



© XAVIER SCHWEBEL / SDCF



# TWO YEARS IN THE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME, WHERE DO WE STAND?

[communautes-resilientes.org](http://communautes-resilientes.org)

Launched in 2021, the Resilient Communities programme (CoRe) brings together a collective of 23 partners from 18 countries to build together and defend a vision of a fair ecological transition. Coordinated by Secours Catholique-Caritas France, the programme is 58% co-financed by the French Development Agency and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

*This document is supported by the Agence Française de Développement. Nevertheless, the ideas and opinions presented do not necessarily represent those of AFD.*



## REASONS FOR HOPE IN THE FACE OF THE IMPACT OF A SINGLE MULTIFACETED CRISIS:

*“There are not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but a single, complex socio-environmental crisis. The possible solutions require an integral approach to combat poverty, to restore dignity to the excluded and at the same time to preserve nature”.*

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

Since the start of the CoRe programme, the daily lives of each and every member of the partner organisations and the communities we support have been punctuated by constant threats to the

survival and well-being of the people we support, and of their territory. **The acceleration, intensification and scale of climate events**, such as drought and flooding, are having a direct and lasting impact on production and harvests (for example in the Sahel region, Bangladesh and Brazil). Inflation in food prices for local populations further increases food insecurity for people already living in poverty. The fragility of the areas where we operate is also linked to local **economic instability and political conflict**. These have had an impact on the **safety of**

**the teams** setting up activities as part of the programme (Colombia, Palestine, Bangladesh, Sahel), leading to travel adjustments or changes in the areas of intervention. In some cases, the staff of partner organisations working specifically to defend the territories of indigenous populations have been threatened and have also had to be relocated.

These changes in context simply illustrate what this programme was set up to achieve. They confirm that there are no isolated social, economic or environmental crises, but rather a **single complex crisis**. This crisis threatens the survival and well-being of everyone, wherever they may be, but it also adds to the vulnerability of populations already weakened by an economic and political context that is often indifferent to their plight. In the face of this multidimensional crisis, the response can only be a collective one, pooling our strengths, experiences and cosmogonies together to build a fairer future for us all.

These first two years of the CoRe programme have been punctuated by reasons for hope. A number of changes of government have given rise to new hope, as they have led to the introduction of a series of structural reforms in Colombia for example, and to new environmental policies, such as the creation of a ministry dedicated to indigenous peoples in Brazil. Again in Brazil, the collective advocacy work of indigenous peoples against the introduction of a law threatening their access to their territories led to a decisive legal victory in the Supreme Court, although the battle is not yet

over. Elsewhere, gouvernements have also decided to **explore other possible futures**: Senegal increasing budgets for agro-ecology, thus to giving greater recognition; Togo organised forums between CSOs and producers to share know-how and knowledge about agricultural production; Bangladesh encouraged the introduction of national emission reduction plans as part of international climate agreements. The members of this collective are seizing these opportunities to take action, each in his or her own context, to promote the emergence of fairer and more fraternal societies, **between human beings and with the rest of the living world**.



## ACTORS AND COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF THE PROCESS: BUILDING ON OUR RESPECTIVE EXPERIENCES AND ACTING FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL.

*The urgency is there: we need a fraternal, participatory and global revolution. Countries must join hands and look in the same direction: save the planet while striving for equity and justice. Within the CoRe programme, we believe that this is possible and must necessarily involve communities at every stage of the process. There's a saying in our region: "Whatever you do for me without me, you do against*

*me". We need to listen to the poorest communities and think with them.*

Moussa Sawa, Programme Manager at CADEV Niger, a partner in the programme.

In the various countries involved, the partners are working on practical responses to the socio-environmental crisis. Given the scale of the challenge, the first step is to draw on the knowledge



© ELODIE PERRIOT / SCCF

and experience of each and every one of them. Working as closely as possible with vulnerable populations, the CoRe collective is committed to working together to **empower each and every one of us**. In each of the programme's regions, the partners are supporting local people to drive a fair ecological transition in their territory.

The first way in which partner work towards a fair ecological transition is by setting up, by setting up and testing or supporting productive and dignified agro-ecological systems that **ensure both food security and the respect and protection of living**

**things**. In West Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, the programme has helped to mobilise and strengthen the **knowledge and skills** of local players in **agro-ecology**, in order to improve food security for local populations. During this period, for example, **385 information and training sessions were held to educate** local communities in Bangladesh, Palestine, the Sahel region and Latin America in the sustainable management of natural resources, while striving for a dignified way of life and meeting people's immediate needs. But the results achieved often go beyond the perimeter of the action, spreading out across the

## CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES OF PARTNERS IN THE TERRITORIES:

**THE VILLAGE OF TERRA PRETA IN BRAZIL** is an indigenous land already demarcated and approved by the government, but threatened by neighbouring farms that are clearing the forest for extensive buffalo farming. Our partner CIMI (Missionary Indigenous Council) and the Mura people have obtained government approval for the introduction of training in agro-ecological techniques. 28 agricultural technicians from the Mura people have now graduated and are involved in developing an agroforestry system. *"We currently have an agroforestry system in the village and we're working on setting up a cooperative to encourage people to produce their own food without depending on products from the towns. (...) With our cooperative, we want to show the municipal administration that we are capable of developing our own projects as indigenous technicians. (...) The agribusiness players, the livestock farmers and the big landowners want a potassium mine to be set up on our land to produce fertiliser. They don't understand that what is cheap today will cost them a lot in the future"*, says Jonison Fonseca, a young leader from the village of Terra Preta.

**IN TOGO**, the Farmer Field School method is winning support and changing behaviour by showing that another way to produce food is possible. After a participatory diagnosis identifying the main difficulties faced by farmers in their respective areas, the Farmer Field Schools enable the partners to demonstrate a series of good agro-ecological production practices that meet the farmers' specific needs.

For example, training courses on direct composting in the fields have been met with great interest, particularly among women growers. These women often have fewer resources than their male counterparts, and chemical fertilisers are increasingly expensive in the area. Beyond the Farmer Field School activities, the methods learned are then being disseminated informally, through the experimentation of curious people on their own farms. Farmers who have adopted these agroecological practices have seen **an increase in their production**.

**IN BANGLADESH**, the experience of Mrs Nemola provides us with an inspiring example. Her income as a day labourer meant that she was unable to meet the education costs of her four dependent children, despite having a small plot of family land. By joining the programme's group of women farmers in her village, she was able to take part in a number of agro-ecology training courses and get support to make the most of her land by creating diversified vegetable plots. Her plot now not only meets the daily nutritional needs of her family, but has also helped to increase the household income by selling surpluses at local markets.

## CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES OF PARTNERS IN THE TERRITORIES:

### **IN PERU, mobilising local authorities to defend the rights of indigenous peoples:**

The Amazonian Centre for Anthropology and Practical Application (CAAAP) provides support to indigenous peoples' organisations to strengthen local communities. It is within this framework that the local partner worked to support the San José de Panamá y Umanavanti communities and the local organisation CECONSEC in developing an advocacy strategy with the municipal authorities. The aim was to set up an office dedicated to the affairs of indigenous peoples, to ensure that their rights were better taken into account and defended. The commitment of the municipal authorities on this point was obtained, going so far as to allocate resources and recruit a director for this office. This local achievement illustrates the impact of strengthening the dialogue between local players and decision-makers and raising awareness on the necessity to implement a fair ecological transition in the local territories.

### **IN THE SOUTH OF SENEGAL, communities are getting organised:**

Caritas Kaolack is mobilising residents and local institutions in three communes to set up a waste collection and sorting system, with a view to combating unsanitary conditions. To do this, the organisation is helping to set up a structured consultation framework on waste management, involving civil society, youth and women's organisations. On the other hand, the aim is to inform and raise awareness among municipal teams. The residents managed to alert the local authorities about the situation by showing them a map of the insalubrity in the locality. As reported by a partner: *"This map does not reflect the reality of the commune of Wack-Ngouna, because we don't have as many rubbish dumps"* first declared one of the agents from the municipality's hygiene department during a pre-validation session. This reaction prompted the sharing of photos showing the various rubbish dumps that had been mapped out, in order to convince the agent of the urgency of the situation. The local authorities thus agreed to urgently define appropriate strategies for eradicating these rubbish dumps, with the involvement of community organisations, including Caritas Kaolack.

*"Local advocacy is essential for waste management. The level of political will is a very important factor in seeing improvements in this sector, so it's essential to convince the decision-makers."* Gertrude Rodriguez, programme partner Caritas Kaolack.



territories. By demonstrating the benefits of these methods directly or indirectly to producers, these activities help to support behavioural change in areas where a change in farming methods can respond to climate threats.

The second way in which the CoRe partners work towards a fair ecological transition is by enabling people to manage their territories collectively, thus guaranteeing their good sovereignty and access to resources and land. In Latin America and Asia, this issue is particularly acute for indigenous peoples. These initiatives are driven or supported by the confidence and initiatives of individuals, who organise themselves collectively to defend a vision of society and protect their living environment. **389 awareness-raising and training sessions on access to rights and the democratic management of territories and resources** have been carried out or supported under the CoRe programme.

It is these experiences that are important for building a desirable future for everyone. And it is from these life experiences and stories of change that we can build a collective narrative of hope.

A total of **21 projects were set up** during the first two years of the programme (2 projects in Bangladesh, 8 in Latin America, 5 in West Africa, 1 in Palestine, an exchange project between the SCCF's French regional teams and international partners, and 4 regional dynamics). A total of **115,652 people, including 70,234 women, have been** involved, trained or supported by the programme.



© XAVIER SCHWIBEL / SCCF

## THE STRENGTH OF THE PROGRAMME: BUILDING A SHARED VISION

### **ACTING AND LEARNING TOGETHER: REGIONAL DYNAMICS FOR CROSS- FERTILISATION OF EXPERIENCE.**

The multiplicity of the challenges we face and the way they are intertwined mean that we have to come up with collective solutions. Based on the experiences they have supported, observed and lived through, the CoRe partners are taking action. First of all, at a regional level, the parties involved in this programme are coming together in regional groups to share their experiences, build on each

other's strengths and **create common ground.**

**5 regional meetings were** held during this period: two in Latin America, two in the Sahel and one in South-East Asia. In Latin America, the collective focused on common goods and the way in which the communities supported, managed and protected these goods, leading to significant changes in the autonomy of family-run agro-ecosystems. This has led to significant changes in the autonomy of

family-run agro-ecosystems, offering new ways of cohabiting with their environment and understanding the resources of their territories. In the Sahel, the regional dynamic is making it possible to combine agro-ecological techniques and local experimentation in a context that is particularly exposed to the risks of food insecurity.

**Space for inter-regional dialogue was also available for** programme partners to meet, exchange know-how and experiences, and gradually identify common ground between contexts that are geographically different but face similar challenges. For example, a global webinar organised by the Sahel partners on farmers' crops brought together 36 programme partners and members of their networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These events provide opportunities for partners from different parts of the world to identify common challenges and issues. At the 10th Pan-Amazon Social Forum (FOSPA), two partners from Niger and Togo attended the forum with Latin American partners to discuss access to water and the promotion of food sovereignty in semi-arid regions.

### **CO-PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE: A COLLECTIVE LEARNING APPROACH BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS.**

**The exchange and joint construction of knowledge** is a key element of this programme. The programme is supported by **two research partners**, GEMDEV (Groupement d'intérêt scientifique pour l'étude de la mondialisation

### **FOCUS ON...**

**In October 2022, the regional meeting of the "Fair Ecological Transition in Rural Areas" initiative** brought together four partners from Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. The creation of this space enabled these CoRe partners to meet for the first time, and to exchange their practices and visions for their work. The four partners are working in rural areas on access to land rights for indigenous populations and on agro-ecology issues. By exploring potential synergies between them and with existing networks working on this issue (to which they may or may not belong), this initiative aims to create a shared culture around indigenous peoples' land rights and issues relating to land and natural resource management. A joint reflection has been undertaken with the partners on the advocacy carried out by/ for indigenous groups in a limited democratic context and a legislative context that is unfavourable to these communities (and their land rights).

## FOCUS ON...

**In August 2023, a local farmer's crop fair held in Brazil** brought together partner organisations representatives and farmers from Brazil, Peru and Colombia. The event provided an opportunity for participants to discuss the efforts made by organisations to participate in and promote the work of farmers in preserving agrobiodiversity. The farmer-to-farmer dialogues during the field visits overcame the language barrier and proved to be very fluid, leading to mutual recognition as guardians of agrobiodiversity. This type of space and meeting gradually enables the articulation of experience and knowledge at the level of both the local people and the partner organisations in the field, and a gradual move towards common vision vision for the CoRe programme.



© MIMORENO

et du développement) and CIEDEL (Centre international d'études pour le développement local), to encourage reflection on the fair ecological transition. During this period, an initial research-action project was set up, looking at **the links between agroecology, employment and food security for local populations**. Carried out in three different areas (Bolivia, Brazil and Senegal), in collaboration with local partners and the Agro Paris Tech institute, this work will enable the results obtained to be compared and cross-referenced, and will serve as a basis for a joint reflection workshop between research actors and the programme's field partners. In addition, the Institut de Recherches et d'Application des Méthodes de Développement (IRAM) is working with partners in Bangladesh, Bolivia and the Sahel on the **"agri-environmentalisation" of territories**.

With the support of CIEDEL, six experience capitalisations with partners and communities are underway in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Palestine, India and Bolivia. Experience capitalisation has two benefits. First, it strengthens the partner organisations and the communities taking part in the process. By reflecting on their experiences, the participants in the capitalisation process name and become aware of their know-how as a collective. Then, these different processes enable key issues and elements of the Fair Ecological Transition to emerge, contributing to the construction of a shared vision. This work will enable **different approaches to the transition to be cross-referenced and a common vision to be gradually built up**



**between partners in research and in the field.** While the final articulation of all this work and themes remains to be done, the beginnings of a reflection on advocacy are being initiated in the various meeting spaces of the programme.

Knowledge is also co-constructed between partners in the field, through the exchange of expertise between organisations. As part of the regional dynamic, the Latin American partners worked together to carry out 8 diagnoses in each of their intervention areas concerning the **management and protection of common goods** within the selected communities (water, farmers' seeds, forest and land). This participatory action-research project has enabled the key role played by communities in

their perception of and relationship with common goods to be discussed with local populations, as well as gradually defining the knowledge and positioning shared by the partner organisations.

### **ACTING AND BUILDING TOGETHER: THE CHALLENGE OF SHARED GOVERNANCE**

FIIn the face of a dominant narrative that promotes personal profit and competition, the CoRe programme defends the idea that collective organisation and shared governance will enable **new ways of doing things together and making decisions together** to emerge. During these first two years, the programme's first governance bodies have been set up and the collective decision-making processes and horizontal organisation of

## FOCUS ON...

**Every two years, the Stakeholder Assembly** brings together all the members of the CoRe collective. Its aim is to develop a shared vision and common positions on the fair ecological transition, through forums for exchange and debate, fed by the realities on the ground experienced by the various stakeholders. This first edition was a key moment for partners to get to know each other and build a collective. By sharing local experiences, taking ownership of the different aspects of the programme and holding debates, the participants were able to strengthen their links over 5 days, despite the different languages spoken. They were also able to bring out the first elements of a common vision for a fair ecological transition, and to create common ground on more technical aspects: agro-ecological practices, mapping and land rights, support for rural and urban communities, common goods, etc.

the CoRe programme are gradually being adopted by everyone.

A Strategic Committee has been set up following experimental work to implement shared and collective decision-making. It is made up of permanent members, associate permanent members, members of research partnerships and partner members representing each region of the world involved in the programme. This Committee will decide on the vision of a fair ecological transition that will be built and defended, drawing on projects in the field, the regional dynamics mentioned, the research and scientific activities put in place and the results of the stakeholder assemblies.

In total, over the first two years of the programme, more than 200 people have come together to build together (two meetings in Latin America, two meetings in the Sahel, one meeting in Asia, one global meeting). There have also been a dozen webinars and thematic exchanges.

It is also a participative and comparative research programme on agroecology.

Finally, collective and shared governance is being put in place.



## **A VISION OF THE FAIR ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION THAT IS SYSTEMIC, DIFFERENTIATED AND FROM A LOCAL/GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE.**

Its diversity of actors, roots in diverse local territories, networking capacity, links between France and the rest of the world and shared governance are assets on which the CoRe programme relies to achieve a vision for a faire ecological transition that is shared, systemic by nature, differentiated, and shaped through local/global perspective.

The process over these first two years has been rich, abundant and complex.

There has been a great deal of discussion, and points of consensus and dissensus are already emerging. The Strategic Committee, informed by the work in the field and the voices of the stakeholders, will arbitrate and systematise these points over the next two years of the programme.

At the various regional meetings attended by partners, communities and indigenous peoples, two major issues came to the fore:

*The term transition, beyond its polysemous nature, gives the impression of a gentle, gradual, consensual process. But in view of the urgency, the "vital need to move"<sup>1</sup> - no country lives in a fair and safe space between the social floor and the environmental ceiling - it's a question of "changing the paradigm", transforming the balance of power, lifestyles and consumption patterns, and doing so on different scales, from local to global.*

*The term "transformation" might therefore be more appropriate and more meaningful than "transition", suggesting a process of structural change, integral change and political change that sets everyone in motion.*

*However, it is important to recognise that these transformations are not the same for everyone. It is not a question of transformation, but of transformations that will differ from one individual to another, from one social group to another, from one context to another, from one level (local, regional, national, global) to another.*

#### **Extract from the CoRe Strategic Committee debate**

---

1. All the words in inverted commas are quotes from debates held during activities organised as part of the programme.

**Sobriety, connection to the living world, cosmovision:** In some areas of the South (or the "global majority"<sup>2</sup>), the transition involves preserving and developing know-how and skills that respect the living world, while acquiring new knowledge. In the so-called northern regions (or "global minority"), the transition in the face of this crisis must involve changes in practices that are more sober and more connected to the living world.

**Know-how of indigenous peoples:** the awareness of indigenous peoples of their role in managing and protecting the resources of their environment is leading to a new self-assurance on the part of communities and individuals. Transitioning also means **restoring ancestral know-how and enriching it with new know-how**. Fair Ecological transition is present in the practices of many communities around the world, and is expressed in their resistance (protection of farmers' seeds, maintenance of agro-ecological techniques, etc.) to protect their territory. "Just as we take care of the mountain, the mountain takes care of us", the Latin American partners remind us. The Asian partners also insist: "It is important to find new ways of communicating the importance of indigenous knowledge to protect land, forests and water. We need to learn from indigenous peoples to understand the links between all human beings, nature and the elements of the soul".

***"Farming and indigenous communities have a role to play in the Fair Ecological Transition. Farmers feed the world, take care of the Pachamama and the seeds.***



*This is the very essence of the Fair Ecological Transition.*” Sabino Condori, Peruvian peasant leader.

Following the various meetings, the common set of values needs to be clarified, but seems to revolve around a number of common points:

- ▶ Justice, in terms of reducing inequalities, but also planetary justice with a view to doing no harm today or for future generations;
- ▶ Equity, so that all human beings have the same opportunities and shared access to resources;
- ▶ Dignity, enabling human beings to fulfil their potential;
- ▶ Responsibility, understood as individual and collective responsibility, in managing the commons so as not to jeopardise the habitability of our planet;
- ▶ Hope, believing in the ability of human beings to make the fair ecological transition, a sine qua non for the future of humanity;

*«There will be no social justice without environmental justice. Social justice for the poor can be achieved through environmental justice, because the poor depend on their natural environment to subsist.»* Tran Thi Lang, SPERI, partner from Vietnam.

### **A DEMANDING AMBITION THAT FACES UP TO THE DIFFICULTIES WE HAVE TO OVERCOME TOGETHER**

The strengths and originality of the programme, which gives itself the opportunity to experiment with its intuitions, are necessarily accompanied by points of difficulty and dissensus.

Moving forward together also means moving forward at your own pace. The collective challenge is not without its difficulties. Trying to come together in such a rich diversity of contexts means that points of disagreement are inevitable.

In order to build common ground and become a force for proposals and solutions, these meetings involve a lot of polluting travel, while at the same time defending the importance of sober lifestyles. What place is there for the need to exchange and share ideas so that we can move forward together in a context of sobriety?

There is also no consensus on how to act. The perception of the living world and our link to it varies from one region to another, and from one imperative to another: should we defend an integral vision of our link to nature, at the risk of having to cut ourselves off from certain opportunities? Or on the contrary, in the case of certain indigenous peoples, should we highlight the services rendered to the environment, and seize the mechanisms of carbon accounting?

How can power relationships be taken into account in projects? Is it necessary to adopt a gender perspective? While for some members of the programme, “no agro-ecology without feminism”, others feel that the work done is sufficient to address these inequalities.

The climate and environmental crisis must be tackled as a matter of urgency. How can we manage the tension between the long-term nature of a collective and the

development of a vision, with immediate crisis situations?

*"What scale for action? From the outset, the dynamics of the programme have been political. It adopts a point of view in the multiple conflicts. The programme is not just a vision, it is the work of actors. It's about praxis. The aim of the programme is not to find every solution to feed a vision. We can't set the bar too high."*

Finally, paths for change are taking shape, formulated at the first Stakeholder Assembly in June 2022:

- ▶ Starting out from local areas, local practices and local mobilisations,
- ▶ Promoting know-how, particularly that of indigenous populations,
- ▶ Building power relations to be able to bring about change,
- ▶ Develop positive narratives and advocacy skills aimed at citizens, economic sectors and political decision-makers.

During these first two years of the CoRe programme, the collective has structured its thinking around **four major themes** (agroecology, management of common goods, indigenous peoples and sustainable and inclusive cities) and **four major areas of change** for a fair ecological transition (the link with territories and changes of scale, empowerment, know-how and changes in power relations).

The life of the programme acts as a mirror to the challenges of the Fair Ecological Transition, raising questions about how the collective operates, in terms of power relations, speed, radicalism and the scale of actions and positions. The collective is experimenting with what it wants to defend, and that's a great asset.

---

2. The "global majority" refers to the majority of the world's population living in what are often referred to as "developing countries" or "the South". The 'global minority' refers to the smaller part of the world's population living in the richest countries, often described as 'the West' or 'the North'. Campbell-Stephens, Rosemary M. (2021). Educational Leadership and the Global Majority: Decolonising Narratives. Springer Nature. London, quoted in inclusive language guide, Oxfam, 2023.

# NEXT STEPS AND OUTLOOK FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS OF THE CORE PROGRAMME.

The CoRe partners will continue to carry out their actions, experiments and responses to the socio-environmental crisis.

The challenges for the coming years are precisely to pool and reinforce the learning of the partners, to strengthen networking and the feeling of belonging to the collective.

In the medium term, our aim is to raise our profile, put across new narratives and increase the number of initiatives to influence political decisions in order to accelerate the fair ecological transition at every level.

Work will be carried out on constructing a vision of a fair ecological transition, and a relational assessment will be carried out by the IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement) to gain a better understanding of the interplay between the partners.

Lastly, the integration of new partners in the field of sustainable and inclusive cities will make an essential contribution to the debate.

[secours-catholique.org](https://secours-catholique.org)

**PÔLE RESSOURCES INTERNATIONALES**

[alice.bauchet@secours-catholique.org](mailto:alice.bauchet@secours-catholique.org)

 [caritasfrance](#)

 [Secours Catholique – Caritas France](#)



AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE



  
**MINISTÈRE  
DE L'EUROPE  
ET DES AFFAIRES  
ÉTRANGÈRES**  
*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*

