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This report charts the trajectory of the Center for Socio-Environmental Support (CASA) in its first five years of existence. It is an opportunity to celebrate and share with friends, partners, supporters, and beneficiaries the achievements and successes in these years of intense activity for our organization, so they can inspire the new times.

With this act of sharing stories and commemorating our accomplishments, we believe we are carrying out our ritual, a big celebration to mark the passage of time, which makes us aware of our growth and the importance of the phases we lived through, as well as the new pathways we wish to tread.

Introduction



The Center for Socio-Environmental Support (CASA) --a socio-environmental fund by essence-- is the result of a lifetime work, or rather, the work of many lives that united with the same determination to support trustworthy and vibrant community based organizations and NGOs – groups with good ideas but invisible to mainstream society, in their struggle to strengthen democracy, where social justice and environmental protection intersect.

In my life, some events were decisive to increasing my awareness and opening up this path before me. In 1981, at the age of 17, I was in Idaho on a student exchange program when another exchange student from the Netherlands asked me about the destruction of the Amazon and what I was going to do about it. Having been raised during the military dictatorship, I had no idea it was possible for a citizen to intervene in such grandiose matters. So I had no answer. Ironically, when I was in the university in California in 1985, I met Randy Hayes, a US activist who told us that an international group had just created the Rainforest Action Network (RAN). In 1986, during the First Citizens Conference on the World Bank, in Washington, D.C., I was introduced to Ailton Krenak, then the coordinator of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI). He not only was there as a witness to the environmental and social destruction caused by a World Bank funded project, but also told us how Brazil's Indigenous Peoples were organized to ensure their rights in the new Brazilian Constitution! The world opened up before me. So, I joined RAN for the next four years and also dedicated my efforts to understand and to help consolidate the Alliance of Forest Peoples. In 1990, I returned to Brazil to officially take on this work.

I recall that in the first few years I thought the “developed” world owed the poorer countries because of the historical transfer of wealth from the South to the North, both during the colonial period and after the Second World War, already with external debts and multilateral banks. And that international philanthropy could be one of the return channels to strengthen civil society, so abandoned and underfunded. In fact, this was what actually happened. For decades, the only financing for initiatives of organized civil society in Brazil came from abroad. Our own institutional history shows this.

The difficulty with this international support is that far-away decision-making does not always reflect a deep understanding of local realities. It may promote an agenda not always fully compatible with actual needs, or at

the very least, too limited within the possible and needed scope to produce the expected results. It also tends to leave out a huge number of groups and leaders that do not fit its “criteria,” or cannot yet meet its administrative requirements, although they make huge sacrifices in their work, relying on impressive personal dedication of their collaborators. Plus, the local social investors who finance activities in the so called third sector are still far from perceiving this need and supplying this demand.

To make a great difference on very complex issues with a “handful” of small projects may seem impossible and utopian to the untrained eye. Many people, without the experience of supporting small projects in a strategic and coordinated fashion, cannot have a glimmer of what a small grant, well applied, can produce in terms of concrete results and impacts on the system as a whole.

In this report, I hope we will be able to demonstrate in concrete terms how this occurs. In the language of business, we could say that the “return on the investment” is huge; in the language of systems thinking, we can say that we found the perfect leverage points for interfering in the system, producing results of exponential proportions, impossible to foresee.

Above all, along the road of creating this socio-environmental fund, we realize that we are helping to shape a new society. Although not fully concretized yet, we know that our grants produce significant and proven advances toward a society where everybody’s voice can be heard, where full citizenship finds real opportunities to be developed, where people no longer find themselves powerless as I found myself at 17, but where people can rest assured they are contributing to a world in which all human beings, of this and coming generations – as well as all living beings – can enjoy a preserved planet, where the right to a full life is a real possibility.

I hope our story inspires you and may bring forth a new vision of our rich and diverse South America.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria Amália F. de Souza". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maria Amália F. de Souza, Executive Director & Co-Founder

A different way of doing things



CASA is an organization headquartered in Brazil that works throughout South America. It mobilizes resources within and outside the country to support civil society initiatives which, despite their innovative and creative potential, capable of bringing about changes and amplifying their actions, would hardly have any support from other sources. These are small-scale ideas and projects that have great impact – often invisible to society.

CASA emerged from the experience and vision of a group of leaders in the Brazilian socio-environmental area, who realized the great opportunities small grants could generate in communities and organizations of the remotest regions in South America. With profound knowledge of local territories and contexts, CASA invests in grassroots groups to strengthen society as a whole, working with the most diverse issues interwoven with socio-environmental themes: protecting traditional territories and the way of life of extractivist and riverine populations, promoting food security, and ensuring the right to a say and participation in the planning of megaprojects that threaten citizens' livelihood and rights.

Our greatest advantage is to reach out where no other funder goes. This difference is made possible by a complex system of networks and working relations, which promote democracy, rights, environmental protection, and cultural diversity on a daily basis.

Above all, CASA is a space for meeting and interaction of people who believe that all beings inhabiting this planet have a right to life, for people striving to ensure respect for rights, building a just society, with more equality and participation, a society more balanced and joyful.

“CASA’s financial support and the investment in building capacities reach some of the world’s neediest and most impoverished places. We believe that supporting and strengthening grassroots groups are key to solving serious local and global problems, ending the cycles of absence of power on the part of civil society, and eradicating poverty and environmental destruction.

“CASA does not support isolated projects. We are not sitting behind a desk waiting for the next project. We carry out a broad analysis of the region, the threats against that ecosystem, and the work of other medium-sized organizations in the same area. We identify who is there providing support, and with whom they are working. Afterwards, we identify at the grassroots level the people who live in that area and have no access to resources, although they are key to carrying out work at the local level, promoting real changes in broader areas. Our attention and resources bring hope and boost the energy of communities excluded from other sources of support. There is no better investment than supporting impassioned people with great ideas.”

Maria Amália Souza



A solid foundation

Since its inception, the proposal to create CASA, based on the previous experience of the Brazil Advisory Board for Global Greengrants Fund (GGF), has been supported by GGF and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. They have bet on this organic model of social philanthropy.

The Board is made up of people who have a deep and unique knowledge of the reality and needs of South American organizations. They are people who have built organizations totally unknown 20-30 years ago that today enjoy national and international recognition.

Thus, the principles defined for CASA's investments tend to strengthen the protagonism of local persons and institutions that are influencing and working on public policy monitoring and formulation, as well as being involved in broad mobilizations to achieve their objectives; and to support and build the capacity of organizations, creating the foundation for their strength, so they can affirm their identity and raise their own funds, thus broadening their access to new sources of support.

Hence, more than an institution that finances projects, CASA invests in capacity building, in supporting the legal constitution of organizations, acquisition of equipment, and operational costs. In general, these items are not covered by other institutions, and they are often required as counterparts by other funders, including governmental funds. We invest in structuring those organizations and building the capacities of their staff, so they can work in an efficient, positive, and articulated way.

Careful criteria



Criteria to support projects and initiatives are broad and flexible, accommodating many action lines. Our Board of Directors and staff monitor the reality of each area and analyze on an ongoing basis the socio-environmental challenges across South America, defining priorities and strategies based on a more comprehensive view of the region. This makes it possible for small grants, carefully selected in the global panorama, to produce impacts well beyond the small initial investment.

Among the priorities for CASA support are the following:

- Social and environmental organizations
- Organizations and networks working collaboratively
- Urgent or emergency needs
- Furthering the mission of the organization, networks or movement as a whole
- Socio-environmental relevance
- Clear potential for strategic impact
- Under-funded groups or regions



Territory covered by our work



“I miss a country that is still not on the map.”

Eduardo Galeano.

Changes throughout the planet caused by human actions and their terrible consequences can no longer be ignored. Environmental themes are present on governmental and corporate agendas, with strong pressure from civil society for changes and positions that prioritize sustainable actions. Despite mobilizations from society and specific groups, much more is required for actual change that would ameliorate the consequences of predatory human presence on the planet.

On this part of the planet, the occupation model in South America, whether of Spanish or Portuguese origin, has always been geared to the benefit of few people, based on the exploitation and exhaustion of natural resources.

The cycles of gold and silver mining, sugarcane, coffee, and industries have come in succession. At no point in history were native populations or environmental balance taken into account.

Now we witness the arrival of roads, waterways, large hydroelectric power plants, mineral exploitation, oil drilling, oil pipelines and refineries, large export-driven soybean cultivation, and sugarcane for biofuels. In South American cities, overcrowded by rural exodus, the same issues are accumulating, all connected to poverty, exclusion, immigration, environmental imbalances, unemployment, and lack of conditions for a decent life.

It is within this context that the CASA Board analyzes the political and economic issues, as well as environmental threats, to define strategies for strengthening democracy and civil society autonomy in South America.

The Portuguese language is perhaps an element isolating Brazil in South America. This has been aggravated by political strategies that have kept the country separate from the struggles and achievements attained by the rest of South America. On the other hand, riverbank dwellers, Indigenous and extractivist populations, small farmers, and isolated populations in South America share the same rivers, mountain ranges, forests, chacos, and wetlands. They also share all the problems and concerns resulting from the model of occupation of South America, as well as the consequences of large development projects which reproduce out-of-date and unsustainable models.

Since its inception as a Brazilian organization, CASA has been closely connected to the Global Greengrants Fund Southern Cone and Andean Advisory Boards, as well as to the Greengrants Alliance of Funds, enhancing relations and expanding networking and synergies.

Creative partnerships



The funds applied by CASA are investments made by individuals, companies, and foundations interested in transforming financial contributions into effective strategic support for resolving socio-environmental issues in South America.

During its years of experience and development of a unique network of collaborators, CASA has specialized in managing large amounts, turning them into a multitude of small inter-related projects, with proven efficiency and results.

International institutions of recognized importance, which share this vision and purpose, are key partners in our work. Trusting CASA's capacity to manage funds and to identify the ablest social actors, those foundations have supported specific funds to address thematic demands or problems in ecosystems.

Throughout these five years creative partnerships established and developed by CASA involved the following funds and foundations:

SOYBEAN FUND



This fund was set up with resources from a pool of Dutch foundations (Doen, Cordaid, Solidaridad), the Blue Moon Fund, and the Global Greengrants Fund. It supports initiatives addressing the effects of soybean production expansion in South America and its impacts on populations and ecosystems. Among supported issues are the following:

- **Sustainable economic alternatives** in Indigenous communities and settlements in Mato Grosso, Maranhão, and southern Pará, regions where the development model is based on soybean monoculture and destruction of natural resources. In those regions, projects of agroecology, construction of seedling nurseries, planting native fruit trees, fruit processing and marketing, creation of extractivist reserves, and income generation for traditional communities were supported.
- **Monitoring the expansion of the agricultural frontier** with studies, surveys, and geo-referenced data on soybean production, researching water and personal contamination by agrochemicals; disseminating information through publications; mobilizing and involving grassroots organization with this issue, registering denunciations of illegal deforestation to clear land for soybean plantations, and monitoring legal suits at the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office.
- **Incentive to organic soybean production** in family farming, as a strategy to resist transgenic plant products and to develop agroecology.

Between 2006 and 2010, we provided 26 grants to projects, funded four capacity-building programs, and one international meeting to discuss this theme, in the total amount of US\$285,000.



SOUTH AMERICAN REGIONAL FUND (SARF)

SARF is a financing line jointly put together by GGF and CASA, and supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Since 2006, these funds have been applied in articulation with GGF Andean and Southern Cone advisory boards. Their purpose is to support actions and organizations working with infrastructure and energy issues in South America, connecting and strengthening groups that address challenges and search for solutions cutting across borders and involving more than one country.

These small grants have the following objectives: creating, strengthening, and mobilizing additional funding for social and environmental movements; linking local processes and actions to national and transnational movements; opening or creating new spaces where social and environmental movements can influence public policies regulating the megaprojects planned for their regions; and changing public opinion regarding development policies and projects.

In the 2006-2010 period, we provided 114 grants, in the total amount of US\$500,000.





The Netherlands Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

In the last five years, the Netherlands Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature supported two specific programs in partnership with CASA:

- **Desertification and Dry Areas (2005-2007)** – This program was able to build capacities in small grassroots organizations and communities in regions of the Northeastern Semiarid, Cerrado, and the Bolivian and Paraguayan Arid Chaco for the exercise of democracy, rule of law, and environmental protection, ensuring their livelihood with dignity and sustainability.

People and organizations supported in those three countries are among the poorest layers of the population and the most affected by exploitation of natural resources, implementation of megaprojects, expansion of monoculture frontiers, deforestation, and changes to water courses that have caused a rapid process of desertification and/or soil exhaustion.

In the process of identifying initiatives to support, CASA consolidated partnerships with informal advisors and important regional networks, such as the Semiarid Network (ASA), Cerrado Network, and the Living Rivers (Rios Vivos) Coalition.

14 projects were supported, in the total amount of US\$130,000.

Micro-grants Fund for the Paraguay-Paraná Basin (2008 to 2010) – This program covers territories included in this basin in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Small grants strengthened the role played by local actors, helped to develop technical tools, and promoted sustainable economic alternatives, protecting biodiversity and natural resources. Results achieved by those supported projects were highly satisfactory, showing the great potential for small initiatives to be replicated in different geographical scale and/or thematic structure. The products generated far exceeded expectations raised by the small initial investment. Again, this proved the efficiency of small funds when applied to grassroots projects and initiatives.

There were 18 grants and one exchange program among all beneficiaries, in the total amount of US\$205,000.



BLUE MOON FUND

Blue Moon Fund resources are focused on two important issues: Sustainable Highway BR-163 and reinforcing the socio-environmental work in the Pantanal region. During 2007 and 2008, CASA supported 19 projects involving the two themes, totaling US\$100,000.

- **BR-163**– to support the work of organizations and groups trying to ensure environmental conservation in the regions and the quality of life of local populations impacted by this road. The project to pave BR 163 (Cuiabá-Santarém) poses a great challenge because its 1,780 kilometers crosses one of the country’s richest regions in terms of natural resources, economic potential, and ethnic and cultural diversity. The road cuts through vast expanses of Amazon Forest, Cerrado, and transitional areas between these two biomes, in addition to important river basins, such as the Amazon, Xingu, and Teles Pires-Tapajós.



The CASA BR-163 Fund enabled the following actions: planning and developing demonstration farms with agroforestry systems; training farmers for agroecological production in ten municipalities; producing, distributing, and planting native seedlings; elaborating an Intervention Plan for Altered Areas; training for and expanding beekeeping programs; introducing participatory management to recover degraded areas; producing and editing documentaries; and developing new partnerships between municipal governments and civil society; among others.

Nine projects were supported, totaling US\$50,000.

- **Pantanal** – Funded organizations and groups with positive initiatives, striving for the socio-environmental conservation of the region, the quality of life of local populations, and developing monitoring work on infrastructure projects such as the South American Regional Integration Initiative (IIRSA), and mining and petro-chemical plants.

The CASA Pantanal Fund resulted in direct impacts, such as: expansion of regional partnerships; advances in public policies with great benefits to riverine communities; research and reduction of live bait mortality in fishing; strengthening associations of artisanal producers; creation of the Paraguay River Day in Cáceres, MT; medical care for riverine communities; school renovation in remote areas; among others.

There were 10 projects totaling US\$50,000.



INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (IAF)

Cooperation between IAF and CASA makes it possible to finance and provide technical support to Brazilian NGOs and grassroots organizations working in the areas of social development and environmental preservation.

The strategic areas funded with these resources are the following: institutional capacity building, from accounting/administrative management to coordination of volunteers and fund raising; reinforcing networks of organizations to better coordinate their activities and become efficient centers for regional collaboration; community participation in local decision-making processes and their involvement in events that will affect their lives; direct services, supporting relevant activities, like recycling programs, environmental education, and sustainable forest management.

Between 2009 and 2012, the program will have directly supported 30 projects, offered two institutional capacity-building courses to 40 groups, and developed a number of monitoring tools and virtual spaces for ongoing experience sharing among beneficiaries. This program totals US\$300,000.



Both ENDS/PSO

With funds from the PSO Capacity-Building Fund, through Both ENDS, CASA has implemented projects to expand the capacities and to strengthen the work of supported organizations. This Fund is consistent with CASA's proposal to develop tools so supported organization can be autonomous and expand their actions, contributing to their sustainability.

Nine training workshops were organized focusing on the following themes: Planning and Institutional Development, Communication and Leadership Training, Volunteer Work, Fund Raising and Mobilization, and Instruments for Legal and Accounting Management. In 2007, two workshops were carried out with members from ten supported projects. In 2010-2011 seven workshops were held in Brazil and Argentina, involving 120 institutions supported by CASA in South America. In addition to capacity-building workshops, teaching materials are made available in Portuguese, Spanish, and English, to be distributed to partners of the Greengrants Alliance of Funds.

Between 2007 and 2011, this program totaled US\$160,000.



Flow Funding

CASA is part of the Flow Funding Circle network. It receives and is in charge of distributing and monitoring its grants in Brazil. These donations can be made to individuals or institutions, using very flexible criteria. According to its founder, Marion Rockefeller Weber, more than investing in individual entrepreneurs or good projects, the purpose is to inspire in everybody the spirit of philanthropy, of the abundance and constructive energy released by the ongoing flow of resources among people to improve the world.

There were 160 grants until 2010. This program includes funding up to 2011, totaling US\$340,000.



"May the rivers of wealth be undammed and flow freely over the earth. May the gifts move through increased hands until all people experience the abundance of life."

Marion Rockefeller Weber, Initiator of the Flow Fund Circle

Global Greengrants Fund

The Global Greengrants Fund was the great inspirer and stimulator of CASA's creation. Counting on its solid investment in the last five years, CASA was able to identify and support priority areas determined by its Board of Directors, based on annual assessments of the conjuncture. This has enabled a good measure of flexibility in actions on issues seen as priorities for the socio-environmental work.

Strategic areas that remain the focus of CASA's work and have been supported by this Fund include: biofuels, agroecology, climate change, and native peoples – with the soon to be created Latin American Indigenous Peoples Rights Fund, in partnership with Latin American members of the Greengrants Alliance Funds. New areas prioritized by CASA are the urban environment, where 70% of the South American population is concentrated, and the coastal and maritime areas of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Areas of high environmental relevance, as for example southern Bahia -- where the delicate and fragile local ecosystem used to be formed by the Atlantic Forest and rich mangroves -- are today threatened by a regional petrochemical development pole, housing development, and crustacean farming. Local organizations get together to mobilize civil society and disseminate information on the impacts of those projects. They seek to protect the ecosystem and create sustainable alternatives for the livelihood of populations with strong presence of Afro-descendants and Indigenous people.

From 2005 to 2010, there were 154 projects totaling US\$ 740,000.

‘For several decades the conventional wisdom, and condescending joke, has been that “Brazil is the nation of the future, and always will be.” But things have changed. Now we have CASA.

‘Brazil is now seen as the leading economic engine for all of Latin America, the Amazon Basin is considered the “lungs of the Earth,” and Brazilian civil society is on the leading edge of a dramatic shift in global geopolitics toward transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

“Since shortly after the 1992 Earth Summit – UNCED – in Rio de Janeiro, the Global Greengrants Fund emerged to make small grants to grassroots environmental groups in Brazil. Initially we were a Donor Collaborative of the Tides Foundation in





San Francisco, and we were comprised of the Colorado-based Caribou Fund (a donor advised fund of Roy Young, owner of Nature's Own stores), the San Francisco-based Damien Foundation, and eventually the Brasilia-based Francisco Foundation (both associated with Brazilian activist-philanthropist Humberto Mafra).

“Over time these three small foundations merged into the Global Greengrants Fund and began to make collaborative grants based on the unique local knowledge of an informal network of grassroots advisors in Brazil. We wanted to address the most difficult environmental conservation and social justice problems at the grassroots level, and do it in the least served parts of the country.

“After almost 10 years advising the Global Greengrants Fund on our grantmaking from 1994 to 2004, CASA has since emerged as an early advocate for domestic environmental philanthropy in Brazil. A Brazilian-registered foundation that specializes in making high impact small grants to protect the environment and, crucially, to also support social justice - the first independent member of the new Greengrants Alliance of Funds. Despite the burdens caused by a neglected civil society sector in Brazil, CASA gradually earned the mutual respect of the social movement and philanthropic leaders within Brazil -- against very great odds.

“But perseverance has paid off for CASA, and for the Greengrants Alliance of Funds. By demonstrating the power its connections to global networks, CASA has earned a reputation for visionary, transparent, and accountable philanthropy in Brazil, and increasingly throughout Latin America. Under the dedicated leadership of Amalia Souza CASA now takes its place at the head of the curve of social change finance in Brazil by engaging effectively across multiple sectors.

“While international funding of environmental protection and social change is still needed in Brazil for the foreseeable future, CASA has positioned itself to play an increasingly important role in the domestic philanthropic sector in Brazil over the next decade.

“CASA's success demonstrates that Brazil is now the nation of the present, and the future.”

Chet Tchozewski, founder, Global Greengrants Fund – July 2011



Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

The Mott Foundation has been a strong and committed partner to further CASA's mission along all the years of its history, from inception to consolidation. The partnership is based on principles of converging interests of the two institutions, mainly in the assurance that the investment that is made toward improving the capacities of local groups and institutions propel a change in the whole social fabric, promoting a more just, equitable and sustainable society.

Mott Foundations' support has been crucial to build, develop and consolidate CASA's institutional and operational structure.

Investments of Mott Foundation toward CASA's general operation total US\$540,000

"It seems to me that every person, always, is in a kind of informal partnership with his community. His own success is dependent to a large degree on that community, and the community, after all, is the sum total of the individuals who make it up. The institutions of a community, in turn, are the means by which those individuals express their faith, their ideals and their concern for fellow men."

Charles Stewart Mott, 1875-1973

"The Mott Foundation relationship with the Centro de Apoio Socio Ambiental (CASA) began when CASA was little more than a creative idea, tossed around at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2003. Brazilian activists strategized into the wee hours of the night about the need for a small grants fund in Brazil, designed and run by Brazilians, that could reach out to small and emerging civil society groups working at the nexus of environment, social justice, and accountability. Mott provided a planning grant to the Brazil advisors as they explored options for turning the concept into reality. Two years later, CASA emerged as a fully recognized Brazilian organization. Shortly thereafter, the Mott Foundation supported CASA directly with a general support grant. The relationship continues to be a productive one.

"For the Mott Foundation Program Area on International Finance and Sustainability (IFS), South America is the focus region—the place where the "rubber hits the road" for our global policy strategy around sustainable public finance. Over the past decade, the governments of South America, with support from international financial institutions



and private banks, have embarked on an ambitious program of regional integration via investments in transport infrastructure (highways, waterways, ports). The Brazilian government is a critical actor in this regional integration process, both because of the overall size of the Brazilian economy, and because Brazil's national development bank (BNDES) has become the largest source of finance for infrastructure projects in many parts of South America. Infrastructure investments have grown in tandem with expansion in the energy sector—oil and gas, hydroelectric dams, as well as biofuels. Decisions about how and where to focus these investments will have lasting implications for sustainable ecosystems and livelihoods, as well as for climate change.

“So why does a foundation that is promoting sustainable public finance need to support a small grants fund? As CASA's director, Amalia Souza said in a video message to the Mott trustees last year, providing support to small and grassroots organizations is critical to “making visible the invisible” to policymakers and other decision-makers. By amplifying local voices, the small grants help bridge the gap between community realities and the broader policy changes that Mott IFS grantmaking is trying to achieve.

“Over the past five years, CASA's growth and development have paralleled the development of the Mott grant portfolio in Brazil and South America. Many current grantees started out with small grants from GGF and CASA. More than three-quarters of the current grantees in the region have received small grants from CASA in the past, helped to administer CASA grants to community-based partners, or served as formal or informal CASA advisors.

“We are pleased to have been a partner with CASA from the very beginning, and look forward to continuing to learn together in the future.”

Amy Shannon – Program Officer, Environmental Program, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Project routing



Projects arrive at CASA through different routes: Board members, partners, and networks of contacts. In some cases, former beneficiaries recommend projects and guide groups or people with potential for support to complete the application form. Specific themes and areas are covered by an occasional request for proposals, initiating a selection process within defined strategies.

The analysis of projects is done by CASA's Board of Directors and funds are transferred without red tape or delays to efficiently meet local needs. Later, projects will be closely monitored by the staff, Board members, and partners, thus ensuring the efficient application of funds, monitoring, analysis of the local situation, and advances made by the project.

The main themes covered by CASA's actions are the following: infrastructure and energy, climate, cities, forest, Indigenous issues, waters, global agendas and transition to sustainability. This accommodates dozens of subthemes and cross-cutting themes in a broad vision of South America, with subdivisions by biome, specific programs, emergency and strategic needs, in addition to a specific focus on capacity building.





Working with biomes

In the last five years, we have supported almost 500 projects; thousands of people were benefited in forests, fields, riverbanks, and cities, involving nine countries in South America.

Small grants that made a difference!

Between 2005 and 2010, CASA made a total of 497 donations, totaling US\$ 1,800,000, within a strategy of action by biome: Dry Areas, Wetlands – Paraguay-Paraná Basin, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, Amazon, Semiarid, Cities. Besides making direct grants to initiatives and projects, institutional and staff capacity building of grantees is a priority for CASA, that has invested strongly in workshops, seminars, trainings, courses and direct programs, totaling of US\$ 205,000,00.



In each one of those biomes, CASA's action has been based on local realities and demands, with perspectives of attaining amplified results because of the innovative way of working. CASA analyzes and understands the general panorama. It identifies actors and institutions already working in those areas, the main local problems and challenges, surveying through its partners the initiatives and projects that could be supported with small grants, resulting in broad impacts for the themes and regions.

“We can say that since the first CASA project supporting the NGO Arirambas, even before it was legally established, we counted on this help to take our first steps. CASA was sensitive to the communities' real needs, and contributed to increase our credibility among riverine populations. The first project had only 11 people involved; today this number has increased to about 35 families. These families are realizing that other organizations support us in implementing different development systems, thus proving that socio-environmental projects can be successful.



“CASA’s support also opened the doors for our partnership with the Ministry of the Environment. The donations of machines for our woodworking shop and the materials to initiate the seedling nursery were essential for our work. Not to speak of the computer, donated even before we were fully legally established. Based on these initial steps, we are now beginning to set up partnerships even with international institutions, as well as establishing closer relations with local associations and public agencies.

“The Arirambas project includes all those aspects, which are being developed in a continuous and interconnected way. The woodworking shop was the first to become independent, generating income and paying for its expenses. Several pieces of furniture have already been made, as well as canoes, oars, and other utensils. We are planning to hold an exhibit of our products in the city soon.”

Siomara da Costa Alves, Arirambas, Porto Velho (Rondônia)

Wetlands: Paraguay-Paraná Basin

Five countries make up the system of basins of the Paraguay and Paraná rivers: Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, this is the world’s largest corridor of freshwater wetlands.



Over 20 million people live in this ecosystem: Indigenous people, traditional communities, urban and rural communities. The region is rich in biodiversity, natural resources, local and traditional knowledge, offering many opportunities for sustainable development initiatives.

During the three years in which projects specific for this area were implemented, 18 small organizations were benefited by grants in four countries: Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Paraguay.

Significant results were achieved in 14 regions located throughout the Paraná-Paraguay basin. Among them, protection of biodiversity, promotion of collective territorial planning, implementation of environmental



education focused on young people and children, and improvement of living conditions in different communities.

Other products resulting from this support are the following: technical studies and reports, videos, capacity-building training, printing and distributing guides, promoting courses, seminars, and gatherings, creation

of new NGOs and cooperatives, as well as the potential identification and governmental recognition of five new protected areas (conservation units) in Uruguay and Brazil.

Exchanges among the several actors and organizations receiving support also enable cooperation, circulation of relevant information, and formulation of action strategies, thus ensuring more effective progress.

CASA maintains close relations with thematic and local networks, maximizing their actions. For this program, we counted on the Aguapé Network for Pantanal Environmental Education, the Pantanal Network of NGOs and Social Movements, and the Group for Active Environmental Protection (GRUPAMA) in Uruguay. In addition, we received help from the Global Greengrants Fund Southern Cone Council.

GRUPAMA, for example, is developing the project “Strengthening the Environmental Protection Area ‘Rincón de Franquía’ and Implementing the Tri-National Park,” located at the convergence of Cuareim and Uruguay rivers, in the city of Bella Union, bordering with Argentina and Brazil. With a small grant from CASA, GRUPAMA achieved great results and advances, establishing new partnerships and cooperation with universities, government, and civil society. This identification of an environmental protection area and the implementation of ecotourism activities, with training and maintenance of services, are about to be converted into the Tri-National Park.

Among many projects supported in this ecosystem in Brazil, the project “Empower to conserve: an alternative for families in Antonio Maria Coelho to continue their agricultural production,” of the Antônio Maria Coelho Neighborhood Association (Mato Grosso do Sul state), is an example of the diversity of issues faced by the population deprived of voice and rights in the region.

Located along the roadside of BR-262, in the municipality of Corumbá, this community is one of those affected by the creation of the mineral processing and metalworking industrial sector in the region. Ignored throughout this process, and being the weakest actors without political power, people living in the area got organized and founded the Association to defend their citizens’ rights. Among the initiatives of this Association are: the mobilization to

ensure preservation of water courses and freshwater sources; discussion of the impact of the new industrial sector, which affects the quality of the environment through air, soil, and water pollution; and the development of research and traditional agricultural practices of the community, related to the extraction of the fruit of the *bocaiuva* palm tree (*Acrocomia aculeata*).

“Looking back and assessing the long way travelled by these women, housewives who now seek to reach their goals and confront large corporations, such as Vale and MMX, in order to ensure their rights, I realize it would have been much more difficult without CASA support.”

“Specific support geared to newly established organizations is crucial. For some, this can be seen as insufficient funding but this is what is needed to attain established short-term goals and encourage people to go on. The Maria Coelho Association has a lot to thank CASA for. We hope to always count on their support.”

Patrícia Zerlotti – ECOA Institutional Director and volunteer project coordinator for the Antônio Maria Coelho Neighborhood Association, Campo Grande (Mato Grosso do Sul state)

“We began working as a nonprofit civil association, and after receiving the first grant from CASA we managed to become an NGO, a legally established entity. This has brought us some headaches but has also facilitated access to many institutions. For the Foundation, it was important to be institutionalized. Prior to this, we had worked with theoretical issues, teaching materials, and journalistic articles. We were more focused on the task of disseminating ideas. After the institutionalization, we have called on other people, among them, biologists, archeologists, engineers, architects, and history professors – persons from different disciplines approached us to see how they could collaborate.”

Fundación Encuentro por la vida (Encounter for Life Foundation) – Nidia Bibiana Pyñeiro, Argentina

Amazon

Madeira River Complex



The Amazon forest is the largest tropical forest on the planet. It covers 40% of South American territory. It occupies half of Brazil and a large part of Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guiana, Suriname, and French Guiana. It is equivalent to one-third of the world's tropical rainforest reserve. It is the largest genetic bank on the planet and contains one-fifth of the world's freshwater, in addition to unmeasured mineral deposits.

All this wealth and diversity have been systematically under threat. Statistical data shows the progressive increase in the illegally deforested area. New infrastructure projects are planned and executed without impact studies, without consultation and participation of those people directly affected, resulting in violence and imbalances.

The search for sustainable alternatives is multiplying with the organization of civil society and creative initiatives and projects mobilizing individuals and organizations supported by CASA in Brazil and beyond its borders.



Among the many projects supported in this biome, we highlight those related to the Madeira Complex, a development pole in northwestern Brazil, in Rondônia state, crossing the borders of Bolivia and Peru.

With heavy investments from the South American Regional Integration Initiative (IIRSA), this

region is the scenario for many projects of hydroelectric power plants, waterways, railroads, road paving, and establishment of companies to support the megaprojects in the region.

Through small grants, CASA's support was key to the establishment of at least two organizations in this region: the "Madeira Vivo" (Living Madeira) Institute (IMV) and the NGO Arirambas, which received initial grants to get established as legal entities, as well as to build their capacities to raise and manage their own funds, and to finance their projects.

CASA also supported the organizing of a unit of the Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB), in Porto Velho (Rondônia), specifically focused on the Madeira Complex. The main objective of these organizations, together with the Bolivian Forum for the Environment and Development, La Paz (Bolivia), was to intervene in the construction of the Jirau and Santo Antônio hydroelectric power plants, denouncing the environmental and social impacts on riverine families, rural communities, and Indigenous people affected by these constructions.

These actions effectively contributed to create and reinforce local capacities, both individually and collectively, to resist and confront public and private agents responsible for the Madeira Complex. They enabled the constitution of a critical and independent unit that can provide visibility to this process in the Upper Madeira River.



In addition, this made it possible for part of the movements and organizations to be more mature and to act when the dams and hydroelectric plants are under construction, operating as intermediaries in negotiations to resettle families, demanding compensatory actions, and creating new perspectives for income generation and a sustainable economy.

Almost all supported organizations were able to mobilize other resources, financial or not, to support the objectives of projects originally received and supported by CASA.

“The Center for Socio-Environmental Support (CASA) played a key role in the establishment of the “Madeira Vivo” (Living Madeira) Institute (IMV) in 2006. This creation had been discussed since 2005. However, when the time came for action, to confront the Madeira River Hydroelectric Complex and defend those threatened by the project, many organized social actors jumped ship.

“When we started networking with the Living Rivers Coalition (“Rios Vivos”), they suggested CASA which at once supported IMV’s institutionalization and our first steps to prepare information materials to raise awareness among riverbank dwellers and Porto Velho residents.

“It was through CASA that other social actors along the Madeira banks had the opportunity to articulate their struggles for rights and income generation. Based on the Madeira work, it was possible to build the Four Rivers Alliance (Madeira, Teles Pires, Tapajós, and Xingu). With CASA support, the first meeting was held in August 2010. This strengthened the struggle of those affected and expelled by the Accelerated Growth Program (PAC) works in the Pan-Amazon region, generating new networking with peoples living on the borders between Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru.

“Thus, we in the IMV greatly appreciate the support from CASA, not only for the financial partnership, but also the presence of CASA members at various moments of our struggles, for the contact based on the heart, on the construction of new paradigms toward good living!”

Iremar Antonio Ferreira, IMV Director, Porto Velho, Rondônia

Xingu River Basin



Because of the importance of its ecosystem and the serious threats it faces, the Xingu river basin also merits special attention from CASA. Some initiatives, like those addressing soybean expansion in the region, are supported within specific programs. Others receive grants due to emergency actions or the scope of their work, such as the Altamira Rural and Urban Women’s Workers Movement (MMTCC), Xingu Alive Forever Movement, National Association of Dam-Affected People, and the organizing committee for the four river basins (Madeira, Tapajós, Xingu, and Teles Pires).

These organizations were fundamental to clarify and mobilize a population scattered along the rivers, without communication or mobility, making them aware of the construction of dams and the impacts on their lives. Funds for transportation, organization of meetings, participation in public hearings, and negotiations with government agents have enabled the presence of local leaders, riverbank dwellers, Indigenous people, and extractivists in a process where they used to have no voice.

“CASA has been a very important institution in our life. It has given us quite a bit of support in our mobilizations against the Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant. Without this support we could not have taken information about their rights to distant communities.

“Brazil has these huge dimensions. Everything is too far and access is hard here in Pará. Transportation is very expensive and people find it very hard to travel. That is why CASA’s support is so crucial. Without funds to pay for transportation to go to the communities with the information and listen to what they think, as well as for them to come to the cities, mobilizations would not be possible. CASA understands our needs, understands what many other organizations are unable to, the importance of



funds for mobilizations. And this is done with no bureaucracy, in a way that suits the conditions of our work.”

Antonia Melo da Silva – Coordinator of the Xingu Alive Forever Movement, Altamira, Pará state



In addition to issues involving dams and hydroelectric power plants in the Xingu river basin, communities also suffer threats resulting from the agricultural frontier expansion. The various social actors identified and supported by CASA in the region are articulated in a network that makes it possible to maintain a dialogue and execute coordinated actions.

One example of such networking is the exchange of experiences between the Kisêdjê Indigenous Association, of the Xingu Indigenous Park, with their project to cultivate and manage traditional varieties of pekea nuts, mangaba (*Hancornia speciosa*), genipap, and anatto, and the Estrela da Paz Agroecological Association, of the New Brazil Settlement, in Querência, which develops projects to recover riparian forests and implement agroforestry systems. Both the settlers and the Kisêdjê, peoples of distinct origin and culture, are partners in the Y Ikatu Xingu Campaign, coordinated by the Instituto Socioambiental-ISA, and in the Xingu Seeds Network. They are also involved in campaigns to mobilize against and provide information on the impacts of building hydroelectric power plants in the region.



“We were very happy with the support. The CASA-funded project in 2006 was the first one for our Association. We were trying to cultivate but had no support from anyone. We learned a lot. With the second project in 2010, we became even closer, struggling together. We made progress and got funding for other projects. We are very happy and grateful for this partnership. CASA can count on us whenever it needs. We are together in this effort, so we can grow together.”

Winti Suyá – leader of the Kisêdjê people. Xingu Indigenous Park, Mato Grosso

In the Peruvian Amazon, CASA also supported the Pakitzapango Indigenous Organization, of the Ashaninka people, in legal actions to defend their collective and citizens' rights, and to develop their legal strategy and communication with civil society and authorities in Lima and Satipo.



“It is impressive what a small grant can do. CASA’s contribution has played a very important role in helping the Rio Ene Ashaninka Center to defend its river by starting a legal action that was able to stop the construction of the Pakitzapango Dam in Peru. Similar contributions have helped other communities in Colombia to mobilize in defence of their rivers from damaging projects like El Quimbo, as well as to negotiate with decision makers for safer energy producing options. There are moments that small grants help tremendously to take action that will translate into the very struggle for an honourable and sustainable life”.

Monti Aguirre, Latin American Program Coordinator– International Rivers

Dry Areas and the Semiarid



Cerrado

The Cerrado encompasses 23% of the Brazil, occupying the entire central region, from northern São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Tocantins states, up to Maranhão state. This rich biome hosts South America’s second greatest species biodiversity, second only to the Amazon region. It is also known as the “cradle of waters” because the sources of the rivers that make up the main hydrographic basins in the country and in South America are in this region.

Despite all this, the Cerrado is the least protected biome in the country. In the last 60 years, its vast fields were “discovered” by agribusiness and extensive areas were occupied by rice monoculture and pastures, then by soybean cultivation, and more recently by sugarcane. In addition, there is the production of coal. About 60% of the Cerrado was deforested and most of the biome pastures are already degraded. The annual rate of deforestation is alarming: three million hectares per year.



This environmental disaster also causes social and cultural losses. Indigenous peoples and populations that historically occupied this region are losing their traditional territories. The land is taken from them or they find themselves surrounded by large farms that cut down the forest and pour agrochemicals on the soil and rivers, affecting the health and the livelihood of those populations.

To address this reality, CASA has a specific program to support actions related to soybean expansion, already described in detail in the topic “Creative Partnerships,” and also invests in other initiatives.

Created during the Rio-92 Conference, the Cerrado Network includes 72 affiliated entities, among community-based organizations and NGOs. In addition, about 100 other entities participate on a regular basis in its events and debates, especially the Gathering and Fair of the Cerrado Peoples, and the Cerrado Cry, held annually. In addition to its collective leadership and an executive committee, the Cerrado Network has four thematic articulations: Agroextractivism, Pacari Network of Medicinal Plants, Participatory Certification, and the Cerrado Culture Network.

In Diorama, Goiás state, AGROTEC has been developing for over ten years a pioneer work of awareness-raising among the Cerrado population about the diversity and importance of this biome, as well as carrying out research to identify plants, their uses, and economic alternatives to extractivism in the region. They have managed to organize a center for research, capacity building, dissemination of information, and certification of herbal medicines. This has opened up new business opportunities for a preserved Cerrado.



“CASA’s support was key in several moments of AGROTEC, especially in this last period when we were approached by the Xavante community of the Pimentel Barbosa Reservation.

“We received their leaders here and they proposed a training course to obtain extracts of native plants in a safer and more lasting way for the exclusive use of their communities, as well as how to control the medications they use.

“I can say this was a fantastic experience. In their accounts, the old people say that our medicines were received by the spirits as a sign of approval.”

Solange dos Santos Castro – AGROTEC, Diorama, Goiás state

Caatinga



The Caatinga biome is the main ecosystem in northeastern Brazil, covering nine states of this geographical region, including northern Minas Gerais. Although located in a semiarid climate area, the Caatinga shows a great variety of landscape and biological wealth.



The former occupation of this region caused great changes in the biome's ecosystems, by replacing native plants with cultivations and pastures. Deforestation and slash and burn agriculture, common practices for local agriculture and animal husbandry, have destroyed the vegetation, harming wildlife, water quality, and climate and soil balance, hence leading to desertification.

Also, this vast Northeast of Brazil is where we find the most deprived population, with rates of extreme poverty exceeding 60%. Families face the harsh climate conditions, poor soils, water scarcity, and abandonment by public authorities.

To address this harsh reality, CASA has supported various initiatives to qualify civil society actors, fight against desertification, conserve biodiversity, and promote sustainable development. One of the important partners for identifying projects is the Brazilian Semiarid Network (ASA), which pulls together 750 entities from the most diverse segments, working for the social, economic, political, and cultural development of the Semiarid. The One Million Water Wells Program (P1MC), the demonstration project of the One Land, Two Waters Program (P1+2), and the Popular Water Pump Program (BAP) are current actions managed by ASA.

ASA is also discussing two issues that have impacted the lives of people living in the Semiarid region, which are desertification and the biofuel production from oleaginous seeds.

Within this strategy, CASA supported projects from the Institute for Economic, Social and Environmental Development (IDESIA) and the Maranhão Institute of Environment and Water Resources (IMARH) to produce

auxiliary teaching materials and institutional support materials to be mainly used in workshops entitled “Qualifying Civil Society Actors in Strategies to Fight Against Desertification and for the Implementation of the National Action Program (PAN-Brazil).”

Another example of success is the Permanent Forum to Defend the São Francisco River and the Coalition to Protect the São Francisco River, which organized the greatest campaign to revitalize that river. For a long time, it also managed to halt the process of transposing the river waters.

Known as the national integration river, the São Francisco is 2,700 km long, crossing five Brazilian states until it reaches the Atlantic Ocean. It also crosses 503 municipalities, with a population of 14 million people in the 640,000 km² of its hydrographic basin. Many problems affect the health and survival of this river: riverbank deforestation reaches 95%, and 18,000 tons of contaminants are discharged into its waters annually. Seven dams, inadequate settlements, irrigation projects, and the plan for transposing its waters make up a worrisome scenario.

The campaign mobilized all segments of society, applied pressure on public organs, promoted seminars, meetings, and public hearings. It also produced and distributed thousands of educational materials.



“CASA’s support was very important for the New Life Association. We wanted to disseminate knowledge about agroecology in our region, but would not have done this without this support. Even technical people in Maranhão countryside did not know about it. We were forced to bring technical people from outside. We carried out a training course with professionals and local farmers on agroecology, mixed farming, combined animal and crop systems, and treatment of small animal diseases. Later, we worked on identifying Cerrado fruits, how to recognize them in the fields, how to protect them, pick, process, extract the pulp, and package. We have studied environmental legislation and Cerrado preservation. At the end, 68 persons got their diplomas. Without CASA’s support, we could not have achieved the same results, the same quality. Even more important than the diploma is the environmental awareness these people attained. And things did not stop here. This training was just the kickoff. An awakening to new possibilities! A door was opened and light got in. We are already

thinking: and now, what next? What are we going to do with this knowledge? We are going to do a feasibility study for marketing Cerrado fruits. We are not staying put.”

João Fonseca, New Life Association, Balsas (Maranhão state)

“During my travels, I met Murilo Drummond of Amavida, an all-purpose environmental group battling against the odds in the state of Maranhão, particularly sensitive because it is the home of the transition ecosystem where the Amazon rainforest meets the Brazilian northeastern “sertão” or scrublands and particularly challenging as a place that represents the worst Brazil has to offer in terms of patronage politics. In Petrolina, on the banks of the degraded São Francisco River, I met Nadja Maria Guedes Farfán of a group called Aguavale. She and other activists were battling then President Lula, who was investing the capital of his enormous popularity to push through an environmentally destructive large-scale water diversion scheme.”

Bill Hinchberger, journalist



Atlantic Forest

The Atlantic Forest covered the whole coastal area of Brazil, from Rio Grande do Norte to Rio Grande do Sul states, from the coast to the central highlands and mountain ranges. Today, less than 7% of this important and rich biome has survived the intense occupation of areas where 70% of Brazil's population is concentrated.

The Atlantic Forest is one of the world's richest set of ecosystems in terms of biodiversity. It is the source of rivers that supply water to Brazilian cities and capitals with a total population of over 120 million people. The protected stretches of forest that remain are home to Indigenous populations that have resisted the occupation of their lands and traditional communities, taking care of the forest and extracting from it their livelihood.

The main threats to what is left of the Atlantic Forest are large projects, real estate speculation, wild animal trafficking, illegal logging and palm heart extraction, crustacean farming, cultivation of exotic species, charcoal kilns, and mining. There are also conflicts related to traditional populations displaced from parks and protected areas created in the last 20 years.

In this region, CASA supports initiatives such as the Juçara Network that mobilizes coastal fisherfolk, Quilombolas (runaway slave communities), Indigenous people, and small farmers across the region to produce juçara fruit juice – juçara is the assai palm of the Atlantic Forest. In addition, it supported establishment of the “Econsciência” (EcoAwareness) Institute – a former project of the Rio Grande do Sul Institute for Environmental Studies (InGá) – to build a native seedling nursery, strengthen the institution, develop strategic planning, and provide support to organize courses on biodiversity.



“The Rio Grande do Sul Institute for Environmental Studies (InGá) has been supported by CASA since 2006. In that year, we received funding to monitor the Uruguay River Basin Integrated Environmental Evaluation. In 2007, InGá received institutional funding, which ensured a structure it never had before. In addition, InGá was the fiscal sponsor to develop the Econsciência Institute in 2007, and for a project to strengthen the Permanent Assembly of Entities in Defense of the Environment (APEDeMA/ Rio Grande do Sul, in 2008.

“CASA’s support made it possible for InGá to consolidate its staff and infrastructure, enabling us to obtain project funding from other sources, as well as to develop mobilizations and environmental policies that make our work recognized in the Rio Grande do Sul environmentalist scenario.

“In contacts with CASA Board members, we realized the possibility of InGá becoming a strategic entity, consolidating our current achievements and raising our environmental work as an NGO to a broader and more effective level.”

Vicente Medaglia – InGá, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul



In the interior of São Paulo state, the Pro-Earth (Pró-Terra) Institute does capacity-building work with rural workers, especially former sugarcane cutters who are unemployed, teaching them to regenerate forests so they can offer their services to recover degraded areas, such as riparian forests, Legal Reserves, and Permanent Preservation Areas (APPs). In this process, the Institute invests in local knowledge, valorizing regional customs and culture, stimulating feelings of belonging and co-responsibility in the face of socio-environmental and cultural issues, development of local sustainability, and environmental education.

“...the forest is thankful. Brazilian forests and their people are the ones who most benefit from support provided by CASA’s esteemed staff. Many look at the forests, green and luxuriant, but few are willing to invest in the hands that touch the land, so it might recover and be able to feed all its beings...CASA’s support made it possible for us to dream further, plant the small seed of a gigantic tree. We kept this little seed carefully, waiting for a sun ray to grow. This seed is a project as significant as the Forest Planters. It gained strength, saw daylight when it caught the attention of CASA’s staff, their consideration and knowledge...Today, hands and feet in increasing numbers touch the land, sowing shades and dreams. This path was watered and we hope to always be able to pick the fruits with you! Thank you, CASA, for the care, trust and especially for investing in the socio-environmental landscapes.”

Yanina Micaela Sammarco – Pro-Land Institute, Jaú, São Paulo state

Pampa



Pampa is the biome also known as Southern Fields. It covers 63% of Rio Grande do Sul state, expanding into the territories of Argentina and Uruguay. Natural ecosystems show great diversity in animals and plants, forming a complex system that is vital to conserve water resources, pollination, and the genetic bank. In addition, it plays an important part in the cultural formation of South America's Southern people the Gauchos.

Although about 41% of the Pampa still has its native vegetal cover, only 0.4% is protected by Conservation Units (protected areas). Under intense human occupation, this biome suffers strong pressures from agriculture, pastures, and forest monocultures that lead to the disappearance of native plant and animal species. Soil characteristics also favor desertification. Extensive areas were lost to desertification in the last decades.

In a region with a strong tradition of family farming, with the expansion of soybean culture in Rio Grande do Sul, organizations such as the Family Farming Central Cooperative (UNICOOPER) and the Regional Association for Education, Development and Research (AREDE), in Santa Rosa, have developed an important work of addressing the social, environmental, and economic consequences of transgenic soybean expansion.

Starting with the identification of farmers resisting this expansion, those organizations have helped with technical assistance to family farmers producing (or interested in producing) organic soybean and other food crops. They also help in systematizing the regional experiences with organic soybean, giving more visibility to these initiatives.

“The seventy farmers from the Rio Grande do Sul northwestern region who joined the organic soybean project are happy with the good development of the crop in the 300 hectares planted. The price bonus is one of the incentives. The organic soybean has a 13% increase on the sack price for those on the first harvest, and 35% for those with more years in this activity. According to the farmers, production costs are lower than for conventional soybean, thus enabling a better financial income at the end of the harvest. Technicians estimate a yield of 50 sacks per hectare in areas not affected by lack of rains.”

AREDE representative, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state



Cities

Large South American cities show the same major problems, no matter the country, region, GDP, or political and economic relevance. They have grown without any order, land or water-use planning, garbage disposal schemes, without the minimum conditions to receive the population and provide housing, employment, healthcare, transportation, education, and leisure.

The cities receive people leaving the countryside for lack of job prospects, as well as migrants who arrive from everywhere, from within and outside the country, in search of better living conditions. However, there are no public policies to meet the needs of that population and the statistics of violent crimes, abuses, and general disrespect for basic human rights rise every day, making these cities unfit for life.

CASA has supported initiatives and projects that seek solutions to these serious problems, pulling together institutions and individuals that work to improve the living conditions of urban populations, trying to achieve better education, housing, income generation, solidarity economy, environmental education, selective garbage collection and disposal, conscious consumption, art and leisure, heritage, and citizenship.

The “Terra Viva” (Living Land) Project seeks to strengthen the alliance between producers and consumers of organic food in Metropolitan Belo Horizonte, networking with other initiatives such as Amaalapinha and “4 Cantos do Mundo” (Four Corners of the World). They valorize traditional knowledge and cultures in rural areas, and the organization of street markets and other mechanisms to distribute organic foods in the cities.

The project “Weaving Life—Weaving, culture and income generation for women in urban Quilombola communities” develops activities with women remnants from the Quilombos of Areal da Baronesa and Fidélis Family, in neighborhoods that had a historical occupation in downtown Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul). Reinforcing the identity and historical memory of this population, the project uses African traditional weaving techniques to educate citizens able to generate income, promote solidarity economy, improve their living conditions, and exercise their rights in the city.

“CASA’s support to ‘4 Cantos do Mundo’ and its respective projects was, and still is, very important. It helped to greatly advance our ‘Terra Viva’ Network, which also celebrates its fifth anniversary. This network proposes to organize small producers of healthy food originated from family, urban, organic, agroecological, and whole-food farming; and to articulate them with consumers who then have the opportunity to buy fresh products produced with socio-environmental responsibility. Currently, it organizes two street markets every two weeks in different sites and delivers food baskets on a weekly basis.

“Another highlight was the 2011 support to the “Quintal Vivo” (Living Backyard) Project – Experiences with Permaculture,” in its third edition. Thanks to CASA’s support, we are providing training courses at no cost for the participants. This enables access for groups that otherwise would be excluded. Our purpose is to disseminate social technologies, such as bio-construction, water treatment, low-cost solar water heaters, planning small and mid-size spaces for food production, and so on.”

Thiago Lopes, “4 Cantos do Mundo”



Climate change



No matter how much one wants to deny the influence of human action on global warming, research and evidence leave no room for doubt: the oceans are heating up, provoking weather related disasters such as hurricanes, storms and floods of unseen proportions; the polar ice caps are melting, increasing the ocean level to the point of threatening entire cities and even countries of disappearing; the unrestrained deforestation is drying up rivers, altering the rainfall patterns and provoking desertification; the concentration of global warming gases interferes with the health of entire populations, increases the hole in the ozone layer, creates heat waves and even interferes with airways security. The visible consequences of human action upon the planet are not few, and the most affected populations are exactly those with the least resources to protect themselves.



The productivity of subsistence farming has gone down and, with it, the ability of poor families to meet their livelihood needs. This has increased the levels of hunger and malnutrition among the poorest, shutting down hopes for a better life, in South America and other continents.



In the cities, the lack of appropriate public policies to deal with the constantly increasing population in risk areas gives place to inappropriate land occupation. Intense occupation also interferes with rainwater drainage systems. Improper waste disposal and the carelessness with rivers lead to disasters that take hundreds of lives, while exhausting scarce public resources.

Today, even if all protocols that enforce emissions reductions were implemented, the effects of the imbalance already underway would not regress to acceptable levels. Therefore, along with the work to raise awareness of society, governments and businesses to the consequences of our actions on the planet, there is also the need to look at ways to mitigate the effects of global warming upon people and territories.

Many of CASA's grants deal exactly with issues involving climate change. We support people in areas affected by great transformations caused by predatory human action over fragile ecosystems, support these communities to find economic alternatives to improve their income while protecting their environment, which in turn increases their capacity for adaptation and resilience in these new times. These actions transcend all biomes, themes and subthemes supported by CASA so far, and shall soon to be turned into a new thematic fund.

Building Capacities



Much more than investing in socio-environmental projects and movements, CASA has capacity building as one of its strategies and priorities, addressing the deficiencies and needs of groups and individuals so they can conduct their missions with more efficiency and security.

Institutional strengthening; capacity building and training in key areas; developing tools for communication with civil society, potential funders, and government officials; and disseminating accumulated knowledge are some of the themes that have mobilized CASA actions and resources.

In addition to specific activities of education and capacity building focused on its internal audience and supported organizations, CASA also invests in educational projects, courses, gatherings, forums, and preparation and distribution of didactic materials in all regions of Brazil and in other South American countries.

In 2007, it organized two workshops on institutional development training, in Brasília (Federal District) and Atalanta (Santa Catarina), attended by 22 participants. Three other workshops on the soybean issue were held in the 2008-2010 period, with 25 supported organizations. In addition, there was a meeting in San Nicolás, Argentina, with 24 representatives from three countries – Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil. In this exchange among CASA-supported organizations, they presented their projects and reflected on their previous pathways and future challenges.

The seminar “Soybean – impacts and social and economic mechanisms,” organized in partnership with the Center for Life Institute (ICV), had 22 participants on June 10-11, 2008, in Brasília.

The course “Agroecological alternatives for communities located near soybean plantations,” was also organized in partnership with ICV, on January 25-26, 2010, in the Peraputanga Settlement, Diamantino, Mato Grosso, and was attended by 47 people from 27 organizations.

CASA also supported the “Strategy workshop on soy, agrofuels and Infrastructure,” held in Buenos Aires, on April 27-28, 2008.

“It was a remarkable experience. I come out of it with increased energy. Many things we dream of are already happening. The conversations on capacity building were very good, they prodded our minds.”

João Otávio Malheiros – AMAVIDA

“Many lessons were learned. CASA’s work provides an investment stimulus to small NGOs struggling to survive.”

Beloyanis Monteiro, trainer on Volunteers Management – SOS Atlantic Forest

“We established closer relations, got to know each other better, we dreamed a joint dream. It was very good to know people with the same objectives, to grow in what we believe in.”

Clemência Donatti – Vida Pantaneira (Pantanal Life)

“What we learned here is like footprints we are going to follow, with increasing determination.”

Gustavo Salles – 4 Cantos do Mundo (Four Corners of the World)





“The dynamics had a great differential – their simple and direct materials – going right to the point of what we needed to do. It’s an ABC that makes a difference. It was a big leap in quality.”

Edmilson Pinheiro – Carajás Forum

“It is important to see that other organizations also go through difficulties. We are now going to work with this collective, so distant and at the same time so close.”

Miriam Prochnow – Capacity Building Program Coordinator and CASA co-founder, APREMAVI

“For us, from CASA, it has been a great joy to help in the implementation of your projects and see the results you achieved. Now that most of you put up your information sheets, we would like to call on you to participate in a centralized exercise, where you may give us an account of what you did, talk amongst ourselves, see if we can help each other, through our experiences, see what we might learn. Above all, I hope this activity will be useful for you all. Don’t hesitate to bring in ideas or suggest changes, or ways you think it can be improved.”

Enrique Bostelmann, San Nicola Workshop Coordinator – CASA Board member



Results

What is the impact of the donation of a freezer, a blender or a packaging device on a community of extractivists that processes and markets juçara palm fruit in the northern coast of São Paulo, in one of the last areas of Atlantic Forest that resisted real estate speculation?

What is the result of donating a telephone, a computer, or even funds to legally constitute an association that mobilizes the population of an area affected by large projects?

In what way can installing a mechanical water pump and a water tank help an Indigenous settlement which is located in a strategic point of the territory, and seeks to recover its traditional culture and knowledge, confronting a destructive model of occupation of the Cerrado?

How do we measure the importance of funds to ensure that riverine dwellers and Indigenous people are able to travel long distances on the Amazon rivers to reach the cities, and attend public hearings or meetings with public authorities where decisions are made on projects that affect their lives?

Often the problem seems so small that it is not even perceived by large philanthropic institutions leading the movements for rights and/or environmental protection. Sometimes, for the communities affected, it seems there is no way out, that local action is ineffectual in face of the magnitude of problems.

However, in these five years of intense activity, CASA's magnifying lenses enabled individuals, communities, and associations based on local actions to project themselves into a scenario of important struggles, with clear results amplified by awareness and empowerment.



Each small grant has contributed in a decisive way to the advancement of civil society toward justice, democracy, and a sustainable and decent life.

An independent evaluation contracted by Global Greengrants Fund to measure the impact of their small grants provided in Brazil together with CASA, showed that those that received the support were benefited by the following results:

- Increased rates of survival and development for environmental organizations.
- Increased self-reliance and self-esteem among supported organizations leading to growth and increased sustainable activities.
- Capacity to raise other funds.
- Continuity of work is ensured through less dependence on volunteer workers.
- Increased visibility for the organizations and their themes.
- Support to dissemination of important environmental information.
- Seed funds for organizations that are currently key actors in the Brazilian environmental movement.
- Support for the creation of a new generation of socioenvironmental organizations in Brazil.
- Support for the growth of environmental networks and key organizations in those networks. Today they play key roles in major debates on public policies.
- Promotion of greater community participation.
- Support to project monitoring and to the defense of specific interests, with concrete results.
- Help in the participation of civil society members in government councils.
- Support for education and training of new environmental leaders.



A new cycle

They say the “Sleeping Giant” finally woke up! Brazil takes a seat together with the world’s powerful nations and even makes loans to the IMF. Consumption of goods was never so high, and cities are increasingly filled with more and more cars, buildings, and electronic devices. Cell phones and computers are present even in the more distant and isolated areas of the country – a progress that enlivens politicians and businesspeople, and even the population in general deluded by so many lights and modernities.

In different ways, other South American countries also share in this new era, joining large economic projects involving infrastructure, energy, and mining.

However, further reflection can identify in this scenario of euphoria the dark side of this development model. Never before have rivers been so threatened by dams, hydroelectric power plants, pollution, and predatory activities. Never before have forests been so devastated by deforestation, illegal exploitation of natural resources, and exhaustion of flora and fauna. Never before have cities become so overcrowded and degraded by irrational occupation, air pollution, poor living conditions for a population expelled from the countryside that seeks to make a living in a scenario of violence, unemployment, and insalubrity.



Unfortunately, the achievements of science and technology, the legal system and culture do not reach most of the population. Brazil still shows alarming rates of mortality among children and young people, corruption, and rural violence.

On the one hand, Brazil and South American countries appear as emerging nations and are no longer the focus of international philanthropic foundations that have redirected their grants to other continents. On the other hand, problems have been aggravated, threatening people and the environment as never before.

Within this context, CASA continues to seek out conscious partners in other regions of the world that could help in the effort to transform this grim reality. At this moment, we also face the new challenge of involving Brazilian philanthropic institutions – or institutions that practice private social investment, the locally preferred term in Brazil – in the concept of small grants that bring about great transformations.

It may seem a difficult task, but CASA has never avoided bumpy roads that sometimes seemed impassable. The strength to face the new challenges derives from our conviction that our way of doing things is innovative, efficient, and provides answers to questions that make a difference.

“The Center for Socio-Environmental Support might just be the Thomas Pynchon of the foundation world. Innovative, politically-committed and successful, CASA has also mimicked the best-selling king of modern experimental literature by keeping a public profile so low that only true insiders actually know whether it really exists. The difference might be in CASA’s precociousness. Pynchon built his career over the years, but in half a decade CASA launched a groundbreaking Brazilian fund in a country with no tradition of such endeavors - and quickly expanded that initiative to neighboring countries. Now, with recent shifts in the Brazilian and global economies, CASA aspires to help spawn a culture of homegrown philanthropy in Brazil, something also lacking in South America’s largest nation.

“With such pioneering accomplishments to its credit, why have so few people heard of CASA? “CASA isn’t supposed to be out in the limelight, taking political stances. It helps worthy groups do their own work,” Maria Amalia Souza, co-founder and executive director, told me, explaining the publicity-shy stance. “Our only audiences have been the donor community abroad and our grantees.

“A few years ago, I had the pleasure to visit about a half-dozen CASA-backed projects in far-flung parts of Brazil – places often new to me even as a well-traveled veteran foreign correspondent. In the interests of full disclosure, I made these journeys on CASA’s dime, on assignment to produce reports for institutional use. But I was sincerely impressed by how just a little cash can go a long way if put in the right hands.

“It isn’t really for me to expand on CASA’s plans for the future. You will find them outlined elsewhere in this document. But as the institution moves into a new era, one thing is for certain: you are going to be hearing more about them and, especially, the groups they support.”

Bill Hinchberger is a freelance writer and the principal of Hinchberger Consulting, with offices in France, Brazil and the United States. He is also the founding editor of BrazilMax.com, an award-winning online travel guide

Board



CASA is governed by a General Assembly composed of its founding and associate members that are divided up into two boards – Board of Directors and Advisory Board. The Board of Directors develops CASA's policies and is formally charged with approving all supported projects. The Advisory Board is called upon to help develop strategies for the organization as a whole and in their areas of expertise.

The Boards believes that ongoing consolidation of these supported organizations is fundamental to a better intervention in public policies, denunciations, proposals, legislation reform, i.e., the implementation of public socioenvironmental policies.

CASA'S Board 2011

Executive Director

Maria Amália Fontoura de Souza

Board of Directors

Renato Cunha (Bahia Environmentalist Group), Bahia, Brazil – Chair of the Board

Adriana Ramos (Socioenvironmental Institute), Brasília, Brazil

Bruna Engle (Friends of the Earth Unit), Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Carlos Afonso (NUPEF Institute), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Enrique Bostelmann (Global Greengrants Fund – Southern Cone and Andes), Montevideo, Uruguay

Karin Kaechele (Center for Life Institute), Mato Grosso, Brazil

Jorge Daneri (M'Biguá Institute), Paraná, Argentina

Marcelo Michelsohn (Tamgram Organizational Consulting Services), São Paulo, Brazil

Rubens Born (Vitae Civilis), São Paulo, Brazil

Tamara Mohr (Both ENDS), Amsterdam, Holland

Board of Advisors

Angela Pappiani (Ikore)

Edmilson Pinheiro (Carajás Forum)

Lucia Ortiz (Friends of the Earth Unit / Brazil – FBOMS Energy Working Group)

Miriam Prochnow (Itajaí Valley Association for Environmental Preservation)

Sérgio Guimarães (Center for Life Institute)

Founding Board

Renato Cunha

Maria Amália Souza

Rubens Born

Alcides Faria

Sérgio Guimarães

Miriam Prochnow

Tamara Mohr

Jorge Daneri

Carolina de Moura Campos

Founding members

Vanderlei de Castro

Lucia Ortiz

Cesar Victor do Espírito Santo

Artur Moretti

Edmilson Pinheiro

Angela Pappiani

Clemência Donatti

Kitty Tavares

Carolina Paiva

Members of the Board of Directors at different periods between 2005-2010

Renato Cunha

Adriana Ramos

Bruna Engel

Carlos Afonso

Enrique Bostelmann

Karin Kaechele

Jorge Daneri

Marcelo Michelsohn

Rubens Born

Tamara Mohr

Sérgio Guimarães

Lucia Ortiz

Alcides Faria

Carolina de Moura Campos

Simone Ramounoulou

CASA Staff

Cristina Orphêo (Institutional Manager)

Fabiana de Souza Costa (Administrative Assistant)

Carolina de Moura Campos (Program Officer)



“Strengthening small institutions of the Brazilian socio-environmental movement was the greatest motivation we had, together with environmentalist companions, to create CASA.

“The existence in Brazil – not to mention other Latin American countries – of an active citizenry concerned with environmental injustices needs to be supported and receive solidarity to implement actions and pull people together in order to fight against the current predatory model and seek for sustainable solutions for each territory – maximizing networks. These initiatives need to gain scale and more visibility in society.

“CASA has played this important role and thus motivates us to remain connected to this work.”

Renato Cunha

“We got involved with CASA because many of its Board members were and are people with whom we have a long history of working. We have always been interested in working with small grants applied in a flexible way. That’s what we do!

“I think achievements are not the result of the work of a single person, but part of a process. Results always depend on a set of factors. I have also been impressed by the amount of information that CASA participants have on the issues we work with, such as environmental, social, and political issues. There is also the passion. For those working, for Board members, this is not work, it’s life. They are very dedicated and committed. I also enjoy seeing young people develop over the years. It’s beautiful to work with young people who want to learn and experience everything.”

Tamara Mohr

“To be in CASA is a great honor, a great privilege. It’s a huge learning process through listening. How much we learn, how much we enjoy with all these human beings who bring about and share this space!

“It’s a privilege and also a great responsibility to so many organizations that might be benefited by CASA’s grants. The big difference of this institution is that they know the supported organizations, they closely monitor their life and development. CASA is not an organization up in the clouds, closed up in a bureaucratic structure. Their way of working, the Board members, and those who reflect upon and work with local issues, they all bring legitimacy to this work.

“Today I see CASA in three strong scenarios. The first one is CASA’s driving force, the daily energy that brings it to life, enriching, caring, expanding, and embellishing its garden. And this driving force is four or five women. This is very interesting and relevant. CASA’s management is led by women.

“The second scenario is the Board of Directors, which is balanced between old members who came from environmentalist organizations and have been there since its creation, and new people arriving with new energy.

“The third scenario is the challenge now posed for CASA. A radical leap, a qualitative advancement with the diversity of new actors that enrich the institution.”

Jorge Daneri

“One of the levers to promote sustainable development is to provide the conditions for society to take on and efficiently carry out their responsibilities aiming at the common good. In order for this to be possible it is necessary to valorize and bet on initiatives that at first might seem small, insignificant, but that have a huge potential of promoting change. A classic example of this type of initiative is the work with microcredit, as an efficient way of combating poverty.

“It is key to stimulate and help the growth of small and mid-size initiatives so they can make a difference in society. CASA does just that. In the years I followed CASA’s work, I’ve realized how important it is to give voice, priority and opportunities to local initiatives. The results of this support prove that we are on the right path, and that there is a lot yet to be done. The diversity of good initiatives, with concrete results, becomes true hope and inspiration for a different future, with quality of life for all.”

Miriam Prochnow

“CASA is an instrument to channel funds to civil society strategic initiatives.

“CASA supports small organizations that in the global mapping of donations would end up without any support, despite the key roles they play. Many are based on volunteer work and this blocks them from access to funding. CASA supports their formalization, the organization of a group of persons, so they can get together, grow, and manage to obtain other funds and proceed with their mission.

“CASA’s greatest advantage is to support activism, campaigns, mobilizations, and networking among communities. It consolidates relations among people who have worked together for a long time and incorporates organizations from other South American countries, especially the Southern Cone.”

Sergio Guimarães

“It’s really something powerful to feel close to and in solidarity with those who are resisting, protecting values, ways of life, and the future and, at the same time, are transforming when they share knowledges and solutions. It is also a privilege to be able to map out the transitional dynamics we are going through based on demands and projects that arrive at the CASA Board. They come from communities and territories, where both the economic and political disputes of the current development model and their resulting social and environmental conflicts are unfolding. But it is also from there that emerge the seeds of a new way of seeing, thinking, and acting in this world. These seeds, I’m sure, represent the force for a change in system and paradigm, for a new organization of society with social and environmental justice, where individuals and peoples could live fulfilling lives guided by human values in harmony with nature because we are also part of nature.”

Lucia Ortiz



“It could not be otherwise, my history with CASA began with a grant. One thousand dollars for ‘4 Cantos do Mundo’ that had just decided to suspend its operation. CASA’s support meant a restart.

“In 2005, during the Porto Alegre World Social Forum, I was invited to be a CASA Board member. I was most honored to have the privilege of participating in an organization with such experienced, historically engaged people.

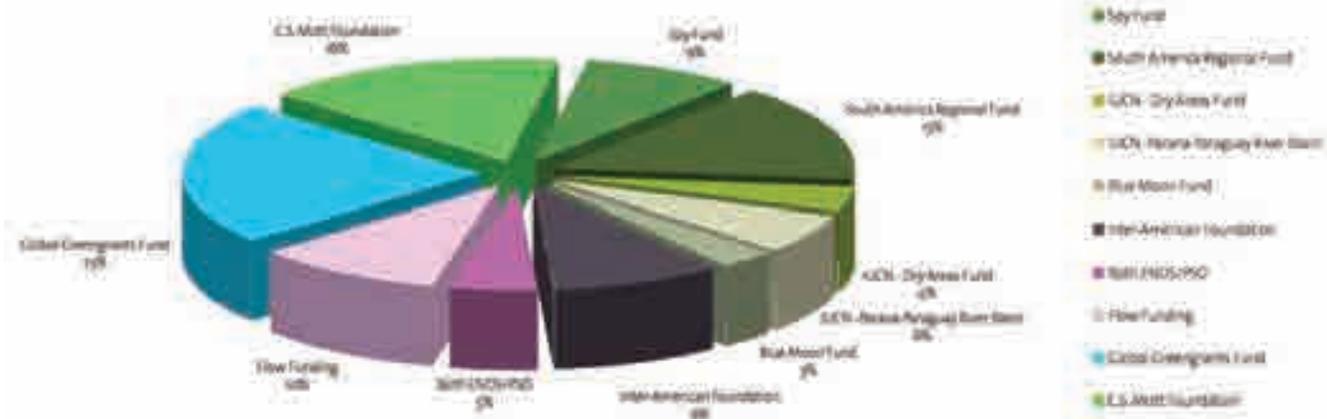
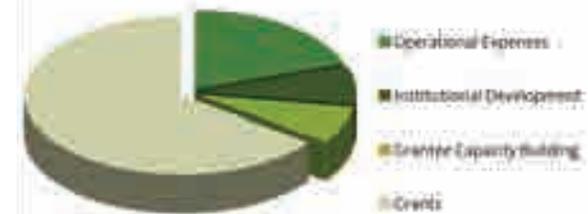
“In mid-2006, I started monitoring projects supported by the Dry Areas Program that CASA developed with IUCN-NL. Soon after this, I was invited to join CASA staff, to work building CASA on a daily basis. Five years of marvelous experiences have already gone by. If there is one thing that delights me, it is to see people getting organized, working together, taking care of their lives.”

Carolina de Moura Campos

CASA in figures

CASA

Operational Expenses	546,682.03
Institutional Development	215,029.96
Grantee Capacity Building	204,751.20
Grants	1,800,000.00
Total	2,766,463.20

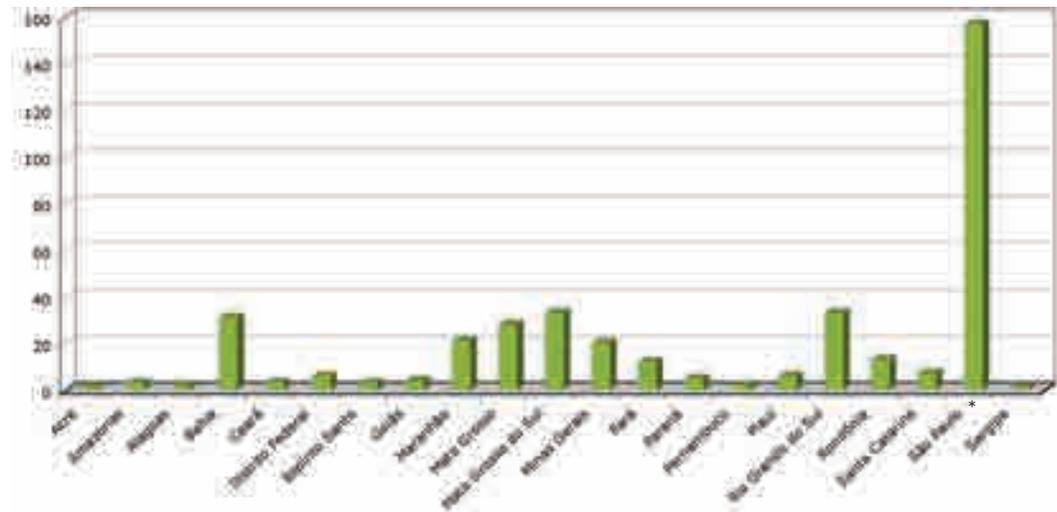


Funding Partners

Soy Fund	285,000.00
South America Regional Fund	500,000.00
IUCN - Dry Areas Fund	130,000.00
IUCN -Parana-Paraguay River Basin	205,000.00
Blue Moon Fund	100,000.00
Inter-American Foundation	300,000.00
Both ENDS/PSO	160,000.00
Flow Funding	340,000.00
Global Greengrants Fund	740,000.00
C.S. Mott Foundation	540,000.00

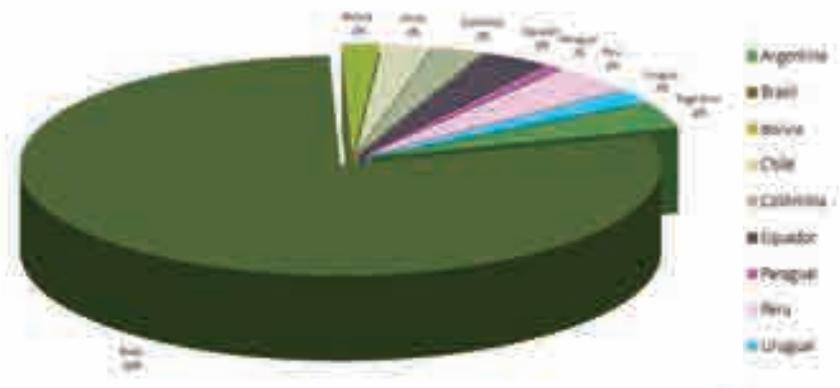
Grants per Brazilian States and South American Countries

Acre	1
Amazonas	3
Alagoas	2
Bahia	31
Ceará	3
Distrito Federal	6
Espírito Santo	3
Goiás	4
Maranhão	21
Mato Grosso	28
Mato Grosso do Sul	33
Minas Gerais	20
Pará	12
Paraná	5
Pernambuco	2
Piauí	6
Rio Grande do Sul	33
Rondônia	13
Santa Catarina	7
São Paulo	157
Sergipe	1
Total	391



* concentration due to great number of micro-grants between US\$50-1,000 from the Flow Funding program

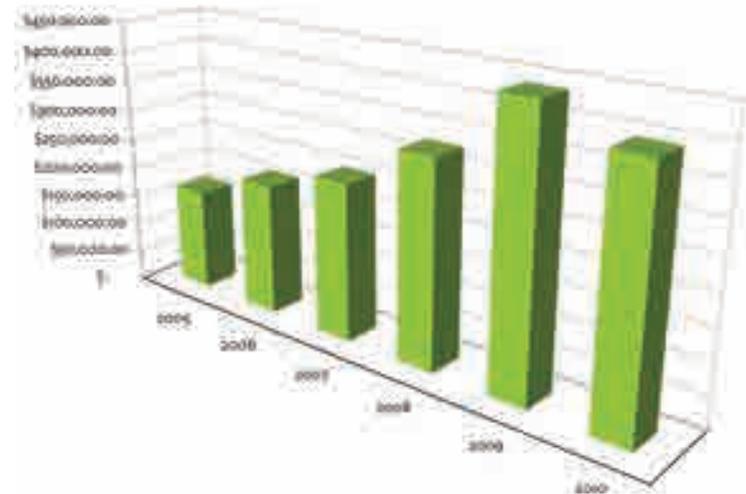
Argentina	19
Brasil	391
Bolivia	10
Chile	12
Colômbia	13
Equador	16
Paraguai	5
Peru	20
Uruguai	10



Grants per year between 2005 - 2010

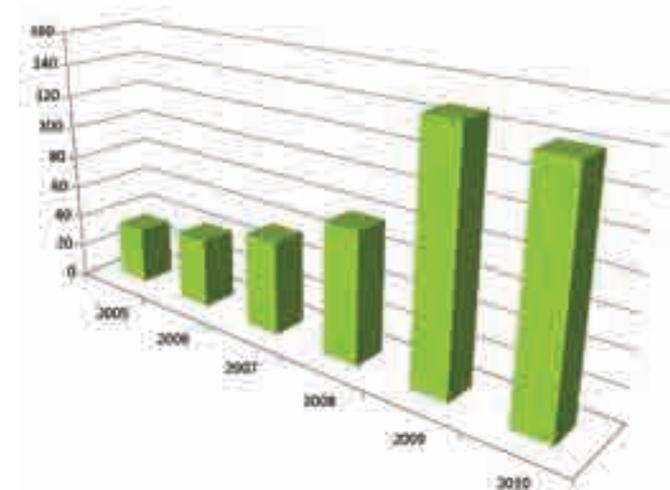
Grantmaking per year

2005	\$166,414.43
2006	\$212,989.63
2007	\$253,377.51
2008	\$328,883.62
2009	\$438,283.26
2010	\$394,670.55
<hr/>	
	\$1,794,619.00



Number of grants per year

2005	34
2006	42
2007	56
2008	78
2009	147
2010	140





- 01** The “Madeira Vivo” (Living Madeira) Institute becomes a legally established entity, winning new partners and support for its key work of mobilizing the population to protect the Madeira River basin.
- 02** The Four Rivers Alliance (Madeira, Teles Pires, Tapajós, and Xingu) develops its networking and plays a major role in struggles related to the basins of these important Amazon rivers affected by dams, hydroelectric power plants, and infrastructure projects. Actions go beyond borders, and organizations from neighboring countries join the struggle.
- 03** The Bororo, Xavante, and Kisêdjê Indigenous communities are strengthened and develop projects to recover traditional crops, organize an association, and recover their culture to confront the onslaught of agribusiness on their territories, devastation of forests and the Cerrado, as well as loss of culture and traditions.
- 04** Indigenous peoples work in networks with settlements and small farmers in Brazil’s central-western region to recover riparian forests and rivers, confronting the soybean monoculture, pollution, and the destruction of the Xingu River watershed.
- 05** Riverine dwellers, women, Indigenous people, and extractivists are organizing to get to know the impacts of large projects in the Xingu River basin and along other Amazon rivers, producing information materials, participating in meetings, and attending public hearings.
- 06** Indigenous organizations in Acre and Amazonas states develop projects to reinforce their culture and recover techniques and knowledge threatened by contact with Brazilian society, protecting the forest and rivers and creating sustainable economic alternatives.
- 07** Farmers and extractivists from Maranhão, Pará, and Piauí states go through capacity-building courses, appropriating information and instruments to change their way of cultivating to preserve soils and rivers, increasing productivity and winning new markets.
- 08** Communities in the northeastern Agreste build wells to face the drought, take training courses, and develop research and practices to deal with soil desertification.

- 09** In Bahia state, civil society organizations work to strengthen their identity and culture, participate as citizens in the formulation of public policies, confront crustacean farming and development projects that put mangroves, the Atlantic Forest, and the ocean at risk.
- 10** In Minas Gerais state, farmers organize to produce organic foods, recover traditional harvesting techniques, and open new markets networking with environmentalist groups and groups of conscious consumers active in the cities.
- 11** In southern Brazil, projects to plant organic soybean appear as alternatives to transgenic soybean. Research and other actions are developed to protect the soil that tends to desertification.
- 12** In the South, actions mobilize institutions from neighboring countries, such as Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia, to protect the Paraguay-Paraná basin, the Pantanal, and Chaco, confronting large infrastructure projects.
- 13** In Peru and Chile, Indigenous communities and workers seek solutions for serious environmental and social problems caused by mining activities.
- 14** The Amazon forest and rivers are the focus of many projects to protect the environment, advance sustainable economic activities, and mobilize against large projects that bring profound changes for the local population.

Large cities in South America have the same problems: lack of planning and public policies in the areas of housing, health, education, transportation, and employment. Across all regions civil society is organizing in search of their rights and voice.

The urban population organizes, creating instruments for citizens' participation, strengthening city heritage and culture, and developing capacity-building and income-generation projects for needy communities.



CASA Report

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