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Cover image of a Sauti ya Dada participant engaging in the Head, Heart, Hands activity in Kampala, Uganda.
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The term climate justice has been salient this year. Climate justice acknowledges that climate change dis-proportionately impacts historically marginalized or under-served communities; this has become ever more clear due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 2021’s climate disasters confirmed that there are specific populations that are more likely to quickly recover from natural disasters given their access to resources. Around the world, grassroots leaders are stepping up to make their voices heard and uplift the perspectives of historically marginalized groups as they fight for inclusion in the proposed solutions and adaptations to climate change. We’re incredibly humbled to be working alongside such leaders fighting at the forefront of sustainability and gender equality.

We have always worked to catalyze community-driven change in gender equality and sustainability, centering on the perspectives of indigenous populations, women, girls, and children. This year partners, both familiar and new, joined in-person and virtually from across Latin America, West Africa, and East Africa.

We did some deep thinking about how we structure our work, where we add value, and how we adjust to the continuously shifting world. This year, we began to take on more mission-aligned collaborations to develop curricula and training to support women in girls in understanding climate change and identifying their role in mitigation and adaptation. Additionally, we incorporated climate justice curriculum in our existing programming to ensure we transfer the skills and knowledge needed to build a climate just world. These efforts confirmed what we’ve always known: those closest to the challenges of gender equality and sustainability are best equipped to identify and implement solutions. Our 2021 Annual Report highlights our incredible partners enacting change in their communities. We hope you are inspired by these leaders who are working hard to build a sustainable and equitable future.

In solidarity,

Clare Dowd, Executive Director

Sauti ya Dada girls celebrate a successful creative advocacy practicum with mentor Pauline and lead artist Florence at Sega Girls Secondary school in Morogoro, Tanzania.
2021 OVERVIEW
Creative Action Institute catalyzes community-driven solutions that advance gender equality and build a sustainable planet. Through our experiential trainings and coaching, opportunities to activate learning through advocacy, and convenings for peer exchange, we develop creative leaders, build networks, and support grassroots advocacy globally.

2021 was a year of expansion. In 2020 we stepped intentionally into the space where gender equality and sustainability intersect: climate justice. Building off the momentum and success of last year, we expanded our programming both in scale and content. We continued to teach problem analysis, creative solution generation, collaboration, innovation, and resilience to our partners and strengthened our focus on developing leaders with a climate-justice lens.

**HOW WE DO IT**

Change needs to be led locally; we build leaders and advocates for gender equality and the planet and strengthen movements through our transformative three-stage approach:

- We build the capacity of grassroots leaders through training and coaching.
- We create opportunities to activate learning through advocacy.
- We offer platforms for peer exchange and sharing best practices to strengthen movements.

*Sauti ya Dada girls from Concern for the Girl Child discuss the medium of portrait with artist Allan in Kampala, Uganda.*

*On the left, a student analyzes a plant during a Sauti ya Dada circle meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.*
2021
BY THE NUMBERS
On the left, a participant from Q'ero Nation, Peru, shares a traditional textile with the group.
LEADERS TRAINED

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

TRAININGS

COACHING CALLS

54
31
14
29
Climate change conversations were center stage this year. We watched world leaders come together at the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, and share ambitious goals about net-zero pledges, yet, there were still voices missing. To move the needle on climate change, perspectives at the margins need to be centered and grassroots leaders need to be uplifted.

We build the capacity of grassroots leaders across Latin America and West Africa to strengthen conservation and biodiversity efforts as well as climate resilience. Participants in our Creative Environmental Leadership Program and Community Resilience Program use our field-tested curriculum and are continuously coached by our team to develop community-centered solutions to the most pressing challenges of our time.

CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

THE CHALLENGE

Environmental leaders on the frontlines of protecting natural resources, habitats, and biocultural diversity recognize that creative approaches are needed to diffuse conflict, open dialogue, build consensus, and catalyze change in behaviors to benefit the biocultural diversity of the planet. However, tools and strategies to infuse efforts with unique and collaborative approaches are often inaccessible. Oftentimes, movements to increase sustainability within a community come from a top-down approach and do not include those who will be most impacted.

From left to right: a participant holds up her craft after a clinic in Brillo Nuevo, Peru, a participant begins weaving using indigenous chambira fiber in Brillo Nuevo, Peru, and a participant shares their analysis of plastic pollution during the Head, Heart, Hands activity in Lower Motowoh, Cameroon.
A DEEPER LOOK: INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE
At COP26, Brazilian Indigenous activist Taily Terena began the Indigenous Peoples Pavilion by saying: "Colonialism caused climate change. Our rights and traditional knowledge are the solution." The global response to climate change must include decolonization. We partner with Indigenous leaders to support the creation of solutions that empower their communities and honor their identity.

For many Indigenous peoples, reverence and respect for the land is tied to conservation. Q’ero Nation is comprised of five remote communities one of the most remote locations in Peru. The Q’ero are thought to be the last direct descendants of the Inca. In Q’ero Nation, over-harvesting, pesticides, and other pollutants threaten the wetlands, which provide water for people and animals, support biodiversity, and are carbon reservoirs. The restoration of wetlands is a strategy to combat climate change.

Marlene Mamani and Anahí Oroz, Indigenous activists with Conservación Amazonica (ACCA), have been working with the community of Japu in Q’ero Nation to protect the wetlands and encourage sustainable management of resources. Marlene and Anahí gained skills through our Creative Environmental Leadership Program that they used to center their community’s Indigenous identity. The Creative Action Institute supported Creative Advocacy Practicum and led by Marlene and Anahí involved 35 women, 11 men, 12 adolescents, and local leaders. Marlene and Anahí used several Creative Action Institute tools to reflect on the deteriorating wetlands, draw connections to their Indigenous culture, and strengthen community identity.

With the Systems Iceberg activity, the participants identified key problems in how people were using the wetlands and create space to reflect on how they could continue to support conservation efforts to preserve the biodiversity of the wetlands.

The leaders applied a tool called the World Cafe. They tied the need for preservation to ancestral practices. The group felt encouraged to talk about the connection between natural resources and their Incan identity by using these tools. Participants then wove a textile to represent their commitment to use the wetlands in the same ways their ancestors had used them. The textile reflected the traditional beliefs about Incan mythology and their culture’s reverence for the natural resources found in Q’ero Nation. The participants reflected on how the resources in Q’ero Nation contribute to their community’s cultural identity and without such reserves, their crafts, native food, and natural medicine would be threatened.

Fostering communal identity strengthens communal responsibility. The participants agreed to support communal agreements on how to use the land. Marlene stated that by tying traditional knowledge to contemporary issues of land degradation, the participants strengthened their sense of community and commitment to sustainability. The participants presented the textile to the community.

The participating women and girls felt empowered by seeing one another in front of the community, a visible reminder that women and girl have a place in conservation work. One participant said that seeing Marlene present made her feel like she could continue her efforts. She said, “If facilitators are women, then I can do this too.”

Those closest to the problem will come up with the most effective solutions. Our approach to advocacy allows for long-term solutions to be created.
A DEEPER LOOK: A MURAL FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE
Collaborative murals can empower a community to take action. These large-scale community art installations are an effective way to promote collaboration and create a collective vision.

We worked virtually with 8 partner organizations from across Ghana and Nicholas Wayo, a Ghanaian artist, to create a large-scale mural portraying the effects of climate change on their rural communities and bring those ideas to the Ghanaian capital of Accra. Through creative collaboration, our partners came together to describe the impacts of climate change and move towards a way forward.

See the creation process of the mural by scanning the code below or by visiting www.youtu.be/fiVMQ9gA8ZE.
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROGRAM

THE CHALLENGE

The impact of climate change is far-reaching; disruptions in regional weather patterns can cause water scarcity, food insecurity, health issues, and increased gender inequality. In the Community Resilience Program, grassroots leaders have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and ability to foster community resilience. We surveyed our grassroots leaders in Latin America and West Africa to better understand what information and skills they needed to address the most pressing issues they face as a result of climate change. This year, with our research complete, we developed and piloted our first course in the Community Resilience Program: the Fundamentals of Food Sovereignty and Food Security.

Dive into our inaugural Community Resilience program:

FUNDAMENTALS OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND FOOD SECURITY

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to access healthy and culturally appropriate food that is ethically and sustainably sourced. The food sovereignty movement starts with farmers, fishers, and indigenous peoples most impacted by hunger, poverty, and climate change.

Food sovereignty is intrinsically linked to climate change; when droughts, floods, and fires occur, native food supplies are disrupted. First framed by the international peasant movement La Via Campesina at the World Food Summit in 1996, food sovereignty is rooted in the ongoing global struggles over control of food, land, water, and livelihoods.
While food systems have always been included in our Sustainable Planet work, this year, it became clear that in the face of the climate crisis, our grassroots leaders needed a course specifically dedicated to food sovereignty and food security.

By identifying current narratives and the socio-historical process behind issues such as gender disparities, malnutrition, the depletion of natural resources, the impact of industrial food production, a culture of overconsumption, and the current climate crisis, participants were able to imagine actions to transform current scenarios and create sustainable and fair food systems and societies.

We listened to and collaborated with our partners and developed an 8-session course for 11 of our partner organizations. The participants joined us virtually from across Latin America (Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Belize, El Salvador, and Nicaragua). The virtual format provided the opportunity for peer exchange and the creation of stronger conservation networks with peers from different cultures.

The participants learned about and shared their experience with the social, historical, and theoretical issues around food systems, shared culturally significant dishes, and discussed the gender dynamics within the food systems. They discussed the native foods to their region and shared their diverse perspectives with one another.

The outcome and impact of the course were clear: by the end of the 8 sessions, there were changes in the participants’ attitudes, knowledge, leadership skills, and relationships. The participants pushed themselves to question their role in food systems and proposed specific actions at both the professional and personal levels to achieve food security and food sovereignty in their regions.

The illustration in the back is an artistic expression called “La tierra que nos alimenta” or “The Land that Feeds Us.” It was submitted by course participant, Marco Acevedo and represents his homeland of Oaxaca, Mexico.
“The training improved my work in rural communities. The pandemic forced us to rethink how we obtain information and share knowledge. Using the techniques I learned has helped me better understand the needs of those around me. To effectively lead, you have to learn to listen and communicate clearly.”

- Marco Acevedo
Climate Resilience Program Participant, Mexico

"Children are the leaders of tomorrow. They need to be empowered today."
“THE WORKSHOP ALLOWED US TO DISCUSS THE SENSITIVE ISSUES SURROUNDING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND CONSERVATION. THE TOOLS ALLOWED US TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS INSTEAD OF JUST FOMENTING BAD FEELINGS.”

- TULIO DAVILA
CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, PERU

“CREATIVE ACTION INSTITUTE’S COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS TOOL CAUGHT MY ATTENTION BECAUSE OF ITS ABILITY TO BRING CHILDREN INTO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION MOVEMENT. CHILDREN ARE THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW. THEY NEED TO BE EMPOWERED TODAY.”

- STEPHANIE EWİ LAMMA
CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, CAMEROON

Participants problem-solve in Q’ero Nation, Peru.

Stephanie Ewi Lamma after her Council of All Beings workshop in Limbe, Cameroon.

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT WWW.YOUTUBE.BE/N55MDQV10U TO HEAR FROM STEPHANIE LAMMA.
GENDER EQUALITY

270 GIRLS SUPPORTED AND DEVELOPED INTO LEADERS
99 MENTORS COACHED
99 TEACHERS TRAINED
Education is a powerful tool to further gender equality, fight poverty, and create resilience during times of societal conflict, including the climate crisis. If current trends continue, however, by 2025 climate change will prevent at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year. With equitable access to education, women and girls can shape the world and create positive changes that ripple throughout their communities.

Educating girls and creating a space for them to practice their resilience skills is essential for their wellbeing. By partnering with schools and organizations across East Africa, we work to educate girls and address long-standing inequalities for a more just and resilient world.

SAUTI YA DADA

THE CHALLENGE

An educated girl has the power to transform her community and shift inequitable practices that prevent her from accessing her human rights. Scheduled school closures like month-long school vacations have always been a point of vulnerability for adolescent girls in East Africa. School closures render girls vulnerable to poverty, sexual violence, teen-pregnancy, and child marriage, making them less likely to finish their schooling. Unexpected and lengthy pandemic-related school closures exacerbated this vulnerability. To adapt to the pandemic and provide support to adolescent girls, we transformed our girls’ leadership curriculum from the East African Girls’ Leadership Summit (EAGLS) into Sauti ya Dada Circles. Our program was a resounding success; with 99% of girls in the SYD program returning to school once they reopened.
In 2021, as we continued coaching our Sauti ya Dada girls in their second year of resilience and leadership programming, it became clear that the girls were ready to step into their role as leaders and practice advocacy through our Creative Advocacy Practicum. Girl leaders, with support from their mentors and local artists, used their leadership skills to advocate for girls’ education. To celebrate their successful completion of the program and give the girls an opportunity to hear from their peers across the region, we brought the 9 cohorts of Sauti ya Dada girls together in a virtual East African Girls Leadership Summit (EAGLS).

The pieces of our gender equality programming came together this year; through a triad of programs - the Sauti ya Dada Circles, Creative Advocacy Practicum (CAP), and East African Girls Leadership Summit (EAGLS) - girl leaders became better equipped to complete their education, advocate for their peers, and bolster climate change resilience along the way.

HERE’S HOW WE DO IT

- Through bi-weekly club meetings that utilize our accredited Sauti ya Dada curriculum, monthly distribution of dignity kits, weekly SMS communication from Aunty Nala, and continuous guidance to the girls’ mentors, the Creative Action Institute team guides each circle of Sauti ya Dada girls to safety despite uncertainty, trains them to lean on their sisters, and coaches them to use their voices in the face of adversity.
- During the Creative Advocacy Practicum (CAP) portion of the curriculum, the girls leverage the problem-solving skills gained from Sauti ya Dada to analyze the root cause of a pressing issue that is a barrier to girls’ education - such as teen pregnancy, environmental pollution, or early marriage - brainstorm solutions, and use storytelling, theater, or visual art as an advocacy tool to explain the issue to key stakeholders within their community.
- EAGLS has always been about building leadership and exploring solutions to common challenges to girls’ education. To celebrate their work and learn from their peers, the 243 girls, 8 mentors, and 6 artists from across the 8 Sauti ya Dada cohorts logged on to the virtual 2022 East African Girls’ Leadership Summit. The summit provided the girls an opportunity to cross-learn, see how similar issues affect girls’ across country lines, and have a chance to further their leadership skills.

Take a closer look at the EAGLS summit by scanning the QR code or by visiting www.youtu.be/F00VURtd98U.

Regional Program Manager Doris Kamathi facilitating a creative advocacy practicum in Kigali, Rwanda in partnership with Club Rafiki Youth Friendly Center.
A DEEPER LOOK: SAUTI YA DADA CIRCLE IN KAMPALA, UGANDA
In Uganda, like many other places, adolescent girls are facing increased mental health concerns because of COVID-19. Uganda had the world's longest school shutdown, with schools remaining closed until January 2022. The lack of a social safety nets and sexual abuse caused a surge in unplanned pregnancies in Uganda, with 25% of teenage girls becoming pregnant by age 19. The trauma of the pandemic, combined with the threat of poverty and teen pregnancy, has increased anxiety and depression among teen girls.

The Sauti ya Dada girls in this cohort advocated for the mental health of their peers. “Over time, we have seen the effects of the pandemic increase and impact each girl differently. Therefore, we explored this topic for our project,” said Gloria, a 17-year-old Sauti ya Dada participant.

Because mental health is so personal, Sauti ya Dada participants from Concern for the Girl Child teamed up with artist Allan Kyanonye and mentor Rose Namubiru to create mixed-media self-portraits that explored the relationship between COVID-19, teen pregnancy, and mental health.

Throughout the creative advocacy practicum, the girls used creative collaboration tools to analyze the impact of the pandemic on girls in their community, discussed the limited mental health services available, and used art to spark dialogue about solutions. Many girls said the creation of self-portraits helped them to see themselves from a different perspective and take ownership of their identity and feelings.

“I discovered I can express myself as dance, drama, and portrait, and use art to express my emotions. The project helped to uplift my confidence and own my difficult feelings,” said Riane.

Josephine, an art-lover and a thoughtful participant of her Sauti ya Dada circle, shared how creating art in a group setting made her feel seen. “To be able to share my work with others and have the girls appreciate my portrait made me feel happy and understood.”

The practicum culminated in an exhibition of the girls’ self-portraits to community members. Parents, school administrators, and community leaders walked through the gallery that the girls created, engaged with the portraits, asked questions, and listened to the girls explain their identities.

Empowered by the support from their mentor, lead artist, and their peers in the club, the Sauti ya Dada girls asked the community for support in accessing mental health services. Parents and teachers committed to provide more resources and encouraged their daughters to continue sharing their struggles and experiences with mental health.

Watch a full recap of the project by scanning the code or by visiting www.youtu.be/aiPh7n_tkjg.
“IT SHOULD BE EVERYBODY’S RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CARE OF A GIRL CHILD AND STOP TEEN PREGNANCY.”

"WE SPOKE WITH OTHER GIRLS OUR AGE AND REALIZED THAT MANY DO NOT HAVE STRONG MENTORSHIP. IT SHOULD BE EVERYBODY’S RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CARE OF A GIRL CHILD AND STOP TEEN PREGNANCY."

- KAREN
SAUTI YA DADA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, KENYA

Sauti ya Dada participant, Lala, showing off her name tag in Kampala, Uganda.
"MANY GIRLS IN MY COMMUNITY DO NOT GO TO SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THE TABOOS SURROUNDING MENSTRUAL HEALTH. 80% OF GIRLS IN MY COMMUNITY DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SANITARY TOWELS. MY PEERS AND I IN THE SAUTI YA DADA CLUB WANT TO SPREAD AWARENESS OF THIS ISSUE TO OUR COMMUNITY."

- SHARLINE
SAUTI YA DADA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, KENYA

"WITH ART WE EXPRESSED TO THE VILLAGERS THAT EDUCATING GIRLS IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT IN PREVENTING EARLY PREGNANCIES. TOGETHER, WE DANCED, ATE, DRANK, AND SHARED OUR VIEWS ON GIRLS’ EDUCATION. THIS PROJECT HAS INSPIRED ME TO CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO PRIORITIZE THEIR DAUGHTERS’ EDUCATION. EDUCATING A GIRL IS LIKE EDUCATING THE WHOLE NATION."

- FATIMA
SAUTI YA DADA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, TANZANIA

"EDUCATING A GIRL IS LIKE EDUCATING A WHOLE NATION."

WWW.CREATIVEACTIONINSTITUTE.ORG 25
We’re innovators, and this year, we were recognized for our unique approach to capacity building.

On the left, program participants create props for their skit to educate community members on environmental pollution in Lower Motowoh, Cameroon. On the right, a Sauti ya Dada girl brainstorms solutions to prevent teen pregnancy.
MISSION-ALIGNED

Creative Action Institute is hired by mission-aligned organizations to develop curriculum content, design programming, and facilitate trainings that leverage our unique methodologies.

In 2021, we began to take on more mission-aligned contract work. Our collaboration with valued organizations have validated our comprehensive and inclusive gender equality and sustainability education materials. These projects have allowed us to dig deeper and use our expertise to develop innovative climate justice training materials. Highlights of this year's contract work include the development of a middle school climate-justice curriculum, the development of a Feminist Participatory Action Research Toolkit to support girl-led research on climate change in East Africa, and the adaptation of FAWE's Gender Responsive Pedagogy Toolkit to a dynamic online training.
2021 FINANCIALS

$782k TOTAL INCOME

$572k TOTAL EXPENSE

INCOME SOURCES

- Foundations 17% $130,800
- Individual 14% $112,438
- Corporate 14% $113,210
- SBA Loan 6% $43,932
- Earned Revenue 2% $14,874
- Direct Payment 42% $327,947
- Government 4% $20,654
- Corporate In Kind 3% $20,100
- Events 2% $20,054

EXPENSE ALLOCATION

- Program: Sustainable Development 39% $219,550
- Program: Gender Equality 43% $248,071
- Administration 12% $70,557
- Fundraising 6% $33,932
- Corporate 3% $20,100
- Events 2% $20,054
- Foundations 17% $130,800
- Individual 14% $112,438
- Corporate 14% $113,210
- SBA Loan 6% $43,932
- Earned Revenue 2% $14,874
- Direct Payment 42% $327,947
- Government 4% $20,654

Program and M&E Coordinator Mukonyo Muendo leads a trust-building exercise with the Sauti ya Dada girls from Rafiki Wa Mwendeleo Trust in Rarieda Constituency, Kenya.
This community shares our passion for gender equality, sustainability, and building a climate-just world. Your generous support makes our work possible!

THANK YOU

SUPPORTERS

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Aida and Luca Celebic
Aimee Hall
Alyssa and Will Wright
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Ann Sandford
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New England BioLabs Foundation
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PaperSeed Foundation
Social(K)
South Mountain Company
State Street Foundation
The Davis Financial Group LLC
The HOW Fund
Towards Sustainability Foundation
Windover Construction
Zevin Asset Management LLC
2021 PROGRAM PARTNERS
Girls from Club Rafiki Youth Friendly Center gather in Kigali, Rwanda to begin their creative advocacy practicum.
2021 BOARD AND STAFF
Doris leads an activity to help open up the Sauti ya Dada girls’ perspectives and assist in solution generating as they think about teen pregnancy in Kayanza District, Rwanda.

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MAKE A GIFT.
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
YOUR GIFT MAKES YOU A VITAL PART OF A HARDWORKING TEAM KNOCKING DOWN SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION.

Your support will help gender and environmental activists access life-changing resources and innovative tools that provide creative and sustainable solutions to issues like deforestation, pollution, threat to biodiversity, gender-based violence, teen pregnancy, and child marriage.

Below are some examples of what a few different gifts can provide.

• Your gift of $25 helps cover the cost of sanitary napkins for two girls in rural areas for three months, or give $50 to cover six months. This essential gift helps to keep girls in school and reach their potential.

• Your gift of $350 to $500 helps cover the production costs of our girl-led podcast, Sauti ya Dada. Sauti ya Dada creates and strengthens systems of support, learning, and leadership to help marginalized girls in East Africa complete their secondary school education.

• Your gift of $1000 allows four Indigenous environmental leaders to attend climate justice workshops with Creative Action Institute. Leaders develop action plans for positive change in their communities.

Thank you for supporting Creative Action Institute and our work to elevate girls and strengthen the advocacy capacity of environmental leaders.

MAKE A GIFT AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY AT CREATIVEACTIONINSTITUTE.ORG.
THANK YOU!

CREATIVE ACTION INSTITUTE
240 COUNTY ROAD
IPSWICH, MA 01938

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