

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**On to the next 20 years  
of social and environmental movement**



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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## Message from the CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD



**SURAYA AFIFF**  
CHAIRPERSON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

I write as 2024 is ending. It is raining and this reminds me of the continuing global challenge of climate change impacting many people.

Nevertheless, there was plenty to celebrate in 2024. On the ground in Papua, IPLC Partners harvested the results of over 10 years of mapping, boundary negotiations, and policy development for recognition, resulting into 4.9 million hectares of territories being secured and managed. Beyond regulations, equally important is the work on strengthening customary institutions, - such as the continuing development of the *Serepungan*, the unified ancestral domain-level Indigenous Political Structure of the Kirenteken-Menuvu in Southern Bukidnon, to the formation of the business entities or *BUMMA* of the Namblong tribe in Papua.

We have been working with Partners of the PERMATA project in the last three years to help uplift economic activities of Papuans, i.e., on eco-tourism, agricultural and garden products, handicrafts, pottery and fish-based products, in four regencies.. We are working with at least 43 communities across SouthEast Asia region on their local food systems enhancement. Many of these are women-led livelihoods and start-ups.

But the concerns are escalating. While communities revive their local agricultural practices and exchange seeds to increase biodiversity, the pressures from monocrop plantations continue.

We are working with at least 43 communities across SouthEast Asia on their local food systems enhancement. Many of these are women-led livelihoods and start-ups.

In Calamianes, Tagbanwa communities continue to be harassed because of land conflicts stemming from tourism and other land speculations in their ancestral territories. Two actual eviction and demolition incidents happened within the year. As the world moves up to maximize the Blue Economy or our marine resources, we should not forget the marine tenure rights of communities who depend on the oceans for their livelihoods and cultural practices.



The second regional Women Environment and Human Rights Defenders (WEHRD) Learning Journey and Reflection that took place in November 2024. In this photo we visit the T'boli tribe, known as the Dream Weavers of the T'nalak cloth, in South Cotabato. Bo-i Barbara Ofong (second from right) is a National Artist (Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan) in the Philippines. (Samdhana/Xenia P)

Recently, a leader of one of the organisations in Papua was beaten up, allegedly related to political issues, and landed in hospital. Violence against indigenous peoples, and environment and human rights defenders are increasing.

### **Strategic steps**

Samdhana realizes that with the challenges that evolve and erupt, we need to continuously remain resilient.

Internally, 2024 was also a significant year for the Samdhana Fellows, as two committees they created have started to function. The Fellows Committee started the process for inviting new fellows that will help sustain the spirit of Samdhana. Secondly, the Program Committee started to find ways to support the strengthening of Samdhana programmes initially by developing a theory of change to reflect Samdhana's priorities and initiating conversations with staff on the "art of grantsmaking" and deepening how we frame Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusions (GEDSI).

To reach out and encourage others, Samdhana co-initiated the Women ASCEND (Women Accessing Support for indigenous and rural Communities and the Environment towards Development) Forum with other Foundations in the Philippines to encourage more donors to support women-led initiatives.

### **Keeping our connections**

With various political, economic, and environmental pressures around, being in the social movement does take its toll on us, on communities, on support groups. That is

why events that bring people in solidarity are very important. This sentiment was echoed by the women and participants in the second regional Women Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (WEHRD) Learning Journey and Reflection. With the very gracious hosting of the T'boli tribe and local group LASIWWAI, the participants were able to appreciate the importance of upholding indigenous culture and identity, and also get back in touch with their persons to recommit to the cause of defending their environment and communities.

Similarly, the opportunity for sharing by Indigenous communities and organizations in Northern Thailand on environmental management and rotational farming in 2024 stressed the value and power of providing safe spaces for Indigenous peoples and local communities across the region to reconnect and share, so that Indigenous knowledge flourishes.


As the challenges continue, so does the need to care for ourselves within our own organizations. Whilst we support others we also need to sustain our bodies, minds and spirits. Let's not forget that these struggles are for the long haul as they require systemic change. Let us continue to care for others and for ourselves so we can be there for the future.

Take care friends,

Suraya

Chairperson of Board of Trustees



A photograph of two women walking through a grassy field. The woman on the left is wearing a grey bucket hat, a blue and white striped shirt, and dark pants. She is holding a small tree sapling in her hands. The woman on the right is wearing a black jacket over a grey t-shirt and grey shorts. She is also holding a sapling. In the background, there is a body of water and a tall, thin, rusted metal pole. The image has a blue semi-transparent overlay on the right side where the text is located.

We move into the second half of our strategic plan (2019-2028) by setting the milestones towards the outcomes we hope to see by the end of 2028. The first five years of implementing our strategic plan has provided us with a very valuable learning curve – in terms of organizing our work into programmes that can effectively provide strategies that address the issues and needs around indigenous peoples and local communities’ (IPLCs) rights, capacities and resilience, and learning for the social movement. We also worked continuously through our organizational ‘adolescent’ years – in terms of extensively setting up our policies and systems.

In the following pages, we share highlights and key achievements in 2024 in our work together with IPLCs, civil society partners and funding donors.

Women and youth of Menoken Mamta planting trees at Yotoro Hill, Jayapura Regency, Papua. March 12, 2024. (NOKEN MAMTA/Alexander Marthen)



A photograph of a person wearing a light-colored bucket hat and a dark shirt, standing in a field of tall grass. The person is smiling and looking down. The background is filled with green trees. A dark blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, featuring a large, light-colored, stylized 'C' shape that frames the text. The text is in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# 2024 Institutional Highlights





## Advancing tenure and supporting IPLCs' self-determined sustainable development

We recorded a total of 5.4million hectares of IPLC territories in Indonesia being secured and managed. We continue to support IPLCs in their customary territory mapping activities and processing of documents for government recognition regulations.

In the Philippines, the Ancestral Domain of the Calamian Tagbanwa in Palawan, and the Dulangan Unified Ancestral Domain of the Higaonon Tribe in Misamis Oriental both received the Certificate of Recognition of Ancestral Domain Claim (CRADC) – a step bringing them closer to the formal government recognition.



We lent support to 27 policy development and lobbying initiatives of Partner CSOs, NGOs, and community organizations. Most significant are national level policies for State recognition of Indigenous Peoples rights – such as the Indigenous Peoples Bill in Indonesia and in Thailand. In Cambodia, Indigenous Peoples' alliances continues to be vigilant in the Land Law reform process to ensure IPs' recognition and participation.

Samdhana continues to increase its legal support to IPLC communities and environmental and human rights defenders (EHRDs).

Manila Observatory (MO), through the support of our Litigation Fund, handled 18 legal cases involving IPLCs and EHRDs across the Philippines. With their legal acumen and the active cooperation community paralegals in documentation and reporting, charges against IP leaders had been dismissed. A number of IPLC communities and leaders also filed counter charges for rights violations and environmental destruction.

Beyond the court cases, the litigation fund significantly increased legal awareness and capacity among communities, empowering them to participate effectively in legal processes. Communities, especially in Calamianes, have taken proactive steps, where they directly gather the data, file the counter cases, and participate in the case management and community updating. It is not only the complainants who were involved; they are being supported by the broader Tagbanwa community and this collective backing strengthens the resolve of those involved and reinforces a sense of unity in pursuing justice.

Another program for social justice leaders helped to reduce threats to EHRDs and build a network of support for increasing their security and capacities. In Indonesia, EHRDs and partners CSOs work on evidence generation, mediation, conflict resolution, and consolidation among communities who have faced criminalization by concession companies.

Our partnerships with Komnas HAM (Commission on Human Rights), the Integral Security Service Provider Network (JPLKI), and TIFA Foundation contributed to developing additional mechanisms to strengthen community-based protection services in conflict-prone areas. These collaborative actions have advanced Samdhana's goal of fostering a responsive and inclusive system for the protection of HRDs, rooted in solidarity and shared accountability across stakeholders.



## Increasing resilience of IPLCs within the Lifespaces in Papua, Northern Mindanao and Calamianes Group of Islands

The Lifespace Programme has evolved over the last five years – reflecting how Samdhana aims to be community-driven and to learn from the ways of our Partners, built on a mutually capacitating relationship.

In 2024, we see the results of strengthening Indigenous Peoples governance through the victories of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMR) in Northern Mindanao.

One is the case of the Kirenteken-Menuvu in the municipality of Don Carlos, a part of CADT 206 in Southern Bukidnon, wherein they conducted the selection of their IPMR according to a customary process they collectively agreed upon. It was a deliberate departure from previous processes wherein the selection of IPMR had become dominated over by political patronage. Through the collective customary process, they selected Datu Nicanor Tahuyan among three candidates. A petition, alleging that the process was irregular, was filed against him, despite the formal recognition from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Region 10 office

and the Municipal Legislative Council. This was seen as a politically motivated petition, to retain a strong influence over the tribe. However, the NCIP National Office upheld the custom-based selection process that had been agreed upon that had been agreed upon by the tribe. This provides a strong case of how Indigenous Peoples' assert their self-determined processes and decision-making. Datu Tahuyan continues to actively push the agenda of the Kirenteken-Menuvu, and has successfully pushed for an ordinance for the observance of the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before approval of projects by the Municipal Local Government Unit (LGU), especially those that will affect their ancestral domain, such as the expansion of mono-crop plantations.

In the municipality of Opol, Misamis Oriental, wherein the larger part of the Dulangan Unified Ancestral Domain of the Higaonon tribe is, the Municipal IPMR Datu Jeffrey Pusan was able to successfully push for an ordinance<sup>[1]</sup> of creating a Committee on Indigenous Peoples as a regular standing committee in the six Local Government Units or Barangay Councils, which are part of their ancestral domain. This ordinance has become key in the selection and validation of four of the Barangay IPMRs. This raises hope that the Higaonon tribe will have more voice in local governance and decision-making to address various concerns, since much of their ancestral domain is currently occupied by private sectors for tourism development, illegal mining, and other commercial purposes, while some government road projects have taken place without FPIC.



"Berbuat Bersama, Berperan Setara" (Working together, playing equal roles). The women's groups participate in a workshop in Jayapura to raise their voices and concerns. (Samdhana/Nurul Hidayah)

Samdhana completed our Papua Strategy for 2025-2030. "Jalan Kita – Jalan Budaya" (Our Path- the Cultural Path) encapsulates the multitude of ways that change can be brought about in Tanah Papua. The strategy took shape through the extensive consultations that the Samdhana Papua team conducted with community partners, NGO and CSO partners, and insights from conversations with government and other stakeholders. *[Jump to page 22 for more on the Jalan Kita-Jalan Budaya]*

In Papua, the BUMMA or Indigenous Peoples-owned corporation model enabled the Namblong tribe to manage its 42,200 hectares customary forest, through the development of their forest management plan. The tribe reports that there has been no forest clearing in the last six months (July to December 2024). The absence of deforestation in Namblong Territory benefits women by securing food and water sources. Not only that, women play strategic and leading roles in the BUMMA, including as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Finance Officer (CFO), and other management positions.

[1] Municipal Ordinance No. 2022-15 Municipality of Opol



## Capacitating women and youth to be at the forefront of the social and environmental movements in Southeast Asia

Samdhana engaged directly with at least 737 women and young women throughout 2024, in various capacity development activities and community initiatives. This includes raising awareness on human rights and indigenous peoples' rights, community leadership, organizational development, gender equality vis-a-vis culture, agroecology-based food production and community-supported agriculture (CSA), enterprise, reviving the weaving culture, climate change community action, and GEDSI. The solidarity network built through the WEHRD project continues to be an important platform for IPLC women in the Philippines to share their struggles and seek strength in their solidarity, and be linked to other NGO service providers, such as those who cater to safety and security, mental health and well-being, and to legal assistance.

To sustain practical actions on the ground, WEHRDs and other women IPLC groups need increased access to financial resources and capacity development. This is our overarching framework in convening the Women ASCEND Initiative - Women Accessing Support for indigenous and rural Communities and the ENvironment towards Development last November 2024. Co-convening this initiative are the major foundations in the Philippines, namely: Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE), Forest Foundation Philippines (FFP), Foundation for a Sustainable Society, Inc. (FSSI), Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF), and The Asia Foundation. In this first meeting, the Convenors met with WEHRDs and local women enterprise groups to understand better where they are and what challenges they face. We collegially discussed our respective programs, and concluded that indeed there is a shared desire to make funding and technical support more accessible to women. Follow-through activities have been agreed to help shape the Women ASCEND Initiative further.

In Papua, 34 remarkable women leaders are mobilizing their communities as Community Facilitators, through menoken and other initiatives. Given the highly patriarchal nature of Papuan society, giving these women and young women the opportunities to lead has increased their self-confidence, improved their capacities to work and lead, and grow their networks.



Women representatives from Talaandig, Calamian Tagbanwa, Kirenteken-Menuvu, and Higaonon tribes, and other communities in Mindanao arrive for the Women ASCEND Forum in South Cotabato. (Samdhana/ Sabrina Balais)



## iv.

## Institutional sustainability



One of the anchors of Samdhana’s capacity development thrust is to help IPLCs link better with government offices and agencies to bring about their concerns and needs. Samdhana’s linking role is becoming well-recognized by Government Partners in the respective countries we work in.

In 2023, Samdhana was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Ecological Services and Protection Committee (ESPC) of Cagayan de Oro City. The ESPC is responsible for managing the Ecological Services and Protection Fund (ESPF) of the city, with an annual budget of PhP 10million or approximately US \$178,571. The fund is the result of the SHIELD Project under the Green Livelihood Alliance (2016-2020), establishing a payment for ecosystem services policy in the Cagayan de Oro Riverbasin. Our seat in the ESPC increases our ability to bring Indigenous Peoples and other local groups to access government support in their local conservation and environmental protection activities.

In Indonesia, Samdhana applied for accreditation with the Indonesian Environment Fund or Badan Pengelola Dana Lingkungan Hidup (BPD LH) in 2022. Two years onward in 2024, we are invited as the *lemtara* or intermediary organization for the RBP REDD+ GCF Output 2 Program of Papua, Maluku, South Papua, and Highland Papua. [See page 26 for further information on BPD LH.]



FRIENDRAISING

Run4ME page



Samdhana's biggest public-facing event to date was launched through the iconic Run for Mother Earth fun run, coined as Run4ME! It became the first ever Earth Day run in Northern Mindanao and was heartily participated in by more than 800 runners. In collaboration with major partners such as the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, Foundation for the Philippine Environment, and Circle Production, Run4ME became a concrete engagement to call for more volunteers and "Conservation Champions".



The public support we are able to raise is channeled to community-led tree-growing initiatives with various partners in Mindanao, Philippines and in Papua, Indonesia. Many of these forest restoration activities are led by community youth groups, with whom Samdhana has been working with through various capacity development processes and through the Lifespace Programmes for the governance and protection of their territories.

In Papua, we also launched the Women Leaders Program. In particular, we are supporting Nela and Yolán, to take on further trainings and capacity development to continue their role in teaching the younger children in their respective villages.

Nela's story



Yolán's story



**Publicly-supported and community-led tree growing activities (2021-2024)**

Philippines and Indonesia



**64,000**

hectares for conservation



**125,013**

new seedlings

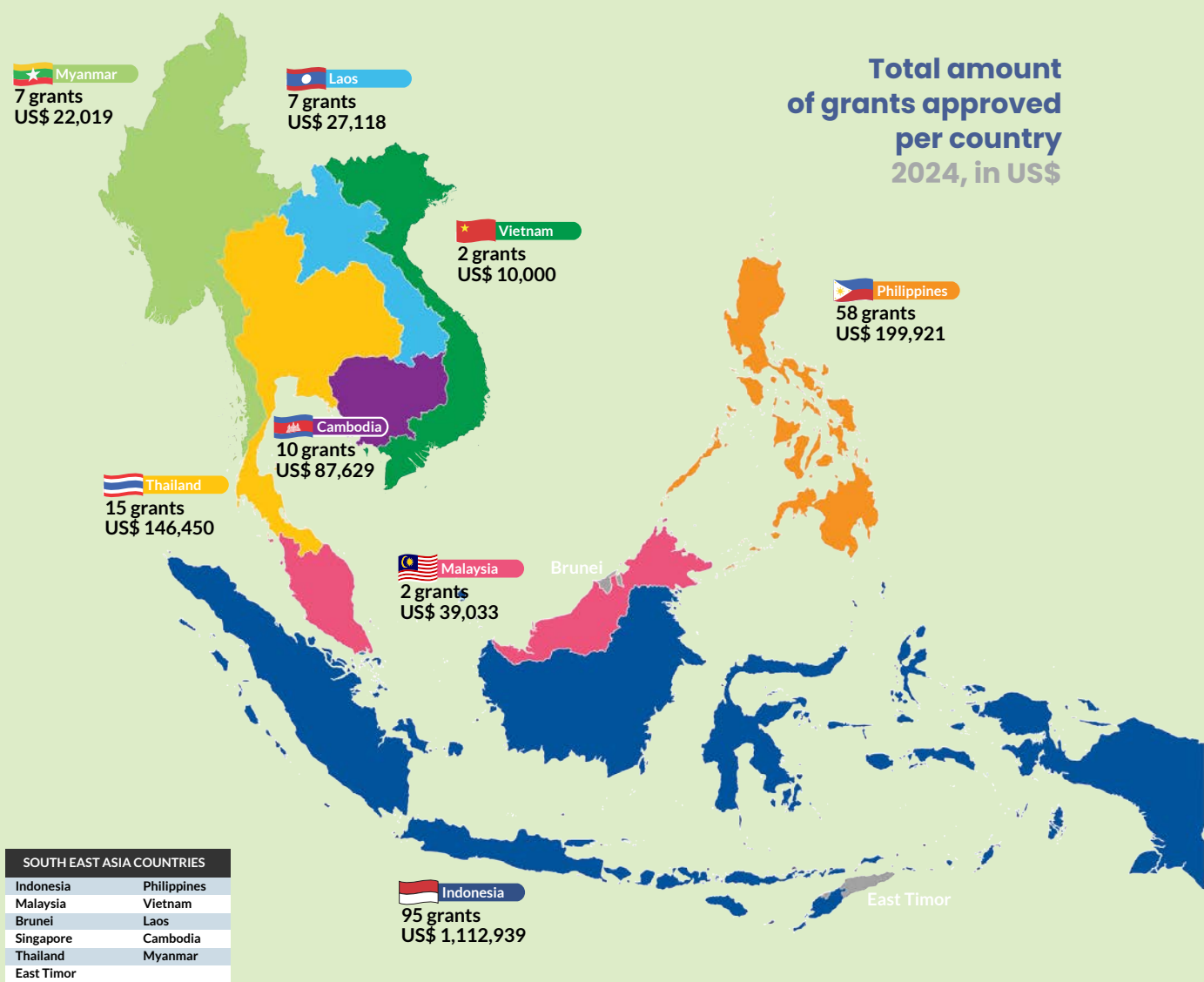


**65**

community partners

# GRANTS MAKING 2024

In 2024, we supported 179 Partners, through direct and flexible grants, with a total funding of US \$1,645,679 and 196 grant contracts processed for the current fiscal year only. Samdhana continues to provide direct and flexible financial support, and technical capacity development for basic project and financial management to IPLCs, grassroots organizations, CSOs, local networks, and other local groups and individuals. Around 17 partners received more than one grant during the year.



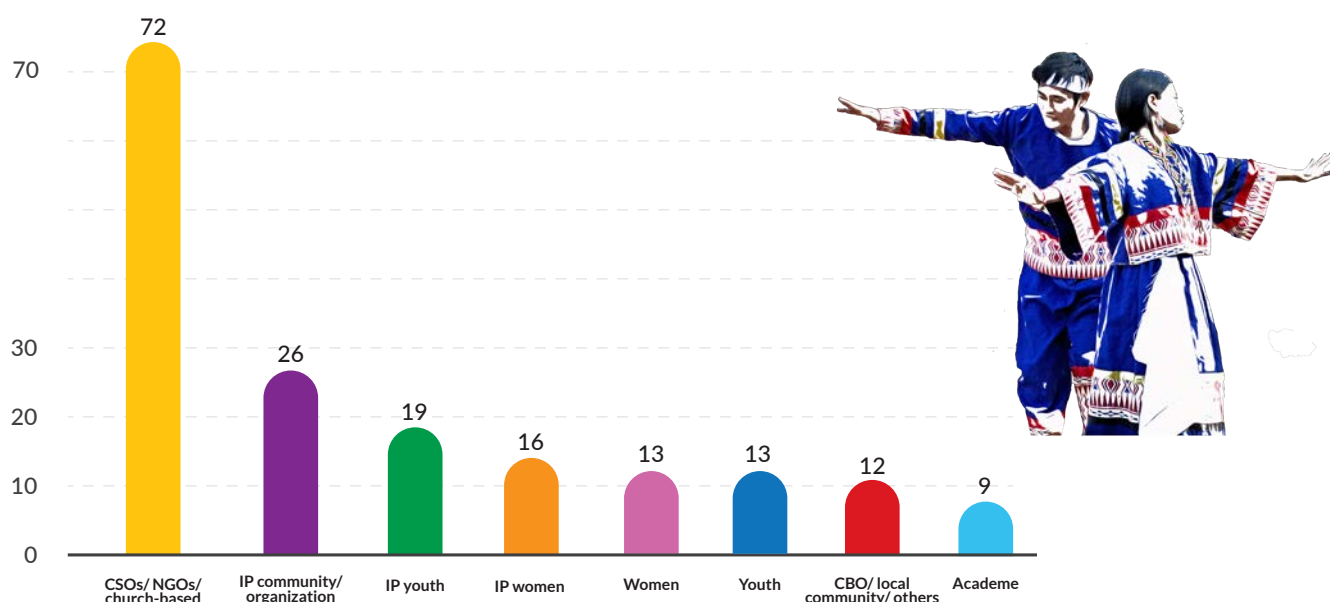
The figures for 2024 Grantsmaking reflect only the financial support provided through grant contracts. It does not include the funding for supplementary support and capacity building provided through technical consultants, other direct trainings and facilitation from Samdhana.

The table below reflects the types of partners we supported in the respective country for the year. We have the most diverse Partners in Indonesia and the Philippines, while for other countries in Lower Mekong region, and also in Malaysia, we are able to reach out to only few Partners. Despite this, in Thailand and in Cambodia, we provided a substantial amount in grants. These are partners who are working closely with other networks and are able to reach other grassroots partners that Samdhana is not reaching directly.

### Number and types of partners supported in each country, in 2024

	Total Grants Amount	CSOs/ NGOs/ church-based	IP community/ organization	IP youth	IP women	Women	Youth	CBO/ local community/ others	Academe
INDONESIA	\$1,112,939	54	3	1	3	9	12	4	5
PHILIPPINES	\$199,921	19	12	13	5	1	3	-	3
THAILAND	\$146,450	3	2	1	1	-	-	1	-
CAMBODIA	\$87,629	1	4	2	1	-	-	1	-
LAOS	\$27,118	3	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
MALAYSIA	\$39,033	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
MYANMAR	\$22,019	-	2	1	2	-	-	1	1
VIETNAM	\$10,000	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

### Total number of Partners supported in 2024

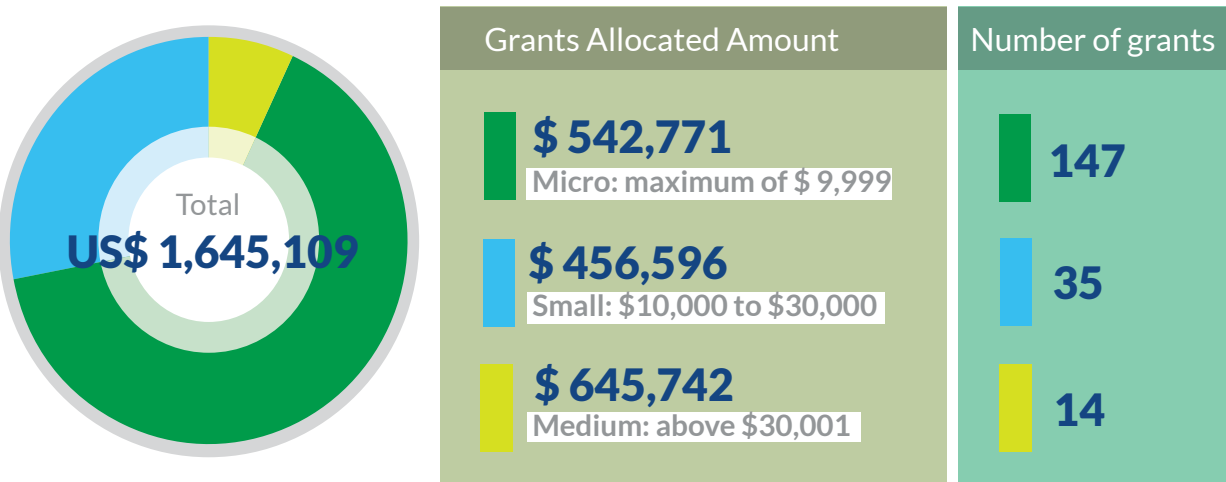


In line with increasing the access of IPLCs to technical assistance and resources, Samdhana has also been steadily building partnerships with local and national organizations, other civil society organizations, and the academe to work directly with community partners.

We continue to provide close accompaniment to Partners, from proposal facilitation to project management, project recording, financial management and reporting. Ninety-seven (97) Grantees received the Project and Financial Management Training (PFMT). And this year, 21% or 42 grantees were first-time or new partners.

Samdhana ensures to facilitate the distribution of funding resources as widely as possible. Thus, majority of contracts in 2024 or 60% are micro grants given directly to IPLCs, as a mechanism to drive the social and environmental movement.

**Grant Category 2024, in US\$**



Through the micro and small grants, we supported a diverse range of activities and community initiatives of Partners in the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam and in Malaysia. We cluster these into the following general thematic areas:

**Amount of Grants per thematic area for the Philippines and Lower Mekong countries, 2024**

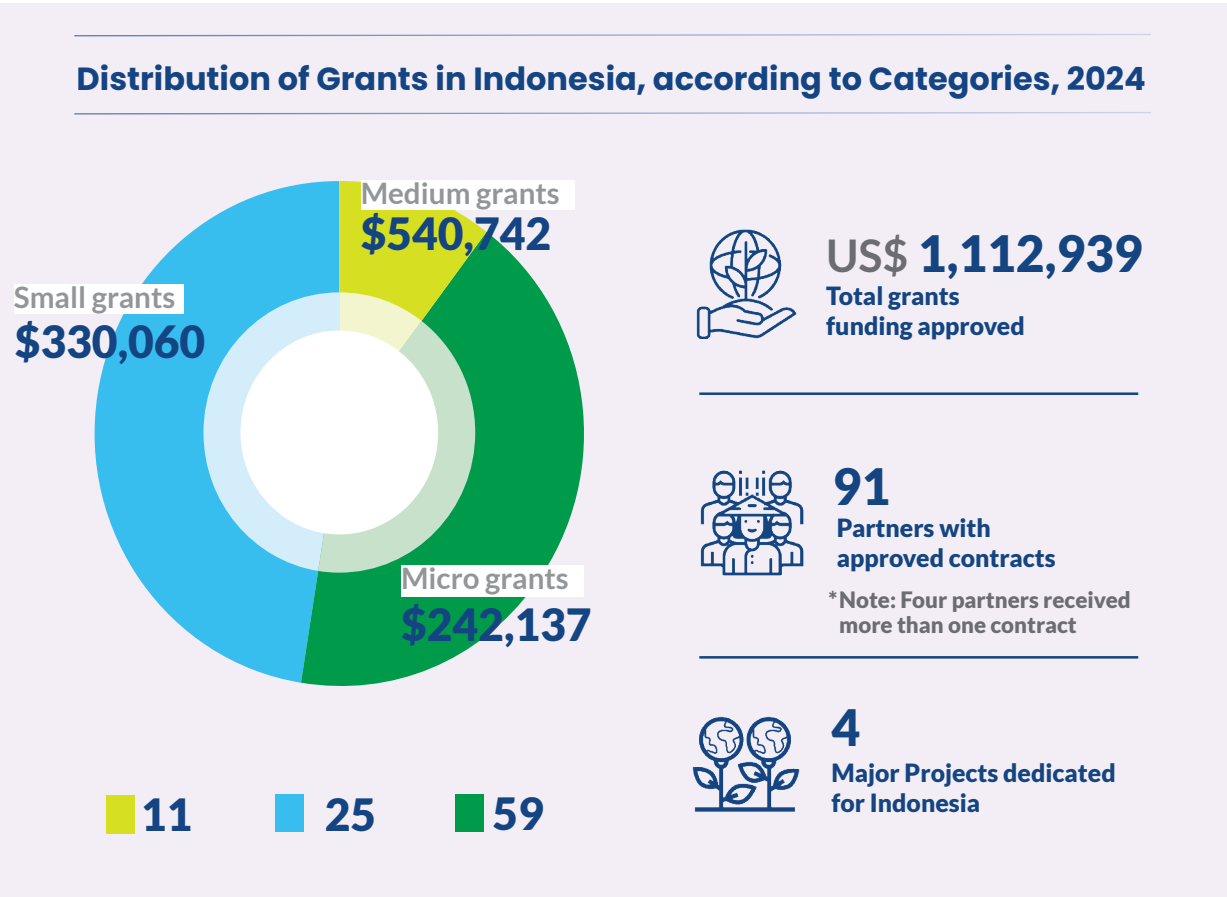


# Indonesia Grants Making

Multi-year grants - balancing flexibility with accountability

Since Samdhana accepted the role of National Implementing Agency of the Dedicated Grant Mechanism - Indonesia (DGMI), from 2016-2021, our Grants Programme in Indonesia has managed medium and large grants to support IPLC tenure rights, resources conflict resolution, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and livelihoods. Over the years, and through the succession of projects that contribute to the four important themes mentioned above, Samdhana in Indonesia has established a grantsmaking system that enables local organizations and communities to work with government agencies and other stakeholders through their own initiatives, and increase capacities of IPLCs to implement projects, manage funds and report with accountability.

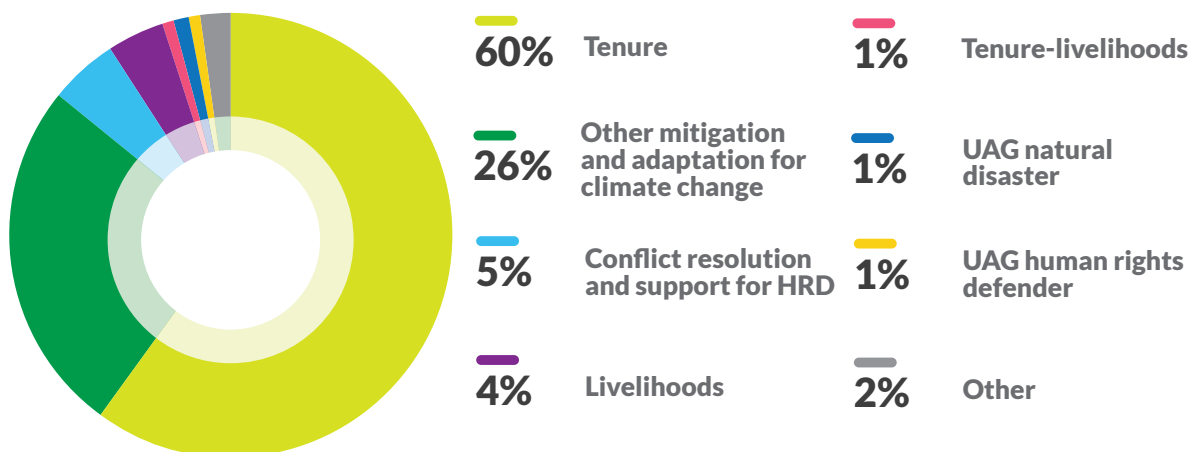
We continue to manage the multi-year grants to partners, especially in the project consortium. Most, if not all of the medium grants are intended for supporting the recognition process of indigenous territories in Papua, and also strengthening of governance, especially elevating the roles of women in securing rights to livelihoods and resources. Majority of micro-grants are supporting IPLCs, individuals and youth groups to address climate change in their localities. We also support organizations and communities for the protection and recognition of their rights, and resolve conflicts around access and control of natural resources.













## Indonesia Grants Making

### General thematic areas, Indonesia, 2024



### Amount of grants per thematic areas, Indonesia, 2024

Indonesia grants thematic areas	Number of grants	Amount in US \$
 Tenure	20	\$ 671,302
 Other mitigation and adaption for climate change	43	\$ 295,479
 Conflict resolution and support for HRD	11	\$ 59,879
 Livelihoods	7	\$ 42,683
 Tenure-livelihoods	1	\$ 9,438
 UAG natural disaster	4	\$ 8,531
 UAG human rights defender	2	\$ 3,649
 Other	7	\$ 21,978
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>\$ 1,112,939</b>

In 2024, we broadened our support into issues and initiatives in coastal and marine areas, as well as in urban centers and to individuals and youth activists. In the NLGF-VCA project, we are able to support civil society organizations, and also respond to emergencies that relate to issues on climate justice, through a total of 33 grants approved in 2024.



Read here some of the experiences of NLGF-funded partners in the Stories of Hope and Struggle

Samdhana continues to lead the PERMATA Project consortium with Yayasan Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat (BRWA) Indigenous Territory Registration Body), Yayasan Urban and Regional Development Institute (URDI), Perkumpulan Kaoem Telapak, Yayasan Kitong Bisa, Perkumpulan Persekutuan Perempuan Adat Nusantara (PEREMPUAN AMAN), and Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN).

We are also working closely with the Foker LSM Papua for the ongoing implementation of the AMAHUTA Project in six districts in Papua Barat and Papua Provinces for the legal frameworks and mechanisms for recognizing indigenous peoples right sand territories.



## Donor Partners

Samdhana acknowledges and thanks our donor partners who continue to support us and the work with and for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities







# **NUSANTARA** **Highlights**





# Perkumpulan Samdhana 2024 Programmes



## JALAN KITA – JALAN BUDAYA (OUR PATH – THE CULTURAL PATH)

*Menanam* (Planting), *Jalan Budaya* (Cultural Way), Tema (Thematic Areas), *Tentang Manusia dan Kebisaanya* (Humans and Their Abilities) – these are the elements we celebrate and embrace in Samdhana’s Papua Strategy 2025-2030.



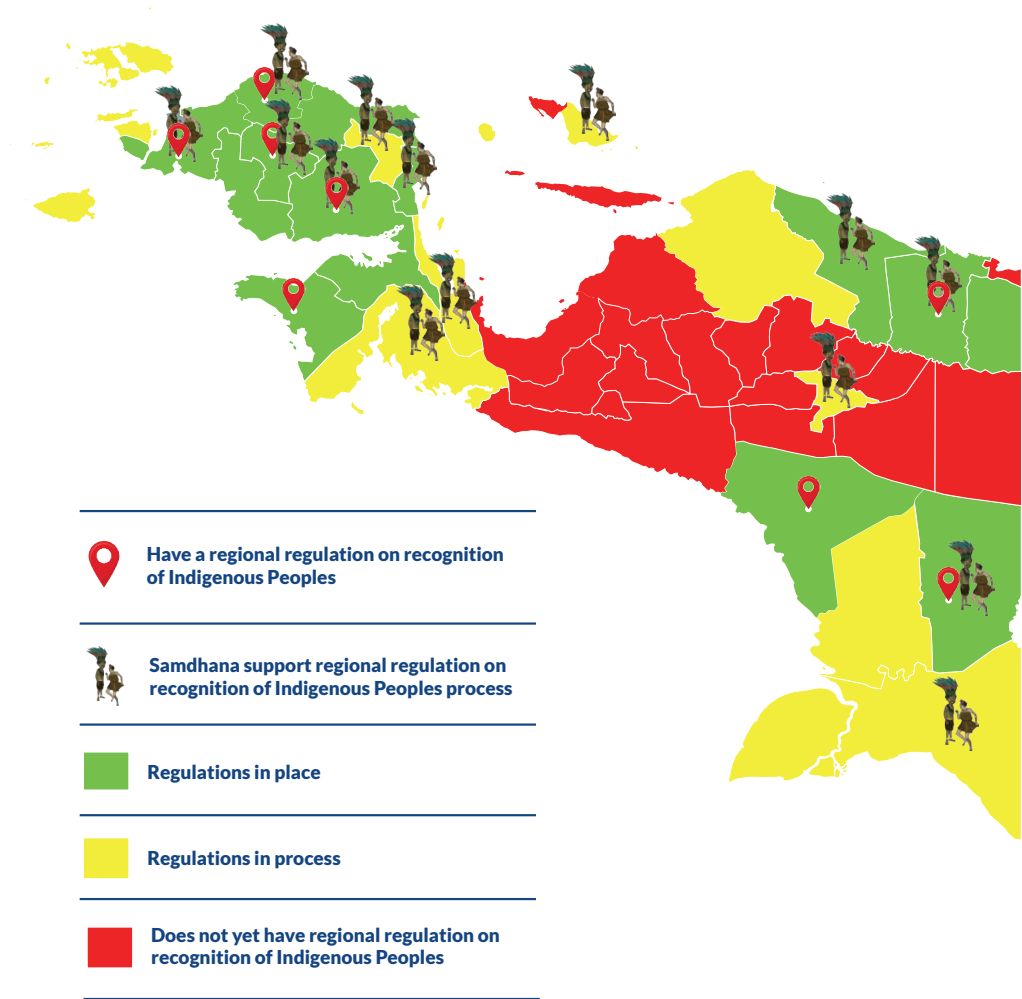
Grandmother and her grandsons return to their *kebun* in Yansu district, Jayapura Regency. (Samdhana/Anggit)

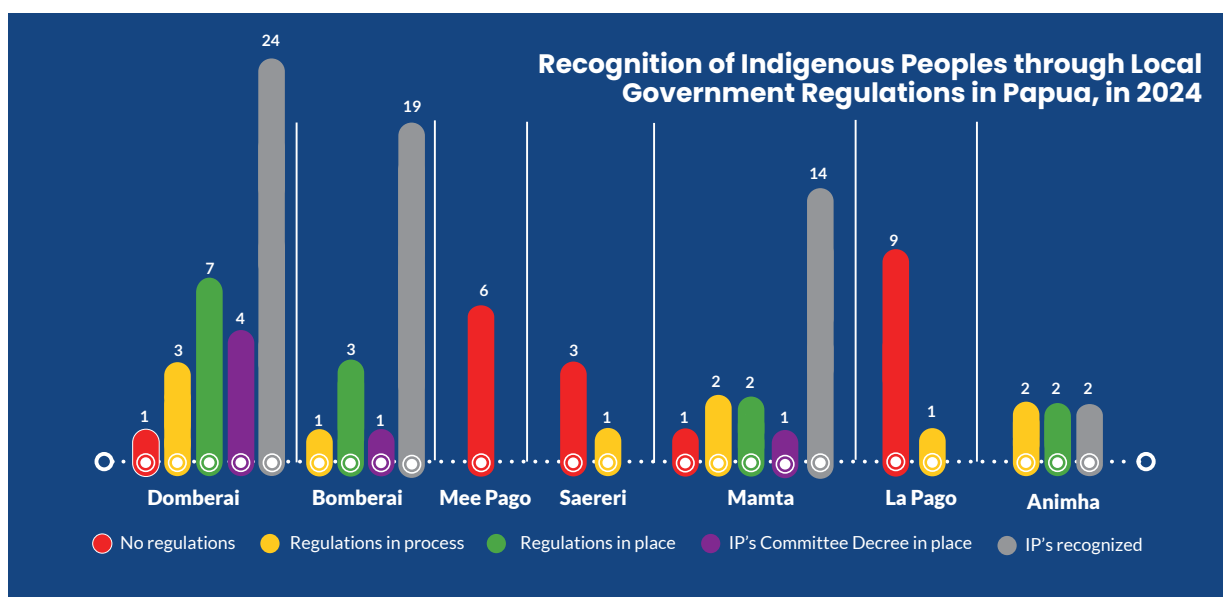


Samdhana first created a strategy in 2018 to guide our work in Tanah Papua. It directed the various efforts and channeling of financial and technical resources toward achieving secure rights and sustainable livelihoods, preserving ecological functions and biodiversity in Papua, and contributing to global efforts to address climate change.

To date, Samdhana has worked in 99 locations across the six customary territories of Papua. Alongside Samdhana, numerous other organizations have also been active in the region. Together, Samdhana and these organizations have helped to sow seeds that flourished into meaningful harvests enjoyed by communities. Some of these include the 23 Indigenous

Local Government Regulations Related to Recognizing of Indigenous Peoples in Papua (7 Cultural Regions)





communities that gained official recognition from local governments in the period from 2019 to 2023; ten regulations in four indigenous territories, and six MHA Committee Decrees in place, while another 10 regulations in process in six indigenous territories. Six customary forests have been formally recognized by the central government. These regulations bolster the protection and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples, and other forms of progress have also emerged-various livelihood development initiatives, community business groups producing a range of goods and services, and the growing prominence of issues surrounding Indigenous Peoples, forest conservation, and the revitalization of Papua's culture and languages.

The intent of *Jalan Kita - Jalan Budaya* is to create new possibilities of bringing about positive change in Tanah Papua. We embrace the strategy timeline of 2025 to 2030 as the 'season of planting', working along the life path of indigenous peoples - the *noken*, the revival of language, rituals, ceremonies, strengthening and deepening these paths.

Indigenous rights, economy, biodiversity, and climate change are the thematic areas we will prioritize. Through capacity development, we intend to empower the organizations and institutions of indigenous peoples and various local communities so they will have the resources, systems and plans, and skilled and capable people. By creating the opportunities in their territories, the younger generation, even those who have studied abroad, will return home and work for their own organizations, institutions, and communities.

*Jalan Budaya* aligns with the territorial approach, departing from a commodity/ issue/ sectoral approach. Similarly, we are using an institutional approach. All of this is about organizing towards a socio-economic-environmental movement for Papua. There, within and with the Papuan tribes, lies the future and safety of peoples, forests, and the Earth.

[Read here the full text of Samdhana Papua Strategy 2025-2030.](#)







Two farmers plant in 2024, after experiencing three crop failures due to drought. (Doc Fariz Azhami Ahmad)

This photo was presented during the national workshop on “Youth Food Systems Dialogue and Movement 2024: Promoting Local Knowledge for Sustainable Food Systems in Indonesia”. It was hosted at the IPB University, Bogor, on 29-30 May 2024.

Samdhana took part in this national workshop that aimed to revive local and sustainable food systems, focusing on helping the older generation to pass down their traditional wisdom to the youth.



## Expanding Community Rights, Livelihood Innovation and REDD+ In Indonesia (PERMATA Project)

### Midterm Review

The PERMATA Project is on its fourth year, and earlier in 2024, a midterm review was conducted. The consortium partners are Yayasan Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat (BRWA), Yayasan Urban and Regional Development Institute (URDI), Perkumpulan Kaoem Telapak, Yayasan Kitong Bisa, Perkumpulan Persekutuan Perempuan Adat Nusantara (PEREMPUAN AMAN), and Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN).



A clan leader shows one of the boundary markers of the Ogoney Clan's customary land and forest. The Ogoney clan allocated two hectares for development purposes in Teluk Bintuni. (Samdhana/Anggit)

The project is implemented across six regencies and provinces in Indonesia, including Jayapura, Merauke, Tambrau, Teluk Bintuni, Malinau, and Kapuas Hulu.

Based on the report, the PERMATA Project has several achievements in land rights recognition, community livelihoods, policy and institutional support, and capacity building. As of 2023, 15 communities received Regent decrees in recognition of their land rights, covering 68,992.78 hectares. Seven of these communities' customary forests (40,112 hectares) already have recognition from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry at the national level.

The project not only focused on actual community livelihood activities, the PERMATA Consortium also addressed the following as enabling factors: supporting ecosystem services governance, revitalizing local food production, and promoting sustainable production and marketing of community products. Another important element is the development of sustainable livelihood roadmaps. At this time, some partners already initiated their community-based ecotourism and agricultural projects.

The review reported that: "Four out of six target districts adopted regulations recognizing IPLC rights, supported by institutions dedicated to managing and protecting these rights. This institutional framework is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of IPLC rights and integrating them into broader regional development plans."

All throughout the project implementation, IPLC partners underwent extensive capacity-building to ensure their participation in the tenure security

process, in land and resource conflict resolution, and livelihood enhancement. IPLC women and youth groups were capacitated so they can better participate in community decision-making and development processes.

The review also noted that the project faced several challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited mobilization and community engagement, and the administrative and logistical complexities arising from the recent expansion of Papua and West Papua provinces. Additionally, boundary disputes, funding constraints, and the need for enhanced coordination among consortium partners and local government institutions were identified as critical areas for improvement. Despite these, the Project was able to continue on with its implementation and made significant progress. Communication and collaboration among consortium partners and local stakeholders resulted to the project's effectiveness. Looking forward to the remaining months, the Project is set to hopefully achieve all the commitments for forest conservation and community development, and the objectives set out for this initiative, for Tanah Papua.



## Supporting Government Mechanism to Fund Local Adaptation and Mitigation

Samdhana was accredited as a *Lemtara* of the *Badan Pengelola Dana Lingkungan Hidup* (BPDLH). The BPDLH was created to increase the mechanisms to resource various sectors of Indonesia, such as forestry, energy, carbon trading and environmental services among others.

In August 2020, the Green Climate Fund approved USD 103.8 million in result-based payments (RBP) for Indonesia's REDD+ emission reductions achieved in 2014 to 2016. This signified international recognition of Indonesia's concrete action to address climate change, based on verified emission reductions totaling 20.26 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq, with an additional 2.5% awarded for Non-Carbon Benefits (NCB).

Of the total RBP, USD 56.25 million is allocated for use at the provincial level. To access and utilize the funds, each provincial government must partner with an accredited intermediary institution (*Lembaga Perantara* or *Lemtara*), which will serve as its fund manager. Together, the provincial governments and their selected *Lemtara* are responsible for developing a concept note outlining proposed activities and implementation plans for the use of the funds. Thus, the BPDLH launched a call for proposals in early 2024.



Meeting the Maluku Provincial Forestry Service with Samdhana Institute as an Intermediary Institution to manage funds for the Result Based Payment (RBP) program to support institutions in the implementation of REDD+ in Indonesia. (Samdhana/Rizqiah)

Seeing the opportunity to sustain the momentum of the recognition of indigenous territories and customary forests, as well as to contribute in realizing the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Samdhana applied for accreditation as a *Lemtara*. While Indonesia has significant achievements, other demands, such as the Java forest transition, national strategic projects like Green Kalimantan Development, and ongoing issues on agrarian conflict, social forestry, conservation and food estate require more funding to address these. Furthermore, Indonesia still has some ways to go to complete its national target of social forestry (12.7 million hectares) and agrarian reform (9 million hectares).

Samdhana's experience in assisting communities and partnerships with CSOs and government have helped us to gain recognition from the former Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan (the Ministry is now separated into Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Forestry respectively).

In May 2024, Samdhana was appointed by the provinces of Papua and Maluku. Subsequently, in June and July, we were also selected by the newly established provinces of South Papua (*Papua Selatan*) and Highland Papua (*Papua Pegunungan*) to manage their RBP allocations.

Taking on the intermediary role for the two new *Daerah Otonomi Baru* (DOB or autonomous regions) presents a meaningful opportunity for Samdhana, beyond the funding. Through capacity development, we are committed to work hand-in-hand with local governments to strengthen their human resource capacity and support the growth of the two emerging provinces. During the preparation phase for the RBP concept notes, Samdhana facilitated focus group discussions with relevant agencies, such as

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the forestry, land and environmental offices, and NGO and academic institutions. This promotes participatory dialogue among stakeholders. Through these sessions, they collectively defined the desired outcomes and identified the activities for the project. Samdhana also provided technical support to complete the concept note itself.

To date, the concept notes of Papua and Maluku provinces are already under review by BPD LH and by PPI (Climate Change Mitigation office). We are jointly developing the concept notes in *Papua Selatan* and *Papua Pegunungan* at present.

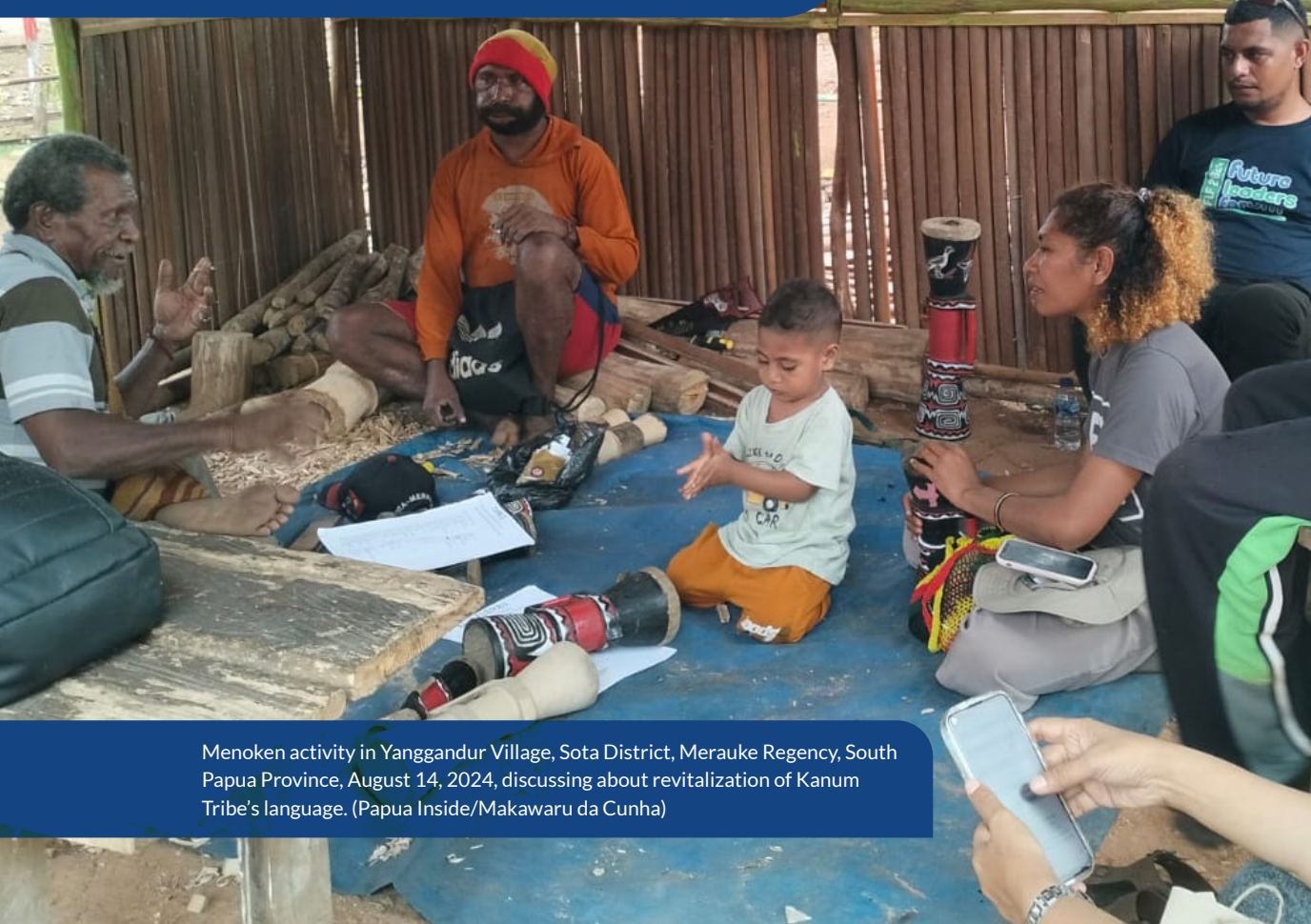
We hope this new funding model, entrusted to *Lemtara* with support from BPD LH, will keep growing to support Indonesia's efforts to reduce emissions—both nationally and locally—and that it will also expand to reach and support Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

(Note: as of the date of publication, Samdhana is also invited to be the *Lemtara* of West Papua province in April 2025.)



## Legacy of Menoken Movement in Papua Connecting Initiatives to Revitalize Mother Tongue

The Language Agency in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, recorded 428 languages in Papua, out of 718 languages across the country. The Menoken movement that Samdhana initiated since 2020 has inspired youth groups and advocates to persist in keeping Papua culture alive, especially on the use and revitalization of their languages.



Menoken activity in Yanggandur Village, Sota District, Merauke Regency, South Papua Province, August 14, 2024, discussing about revitalization of Kanum Tribe's language. (Papua Inside/Makawaru da Cunha)



In Merauke, South Papua Province, the group of Yune, Ayub, and several others teach elementary level students the Malind language through a non-formal school called Sekolah Alam Paradise. Seeing how consistent they were to reintroduce the Malind language, they were invited to collaborate with the Papua Language Center for the Mother Language Revitalization program.

Another Nokener who is also persistent in fighting for Papuan culture including the Mother Language, which is the Sentani language, is

Papua State Traditional School. With his personal network and the connections built through Menoken activities, Mr. Monim continues to move forward to realize his dream of keeping alive the culture of the Sentani Tribe and the Sentani Language.

The teaching of Mother Tongue must be integrated with the existing formal education system so that it becomes more systematic in terms of being integrated and implemented. As we have learned from our experience, efforts



Learning bahasa Malind (Malind Mayan) with Mama Kristina Balagaize. (PAPUA PARADISE CENTER)



Origenes Monim share his experience in initiating the Sekolah Adat Papua during Meeting of Indigenous Education Initiators, Jayapura, 20 February 2024. (Samdhana/Sandika)

to keep the Mother Tongue alive and in use can start from community initiatives, and can come from efforts of individuals who have the passion. Through movements like Menoken, this effort can grow through the links and doors that are opened between civil society, government, and communities.

Origenes Monim. Around 2016-2017, Mr. Monim founded the Jayapura Regency Traditional School in Hobong Village located in the Sentani Lake Area. In 2021, it changed status into the

Read the full  
article here







In the Higaonon- Manobo- Talaandig Kitanglad Kalatungan Ancestral Domain (HIMATAKKAD), on June 5 World Environment Day, for the ritual during the establishment of their community conservation area. (Samdhana/Xenia Porras)





# 2024 Stories



# Shifting the Power: An Institutional Reflection

Written by: Ayu Puspa Ariany

Shifting the Power is more than just a slogan—it is an ongoing effort to challenge systemic imbalance between donor institutions and local communities. For Samdhana Institute, the idea of shifting the power is not about taking over or asserting control, but about enabling leadership where it already exists—among communities and grassroots organizations that hold deep knowledge and lived experience.

Long before the term became common in development discourse, we were already grappling with what it means to support without dominating, to fund without controlling, and to build relationships centred on mutual respect and shared learning.

“Shifting the power isn’t just about transferring authority from A to B. What we are advocating is sharing power and building equitable relationship,” said Martua Sirait, Deputy Director of Indonesia Operations.

“We’ve been working to balance power dynamics even before it had a name,” added Erwin Quinone, Deputy Director of the Philippines-Mekong Operations.

## **Building accessible pathways to resources**

At the heart of this work is a shared understanding: that funding and support systems must be accessible to those who need it the most. In Southeast Asia, we see communities excluded from formal funding often because they lack legal status, administrative capacity, or are working in remote areas with limited documentation. They

never get the opportunity to be entrusted with financial resources to manage and implement on their own.

Samdhana has intentionally reduced the barriers and gatekeeping to our grantmaking process. Simplified requirements, community-informed selection mechanism, and adviser-led grants are among the strategies to ensure that support reaches those often left behind.

“We try to make our grantmaking accessible to the ‘unfundable,’” said Erwin. “We don’t tell them what project to do. We let them decide, based on what’s important to them.”

This approach is practiced in our partnership with grassroots women’s groups in Mindanao, land defenders in Papua, and traditional communities in Sulawesi—each shaping their own path forward using the resources made available to them.

## **Responding to a changing donor landscape**

As global priorities shift, so too has the availability of traditional donor support. Indonesia’s classification as a middle-income country has led to deprioritizing, even when inequality and environmental challenges persist. “If we are not able to navigate this change, IPs and LCs will be further marginalized,” Martua said.

In the Philippines, many partner organizations have lost longstanding financial support and turned to Samdhana for assistance. “Many of our projects are ending, and our resources are limited,” Erwin noted. “But we try to be present and help where we can.”



To adapt, Samdhana has strengthened its financial and accountability systems, undergoing rigorous accreditation and aligning with international standards. This has enabled access to bilateral grants (e.g., Netherlands, Norway), multilateral funds (e.g., World Bank, GEF), and national sources such as Indonesia's BPLDH. During the Dedicated Grant Mechanism Indonesia (DGM-I) project where funds were dedicated for IPs and LCs, a National Steering Committee composed of Indigenous leaders, local community leaders and government representatives helped to advocate for more realistic reporting expectations, ensuring community grantees could meet requirements without being overwhelmed. Samdhana continues to explore how to balance accountability with accessibility—learning from each funding experience and adjusting where needed.

As we respond to funding constraints, we are also seeking ways to support longer-term resilience of communities. We've begun piloting blended grantingsupport-combininggrantswithrevolving

or flexible funds—particularly for partners with economic self-reliance, and community-based livelihoods and income generating activities.

In this way, we are raising awareness and recognition of the communities and partners that both they and Samdhana have our respective “power” and contributions that we bring to the table. We aim to recognize and value the contributions that communities already bring—through land and other community assets, knowledge, time and solidarity—and to ensure that funding does not override but rather complement those efforts.

### Growing public support and shared ownership

In Indonesia, public fundraising initiatives—done through online platforms BenihBaik and KitaBisa—have helped us engage individuals and local institutions around causes they care about. While still modest, these efforts represent another way for people to exercise agency and participate in social and environmental action.



Women's groups participate in the collaboration session during Meeting of Indigenous Education Initiators, Jayapura, 20 February 2024. (Samdhana/Sandika)

In the Philippines, Samdhana is stepping ahead to explore crowdfunding, individual giving, and public-facing events as part of its sustainability strategy. Though early in development, these efforts reflect our belief that power does not only lie with institutions—anyone can contribute to change, in whatever capacity they are able to.

“Beyond the money we raise, it is gaining public trust that strengthens Samdhana’s legitimacy and role,” Martua reflected.

**Strengthening local institutions with respect and mutual capacity development**

Samdhana’s contribution to shifting the power is not only financial. We accompany local organizations as they grow—supporting leadership transitions, governance development, strategic reflection, and internal system building.

“We don’t just hand out money,” Martua emphasized. “We encourage partners to build their own systems and stand on their own.”

In Indonesia, we’ve worked closely with organizations like Mama Aleta Fund and FOKER LSM Papua, investing in their long-term capacity to govern themselves and manage resources. Through this journey, they now have systems able to promote community-led grantsmaking and further increasing grassroots access to funding and other technical support. In the Philippines, through initiatives like the Women ASCEND, we facilitate dialogue between Foundations and women’s groups—supporting mutual learning and more inclusive grantmaking practices.

Collaboration with newer initiatives such as 4F and Dana Nusantara are also part of this ecosystem-building approach. Samdhana is committed to helping new organizations that can facilitate community grantsmaking through

their genuine reach on the ground, for the constituencies that they work with.

“Our role is not to solve everything,” Erwin added. “But we can help open space—so that more accessible, locally-led philanthropy can grow.”

Increasing Indigenous-led funds is now taking centerstage in international discussions as more Indigenous groups and organizations assert their right to self-determination. They bring the promise that funding and philanthropy will become more community-centered, participatory, and rooted in local realities. Funding should uplift community leadership rather than replace it.

### **Practicing internal accountability**

Shifting the power also means turning inward. We recognize that holding and distributing funds comes with influence—and that we must be mindful not to replicate the very dynamics we aim to shift.

“Communities look to us as a funder,” said Erwin. “Even without meaning to, we can end up dominating decisions. That’s why we’re always learning how to listen more and guide less.”



(Samdhana/ Xenia Porras)



## “If we believe power must shift, what are we each willing to let go of—and what are we ready to build together?”

We prioritize co-creating, shared decision-making and long-term trust-building. We also try to influence larger institutions we partner with to reflect on how support can be more enabling and less prescriptive.

This reflection remains ongoing. We do not see ourselves as beyond critique—but rather as a part of a collective movement trying to do better, together. It is a principle we commit to practicing—in our relationships, in our decisions, and in the ways we listen. It means creating the conditions for communities to lead on their own terms, and being willing to stand behind them, not in front.

It is also about the courage to unlearn, to co-create, and to listen. These are not easy tasks. They require slowing down, being uncomfortable, and letting go of control.

Samdhana’s experience shows that trust-building and mutual cooperation with communities—built on respect, patience, and shared purpose—makes it possible to genuinely share power or collective strength. With this, we believe structural change is not only possible—it is already underway, led by the communities at the heart of social and ecological justice.



A T'boli woman shows how abaca string is prepared for weaving t'nalak, during the WEHRD. (Samdhana/Xenia Porras)

# The Land Recovery Fund

Written by: Sweet Edrote

*“Ang pakigbisog sa yutang kabilin mosikad sa pagtinabangay sa komunidad. (The struggle for the ancestral domain is driven by the cooperation of the community.)” - Japrey Cemente - Petiralan (community guide for the youth)*

Japrey is a *memenguhed* or youth in the community of Inator, one of the communities inside the unified ancestral domain CADT 206 of the Menuvu Kirenteken-Ilantungen tribe in Southern Bukidnon, Philippines. The name *Inator* comes from the term that means it is a place where the resolution of a big problem took place. According to Datu Jacinto Tigbabao, the *Punggos* or leader of the community, a long time ago, their forefathers were involved in conflict, and some of them were killed.

This historical identity seemed to remain in the Inator community and their major struggles, such as the pawning of land within their ancestral domain to repay their agricultural debt. The community sits only within five hectares of land. And yet, against their will, two hectares of land was pawned in 2004 when they had a series of “failures” or very poor harvest from their corn farms. Because of this, they were forced to pawn off the land to the High School Principal who financed in advance the cost for fertilizers.

Informal loan arrangements such as this sink small farmers deeper and deeper into debt. The fertilizer loan amount of PhP 200,000 (approximately US \$3,571) was imposed with an annual interest of 20% within a period of five years, and the two hectares of land served as collateral. The land was planted to banana, corn and cassava farms where the residents of Inator became mere laborers who earned only PhP 280 (approximately US\$ 2) for eight hours of hard farm labor.

This irony was a very bitter experience for the tribe. The steep loan arrangement, and the lack of better economic opportunities made it almost impossible for them to repay off their loan, which extended to 19 years.

Land pawning arrangements such as this are prolific in Southern Bukidnon, and in many areas where small farmers become deeply indebted due to loan advances for agricultural inputs, and consequently experience crop failure. Many farmers lose their lands in this kind of one-sided arrangement. Based on this observation, Samdhana proposed to establish a **Land Recovery Revolving Fund (LRF)**. The aim is to help indigenous community partners within the Lifespace Programme to recover their lands that have been pawned, so that they can continue to consolidate their territory, in parallel with other efforts to strengthen their governance and control of their ancestral domain. It is designed as a “revolving fund” where community partners are expected to return the full amount, without any financial interest, to Samdhana within a given time period, so that other communities with similar issues can avail of the funds.

Thus, in 2023, Inator community was able to avail the LRF, successfully paid off their loan and got back their land.

*“Karon nga nalukat na namo, makaingon mi nga naa nami control sa among yutang kabilin. (Now that we have redeemed our loan, we can say we have control of our ancestral land.)”* said Venerando





Trekking through the Inator farm areas that were recovered through the LRF, Nov. 15, 2024. (Samdhana/Bernadie Jamora)

Tigbabao Cemente, who is *Unuten* and *Ivevesuk* (Community leader, and one of the members of the agricultural committee) of Inator.

Part of the due diligence before approving the LRF is the community development plan for the land and their policy for repayment. Through their collective efforts and conducting regular *buron buron* or community dialogues, they created an agricultural committee composed of 11 male members. Together with the *Memeritan* (women) and the youth, they are charged with developing the land they recovered. They agreed on the policy and mechanism for monitoring their tasks in production and protecting their ancestral land. They also allocated a portion of the LRF to buy agricultural inputs so that they can immediately start planting.

In November 2024, the community celebrated their first harvest amounting to PhP 250,000 (approximately US\$ 4,400) from the redeemed land. This enabled them to repay the first installment for the LRF. Additionally, they started cultivating another two hectares where they grow corn and various vegetables for their families' consumption. The *Memeriten* manages one-fourth of a hectare for their own garden.

To date, four communities in Southern Bukidnon have availed of the funds, and recovered nine (9) hectares.

[Read the full article here](#)



Samdhana's accompaniment of the community partners in Southern Bukidnon, and understanding other issues in between the layers of indigenous communities' dynamics motivated us to innovate other mechanisms that can reinforce their self-governance. We beginning to understand that addressing the real issues of indebtedness among communities is a step deeper into promoting equity and balancing economic powers. ###



# Fellow Committees Contributing to Strengthen Samdhana's Next 20 Years

Samdhana Fellows actively contribute to help ensure that Programmes and projects remain strategic.

Chip Fay, one of Samdhana's Founders and leading the Samdhana Programme Committee (SPC) said that there is a need for data to have a better reflection on strategy, because the challenges and context are evolving. Better information about what is actually happening and what the long-term challenges are enable us to review strategies and avoid becoming stagnant.

The SPC was created in September 2023, when a number of Fellows were also discussing during the Fellows' Retreat about how Samdhana's strategies are evolving and how we remain relevant to the changes and challenges in the region.

In June 2024, the SPC conversed around the need for strategic planning and prioritization in social impact work, with a focus on balancing local and global dynamics. The participants discussed the importance of reviewing the organization's 10-year strategic plan, the



Samdhana Board members and Fellows pose with staff at Manila Observatory, after the midyear Board meeting. (Samdhana/Jonathan Deysolong)



20-year evaluation conducted between 2022-2023, and the inputs of Fellows to grasp a clearer understanding of Samdhana's program. There was also a discussion on the challenges in navigating complex coalitions and donor relationships, and the need to better understand community needs.

Other Fellows, key informants within and outside networks that Samdhana works with, and some staff will also be involved in future meetings of the Program Committee. The members of the SPC are the Fellows: Chip Fay, Yvan Biot, Anny Andaryati, and Suraya Afiff; with Ita Natalia and Erwin Quinones representing the staff, and assisted by Fellow Beth Pua who serves as Fellows Coordinator.

Another milestone is the kick-off of the Fellows recruitment process, driven by the Fellows Committee. The recruitment of new Fellows had been put on hold for some years since 2017, due to the need to carefully assess how the fellowship had evolved and what roles that Fellows play in the programs that had been set up and the projects that Samdhana managed. After conversations with other Fellows and careful work on drawing up the guidelines, and upon the approval of the Board, the Fellows Committee was finally able to put in action the process for inviting new Fellows. The results of this process will be announced in the coming months.

Emphasizing that the invitation to new Fellows is not simply a matter of increasing membership, but more on the mutual value that individuals and the Samdhana Fellowship will benefit from, it was agreed during the Board meeting that the process will be piloted and then revisited



Samdhana Fellows: Tony La Vina, Cristi Nozawa, Men Sta. Ana, Hilly Quiaoit, Beth Pua and Edtami Mansayagan in Manila Observatory last April 2024. Tony, Men and Hilly are also members of the Philippine Board of Trustees, while Cristi is the current Executive Director. (Samdhana/Xenia Porras)

at the end of two years. It will be refined and simplified as needed based on the experience from the piloting. The members of the Fellows Committee are: Tony La Vina, Patrick Anderson, Le Anh Long, Edtami Mansayagan, Sandra Moniaga and Ros Bandos. Cristi Nozawa also sits as the ex-officio.

With the aim of improving the Fellowship, a joint meeting between the Fellows Committee and the Programme Committee was held on October 29, 2024 to discuss and deepen further on what it means to be a Fellow and the corresponding responsibilities; a Fellows' Grievance Policy, and Code of Ethics. These are work-in-progress that we look forward to, to find ways to bring more people to give back for the communities and the region.

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Visiting the community-managed forest in  
Huai E-Khang community with the women  
weavers, in Mae Wang, Chiang Mai, Thailand.  
(Samdhana/ Sweet Edrote)





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