

An illustration of a diverse group of women of various ethnicities and ages. In the center, a woman with dark hair and a green top has her fist raised. To her right, an older woman with white hair and a blue shawl looks forward. In the foreground, a woman in a purple sari and another in a blue top with a raised fist are visible. The background shows other women, some holding signs, including one with stick figures. A banner with the Women's Fund Asia logo is held in the upper left.

Women's Fund Asia

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021

WE ARE WOMEN'S FUND ASIA

Women's Fund Asia (WFA) is a regional feminist fund committed to supporting human rights interventions led by women, girls, trans, and intersex people in Asia. We began in 2004 as South Asia Women's Fund to address the lack of resources for feminist organisations, especially smaller frontline groups. Our work closes the resource gap by creating sustainable, flexible resources and opportunities essential to supporting the leadership of women, girls, trans, and intersex people in bringing progressive change from within their communities. We now fund feminist human rights work across 18 countries in Asia.

WFA Vision

Our vision is the realisation of the human rights of women, girls, trans, and intersex people in Asia.

WFA Mission

Our mission is to nurture and lead feminist philanthropy in the region; to effectively mobilise resources to support individuals, groups, and networks by enabling their sustainability; and to strengthen partner capacities, leadership, advocacy, and networks in the field.

Note about Constituencies

As of 2021, we have updated how we refer to our constituencies as a whole. We feel that 'women, girls, trans, and intersex people' better reflects their individualities and preferred identities.

- *WFA acknowledges that there is no consistent and agreed upon definition of 'girls.' WFA supports girls at two levels: through directly funding groups led by girls between the ages of 18 to 24, and through supporting work on the human rights of young women and girls aged 13 and above.*
- *'Trans' is used by WFA as a placeholder to cover a diversity of gender identities and forms of gender expressions claimed by people across the region and the world. WFA supports trans rights, including that of transfeminine, transmasculine, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people, amongst other identities.*



Where WFA Works

We operate in **18 countries** across South, East, & Southeast Asia:

South Asia

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Maldives
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Pakistan

Southeast Asia

Cambodia
Indonesia
Laos
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

East Asia

Mongolia

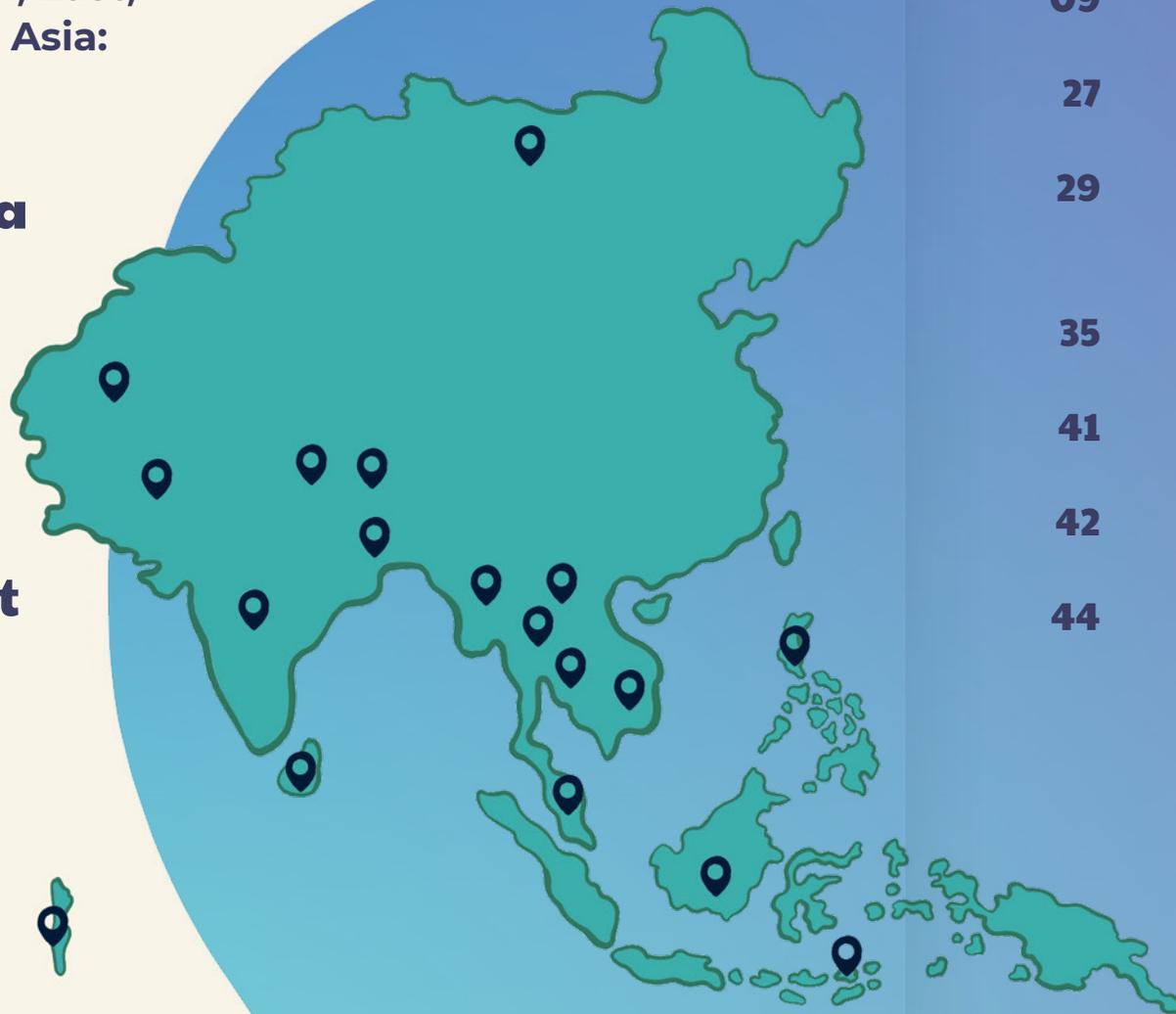


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A Message from the WFA Team

As we write this, our region is still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis which started at the end of 2019 and made its presence felt through 2020. The WFA team itself has not met in person for more than a year, let alone our extended community of partners and allies.

The pandemic has created immeasurable loss worldwide, exacerbating existing structural and power inequalities, while creating new challenges and reversing decades of rights-based work. It has also enabled greater opportunities for authoritarian regimes the world over to further limit civic and democratic spaces and voices under the guise of protecting public health.

In the face of overwhelming loss and disruption, we have received unwavering support from a range of supporters and allies, particularly feminist groups and leadership. Over the last year we could not be more honoured to serve the feminist movements led by women, girls, trans, and intersex people.

Our partners have risen courageously and unerringly to the challenge, supporting

their communities in the face of the pandemic. Our funders demonstrated their solidarity through action—allowing us flexibility and securing more resources to ensure WFA's effective response on the ground. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, in 2020–21, WFA supported the largest number and total value of grants since its inception in 2004. WFA was able to live up to its role as a regional women's fund by being nimble and innovate in its response to the pandemic with the formation of the Kaagapay Fund. This COVID-19 response fund allowed the communities to define and access the support they needed.

The successful completion of Leading from the South (LFS) I was marked by the virtual Linking and Learning convergence facilitated by the International Indigenous Women's Forum, bringing us together to reflect on our shared journey and the way forward. The launch of LFS II, with a doubled budget, signified not only the success of LFS I, but also the commitment of all partners, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, to support feminist movement

building through feminist leadership of the Global South, and to continue shifting and dismantling power hierarchies.

While the slowdown in travel did not reduce our workload, it did allow us the opportunity to engage more deeply with our team processes. We initiated and completed our strategic review process, which lays the foundation for our three-to-five year strategic plan. We also developed our Theory of Change, a roadmap to how we can achieve our vision and mission. It was an organisational process owned by the team, with participation of all team members, no matter their function in WFA. In fact, this collaboration created a bond that led to the building and nurturing of critical sharing spaces.

Despite many of the WFA team members being personally affected by COVID-19, it has been a privilege to work with a team that is constantly pushing the way forward for the communities we

are committed to supporting. The solidarity that we are experiencing has enabled a process of dynamic introspection, pushing us towards better accountability, while ensuring that we deepen and widen our role as a women's fund politically and substantively.

“While we still look for answers to the present global challenges, the underpinning value of solidarity is something we hold in our hearts. During this past year, we have recognised that while we must physically be apart, standing together must be the only response to this pandemic.”

We draw hope from the communities we work with and will remain steadfast in our commitment, always drawing courage from the guidance of feminist activists and movements across Asia.



Shaheen Anam
Chairperson



Tulika Srivastava
Executive Director

Key Strategic Areas

In a little over a decade, WFA has disbursed more than USD 10 million to support more than 500 initiatives for women, girls, trans, and intersex people across Asia by providing opportunities for learning and networking, technical and fiscal support, and leadership in changemaking. Our work this past year was focused on four broad areas:

1. Grantmaking

To bridge the resource gaps as dictated by the needs and priorities of women, girls, trans, and intersex people-led organisations, networks, and consortiums, we fund grants that are flexible and multilevel.

2. Linking and Learning

To bring together our partners, allies, and other catalytic actors, we facilitate, create, and participate in needs-based spaces and opportunities that allow for collective learning, reflection, and exchanges.

3. Institution Building

To reflect WFA's expanded mandate and team, we restructured our feminist funding model and continue to strengthen our systems of delivery.

4. Influencing Philanthropy and Claiming Resources

To strengthen the region's feminist resource architecture, we guide, influence, and build alliances with a diverse set of stakeholders towards women, girls, trans, and intersex people human rights work.





KEY STRATEGIC AREA

Grantmaking

Supporting Women, Girls, Trans, and Intersex Human Rights Movements across Asia

The past year has been unique for WFA's grantmaking due to the global COVID-19 pandemic disrupting many parts of our work. We had to adjust and be flexible, understanding how the added difficulty of lockdowns, travel restrictions, and other government measures and regulations could impact the ability of our grantee-partners to continue their vital work. As a result, WFA was challenged to devise new strategies to help our grantee-partners. This led to the creation of the **Kaagapay¹ Fund to Support Feminist Resilience in the Face of COVID-19**, WFA's first comprehensive crisis grantmaking programme.

At the same time, our largest grantmaking programme, **Leading from the South (LFS)**, ended its first phase in 2020 and reemerged in its second phase in 2021. While we did not do any new grantmaking for this programme in 2020–21, there were 36 grants active during this period. However, our core small grants programme, Strengthening Feminist Movements (SFM), continued grantmaking in the five thematic areas: Strengthening Feminist Voices; Movement and Labour; Autonomy, Decisions, and Sexual Rights; Access to Justice; and Environmental Justice.

¹Kaagapay is a Filipino term which means to 'stand by one's side' or 'to go hand in hand in support.' It signifies mutual care, respect, support, and trust.

Another special programme for the 2020–21 period was **Claiming Our Voices: Beijing+25**, designed to amplify Asian women, girls, trans, and intersex communities' voices in global and regional review processes related to the follow-up 25 and 26 years after the adoption of the UN World Conference on Women's Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

In the year 2020–2021, WFA committed a total of **USD 1,851,119** to support **169 grants** and **four consultancies** through the three grantmaking programmes, as well as through provision of fiscal support through the following: **the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) Autonomy and Resilience Fund, GAGGA Rapid Response Fund, and Foundation for a Just Society (FJS) support to the SWASA/SANGRAM programme.** The table on the following page illustrates the distribution by grantmaking programme.



We support feminist movements led by women, girls, trans, and intersex people across Asia who are a part of and involved with the most marginalised communities. Through these funds, our grantee-partner organisations work with diverse constituencies covering all ages, all financial and educational backgrounds, those that identify as LBTIQ+, those with accessibility requirements, religious and ethnic minorities, indigenous people, migrant workers, and sex workers, among many others.

GRANTMAKING PROGRAMMES	TOTAL YEAR 2020–2021			
	TOTAL NO. OF GRANTS	NO. OF PROGRAMME CONSULTANCIES	TOTAL	TOTAL COMMITTED AMOUNT
Strengthening Feminist Movements	69	2	71	\$499,432
Kaagapay (COVID-19)	66	0	66	\$792,809
GAGGA Funds	6	0	6	\$56,637
Beijing+25	17	2	19	\$287,181
FJS Support to SWASA/Sangram	11	0	11	\$215,060
TOTAL	169	4	173	\$1,851,119

Note: In addition to the above, 36 LFS grants were active during this period.

Strengthening Feminist Movements (SFM)

Makes small grants and fellowships to provide programmatic and institutional support for those working at the local and national levels in Asia.

USD 499,432 in grants for 71 initiatives

Leading from the South (LFS)

Funds large programme grants to support activism devised, implemented, and led by organisations in the Global South. Realised by four women's funds with WFA handling the Asia region covering South, Southeast, and East Asia.

Note: For the 2020-2021 reporting period, no new grantmaking was done under this programme. However, ongoing grants continued and were completed by the end of December 2020.

Grant Categories

Grants under the LFS programme are made under three broad categories:

FRONTLINE DEFENDERS

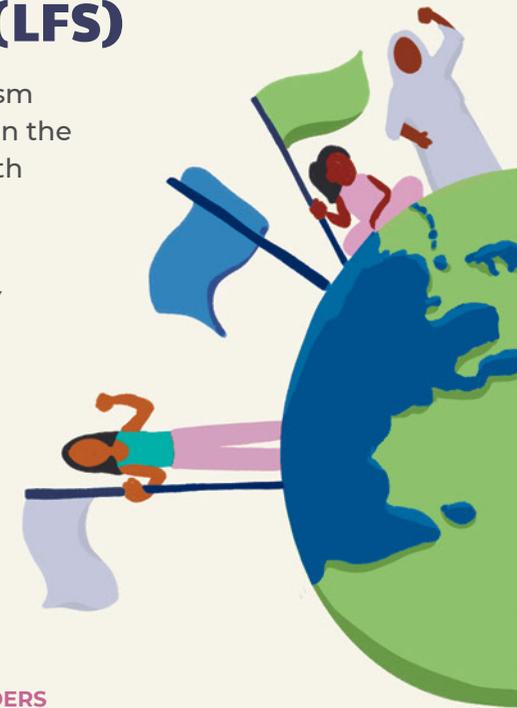
Organisations and networks at the community and subnational levels working to fight against women, girls, trans, and intersex people's human rights violations and to mobilise movements.

AMPLIFYING VOICES

Organisations and networks at the subnational and national levels working on policy advocacy with key stakeholders and states as well as campaigns on women, girls, trans, and intersex people's human rights.

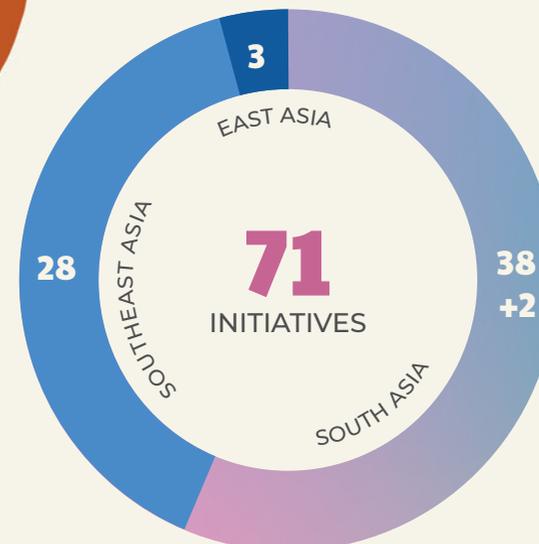
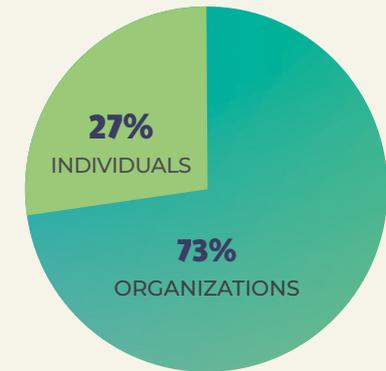
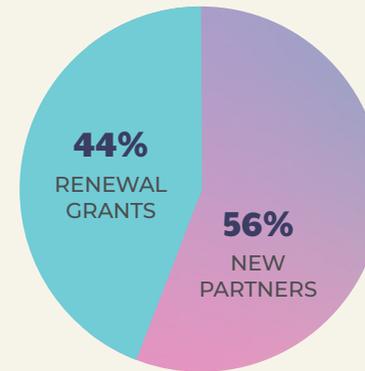
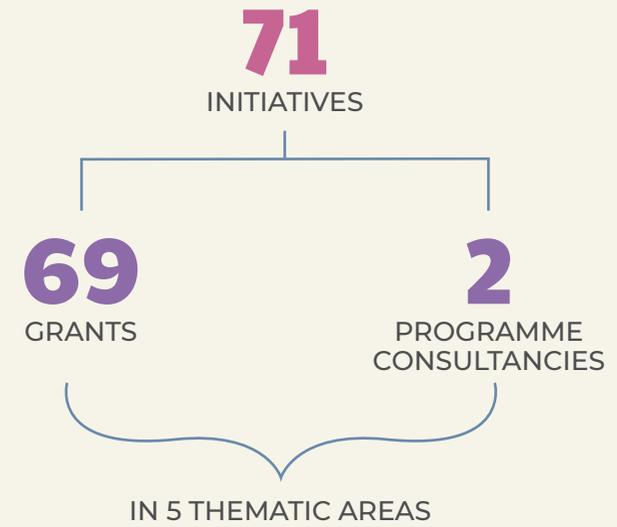
PROMOTING REGIONAL FEMINIST AGENDAS

Organisations and networks at the cross-national, subregional, and regional levels working on knowledge, capacity, and leadership building as well as advocacy for state accountability to advance women, girls, trans, and intersex people's human rights.



Grants Overview

Over the past year, the Strengthening Feminist Movements programme supported **71 initiatives through 69 grants and two programme consultancies in five thematic areas**. SFM grants supported, for instance, organisations that worked with an intersectional approach to address the multiple layers of discrimination faced by indigenous women garment workers and trans people with disabilities. WFA is also proud to provide first-time grants to deaf women and girls in Mongolia to develop a series of human rights videos in Mongolian sign language, support a safe platform for refugee women to learn about feminism in Indonesia, provide institutional support to a LGBTIQ+ rights group in Timor Leste, advocate for a more humane drug policy in Indonesia, and aid the participatory development of documentary videos of grassroots trans and queer activists in Vietnam.



38 grants and two programme consultancies went to South Asia, 28 to Southeast Asia, and 3 to East Asia:

- BANGLADESH
- PAKISTAN
- INDIA
- PHILIPPINES
- INDONESIA
- SRI LANKA
- MALAYSIA
- THAILAND
- MONGOLIA
- TIMOR-LESTE
- MYANMAR
- VIETNAM
- NEPAL



Strengthening Feminist Voices (SFV)

Supporting and strengthening grassroots feminist leadership and movements

USD 196,776 for 28 grants supporting 28 initiatives

Movement & Labour (M&L)

Safe migration, economic justice, and labour rights

USD 97,558 for 13 grants supporting 13 initiatives



Autonomy, Decisions, & Sexual Rights (ADS)

Bodily autonomy and decision-making

USD 149,534 to 21 grants and one programme consultancy for a total of 22 supported initiatives



Access to Justice (ATJ)

Ensuring legal support to women across Asia

USD 55,564 to 7 grants and one programme consultancy for a total of 8 supported initiatives



Environmental Justice (EJ)

The intersection of human rights and access to natural resources.

For our SFM 2020–21 call, Environmental Justice grants were excluded because there was already a call specifically for this area in 2019. However, there are multi-year grants in this area that we will highlight later in this report.



Linking & Learning (L&L)

Self-identified, needs-based capacity building grants for feminist activists and groups in the region.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding travel restrictions, we redirected resources to our emergency fund, Kaagapay, and no L&L grants were issued during the 2020–21 period.

Special Initiatives

In 2020–21, WFA created two grantmaking programmes: one to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the second to take advantage of a special opportunity for strengthening our mandate. They are the **Kaagapay Fund to Support Feminist Resilience in the Face of COVID-19** and **Claiming Our Voices: Beijing+25 Review and Follow-up**, respectively.

Kaagapay Fund distributed **USD 792,809 for 66 grants**

while Claiming Our Voices: Beijing+25 distributed **USD 287,181 for 17 grants and two programme consultancies.**

Strengthening Feminist Voices

The Strengthening Feminist Voices portfolio is a flexible fund that bridges the gap between resources and the grassroots feminist movements that will use them to sustain and strengthen their efforts while exploring new strategies. Over the past year, our initiatives focused on such aims as supporting survivor groups of gender-based violence, raising awareness of the realities of women with psychosocial disabilities, and developing cis, transgender, and rural indigenous women leadership, among many others.

Over 2020–21, we supported 28 SFM grants totalling USD 196,776, making this our largest portfolio.

India had ten initiatives, while Nepal had four initiatives; Indonesia had three; Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka had two initiatives each; and Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand had one initiative each.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: MONGOLIA

Culture Centre of the Deaf (CCD)

The Culture Centre of the Deaf is filling a serious gap in the accessibility of information for deaf women and girls in Mongolia. They are improving inclusion of deaf people, particularly women and girls, in social, economic, and political spheres through the creation of accessible learning materials on deaf women's and girl's rights. Based on their research, which identified the lack of access to information as one of the main barriers for deaf women and girls, they developed a series of video lessons and classroom training and discussions on human rights in Mongolian sign language based on international human rights instruments and mechanisms.

Movement & Labour

With our Movement and Labour portfolio, we provide grants support to interventions that challenge the traditional anti-trafficking discourse that represents women, girls, trans, and intersex people as powerless victims—rather, it advances and strengthens the approach that they have a right to agency and autonomy in decisions regarding their movement and labour. Over the past year, our initiatives in this portfolio helped strengthen local sex worker groups, organised women workers in tea plantations, and documented the stories of local women workers, among many other goals.

This past year we were able to make **13 grants totalling USD 97,558** to support and further the work on safe migration, economic justice, and labour rights in Asia. India and Sri Lanka had four initiatives supported; Indonesia had two; and Bangladesh, Mongolia, and Nepal all had one initiative.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: SRI LANKA

ACTFORM

ACTFORM is a network of migrants' organisations working at village and district levels that works to promote and protect rights of migrant workers in Sri Lanka. Their initiative, funded through an LFS grant, was originally focused on educating and empowering the migrant worker community on their rights. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were unable to conduct some of their field work and requested to adapt their original plan. Through realignment of their work and additional support through WFA's Kaagapay Fund, on top of core activities, they were also able to provide emergency support, financial assistance, and awareness raising on COVID-19 protection to their respective communities; COVID-19 hygiene and technological support for remote working for staff; psychosocial care for migrant women and informal sector workers; and strengthen leadership of community leaders.

Autonomy, Decisions, & Sexual Rights

Our Autonomy, Decisions, and Sexual Rights portfolio focuses on supporting diverse constituencies that amplify voices who challenge gender discrimination and advance sexual rights and bodily autonomy for all people. Sexual rights are an inalienable part of human rights and are central to the realisation of the highest standard of human rights for all. Over the past year, the initiatives we funded included providing institutional support to newly established LGBTIQ+ groups, strengthening network building and self-led advocacy efforts by trans and queer persons with disabilities, establishing of safe and inclusive spaces and a comprehensive crisis intervention programme for communities of marginalised genders and sexualities, and supporting evidence-based advocacy on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV.

This past year, under this thematic area, we were able to offer support for **21 grants and one programme consultancy totalling USD 149,534** to strengthen bodily autonomy and decision-making of women, girls, trans and intersex people in Asia. India had three initiatives; Indonesia and the Philippines had four; Malaysia and Pakistan had two; and Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam each had one.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: THE PHILIPPINES

Likhaan Center for Women's Health Inc

Likhaan is enhancing efforts to strengthen women's voices on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Accountability (SRHRA). There were three broad strategies in their LFS grant: application and refinement of sexual reproductive rights (SRR) monitoring tools, capacity building of SRR monitors, and management of dialogues with state actors and health providers' organisations, including discussions on SRHR of people with disabilities (PWD), especially women with disabilities (WWD), with the National Commission on Disability Affairs. In addition, Likhaan and WWDs SRR monitors spoke under oath at the Commission on Human Rights National Inquiry on the reproductive health of WWDs. WWDs recounted their experience of SRR violations, which included discrimination, lack or denial of access to reproductive health information and services, and forced contraception and sterilization.

Access to Justice

The Access to Justice portfolio supports grassroots organisations, activists, and women lawyers that fight for the justice of women, girls, trans, and intersex people, particularly survivors of violence, by providing pro bono legal services in primary courts. This portfolio has two components: grant funding that supports justice interventions and the Legal Fellowship Programme that offers financial and technical resources to women lawyers.

In 2020–21, WFA offered **7 SFM grants and one SFM programme consultancy totalling USD 55,564**. India and Indonesia had two grants; while Malaysia and Thailand each had one. Pakistan had one grant and one consultancy. Grantee-partners worked on providing a safe platform for refugee women in Indonesia, focused on the human rights of Malaysian women in transnational marriages, and aimed to improve access to justice for women and trans people who experience human rights violations, among other legal and rights-based goals.

In 2019, WFA commissioned a study into the Legal Fellowship Programme to assess the challenges and achievements of the programme, and to map out its future direction. The study notes that the programme is unique in the region for its work at the community level of justice, its focus on the primary courts, and its feminist approach.

However, the current programme strategy has not expanded the number of feminist women lawyers, but has consistently sustained a small group of women lawyers in their pro bono litigation, with many of these cases taking years to be resolved. As the current programme only focuses in five countries in South Asia, we needed to align it with the rest of the organisation's work across all of WFA's mandated 18 countries across Asia, as well as the expansion of our constituencies to include trans and intersex people.

Sustaining the programme will require a shift in focus. The Legal Fellowship Programme will be recast with a significant focus on supporting the capacity building of legal fellows / feminist lawyers themselves, rather than their litigation work. Our objectives remain in the spirit of the existing programme, which aims to advance a feminist legal praxis at the district and primary court level, by supporting women as well as trans and intersex legal practitioners.

Because of this redirection, we did not open the programme for new fellowships this past year. Instead, we have and will continue the support of 11 eligible legal fellows from the 2019–20 cohort through transition grants for the year 2021–22.

Environmental Justice

Our Environmental Justice portfolio supports the voices and leadership of our constituencies so that they are involved in the decision-making processes with the distribution of natural resources, the creation of disaster risk reduction management policies, and the provision of opportunities for sustainable development and climate resilience within their communities.

This past year Environmental Justice grants were not a part of the SFM call as there was a special Environmental Justice call launched in 2019. However, we have three multi-year grants working on addressing environmental violations from a women's human rights perspective, promoting women's control over land inheritance, and creating community-led advocacy on the protection of indigenous women's human rights that began in 2018 and concluded in 2020.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: THAILAND

Payoon Sri Trang Group

Payoon Sri Trang Group is working on enabling trans women to exercise their sexual rights, access equitable quality health services, and to eradicate stigma and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity by ensuring effective implementation of the Gender Equality law, passed in 2015. They are mobilising the trans community, raising awareness on the underused Gender Equality law, and collaborating with policy makers and government agencies to ensure inclusion and access to services.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: BANGLADESH

Badabon Sangho

In an area where land grabbing is rampant, Badabon Sangho is working on providing land literacy to disadvantaged and socially excluded women and girls and addressing barriers of inheritance laws and local customs that prevent women's land ownership. They mobilise and organise women and promote women's leadership in defending and managing land and natural resources so they are able to address vulnerabilities and economic insecurity.

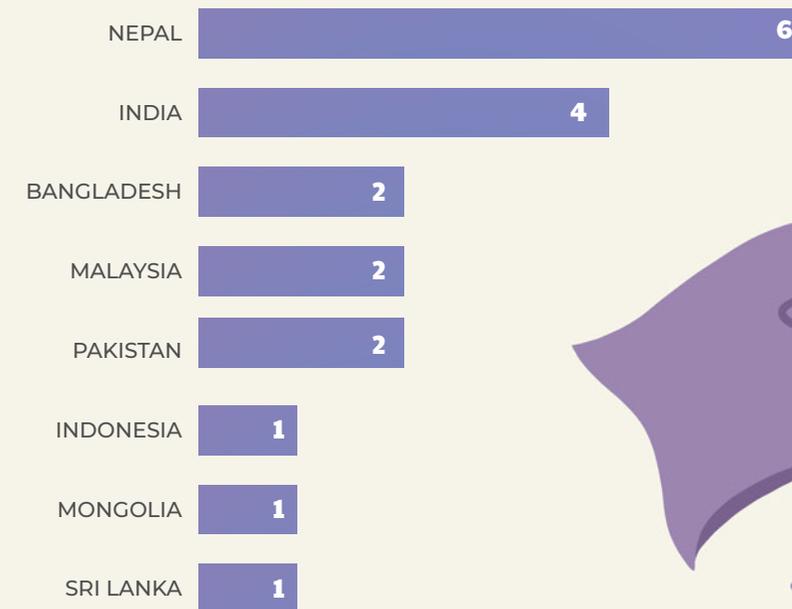
Claiming Our Voices: Beijing+25

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) was created at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women with the mission of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all spheres of public and private life in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making. The BPFA was adopted by 189 governments.

In 2020, 25 years later, WFA's grantmaking programme, **Claiming Our Voices: Beijing+25**, was designed to amplify Asian women and trans communities' voices in global discussions during the review and to follow-up 25 and 26 years after the adoption of the BPFA. It was developed in collaboration with our sister funds, Urgent Action Fund and Urgent Action Fund - Africa, and the support of the Gates Foundation. Claiming Our Voices was part of the Surge Fund, which aims to fund organisations participating in the review and follow-up for Beijing+25/26. Additional support for the accompaniment of grantee-partners was sourced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands under the Leading from the South programme.

Our call prioritised constituencies that have been invisibilised, excluded, or have had limited participation in the Beijing review processes, especially younger feminists, dalit women, indigenous people, sex workers, trans people, women with disabilities, rural women, and other marginalised groups.

Beijing+25 Grants and Programme Consultancies by Country



NO. OF GRANTS AND PROGRAMME CONSULTANCIES

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: NEPAL

Visible Impact

Visible Impact has been working towards building a feminist youth coalition of ten young feminists and is building their capacity to engage and advocate for the inclusion of marginalised youth in the Beijing+25/26 and Generation Equality Forum related processes and follow up. The work addresses the need for multigenerational leadership and the inclusion of voices that are often sidelined—transfeminine, disabled, etc.—in global policy level discussions and feminist movement spaces.

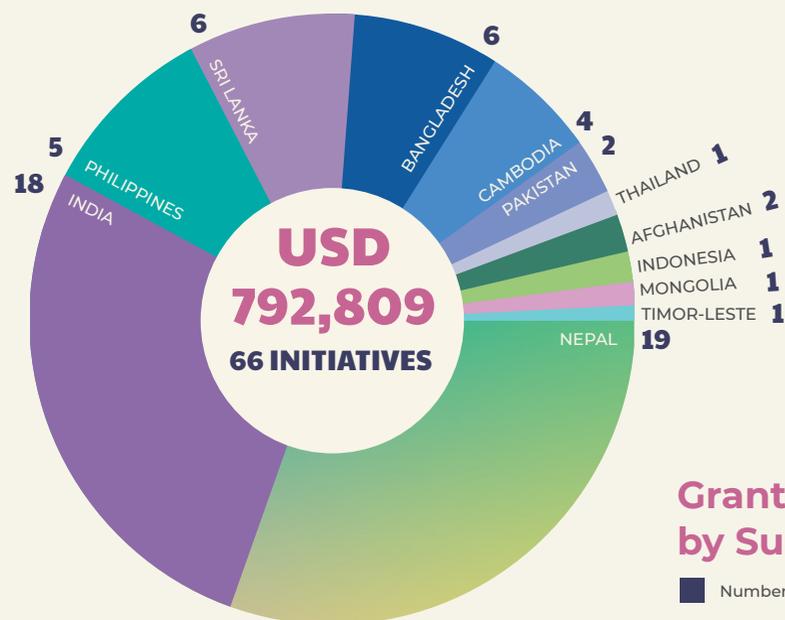


Kaagapay Fund to Support Feminist Resilience in the Face of COVID-19

In response to the pandemic, WFA launched its own emergency grant for the first time ever. The **Kaagapay Fund to Support Feminist Resilience in the Face of COVID-19** was an initiative to support the communities and groups we partner with in the region. The word **kaagapay** is a Filipino term which means ‘to stand by one’s side’ or ‘to go hand in hand in support,’ signifying mutual care, respect, support, and trust.

The pandemic’s resulting public health crisis, as well as the ensuing economic and social shocks, has had and continues to have significant, disproportionate impact on women, girls, trans, and intersex people. However, the mainstream COVID-19 response has underfunded and often ignored these communities. The Kaagapay Fund reaffirms our commitment as a feminist funder to resource these groups during times of crisis, conflict, and emergency.

The closed call was open only to grantee-partners from 2015 to the present, and we were able to fund **66 initiatives for a total of USD 792,809**. Most of the grants supported constituencies that hold an intersection of identities, e.g., young indigenous women with disabilities; sex workers who are trans women; Dalit women who are migrant, domestic, informal workers or from tribal/rural communities; and women living with HIV and AIDs who are also survivors of gender-based violence, among others.



Grantees by Sub-Region

■ Number of grantees

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT: INDIA

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DSMC)

The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee sought to engage with policy makers and state actors to raise awareness about the issues facing LGBT+ individuals and sex workers experiencing financial insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. They put up a petition in the Honorable Supreme Court of India for provision of dry rations to each and every sex worker and members of LGBT+ community without insisting on the production of identity documents, such as ration cards, during the pandemic. They also arranged for citizenship identity cards for undocumented community members through awareness raising and capacity building on this issue as well as capacity building on financial literacy for sex workers.

“Your amazing support is highly appreciated and you are a real great strength for us. Thank you so much to all of you for this support at all the crucial times!”

-BDS SAMABHABONA, INDIA

“Thank you very much for your thoughtful contribution and supporting our efforts to make a difference. Your kindness will help to improve the quality of life and rights of sex workers and their families as well as supporting our organisation in achieving our goals.”

- WOMEN’S NETWORK FOR UNITY/UNITED SISTERHOOD ALLIANCE, CAMBODIA

“This is great support for the organisation during this difficult time. We assure you that the organisation will make best use of the fund in supporting the right holders and building the feminist movement stronger.”

- SRIJANA, WOMEN FORUM FOR WOMEN IN NEPAL (WOFOWON)



KEY STRATEGIC AREA

Linking & Learning

Connections. Collaborations. Knowledge exchange.

Linking and Learning (L&L) is a strategic and integral part of building inclusive social justice movements, which sits at the core of WFA's identity as a women's fund. Our commitment to feminist values and principles goes beyond the traditional understanding of 'funding.' While direct financial support, especially core support, is critical, organisations and activists also require additional support of knowledge and information tools, skilled human resources, and access to strategic spaces, among others.

This focus on L&L runs across our five thematic areas where grantee-partners and non-partners come together to exchange perspectives, solidify learnings, and build action-based partnerships for change. WFA takes a two-pronged approach to enabling linking and learning. First, WFA organises convenings with programme partners, experts, and other actors for collective learning, reflection, and strategising. Second, we support activists through travel grants to participate in workshops and meetings, as well as grants to organise exchange visits, trainings, and convenings.

This conscious attempt has enabled WFA to reach a wider network of communities across Asia. It has also allowed us to remain dynamic in our approach, operate as facilitators in these conversations, and not unduly influence the agenda at these events—thereby helping to fulfil our role as a resourcing arm to the movement.

Given that WFA has been responding to the COVID-19 crisis by supporting many of our partners in the region through special grants since March 2020, and because of the complete standstill of nearly all travel and mobility, there were no L&L events that took place physically. WFA redirected all resources earmarked for Linking and Learning to the Kaagapay Fund to support feminist resilience.

LNL Events and Spaces

Organised by WFA

- **AccountAid workshop (August 2020):** Virtual training and dedicated email support for grantee partners based in India to discuss the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) regulatory amendments and how this would impact the organisations.
- **Financial Innovation & Resilience Intensive (October 2020):** WFA organised a three-day virtual workshop for partner organisations to increase organisational financial resilience.
- **Finance and Accounting Fundamentals Workshop (January 2021):** A virtual capacity-building workshop for grantees based in Thailand with interpretation in Thai.
- **'Global Promises, Local Realities: 25 years of BPFA Journey' (March 2021):** The Feminist Generation Coalition—WFA, Urgent Action Fund, Urgent Action Fund Africa, with support from the Gates Foundation—organised this virtual side event for the 65th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- **Beijing+25/26 Partner Accompaniment (March 2021):** To complement our 'Claiming Our Voices' grants, WFA collaborated with **Breakthrough** to organise six online learning and sharing sessions for our grantee partners to engage with the ongoing Beijing+25/26 review process.

Organised by other organisations

- **Global Conference on Muslim Family Law Reform (November 2020):** Organised by WFA grantee-partner Musawah, this conference brought together more than 60 activists, scholars, and policy makers from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa working on issues pertaining to Muslim family laws in their respective countries and regions.

KEY STRATEGIC AREA

Influencing Philanthropy & Claiming Resources

Ensuring access to resources for feminist activism

Beyond grantmaking and mobilising resources, WFA understands that there is a need for guidance in the distribution and use of resources so that the feminist movements in the region can be sustainable and remain resilient. In order to do this, we need to encourage participation in dialogues, involvement in critical spaces, and expansion of resource opportunities for such work.

As a feminist fund, WFA sees its role as going beyond the direct resource mobilisation efforts for ourselves and our partners. Resources are a feminist issue, and by claiming them for funding feminist movements, along with other sister funds from the region, WFA plays a vital role in strengthening the feminist aid architecture in the Asia region. In addition, WFA uses an intersectional lens in approaching both aid and philanthropic giving as a claimant, on behalf of diverse feminist movements.

Networks & Consortia

As an active member of the Prospera Network, WFA continues its deeper engagement with the regional chapter of the Prospera Network for Asia and the Pacific.

WFA, Urgent Action Fund - USA, and Urgent Action Fund - Africa are part of the Beijing+25 consortium called the **Surge Fund**. In addition to making grants, the Surge Fund is also developing a strategy to influence funders and other key players in ensuring resource commitments are met for the feminist movements.

WFA is a member of the **Global Resilience Fund for Girls and Young Women: A Collective Response to the COVID-19 Crisis**, a partnership amongst 23 social justice funders. The fund is housed at and facilitated by Purposeful, a feminist movement building hub for adolescent girls headquartered in Sierra Leone and working around the world. The fund is also co-led by Women-Win.

WFA is a founding member of the **Sex Workers Donor Collaborative**, which aims to increase the amount and quality of funding to support sex workers' rights.

WFA is also a member of the **Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)**, which aims to increase support for women's human rights and environmental justice.

Critical Spaces

- Roundtable Webinar on Leading from the South, 'Resourcing Advocacy for Women's Rights' (September 2020)
- International Intersex Virtual Forum (October 2020) - Donor Activist Dialogue, 'Where is the Money for Intersex Organising?'
- Beijing+25 Civil Society Town Hall (October 2020)
- Leaving No One Behind @Beijing+25 and COVID-19: Lessons about Equality and Justice from Sex Workers (October 2020)
- International Trans Fund Funding Webinar (5 November)
- Shaping the 2020s: Symposium for Workers' Future in Asia Research Conference (November 2020)
- Regional Consultation Series in South Asia on Environment Justice and Women's Rights (November 2020)
- Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum 2020: Solidarity and System Change are the Only Antidotes to COVID-19 (30 November)
- From Crisis to Solidarity: Avenues for Support Grassroots Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (3 February)
- State of LBQ Funding in SEA: A Conversation with Feminist Funders (10 March)

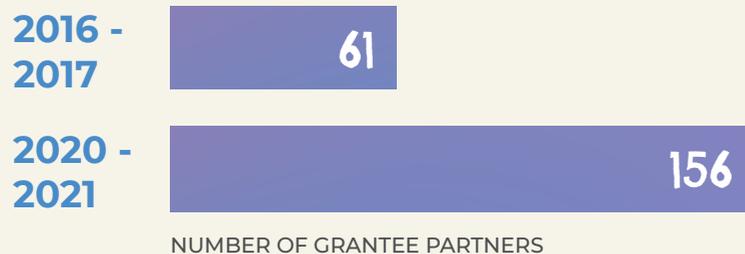
Leading from the South

Taking Root And Growing

In 2016, we started the process of expanding beyond our position as South Asia Women’s Fund (SAWF) to become Women’s Fund Asia (WFA). Fuelling this need to grow was the desire to take on more leadership roles in creating access to critical resources and spaces within and beyond South Asia. With such a key strategic move, the issue of limited resources was a major obstacle. The Leading from the South initiative, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, provided us with the opportunity to expand our mandate and outreach to Southeast Asia and Mongolia.

Because of the success of LFS 1, WFA applied for the renewal of the programme. In November 2020, WFA attended a virtual meeting with all four consortium members and representatives from the Dutch MFA, and the Prospera Network. This meeting concluded the first phase of the LFS consortium grant and was where the MFA officially announced the approval for the renewal of Leading from the South.

Bearing Fruit: Key Results



As a women’s fund, we started LFS being able to only support mostly small grants; now WFA has the capacity to support multi-year and larger grant sizes.

Additionally, when critical assistance was needed, we were able to raise **close to USD 1 million from five funders** for our COVID-19 fund for core support and emergency work.

Outcomes

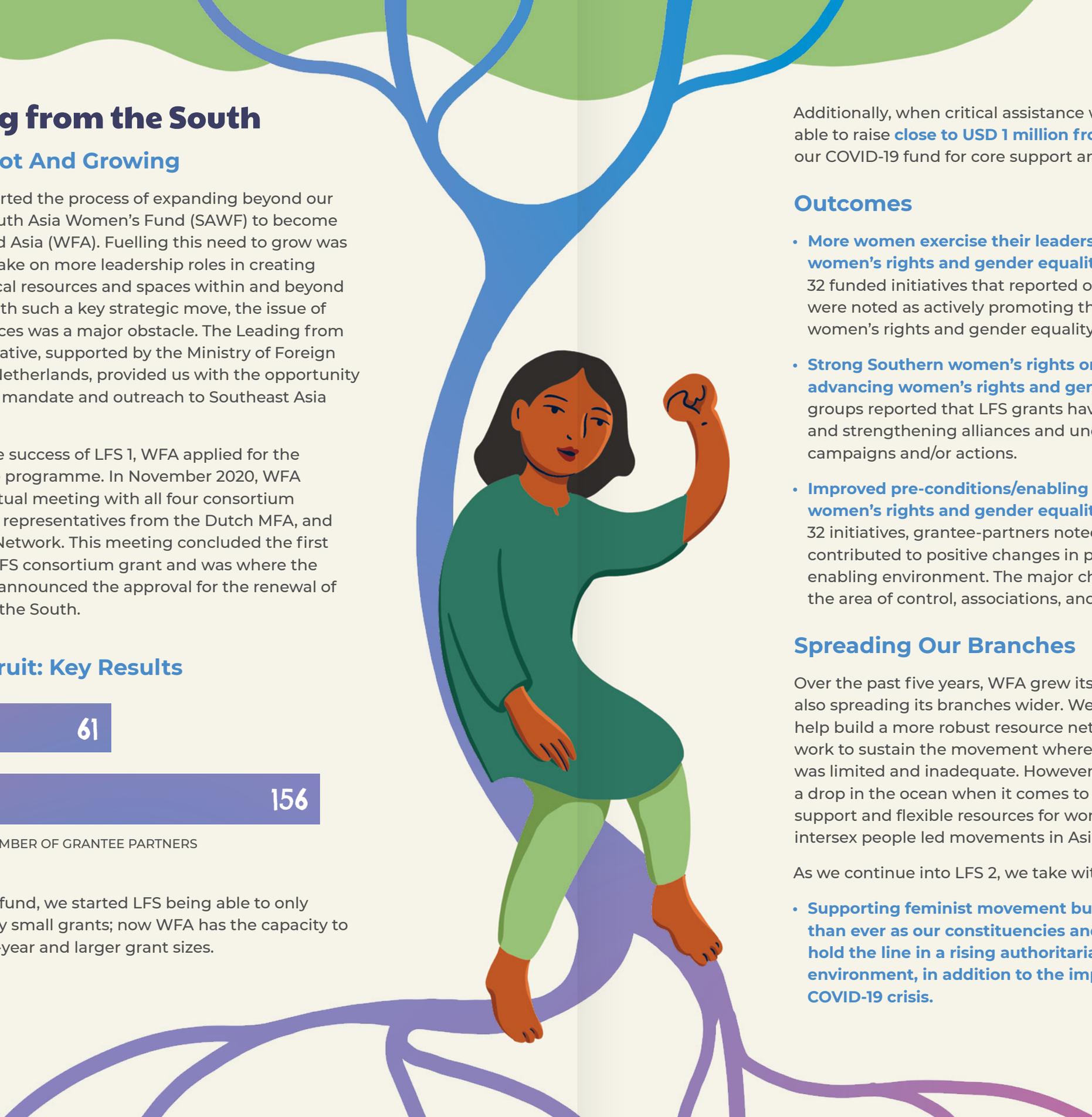
- **More women exercise their leadership to promote women’s rights and gender equality.** Overall, 31 of 32 funded initiatives that reported on the indicators were noted as actively promoting the advancement of women’s rights and gender equality.
- **Strong Southern women’s rights organisations advancing women’s rights and gender equality.** All groups reported that LFS grants have supported creating and strengthening alliances and undertaking joint campaigns and/or actions.
- **Improved pre-conditions/enabling environment for women’s rights and gender equality.** In 30 of the 32 initiatives, grantee-partners noted that LFS grants contributed to positive changes in pre-conditions for an enabling environment. The major changes were largely in the area of control, associations, and values and norms.

Spreading Our Branches

Over the past five years, WFA grew its roots deeper, while also spreading its branches wider. We have been able to help build a more robust resource network for funding work to sustain the movement where previously support was limited and inadequate. However, this is still barely a drop in the ocean when it comes to availability of core support and flexible resources for women, girls, trans, and intersex people led movements in Asia.

As we continue into LFS 2, we take with us many lessons:

- **Supporting feminist movement building is more critical than ever as our constituencies and grantee-partners hold the line in a rising authoritarian and anti-rights environment, in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.**



- **Emergency funds are a crucial arm of feminist funding.** The pandemic increased economic and social insecurity for women, girls, trans, and intersex people, making it important for women's funds to acknowledge, respond to, and support them to navigate new threats.
- **Resources are more political than ever.** We know that funding for women's rights in general is low, as is funding for Asia compared to other regions. Even as governments and foundations globally divert most resources to economic rebuilding in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, out of total official development assistance integrating a gender equality perspective, as little as 2% is dedicated to gender equality as a primary objective.²
- **Self-care and collective well-being become more important in a crisis.** A lesson that has become increasingly clear is the political nature of collective well-being and self-care. We have to take into account what the pandemic has exposed for all of us—the devastating economies around us are being subsidised by the unpaid and underpaid labour of women and girls, at the cost of their own health and well-being.
- **We are better together.** Throughout LFS 1, the four funds, along with the Dutch MFA, have actively and purposefully sought each other's expertise and learnt from each other, as well as with the wider community of feminist funders. A key learning and challenge through this process has centred around the need to connect learnings and strategies around grantmaking undertaken by all four funds in a way that collectively amplifies the feminist voices from the Global South, along with building network and solidarity spaces for LFS partners across continents. This will be a key component of LFS 2.

²as little as 2% is dedicated to gender equality



“The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is proud of its partnership with Leading from the South. This fund is a good example of innovative and direct funding towards women’s rights organisations in the Global South. By supporting leadership from the Global South we have seen great results in addressing women’s rights and gender equality and the fund contributes to the reframing of relationships with Southern-led feminist funders.”

- MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE NETHERLANDS

“LFS is proof that feminists from the Global South are best placed to tackle their own challenges, and that when we come together across regions, we are unstoppable. We must keep believing in our own power, and more partners and actors must do the same”.

- AFRICAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT FUND

“LFS is a great feminist force thought and led by women from the Global South, challenging the prevailing notions about who has the capacity and expertise to lead social change. LFS is a unique opportunity to support feminist activism so it can be as strong and effective as possible in creating a better present and future for all.”

- FONDO DE MUJERES DEL SUR

“Leading from the South was an opportunity to walk together—despite our diverse regions, experiences, knowledge, focuses, ethnic and gender identities—with a single objective: to reduce the barriers to inequality for the full exercise of women’s human rights. Each fund contributes and learns the best from others, helping us grow and strengthen our funds for joint advocacy in mobilising investment towards gender equality and transforming philanthropy.”

- INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FORUM

KEY STRATEGIC AREA

Institution Building

Strengthening our core to support growth

Since transitioning from South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF), WFA understands that an important part of the growth process is the continuous reflection and focus on strengthening the internal capacity of the organisation. A major pillar of our institution building is the creation of the organisational Theory of Change. Drawing from the lessons learned as WFA evolved from SAWF, this document, combined with the insights of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework and Toolkit (currently in development), will allow WFA greater accountability, transparency, and evolution of its programming and strategies. It will connect WFA's vision and mission across all of our work, ensuring that we continue to be true to our feminist principles.

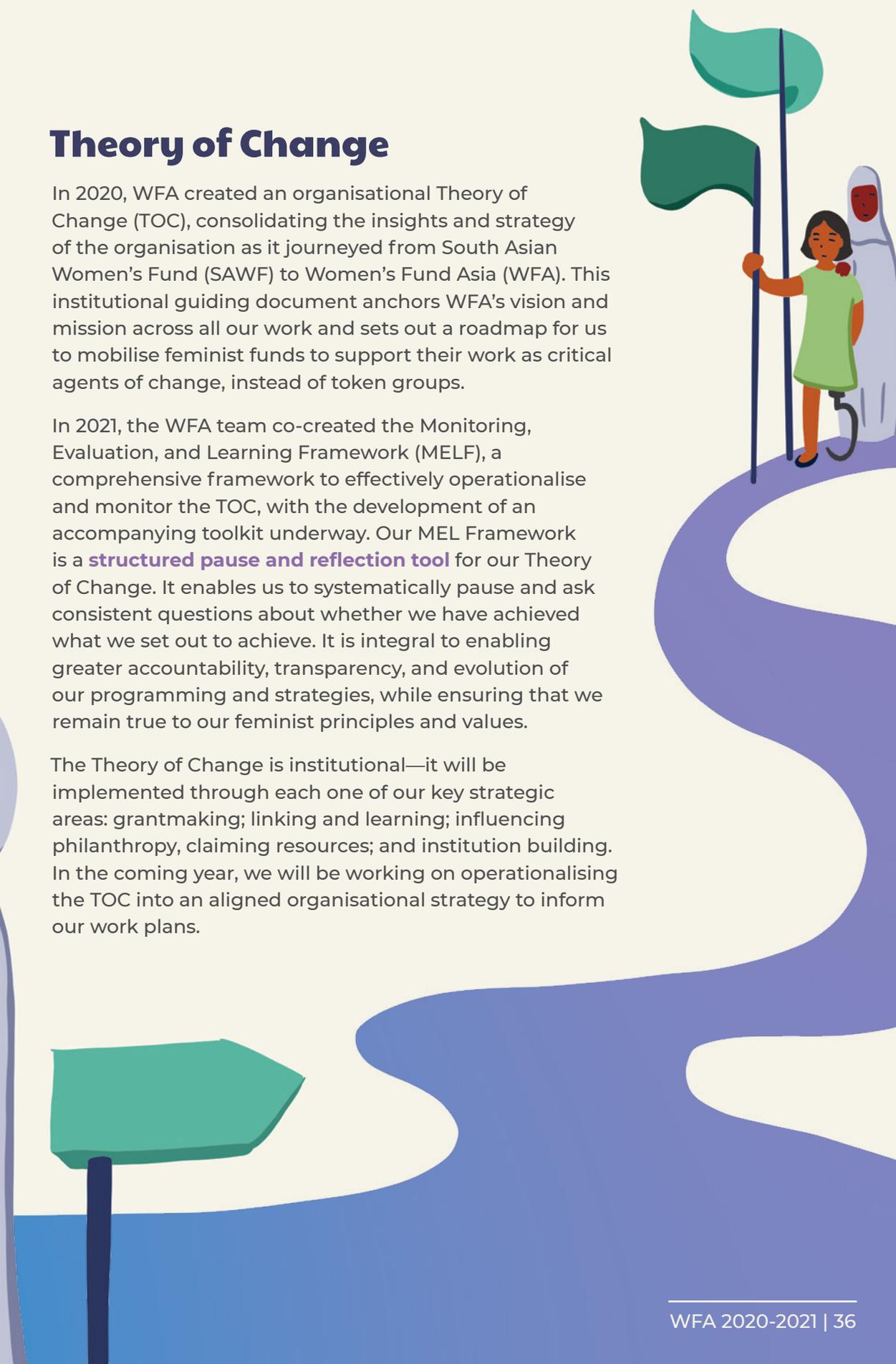
Over the past year, we have also undertaken a Strategic Review, interviewing allies and grantee-partners to understand our external relationships, as well as holding discussions with our own staff to understand our internal relationships. These insights will guide us in developing a five-year organisational strategic plan, thereby operationalising our Theory of Change.

Theory of Change

In 2020, WFA created an organisational Theory of Change (TOC), consolidating the insights and strategy of the organisation as it journeyed from South Asian Women's Fund (SAWF) to Women's Fund Asia (WFA). This institutional guiding document anchors WFA's vision and mission across all our work and sets out a roadmap for us to mobilise feminist funds to support their work as critical agents of change, instead of token groups.

In 2021, the WFA team co-created the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework (MELF), a comprehensive framework to effectively operationalise and monitor the TOC, with the development of an accompanying toolkit underway. Our MEL Framework is a **structured pause and reflection tool** for our Theory of Change. It enables us to systematically pause and ask consistent questions about whether we have achieved what we set out to achieve. It is integral to enabling greater accountability, transparency, and evolution of our programming and strategies, while ensuring that we remain true to our feminist principles and values.

The Theory of Change is institutional—it will be implemented through each one of our key strategic areas: grantmaking; linking and learning; influencing philanthropy, claiming resources; and institution building. In the coming year, we will be working on operationalising the TOC into an aligned organisational strategy to inform our work plans.



Using Feminist Values to Develop the Framework

It was important to frame the development of MELF on WFA's core feminist values. As a feminist organisation, WFA aspires to be self-reflective about processes to advance gender equality and justice as well as seeks to negotiate power relations collectively and individually with on-going discussion.

Our Feminist Values:

- Rights-based
- Inclusive and intersectional
- Transparent
- Accountable
- Collaborative

Framework Overview

WFA's MEL Framework is designed to align to WFA's strategy plan which is envisaged as a 3+2 year cycle. Our MEL framework centers on the culture of learning and reflection, and this is achieved by way of regular and periodic reflection cycles with the varied teams. There is also an all-staff annual reflection meeting envisaged to reflect on the strategy progress through MEL processes.

WFA's MELF uses both quantitative and qualitative indicators, but with a focus on the qualitative; the driver for this being commitment to reflexive feminist practice and learning. These indicators are part of WFA's commitment to transparency and accountability, as well as part of its commitment to reflexive feminist practice and learning.

Strategic Review Process

The strategic review is a concerted effort to gather the lessons from WFA's history so that they can inform the organisation's future. We acknowledged that the world when WFA began as the South Asia Women's Fund is not what the world is today. It is not only time for reflection on what has worked, what we should continue to do, and what we should start doing, but it is also time to celebrate what WFA has achieved in the last decade.

In the last year, the consultant team hired to conduct the review interviewed selected partners, funders, and allies to gain a better understanding of how our external relationships were working. We then turned inward and conducted team-based dialogues. Earlier this year, the consultants conducted a workshop to explore the findings from the review and had the WFA team work through case study exercises to consider possible future scenarios, establishing a solid foundation for the strategic planning process that will take place later in 2021.

Design & Method

We aimed to answer questions related to four overall themes:

Relevance: How or how not has WFA remained relevant? How can we strengthen it?

Representation: What issues and constituencies (marginalised in funding spaces) must WFA represent as a women's fund? Where can we support?

Response: How do all WFA work-streams respond to critical needs? How can it remain strategic in its response?

Resilience: What does resilience mean for WFA? How do we ensure we take all our stakeholders along? How do we build institutional strength?

We then applied these questions to WFA's focus areas: Grantmaking, L&L, Influencing Aid & Philanthropy, and Institution Building and held conversations with key WFA stakeholders.





Key Insights

- WFA is well-respected and trusted within a group of powerful actors in the feminist women's / trans' human rights space. This group is limited and already a part of the 'converted'. For WFA to expand its allyship, it must speak to a wider audience.
- WFA's current grantee-partners are diverse and at the frontlines. They value WFA for its unique and relevant funding mechanism. While WFA has achieved significant scale, a depth in its partnerships would benefit grantee-partners and WFA.
- WFA has a strong, passionate, and intelligent team. Each person embodies the WFA politics and feminist analysis. While dedication is high, they feel a need for a balanced work structure and there is threat of a burnout amongst the team.

Key Recommendations

- WFA's representation cannot rest solely on its leadership, but rather by democratising representation by all team members.
- WFA needs to understand and organise our internal structure between the different teams, allow for opportunities for collective reflection, and find the gaps in grants-management, especially for identity-led groups.
- Diversify partnerships with grantees by tapping into their knowledge, skills, and expertise to shape WFA's thematic areas, inform the institutional learning framework and communications strategy, and co-create a dynamic L&L journey for both WFA and our partners.
- Deepen the conceptual and political understanding of each thematic area through strategic thinking and planning.

Quotes from Strategic Review Participants

“One thing that struck me was how thoughtful they were about precisely expanding and not becoming a monster fund that decides and imposes. A feminist process at the forefront in relationships and deep listening. It continues to remember the story of its origin and what movements and organisations want.”

- WFA ALLY

“WFA values our context, knowledge, and expertise and gives autonomy in determining the structure of the program.”

- WFA GRANTEE-PARTNER

“How do we communicate more horizontally? I need to reflect on myself. I go straight to [my supervisor] but it would be great to have more space to soundboard more with other team members. How can we do that more?”

- WFA STAFF MEMBER



Board and Team

BOARD:

Shaheen Anam
CHAIR, BANGLADESH

Honey Tan Lay Ean
MEMBER, MALAYSIA

Linda To
MEMBER, HONG KONG

Kunthea Chan
MEMBER, CAMBODIA

Sivalee Anantachart
MEMBER, THAILAND

Dilani Champika Alagaratnam Goonatileke
MEMBER, SRI LANKA

Radhika Coomaraswamy
MEMBER, SRI LANKA

STAFF:

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Anisha
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kishani
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Malyn
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES

Sanjana
DIRECTOR OF STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMMES

Madhu
PROGRAMME OFFICER – MONITORING, LEARNING & EVALUATION

Nikita
PROGRAMME OFFICER – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Pim
PROGRAMME OFFICER – COMMUNICATIONS

Himakshi
PROGRAMME OFFICER – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Priyanka
PROGRAMME OFFICER – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Shuchi
PROGRAMME OFFICER – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Wei San
PROGRAMME OFFICER – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Bushra
PROGRAMME ASSOCIATE – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Milaine Thia
PROGRAMME ASSOCIATE – GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Krishna
GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR

Vineeta
MANAGER – OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Heloise
MANAGER – ADMINISTRATION AND EVENTS

Miruna
FINANCE MANAGER

Anukriti
ACCOUNT OFFICER

Mifaza
ACCOUNT OFFICER

Abhilasha
OPERATIONS OFFICER

Dharini
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

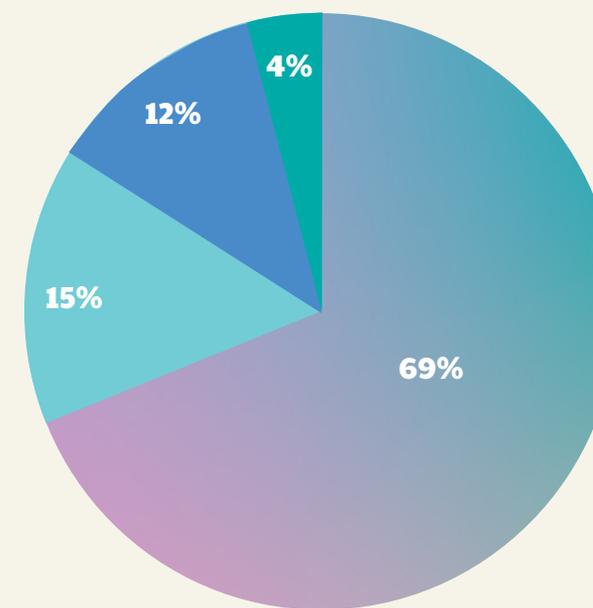
Pinki
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

Jayanthi
OFFICE SUPPORT STAFF

Preeti
OFFICE SUPPORT STAFF

Utilisation of Funds

Our full audited financial report is available on our website.



- Direct Grants
- Staff Costs
- Linking and Learning, MEL, Communications, and Grant Management
- Finance, Compliance, and Operations



Thank You

We are deeply grateful to our grantee-partners, not only for the courageous and crucial work they do, but also for their continued faith and belief in us. You always push us to be accountable, transparent, and reflective.

WFA would like to thank our funders for being steadfast companions in our journey as we navigate difficult challenges and celebrate critical victories. Thank you for your continued solidarity, support, and commitment to the human rights of women, girls, trans, and intersex people in Asia. Your support has been especially invaluable in the last year with the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and we are grateful to you for standing with us.

- **Comic Relief**
- **Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres**
- **Ford Foundation**
- **Foundation for a Just Society**
- **Gates Foundation**
- **Global Fund for Women**
- **Mama Cash**
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**
- **New Venture Fund**
- **Oak Foundation**
- **Open Society Foundation**
- **Prospera - The International Network of Women's Funds**
- **Tides Foundation**
- **Wellspring**

Our gratitude to all the amazing feminists across the region who have supported our work by being part of our various advisories. Your wisdom has guided us during some very challenging times.

A big thank you to the Secretariat at Prospera - The International Network of Women's Funds, to all the member sister funds across the globe for their inspiring work, as well as the Leading from the South consortium and the Human Rights Funders Network.



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