

*“These Are the Tools that You Can Carry with You.”*

# A Mid-Term Review of the Climate Justice Resilience Fund

POLICY BRIEF | September 2020

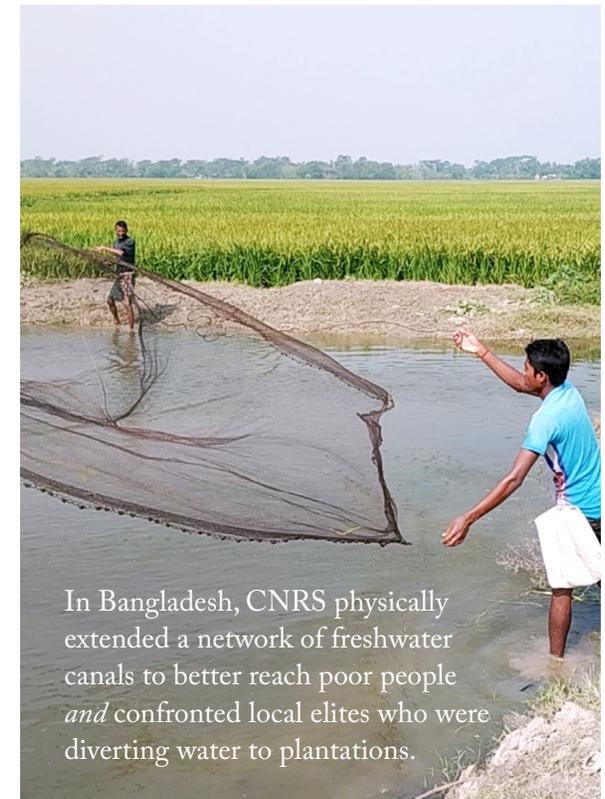


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**The Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) is a new and innovative endeavor. It seeks to catalyze meaningful and far-reaching climate justice and resilience aims. CJRF has a compelling and innovative portfolio. Its grantmaking supports promising initiatives, and there are signals of both initial impact and potentially significant contribution towards long-term, sustainable change.**

CJRF funds climate justice and climate resilience initiatives in East Africa, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arctic as well as more globally-focused grants. It is dedicated to empowering women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to create and share their own solutions. In its first three years, the fund has made 34 grants worth \$15 million. This briefing paper summarizes the key findings and recommendations from ISET-International’s independent portfolio evaluation of the Fund.

- CJRF is most successful when it finances community-driven (not just community-based) approaches and advocacy.
- CJRF pursues a synthesis of local-level solutions in key climate-vulnerable sectors; shifts critical concerns from the periphery to the center; acts on intersectionality; and infuses technical questions and service delivery with advocacy which addresses underlying drivers of climate vulnerability.
- CJRF is to be especially commended for bypassing a prosaic path of ‘technical’ solutions in favor of developing leaders, building movements, and pursuing transformational change at the local level.



In Bangladesh, CNRS physically extended a network of freshwater canals to better reach poor people *and* confronted local elites who were diverting water to plantations.



# KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

## Changes in Key Actors

- CJRF has a strong eye for identifying champions of change.
- CJRF funds the right people – not just the right projects.

## Systems-Level Change

- CJRF pursues systems change at the local level by selecting the right partners and empowering them to pursue tangible projects and hard-hitting advocacy.
- Confronting the underlying drivers of vulnerability with the right people and right projects advances climate resilience within a justice lens, and can be transformational.

## CJRF Contribution

- CJRF's innovative and intersectional approach seeks the “right mix” of people and programs.
- CJRF pairs tangible projects with advocacy and movement building.

- CJRF's external engagement strategy is under-resourced.
- Some of the premises that inspired CJRF are out-of-date.
- Knowledge generation is a gap.

## Constituent Empowerment

- CJRF funds vulnerable constituencies: women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples.
- CJRF selects grants which aim for empowerment and inclusion.
- CJRF-funded projects equip grantees to address and overcome barriers that marginalize them.

## Local Solutions

- CJRF funds initiatives that deliver results in the local context.
- Many CJRF stakeholders aspire for integrated and contextualized approaches. CJRF is seen as a donor that understands this – and acts accordingly.
- CJRF grantees want to define success in their own terms, and tailor projects to local conditions. CJRF is one of the few donors who enable them to do this.

## Portfolio Mix and Geographic Scope

- Strong and sound portfolio strategies (overall, and within regions).
- The logic underpinning CJRF's geographic scope is not compelling. It does make sense to build upon its own (and, previously, Oak Foundation's) partnership, with an aim towards long-term engagement.

- Other funders who join hands with CJRF should be able to finance partners and projects in other parts of the world, so long as they are consistent with CJRF's vision and strategy.

## Advocacy

- CJRF sees advocacy as key to its mandate.
- CJRF supports advocacy and access to information, either as standalone initiatives or as an element within broader programs.
- Local-level advocacy is essential and difficult for grantees to raise money for.
- Some grantees have “scored big wins” in the advocacy arena.

## Grant Selection

- Grantmaking processes are smooth and responsive.
- CJRF staff are thoughtful, committed, and accessible to grantees.

- Partner selection is too personal. While perhaps suitable for a startup, CJRF may be criticized for lacking transparency.

## Non-Financial Support

- CJRF supports partners to network with each other; different regions have had divergent experiences.
- CJRF partners appreciate information, news, and event announcements from CJRF.
- Missed opportunity: technical assistance.
- Some partners stumble over climate rationale; CJRF could better support them.

## Adaptive Management

- Grantees mostly give CJRF high marks for flexibility and supportive problem-solving.
- As CJRF matures and (potentially) becomes more independent from The Oak Foundation, some policies and structures should be revisited.





## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Short Term

- CJRF's grantmaking strategy is strong, sound, and implemented. It should continue along this pathway.
- CJRF's geographic scope is more convenient than compelling. It should not restrict other potential funding partners to join hands with CJRF, especially if they focus on *other* parts of the world.

### Long Term

- CJRF has potential to influence cutting-edge international debates, such as what effective climate resilience programming looks like through a justice lens. It should pro-actively engage.
- CJRF should revisit what niche to fill in the global climate funding landscape.
- Knowledge generation is a gap. CJRF can influence policy and practice through action research.
- CJRF recognizes the importance of advocacy – including advocacy at the local level. It should continue to emphasize this niche.
- CJRF should seek to better bridge advocacy issues, actors, and targets.
- CJRF should extend core funding to successful partners – not just finance individual projects.
- CJRF should continue to support its partners with the flexibility and personal attention that they have experienced. However, grantmaking processes should become more transparent.
- CJRF is outgrowing certain policies and procedures inherited from Oak Foundation and/or were suitable for a start-up.
- M&E should be strengthened, and better harnessed to advance knowledge generation and communications.
- As CJRF matures, consider a structure that increases participation and grantmaking by partners.





## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Our overarching conclusion is that CJRF is to be commended for crafting a thoughtful, ambitious portfolio of meaningful grants which demonstrate emerging results within a short timeframe.
- CJRF’s small, committed team consistently exhibits insight and commitment to not just the what (i.e., funding projects which deliver results), but the how (i.e., empowering grassroots action and marginalized constituencies).
- CJRF’s finances individual projects, but selects them with an aim to catalyze integrated and intersectional approaches to climate resilience, and to build movements and leaders. It should continue along this pathway.
- CJRF’s underlying strategy is sound, and effectively guides funding the “right mix” of advocacy, development interventions, and empowerment while putting marginalized people at the forefront.
- CJRF is maturing operationally and programmatically. Nevertheless, its portfolio is full of powerful stories which reflect the Fund’s strategy.



## CJRF PARTNERS IN ACTION

### SmartIce (Canada)

- SmartIce tool integrates traditional knowledge of sea ice with advanced technology.
- Data helps local people make informed decisions which help Inuit people be safe and resilient.
- Program hires local youths to bridge worldviews, perspectives, and economies, and equips them to face an uncertain future.

### Centre for Natural Resource Studies (Bangladesh)

- Extended irrigation channels so that poor subsistence farmers had freshwater.
- Hard-hitting – and dangerous – local level advocacy when elites captured and diverted water to their businesses.
- Access to water is meaningless without rights to water use.

### Tebtebba

- Tebtebba is composed by and for indigenous peoples worldwide.
- With funding from Oak Foundation, CJRF, and others Tebtebba’s advocacy helped forge a strong Indigenous Peoples Policy for the Green Climate Fund.

### MakeWay and Dehcho First Nations (Canada)

- Indigenous Guardian program monitors water and land management across Canada.
- Strengthens Indigenous Peoples’ natural resource management and land claims.
- Indigenous guardian programs are now networked and learning from each other.
- Land stewardship and guardian programs have equipped First Nations to address climate resilience and pursue climate justice.

### IMPACT (Kenya)

- Equipped local communities to understand – and defend – their rights under the Community Land Act.
- Enabled local communities to secure full land title.
- Partners with local communities for participatory, culturally-appropriate environmental protection and management.



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