



Fondo Acción Solidaria

Weaving networks to achieve
socio-environmental justice





The case study on **FASOL** is part of a series contributing to a larger research on intermediary organizations. [You can find all the details here.](#)

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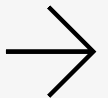
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FASOL is identified as an organization created by civil society actors belonging to local movements with regranting as their top priority.*



*We have identified 4 different models on how intermediary organizations work. [To learn more, visit us here.](#)



01. How did they start?



Fondo Acción Solidaria (FASOL), translated to Solidarity Action Fund*, **was established in Mexico in 2007, through the Global Greengrants Fund's support.** This nonprofit fund aims to enhance projects and initiatives of grassroots groups, collectives, and communities focused on socio-environmental justice and rights in Mexico. Currently, **FASOL works in 21 of the 32 Mexican states.** It implements the **Contributions Program** (Programa de Aportaciones) **to provide seed funding to local organizations and grassroots initiatives.** This program, launched in 2007 when FASOL was founded, is in permanent evaluation and adaptation.

*More information on FASOL is available [here](#)



02. How do they define themselves?



FASOL perceives itself as an active participant in the socio-environmental movement in Mexico. **As part of this ecosystem, its role involves resource intermediation, organizational strengthening, and network building.** Artemisa Castro, executive director, describes FASOL as “a living organism in constant evolution and growth.” In line with this, the organization **fosters collective work by strengthening the social fabric and facilitating network creation among all actors and movements with similar goals.** Additionally, FASOL is part of a coalition* promoting the practice of Community Philanthropy, which encourages greater funding for grassroots organizations. This model aims to increase recognition levels for grassroots groups’ and communities’ projects and initiatives.

*The coalition is Arrecife and is composed of eight Mexican organizations: Fundación ADO, Fundación Comunitaria del Bajío, Comunalía, Fondo Acción Solidaria, A.C., Fundación Comunitaria Oaxaca, Fondo Semillas, Fondo Oaxaqueño para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, and Fundación Tichi-Muñoz y Fundación Merced.



03. How does FASOL work in Just and Equitable Governance?



FASOL is **committed to socio-environmental justice and ensuring the rights that such justice entails**. Furthermore, through the Community Philanthropy model, FASOL seeks to **influence the power dynamics that have shaped philanthropy and fund transfers to grassroots organizations in Mexico**, strengthening communities' and collectives' agency in decision-making processes. Moreover, based on its commitment to social justice, FASOL has **integrated an intersectional gender perspective strategy into all its activities**. This strategy permeates the grantee partners and their activities. Through this lens, FASOL recognizes the wide diversity of challenges that social struggles and the defense of people's rights face.





04. How do they fund?

THE CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM

This is FASOL's tool to fund grassroots and local organizations, which has been active since the organization was founded. It operates thanks to a voluntary Mentors Network that supports FASOL.

“MENTORS ARE FASOL'S HEART”*

Mentors are socio-environmental activists who have deep knowledge of local challenges, who have worked in different territories, and are acquainted with local groups and networks working on socio-environmental rights and justice. The Mentors Network is composed of 49 mentors from throughout Mexico, who actively work in different territories to identify potential organizations and networks aligned with FASOL's core values.

*Artemisa Castro, FASOL's executive director, emphasized this quote due to the key role mentors play in the organization.



IDENTIFYING GRANTEE PARTNERS

FASOL does not implement open calls for proposals. If an organization is interested in receiving support and working with FASOL, there are different channels they can use to reach out. Once initial contact is established, the organization would be connected to the mentor who is closest to their territory. As such, the **Mentor Network performs a fundamental role in FASOL's structure, facilitating the linking process of local organizations with FASOL.** Moreover, mentors work hand in hand with the local organizations to structure proposals, which are later evaluated by FASOL to receive funding. Additionally, once the local organizations become grantee partners, mentors accompany the organizations to assist in the identification of needs and challenges and later draft strengthening strategies that would facilitate the organization's growth and progress.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

When it comes to the grant decision-making processes, FASOL relies on a selection committee to revise, evaluate, and choose the proposals that will receive funding. The selection committee is composed of four mentors, six members of FASOL's operations team, and two external advisors. To ensure an objective process, **mentors contributing to the committee rotate depending on the specific proposals being reviewed.** This process is supervised by the Contributions Program manager. The aim is to avoid mentors involved in drafting specific proposals to participate in their evaluation process. Additionally, a cross-review is carried out, and results are discussed and agreed on before funding decisions are made.

IMPLEMENTATION

FASOL endeavors to give grantee partners autonomy to decide upon and execute the grants they receive, so they do not intervene in day-to-day execution. As part of this commitment, FASOL has also developed the Strengthening and Capacity Building Program and the Partnerships Program, which seek to provide grantee partners the tools they require to achieve their goals and bolster their networks.



05. Who do they fund?

FASOL has financed 171 local grassroots organizations, collectives, and communities in 17 of the 32 Mexican states. Food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, sustainable local economies, environmental popular education, water resource conservation, climate change mitigation, and community resource management are among the topics FASOL has funded. Furthermore, financing is divided into three schemes, depending on the recipient's characteristics:

SCHEME 1

Activists who work with communities, collectives, or other social organizational forms, contributing their knowledge, tools, and skills.

SCHEME 2

Activists who, in addition to the characteristics of the first scheme, are backed by the organization they are part of, and with this support, strengthen the assistance they provide with equipment, infrastructure, knowledge, and tools.

SCHEME 3

Organizations that accompany processes in communities, providing resources, tools, infrastructure, personnel, knowledge, and skills to promote, strengthen, and connect initiatives within one or several communities.

When it comes to the second and third schemes, FASOL does not require organizations to be formally established.



06. Who funds FASOL?

Global Greengrants Fund has been a strategic ally for FASOL since its beginnings. It is one of its main financial partners, directing funds to FASOL annually and helping FASOL to connect with other partners and stakeholders. Moreover, FASOL has received support from other financial allies, such as the Ford Foundation, Cotyledon Fund, and Global Fund for Community Foundations, among others. Regarding the distribution of resources, in its 2022 Annual Report, FASOL shares that 65% is allocated to regranting and programmatic activities, 21% to development*, and 14% to operational activities.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES (2022 ANNUAL REPORT)

65% to regranting and programmatic activities

21% to development

14% to operational activities

*All activities aiming for FASOL's internal strengthening fall under the category "Development."



07. Challenges

HIGHLIGHTING THE VITAL ROLE OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PROJECT SUCCESS

FASOL must highlight and demonstrate to funders the importance of the contributions made by groups, collectives, and organizations in the implementation and development of their projects and initiatives on a daily basis. Moreover, they have needed to identify the correct mechanisms to portray and show how these contributions extend beyond mere financial resources.

CREATING MECHANISMS AND AN ECOSYSTEM THAT ENCOURAGES LOCAL PHILANTHROPY

From Mexicans, for Mexicans.

ENCOURAGING COOPERATIVE APPROACHES

FASOL must work to identify strategies that foster more collaborative and less competitive approaches for all organizations pursuing similar objectives. For instance, FASOL is part of a consortium designing a network to support community action. Developing strategies for collaborative work among donors, organizations, and other stakeholders supporting community action has posed a challenge.





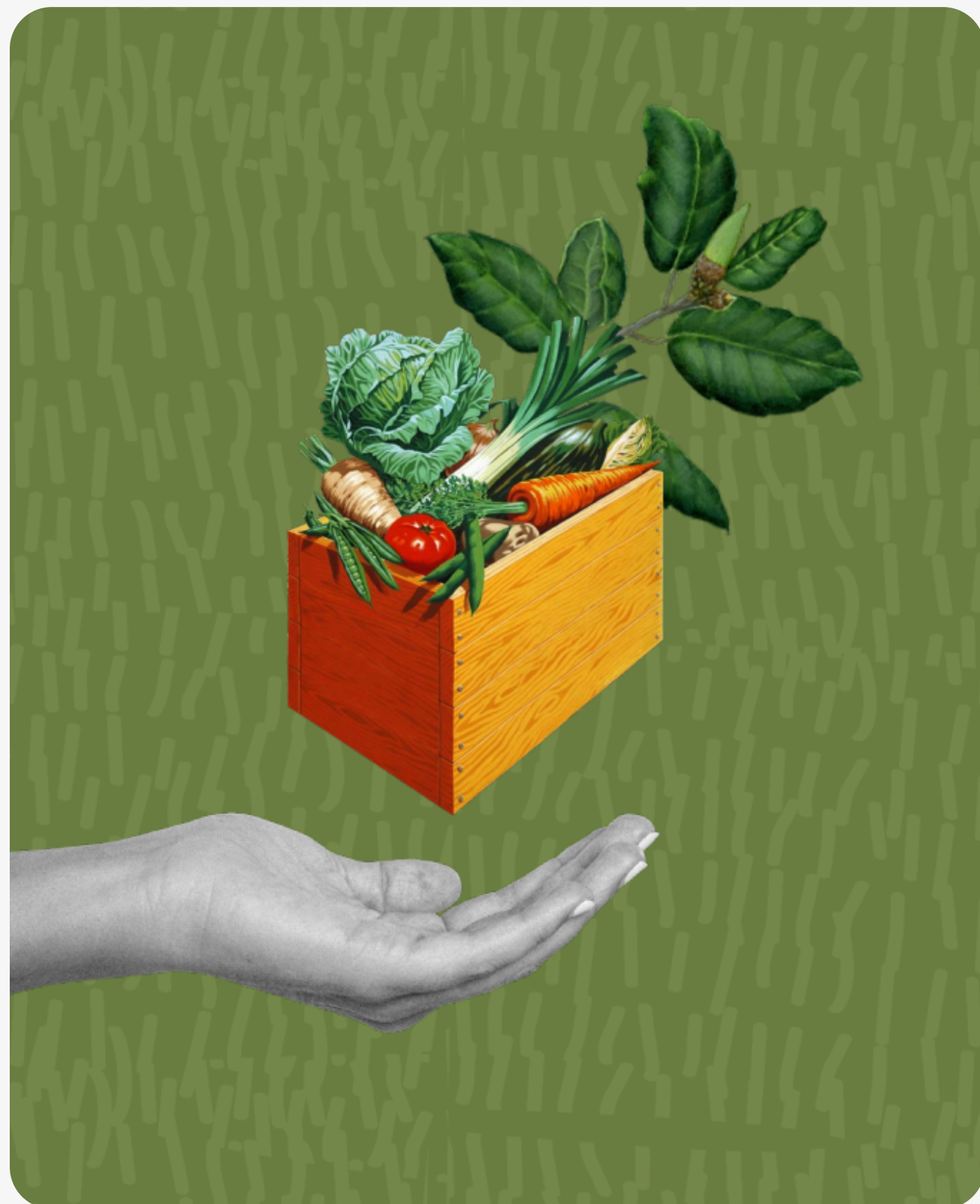
ENSURING A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF FASOL'S ROLE IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM ECOSYSTEM

While FASOL engages in resource intermediation, organizational strengthening, and network building, it refrains from directly intervening in the specific struggles of individual organizations.

OVERCOMING FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The organization must address fiscal constraints and navigate the administrative and political costs associated with funding activities. It is essential to manage financial resources prudently while also supporting civil society organizations to sustain their impactful interventions.





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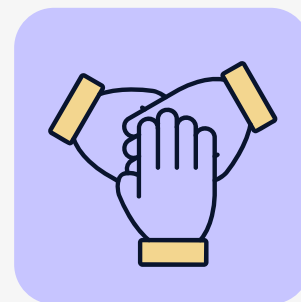


08. Recommendations for funders and donors



RECOGNIZE LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Acknowledge all the contributions made by groups and collectives to funded projects. Recognize the value of non-financial contributions, especially those from grassroots organizations, to foster trust and partnership.



TRUST LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

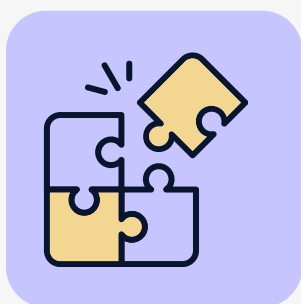
Connected to the last point, trust in local actors and their knowledge of community challenges. Provide them with the necessary resources and support to address issues effectively, thereby strengthening local capacity and ownership of development initiatives.



ENSURE FUNDING FLEXIBILITY

Ensure flexibility in funding mechanisms, particularly in response to the territories' dynamics and needs. Be open to adapting funding approaches to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, such as risks faced by environmental activists.





PROMOTE COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES

Promote strategies that prioritize collective efforts and that encourage coordination and partnership.



ADDRESS POWER DYNAMICS

Recognize and address power dynamics inherent in resource allocation processes. Understand the implications of these dynamics on communities and groups in rural areas to promote equitable distribution of resources and foster sustainable development.



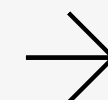
OPTIMIZE FUNDING PROCESSES

Streamline funding processes to ensure that resources reach beneficiaries efficiently and are not lost in bureaucratic processes. Simplify application procedures and minimize administrative burdens to enhance the effectiveness and impact of funded projects.



PRIORITIZE FIELD ENGAGEMENT

Prioritize fieldwork and direct engagement with communities over desk-based approaches. Invest in on-the-ground initiatives and participatory processes to foster a greater understanding of local contexts and strengthen relationships with grassroots organizations, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.





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