

LAB4GE

Learn Abroad to do better at Home for Gender Equality



Dear readers,

The fourth edition of our LAB4GE will focus on an issue that is of high imminence. The push to combat climate change is resounding in various spaces in recent times, and its importance is slowly reaching a larger scale of the population. Though climate change and its effects has been widely discussed, the role of women aiding to combat climate change is not spoken much. We wanted to focus solely on women's contribution to climate change in the fourth LAB4GE issue. We sincerely hope this edition will show a glimpse of the caliber women possess and the impact they create when they contribute towards combating climate change. Both in a miniscule and a large scale in the society.

This issue covers six amazing women from six different countries taking active action against climate change in various ways. We truly hope this will pose as an inspiration to contribute towards combatting climate change!

LAB4GE INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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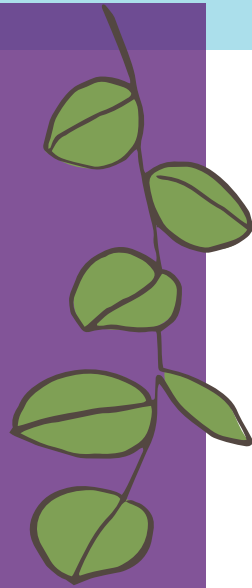
JUDIT CSÍKVÁRI ZSÖRK FOUNDATION

Judit Csíkvári grew up in a block of apartments in South-Eastern Hungary and as a child, she was almost only out in nature on school trips. She turned to protecting nature when she was confronted with the destruction of a rainforest, a tribe's habitat on the other side of the world. Since that, Judit has come a long way by devoting almost all her time and energy to fighting against climate change and promoting agroforestry systems and forest gardens.

She graduated in the early 2000's at the University of Miskolc, Faculty of Arts, Department of Cultural and Visual Anthropology. She was initially interested in the social science side of the relationship between agriculture and social development trends, but later her theoretical interest turned more and more into practical ideas, and she started to look for a farming method that would allow her to produce healthy food while preserving natural and ecological values. Judit is also a mother of a 6-year-old son.

She started putting theory into practice by buying some abandoned land in Western Hungary. It was not the ownership of the land that attracted her, but the unique opportunity to try out nature based agricultural methodologies. She did not stop at cultivating the land.

As the initiator of a foundation (Zsörk Foundation), she has been constantly thinking about how to promote the methodologies such as forest gardens (a low-maintenance, sustainable, plant-based food production and agroforestry system based on woodland ecosystems). Her mission is to advance sustainable farming and to support innovative agricultural technologies based on traditional knowledge and advanced conservation techniques. The long-term goals include developing a culture of conservation, with a special focus on agriculture; promoting the preservation of the natural environment and the introduction of environmentally friendly, high-quality food production. In terms of local environment and nature conservation, one of the main activities is to enhance research to assess the wildlife of Zsörk (the outside part of Pápateszér in the Bakony mountains) and its surroundings. Besides, the Foundation focuses on the protection of cultural heritage, the shaping and protection of the built environment, the cultural traditions and the values of the community.



Though Judit is full of energy and has definitive goals, she also faces difficulties in implementation at the same time. One of the barriers are gender and age-based prejudices. In the Hungarian agricultural sector, it is usually the senior men who take leadership. The other obstacle is to find the best way to influence the will to change agricultural practices that have been fossilised over decades.

Despite these drawbacks, she has gained devotion probably for a lifetime in a life-changing experience a decade ago in Ecuador. This turning point was when she met with the Shuar people, an indigenous tribe in the rainforest. This, to date pushes her to desperately try to 'not let nature behind'. She saw the results of their destroyed environment, the effects of deforestation and how the rights of the Shuar's access to a healthy and sustainable life were ignored. This deep experience motivated her to stand up for environmental and social sustainability and start to work by starting with her own neighbourhood's ecosystem. And even more now, because parallel to the active work in the local Foundation she is also the chair of the European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF). This work allows her to extend her ideas in terms of the geographical scope and regarding the diversity of methodologies.

EURAF aims to strengthen information and awareness among professionals and the general public, to support education and research in agroforestry, and to obtain political decisions that could allow the use of trees on farms in Europe. On a European level, as a chair of the EURAF, she can contribute towards bringing together researchers, farmers and also influence European policies towards a more sustainable form of agriculture.

Working close to nature is uplifting for Judit and a rewarding frame of life. Judit feels that in the last 10 years her biggest achievement has been the preservation of a huge land in Zsörk and raising a lot of awareness in the local community. It might seem like a minor step, but now, the mayor of the village decided to apply the continuous cover forestry (sustainable management of forests) approach in the lands owned by the local municipality.

Along her journey, financial sustainability has also been a challenge, since most of her work has been voluntary. An option to gain profit from the lands they have bought in the last year (close to 30 hectares) in Zsörk is possible but it is very challenging to make much profit from the forest gardens. One needs manpower to harvest the fruits, nuts, shrubs, herbs, vines and vegetables, and also automation is not possible in this diverse ecosystem and not many people are interested in indulging in physical labour. The harvested fruits, vegetables are grown without chemical fertilisers and thus cannot be preserved for longer periods, so the only solution is producing jam, syrup and other similar products. This process also requires time, manpower and financial investment. Another huge obstacle is climate change itself. This remote area has no watering system and the more and more dry seasons cause serious damages. Therefore, a variety of nature-based solutions for water treatment have to be applied.



Her vision remains to sustain the lands and keep alive the forest garden and to combine it with ecotourism in Zsörk. Also to have more and more people who believe in the paradigm to shift to low-maintenance, sustainable, plant-based food production and agroforestry systems based on woodland ecosystems.

To achieve real change we need people like Judit, who strongly believe in the value of sustainability. Both locally and at European level, she tirelessly fights to ensure that the agricultural sector adopts practices that are at the very least harmful for the environment. This determination affects friends, colleagues, and local communities. She is not only speaking about solutions at the European level, but also put it in practice at the local level.



DR. AMIERA SAWAS

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES AND RESEARCH AT
CLIMATE OUTREACH, UK.

Recently some concerns have been stressed about the gendered dimension of climate change. Women's organisation have for long now emphasized that climate change is not gender neutral and in fact, tends to increase gender inequalities. But very few analysts have considered how climate change, gender and security are interconnected.

Working on this topic is dr Amiera Sawas, current Director of Programmes and Research at Climate Outreach, UK. She is a feminist researcher and advocate, focused on the intersections of climate, environment, gender and security. As well as an expert in global participatory research and public engagement, climate change communication and policy making.

She has been conducting research in private, non-governmental and academic sectors over the past 10 years. This has taken her to various countries including Sweden, Pakistan, Jordan and Kenya. As a result, she's passionate about the potential of bringing diverse stakeholders together to combat climate change and set an inclusive vision for our collective future.

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Amiera holds a PhD in water governance and human rights in Pakistan and a postdoc that focussed on the implications of the low carbon transition for gender equality and security. As well as a Masters in Global Politics (LSE) and a Bachelor in Psychology from the University of Manchester.

She has worked extensively on participatory and collaborative research with some of the people most affected by climate impacts, with a focus on women and minoritized communities. She uses a feminist and intersectional research approach, which aims to put people at the centre and overcome the barriers and exclusions that prevent their voices from being heard.

Her journey in this field began with the Climate and Development Knowledge Network, where she worked as a communication officer to support decision-makers in designing and delivering climate-compatible development. After which she became a Research Associate at King's College, and worked as part of the Safe and Inclusive Cities research programme which was funded by the International Development Research Center (Canada).

"Climate
change
is
not
gender
neutral"



Over 2.5 years she conducted research on gender and violence in urban Pakistan. As her work progressed, the linkages between gender, changing access to environmental resources and violence became increasingly evident. Therefore, she became concerned with how climate change and, importantly, responses to climate change would impact security. After which she worked at Imperial College London where she led a new, policy-relevant workstream on climate change and security, researching the linkages between climate change adaptation and security in Pakistan.

She believes that gender intersects with other categories of identity – like socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, class, religion, disability – to create compounding ‘intersections’ where a person’s vulnerability may worsen or reduce. To take one case, in Amiera’s work with King’s College London and IBA Karachi on gender and violence in urban Pakistan, the most vulnerable groups to both experiencing and perpetrating violence included minority ethnic, young males residing in informal settlements.



This is in contrast to established assumptions. Why is this the case? Because they are dealing with extreme economic and political marginalisation in an uncertain economy, whilst also having to ‘live up’ to the pressures of ‘being a good man’—including financially supporting their families. In moments of environmental stress, frustrations bubble over into violence and joining non-state armed groups becomes one of the only options for economic and physical security. In the gender equals women approach, young men like this get left out of the analysis, meaning risk assessment and mitigation strategies suffer critical gaps.

After a few years she became a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment and developed a conceptual framework and stakeholder ecosystem for a research programme on the linkages between climate change transitions and peacebuilding and conflict.

During her time as a Researcher in the Climate Change and Risk Programme at SIRPI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), she was conducting research and worked with policymakers on security and risk mainly researching the linkages between climate change adaptation and security in Pakistan, in partnership with local stakeholders. She also joined Action UK as Senior Climate and Gender Justice Advisor; and focused her work on supporting research that centres on the voices and needs of the people living on the frontlines of the climate crisis, especially women and girls.

Amiera has been a consultant to key development, multilateral organisations and the private sector including the United Nations. She was on policy, research, legal reform and rights-based litigation, MEAL and strategy development. She was supporting legal advocates and claimants on human rights-based cases in various countries and worked with UNDP/UN-Women on policy advice and workshops on 'Gender and Responsive Local Government Service Delivery'. Also, she has conducted global research on designing gender based violence programmes in fragile states and contexts affected by violence' and was a co-author of a report on ethnic minorities' experiences and perceptions of climate change, climate policies and movements in the UK.

Currently, she is part of the Climate Outreach team as Director of Programmes and Research. They are working with people from all walks of life to engage with climate outreach by leading the mobilisation of social research, supporting climate advocates new and old, and promoting the importance of public engagement. They believe that a social mandate on climate change is needed - where everyone, regardless of their background or identity - feel part of the climate story and feel they have agency to take action and hold decision-makers to account.



Amiera believes that there can be no societal shift towards a low carbon and resilient world without the buy-in and meaningful engagement of a wide range of stakeholders. So through her experience in multi-disciplinary research, she will continue to support climate advocates and promote the importance of public engagement.

ASSOCIAZIONE SUD

LUCIANA DELLE DONNE MADE IN CARCERE - ITALY

By creating a powerful brand, Luciana delle Donne has found a way to hire hundreds of women in prisons and to embed them in a production system which begins and ends outside of the prison. Women are indeed hired with a regular contract, which pays for their legal expenses and allows them to save up for their first periods after detention. She compensates for the lower productivity inherent to work inside prison by working with for-profit companies that donate materials to Made in Carcere.

Her model has been taken up by the Minister of Justice as the only functional example of paid work in prison.

Luciana became an orphan from her father when she was only 7 years old. With 5 other siblings, she had to learn quickly how to be independent and shape the future she wanted for herself. She began her career working in a bank in Lecce, her local town, and she invented in 1991 the first prototype of online banking in Italy. Because of this disruptive invention, she was hired by a major financial institution and moved to Milan, the financial capital of Italy.

When she was about 40, she decided it was time to have kids, focus less on her work and start a family. But her body thought otherwise, and she was unable to conceive. This led to a moment of depression quickly transformed into the beginning of a new life. She abandoned her career in banking and decided that if she could not be a mother, she could take care of other people's children who were neglected. She returned to her hometown and began working with the children of female inmates in Lecce's prison.

She rapidly understood that the best chance for these children to have a future was to prevent their parents from repeating their mistakes by ensuring their economic stability through work. She began training female inmates in a profession for which there was a decent demand, which both Italian and migrant inmates, literate or illiterate, could equally perform: the textile industry. Since 2008, she has established not only training workshops but a whole brand of products designed and made in prison. The inmates are paid, can send money to their children, and pay for better legal advice. Their days are filled with activities, reducing drug intake, behavioral issues and improving the relationship with other inmates and staff.

“Life is made of choices, not opportunities. Choosing MADE IN CARCERE means promoting a new social well-being and a world full of hope.”

-Luciana



MADE IN CARCERE



Giving a second chance also means not inquiring about negative side of one's story to focus on the positive. Luciana asks all inmates not to tell her the reason they are imprisoned and wants all of her staff to do the same.

Luciana is not paid for her work with Made in Carcere and lives off the rent of a property she bought with her severance payment at the end of her banking career. She thinks that she can convince more people to invest in Made in Carcere if it remains clear she is not making a living out of it, while dedicating herself fully to it.

Made in Carcere (made in prison) offers women real waged jobs while serving their sentences. They learn new skills that will allow them to choose employment rather than reoffending once they are out. Made in Carcere's women produce textile products both for consumers and on behalf of other businesses. At the same time, Luciana's work has an environmental impact, as she gives a second chance to waste material. Luciana involves several businesses in the large Italian textile industry to donate unused fabric to Made in Carcere, reducing waste, and cutting the cost of production, so that more of the income can be used to hire new workers in prison.

Her model is based on the idea that the waste of one industry can be reused while at the same time providing a job opportunity to those who need it the most. She began her work in prison with textile products, but her model has already tipped to other industries. As a local foodstuff business found itself with oversupply of flour, Luciana accepted their donation and found a prison with sufficient equipment for cooking large quantities of food. She began a new production of biscuits made in prison.

Luciana transforms detention into a time for learning. She sets standards that are comparable to those found in the outside world, giving women with little or no experience in the non-criminal economy, not only new skills, but also the experience of life in a real company. By keeping themselves busy, women tend to behave much better, to improve in other aspects of their psychological and social lives. They have new-found pride, as they can pay for legal expenses and send checks to their children and families. The current re-offense rate for women who have gone through Luciana's program is 0%.

For this reason the Italian Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has noticed Luciana and has assigned her the task of creating a network of all experiences of work behind bars in Italy and to connect them into a production system called Progetto Sigillo. Once the MOJ money ran out, the consortium of prison's workshops continued to survive only because of the demand created by the Made in Carcere brand. Luciana has managed to achieve what the government has tried and failed to achieve in years: to profoundly change the nature of detention using work to empower inmates to begin a new life, while at the same time paying them a real wage, as the law requires. She can barely keep up the demand from more prison directors wanting Made in Carcere to set up working labs inside their units.

In June 2014 Italy was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for inhumane conditions in which prisoners lived. Life in prison is not easy anywhere, but conditions in Italy are particularly dire. Italy is second only to Serbia and Greece, in the whole of Europe in terms of overcrowding, with 147 inmates for every 100 assigned spots (tiny cells meant for 3 inmates, usually host 4 or 5).





In addition to difficult living conditions, inmates in Italy spend most of the time in prison without much to do. Several make new connections that will result in a new web of criminality: as soon as they leave prison, they are more likely to re-offend. The rate of re-offence in Italy is as high as 70%. However, for those who work the rate is massively reduced.

A second parallel problem is that of industrial waste. The textile sector accounts for 12.7% of all manufacturing production in Italy and every year a considerable proportion of the fabric and other textile material produced ends up wasted. This has an environmental effect and often a cost, as businesses need to pay for this material to be dumped or recycled.

Luciana began in the local prison of her town Lecce. She then moved onto Trani in the same region. She now works with 12 prisons all across Italy.

Furthermore, she has managed to organize the different one-off programs of work inside prisons into an ecosystem of production. Whereas most programs would end once funding was over, Luciana has kept those alive by creating more demands for her products outside of prison, so that more inmates could be given a job. She has created a network of prisons in which inmates can work to create an interconnected ecosystem and one sales channel with its own brand. The system can be implemented in more countries.

The key difference to other programs that seek to offer employment to inmates, is that Made in Carcere has made the fact that these products are made in prison the central element of its marketing strategy. Wherever there are prisoners and industries with left-over material, Luciana's model will be replicable.

To continue hiring more people and offering them a chance to change, Luciana had to lower cost elsewhere: the cost for the raw material needed to be reduced. For this reason, Luciana has actively involved the outside world in Made in Carcere, especially the wider fashion industry. She has begun to reach out to large and small businesses in the textile and fashion industry asking them to donate their left-over material. Sometimes it is a box of silk, sometimes is a truck full of fabric. She currently purchases 30% of the material and gets 70% donated. She would like this proportion to increase to 10/90 in the next years. This system also has an impact on the environment, as it focuses on material to be reused and given a second life.

Her model is completed by connecting the work inside the prison not only to other industries, but to responsible consumers. Made in Carcere is therefore made into a powerful brand and its products are sold through dedicated shops, online or through third-party retailers.



MADE IN CARCERE main goal is to “contaminate” economic and civil society, through the promotion and dissemination of our model of “regenerative economy.” An ethical business model, based on principles of regeneration and awareness of marginalized people, to protect the environmental impact and social inclusion, thus leading over time to a systemic change throughout the territory.

You can find this information and more here: madeincarcere.it & ashoka.org/en

IBOX CREATE

CLIMABAR

BY CARMEN HUIDOBRO AND BELÉN HINOJAR

One of the main problems in the fight against climate change is to get the message across and capture the attention of that part of the population that is not aware of sustainability and is not interested in issues related to the environment.

Amid the health crisis of 2020 and also as a result of the opening of bars in Spain, CLIMABAR was born, a communication and outreach initiative on sustainability and the fight against climate change, but in a humorous way, capturing the attention of a very broad target audience



Carmen Huidodro and Belén Hinojar are the founders of CLIMABAR, two millennials who use technology and social networks as tools to communicate their message about the climate crisis through black humor and a lot of irony with their famous memes. Both are from Madrid, the capital of Spain, and have known each other since childhood.

Carmen Huidodro, studied a Degree in Environmental Sciences, is an environmentalist, content creator and editor at the European Climate Foundation.

Belén Hinojar, studied a degree in Audiovisual Communication and a postgraduate degree in Advertising, Marketing and Social Media and a postgraduate degree in film, radio and television scriptwriting, works as an advertising creative.

The main problem with Green Communication is that the message usually reaches people who already have a certain interest in sustainability and the climate crisis, making it very difficult for outsiders to get the message.

Their contribution to the fight against climate change is through the social network Instagram and the Twitch platform where they explain in a colloquial and humorous the climate crisis that the planet is experiencing. Their ironic and funny conversations are accompanied by videos that accumulate thousands of views, which turns his content into a vehicle that manages to reach people who did not show interest in the climate crisis or who felt identified with sustainability.

"CLIMABAR, is the perfect formula to talk of the sustainability of the planet."

The logo for CLIMABAR, with 'CLIMA' in a multi-colored font (C: black, L: pink, I: blue, M: yellow, A: red) and 'BAR' in a multi-colored font (B: green, A: purple, R: black).



CLIMABAR's journey began when Carmen and Belén, childhood friends, found themselves in the pandemic without work, and with a future that looked very dark, at which point they were aware that it was time to talk about issues that occupied many conversations between beers with friends in any bar on the streets of Madrid before the pandemic: the climate crisis. Both realized that green communication had to be transformed because people did not come, and thus they combined the point of view of an environmentalologist with that of an advertising creative and through a relaxed language full of irony. The CLIMABAR project was born, whose setting is a bar next to a beer or perhaps a coffee, with videos from 60 seconds to 5 minutes, a setting where people can feel identified and where important conversations take place with your circle of friends, the perfect formula to talk of the sustainability of the planet.

People are resistant to listening to topics related to science or climate and we had to find a way to reach them. Consequently, the start of the project was based on trial and error, finding the key to reach people through relaxed language, humor and irony, breaking down barriers and stereotypes towards general disinterest. Success came with the didactic smiles, when the person wants to learn and goes from resistance to being receptive and not only that, but to wanting to become an actor of change, being aware that simple actions of daily life can change the world.

Carmen and Belén currently maintain their work outside of CLIMABAR, but their Instagram account has 25,000 followers (and counting) and 257 posts. These climate influencers regularly attend talks on the climate crisis and the environment throughout Spain, attended COP26 as guests and have released a podcast where they talk with different guests about sustainability.

The success of CLIMABAR is based on the way of telling the story, in the place from where it is told, with a simple, direct and tremendously funny language, breaking with old schemes about the environment and science, making the public feel identified, looking for parallels with the millennial culture with scenes as if you were with some friends in a bar trying to save the planet, that is the key that makes them connect, speaking their same language but offering disclosure on sustainability and ecology even though it may not seem like it, that is the secret.

The objective of Carmen and Belén is to break down barriers of resistance towards these serious issues but that can be told in a way that catches you and moves you so much that you want to participate in the change. The discourse is far from catastrophizing, the important thing is to create a collective consciousness that leaves behind old beliefs or prejudices about the fight against climate change

INTERCOLLEGE



GITTEMARY JOHNSANSEN FROM FASHION BLOGGER TO ZERO WASTE INFLUENCER



Combating climate change carries within itself many proactive movements and one of the most prominent has been the Zero-Waste movement. The zero-waste movement has actively encouraged people to be mindful of one's production and consumption of resources and increase their reuse and recovery.

Understanding the exponential role of zero-waste in combating climate change Gittemarie Johansen, a social media influencer and activist takes her followers on a realistic journey towards a zero-waste lifestyle.

Gittemarie hails from the Northern Jutish city of Aalborg, Denmark. Since her childhood she aspired to pursue a career in the fashion industry. Even before beginning her studies in English and Culture at Aalborg University, Gittemarie had her share of working in a few fashion magazines, assisting in important fashion events, and running her own fashion blog.



Gittemarie, instagram, 2022.

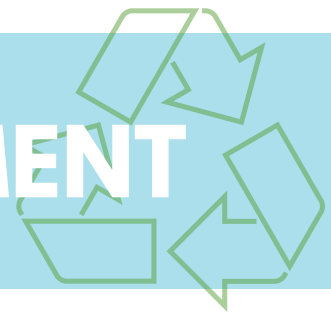
In the year 2014 her perception of fashion and its loyal confidante consumerism caught up with her in a single moment. The 18-year-old Gittemarie came across a peculiar picture of a woman with a jar and the contents pinched her curiosity. Inside the jar was her waste amounting to three whole years! The picture spoke a thousand words and invoked in her even more emotions. It opened her eyes to pursue an alternate lifestyle which she would have never thought of before. She immediately started being mindful of her own waste and reducing her own trash. She started to notice the amount of plastic everywhere - her house, her neighbourhood, her supermarket. This pushed Gittemarie to take on her own 30 days zero-waste experiment. For the whole month she documented her zero-waste journey online.

At the end of the month, Gittemarie was left with two important lessons. Self-realisation dawned upon her that the zero-waste lifestyle represented her values and was a reflection of her inner core and that she was being a part of something that was bigger than her own self. Secondly, that zero-waste takes much longer than a month. She metamorphosed her one-month experiment into a day-to-day lifestyle. She switched out her impulse buys and delved into buying only must haves to be more sustainable.

"Zero-Waste made me reflect upon the trash that goes in my bin, but veganism made me think about all the invisible trash of some really bad industries."

-Gittemarie

ZERO WASTE MOVEMENT



Gittemarie's documentation of her realistic zero-waste journey online made her to gradually transform her fashion blog into a zero-waste lifestyle blog. It became a potent platform where she guides her followers on getting started on reducing trash and finding nonmaterialistic values.

Gittemarie's terrific journey was not an easy one and her road to zero-waste lifestyle had its fair share of challenges. She believes that the journey would have been easier if someone would have told that while the trash jar was inspirational, it isn't necessarily a realistic goal. During her initial 30 days expedition towards zero-waste, Gittemarie felt immense pressure to not create any waste bigger than one which she could fit in a jar. This pressure discouraged her and made her feel like she could never fit three-years' worth of waste into a marmalade jar.

In her recent TEDx, the zero-waste influencer compares the idea of fitting 3 years' worth of waste in a jar with that of a skinny model. Skinny models are seen as the "perfect and ideal" body type in the fashion industry. It is neither a realistically attainable standard nor should people need to achieve it. The jar, similarly, should not be forced to be the standard of a zero-waste lifestyle. Doing so would lead to a generalised assumption that every single person on this journey would have the same amount of accessibility to sustainable products and options available.

Today Gittemarie, actively conducts workshops and lectures which aims to promote a sustainable lifestyle that can decrease one's contribution to environmental contamination. She also gives ideas on sustainable ways to run a household with a much less environmental impact. She sincerely believes that if more people are made aware of the severe repercussions of pollution and overconsumption, then there is a very positive chance for a snowball reaction. This snowball reaction will hopefully pressure the fashion industry enough to mend and change their unsustainable methods of overproduction.



Mini Media, 2019.

Thanks to her online family which she had created through her social media presence (YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook) Gittemarie has continuously been able to create awareness on plastic pollution, food waste and the negative impact of fast fashion. She has actively worked with the Danish company Too Good to Go and the FN's World Food Programme campaigning to avoid food waste. Furthermore, she has also worked in several campaigns that promote healthy and sustainable menstruation products.

In 2020, following her success of her blog and online presence, she wrote her book titled Bæredygtig Badass (Sustainable Badass). The book covers her journey into her zero-waste lifestyle and her kickstart into sustainability. For her, this book is a compilation of all her self-learned lessons and experiences, to motivate people to be more environmentally conscience and to follow a lifestyle that does not have a negative impact on climate.



A REFLECTION OF HER WORK

Gittemarie's journey is yet another reminder on how much impact women could play in combatting climate change. Communities do better in resilience and capacity building when women are also involved in planning. According to the UN, women tend to share information about community wellbeing that is important for resilience and more willing to adapt to environmental changes since their family lives are impacted (UNFCC, 2019)

Additionally, women are also usually first responders in community responses to natural disasters, leaders in disaster risk-reduction. They contribute to post recovery by addressing the early recovery needs of their families and strengthening community building. Women being actively involved in the fight against climate change exponentially increases the chance to move forward on a much faster pace and have a positive impact on both a micro and macro scale.



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INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS

LAVINIA ANDREI

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF FUNDAȚIA TERRA MILENIUL III

When talking about environment and climate change activism in Romania, there is one name, one woman, whose doing it for 30 years. Lavinia ANDREI, an experienced consultant on energy and climate change with a demonstrated history of working in the environmental services industry. Skilled in Negotiation, Nonprofit Organizations, Budgeting, Sustainable Development, and Corporate Social Responsibility. Strong business development professional with a Master of Engineering from Universitatea „Politehnica” of București and on Public Administration from the “University of Bucharest”. Founder and President of “Fundația Terra Mileniul III”.

Looking in the past, the years of communism have left Romania without a real civil society and with a lack of civic spirit at all levels of society. The collapse of the communist regime gave way to the reconfiguration of the political and public space, providing the conditions for the exercise of civic rights and freedoms.

Environmental non-governmental organizations were among the first civic organizations to appear in the early 90s; however, few have survived to the present day.

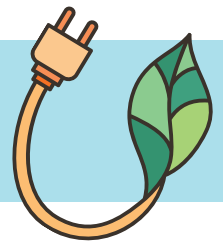


Lavinia remembers perfectly the beginning:

"I started my activity in the world of NGOs in 1993, when an office colleague from the design institute where I worked at that time, invited me to volunteer at the “Romanian ecologist youth”. At that time, there were very few NGOs in Romania and only a few of them dealt with the environment. I was active at the time in Tineretul Ecologist Roman (TER) and I think there were about 5-6 other environmental organizations that I knew. In 1993, none of the organizations were discussing climate change. Instead, we talked about sustainable energy, sustainable transport, biodiversity, sustainable development, Agenda XXI, etc.



FUNDAȚIA TERRA MILENIUL III



"At the end of 1997, together with 4 other friends, I founded Terra Mileniul III, with the clear mission of contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and measures to adapt to climate change. In 1998, I took part in COP4 in Buenos Aires, where during the "high-level" conference I was appointed by the network to speak, and my speech emphasized the climate emergency and the importance of taking action as soon as possible fast. At that time, I was a kind of modern-day Greta Thunberg, except that the means of communication were much reduced, and Romania was not at all interested in this topic. Participating in international conferences and working in the European network represented a great advantage for the organization and for the non-governmental environmental sector in Romania, because after some time, the foundations of the national network of NGOs, for climate action, were laid."

Activities at the national and local level continued to be restrained, as were the financial resources of NGOs, which made the human resource scarce. The only sources of funding for the projects came from international donor organizations and the values were often symbolic, however, there was a special enthusiasm that mobilized the young people of that time to associate and implement projects through voluntary activities.

Starting with 2000, the prospect of joining the European Union produced major changes in the Romanian public space, as well as the European one. The role of NGOs in Eastern Europe was gaining new importance, as well as financial support from the European Union for the Phare programs intended for NGOs after which came an increasing involvement of NGOs in sectoral public policies. But, once joining the European Union in 2007, the attitude of the politicians towards NGOs changed. Things became less transparent, because there was no longer the pressure of accession and permanent monitoring by the EU.



On the other hand, traditional financiers have completed their mission or left for other countries, being replaced by European funds, which were much more consistent, but much less accessible for small organizations in Romania. As for financial support from the Romanian state, it was out of the question.

The programs financed by the governments of Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein and the Swiss government appeared, but in 2013 the GEF SGP program was closed, which had an important weight on the climate change component.

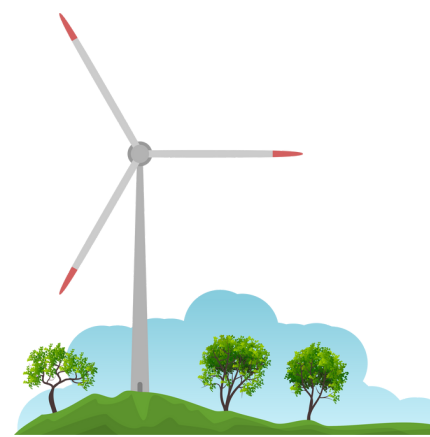
The NGO movement in Romania has suffered a lot and few organizations have managed to survive, continue their activity and keep their mission intact, without turning into a service provider.

Going forward, Lavinia says that "the mission of the organization TERRA Mileniul III is to develop awareness programs regarding the causes and effects of climate change and to promote sustainable development solutions.

We act to improve public policies in this sector and to help people adapt to the effects of climate change.

Concretely, TERRA III activities aim at the transition from fossil fuels and nuclear energy to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources, from car transport to sustainable and non-polluting forms of transport, from unsustainable products and consumption to new technologies and environmentally friendly products.

Such measures encourage the transition of the Romanian economy to a new stage of sustainability and offer the guarantee of a cleaner and healthier environment.



"In parallel, the organization successfully continues activities of educating children and adults on topics related to climate change and sustainable development, as I believe that young people in Romania need education on climate change. As long as the young generation does not have access to basic information, which should be transmitted in school, it is quite difficult for them to realize what dangers await them. There should be programs dedicated to young people, be they mentoring programs, institutional capacity programs, or scholarships - so that they deepen the climate change theme. Apart from formal education in the classroom, we need to find projects to empower young people, projects that can be implemented by them themselves.



"And we have been struggling for 20 years to introduce this education in various forms: for the environment, for sustainable development, for the climate. We are still trying to penetrate the education system, but it seems to be even more refractory than the environmental system. Some changes were made, I contributed with certain things: I trained hundreds, maybe even thousands of teachers, I trained thousands of children. Some of them are already adults and have embraced a career in the field of the environment, precisely because they have been involved in some educational activities. But, unfortunately, at the national level we have not been able to bring a change.

However, after almost 20 years of shared efforts in this field by various NGO's, in January 2022 the law that introduces environmental education into the school curriculum, starting with the 2022-2023 school year, entered into force.

Meanwhile, Terra Millennium III has been implementing the Young Ambassadors in the Fight against Climate Change project since 2008, with some interruptions due to lack of funding. It is a project through which we train teachers about climate change, who in turn train students in the classroom. Then we organize a competition with the same name, which has already become famous. It started under the auspices of some embassies. We had the support of the UK, Norwegian, German, Dutch embassies and continued to grow. The young participants which learned about the climate, did a good job and at the end received an award from an ambassador, will surely not forget this experience. Also, some of the teachers I worked with, developed their own climate related curricula.

They have been teaching in school for years about carbon emissions, climate change, etc. On the whole, the organization has had 1235 projects to actively combat climate change.



Why is important that women are involved in combating climate change

Because women are the first educator of kids. If they have a mindset to combat climate change, they will teach it to their kids therefore the next generation. That is why we need to transmit these messages to women educators and opinion leaders. Women are also much more sensitive to danger therefore we need to teach them and protect them. Emotions are also easier and effective transmitted by women.