Friends of the Earth International

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

MOBILISE, RESIST, TRANSFORM
The extraordinary range of alliances with diverse movements makes Friends of the Earth one of the most powerful voices in global discourse. La Via Campesina’s 7th International Agroecology Meeting, Cuba.

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Friends of the Earth International is the world’s largest grassroots environmental network, with 73 member groups and over two million members and supporters around the world.

Our Vision

- A peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature.
- A society of interdependent people living in dignity, wholeness and fulfilment in which equity and human and peoples’ rights are realised.
- A society built on peoples’ sovereignty and participation.
- A society founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice, and free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalisation, neo-colonialism and militarism.

We believe our children’s future will be better because of what we do.

Our Mission

- To collectively ensure environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights and peoples’ rights so as to secure sustainable societies.
- To halt and reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, nurture the Earth’s ecological and cultural diversity, and secure sustainable livelihoods.
- To secure the empowerment of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, groups and individuals, and to ensure public participation in decision-making.
- To bring about transformation towards sustainability, and equity between and within societies with creative approaches and solutions.
- To engage in vibrant campaigns, raise awareness, mobilise people and build alliances with diverse movements, linking grassroots, national and global struggles.
- To inspire one another and to harness, strengthen and complement each other’s capacities, living the change we wish to see and working together in solidarity.
Dear friends,

2019 posed enormous challenges to the grassroots environmental justice federation that is Friends of the Earth International and we responded with some inspirational achievements. This report highlights just a few of them.

The context in which we work has become increasingly threatening. Democracy and participation are under siege in many countries, with the extreme right and neo-fascism growing in power. Manipulation of our data, fake news, and misogynist, racist and xenophobic discourse – all are becoming normalised. With increasing corporate control, the assault on peoples’ rights, especially women’s, is systemic. Social movements, communities, and defenders of nature and livelihoods are being criminalised and, in some countries, their members killed.

Our own groups and partners are on the front line. Our new system of monitoring and calling out attacks against peoples’ rights is proving invaluable. In 2019, through this Internationalist Solidarity System, we were able to report on 14 cases of human rights violations, take political action in support of communities and social movements and respond to emergency situations in many countries.

Rooted in struggles in so many countries, we are well placed to strengthen the fight against projects and policies that will worsen social and environmental crises. Opposition to corporate-led market-based false solutions remained a key dimension of our work at all levels in 2019.

On climate justice and energy, we and our allies prevented a deal on carbon markets and offsetting being struck at the UN climate talks in Madrid. Our member groups, meanwhile, pushed back against fossil-fuel projects and dams from Scotland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Norway, to Bangladesh and Indonesia, and from Mozambique, Uganda and Togo to Honduras.

On biodiversity, we continued our work to prevent the Financialisation of Nature gaining a foothold at the Convention on Biological Diversity. To this end, in preparatory UN talks on a Global Biodiversity Framework, we made a powerful case against market-based mechanisms.

On economic justice, we continued our work with allies to ensure an ambitious UN binding treaty on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights. We made sure several states took up positions that could improve the revised text of the UN Binding Treaty which is meant to make transnational companies liable for human rights violations and environmental crimes. We also fought the impunity of corporations such as Shell and Total in the courts.

As well as opposing damaging neoliberal policies, projects and mechanisms, we are committed to building systemic approaches to bring about environmental, social, gender and economic justice and we achieved some important results in 2019.

On food sovereignty, along with other social movements and organisations, including our strategic ally La Via Campesina, we successfully lobbied UN bodies to recognise agroecology as a key solution for a food system in crisis. This breakthrough opens the space for national and international policy changes, all the more important in the light of Covid 19: the pandemic has shown, among other things, how urgent it is to move away from industrial agriculture and foster peasants’ agro-ecological food systems.
Meanwhile, we advanced our work on Community Forest Management, an approach to stopping deforestation and biodiversity loss that puts Indigenous Peoples and local communities at the centre.

While we work to change the world, we also strive to develop as a federation. Key to this is the integration of a gender justice and feminist perspective throughout our programmes and membership development. During the climate COP we organised a workshop on what a just feminist transition should look like, with allies from Indigenous Peoples and the feminist, trade union, peasants and youth movements. We also progressed our work on women as key political actors in food sovereignty, and the relevance of gender justice to biodiversity. To advance gender justice and change patriarchal power relations within the federation, we began implementing the strategy approved at our 2018 Biennial General Meeting, and held workshops at the annual general meetings in all four regions. The new federation-wide policy on violence and sexual harassment is a key step in our commitment to end patriarchal oppression.

Our regions continue to engage with potential new member groups. We aim to increase our geographical reach and power base to build a more diverse and inclusive environmental justice movement.

Our working year 2019 ended just as the threat of a global spread of Covid 19 emerged. Reaching far beyond its shocking health impacts, the pandemic has profound implications for the issues we work on, and for our allies, groups and communities. But we have shown our potential to organise, mobilise and tackle the social-ecological crises facing humanity, and to fight for peoples’ power, collective rights, and gender justice and against patriarchy. So it is with renewed energy that we reaffirm our commitment to the struggle.

“While we work to change the world, we also strive to develop as a federation. Key to this is the integration of a gender justice and feminist perspective throughout our programmes and membership development.”

Karin Nansen, Uruguay, Friends of the Earth International Chair.

CONTENTS

Climate justice & energy 6
Economic justice & resisting neoliberalism 10
Food sovereignty 14
Forests & biodiversity 18
Cross-cutting themes & regional highlights 22
Finances 26
Friends of the Earth has been a fierce critic of the outcomes of the UNFCCC process in recent years - a critique now shared by a wider cross-section of civil society. Friends of the Earth on the streets of Madrid, Spain, during COP25.

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2019 programme highlights

FOCUSING THE POWER OF A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Climate Justice & Energy programme
Amid accelerating climate impacts and surging media attention, the 2019 UN talks were the focus for an emboldened global climate justice movement.

Mass mobilisation & COP25

A last-minute change of venue from Santiago to Madrid for the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP25) was a challenge but didn’t stop us making our presence felt on both sides of the Atlantic.

As almost 50 colleagues from across Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe descended on Madrid, we helped organise a march of half a million people, led actions on finance, liability for polluters, and loss and damage, held press conferences, put up speakers at the plenaries of the Social Summit (Cumbre Social) and staged our own event at that summit, called ‘Voices from the frontlines’. Inside the official venue, we helped organise a protest at the lack of action, which was aggressively shut down. The contrast between polluters being welcomed as sponsors and running events on the inside, and civil society being literally shut out in the cold, was a powerful illustration of the dynamics inside the COP.

In Santiago meanwhile, colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean mounted a week-long Peoples’ Summit (Cumbre de los Pueblos), joined by colleagues from other regions. With activities including Just Transition events organised by our Latin American team and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) – a developing relationship. Collectively we threw a spotlight on Southern voices and social movements unable to attend the Madrid meeting, and made clear the links between the two events, while challenging the Chilean government’s crackdown on the protests in Chile.

Our delegations to the COP25 and UN Climate Action Summit were gender balanced, with women activists from the global South clearly at the forefront of actions, on panels, and speaking to the media. In Madrid we ran a workshop where our groups and allies from the feminist, union, and social movements explored what a feminist just transition would look like.

We pushed to make the fight against carbon offsets and carbon markets the main issue at the COP, securing extensive media coverage for our analysis and gathering 174 organisations behind our ‘No to carbon markets’ petition. The good news is that our efforts helped prevent a deal on carbon markets being struck in Madrid. The momentum we generated against this dangerous distraction will be crucial because carbon markets will be back on the table at COP26.

Our Climate Justice & Energy programme aims to

- mobilise at scale under a narrative of planetary emergency and climate justice.
- weaken the dirty energy sector by stopping harmful energy projects.
- be recognised as a leading voice for a just peoples’ energy system.

Calling for an end to fossil fuels and demanding a just transition to renewable energy in Penang, Malaysia.
NEW MOVEMENTS

Even the huge Madrid mobilisation wasn’t the biggest in a year that saw youth strikes and Extinction Rebellion actions change the campaigning landscape. Behind the scenes we worked to strengthen Southern voices and our narrative of justice and equity in these movements. But we were also directly active in student strikes and at the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Summit in September, when at least 35 Friends of the Earth groups took part in mobilisations of around 7.9 million people globally.

“We will stand up to those who are destroying the planet and harming communities with impunity. We will push for a transformation of our energy, transport, food and economic systems.”

dipti Bhatnagar, Climate Justice and Energy Coordinator, Friends of the Earth International, quoted in Environews, Nigeria.

FIGHTING DIRTY ENERGY & FALSE SOLUTIONS

Alongside concerted action on the global stage, member groups pushed back against fossil fuel projects at the national and regional levels. In 2019 we:

• celebrated when Norway’s Labour Party said no to oil drilling in the ecologically-sensitive Lofoten Peninsula, thereby ending the possibility of drilling in the near future. This followed years of campaigning by Norges Naturverforbund/Friends of the Earth Norway.

• welcomed the effective outlawing of fracking in Scotland and England.

• coordinated international work to block funding for gas exploitation in Mozambique, including the release of a short film in Portuguese, English, Spanish and French.

• opposed Japanese funding for coal in Indonesia and Vietnam.

• worked with Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers’ Association/Friends of the Earth Bangladesh to boost their resources to fight coal and nuclear power.

• launched the Fossil Free Politics campaign to cut the political influence of top oil, coal and gas companies out of policy-making in Europe.

• supported Amis de la Terre/Friends of the Earth Togo’s work with local communities affected by offshore oil exploration.

• supported the work of Movimiento Madre Tierra/Friends of the Earth Honduras with the people of Reitoca to prevent hydroelectric dams destroying their river and way of life.

• marked a green energy milestone in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where our member group successfully crowdfunded to install solar panels on the rural Pecka Visitor Centre, a first for the country.
SCHOOLS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

The region held two schools of sustainability – one led by Young Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria in Nigeria, where experts, advocacy groups and more than 100 young people examined environmental action, the importance of renewable energy, the need to monitor the environment and the transition to cleaner energy.

FOSSIL-FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE IN EUROPE

We scored a significant victory for our work to ensure new projects are vetted for their effect on the climate, when French regulators rejected the so-called MidCat pipeline, and on climate grounds the Swedish government rejected a permit request for a liquid natural gas terminal in Gothenburg. The moves came after Friends of the Earth Europe lodged formal complaints and lobbied MEPs over European Commission support for fossil-fuel infrastructure.

FIGHTING NUCLEAR POWER IN ASIA PACIFIC

Friends of the Earth Japan’s campaign to block financing for nuclear projects made a breakthrough in 2019. Japanese company Hitachi, through its subsidiary Horizon, announced that it will suspend the building of a nuclear reactor on Anglesey in Wales. The news was celebrated by Friends of the Earth Japan and Welsh partners, People Against Wylfa B.

In Japan itself, 8 years after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, officials were downplaying the persistent threat ahead of the Olympics. Friends of the Earth Japan released ‘Fukushima Today and Japan’s Energy Future 2019’, a report on the situation facing people affected by the disaster, Japan’s energy policies and citizen efforts towards a sustainable energy future.

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHAOS & DIRTY ENERGY IN THE COURTS

2019 saw significant developments in two high-profile cases where we are using the law to fight climate change and bad energy projects.

Milieudefensie/Friends of the Earth Netherlands, with six other organisations and more than 17,000 co-plaintiffs, submitted its historic legal summons against Shell. More than 60 media outlets outside the Netherlands took up the story from Reuters and Associated Press to the BBC, El Pais, and Washington Post. The publicity and international nature of this case could help ensure Shell does not get to tell a ‘green’ story while continuing to aggravate the climate crisis. The aim is to force Shell to reduce its CO₂ emissions as quickly as possible.

In the first legal action of its kind, our member groups in France and Uganda, with other Ugandan NGOs, took oil giant Total to court for failing to comply with its duty of vigilance under French law. Total is the main operator of a mega oil project in Lake Albert and Murchison Falls, a protected natural park in Uganda. Although the French court found the case fell outside its jurisdiction, we are considering appealing. In a troubling development, on returning from France to Uganda one witness was arrested and interrogated. We demanded an immediate end to intimidation of communities affected by the oil project.

Recognising the huge potential that legal processes offer to our campaigns, we have begun mapping member groups’ work on climate litigation. This information is being used to shape strategies and coordinate action for the next 5-year plan.
We and our allies are at the heart of work to put an end to corporate impunity, exploitation and to ensure rights and justice for peoples. The Global Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power at the UN on the last day of the 5th Inter-Governmental Working Group negotiations in Geneva.

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Our Economic Justice & Resisting Neoliberalism programme aims to

• reduce corporate impunity through national regulation and a UN binding treaty.
• win significant victories against the current trade and investment regime, helping to weaken it.
• support more groups to promote our economic transformation agenda.

This year we continued alliance-building around mechanisms to end the impunity of transnationals, while pushing grassroots struggles for collective rights. We’re doing this in a context where violations of peoples’ rights are on the rise.

CORPORATE IMPUNITY & A LEGALLY BINDING UN TREATY

Negotiations have been underway since 2015 on the UN’s planned ‘international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights’. With our allies we have been at the forefront of the fight for this Binding Treaty to be ambitious and effective. The so-called zero draft was published in 2018, and radically improving a disappointing revised draft text is a key focus for our work on economic justice.

In 2019, in the run-up to the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva, we worked on strategy with civil society partners: the Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power, Treaty Alliance, Continental Day (Jornada Continental) for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism. Particularly effective was the tour of five southern partners to Europe to meet politicians, policy makers, journalists and Friends of the Earth and other groups. The insights and exposure that this tour generated helped national groups push the binding treaty up the political agenda.

A pivotal seminar in Uruguay focused on the legally binding UN instrument and the urgency of addressing the architecture of impunity in investment and trade instruments. Held in Uruguay’s parliament, ‘Transnational Corporations, ISDS Cases and Captured Democracy’ was organised by our Latin American and Caribbean members and allies with the support of the Transnational Institute (TNI). ISDSs (Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms) enable transnational corporations to sue governments for taking actions to protect lives. The seminar enabled us to engage with members of parliament in an in-depth debate on the need for a legally binding instrument.

In October 2019 at the 5th Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, we coordinated a delegation from 14 countries. Our delegation took part in the negotiations, making oral interventions to the UN plenary, and lobbying off- and online. Our movement’s proposals and demands for revisions of the draft Binding Treaty were reflected in the arguments of four member states in the IGWG negotiations and were well covered by the media. But there remains a lot to do. We will redouble our efforts to ensure the final treaty guarantees rights for people, justice for victims, and ends corporate impunity.

A report on Berta Cáceres and the role of multinational corporations in murdering defenders of territories, published in March 2019, formed part of our work to push for a UN instrument ending corporate impunity.
TIGHTENING THE NET ON PLASTIC WASTE

As part of a growing global movement to stop plastic pollution we achieved a huge victory in 2019. In May more than 180 governments agreed amendments to the Basel Convention on hazardous waste. The changes will improve transparency in the trade in plastics, and establish countries’ right to refuse plastic waste imports. It’s not a moment too soon, since China’s commendable 2018 ban on plastic waste imports led to more dumping of plastic waste on the global South. The Basel success followed intense lobbying, creative activism, and powerful communications by the Break Free From Plastic movement coalition and Friends of the Earth groups from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Australia and Europe. Sahabat Alam Malaysia/Friends of the Earth Malaysia pressed their government to back the Basel amendments, so it was encouraging to see the country tighten regulation of plastic waste imports and sending waste back to countries of origin. Advocacy by Friends of the Earth Australia and allies helped push the Australian government to ban exports of low-grade unsorted plastic waste which until now has been dumped in Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere in the South.
CITIES AWARD  
INSPIRING CHANGE

Friends of the Earth International became an official partner of the Transformative Cities Award in 2019. This unique project collected 33 stories of community-led initiatives – including four from Friends of the Earth groups and allies – in water, energy, food and housing from 24 countries. It attracted widespread media coverage, and 6,000 people voted for their favourite initiative. Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria won an award for its campaign on the right to public water in Lagos and as a result was able to meet with social change makers at a global Transforming Cities conference. The scheme is an opportunity for local governments, municipal coalitions, social movements and civil society organisations to share experiences of building solutions and, crucially, inspire others.

MAPPING THE BELT ROAD  
FOOTPRINT

2019 saw intense coordination among Asia and Pacific groups over China’s Belt Road Initiative (BRI), whose effects are being felt across the region and beyond. Groups produced a briefing on BRI, the regional backdrop, and the questions and opportunities it poses for our work.

“Human rights and environmental defenders are on the front line, facing attacks and intimidation by multinationals. A legally-binding UN treaty represents the end of impunity and human rights violations and justice for the people affected.”

Karin Nansen, Friends of the Earth International Chair, at the UN Binding Treaty negotiations, quoted in Nueva Tribuna, 16 October 2019.
We’re making substantial progress in getting global institutions to adopt a radical vision of agroecology as a credible solution to environmental and social challenges. Woman working her land in Namaacha, Mozambique. © Amelia Collins / Friends of the Earth International

2019 programme highlights

ROOTING CHANGE IN AGROECOLOGY

Food Sovereignty programme
Our Food Sovereignty programme aims to

- strengthen the food sovereignty movement and contribute to its political positions and actions.
- strengthen food sovereignty through policy and peoples’ initiatives.
- weaken the expansion of agribusiness.

Great progress has been made in the past five years to position agroecology on the agenda of multilateral institutions. But the private sector has been quick to pursue strategies to capture these processes. So we have stepped up our work to strengthen the movement for food sovereignty from fields and farms to the committee rooms and halls of governance where international policies are made.

Our advocacy on agroecology and food sovereignty in 2019 prioritised two international policy spaces – the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the UN’s Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Our work with allies among social movements and organisations helped secure a major win. With the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, a platform of more than 6,000 organisations and 300 million small-scale food producers, we successfully lobbied the FAO to adopt a radical vision for agroecology, the Ten Principles of Agroecology. We also supported them to adopt ways to assess its performance on a range of environmental, social and economic measures. The FAO now recognises agroecology as an important system for food security and nutrition; and in its recommendation that agricultural biodiversity be included in the Global Biodiversity Framework, the FAO mentions agroecology as the main transformative system.

“If we don’t eradicate hunger, the situation will continue to worsen, as will the crisis of the climate, biodiversity, and the planet’s ecological limits, while institutions and governments continue promoting the same false solutions.”


AGROECOLOGY ACCEPTED

2019 was a landmark year for our work in the UN Committee on World Food Security. At its annual meeting in Rome in October, the Committee accepted a report of its High Level Panel of Experts that recognised agroecology as the transformative solution for a food system in crisis, with governments agreeing to a year of negotiations to set out policy recommendations on agroecology.

This was a period when we saw large agribusinesses intensify attempts to greenwash their model and increase their profits and control over the agri-food system. Our analysis of such strategies, prepared with the Transnational Institute and Crocevia, will be available in 2020. We and our allies remain deeply engaged to get policy makers to focus on real solutions.
GENDER JUSTICE & FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

We continue to integrate feminist analysis and practice at all levels in our food sovereignty work.

At the international level, in October we supported a workshop based on the paper ‘Without Feminism there is no Agroecology’. This was prepared by the Women’s Working Group within the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples’ Mechanism (CSM). The CSM, which facilitates civil society participation in the Committee on World Food Security, is the largest global grouping of civil society organisations working to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition. The analysis supported interventions in the CFS plenary, and helped strengthen the position of the Women’s Working Group within the CSM itself.

At a regional level, in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa we recorded interviews with women leaders about their struggles against agribusiness and their feminist analysis of food sovereignty as a solution. Materials based on these interviews will be launched in 2020. Real World Radio began publishing podcasts in 2019, the first of which was on women and agroecology, a co-production with the World March of Women, in Brazil. A regional workshop in Togo in December saw 16 civil society organisations examine gender and the food sovereignty movement in Africa. Data on women’s participation in agroecology and community forest management will be used to develop a regional campaign pushing agroecology to be integrated into Africa Union policies.

At country level, gender analysis features in agroecology and food sovereignty work by Centro Salvadoréno de Tecnología Apropiada/Friends of the Earth El Salvador. On October’s Day of Rural Women, 60 women attended an event focusing on agroecological knowledge and native seeds that attracted 150 participants in all, including farmers, grassroots groups and feminist organisations.
NATIONAL LEVEL HIGHLIGHTS

National level advocacy and action on food sovereignty in 2019 included:

- a major victory for Les Amis de la Terre/Friends of the Earth Togo, when the government announced a definitive ban on the chemical herbicide glyphosate.

- the publication by regional member groups of *The Laws of Landgrabs in Asia Pacific*, examining land rights case studies in six countries.

- a proposal for an agro-ecology law in El Salvador agreed by our member group with communities, small-scale food producers and civil society organisations. Centro Salvadoreño de Tecnología Apropiada/Friends of the Earth El Salvador is supporting partners to push for the proposal to become law.

CAPACITY BUILDING, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Building capacity through the knowledge that exists across our network is central to the success of the food sovereignty movement. In 2019 we:

- found inspiration in Cuba when we took Friends of the Earth members to the Via Campesina 7th International Meeting of Agroecology, Sustainable Agriculture and Cooperativism, a project based on cooperation and respect for nature. Participants visited 37 farms in 17 municipalities and met 200 delegates from 31 countries to learn about agroecology across the world and what the Cuban government is doing to comply with the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

- financed three projects in the global South focused on training in agroecology and policy lobbying.

- critiqued several high-profile scientific analyses on the causes of the environmental crises, and a new push for land-based carbon sequestration and adaptation techniques: we provided analysis to our networks and UN Committees on the threats that some of these proposals pose to food sovereignty and human rights.

- worked on articulating the role of women and youth in food sovereignty: in 2020 we will publish our position on links between gender justice and food sovereignty.

- provided media coverage of food sovereignty issues and events, including 16 articles in Spanish and six in English; a film on communities fighting the power of agribusiness in El Salvador; and a new series of podcasts by Real World Radio (RWR) featuring their programmes Mil Voces, Voz Campesina and Furia Feminista.

- developed, with the Transnational Institute (TNI) and Crocevia, a report on corporate capture of agroecology in the CFS process, and continued to see strong demand for our report series, ‘Who Benefits?’.
We're pushing global institutions to treat the planetary crisis in biodiversity with the speed and urgency it demands. Friends of the Earth International and allies conveying our demands at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kenya.

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Our Forests & Biodiversity programme aims to

• slow or stop the financialisation of nature.
• advance a political framework favouring community forest management.
• slow the expansion of agro-commodity plantations into forested areas.

As evidence mounts of ecological collapse, our work to protect biodiversity, forests and forest communities prioritised two crucial areas in 2019: stopping international fora adopting financialisation of nature; and making the case for community forest management (CFM).

Evidence is growing on the critical need for action in this area. In May 2019 the most comprehensive scientific global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services to be adopted by governments to date exposed the main drivers of global biodiversity collapse and called for urgent regulatory change. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reported that the world faces ecological collapse and mass extinctions unless dramatic action is taken to change social and economic systems.

Against this background, our international advocacy on nature in 2019 centred on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where talks on the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) are set to conclude in 2020. The draft framework is weak and our work in regional consultations and alliance-building among progressive civil society organisations sought to strengthen it in a number of areas: recognition of planetary limits, and the centrality of CFM and human rights; safeguards against false solutions such as offsetting and voluntary certification; the need for binding environmental regulation on the private sector; and the importance of compliance and implementation.

We made good progress in the CBD expert consultation on forest restoration, ensuring a number of key civil society negotiating positions will be considered – which, if adopted, would strengthen the standing of indigenous peoples, local communities and ecosystems. Extensive consultation with member groups led to ‘The Essential Rights of Community Forest Management’, a report which forms the basis for a study we are producing on the status these rights enjoy in international forums. These two tools will underpin our lobbying for greater respect for these rights.

On the financialisation of nature, our report ‘Regulated Destruction’ explored how biodiversity offsetting undermines environmental protection. We generated media coverage and helped organise a side event at the CBD’s 23rd Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), where we launched ‘Can Market Based Approaches Address Critical Loss of Biodiversity?’ designed to help negotiators and organisations involved in the CBD understand why market-based mechanisms are not an answer to the destruction of our natural world.

We continued to develop a gendered analysis of our advocacy at the Convention, thanks to a closer relationship with the World March of Women (WMW) and our involvement in the Women’s Caucus.

Sahabit Alam Malaysia/Friends of the Earth Malaysia’s Agroecology and Agro-forestry Centre (lobang Kompeni Nursery site) in Marudi, Baram, Sarawak.
The environmental and health impacts of forest fires came to the fore for the Asia Pacific region in 2019. Friends of the Earth Australia exposed the links between climate change and the devastating forest fires that ravaged the continent, while our groups in Indonesia and Malaysia launched a data-gathering project on forest and plantation fires and transboundary haze. The research is informing efforts to engage civil society organisations and national and regional leaders in building a common framework to prevent future fire/haze crises.

Bringing together insights from member groups in Honduras, Malaysia and Africa, in 2019 we concluded a three-year research project to demonstrate that certification is no solution to the damage caused by oil palm plantations. We plan to extend this collaboration for four years, widening its focus to the threat that agribusiness poses to land rights and local small-scale producers.

In Malaysia, where palm oil is key to the economy, a report from our member group, ‘The Land We Lost’, analysed the impacts of large pulp and paper, timber and oil palm plantations in Sarawak. Sahabat Alam Malaysia/Friends of the Earth Malaysia drew attention to the impacts of certification, mobilised communities against land-grabbing for plantations, and advocated for changes to the legal framework.

Movimiento Madre Tierra/Friends of the Earth Honduras worked with local allies to analyse regulation that favours monocultures, understand the effects of the expansion of oil palm and other monocultures, and develop strategies for reporting on impacts to the media. The group continues its struggle against agribusiness amid worsening human rights violations, repression and militarisation.

“We can build a better world and arrest biodiversity collapse, but it needs nothing less than radical system change ... we must break down all systems of exploitation – colonialism and neocolonialism, patriarchy and racism.”

Golfrid Siregar was discovered in a critical condition by a roadside on 3 October 2019 and died three days later. A member of Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI)/Friends of the Earth Indonesia, he had been deeply involved in WALHI’s work to protect Sumatra’s rainforests and communities from palm oil plantations and hydropower. Police initially claimed Golfrid was the victim of a traffic accident but irregularities and suspicious circumstances suggest his death may have been in retaliation for his work. Friends of the Earth and more than 240 organisations around the world delivered letters to Indonesian embassies, and there were demonstrations in 17 countries. Activists called for a police investigation into Golfrid’s death on a par with international standards, and an independent probe by Indonesia’s human rights commission. The case underlines yet again the dangers environmental defenders face. Across the planet, there are more than 2,500 conflicts over fossil fuels, water, food and land, and at least 1,000 environmental activists and journalists were killed between 2002 and 2013, according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
Gender justice and the rights of environmental defenders are not just unifying themes across Friends of the Earth International - they’re the substance of some of our most important work. Standing in solidarity with the peoples of Porto Alegre threatened with eviction by German company Fraport and the Porto Alegre government because of the city’s airport expansion.

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INTEGRATING GENDER JUSTICE ACROSS OUR NETWORK

In 2019 we intensified our efforts to build a feminist culture within our federation. We developed understanding across the network and supported member groups to mobilise around key feminist events. We also took steps to ensure a feminist analysis shapes what we do in spaces such as the Climate COP and Committee on World Food Security. Our international programmes buddied up in pairs with the Gender Justice Dismantling Patriarchy (GJDP) Working Group and together they will drive integration of gender justice and feminist analysis in our international programmes.

Our federation continues to work with feminist allies who have been leading the way on gender justice, such as the World March of Women (WMW), WoMin, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, and Law and Development (part of #Feminists4Treaty). In 2019 we took part in the European WMW conference and the Americas WMW feminist school, and WMW representatives attended several Friends of the Earth events.

Gender justice and power relations were in the spotlight at annual general meetings in all our regions. Before the Africa region’s AGM in Maputo, a two-day women’s meeting, which included feminist allied organisations, signalled the commitment of our regional structures, member groups and programme representatives. Member groups in Africa have developed activities to promote gender justice as a key strategy for movement-building, especially around agroecology, community forest management and climate justice.

At the Latin America regional strategy meeting, participants examined: violence against women as a tool of control; why it is worsening under authoritarian governments, in corporate-controlled territories, and against women environmental human rights defenders; and how to prevent violence against women in member groups and our societies.

International secretariat staff received training in 2019, and the Working Group published ‘Why Gender Justice and Dismantling Patriarchy? Reflections and Stories from the Friends of the Earth International Federation’, explaining key concepts to help us talk about and strategise on this subject.
VIOLENCE & SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Throughout 2019 the Gender Justice Dismantling Patriarchy Working Group (WG) consulted on what was to become a federation-wide policy on violence and sexual harassment. Real World Radio amplified learnings from the process beyond our federation, and in a video WG members explored the links between gender and environmental justice. The new policy was authorised by our Executive Committee, and finally shared with member groups at the beginning of 2020. It focuses on preventing and responding to violence and sexual harassment against women and all staff and people for whom Friends of the Earth has responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY OF STRUGGLE

International Women’s Day of Struggle, 8 March, is a key date to raise awareness of women’s political demands and alternatives for social transformation. In 2019 we produced a landing page on foei.org for gender justice dismantling patriarchy, launched a video call to action from Chair Karin Nansen and used social media to encourage member groups to support the feminist movement in street mobilisations and online posts. We united dozens of actions across the federation through shared memes, hashtags and messages such as ‘No #SystemChange without dismantling #Patriarchy,’ ‘#DismantlePatriarchy, not the planet’, and ‘No #EnvironmentalJustice without #GenderJustice’.

Raising awareness of women’s political demands and alternatives for social transformation on International Women’s Day around the world.
PROTECTING THE DEFENDERS OF TERRITORIES & PEOPLES’ RIGHTS

Rapid escalation of attacks against environmental and human rights defenders threatens to derail our movement’s responses to worsening global crises. The need to defend territories and the collective rights of people has never been more pressing.

Our defence of peoples’ sovereignty and response to threats, attacks and murders took a more systematic and holistic approach in 2019. In May representatives from across the federation, together with allies including La Via Campesina and the World March of Women, met in Porto Alegre, Brazil. There they agreed the vision for the Internationalist Solidarity System through which Friends of the Earth International and its allies will act at speed and scale to protect defenders of the collective rights of peoples and the environment from systematic attacks. The system is being developed and implemented quickly through its four areas of work: political formation; analysis and documentation; rapid response; and mobilisation for political action. Working with regional representatives from Colombia, Togo and the Philippines, we reported 14 cases of human rights violations and responded to emergency cases in Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Indonesia, Togo and Uganda.

At a regional level Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific launched 'Defending Territories, Defending our Lives: Protecting Human Rights and the Environment in Asia Pacific Through System Change'. This reports on seven cases from member groups in the region that illustrate the extreme risks confronting environmental and human rights defenders. The casework was used by member groups in their lobbying efforts in Geneva and across Europe in support of a UN binding treaty on transnational corporations and human rights.

SAFEGUARDS IN BRAZIL

Responding to dangers to rights defenders in Brazil, we supported a capacity-building seminar for local and regional staff, activists and allies from the rural social and feminist movements, trade unions and indigenous organisations. While participants learned about digital security and communications, the seminar also helped develop an action protocol to protect defenders facing violence or threats.

We supported Friends of the Earth Brazil when wildfires ravaged the Amazon rainforest in August. Caused by agribusiness, mining and timber companies, with the complicity of President Jair Bolsonaro, the fires raged for months, affecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Together we worked on proposals from the territories for defending the forest and rejecting false capitalist solutions. Internationalist solidarity included letters, mobilisations and financial resources for the peoples of the Amazon, enabling Friends of the Earth Brazil to work with grassroots communities and allied movements in the territories of Acre and Pará.

Underlining the growing need for such action in Brazil, in November 2019 our member group was threatened with eviction from their Porto Alegre office, a property which also hosts the Magda Renner centre, a library and memorial to the history of Brazil’s nature defenders. The abrupt notice of eviction points to the political nature of this attack in a context where the Bolsonaro regime’s hostility toward environmental and human rights defenders is no secret.

Dercy Telles, former president of the Rural Workers Union from Xapuri in the state of Acre, an area that is being used as a testing ground for ‘green’ capitalism in Brazil.

Ibu Rumsiah from Kalimantan, Indonesia resisting the Indrumayu coal fired power plant.
REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the year across our global federation from Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin American and the Caribbean, and Europe.

AFRICA

Young Friends of the Earth Nigeria held its first School of Sustainability in March 2019 in Port Harcourt. Providing a platform for networking and empowerment, the aim was to train young people in topics relating to environmental protection, extractivism, energy transition and sustainable development. In August representatives from member groups in Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda attended Friends of the Earth Africa’s regional School of Sustainability, in Monrovia. Here the theme was ‘Towards a Change of System: Linking Struggles and Defending the Rights of Peoples.’ Training focused on environmental justice, human rights defenders, and integrated communications tools and processes. The last day of the meeting was devoted to a field visit with members of the Djogbahn clan, a community under pressure from the government to donate its land to Equatorial Oil Palm Company for plantations.

In an example of growing unity in the region, member groups released a joint statement of demands to African governments and the African Union, after a series of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in September. This coordinated action, including Liberia, Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon and Ghana, was a direct result of the Africa regional meeting in June 2019 in Mozambique. Collaboration is being helped by development of the region’s website, which publishes updates on work across the region, and by a quarterly regional e-newsletter highlighting the work of member groups.
The Asia Pacific AGM in Bangladesh in July hosted a capacity-building workshop where participants deepened their understanding of Friends of the Earth International’s concept of food sovereignty. Regional member groups increasingly recognise their national practices as food sovereignty and have decided to prioritise work in this area in 2020 by organising a regional School of Sustainability with a focus on digital campaigning and food sovereignty.

Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific has been growing from strength to strength. This year the region benefited from three part-time staff handling member group issues, projects and communications. A dedicated communications person made a huge difference, reaching out to communicators in each member group and getting them to share content on social media.
The 14 member groups in Latin America and the Caribbean (ATALC) worked together on a huge range of issues in 2019. Central to our efforts is collaboration with social movements through the Jornada Continental por la Democracia y contra el Neoliberalismo. This is a significant grouping including the World March of Women, Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), the Latin American coordination of peasants, rural workers and indigenous peoples organisations (CLOC-LVC), Cuban Chapter of Social Movements, Jubilee South Americas, Alba Movements, Movement of People Affected by Dams in Latin America, Grassroots Global Justice, and ATALC. At the 2019 Anti-imperialist and Solidarity Gathering for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism meeting in November in Havana, groups analysed the regional context and shared positions on environmental justice, patriarchy and gender, the rights of peoples and defenders, and solidarity. This forms part of our work to build the movement and alliances at regional level.

Also in Cuba in November, ATALC held a School of Sustainability in alliance with the Cuban organisations Centro Memorial Martin Luther King Jr (CMMLK) and the Center for the Promotion of Education and Sustainable Development (CEPRODESO). Colleagues from Asia Pacific, Europe, Africa and the International Secretariat also attended. The School looked at movement building, false solutions, just transition and the internationalist solidarity system.

ATALC organised a regional seminar on ‘Transnational Corporations, ISDS Challenges Against States, and the Capture of Democracy’ in the Uruguay parliament in Montevideo in May as part of the work on the Binding Treaty. This was a process of engagement and regional movement-building focusing on corporate capture and ISDS (Investor-State Dispute Settlement) challenges to states by transnational corporations (see EJRN section, page 11).

Above: Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean’s AGM in Punta Gorda, Nueva Palmira, Uruguay.

Far Right: The 2019 Anti-imperialist and Solidarity Gathering for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism meeting in November in Havana, Cuba.

Right: Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean’s 2019 School of Sustainability in Havana, Cuba.
Mobilising around a positive narrative of The Europe We Want, Friends of the Earth Europe ramped up its work in 2019 to influence EU political priorities, including in the parliamentary elections and establishment of the new EU Commission. With broad support from trade unions, environmental NGOs, anti-poverty groups, women’s networks, human rights groups and others, the region developed a shared twelve-point advocacy platform, Manifesto for a Sustainable Europe for its Citizens. Friends of the Earth International and European member groups used this to shape the debate and input into the programmes of political groups ahead of the European elections. All mainstream European political groups were forced to make climate and sustainability pledges, and the incoming Commission announced a European Green Deal.

Far Right: Friends of the Earth Europe joins Friends of the Earth Belgium at the climate strikes in Brussels.

Above Top: Friends of the Earth Europe’s action to protect Kresna gorge in Bulgaria from the threat of an EU-funded motorway from Sofia to Greece.

Above: Friends of the Earth Europe’s annual general meeting in Bulgaria.
Friends of the Earth International has developed policies on violence and sexual harassment, anti-corruption and anti-fraud, a code of conduct and a whistleblower policy. This ‘integrity system’ aims to address violations of both personal and financial integrity, to give guidance on desired behaviour, and to provide staff with a safe way to address injustices. The ExCom planned to adopt this system in 2020.

- Friends of the Earth International has dealt with one violation of personal integrity, which was a case reported and investigated in 2018. The process of sanctions and reparations for this case began in 2019 and is still going on.

- Friends of the Earth International dealt with one violation of financial integrity reported in 2019. The investigations are still underway.

- Friends of the Earth International is developing more robust safety and security policies.

Friends of the Earth International wishes to thank our generous individual supporters and institutional donors:

- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Fair, Green & Global Alliance and Green Livelihoods Alliance)
- Isvara Foundation
- Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
- Bread for the World
- IUCN-NL / Netherlands Postcode Lottery
- Bread for All
- European Union (Europe Aid)
- Cultures of Resistance
- Friends of the Earth Switzerland
- Friends of the Earth Netherlands
- other donors.

Friends of the Earth International’s complete audited financial statements are available at [www.foei.org/about-foei/annual-reports](http://www.foei.org/about-foei/annual-reports)
The new Executive Committee was elected during our Biennial General Meeting at the end of 2018. It consists of:

**Chair:** Karin Nansen, *Latin America and the Caribbean/ Friends of the Earth Uruguay*

**Vice Chair:** Silvia Quiroa, *Latin America and the Caribbean/ Friends of the Earth El Salvador*

**Treasurer:** Nur Hidayati, *Asia Pacific/Friends of the Earth Indonesia*

**Members:** Anabela Lemos, *Africa/ Friends of the Earth Mozambique*
Bertrand Sansonnens, *Europe/Friends of the Earth Switzerland*
Nora Bowier, *Africa/Friends of the Earth Liberia*
Pankaj Kumar Karn until August 2019 & Prakash Mani Sharma *(both Asia Pacific/Friends of the Earth South Nepal)* from September 2019
Victor Barro, *Europe/Friends of the Earth Spain*

**Our programme coordinators:**

**Economic Justice & Resisting Neoliberalism**
Leticia Paranhos Menna de Oliveira
Sam Cossar-Gilbert

**Climate Justice & Energy**
dipti Bhatnagar
Sara Shaw

**Food Sovereignty**
Kirtana Chandrasekaran
Martín Drago

**Forests & Biodiversity**
Isaac Rojas
Nele Marien

**Our membership development team:** Elaine Gilligan (Friends of the Earth Europe); Chloe Aldenhoven (Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific); Danilo Urrea (Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean); Kwami Kpondzo (Friends of the Earth Africa).

**Our regional facilitators:** Danilo Urrea (Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean); Kureeba David (Friends of the Earth Africa); Shenna Sanchez and Jagoda Munic (Friends of the Earth Europe); Theiva Lingam (Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific).