



WOMEN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AGRICULTURAL EXTRACTIVISM: Voices of Women Land Defenders in Central America

Executive summary and urgent recommendations to key stakeholders¹



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1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extractivism in Central America tells us a story about how capitalism hides behind the veneer of sustainable energy and food alternatives, of transnational companies, investors, national elites, and corrupt governments. At the same time, it speaks to us about the living memory of the struggles for the defense of the commons and local communities' permanence in the territory, as they confront inequality, the impact of armed conflicts, organized crime, and agrarian counter-reforms. The stories we want to honor now are those that have been forcefully carved by women, who have transformed multiple injustices and sowed hope amid *green deserts*.

How do monocultures affect ecosystems, communities, and specifically women?

What are women defenders and their communities doing to stop the destruction of their territory?

Why is it imperative that we talk about this and do something about it?

These are some of the key questions that guided the collaborative report *Women within the Context of Agricultural Extractivism: Voices of Women Land Defenders in Central America*, which was executed by various Central American partner organizations of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action, GAGGA.² The report's objective is to make visible the gendered impacts of agricultural extractivism faced by women and to support actions against its expansion in Central America.

In this executive summary, you will find a review of the investigation's methodology and content, a brief characterization of agricultural extractivism in Central America, a synthesis of the main findings from the cases studied, and proposals and actions by the affected women. Finally, you will learn about our recommendations to States, companies, donors, international financial institutions, and multilateral financing organizations with the goal of guaranteeing human rights in these contexts and promoting the struggles of women and their communities for the safekeeping of life and the territories.

² The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) mobilizes the collective power of movements for women's rights and environmental justice around the world. Our vision is a world in which women's rights to water, food security and a clean, healthy and safe environment are recognized and respected. For more information visit our website GAGGA – Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (gaggaalliance.org).

2. CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION

This report is qualitative in nature and uses a collective construction approach, and it focuses on oil palm, sugarcane, cantaloupe, watermelon, and banana plantations in Honduras and Guatemala. In Chapter 1, we offer a brief characterization of monocultures in Central America, highlighting their relationship with land concentration and land grabbing, the collusion between public and private actors to make the consolidation of this model viable, and the main socio-environmental impacts of this type of extractivism. In the following chapters, we will delve into the model's gendered impacts and the struggles of women and their communities in the communities of Santo Domingo Suchitepéquez, Guatemala, and Marcovia and Bajo Aguán in Honduras.

This idea to commission this report sprouted from conversation that took place between 2016 and 2018 among the organizations that make up GAGGA and the grassroots organizations with whom the Alliance works. In these discussions, we identified the need to provide information on the gendered impacts of agricultural extractivism as recounted by the voices of rural, peasant, indigenous, and Afro-descendant women while applying a feminist approach and a regional focus.

In addition to the perspectives of the grassroots organizations and members of GAGGA, the analysis of the cases tackled in this report is informed by the important contributions of Astrid Ulloa, Silvia Federici, and the thinking of the Colectivo Feminista Miradas Críticas al Territorio. The report's methodology is based on the review of bibliographic information—including the reports made by the local organizations that work with GAGGA—interviews and focus groups in which we listened to various key actors, and

conversations with local organizations that work with GAGGA. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted forty interviews with women defenders, adult women, women community leaders, adult men, and workers or former workers of monoculture plantations; three focus groups with young women and two focus groups with young men, who collectively provided a comprehensive view of the dynamics of the territory and the gendered impacts of agricultural extractivism. In order to be responsible and caring while co-constructing, this investigation's findings were shared with participant local organizations, who validated the report and enriched it with their input.

3. AGRICULTURAL EXTRACTIVISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Land concentration and dependence on the international market

Central America is an important producer and exporter of non-traditional crops, whose purpose is to satisfy the international market, especially Europe and the United States. Two fundamental and inherent aspects of the agricultural extractivism model are the producer countries' dependence on the fluctuations of the international market and the accelerated increase in the concentration of land and wealth, which is a consequence of the pressure exerted on the land owned by small farmers.

Land concentration affects women in particular due to historical inequities and discrimination; for example, agrarian reforms and land titling processes have routinely excluded them. In Central America, gender gaps in relation to land access have continued to widen. Indeed, "women own barely 12% of agricultural production in Honduras, 15% in Guatemala, 13% in El Salvador, and 23% in Nicaragua; [percentages] that are significantly smaller than those controlled by

men.”³ Both in Honduras and in Guatemala, agrarian policies lack a gender approach, which would make it possible to curb inequalities. In addition, the situation is exacerbated by the violence and exclusion women face in the family and community spheres.

Alliances between political, financial, and military powers

The agricultural extractivist model is sustained and promoted by the alliances between political, financial, and military powers⁴ and, in many territories, organized crime. In addition to the harm they have caused by omission—for example, by neglecting to guarantee the rights of the population—States have encouraged and played an active role in the consolidation of this model, despite having plenty of evidence of its unsustainability.

Companies and investors act in collusion with political elites and state officials to seize the land for their activities, whether through legal means or fraudulently. Political actors manipulate laws and regulations to favor extractive activities, or they offer concessions and benefits as part of the allocation of public spending and the provision of public security to protect the private sector’s interests and infrastructure. Likewise, these actors routinely exert violence against the local population by deploying police and military forces to quell social protests, carry out violent evictions, commit sexual violence, and criminalize human rights defenders, among other tactics. In exchange, companies and investors provide economic benefits, finance political campaigns, and ensure territorial control through the use of violence and intimidation. To cap it all off, **international financial institutions** fund projects that clearly violate human rights and destroy ecosystems.

The socio-environmental impacts of monocultures

By their very nature, monocultures have a high water demand and routinely pollute water sources, leading to their extinction. Likewise, they are responsible for the deterioration of the soil and air due to the use of pesticides and the depletion of biodiversity, including agrobiodiversity, due to deforestation and the introduction of transgenics. This leads to the loss of indigenous food crops, which is why they are called “**green deserts**” that threaten the food sovereignty of the peoples.⁵

Moreover, this model is based on the systematic violation of the rights of plantation workers. Many workers report conditions that have all the hallmarks of modern enslavement. After years of working in the plantations, workers have no guarantees in matters of occupational and health hazards—in fact, many suffer from chronic kidney failure and other serious illnesses. Women workers, for their part, commonly experience harassment and sexual violence.

³ Central American Network of Rural Indigenous and Peasant Women (RECMURIC), 2015. “Land for Us: Political Proposals by Central American Rural Women to Access and. Available at: <https://landportal.org/es/library/resources/tierra-para-nosotras-propuestas-pol%C3%ADticas-de-las-mujeres-rurales-centroamericanas>

⁴ Camacho, K. 2018. *Commodification of the Territory and Reconfiguration of Violence against Women: The Case of Women Leaders in Environmental Movements against Pineapple Monocultures in Costa Rica*.

⁵ Carvajal, L./ Urgent Action Fund for Latin America FAU-AL, 2016. *Extractivism in Latin America: Impact on the lives of women and proposals for the defense of the territory*. Available at: <https://cpalsocial.org/documentos/355.pdf> (03/01/2020).

4. CASE STUDIES: MAIN FINDINGS

At the root of extractivism racism and patriarchy are intertwined. These systems of oppression operate to exert control over the commons and (racialized and feminized) women's bodies. The women who participated in this research confirmed that gender-based mandates and hierarchies shape and sustain agricultural extractivism. This is manifested in the intensification of all forms of violence against them. Below, we present a synthesis of the key findings from the three case studies.

Increase in women's working hours

Extractivism, in all its forms, has benefited from the care work carried out by (mostly) women, which continues to be exploited while going unacknowledged. In both Honduras and Guatemala, the impacts on the environment and on workers' health has led to an increase in the care workload for women, who, in addition to the tasks they traditionally perform, now must:

- Take care of the care of people who become ill due to the pesticides used in the plantations.
- Travel greater distances and spend more time looking for water sources since the ones nearby have been polluted by plantations.
- Find additional sources of income to meet their family's emergent economic needs, since their partners, who have become ill, are left to fend for themselves by the companies, even when their illness is the result of coming into contact with agrochemicals.
- Spend more time cleaning because of the soot and dust that results from sugarcane crop burning.
- Adolescent women and even girls and elderly women must take care of their siblings or

grandchildren because adult women are working in the plantations. This commonly forces young women to quit school, and it makes it impossible for elderly women to rest and take care of their health.

Many women work from sunup to sunup, that is, without breaks, hardly any sleep, or leisure time. Companies systematically violate the rights of plantation workers; however, because women have been dispossessed of their lands and other means of livelihood, they do not have other opportunities and must continue to work there; this is especially true of autonomous mothers. In addition, they also perform emotional work, as they are expected to maintain the wellbeing of and harmony within their entire family.

Dispossession of land and livelihoods

*"One of their strategies is to sink the peasants so they cannot sow"*⁶.

The establishment and expansion of monocultures has been carried out by seizing public lands or dispossessing indigenous and peasant communities as well as small farmers from their lands and depriving them of access to the commons. The situation has been compounded by the historical exclusion of women from land ownership, which has been perpetuated by the governments of Honduras and Guatemala. In the cases studied, which are illustrative of what is happening in the region, this dispossession has occurred through:

- The **harassment of peasants and producers** who are still active, violently pressuring them to sell or lease their land for monocultures. Women and their families often have had to sign agreements or contracts that suit companies, which has often resulted in them being tricked into losing autonomy over the use of their land. Businessmen take advantage of women's and their family's vulnerabilities, including their lack of resources, to rent their

⁶ Interview B2

land at a very low cost. Long term, this ends up weakening the soil and making it infertile, which makes it impossible for them to plant their crops again.

- **Weakening and/or destroying traditional fishing, family orchards, and subsistence crops** by polluting the soil and water sources via crop dusting, for example, in addition to the the proliferation of pests that these crops usually attract.

The ensuing loss of livelihoods affects the communities' food sovereignty, making them even more dependent on the market and on work in the plantations to obtain a minimum income to survive. It also affects the economic autonomy of women and makes them even more vulnerable since it makes it impossible for them to derive their own income.

Finally, women reported the **loss of spaces for socializing**: "We often talk about how much we miss all of that [...]. Before we used to work up there, but now we don't, so this has been a difficult situation for us."⁷ This has undermined the community's social fabric, spaces for recreation, and the construction solidarity.

Aggravation of all forms of violence against women, in particular women defenders and leaders

"Violence against women destroys the community's capacity to resist."⁸

In the three cases studied, violence against women who work on the plantations has continued to intensify within the family, community, organizational, and labor spheres. Violence is perpetrated by state actors (police, military, public officials), private actors (private security forces, businessmen, farmers, hit men), and by their peers and the leaders of the cooperatives, organizations, and social movements. The main types of violence in the territories are:

- **Sexual violence:** There have been multiple cases of harassment, assault, threats of rape, and rape perpetrated by plantation guards, heads of packing plants, and leaders of cooperatives and social organizations.
- **Economic and property-related violence:** This has been described above as multiple forms of dispossession, exploitation, and hoarding of women's assets and livelihoods. This type of violence has also been systematically exercised by States, by excluding women from access to land ownership and perpetuating inequalities in this regard.
- **Physical violence:** Women are targets both in the domestic and family spheres. This type of violence is usually exerted by sentimental partners and by police officers and soldiers, who are deployed to quell protests and stop land reclamations, which are promoted by the peasant movements. This violence is also evident when peasant communities resist against violent evictions that seek to remove them from the public lands that have been appropriated by monoculture entrepreneurs.

⁷ Interview A1

⁸ Silvia Federici, 2016. *Reflections on Extractivism and Women*.

- **Labor exploitation:** In addition to sexual violence on the plantations, women suffer the systematic violation of their labor rights, working much longer hours than what is legally established. On many occasions they are forced to stay later than their shift is supposed to last, without receiving additional remuneration for it. They do not have guarantees or social security to support them when they get sick due to the working conditions. The flipside of that is women being barred from working at the plantations, as it happened in Marcovia, where businessmen excluded them due to the violence exerted against them. This constitutes another form of discrimination and does not solve the root cause of the problem.
- **Psychological and symbolic violence:** Women in general, and specifically plantation workers and community leaders and defenders, face constant stigmatization and judgment from their families and communities. They are perceived as “bad women” who “like to lead wicked lives” or “go around making trouble” because they challenge established gender roles. This stigmatization is often the basis to justify other types of violence against them.
- **Political violence and exclusion:** In all three cases, women affirm they have been excluded from decision-making spaces. Indeed, they face multiple barriers that hinder accessibility and preclude them from expressing themselves, whether by proffering an opinion or casting a vote. The lack of equitable distribution of care burdens, for example, leaves women no time to attend these spaces. In addition, cooperatives (long sanctioned by state institutions) have explicitly excluded women from participating. Even when they manage to insert themselves in these spaces and hold leadership positions, their contributions and voices are subordinated to those of their males peers. At the same time, they state their participation is often instrumentalized to attract financing for economic ventures. In several cases, it is their husbands, not them, who decide whether or not they will get involved in an organization.
- **Violence against land defenders:** Women human rights and land defenders are the constant targets of attempts against their lives and their integrity, for example, stigmatization and criminalization, persecution, threats and harassment, sexual violence as a way to silence them and neutralize their work, and exile from their organizations when they question patriarchal and fraudulent practices. Leaders such as **Iris Argentina Álvarez** (2020), in Marcovia, and **Diana Isabel Hernández** (2019), in Santo Domingo Suchitepéquez, were assassinated to put a stop to their activism. These crimes remain in impunity, with the aggravating factor that there are no effective protective measures for defenders; indeed, there is a systematic failure to comply with the precautionary measures granted by the IACHR to defenders at risk.

Impacts on the physical, mental and emotional health of women, including women defenders and workers

The situations narrated above have resulted in **high levels of burnout and emotional and physical exhaustion** in women, which translates into widespread ailments in the communities. As one of the interviewees said, These are diseases that we get as women. [...]. We're losing women to **cancer, kidney failure, arthritis, and [other] diseases**, which we see in most households."⁹ These diseases are a consequence of the use of agrochemicals and, in cases such as Marcovia, the excessive use of energy drinks, which women turn to so they can work through multiple shifts. Women leaders, for their part, often suffer from **anxiety, depression, anguish, and fear of re-victimization** that targets them or their children. Many of them have experienced sexual violence, violent evictions, and military occupation.

Migration, forced displacement, and the “emptying” of the territory

“The problem isn't really migration; it's poverty and the corruption that trickles down from government that is expelling [people from their homes]. We're worried because we believe this is deliberate, and the goal is to empty the territories.”¹⁰

In recent years, the migration from Guatemala and Hondurans to other countries has been increased.¹¹ Among the most relevant causes we find social inequality, corruption, and the country's failure in governance. Interviewees state that the ever-increasing rate of emigration is a consequence of the lack of decent job opportunities, precarious living conditions, and insecurity in their territories, which are largely caused by agricultural extractivism. As the quote at the beginning of this section highlights,

women are concerned because they know this is a strategy to “empty” their territories, that is, to clear the way for the expansion of monocultures.

The massive exodus of young people is leaving a great void whose effects go beyond the economy. Generational renewal in peasant organizations and movements has been severely affected. Likewise, the migration of mothers and fathers configures a series of **global care chains**, in which the care of the children of migrant mothers falls on older adult women.

5. THE RESISTANCE OF WOMEN AND THEIR PROPOSALS

“We demand to be respected. We demand equality and the recognition of organized women within and outside of the settlements.

Some of the settlements don't want to acknowledge the organizing work carried out by our compañeras, even if it's as part of the very same organizations. We also want to transform the kind of labor we do [...]. We fight as hard as we do because we want a plot of land where we can produce.”¹²

Women fight for dignity, for the territory, and the sustainability of life in all its forms; ; therefore, their actions do not seek “only women's wellbeing but rather the wellbeing of their families and communities.”¹³ They struggle every single day within their communities, community organizations, and women's organizations, while challenging all systems of oppression. Below, we summarize the main actions and proposals of the women of Santo Domingo Suchitepéquez, Marcovia and Bajo Aguán.

⁹ Entrevista B2

¹⁰ Interview C7

¹¹ [Datos migratorios en Centroamérica | Portal de Datos sobre Migración \(migrationdataportal.org\)](https://datos.migratorios.en.centroamerica.org/)

¹² Entrevista C6

¹³ Entrevista A1

Women's struggle to take back their lands

Since it enables them to have a greater degree of autonomy, women have fought for the right to own and make decisions about their lands. For example, the women of Santo Domingo Suchitepéquez have worked to be taken into account in negotiations with the government and for the men of the communities to respect women in these spaces. Despite institutional disinterest in recognizing them as owners or co-owners, many women have succeeded and continue to fight so that all women may own land, have the autonomy to decide how it is used, and participate in institutional spaces.

In addition to the struggle before the State to access land, women have participated in struggle to take their lands back from the beginning. The women of Bajo Aguán, together with the peasant movements, have promoted actions to reclaim oil palm plantations. Indeed, some peasant groups have resumed harvesting grains and other subsistence crops in the reclaimed lands: "We're currently harvesting [...] corn, beans, cassava, and plantains. [...] When we recovered our lands, there was only oil palm, but now we're producing a wide variety of foods, [...] and it's feeding us."¹⁴ These actions allow communities not only to strengthen their autonomy and food security but also to gradually heal the soil and water sources, which have been deeply affected by years of accumulation of pesticides.

Agroecology, ancestral knowledge, and caring for nature

Women also strengthen food sovereignty through **agroecology**, which is also a comprehensive strategy for the defense, preservation, and protection of the territory and nature. Agroecological practices reduce dependence on the logic and fluctuations of the market, ensure better nutrition at a lower cost, allow the conservation and improvement of the

soil, and make possible the recovery of cultural practices and ancestral knowledge.

Faced with monocultures' impact on fishing, tourism, and mangrove ecosystems, the women of Marcovia have developed awareness campaigns for the protection and care of the environment. For example, in early 2020, they held a forum to propose the disuse of disposable containers, which harm water sources and local fauna, and implement an institutional project to collect and care for Pacific ridley sea turtle eggs.

Economic autonomy

In response to the lack of job opportunities, women have pushed for training processes to learn technical and administrative skills that will make it easier to manage family orchards, bakeries, and cafeterias, among other entrepreneurial ventures. Along those lines, they have worked to establish community savings and credit banks, which strengthen the sustainability of their ventures and their families. Additionally, they have worked for the construction and strengthening of consumer stores as a strategy to encourage community solidarity and support household's sustenance.

Advocacy, training, and political participation

Women defenders have promoted **meetings, alliances, and synergies** with their counterparts from other territories to strengthen the struggle for the defense of the land and the rights of peoples and women at the national and regional levels. They have also highlighted educational experiences, such as the **School for Citizenship and Political Training**¹⁵ in Bajo Aguán, that have strengthened the peasant movements and transformed patriarchal practices.

In Marcovia, women are committed to strengthening of their political leadership, with the goal of, among other things, assuming public office at the local and municipal level.

¹⁴ Entrevista C8

¹⁵ The School is led by the Reflection, Research, and Communication Team (ERIC).

To that end, compañeras participate in training processes that prepare them to effectively synergize with grassroots organizations and stick to their mandate to prioritize their demands concerning women's rights.

For their part, the women of Santo Domingo have led political actions to denounce the impacts of monocultures; they have built alliances at the territorial level and presented their demands against environmental degradation and its impacts on health to the private sector, especially sugarcane and oil palm companies. In addition to these dialogues, they have built an advocacy agenda that targets the State, which pushes for effective responses to environmental problems and human rights violations. Lastly, they continue to demand that the government approve Initiative 5452, the Economic Development Law for Women, or DEM LAW.

6. URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL INVOLVED ACTORS

Taking into account the seriousness of the problems faced by women, the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action puts forth the following recommendations, which are addressed to the States of the Central American region, the companies and investors that promote monocultures, the philanthropic and donor community, international financial institutions, and bilateral and multilateral financing organizations that fund projects related to the environment, climate change, and women's rights in Central America.

6.1 Recommendations for the States

As regards the affected communities and territories

- Refrain from promoting the expansion of the extractive frontier until monoculture

companies provide guarantees that safeguard human rights, until crimes against the environment and the population are investigated and penalized, and until those affected receive reparations. This means no incentives, decrees, or other legislative measures that benefit agribusiness.

- Suspend alliances with organized crime; immediately demilitarize the territories; and support the development of effective, non-violent measures to protect the population affected by industrial monocultures by eradicating inequality in terms of land access and use.
- Refrain from getting involved in new projects and suspend current projects or other bilateral or multilateral financing mechanisms that finance or promote agro-industrial monocultures that violate human rights and fail to comply with international standards in terms of environmental protection.
- Recognize their responsibility, by action or omission and in collusion with private actors, in the dispossession and violence perpetrated against the peasant, indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Garifuna population; establish reparation measures, which must include the restoration of lands to those who have been stripped of them in the past, ensuring that women have equal access to land ownership.
- Guarantee fundamental rights, such as the right to land, water, sanitation, a healthy environment, food, education, and healthcare, for the communities affected by monocultures, taking into account the specific needs and challenges faced by women, girls, trans, and non-binary people. This would foster the right conditions for the communities to stay in the territories.
- Design detailed policies to guarantee the right to education—including sexual education—

and healthcare as well as the sexual and (non-)reproductive rights of women, girls, adolescents, trans, intersex and non-binary people. In addition, develop detailed policies to allow elderly women to enjoy their old age with dignity, taking into account the alarming numbers of teenage pregnancies and the care burdens that fall on women, girls, adolescents, and elderly women in these territories.

- Build and strengthen public policies that protect environmental assets. These policies must respect and integrate the development models, worldviews, and ways of life of the communities, and they should adopt a gender and intersectional approach. They likewise must guarantee equity and historical reparations for women, who have been denied the right to own land and the autonomy to make decisions about its use. To that end, these policies must promote spaces for dialogue and co-construction by leaders, defenders, organizations, and the communities directly affected by monocultures, while ensuring the effective participation of women.
- Guarantee the equal participation of women in spaces for dialogue with peasant organizations and movements; establish ancillary mechanisms and dialogue spaces to address the specific demands of women workers, leaders, and human rights defenders that live in areas affected by monocultures.
- Design environmental policies to implement energy transition by executing real solutions to the environmental and climate crisis in the region and the world; exclude false solutions such as monocultures.

As regards companies and investors in agro-industrial monocultures

- Create, implement, and/or update laws and control mechanisms and urgent measures so that companies immediately cease aerial fumigation, crop burning, and pollution of

water sources and soils since this violates the rights of the population and generates irreversible environmental damage.

- Investigate, penalize, and sentence companies that commit environmental crimes and human rights violations; force them to make timely and comprehensive reparations to communities and ecosystems.
- Ratify the International Labor Organization's Convention 190 on violence and harassment at the workplace; create effective mechanisms to monitor monoculture companies' compliance with labor rights and investigate and sanction those who engage in exploitation, harassment, and endangerment of workers' health and/or life.
- Require companies to create and monitor inclusive and non-discriminatory policies and mechanisms to guarantee the rights of women, trans, intersex, and non-binary people in order to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against them, inside and outside of their facilities.

As regards women defenders, community leaders, and their organizations

- Put a stop to all violations of the rights of defenders, especially women, trans, intersex, and non-binary people at the hands of state agents, including police officers, soldiers, and public officials, which would end criminalization, stigmatization, physical, psychological, and sexual violence immediately.
- Guarantee access to justice and put an end to impunity for crimes against defenders, ensuring prompt, transparent, and timely investigations as well as guarantees of non-repetition.
- In order to guarantee the above recommendations, it is essential to implement urgent measures to eliminate institutional

racism and eradicate the misogynist and racist prejudices and stereotypes that influence justice and other state officials.

- Strengthen protection mechanisms for defenders in all Central American countries, and create them where they do not exist, as in the case of Guatemala,¹⁶ ensuring that these are effective and comprehensive, that they have a gender and intersectional approach, and that they do not re-victimize or endanger women. It is essential to strengthen institutional articulation so these mechanisms are more effective. To that end, it is also of vital importance that all the countries in the region ratify the Escazú Agreement.
- Strengthen community initiatives and guarantee financing for their economic ventures, supporting particularly those led by women and respecting organizations' autonomy.
- Finance and strengthen by means of other tools community agroecological projects, family gardens, and other initiatives led by women that contribute to food sovereignty and the improvement of the communities' living conditions.
- Strengthen mechanisms, laws, institutions, and protocols with sufficient equipment, training programs, awareness raising, and tools to guide and address cases of violence against women and LGBTQI+ people in communities affected by monocultures, ensuring access to justice, psychosocial counseling, and financial support.

6.2 For monoculture companies and their investors

- Acknowledge and immediately suspend all human rights violations and the dispossession that have been carried out against the

communities. This includes is not limited to direct attacks on communities; it includes crop dusting, agricultural burning, and polluting and hoarding water sources and lands.

- Comply quickly and transparently with all the measures imposed by international mechanisms and by national authorities to repair the environmental, economic, and psychosocial damage caused to the communities, in their own terms; to that end, they must facilitate listening and dialogue mechanisms without exercising any kind of retaliation. This includes the restoration of all public, collective, and small farmers' lands that were obtained through fraudulent or violent means.
- Respond socially and legally for these damages and for the crimes against human rights defenders who have stepped up to protect women's and communities' rights.
- If they remain in the territory or continue to finance projects, they must ensure compliance with international standards on environmental law, the rights of peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants.¹⁷
- Ensure respect for the labor rights of all the people who work on their plantations, abiding by international standards on this issue. They must provide comprehensive reparations and compensation for any damage to their physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Guarantee respect for private, collective, and communal property rights. This means respecting the right to free, prior, and informed consultation and reviewing land rental mechanisms so they abide by those rights. In this manner, communities and land owners will never lose autonomy over the use of their land.

¹⁶ GUATEMALA: "Six Years of Inaction to support the Protection of Human Rights Defenders" (fidh.org)

¹⁷ Monoculture companies and their investors must take into account agreed principles and criteria for sustainable production and the sourcing of agricultural commodities adopted by global certification schemes such as RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil), BonSucro, and International Corporate Social Responsibility.

- Urgently create and implement effective mechanisms to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women, trans, intersex, and non-binary people, both in their facilities and in community spaces where their workers (including managers and security guards) are present. They must guarantee that women have dignified working conditions and safe spaces in their facilities, which implies the creation of strict protocols to stop all forms of violence, including sexual violence, exercised within the workplace. These protocols must be designed from their point of view and address their needs.
- Acknowledge and respect community, social, and women's organizations, as well as women defenders and leaders, as key actors that watch over the rights and well-being of the communities

6.3 For the philanthropic community and donors

- Increase the quantity and quality of support available to women's, trans, intersex, and non-binary organizations as well as feminist, community, peasant, Afro-descendant, Garifuna, and indigenous organizations that resist agricultural extractivism in Central America. Support must be flexible and long-term, and it must contribute to the sustainability of their actions and organizational structures. This support can be used for advocacy, communications campaigns, support for agroecological and reforestation alternatives, sustainable economic ventures led by women, training processes, strengthening alliances, and exchanges between organizations.
- Increase and promote flexible, comprehensive, and long-term funding to implement protection, security, and care strategies and practices for women defenders, leaders, and their organizations, which will contribute to their comprehensive strengthening. These

resources will also allow them to bolster their security in the territories and ameliorate the emotional and physical effects of the attacks they endure as part of their work and the structural violence they face. Financial support can be complemented by making technical resources available to organizations, including supporting them in conducting risk assessments, designing protocols and protection strategies, and carrying out individual and collective protective actions for women defenders at risk, etc.

- Strengthen mechanisms and offer support that take into account the structures, dynamics, and limitations of the organizations in the territories, ensuring that women's participation is not instrumentalized, that resources and opportunities actually reach them, and that the projects developed do not increase endanger women leaders and the organizations.
- Continue and strengthen their support for regional and international environmental and feminist organizations, funds, and alliances that directly support and accompany grassroots organizations.
- Review, update, and comply with their financing and safeguard policies and principles to ensure they do not receive resources from companies and investors that profit from extractivism, and that in turn their donations are not granted to organizations that in any way promote monocultures. These policies must include an intersectional gender, feminist, and intersectional approach that integrates environmental justice and allocates resources to grassroots organizations and not just large or medium ones.
- Promote and articulate public denunciations, mobilization, and international solidarity, working in alignment with the affected communities. This includes exerting pressure on companies or investors and influencing

their countries' embassies so they put a stop to human rights violations and cease funding companies that carry out crimes against nature and communities.

- Contribute to the visibility of the women's lived experience, actions, and demands via their platforms, campaigns on social media, meetings, forums, and other spaces. In addition, they can support, with financial and technical resources, research initiatives and the collective construction of knowledge to aid organizations in their advocacy efforts in connection to these companies' networks, socio-environmental impacts, and the search for energy and food alternatives to reduce the use and consumption of products derived from monocultures worldwide.
- Strengthen their theories of change, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, approaches, and funding programs so they (a) have a gender and feminist perspective, (b) integrate women's rights and environmental and climate justice, and (c) respond to the realities and demands of the organizations on the ground that work on these issues.
- Create and strengthen spaces for listening and receiving feedback with women's, feminist, environmental, and community organizations to collectively build advocacy strategies and other key actions. In addition, they can increase financial and technical support to broaden the participation of women and their organizations in international advocacy spaces, which are often inaccessible to those who are fighting in the territories.
- Work in alliance with and in support of international bodies and mechanisms for the defense of human rights to contribute to the work of women defenders and leaders.
- Transform their organizations and institutions' practices and internal mechanisms that

increase women defenders', leaders', and their organizations' workloads or that cause stress and other emotional effects.

6.4 Specific recommendations for bilateral and multilateral financing organizations and international financial institutions

- Guarantee transparency in the execution of their projects and their monitoring and accountability mechanisms, ensuring they are accessible, clear, and effective for organizations, communities, and defenders.
- Immediately suspend current financing to organizations, foundations, and companies that sow, promote, or protect large-scale industrial monocultures, which violate human rights and harm the environment and biodiversity.
- With the effective participation of women, civil society organizations, and communities, implement processes to periodically evaluate their funding and accountability mechanisms as well as their policies; publish the results.
- Increase in quantity and quality the donations and projects that they carry out with community and women's organizations, ensuring that the money effectively reaches grassroots organizations and does not remain only in large and intermediate organizations.
- Ensure compliance with their gender policies and the incorporation of a gender, feminist, and intersectional approach in connection to the programs and funds they implement or can influence in order to guarantee that a significant percentage of the funds reach women's organizations and women land defenders.
- Implement consultation processes before, during, and after the execution of projects in compliance with the needs and desires

of the communities that would be affected by said projects, while ensuring the effective participation of women. The communities must be previously informed about the projects, and they must approve them; otherwise, they must refrain from executing or financing any project.

The GAGGA alliance, in coordination with women's, feminist, and environmental organizations that continue to fight for life, territory, and the commons in Central America, calls on all the actors involved to commit to mobilizing support and accompaniment to the communities that work for justice and the construction of truly sustainable economic, energy, and food models that respect life.