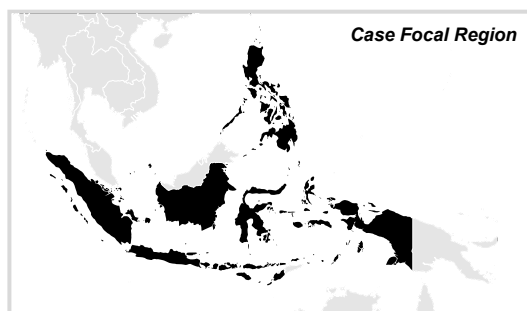


The Samdhana Institute - Philippines / Southeast Asia

Type: Non-Profit Organization

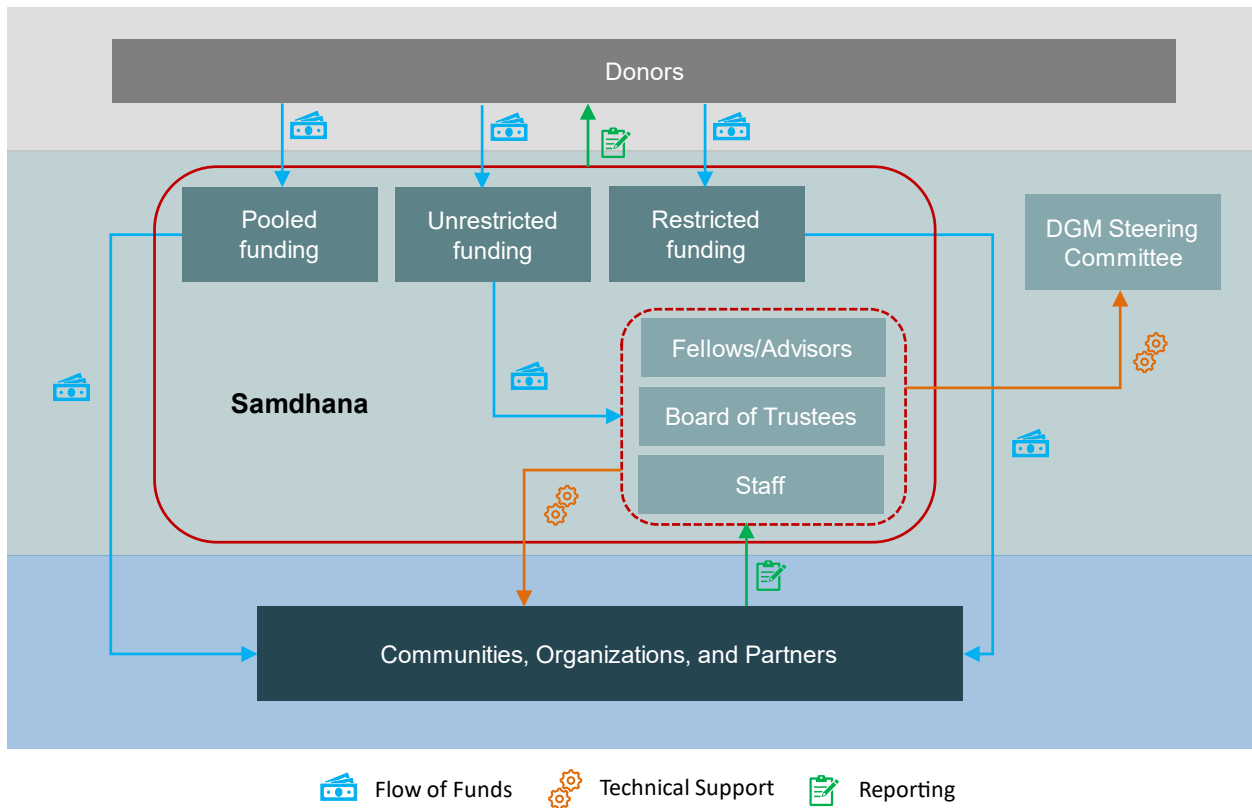
Global Objective: Sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, and social justice.

Established in 2003 as a non-profit organization focused on “*working alongside Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP & LCs) to achieve social and environmental justice*” throughout the Southeast Asian region.



Current Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Private Donors:</i> Full Circle Foundation, Ford Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Marion R. Weber Family Fund, Climate and Land Use Alliance – CLUA, Global Greengrants Fund, Tides, Both ENDS, Tikva Grassroots, IUCN, RSF Social Finance • <i>Bilateral Donors:</i> NORAD • <i>Multilateral Donors:</i> The World Bank
Annual Turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USD 2.91 million (2021)
Management/Administration – % of total funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% for general operations and administration
Scale of Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium – IP & LC-accountable
Replicability potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium – Potential for replication in the near-term would be contingent on the existence of organizations that have a clear track record of supporting frontline IP & LCs and their organizations, and the pre-established “chains of trust”
Absorption capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current: Medium in relative terms and low in absolute terms
Expansion potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low – 2019-2028 strategy seeks to maintain the current level of funding

The Samdhana Institute Fund Flow Diagram



The Samdhana Institute – Philippines / Southeast Asia

What is the Samdhana Institute? The Samdhana Institute (“Samdhana”) was established in 2003 as a non-profit organization focused on “working alongside Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP & LCs) to achieve social and environmental justice” throughout the Southeast Asian region. It is registered in the Philippines and Indonesia, with offices in both countries, as well as operations in the Mekong region.

Global objective (s): Sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, and social justice.

Organizational objective (s): Samdhana has identified six strategic objectives for the 2019-2028 periodⁱ:

- Grant Making – developing protocols, strengthening capacities, and maintaining funding
- Capacity Development – of IP & LCs and other social and environmental movements
- Lifescapes – developing and piloting integrated landscape/seascape strategies for place-based approaches to secure IP & LC’ partner rights, improve livelihoods, and conserve ecological functions and biodiversity in Indonesia and the Philippines
- Policy Support – with emphasis on addressing gaps in tenurial rights, tenure security, and natural resource management
- Knowledge Management and Resource Development – development and implementation of plans for knowledge management, communications, and resource mobilization
- Fellows Programme – renewing and growing the program.

Typology: Accountability – IP & LC accountable. Scale of target outcome – strengthening specific IP & LC communities & organizations.

Focal region: Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, and the Mekong region).

Operational context: Southeast Asia is one of the most biodiverse regions of the planet and threatened by climate change, urbanization, development pressures, chronic poverty, unsustainable agricultural practices, and mineral extraction. Over 120 million Indigenous Peoples live in the regionⁱⁱ, though they and their lands and resources often have limited legal recognition and remain vulnerable. At the same time, increasingly IP & LC resource management systems and livelihoods are understood to be crucial global assets to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss, making effective support for these equally crucial.

How it works: Samdhana has four cross-cutting programs: grants making, capacity development, lifescapes, and policy support. Samdhana works through a pool of Fellows¹ that plays a central role in the direction and implementation of their programs. The personal connections and mutual trust established between IP & LCs/Civil Society Organizations and Samdhana Fellows, and onward onto Samdhana, allows the organization to be introduced to communities as a partner, with local leaders and key stakeholders vouching for the organization. Samdhana does not publicly call for funding applications, as this “referral system” introduces communities to the organization.

Notwithstanding its grants program, Samdhana does not identify itself as a “regranting organization.” Neither do they agree with being referred to as an “intermediary,” as if their primary role were simply a conduit for external funds, although the majority of its resources are channeled to other organizations or groups. Significantly, Samdhana differs from other regranting organizations with its core operations anchored in 1) the process of trust-building, facilitation, and assistance to IPLCs in preparing their proposals to address strategically the concerns and problems they face, 2) the capacity development support to grantee-partners, and 3) the flexibility by which Samdhana makes its funds accessible to IPLC grassroots organizations.

¹ Samdhana was formed by a group of individuals, conservationists, and development practitioners, who became the first Samdhana Fellows. At present, there are around sixty Fellows. They have various roles such as project activity leaders, advisors for small grants, and supporters in the implementation of Samdhana programs

Samdhana's grant making program is directed at "funding the unfundable"², meaning, grantees that would not meet the typical financial, administrative, legal, and organizational criteria of most grantors/donors. The grant making program includes:

- **Urgent action grants** of USD 500 to USD 3,000 can respond to more immediate requests, such as with disaster relief, post-disaster recovery, and legal fees for community leaders at risk. Because of the "chain of trust," the approval process for these small and urgent action grants is relatively straightforward. The Samdhana team and advisors review the proposal and may direct additional questions to the communities before approval. If needed, Samdhana field staff in the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Mekong go to the communities to consult with them, observe the communities' consultation and decision-making processes, and provide assistance as requested. These grants may also go to individual IP & LC environmental defenders.
- **Small grants** are modeled after those of the Global Green Grants Fundⁱⁱⁱ and include support of up to USD 30,000³ for projects of six-to-twelve-month duration. These respond to needs and priorities identified by communities through their traditional consultation and decision-making processes, which are aligned with Samdhana's thematic areas of work. Partnering with Samdhana under these small grants includes capacity-building in areas such as financial management and reporting, to empower partners over the longer-term to be able to access other funding channels.
- **Medium and large grants**, which includes Samdhana's implementation of the World Bank Forest Investment Program's Dedicated Grant Mechanism in Indonesia (DGM-I), provide from USD 30,000 to USD 100,000. These are focused on building the capacities needed by IP & LCs to secure tenure over their lands, and to sustainably pursue their forest-based livelihoods. Due diligence is conducted by Samdhana staff before a proposal is submitted for approval to a national steering committee composed of IP & LCs and government representatives. With the DGM's completion in 2022, Samdhana's plan is to continue to provide these larger grants for strategic and institutional support to selected local CSO partners.

Excluding the medium and large grants, Samdhana provides some seven different purpose grants, including travel grants, education grants, indigenous knowledge building grants, and institutional development support grants.

Samdhana provides some longer-term support to communities. For example, in the Philippines, Indigenous communities may apply for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), a process that takes around three years on average. Samdhana provides resources to support data collection (e.g., local census and genealogical surveys) and internal gatherings. The entire process may entail repeated grants for activities at different stages.

Samdhana also carries out and supports extensive capacity building of individuals and organizations, with a central focus on supporting IP & LCs to prepare and develop proposals, as well as cross-cutting activities related to Samdhana's four programs. Depending upon the topic, Samdhana staff will either carry out the capacity development exercises if the subject lies within their expertise (e.g., financial management, and project design and planning), or will engage partner organizations or experts to provide the services.

Governance: Samdhana's ten-person Board of Trustees is responsible for overall governance of the organization. A staff of fifty-one full-time members are responsible for the implementation of programs and projects. Teams are based in Bogor (West Java) and Papua in Indonesia; in Cagayan de Oro, the Calamian Islands, and Palawan in the Philippines; and in Vientiane, Laos. For larger grants under the Dedicated

² Community partners are not required to be formally registered entities. Many indigenous organizations are established based on traditional political systems or modes of governance, and Samdhana can work with them in this capacity. Additionally, Samdhana is also able to support informal community groups that have clear plans with short-term projects. A bank account and official receipts are also not required – funds can be released directly to community representatives, and Samdhana staff can assist them at the bank to ensure the transfer. In lieu of official receipts, Samdhana accepts acknowledgment receipts. Capacity building support also helps the community to set up a simple financial and recording system.

³ In practice, the average of size of these grants is USD 5,000.

Grant Mechanism^{4,iv}, a National Steering Committee composed of Indigenous Peoples and Samdhana advisors was organized to approve proposals⁵. Samdhana has around 60 Fellows with various roles such as project activity leaders, advisors for small grants and supporters in the implementation of Samdhana programs.

Priorities: For the period of 2019-2028, Samdhana has defined its strategic goals as:

- Support Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and individuals in defining, securing and asserting their rights to territory and its governance and management.
- Build resilient communities through integrated sea-land management and viable livelihoods.
- Support social and environmental movements by strengthening individual, community, organizational and network capacities.
- Develop an organization that fosters learning and movement building.

Thematic areas of Samdhana's work during the period will be:

- Tenure and Natural Resource Conflict Resolution
- Indigenous Peoples and Local Community Natural Resource Management
- Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security
- Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- Gender Awareness and Social Inclusion
- Governance and Leadership Development

Primary Outputs/Outcomes: Cross-cutting examples of recent Samdhana efforts across its four program areas includes:

- **Grant making:** In 2021^v, 112 grants across were approved in Indonesia (USD 1,669,368), the Philippines (USD 170,856), Laos (USD 43,472), Cambodia (USD 23,145), Thailand (USD 59,200), Vietnam (USD 8,478) and Myanmar (USD 11,105). Grants were approved for thirty climate change action grants totaling USD 74,684; twenty-five grants for IP & LC natural resource management totaling USD 954,938; twenty-three rural livelihoods and green economy grants totaling USD 767,221; fourteen institutional strengthening and governance grants totaling USD 76,000, nine next-generation leadership development grants totaling USD 188,584; seven resilience and recovery support for COVID-19 grants totaling USD 111,988; and four disability rights grants totaling USD 16,647.
- **Capacity development:** A significant focus across all program areas. For example, a partner from Panaghiusa Alang Sa Kaugalingnan Ug Kalingkawasan, Inc. (PASAKK), in the province of Agusan del Sur in Mindanao, Philippines described that proposals could be submitted in *Binisaya*, the local language used in their area. Capacity-building support from Samdhana also enabled the organization to begin to engage and train “second liners,” or younger members who are better equipped to take over proposal writing, reporting and management for succeeding projects.
- **Lifescapes:** For example, Samdhana worked to build capacities of Indigenous communities in the Northern Minanao landscape to assert their rights through strengthening their Indigenous governance/political structure, supporting the CADT application process, increased Indigenous participation in networking with CSOs and key stakeholders, and built capacities of Indigenous women and youth as part of the Green Livelihood Alliance (GLA2) program⁶.

⁴ The Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (DGM) is part of the World Bank's Forest Investment Program (FIP). The DGM is aimed at facilitating IP & LC participation in activities to reduce deforestation/forest degradation. Samdhana was selected to be the National Executing Agency of the DGM in Indonesia; a USD 6.33 million grant project of five years duration, which ended in 2022.

⁵ For purposes of the implementation of the DGM/Indonesia, a national steering committee (NSC) composed of IPLC representatives, and two government representatives was set up as the key decision-making group. Following the Samdhana model, advisers were also part of the review process for proposals, and due diligence was conducted by Samdhana staff before these proposals were put forward to the NSC.

⁶ [GLA](#) is coordinated by the IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands.

- **Policy support:** The Expanding Community Rights, Livelihoods Innovation and REDD+ in Indonesia (PERMETA^{vi}) initiative is supported by Norway’s International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Samdhana is appointed as the consortium leader to carry out the initiative (for 2021-2025), working with CSOs and NGOs to secure community rights to land and resources, enhance community livelihoods, enable policies and institutions to actively promote and support rights-based community development and support IP & LC communities to have the capacity to sustain, protect and manage their forest resources. PERMATA, with the support of provincial government, supports local governments at the regency level to recognize community rights.

Funding sources: In 2021, Samdhana received support from a range of financiers, including private philanthropies (e.g., Full Circle Foundation, Ford Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Marion R. Weber Family Fund, Climate and Land Use Alliance – CLUA, Global Greengrants Fund, Tides, Both ENDS, Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund); non-profits (e.g., IUCN, RSF Social Finance), bilateral (NORAD), and multilateral (The World Bank) agencies.

Financial mechanism: Samdhana has a mix of pooled funding and restricted/directed funding⁷, from a range of donors (see above) and regrants to smaller entities and IP & LCs. The pooled funding provides for greater flexibility, both from the donors and as regards the flexibility to cater to on-the-ground needs and priorities of IP & LCs without having to be limited by funders’ agenda. In 2021, grants were allocated as follows: 66% toward capacity building, policy development support and the living land and seascapes programs; 24% toward grantmaking/re-granting; and, 10% toward Samdhana’s general operations and administration. This does not include the DGM funding.

Annual turnover: For Fiscal Year 2021, Samdhana reported⁸ net assets of USD 4.12 million. The organization received USD 3.54 million in grants and support (89% restricted, 10% unrestricted and 1% other income), with (i) USD 1.92 million going to program expenses; (ii) USD 0.68 million going to grant making⁹; and (iii) USD 0.31 million going to general operations and administration. See Endnote ^{vii} for details.

In addition, in 2021 Samdhana was implementing the World Bank FIP-financed DGM grant program in Indonesia. The DGM had a total expenditure of about USD 1.30 million in that year, of which 72% went to block grants, 5% to capacity building and IP & LC strategic engagement in policy and policy dialogue, and 22% to project implementation and institutional support^{viii}.

Absorption capacity: Moderate – Samdhana works through established “chains of trust” to grow its partner network, which is both a benefit and limitation to rapid scaling. As the network and organization are sufficiently mature, it would be expected that the capacity to grow the granting and capacity building programs is at least moderate at this point, though limited by the existing network. The speed of expansion via regrants to trusted organizations is particularly high in organizations like Samdhana that rely on established relationships for grant making. Samdhana carries out successive grants to some organizations, which is another area of potential expansion.

What works:

- Samdhana’s “pool of Fellows” plays an especially important role in Samdhana’s approach to “funding the unfundable through deep connections established by chains of trust.” This model allows Samdhana to be introduced to communities as a partner, with local leaders and key stakeholders already vouching for their organization. Through this, communities are introduced to Samdhana via a “referral system,” or through recommendations of Fellows, advisers, and trusted networks

⁷ Examples of directed funding include the World Bank DGM financing, the Global Green Grants Fund financing for small grants to grassroots and IP & LCs and their organizations, and RSF Social Finance for a “Women’s Defenders Fund”.

⁸ Unaudited, from Samdhana’s [Annual Report 2021](#).

⁹ The difference between grant totals reported above (Primary Outputs/Outcomes, Grant making: USD 2.1 million) and grant disbursements of USD 0.68 million reflects the difference between grant approvals and disbursements.

- Because of the “chain of trust,” the approval process for both small and urgent action grants is relatively straightforward. Proposals and requests can be written in local languages, and other requirements usually called for by traditional funders (such as government accreditation or a bank account) can be dispensed with.
- Flexibility throughout the process of accessing funds, combined with assistance to prepare applications and other required documents is recognized by Samdhana’s community partners as critical elements that both define the organization’s approach to grant-making and differentiating it from other NGOs.
- Samdhana’s efforts to sustain relationships with their partners beyond the support that they provide, and even after their projects are formally concluded, is a strong basis for connecting to other communities that may not yet be familiar with Samdhana’s work. Samdhana, and their Fellows’, ongoing deep level of engagement with IP & LC adds links in the “chains of trust,” allowing them to scale up their work.
- Samdhana’s pooled funding experiences – where funds from donors are pooled – indicate that this model, and the flexibility that comes with it, allows for maximizing impacts on the ground. For example, when Samdhana’s small grants program was pooled with other sources to develop a dedicated Indigenous Peoples Support Fund for forest conservation, this allowed grants to support the range of actions identified by IP & LC partners as needed to achieve the desired outcomes, e.g., rights awareness-raising, improving governance and leadership, community infrastructure, livelihoods, conservation and enterprise development, and processes for formal recognition of land tenure.
- Support for dialogues and consultations has the additional advantage of strengthening communities, particularly by capacitating and empowering the younger leaders from the next generation on a broad range of issues. For example, an indigenous leader from the Philippines shared that this creates opportunities for “bonding” between indigenous elders and indigenous youth, which increases the potential for their tenure and rights being protected in the long term.
- Two-thirds of Samdhana’s budget (2021) was devoted to capacity development, policy development support and the living land and seascapes program, highlighting the organization’s investments beyond granting funds for projects/programs.

Strategic Insights

Effectively supporting IP & LC land tenure and rights requires long-term partnerships and commitments, extending beyond short project cycles. National tenure regimes and legal frameworks disadvantage many IP & LCs in their efforts to secure tenure and rights. Given the challenges, financing alone cannot guarantee beneficial social and environmental outcomes – projects must be approached holistically and include a process rooted in community-defined objectives and approaches. Additionally, donors must recognize the longer time frames that may be needed to produce impacts related to tenure security.

Anchoring projects on community processes for dialogue, decision-making and collectively identified needs results in a strong sense of community ownership, minimizes internal disagreements, and allows communities to contribute more fully to project outputs. However, to effectively do so, flexibility in the grant model – both in terms of what is financed and patience to allow processes within the community to take the time needed – must be adequate to allow the organization to work with community processes for dialogue and decision-making.

Maintaining and investing in relationships is key to responding to the unique circumstances and challenges in each organization, community, or site where they operate. Samdhana’s Fellows, in particular, have provided this capacity and through it the opportunity to expand and scale programs to new communities and partner organizations via “chains of trust.”

Flexible, small grants model are effective for responding to community-identified needs in a prompt and efficient manner, with minimal need for bureaucratic processes and requirements that otherwise strain the capacity of many communities. Small grants also carry smaller risks – if communities are unable to implement projects as expected, this can form part of the costs of learning. In comparison, larger funds require additional due diligence and assessment of partners’ long-term patterns of spending and fund management. When these are accompanied by learn-by-doing capacity building for financial management,

reporting, etc. this allows communities to aspire to accessing other funding channels and to prepare younger leaders to take this on.

The importance of small (vs large) grants. When asked whether they anticipate an increased call from community partners for medium and large grants, Samdhana staff answered that this demand is not expected, as IPLC partners already find the current small grants quite substantial. Small grants can generate significant community-level benefits and can be spread out to reach more communities. Besides lacking the capacity and experience required for managing larger grants, a sudden influx of funds before all stakeholders are prepared to manage these may become a cause of community conflict and division. As observed by one of Samdhana's Indigenous small grants advisers *"Indigenous communities have historically been self-sufficient without being dependent on the cash economy, and so the entry of huge money tends to affect the value system of such communities."*

The use of multiple, successive grants is well-suited to addressing needs of communities challenged by the traditional systems for seeking out, applying for, and implementing funding. In challenging contexts where flexibility, minimal eligibility and compliance requirements, and rapid deployment of funds are required relatively small, successive grants are appropriate for to both highly local approaches and for the expansion of grantee' community networks ("chains of trust"). Longer-term investments in this form allow for the systematic building of grantees' capacities, and eventually for accessing and implementing larger funds.

Whose agenda: Donors or IP & LCs? Organizations whose mission and model is anchored in wider relationships with IP & LCs should not be perceived or approached as simply a "financial intermediary" or "disburser of funds". Such an assumption, that their only purpose is as a service provider that "caters to the donor's agenda," fails to consider and capitalize on their relationships and embeddedness in IP & LCs struggles for securing and protecting their rights; managing, conserving, and benefitting from their natural and cultural resources; and achieving their visions of self-determined development. Organizations that place great importance on their relationships with IP & LCs and work with them as partners can provide unique and valuable insights to financiers, as well as positively impact the usage, reach, effectiveness, and efficiency funding.

Scalability

Replicability. The potential for replication of the Samdhana model in the near-term is modest. Doing so would be contingent on the existence of organizations that have a clear track record of supporting frontline IP & LCs and their organizations, and the pre-established "chains of trust". Whether to replicate Samdhana-like organizations or expand the capacities of a Samdhana would itself depend on that (and similar) organization's visions of expansion, their assessment of feasibility of growth through their current network, and the geographies and contexts to potentially expand into.

Expansion. Low – Samdhana's current strategy (2019-2028)^{ix} proposes to maintain their current level of funding.

References

ⁱ https://www.samdhana.org/sites/default/files/publication/Samdhana%20Strategic_summary.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.greengrants.org/>

^{iv} <https://www.samdhana.org/node/821>

^v https://www.samdhana.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Samdhana%20Annual%20Report%202021_website.pdf

^{vi} https://www.samdhana.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Flyer%20PERMATA%20Project_English.pdf

^{vii} *Samdhana Institute – Financial Situation – 2021.*

Source: *Samdhana Annual Report 2021*

^{viii} World Bank. 2021 Indonesia - - P156473 - Strengthening Rights and Economies of Adat and Local Communities - Audited Financial Statement (English) <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099845008222212620/p15647300f8f3808c0b996072dcc864c58a>

^{ix} https://www.samdhana.org/sites/default/files/publication/Samdhana%20Strategic_summary.pdf