



Resourcing Community Governance of Renewables

A thematic brief for funders

The [CLIMA Fund](#) is a collaboration between Global Greengrants Fund, Grassroots International, Thousand Currents, and Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism. We envision a world in which grassroots movements have the power to influence and enact self-determined solutions to the climate crisis. These self-determined solutions include [community governance of renewable energy](#). Community-controlled renewables means the production and distribution of energy resources are locally controlled, and decisions about energy are place-based.

Our dominant, global economy produces energy through the use of fossil fuels and the energy sector is the [second-highest polluting industry](#). However, community-controlled renewables can reduce emissions from fossil fuel production of approximately [250 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent \(CO₂e\) by 2050](#). Since locally-led energy systems are decentralized, they are better able to respond to shocks and strengthen community autonomy.

Here is a snapshot of how our partners are transforming existing energy production systems instead of replicating them. For more grantee partner profiles, [check out our website](#).

REFORMING THE SYSTEM

Failing to decentralize energy production comes at the risk of large-scale grid failures and millions of deaths from air pollution caused by burning fossil fuels. Power outages due to weather are projected to increase as the climate heats. In the case of large-scale grid failures, economic costs are estimated at [between \\$18 billion and \\$33 billion per year in the United States alone](#). Community renewable-energy projects would help [prevent domino failures](#) during natural disasters, typical with large-scale energy systems, and make restoration easier.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: CONFEDERACIÓN NACIONAL DE MUJERES INDÍGENAS DE BOLIVIA (CNAMIB)



Our grassroots partner, Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Bolivia (CNAMIB), has been addressing energy system failures since 2007. CNAMIB has gathered Indigenous women from 34 nations and developed political positions from their shared grievances. CNAMIB elevates Indigenous rights in its opposition to extractive industries and infrastructure projects. In 2009, CNAMIB played a critical role in the Bolivian government recognizing [Indigenous rights, values, and worldviews](#) in its Constitution for the first time.

CHALLENGING THE SYSTEM

An analysis of energy conflict cases demonstrates that [grassroots movements transform energy resource governance](#) (e.g., project approval processes, legislative changes, and legal precedents). For example, Indigenous communities leading resistance to extraction in Canada are credited with significantly influencing the country's broader resource decision-making and averting 25% of expected extraction-related emissions in the US and Canada.

Communities in Portugal have effectively [stopped the country's existing fossil fuel contracts](#) by organizing, protesting, and demanding that the government cancel extraction projects. The country ended the last two remaining extraction contracts in the summer of 2020, and [the last coal plant](#) was shut down the following year. This campaign involved savvy legal advocacy and coordinated pressure on companies and investors.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: CASA PUEBLO

[Casa Pueblo](#) has been a leader in struggles for sustainable development in Puerto Rico since 1980, including the fight for energy independence as a key step in Puerto Rico's self-determination and decolonization. Casa Pueblo is striving to make Puerto Rico's entire energy system regenerative by strengthening communities' capacity to generate affordable solar energy.



After Hurricane Maria, Casa Pueblo activated [a strong humanitarian response](#) that included thousands of solar lamps, alongside food and medicines. For the long term, Casa Pueblo is developing [Adjuntas Pueblo Solar](#), an initiative to generate energy needed by the urban area of Adjuntas. The project will generate, store, and distribute solar energy for 16 to 20 small businesses, who will buy it for a lower price than they currently pay the state. Proceeds from the businesses will then be re-invested to support new cucubanos (solar homes) for families that need economic support.

REIMAGINING THE SYSTEM

Our grassroots partners are creating alternative energy and economic systems to improve community well-being, [reimagining the system](#) by providing direct services where the state neglects, excludes, or threatens community well-being. Diversified and decentralized energy production can [reduce vulnerabilities](#) to climate change, especially in rural areas. Microgrids increase energy flexibility and are resilient to extreme weather-caused, large-scale grid failure.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: DIGO BIKAS INSTITUTE



Our partner, [Digo Bikas Institute](#), installed a [Solar Nano Grid in Dhapchung](#), a rural village in Nepal. This women-led project now provides basic electricity supply to residents for lighting homes and charging their mobile phones. The community has now transitioned to one hundred percent renewable energy.

Solar Nano Grid is a low-cost technology in which individual houses within a densely settled cluster of fewer than 50 households are connected to a main generation (solar photovoltaic array) and storage (batteries) facility via cables. Digo Bikas Institute and its partners also [installed solar power systems in ten earthquake-affected schools](#), which benefit over 1,500 students.

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: SAVE RIVERS



In 2018, the 50 Indigenous Kayan families of Long Liam village in Malaysia who opposed a large dam decided to build a [micro hydropower \(MHP\) renewable energy system](#). They volunteered their labor and gathered materials to support the process and build the MHP with the assistance of local civil society organizations, including CLIMA partner [SAVE Rivers](#).

Since 2019, the completed MHP installation has ensured a sustainable, affordable, and environmentally safe electrification system. The village no longer depends on diesel generators or destructive development (e.g., large dams).

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: DOORKOP COMMUNAL PROPERTY ASSOCIATION

Mpumalanga in South Africa is very vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis and is experiencing high levels of unemployment. The region has a long history of land dispossession and displacement. Residents lacked access to electricity till a few years ago and relied on unsustainable energy sources. Our grassroots partner [Doornkop Communal Property Association](#) has a five-year community-based green development plan for 1,500 hectares of land and has trained women and youth in solar panel installation, maintenance, and repairs.



DCPA has fostered community governance of energy generation, waste management, and smart agro-processing, to improve the efficiency of agricultural and food processing operations. Through its partnerships with other local groups and the municipality, DCPA has installed an [18-kilowatt solar energy system](#) to power three communal buildings. They have retrofitted the infrastructure to keep the buildings cool and light the surrounding area. Access to electricity ensures that community members can cook and store food in the daycare and community center.

To learn about how you can fund community-controlled renewables and energy sovereignty, email community@climasolutions.org.