

ATALC

**AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF
PEOPLES' EMANCIPATORY AGENDAS
AND INITIATIVES**



**Amigos de
la Tierra
América Latina
y el Caribe**





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ATALC and the construction of peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives¹

It is becoming clearer every day that the serious socio-environmental crises that we face – climate, biodiversity, water, food, care, inequality, and now the health crisis – are systemic, and are the result of a system that privileges capital accumulation at the expense of ecological systems that make life on the planet and peoples' rights possible.

The capitalist, patriarchal, and racist system sustains the oppression and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendent communities, working-class people, and women's bodies and work. This same system exploits nature, with devastating effects that endanger ecological systems and their functions, placing millions of human lives at risk. This is why, as capital advances over territories and over the different spheres of life, it grabs land, water, and forests; destroys biodiversity and livelihoods; and dismantles the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendent communities as well as the hard won rights conquered by peoples and their movements through struggle.

The injustice inherent in the dominant capitalist system is at the root of socio-environmental problems, and it determines the unequal distribution of their consequences, with terrible effects on societies that are increasingly unequal, defined by growing concentration of wealth in a few hands. Power structures, along with growing pressure from transnational corporations (TNCs) and large national economic groups on national and international policy and decision-making, reproduce injustice and impunity, while also exacerbating systemic crises. Working-class peoples suffer most from the impacts of destructive projects such as mining, large dams, fossil fuel exploitation, and the expansion of monocultures and agribusiness. They also suffer the most from hurricanes, droughts, and floods.

On top of all this, in their constant quest to recoup profit rates and increase capital accumulation, the main actors in the system seek to profit from the crisis thereby imposing the so-called false solutions. These initiatives are part of capitalism's greenwashing and serve to consolidate the private appropriation, commodification, and financialization of nature through processes that increase land grabbing and dispossess the peoples who have historically cared for rivers, soil, seeds, forests, and mountains, and who depend on them for their livelihoods.

Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean (ATALC, for its acronym in Spanish), and the international federation to which it belongs (Friends of the Earth International – FOEI) pursue system change. This change requires us to confront systemic oppressions by dismantling patriarchy, racism, and colonialism, and to move towards a radical transformation of the economic, food, and energy systems, and collective or community management of biodiversity. This transformation goes hand-in-hand with struggle and resistance, and it demands organization and building peoples' power. Every time a community mobilizes against the construction of a mega-dam, or a social movement struggles against the privatization of services, they are re-affirming collective rights, paradigms, and logics in opposition to exploitation and dispossession. This creates the possibility of reproducing just systems based on reciprocity, which can open a pathway towards systems that view food, water, and energy as rights and not as commodities.

In this context, ATALC is committed to building emancipatory initiatives and political agendas that are driven by popular/working-class political subjects/actors who understand and confront the structural causes of the systemic crises. ATALC members stand in internationalist solidarity along with feminist, peasant, and workers' movements, Afro-descendent communities, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk organizations, and urban working-class organizations. Together, we resist the advance of capital and its predatory and privatizing logic on societies and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean; at the same time that we build the pillars of a new society organized around justice and peoples' sovereignty.

1. Written by Karin Nansen and Danilo Urrea, with contributions from FOE Argentina, FOE Brazil, CENSAT/ FOE Colombia, CESTA/ FOE El Salvador, COECO Ceiba/ FOE Costa Rica, Movimiento Madre Tierra/ FOE Honduras, Otros Mundos/ FOE Mexico, and REDES/ FOE Uruguay, December 2020. Translation to English, February 2021.

FEATURES OF PEOPLES' EMANCIPATORY AGENDAS AND INITIATIVES²

1. Peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives are built and driven by collective political subjects/actors, and have a class, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and internationalist perspective.

Peoples of the continent and the world have organized themselves throughout history as collective political subjects in order to struggle for justice and peoples' sovereignty, as well as to define and practice foundational principles for a society that is organized around the sustainability of life and that recognizes the centrality of productive and reproductive work. This is how emancipatory political agendas and initiatives have been created, providing a response to the structural crises of the capitalist system. These agendas seek to dismantle systemic oppressions, aiming at a radical transformation of society from a class, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and internationalist perspective.

The Continental Platform for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism³ (where ATALC participates alongside allied movements and organizations) plays a crucial role in providing continuity to a decades-long process of social and political construction and accumulation in order to strengthen the struggle against neoliberalism, against the power of large TNCs, and against the erosion or dismantling of democracy. The advance of neoliberalism and large TNCs have brought higher levels of oppression and exploitation of working-class peoples and nature. The continental convergence of movements also allows for the development of political platforms unified along the principles and political agenda of Food Sovereignty, climate justice and Energy Sovereignty, community forest management and collective management of biodiversity, economic justice, and feminist economies.

2. Peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives vindicate and dispute the political arena and public policies for the fulfillment of peoples' rights, while promoting organization and self-governance.

In the current context, politics has been delegitimized and trivialized, as well as captured and co-opted by large TNCs and economic power groups. Reclaiming politics in the hands of peoples is vital, and we must therefore seek to build peoples' power, contributing to full and participatory democracy, and providing a comprehensive response to the socio-environmental problems that affect us.

Alongside the social movements converging in the Continental Platform for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism, ATALC promotes a political agenda based on unity, which vindicates politics and seeks to change power relations. This demands organization, mobilization, and struggle. Some of the key questions that we must answer collectively include: How should we organize our societies, public services, the economy? How can we ensure care work that is necessary for life, and share this work? How can we ensure the rights of our peoples? How can we end the rupture between society and nature inherent in capitalism, exacerbated in its neoliberal and financial phase? How can we reverse the sexual division of labor and the dichotomy between production and reproduction?

ATALC member organizations contribute to system change by disputing the political arena to achieve progress that benefits peoples and ensures environmental justice, and at the same time to roll back the systems of oppression that seek to shut down our voices and prevent our strengthening as collective political subjects/actors. To this end, ATALC members demand public policies that respond to the needs and rights of peoples – like the right to land, to seeds, to water – while also working on peoples' and community organization and self-governance to build agroecological food systems, renewable energy systems, community forest management, and production and services co-operatives.

3. Peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives struggle for justice in the economic sphere

The systemic crises have exposed the need to abandon the capitalist and colonialist mode of production that imposes destructive policies and projects, denies the rights of working-class peoples, and exacerbates the socio-ecological crisis.

2. Nansen, Karin. Emancipatory Political Projects. Internal unpublished document, FOEI, 2020

3. The organizations that make up the Continental Platform are: the Latin American Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CLOC - La Vía Campesina for its acronym in Spanish), the World March of Women (WMW), the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), Jubilee South Americas, ALBA Movimientos, El Capitulo Cubano de Organizaciones Sociales, the Movement of Peoples Affected by Dams in Latin America (MAR for its acronym in Spanish), Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean (ATALC for its acronym in Spanish), Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ). www.seguimosenlucha.org (See also: <https://csa-csi.org/jornada-continental-por-la-democracia-y-contra-el-neoliberalismo/>)

It is increasingly urgent to leave behind the economy that depends on fossil fuels and the constant extraction and deterioration of natural “resources” (through, for example, mining and agribusiness) that plunder and destroy livelihoods. This same economy aggravates the interrelated crises of climate, biodiversity, food, water, inequality, care, and health.

Moving away from the current system involves disputing the economic sphere and vindicating that this encapsulates both the way society is organized and its metabolism with nature in order to satisfy the needs of individual persons and peoples. Economic justice requires new social relationships, recognizing the importance of work to develop the material base for the production and reproduction of life.⁴ Its goal is to improve peoples’ living conditions through productive processes and policies that are part of, feed from, and care for ecological functions and systems, instead of focusing on economic growth and accumulation. Economic justice demands placing the sustainability of life and caring at the center as an organizing principle of economic processes, reversing the sexual division of labor and the exploitation of women’s bodies and work. At the same time, it requires breaking the dichotomy between productive and reproductive work, and reaffirming the importance of women’s economic autonomy.⁵

4. Peoples’ emancipatory agendas and initiatives dispute control over territories and roll back the reductionism, commodification, privatization, and financialization of nature.

The advance of capital over territories in Latin America and the Caribbean has currently intensified. This brings a brutal militarization process and deployment of violence that attacks the life, cultures, and rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendent communities, peasants, fisherfolk, working-class peoples, and women. The situation leads to a dispute that has concrete physical expressions, but also to a dispute over meanings.

From the perspective of capital, territory is a space to be conquered, holding resources to be exploited through profitable activities that ensure capital accumulation. Therefore, the goal of capital is to transform territory into a platform to increase profit rates.

For peoples and communities who have a strong belonging to their territory, it is a space with multiple dimensions where the production and reproduction of life take place, and where relationships of reciprocity with nature are maintained. Territory is where culture and history are developed and where knowledge and wisdoms accumulated across generations are nurtured, maintained, and reproduced. Territory is where society, work, struggle, and politics are developed. It is a socially constructed space where resistance manifests and peoples’ power is built.

Connecting urban and rural territories, emancipatory political agendas emerge from struggles for the right to land, to water, to seeds, to rivers, to forests, as well as the right to the city, to housing, and to public services. This entails reclaiming and strengthening peoples’ control over territories and the commons to create the material, political, and social conditions to fulfill rights and satisfy needs. It also means fighting against environmental racism and property speculation.⁶

In this dispute over the meaning of territory and against capital’s control of it, an important struggle is currently taking place against the privatization, commodification, and financialization of nature based on the reduction of nature to a financial asset, to tradable units in the market. This is capital’s new strategy that enables it to expand and advance over territories, even boasting a purportedly green discourse while directly attacking the very existence of the commons – which includes material goods (land, forests, water, crops, etc.) and immaterial goods (knowledge and wisdoms, food practices, cultural expressions, etc.) that nurture community and that the community produces.⁷

The dispute over meanings can also be found in communities and territories where patriarchal oppression and class exploitation takes place, often rooted in historical practices and institutions. This calls for a popular/peoples’ political agenda that transcends disperse community and territorial struggles, integrating them into a comprehensive dispute with permanent feedback in the struggle for the rights of peoples.

4. Moreno, Renata (2013) “Economía feminista: una visión antisistémica”, in En busca de la Igualdad. Textos para la acción feminista, Sempreviva Organización Feminista (SOF), in Natalia Carrau, Mapping Economic Justice Solutions, unpublished document, FOEI.

5. Carrau, Natalia. Mapping Economic Justice Solutions. Internal unpublished document, FOEI, 2018

6. FOE Brazil is fighting against property speculation in the Hacienda Arado Velho urbanization project, defending Indigenous resistance.

<http://www.amigosdaterrabrasil.org.br/2020/12/02/audiencia-publica-da-camara-de-porto-alegre-volta-a-discutir-projeto-ajuizado-da-fazenda-ara-do-velho/>

7. Carrau, Natalia. Mapping Economic Justice Solutions. Internal unpublished document, FOEI, 2018

5. Peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives reaffirm peoples' collective knowledge and wisdoms and dispute technology.

Peoples' emancipatory proposals reaffirm peoples' collective knowledge – and its public nature – and demand that technology be controlled socially. In this line, the proposals vindicate society's right to democratically define and assess the most appropriate technologies for their political and social goals. This is not an opposition to technology; on the contrary, it is a recognition that many technologies have been the result of collective creation processes, nurtured by collective knowledge, enabling the development of tools and techniques to respond to the problems and limitations that humanity faced and to achieve more freedom.

However, technologies within the capitalist system are expressions of economic and power relations, and therefore play a key role in increasing productivity and surplus value, as well as in the exploitation of nature and human beings. As privatization of knowledge is imposed, science and technology – and decisions about their development and applications – are concentrated in a few hands, and this in turn increases the political and economic power of corporations that own them.

In line with ATALC's vision and solutions in the area of technology, we have integrated our environmental justice perspective in the political analysis of other movements and organizations through the Network for the Social Assessment of Technology (Red TECLA, for its acronym in Spanish).⁸ Coordinated joint work between social movements and scientists who are committed to society and nature is essential for building collective solutions in the dispute for the development and use of technology. Currently, large corporations develop and control new technologies that they then impose as solutions to the environmental crisis without any prior assessment or regulation. In this context, it is crucial to organize ourselves to analyze and collectively act in the face of each of these technologies, whose impacts go from exacerbating the environmental crisis and the exploitation of the working classes, to a higher concentration of power and erosion of democracy, among others.

8. <https://www.redtecla.org/>

ATALC AND ALLIES: POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION AND PROPOSALS

The following section describes emancipatory political agendas and projects in which ATALC and our allies play central roles. They all integrate the principles set out above.

Food Sovereignty

Originally conceived by La Vía Campesina in 1996, the political principle of Food Sovereignty has been crucial in the struggles, proposals, and political visions of many movements, including ATALC and FOEI, the World March of Women, Indigenous Peoples, artisanal fisherfolk organizations, pastoralists, and other international organizations that defend peoples' rights to land and territory, and that fight against neoliberalism.

Food Sovereignty affirms the right of peoples to define their own strategies, policies and agroecological and just systems of food production, distribution and consumption, based on peasant and small-scale production, and recognizing the central role of women. This means the right of peasants, fisherfolk, and pastoralists to land, water, and seeds, and the right to continue producing food in conditions of dignity. It is also the right of working-class peoples to access healthy food in sufficient quantities and at fair prices.

Women play a key role in producing food, conserving and reproducing native and local seeds, caring for water, and defending the territory. They have also developed and accumulated knowledge and practices that are essential in agriculture. However, women have historically faced denial of their rights by the patriarchal system and have lacked access to the necessary means of production. This has included the refusal to recognize women's knowledge and productive work, as well as a system of oppression that seeks to relegate women to the domestic sphere through the sexual division of labor. The advance of agribusiness has expelled women from their land, has snatched away their livelihoods, and has further exploited their labor, or simply displaced women from production.

Today's health crisis, added to the other existing crises, has demonstrated that one of the biggest risks we face is losing the sovereign capacity to feed ourselves, becoming further dependent on the agro-food industry that organizes itself to increase profits. This goes against the right to food. Organizing food systems controlled by peoples is essential to avoid submission to speculation and to the exponential increase in the price of the basic food basket, to prevent more and more people from going hungry, and to defend our health and that of our territories.

Towards this end, Friends of the Earth Argentina offers a space for selling local products in their main office in Adrogué, an urban area near the capital city of Buenos Aires. Local residents can access healthy and sovereign foods produced agroecologically, co-operatively, locally, and without intermediaries. The FoE organizers do so in coordination with rural producers from La Vía Campesina, the land workers' union (Unión de Trabajadores de la Tierra), and various peoples' economic co-operatives that produce processed foods, organic cosmetics, native seeds and seedlings. The Adrogué agroecological hub creates work opportunities for young people. They come for jobs in sales and logistics, but the space is also one of political training and activism for Food Sovereignty and fair trade. During the quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the space was open every 15 days, selling more than 500 kilos of agroecological fruits and vegetables each time.

REDES / Friends of the Earth Uruguay is co-founder and member of the Native and Local Seeds Network, with more than 30 local groups nationwide. The Network plays a key role in rescuing, producing, selecting, multiplying and exchanging local seeds. It supplies seeds to diversified agroecological systems made up of family farmers and urban and suburban household food gardens, thus contributing to the construction of Food Sovereignty, to feeding the people of Uruguay, and to the collective management and defense of seeds. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Seeds Network has increased its efforts to produce seeds and food, sharing them with community vegetable gardens and community soup kitchens.⁹

In Uruguay, as in other countries in the region, organizing and working collectively and through networks is essential to take forward a collective task like seed conservation and multiplication. Reproducing seeds on the land and exchanging them within and among communities sustains diversified, autonomous, and resilient food systems; this is a pillar of Food Sovereignty and agroecological production.

9. <https://www.redes.org.uy/2020/07/07/que-la-pandemia-nos-encuentre-organizadas/>

Having the necessary seeds, planting at the proper time, and knowing the features and behavior of seeds allows for greater autonomy and for engagement with the social dynamics, the agroecological conditions, and the cycles of time. Native seeds are selected by those who produce them based on their needs and in constant dialogue with the environment. Thus, they are better adapted to local conditions and are less dependent on inputs. By sharing seeds with the community, if a producer loses a harvest, they can rescue the variety from other growers. This practice nurtures and strengthens relationships between neighbors as well as the community, regional, and national social fabric. Organizing various spaces for gathering throughout the year is crucial to maintain this fabric vibrant. These include local group gatherings, national gatherings of group representatives, regional gatherings, and a national gathering of all members of the Seeds Network every two years. These gatherings always include a celebration with exchanges of seeds and knowledge.¹⁰

Some years ago, the Seeds Network, REDES / FoE Uruguay, and other organizations began to advocate for a public policy to promote agroecology; they were successful in getting a law passed in 2018 and the development of a National Agroecology Plan in 2019, with the active involvement of social movements. The plan was completed in February 2020 and includes the themes proposed by the Seeds Network and the group of organizations that pushed for the plan.¹¹ Both in its internal functioning and in its productive and political action, the Seeds Network is committed to a feminist vision of agroecology that highlights the essential role of women in seed and food production, and as political subjects/actors in Food Sovereignty and agroecology.

FOE Brazil organizes the Fruits of Resistance Fair that serves as a gathering space to exchange information about struggles and resistance that are taking place in the Pampa biome, the Atlantic Forest, and in Porto Alegre. The event takes place on the second Saturday of every month at FOE Brazil's main office. Groups that are invited to bring their products to the agroecological fairs are not selected based on productivity or purely "economic" criteria. Rather, participation in the fair is determined by other principles and, for example, can serve to bring women who are isolated and are feared to be psychologically or physically oppressed, closer to the group. In this way, participation in the fair is a way of linking a woman to a network of support and sisterhood, where her life and the care that the collective can offer is the most important factor in the invitation.¹²

As part of its historical commitment and experience in building Food Sovereignty and developing agroecology, CESTA / FOE El Salvador and the Movement of Victims and People Affected by Climate Change and Corporations (MOVIAC, for its acronym in Spanish) have proposed a national law to promote agroecology. The organizations emphasize that this law must support the work of small-scale farmers and peasants, as well as uphold the right to conserve and defend native seeds as a guarantee for the life and culture of communities. It must also stimulate the development of community markets for selling and buying food products. Additionally, the law must include other aims regarding corporate power, technology, and human and environmental health. It must prevent monopolies by transnational seed companies and forbid the use of genetically modified seeds, due to their dependence on industrial chemical inputs, their weakness in resisting extreme climate variations, and their harm to people and the environment. It must also forbid the use of toxic agrochemicals like glyphosate because it affects life, soil fertility, and causes negative impacts on aquifers, human and animal health – such as cancer, damage to DNA and chromosomes in human cells. Along this line, the organizations also call for rejection of agriculture that uses hybrid seeds and monocultures, especially if they take up large plots of land.¹³

The grassroots women that form the base of Movimiento Madre Tierra / FOE Honduras defend Food Sovereignty by maintaining household food gardens and developing natural medicines. They have planted traditional household gardens (known as milpas) that can sustain entire families, thus ensuring the basic elements to feed working-class peoples. The right-wing government in Honduras has used the global health crisis as an excuse to impose a quarantine and state of emergency, creating huge difficulties for working-class peoples. In this period, the milpas– promoted and worked primarily by women – have succeeded in collectively providing food for their families. They sell the surplus in the surroundings of Tegucigalpa neighborhoods, helping families in need to face the crisis, based on principles of self-governance and community and grassroots work.

FOE Honduras has spent many years rescuing knowledge and wisdoms based on natural medicine supported by plants and their properties. Developing and using this type of medicine, and reclaiming ancestral memory for its use, facilitates the

10. Audiovisual series: '¿Qué Semilla Germinó para que comieras hoy?', Red Nacional de Semillas Nativas y Criollas and REDES / FoE Uruguay, October 2020. <https://www.redes.org.uy/2020/10/13/serie-audiovisuales-red-semillas-nativas-criollas-uruguay-2020/>

11. <https://www.redes.org.uy/2020/02/21/plan-nacional-de-agroecologia-una-hoja-de-ruta-para-producir-y-consumir/>

12. Parahnos De Oliveira, Leticia, Una mirada desde el Ambientalismo Popular sobre las enseñanzas de la Economía Feminista, in "Cultivar la vida en movimiento: experiencias de economía feminista en Latinoamérica", WMW, SOF and REMTE, 2020

https://www.sof.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Cultivar-la-Vida_final-me%CC%81dia.pdf

<https://www.sof.org.br/cultivar-la-vida-en-movimiento/>

13. <https://atalc.org/2020/10/14/cesta-at-el-salvador-y-organizaciones-sociales-proponen-ley-de-fomento-a-la-agroecologia/>

treatment of common illnesses, particularly given the absence of the State that should guarantee people's rights. During the pandemic's most difficult times, FOE Honduras has become a bastion of health support, working in and around the capital city of Tegucigalpa to deliver solidarity support to the most impoverished communities.

Energy Sovereignty and Just Transition

The current energy system, organized around the accumulation of capital, is responsible for the climate crisis as well as the grabbing and destruction of territories and livelihoods. It is a profoundly unjust and racist system with its most severe impacts felt on the lives and health of Indigenous Peoples, Black and Afro-descendent communities, peasant communities, working-class neighborhoods, and women.

This is why the struggle for democratic control of the energy system is urgent in order to ensure energy as a right and roll back its privatization and commodification. Energy transition as put forth by ATALC envisions an energy system that is environmentally and socially just, and that guarantees the rights of working-class peoples and local communities. While it is crucial and urgent to abandon fossil fuels and make progress in adopting renewable energies to respond to the climate crisis, this cannot take place simply through a change in technology or in the energy matrix. It requires a re-organization of the energy system centered on the needs of peoples, while at the same time ensuring the health of territories. How much energy to produce, how to do so, and what for and for whom; these are all important questions that must be answered democratically, with an anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, and class perspective.

Across the region, movements and organizations are reclaiming the rights of peoples to make sovereign decisions over their renewable energy policies and systems that are socially and environmentally just; use appropriate technologies that are publicly owned and controlled; and guarantee the right to energy, dignified work, and the health of and caring for the territory. ATALC has played a key role together with these allies in building this proposal for Energy Sovereignty.

ATALC also actively participates in FOEI's process to advance the collective construction of a feminist just transition from a working-class, anti-racist, and anti-colonialist perspective, alongside allies from feminist, Indigenous women's, Afro-descendent, peasant, worker, migrant, and environmentalist movements and organizations. We work jointly on this agenda at the continental level with the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), the World March of Women (WMW), the Movement of Peoples Affected by Dams in Latin America and the Caribbean (MAR, for its acronym in Spanish), the Movement of Peoples Affected by Dams in Brazil (MAB, for its acronym in Spanish), the Latin American Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CLOC – La Vía Campesina, for its acronym in Spanish), Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), and the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) in the US.

ATALC and TUCA have a common history developing joint proposals and strategies for energy democracy and just transition from an environmental justice perspective. In this line, the two organizations, along with REDES / FOE Uruguay, will develop a joint project in 2021 to analyze the neoliberal regulatory frameworks and the involvement of transnational corporations in the energy sector in Latin America. The analysis seeks to identify the barriers that these frameworks represent for a just transition and the democratization of energy, as well as to promote the construction of public policy proposals for the energy sector that can contribute to a just transition in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Otros Mundos / FOE Mexico created the Energy Justice School, convening communities and organizations in the regions of Guatemala and Chiapas who are resisting against dams, and are part of the Mexican Movement of Peoples Affected by Dams (MAPDER for its acronym in Spanish), REDLAR, and MAR. The School is a space for reflection, analysis, and creating proposals for energy for peoples. Seeking local energy alternatives and identifying opportunities to replicate them, they have visited micro-hydroelectric dams in Guatemala and plan to visit others in 2021, as well as visiting a co-operative for community solar panels. In this same line, they are creating a network of biodigester users to generate household gas in Indigenous and peasant communities. They have organized training and capacity-building workshops for organizations in various regions of the state of Chiapas with the goal of linking diverse issue areas – the health of women and girls; respiratory problems; the effects of COVID-19; deforestation and forest management; loss of soil, access to water; and climate change, among others – with the alternative of biodigesters. Technical trainings also took place as well as a first community installation of the technology, and they are planning ten more installations in 2021.¹⁴

14. <https://otrosmundoschiapas.org/video-escuela-de-justicia-energetica/>
<https://otrosmundoschiapas.org/video-escuela-popular-ejidal-y-comunal/>

COECO Ceiba / FOE Costa Rica is raising awareness to build a critical vision of climate change and the public policy proposals presented in the country. They aim to mobilize more people along with other organizations in the environmental movement, denounce the real culprits who are responsible for climate change, pursue real structural changes to the system, and demand equity and justice, particularly for those who already suffer the impacts of climate change in the Global South.

CENSAT Agua Viva / FOE Colombia has advanced in research processes and proposals towards a just energy transition, developed with allied organizations, processes, and communities in different parts of the country, such as the Community Reserves Collective in Santander, Fundaexpresión, and SETAA / Movimiento Ríos Vivos communities, among others. The podcast “Convites para la Vida” (Gatherings for Life) captures and disseminates these proposals. The series has presented programs on harvesting new relationships, learning about biodigesters, agroecology to heal the Earth, the strength of water and peoples’ ingenuity, efficient stoves and firewood gardens, among others.¹⁵

Other emancipatory proposals for Energy Sovereignty include the Training School for Alternative Energy Community Workers that operates under the premise of socializing knowledge and building local autonomy.¹⁶

Biodiversity and Community Forest Management

Forests are vital for ecosystems, natural processes, and sustaining communities, and, therefore, for sustaining lives. They are complex systems, extremely rich in biodiversity; their conservation and adequate management ensures the protection of water and soil, and it minimizes communities’ vulnerability to natural disasters. Forests play a regulatory function for climate and are vital for addressing the climate crisis.¹⁷

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, destruction of biodiversity and natural habitats due to expanding economic activities and infrastructure works (such as monoculture plantations, mining, large dams, and fossil energy exploitation) have devastating effects on the lives and health of peoples. These activities not only destroy the livelihoods of those who depend on forests and biodiversity, but they also greatly alter ecological systems and their functions, to the point of severely compromising them.

Faced with the dire reality of forest destruction, it is fundamental that the collective rights of peoples be recognized, implemented, and respected, so that their millennia-old practices of collective territory management, maintaining and nurturing biodiversity, may continue and become stronger. There is scientific proof that forests controlled by Indigenous Peoples and local communities have a higher level of conservation and a higher ratio of biodiversity than those protected through legal entities such as, for example, national parks. The management and practices developed by peoples guarantee their food and health, and enable them to generate economic income.¹⁸

ATALC members in every country defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendent and peasant communities, forests and biodiversity – showing that those who best protect biodiversity and forests are the communities that live there, producing and collecting food, fibers, clothing, medicines, and water. These peoples and communities – and their forests – are not only threatened by deforestation and “resource” extraction, but also by green economy projects and the financialization of nature, such as carbon markets and off-set mechanisms.

COECO Ceiba / FOE Costa Rica has a strong commitment to community forest management. The organization believes that while the National Parks model has contributed to preventing the destruction of many forests during the expansion of the livestock industry, it has also shown deficiencies in creating and promoting dynamic links between communities and forests. In fact, in some cases the strategy became a model that excluded communities and facilitated corporate piracy. Although the latest studies of forest cover in Costa Rica indicate that large areas have been recovered, they also show the existence of other areas that have emerged as large “deforestation fronts”, where forests with high strategic value for biodiversity conservation or for linking protected wild areas were destroyed in the last five years. Additionally, the few primary forests that still exist outside of protected wild areas and overall forests are under constant attack.

This is why COECO Ceiba prioritizes the promotion of forest restoration and planned management in rural and urban communities, through support for communities and organizations, research, promotion of forest restoration and ecological

15. For more information (Spanish only), see: <https://transiciones.info/secciones/transiciones/>

16. This video provides more information on this initiative (Spanish only): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWgDf5nGZml&t=44s>

17. <http://www.coecoceiba.org/bosques-y-biodiversidad/>

18. <https://www.foei.org/features/principles-for-a-just-recovery-from-the-covid-19-crisis>

timber production, and legislative advocacy for reforms and adjustments to the forestry law in order to facilitate an optimal relationship between forests and sustainable communities. In the process, COECO Ceiba has built strong alliances with peasant, environmental, and Indigenous organizations locally, nationally, and internationally.

FOE Argentina seeks to strengthen community management of the palm tree savannah within the territories of communities linked to the Guaraní peasant federation in the province of Corrientes. This type of management emphasizes non-timber uses by Indigenous and peasant communities of the palm groves, and their importance for bio-cultural heritage. Community management of palm groves based on traditional and ancestral knowledge is essential for protecting palm trees and associated biodiversity, as well as to strengthen communities that confront corporations destroying their lands.

FOE Brazil has strengthened alliances with other movements and organizations in support of Indigenous Peoples and communities in the Amazon that resist the destruction, fires, and death policies of Bolsonaro's fascist government. In this line, they denounce the impacts that the EU – Mercosur Free Trade Agreement will have on the Amazon and its peoples.¹⁹

Water for life

The historical construction of a peoples' emancipatory agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to water goes back several years, when various national groups presented proposals for enshrining water as a commons and a fundamental human right.

It is worth remembering that in 2004, the plebiscite to enshrine the right to water in the constitution was won in Uruguay. REDES / FOE Uruguay actively participated in the struggle organized by the National Commission in Defense of Water and Life (CNDAV, for its acronym in Spanish). Similarly, CENSAT Agua Viva / FOE Colombia actively participated in a process towards a water referendum. It had the same goal of recognizing water as a fundamental right within the Constitution, but it faced strong attacks by the Colombian right wing in alliance with transnational corporations that profit from the privatization, commodification and financialization of water. Still, the democratic process led by peoples resulted in the creation of local, regional, and national spaces for coordinated work in defense of water territories and their public and community management.

An important aspect of the emancipatory proposals in Colombia is the promotion of community aqueducts by people who take political agency in territories and claim their rights from a holistic perspective to protect and care for essential ecosystems that regulate the water cycle.

In El Salvador, CESTA has promoted public policies to recognize water as a fundamental human right and to protect water territories from mining projects. These are among the many processes and initiatives that ATALC members foster as emancipatory proposals for water, developed in coordination with working-class, community, and collective political subjects/actors, with the participation of peasant communities, Afro-descendent communities, Indigenous Peoples, and urban working-class peoples. In Uruguay, the struggle continues to ensure the sustainable management of water basins, based on the dispositions included in the 2004 constitutional reform. This requires abandoning the agribusiness production model that deteriorates and contaminates water sources and implementing a public policy that promotes agroecology, as proposed by the Native and Local Seeds Network and REDES / FoE Uruguay, along with other organizations.

These national efforts are inspired by initiatives that take place in other countries, with the corresponding adaptations according to national contexts, and they integrate an element of internationalist solidarity in support of struggles in the different countries. Additionally, the region has taken on the task of producing knowledge and expertise together, with the perspective and goal of building regional proposals. Towards this end, a participatory research process was carried out over the past decade in the countries where ATALC has a presence. The result was the development of *The State of Water in Latin America and the Caribbean*, and the subsequent analysis of *Public policy and the fundamental right to water* in the region – providing a comparative view of progress and setbacks in this area. We are currently working on the construction of proposals for public policies on water, with emphasis on some countries but seeking to develop comprehensive public policy proposals at the regional level. We must also highlight that the construction of these proposals is linked to national and regional realities, and in a direct relationship with Food Sovereignty, agroecology, Energy Sovereignty, community forest management, etc., as they are emancipatory proposals in which water as a fundamental right is a necessary condition for their realization.

19. "Burning Amazonia: A Global Corporate Crime. A warning to stop the MercoSur - European Union Free Trade Agreement"
<https://www.foei.org/resources/publications/burning-amazonia-eu-mercosur-free-trade-agreement>

Economic Justice

As feminist economics affirms, we must place the sustainability of life at the center and organize work to ensure production and the reproduction of life. This entails valuing the vital importance of care work. We must therefore reverse the sexual division of labor that assigns care work to women without recognizing it as work, imposing a patriarchal exploitation system on women that is built on the reproduction of capital. The racist nature of this system means that the worst oppression is felt by working-class and Afro-descendent women.

From an emancipatory perspective, society must organize productive and reproductive work in order to meet peoples' collective and individual needs. We must do so by strengthening the public sphere as well as the social and solidarity economy, emphasizing women's economic autonomy.

Addressing the crisis of gross inequality in our continent demands that we organize the economy based on justice – starting with systems of production, distribution, and consumption that are fair and ecological; strengthening the rights of working-class peoples; and ensuring tax justice. Emancipatory proposals include defending and strengthening public services that are owned and controlled by the State, municipalities, or communities; co-operativism with collective ownership of the means of production by the working classes; local markets and fair trade, prioritizing the well-being of people and the planet.²⁰

All ATALC members defend public services and support the development of local markets and social and solidarity economies. For example, Otros Mundos in Mexico has promoted a community currency – the Túmin – that has gained a lot of momentum. The goals are to survive the economic crisis, to rescue ourselves, and to strengthen local and neighborhood economies and the relationship between producers. The organization is part of a national solidarity economy network and has offered workshops and training on the capitalist banking system, raising awareness on another economy, one that is based on solidarity and trust, and that organizes and links peoples and communities.²¹ In the same line, ATALC members are incorporating proposals that come from feminist economics in their public policy proposals as well as in their actions and struggles in the territory.

A comprehensive political perspective

We cannot view each of these proposals in an isolated or compartmentalized manner. Rather, they are interconnected and collectively form a peoples' political agenda. When we speak of Food Sovereignty, for example, we are simultaneously integrating climate justice, economic justice, and feminist economics. This holistic understanding of peoples' emancipatory initiatives and agendas clearly manifests itself in the networks and coordinated spaces where ATALC members participate.

For example, FOE Brazil created a space in its main office – Casanat – to foster community participation in socio-environmental debates, to organize political action by social movements and organizations, and for activists to work. By rehabilitating a conventional publicly owned building, the organization has demonstrated that sustainability is possible in cities, disseminating low environmental impact practices and techniques, such as energy efficiency and solar thermal energy, natural lighting and ventilation, local wastewater treatment, reuse of waste, and productive landscaping. The organization received an award in the social movements category from the Architecture and Urbanism Council of the Rio Grande do Sul province, which shares their struggles.²² It also participated in the Atlas of Utopias²³ and received the Transformative Cities Award, a crucial recognition in a year during which they were threatened with eviction from their offices (#CaSanATResiste).²³

FOE Argentina accompanies groups of women from vulnerable neighborhoods with employment proposals that promote their economic autonomy and that support co-operativism, while also building Food Sovereignty and restoring the value of ancestral knowledge regarding food. Many of these women come from Indigenous communities and they restore the value of their knowledge by using their recipes.

20. Nansen, Karin, The magnitude of the planetary crisis requires action of a similar size; the solution is system change, FOEI, 2018
<https://www.foei.org/features/planetary-crisis-system-change>

21. <https://otrosmundoschiapas.org/video-tumin-en-chiapas-economia-solidaria/>
<https://otrosmundoschiapas.org/el-escaramujo-108-la-moneda-comunitaria-tumin-x-aniversario-de-la-economia-solidaria/>

22. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpOUxX_5XUs - award presentation Architecture and Urbanism Council

23. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s500oFcAc3s> - award presentation Transformative Cities

<https://transformativecities.org/atlas/housing8/>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=659890854532731>

FOE Argentina organizes training workshops, gender spaces, and supports the organizational fabric by offering market spaces that foster social and solidarity economy, and that promote sales and consumption of sovereign and healthy foods. This process has led to gatherings for dialogue, sharing experiences, and building collective power to confront patriarchy and support women's economic autonomy and entry into the workforce. Additionally, they support women from La Vía Campesina in the province of Buenos Aires to strengthen the productive and distribution capacities of peasant women's horticultural and processed food co-operatives, thereby building and strengthening Food Sovereignty. They offer workshops on issues such as social economies, sales and distribution, and self-care; all with a popular education approach, towards the collective construction of knowledge and of a peoples' feminism.

Together with allies, ATALC members develop, propose, and disseminate comprehensive political proposals for the transformation of societies.

REDES / FoE Uruguay developed a political platform for the 2020 departmental elections, understanding that these present an opportunity to weave holistic responses that affirm women's central role as political subjects/actors. These responses are connected to Food and Energy Sovereignty, and to climate, environmental, and gender justice. Given the seriousness of the systemic crises, the organization has made political proposals to restore peoples' ability to decide over the production systems that are best suited to satisfy needs and guarantee rights, and that will enable relationships of reciprocity with nature. These proposals require that we strengthen participatory democracy, which entails active participation from organized society and the entire population in designing public policies as well as in monitoring and evaluating their implementation at the departmental level. They also require permanent spaces for participation at the territory level.²⁴

Along with the Costa Rican Federation for Environmental Conservation (FECON, for its acronym in Spanish), COECO Ceiba has developed an agenda that incorporates the principles of just recovery and the emancipatory principles proposed by FOEI and ATALC.²⁵

CENSAT has joined other organizations in creating a platform on the transitions that are necessary for the reproduction of life.²⁶ They have also promoted the "Convites para la vida" podcast series mentioned earlier, which highlights various political proposals and initiatives on water, biodiversity, and Food and Energy Sovereignty, among others.²⁷

24. <https://www.redes.org.uy/2020/09/04/propuesta-redes-politicas-ambientales-departamentales-uruguay-2020/>

25. <http://www.coecoceiba.org/ruta-a-la-recuperacion-justa-reflexiones-del-movimiento-ecologista-en-costa-rica/>

26. <https://transiciones.info/transiciones/necesitamos-una-transicion-ambiental-para-la-reproduccion-de-la-vida/>

27. <https://transiciones.info/secciones/podcast/convites-para-la-vida/>

> FINAL REFLECTIONS

The political vision for system change put forward by Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean and the Friends of the Earth International Federation comes to life in the construction of peoples' emancipatory agendas and initiatives such as those described in this document, with the work conducted by national member groups and ATALC as a whole as a starting point. The work of our member groups feed each other through a shared regional analysis; both regional and national activities apply the features and principles described in the second section of this paper.

Concrete initiatives and projects for the transformation of the economic, food, and energy system – as well as collective, community, and peoples' management of biodiversity – make it possible to confront systemic oppressions through the struggle to dismantle patriarchy and against racism and colonialism. Thus, the actions described earlier contribute to these processes while at the same time building peoples' power.

There is a permanent feedback loop between the actions of collective political subjects/actors that enable the defense of territory, and the construction of peoples' political agendas centered on the rights of peoples and the fulfillment of those rights. This makes the resistance against destructive projects and the architecture of impunity imposed by transnational corporations and international financial institutions real. A peoples' emancipatory agenda links local actions with national and regional proposals that are driven by working-class political subjects/actors that give continuity and life to struggles through constructions that are also intergenerational.

The creation of a new society where peoples' sovereignty and justice prevail requires internationalist solidarity, learning together from popular knowledge and ancestral and traditional practices that contribute invaluable to the creation of emancipatory agendas and initiatives to stop the advance of capital and its voracity. We continue – and will continue – to count on the capacity that our peoples have taught us to recognize ourselves and engage in the struggles of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities, peasants, urban working-class peoples, and women; and to offer our commitment, experiences, knowledge, and wisdom to confront systemic oppressions wherever and whenever they seek to impose themselves.





**Amigos de
la Tierra
América Latina
y el Caribe**