

FINAL REPORT FOR PHASE 6

May 2019-February 2020



Participants of "Gardening Project 2019", SAVWA South Africa

About GAIA MicroGrants

GAIA MicroGrants Programme encourages SCI activists to promote climate justice and sustainable living through deeds and words. It does so by providing grants of up to 500€ for organizing grassroots activities and by highlighting examples of model projects. These have to be in line with SCI Mission and guided by SCI core values: Volunteering, Non-Violence, Respect for Human Rights, International Solidarity, Respect for the Environment, Inclusion, Empowerment and Cooperation. So far 77 grassroots projects were supported through the programme. The 6th phase of GAIA MicroGrants took place between May 2019 and February 2020 and covered eight projects.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the main facts and learning points defined throughout that time. GAIA MicroGrants is run for and by SCI volunteers. It is designed to be an opportunity to learn through practice and keeping track of the main conclusions is an element of this process - both for the activists implementing the projects, prospective applicants and those running the programme itself.

1. Overview of GAIA MicroGrants Programme implementation

General information

During the 6th phase of GAIA MicroGrants 12 project applications were submitted by SCI branches and partners for assessment. Eight project proposals were approved and successfully implemented, out of which three were part of a pilot Working Group Support Grant. The application process was open to SCI branches, partners and working groups.

Submitted applications were evaluated by the Selection Team according to the assessment criteria detailed below. Assessment provided by each member of the Selection Team was recorded using an online document accessible to all team members.

Assessment criteria followed by the Selection Team

In order to be successful, project proposal had to:

- Contain a completed application form and fit one of the two funding areas:
 - *Supporting frontline communities in preparation for climate change;*
 - *Making our food systems more sustainable;*
- Combine action and education on sustainable living and/or climate justice.
- Provide practical benefits to the local community.
- Have a plan for follow up activities.



Participants of the "Living with Bees" project learning about wild beekeeping, GAIA Kosovo

Pilot edition of new funding area

Additionally this year four branches and partners had the opportunity to apply for the pilot edition of the Working Group Support Grant. Invitation was extended to long-standing applicants of the GAIA MicroGrants and its goal was to help local groups become stronger and develop new activities. Organizations that were invited to apply for these funds (up to 350€) were

identified based on their record of past applications submitted to GAIA MicroGrants. If they declared having an existing group working with issues of sustainability and climate change, they were eligible to receive the funds. Applicants were able to propose activities that would strengthen their group through team-building, allow them time to plan future activities and celebrate past accomplishments, consult local communities, invite topical experts etc. The only requirement outside of submitting self-evaluation was, in the evaluation phase, to present a future activity proposal to be carried out by the local working group. The groups that applied are part of SCI Sri Lanka, SAVWA South Africa and PVN Albania.

Geographical spread of Applicants

As in the past five phases, 75% of the available funding was designated for projects organized by SCI branches and partners in the Global South. However this year an unusually high number of submitted applications came from non-Southern partners. The Selection Team and the Programme Coordinator decided to dedicate the group's savings to support more of the incoming applications, but even that wasn't enough to meet the demand coming from Europe and Australia. Running out of funds allocated for non-Southern applicants was the reason for rejecting 4 out of 12 submitted applications. The reasons for this lack of geographical balance are not clear, but in the future editions even more attention should be paid to promoting GAIA MicroGrants across the entire SCI Movement.

Out of eight implemented projects, three were organized by SCI branches and partners in the South - two projects by South African Volunteer Work Camp Association and one by SCI Sri Lanka (out of that two within the Working Group Support Grant framework) and five by European branches - SCI Germany, GAIA Kosovo, Projekte Vullnetare Nderkombetare Albania (2 projects) and Zavod Voluntariat (SCI Slovenia).



Participants of "GFF (Garden Friends Forever)" project building a school garden, PVN Albania

List of implemented projects

Supporting
Frontline
Communities In
Preparation For
Climate Change

- **Climate Messenger Initiative, SCI Germany**

A group of 15 activists gathered to discuss issues related to climate change, environmental injustice, sustainable food systems etc. During the three-day workshop they learned interactive non-formal education methods, composed and tested workshop outlines. Later, as Climate Messengers, they conducted these workshops during workcamps taking place all over Germany with the intention of getting workcamp participants better informed and equipped to take action for climate justice themselves.

Making Our
Food Systems
More
Sustainable

- **GFF (Garden Friends Forever), PVN Albania**

A group of 10 local and international volunteers introduced pupils in a small town school to the principles of permaculture gardening. After learning the basic theory, a group of 60 people got down to work on establishing a garden in the school yard. All this was an opportunity to talk about the impact of green spaces on quality of life, the environment and the climate.

- **DIY Balcony Garden, Zavod Voluntariat Slovenia**

Fifteen urban young people came to two workshops with little to no knowledge about growing plants. By the end of the day they knew enough to give growing food a go - they even left with plant saplings to start their gardens immediately. One group focused more on exploring urban gardens, while the other started a balcony garden and learned the tips and tricks for growing food in limited spaces, all according to the principles of permaculture. The seeds of curiosity and self-reliance were planted!

- **Living With Bees, GAIA Kosovo**

An international group of 15 participants gathered in a permacultural estate in the mountains, Bozevce, to learn about the role of bees in supporting the ecosystem and about the intricacies of natural beekeeping. To conclude the three-day workshop they visited a bigger-scale beekeeper in the area to reflect on how humans perceive bees nowadays. The tangible outcome of this meeting is that Bozevce will now have an addition of beehives maintained in the spirit of respect and support for the little pollinators.

- **Food Gardening 2019, SAVWA South Africa**

Volunteers from SAVWA have been promoting food gardening amongst the most vulnerable groups in their community for years. This year an international group of 10 participants focused on getting more young people educated in starting a garden to support their diet on a low budget. They learned about composting, soil management and seeding, used reclaimed materials like old crates, stones and bricks.

- **SCI Sri Lanka**

Local educators representing schools and universities, as well as an international volunteer met for a very intensive two-day workshop. The twenty participants discussed an idea for a project which could bring valuable lessons to children's lives that are not delivered by the schooling system in Sri Lanka, such as opportunities to interact with students from different religious and ethnic backgrounds and time to learn about nature and environment. According to the plan, it would be a year-long project consisting of multiple weekend meetings. Each activity would bring together children from different regions in a hands-on workshop, covering environmental activities, field trips and simply living together.

- **SAVWA South Africa**

A group of five volunteers of SAVWA met and decided they are ready to initiate a Climate Justice Campaign at their organization. As one of the participants stated, the group might have been small, but it is "a powerful and action oriented team". SAVWA activists have implemented a series of community food gardening projects over the years and now they decided they want to broaden their perspective and scope of actions. Their future plans focus on school visits across Soshanguve and organizing workcamps with local and international volunteers, engaging even more people in action for climate protection.

- **PVN Albania**

During a three-day capacity building workshop PVN activists established a team of ambassadors, who will organize projects spreading climate justice. Participants covered a wide range of topics, from project management, through helping people reestablish their connection to nature to DIY personal care products. PVN volunteers already visit schools in Tirana with environmental workshops and now they grew their ranks and got ideas for more activities.



Participants of "DIY Balcony Garden" creating and exemplary small space garden, Zavod Voluntariat (SCI Slovenia)

2. Programme outcomes and management

Application management

All incoming applications were handled by a team of four volunteers (three members of the Selection Team and one Programme Coordinator). The programme is designed by SCI activists for SCI activists and is meant to accommodate applicants without prior experience in applying for funds and provide them with a learning opportunity. This is why, if any information in the application was missing, the programme team asked additional questions to help develop the project concept more thoroughly. The aim was always to make sure that the team organizing the project considered all essential elements of project planning and follow up. Additional questions sent to applicants were defined in email exchanges or during Skype calls by the Selection Team members and then forwarded to the applicant by the Programme Coordinator.

Some numbers

In total 125 people were directly involved in the various project activities. In total eight workshops were held, usually with a strong practical aspect to them. Most of the workshops had an element of starting a new or improving an existing food garden, which remains in line with tendencies from previous phases.

The creativity and passion exhibited by the workshop organizers always felt contagious. GAIA MicroGrants is primarily meant as a learning opportunity, but the outcomes of every project go well beyond that every time.

Commonalities In this phase all projects took the form of a workshop, in four out of eight cases held for an international group of people. Workshops were mainly targeted to adults, who in one case then provided workshops for school youth.

In this phase workshops were focused on smaller groups of participants than what was usual in the past and in two cases the participants facilitated workshops for other groups as a follow up to this project.

Half of the workshops were deeply rooted in the principles of permaculture. It is clear that this holistic approach to land and ecosystem management has a great appeal to SCI activists and can be implemented without high financial input. It should serve as a lead for future editions of the MicroGrants Programme.

Decline in number and geographical scope Overall the number of submitted applications was surprisingly low, especially that the previous 5 years saw a steady incline. Also the fact that applications came mostly from Europe was an unexpected shift.

Visibility The programme and individual projects were given visibility mainly through social media and SCI's E-Zine, as always with a principal goal of inspiring Activists to take action in their communities. Considering the decline in number of applications, in the future the possibility to apply should be communicated even more clearly and with higher frequency.

Recommendations for the future phases Every year the Programme Team draws conclusions for future editions. It is equally a learning opportunity for the applicants as well as the coordinators of the MicroGrant. Some of the recommendations for next phases are as follows:

- The GAIA MicroGrant Programme should be integrated into SCI international meetings in an organic manner. Discussing the programme developments and maybe even highlighting some of the projects can be put on the main agenda. This would allow both to give more visibility to excellent efforts of SCI Activists as well as promote the possibility to apply for the grant.
- At least one member of the Programme Team should be an active part of an SCI branch or another governing body. This is essential in order to keep the programme relevant to the needs of the Activists and SCI Movement itself. It would also allow the Programme Team to respond

to new developments and suggest changes affecting the Programme in a more timely manner.

- In order to aid financial sustainability of the programme, it would be best if it could be included in a larger fundraising application submitted by SCI. Again having somebody more closely following the developments in SCI as part of the Programme Team would help to identify such opportunity.
- It would be beneficial to organize a face-to-face meeting for the Programme Team. Traditionally the Team has been working fully virtually for the past six years, but an in-person meeting could accelerate the development and scaling up of the GAIA MicroGrants Programme efforts.



Participants of the "Gardening Project 2019" practicing their new skills, SAVWA South Africa

3. Programme Governance

*Composition
of the
Programme
Team*

The programme was facilitated by a group of five people. The roles were:

- Selection Team - **Silva Huda, Amelie Jaquet, Albina Rybakova**
- Programme Facilitator - **Marta Sykut**
- Review coordinator - **Ivo Knoepfel**

All activities were followed by a representative of SCI's International Executive Committee - **Jackie Purves**, who was also Acting International Coordinator of SCI for part of this phase's duration.

Larissa Soledad Fankhauser and **Federica Vitale**, long-term volunteers at the International Secretariat supported the Team in the areas of promotion and fundraising.

Since its beginnings, every year GAIA MicroGrants receives support from SCI's Financial Officer, **Ossi Lemstrom**, who manages the programme's finances and overall financial reporting.

The Selection Team remained the same as in the previous three phases in an effort to provide continuity and maintain high standards in the development of this volunteer dependent programme.

Terms of Reference All roles are performed on a voluntary basis. Terms of Reference for the roles of Selection Team members and Programme Facilitator remained unchanged since the 2nd phase and were defined in separate documents (available for downloading from SCI's Members Area).

Overview of Programme finances The eight implemented projects were supported with a total of €3554. Terra21 Foundation matched financial contributions from SCI 3:1.

Ivo Knoepfel from Terra 21 Foundation remained in contact with the project team and provided feedback to inspire further developments.

Funds for the pilot Working Group Support Grant were fully donated by a private donor (total of €1500).

Administrative costs were covered by SCI's internal funds and resources for co-funding Terra21 Foundation's input were contributed by individual SCI Activists through SCI's Travel Policy scheme.

4. About SCI and Terra21 Foundation

Service Civil International SCI's vision is a world of peace; social justice and sustainable development, where all people live together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflict. SCI is a volunteer organisation dedicated to promoting a culture of peace by organising international voluntary projects for people of all ages and backgrounds. The organisation consists of 43 branches and an ever growing number of partner organisations. Living and working together with people of different backgrounds helps volunteers to break down barriers and prejudices. It allows them to experience a world of mutual respect and understanding. In this sense, volunteering can be seen as a way of life - a demonstration of the possible reality of a peaceful and cooperative world. GAIA MicroGrants programme is an essential part of SCI's mission, vision and strategy towards achieving them.

Web page:

<https://www.sci.ngo/what-we-do/climate-justice-campaign/new-gaia-microgrants-programme>

E-mail: microgrants@sci.ngo

Terra21 Foundation Terra21 Foundation's mission is to support civil society's role in the following areas:

- Peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation (global focus);
- Strengthening local communities' resilience to climate change (focus on South and South-East Asia).

Our partners are typically local organisations (often part of international networks), because Terra21 Foundation believes that local organisations are best positioned to develop sustainable solutions to conflict and to the consequences of changing weather patterns. Our mission is to support them by providing funding, strategy development support and showcasing their work to other donors.

More information can be found in Terra21 Foundation's annual reports: www.fondateurs.ch/en/foundations/terra21-foundation/.