained legal advocacy to hold governments and companies accountable. With increased funding, we could support more groups, facilitate more activism, and expand collaboration across borders and movements.



Local, regional, and global activist meetings and convenings that previously could only be conducted in person are transitioning to virtual environments, limiting climate impact while also enabling more frequent coordination and exchange among environmental defenders. We will continue to invest in the ability of activists to work and connect securely online, through the provision of hardware, software, and intensive training in information technology and digital security.

Building on our expertise in emergency relocation of activists at risk, and our in-place legal and health support for defenders in acute crisis, FGHR hopes to establish and deploy a rapid-response fund to protect activists at risk in response to increased criminalization of climate activism and protest, and in coordination with security and protection networks for environmental defenders.

We also hope to combine local-level funding with enhanced opportunities for national and transnational joint actions and learning to maximize impact. We aim to create a library of environmental cross-movement learning to sustain the networks of frontline climate defenders.

Impact

Outcomes of increased, sustained investments in the power of intersectional climate activism will include:

- Communities and movements build **mass public support for climate change action** and a **more equitable and inclusive economy**.
- Indigenous, native, and frontline communities are acknowledged as **custodians of their land and holders of climate-relevant knowledge**, and are **free from intimidation, smear attacks, litigation, and violence**.
- Climate change activists are increasingly **co-creating campaigns and engaging in cross-movement learning processes** with other defenders and activists who all **protect human rights and promote climate justice in their work**.
- The climate movement consists of various groups engaging in **hope-based activism, rooted in the intersecting identities and experiences of the activists themselves**. As a result, **a diverse range of voices are heard and prioritized in local, national, and global climate policy-making**.
- Environmental defenders, and other activists protecting the earth, can more readily **exercise their core freedoms under legislation and administrative measures that better align with international human rights standards**.



Photo Captions

Front cover: In Myanmar's Seven Steps Lakes region, a farmer stands on land successfully blocked from development thanks to collaboration with local activists.

Page 1 (left): Denia, a volunteer lawyer with Movimiento Ambientalista Social del Sur por la Vida visits a community in Honduras where people peacefully protesting land grabs face arrest.

Page 2: Activists from East and West Africa come together to share and develop legal empowerment strategies for youth-led climate justice.

Page 3: Activists with EnLaw in Thailand use litigation, training, and advocacy to support marginalized communities in protecting their land rights and protect the environment.

Page 4 (left): A rice farmer in Myanmar is part of a movement working to prevent land grabs that threaten rural and Indigenous communities and the environment.

Page 4 (right): In Tunisia, Nomad08 activists work with community members to document issues affecting access to clean water.

Page 5: Derek, an activist in the Philippines with Nuclear and Coal Free Bataan Movement, helps communities mobilize to protect their environment and homes from large-scale industrial projects.

Page 6: Karnan, a farmer in India, relies on sand dunes to protect and nourish his crops; Coastal Resource Center is helping his community push back against overdevelopment.

Page 7: Youth rights activists from West Africa gather to explore the intersection of critical issues including the climate crisis, economic inequality, and gender justice.

Page 8: In Morocco, activists with Prometheus Institute jump-started an initiative bringing youth together to advocate for climate justice.

Page 9: A woman carries water in Myanmar, where collective action stopped the construction of a hotel that would have destroyed her community and local natural resources.

Page 10 (left): Activists in Myanmar stand with community members who worked together to prevent their land being used without consent by developers

Page 10 (right): Philippe Ruvunangiza of BEST was awarded the prestigious Civil Courage Prize in 2024 for the organization's work advocating for stronger environmental and human rights standards for mining companies in Democratic Republic of the Congo. (Photo courtesy of The Train Foundation)

Back cover: A woman in Thailand cares for her crops; her community collaborated with EnLaw to get a company to address decades of pollution in a local waterway and monitor clean-up progress.

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