



# SHAKING THE GROUND COLORING THE SKY

Challenges, Strategies and Impact  
of FRIDA's LGBTQI grantee partners





Guayana Trans United, **Guayana** at a street protest highlighting violence faced by trans people



Young Feminist Movement (Y-Fem) Namibia participating at a public protest during the 16 days of activism against gender based violence



# INTRODUCTION

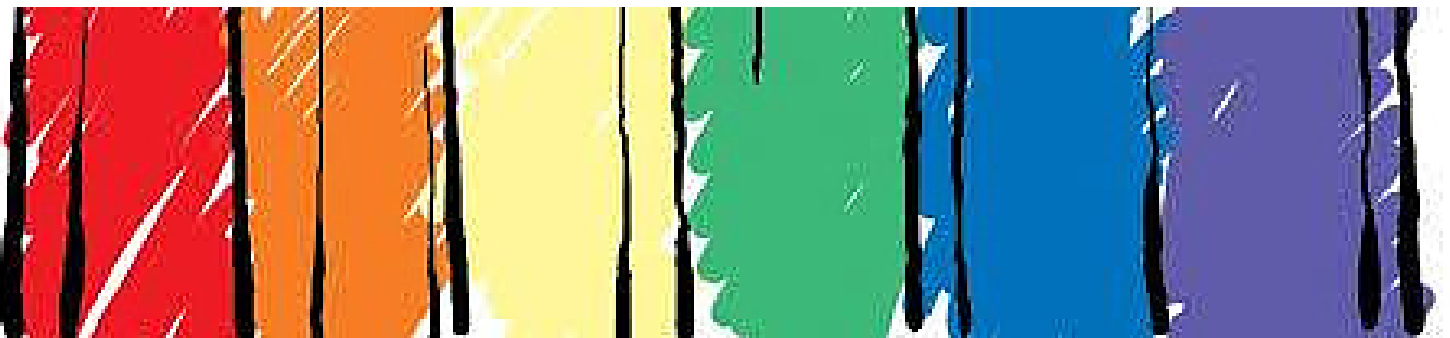
## THE ISSUE

The rights of Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LBTQI)\* community members to freely express their full identities and live free from violence have become critical rights to protect for many movements, including feminist movements. Emerging trans-feminist movements around the globe have embraced many values that are also intrinsic to our feminist principles: the right to self-determine one's own identity and expression; the right to bodily autonomy; a commitment to unpacking, challenging and transcending gender norms and hierarchies; and an ethical position which recognises different dimensions of inequality and human rights as multiple, material and interlocking.

Since its inception in 2012, FRIDA has operated according to the principle that diversity in experience, identity and opinion are critical to achieving feminist values. Many mainstream LBTQI movements continue to structure themselves in a cisnormative manner, where leadership is largely Western, older, cisgender and male. In response, one<sup>1</sup> of FRIDA's funding priorities has been to fund groups led by young women and trans youth whose work specifically addresses LBTQI issues. To date, FRIDA has supported youth-led groups working on LBTQI rights in as many as 19 countries\*\* in the Global South with USD 107, 214.

*\* In this report, the term "LGBTQI" refers to the global movement around advocating sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. However, to refer to girl, young women and trans youth led activism in this report, FRIDA used the term "LBTQI".*

*\*\* This is a total of 13 countries plus Trans Mreza Balkan, one of FRIDA's grantee partners, that works in 6 countries in the Balkan region*



# WHY THIS REPORT

**FRIDA believes young women, girls, and trans\* youth are experts of their own reality as a matter of respect and dignity.** This underlines our commitment to working with these grassroots leaders as change agents and amplifying their strategic legitimacy in speaking about issues that directly affect them, their friends and peers, and the entire community. Documenting and visibilizing the work of young feminists is also a significant part of FRIDA's contribution to the feminist and other social movements.

With its long-established focus on mobilising civil society constituencies, FRIDA believes that **May 17\*, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), offers an entry point for women's rights and feminist groups to celebrate trans and intersex\*\* inclusion as well as gender and sexual diversity within the feminist movement.** We have compiled this special issue impact report sharing some of the challenges, strategies and impact of the LBTQI groups in our 2014/15 grant-making cycle.

**This report is the second of an ongoing series that aims to profile the work and impact of young feminist organizers.** We share this report with our community to thank them for their ongoing support. Furthermore, we hope this report will reach other women's rights organizations, funders, governments, universities, activists, and others so that the impact of young feminist organizers is more acknowledged and included in our collective struggle for social justice and equality. The change we all seek can be achieved much faster if young organizers are more meaningfully acknowledged, engaged, and funded.

*\* To learn more about the day, its history and its ever-evolving acronym, please visit:  
[www.dayagainsthomophobia.org](http://www.dayagainsthomophobia.org)*

*\*\* On October 26 2015, Intersex Awareness Day, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice launched the new Intersex Human Rights Fund 2015. The Fund awards nearly \$200,000 in grants to 29 intersex-led grantee partners based in 20 counties. Read more:*

*<http://astraeaintersexfund.tumblr.com/>*



# THE GROUPS



Members of WHER, Nigeria at a planning meeting

**Since its inception, FRIDA has spent 15 % of the total grant amount awarded since 2012 supporting groups working on LGBTQI issues. In the 2014-15, FRIDA supported eight LGBTQI groups through grants, mentorship, capacity building, and other kinds of support:**

**Chouf, Tunisia** was formed in response to the discrimination and violence against LBT women in Tunisia. The group uses audiovisual tools to advocate for the physical and intellectual freedom of women in Tunisia including LBT women.

**Agrupacion Lesbofeminista Segundo Patio, Chile:** Through the music of their band Segundo Patio, this group has raised the visibility of lesbi-feminism in the Araucanêa region of Chile.

**Guayana Trans United (GTU), Guyana:** GTU's advocacy, including challenging legislative injustices against trans persons, supports trans persons across Guyana and has enabled members of the trans community to fight for visibility and respect.


**Colectiva Feminista Rabiosa, Argentina:** Through their various initiatives, this group has nurtured and mobilised community level feminist political activism.

**Radical Queer Affinity Collective, Hungary:** This collective is one of the few groups in Budapest advocating to end violence against and oppression of women through sharing information and hosting feminist defense classes.

**Trans Mreza Balkan (TMB), Balkan Region:** TMB's informative online platform has provided trans persons in the Balkan region with access to resources and information on trans issues and rights, as well as a space for the authentic expression of trans voices.

**Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative (WHER), Nigeria:** WHER's advocacy and safe spaces, both online and off, have provided LGBTQI women in Nigeria with support for their physical and emotional well-being.

**Young Feminists Movement (YFem), Namibia:** As a result of YFem's work to raise awareness, more young women and trans youth know about their human rights and have been able to talk more openly about HIV/AIDS, their reproductive health, LGBTQI rights and sex.





# EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

FRIDA works with groups led by young women from the LGBTQI community and who therefore understand the local context and specific issues from those communities. Many of the groups we work with have done outreach to further gauge the needs of the broader LGBTQI population. Trans Mreza Balkan conducted a survey on the needs of the trans community in the Balkan region, and have used that information to design their programs. Yfem held a meeting in Gobabis for queer youth to source the challenges they face so that they could design their projects accordingly, and lastly, WHER has documented human rights violations against sexual minority women in Nigeria to use for advocacy purposes.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES FACING LBQTI ACTIVISTS

The LGBTQI groups FRIDA supports face similar challenges despite differences in location and context. The criminalization of homosexuality is one example; Tunisia's Article 230 in the Penal Code\* and Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014\*\* both severely hamper the basic civil and human rights of LGBTQI individuals. This legislation prevents some of the organizations we work with from being able to formally and/or truthfully register, and increases the potential for discrimination in the forms of homophobic violence, blackmail and extortion. As a result, at times, our grantee partners are unable to engage with the broader LGBTQI communities in their countries given the risks in the formal realm from the justice system and in the informal realm from restrictive social norms.

\* Human Rights Watch, 2016. *Dispatches: LGBT rights five years after the Tunisian Uprising*. Online resource: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/08/dispatches-lgbt-rights-five-years-after-tunisian-uprising>

\*\* The Guardian. 2014. *Nigeria Arrests Dozens as Anti-Gay Law comes into Force*. Online article: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/14/nigeria-arrests-dozens-anti-gay-law>

**"We strongly feel that Trans persons do not get justice in any legal matter."**

—Guyana Trans United (GTU), FRIDA Grantee Partner since 2014

In the Balkan region, the rise of conservative movements who oppose the protection LBTQI human rights has meant that increased visibility of trans issues is accompanied by increased risk. This has inhibited trans community organizing and voice. In Namibia, YFem has faced a lack of support from local leaders and from media to share the stories of their community. This has limited their ability to reach wide audiences with their advocacy and consciousness raising actions.

Some of the groups we work with have been victims of hate crimes; in March 2015 two members of Chouf organization were attacked\* in the same week; one woman was raped, and another woman was beaten up; both attacks were because of their sexual orientation. Two members of Guyana Trans United were murdered\*\*, and the main suspect was not arrested until after the group's public protests led to pressure for arrests. Despite that, even after these arrests were made, the case was delayed and ended with a dismissal of the case due to 'insufficient evidence'. Justice for LBTQI persons is often hard to attain.

Although the contexts are different, attacks on LBTQI communities come from similar sets of actors: Representatives of conservative and authoritarian regimes, who frame their assaults on basic human rights as a "defensive" measure designed to guard against "Western" incursions on "public morality." One of the effects of this trope is that it has split LBTQI women's and feminist energies and marginalized feminist voices, constricting space for alliances. FRIDA grantee partners have, in different ways, tackled this challenge through advocacy at the national and regional governmental levels, by advocating for justice in cases of homophobia and transphobia, by sensitizing communities on LBTQI rights and by creating safe spaces for LBTQI persons to share experiences, information and to build community. Below, we share more about their key strategies and impact.

\* Refer to this news report: <http://historia-ime.com/2015/03/13/in-tunisia-two-violent-attacks-against-women-of-the-lbt-community/>

\*\* Take Part. 2015. In Guyana, Transgender People Fight for Visibility and Respect. Online resource: <http://www.takepart.com/article/2015/06/23/guyanas-transgender-community>





"Our main challenge concerns the security of our members. We are trying to cope with these difficulties by organizing physical and online security trainings and by protecting the anonymity of our members."

—Chouf  
Minorities,  
FRIDA grantee  
partner since  
2012





Chouf in Tunisia during its annual Chouftouhonna Festival:  
"The Festival of Feminist Art"

## SAFE SPACES


An essential part of all the groups' work, given the hostile environment in which LGBTQI activists operate, is the provision of safe spaces. FRIDA's grantee partners have created safe spaces online and offline t, with a particular focus on fostering openness and sharing experiences. In Nigeria, WHER has held workshops with a total of 29 sexual minority women, which, in addition to the provision and sharing of information, has served as an opportunity for participants to meet, bond and network. WHER has also sought to reduce internalized homophobia, through writing and poetry sessions where participants shared writing and poetry as tools of healing and self-love.

WHER has also established a confidential online platform strictly for sexual minority women that provides them with a safe space to network, obtain psychosocial support and share valuable information. This space encourages the sharing of safety risks and preventative tactics, issues, ideas, setbacks and joys with a community who understand and respond. Their members have described the platform as educative and supportive.



Trans Mreza Balkan launched their online platform (<http://www.transbalkan.org/>) to raise awareness about the diverse identities and experiences in the trans community across the Balkan region (specifically, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro). They also work effectively to create a **space for authentic expression by trans persons from the region**; through the blog space they have on the online platform where trans persons can share their experiences, thoughts and or ideas; for example: *A time to mourn- on activism and staying present* or *Why I need feminism*. Agrupacion Lesbofeminista Segundo Patio in Chile also employed art therapy techniques to engage girls and women, including singing, painting, dance, silk-screen painting and guitar playing. The group invited women throughout Wallmapu, the southern part of Chile, to send stories about their experiences **“to free themselves from shame and to confront their fears.”** The responses will soon be published as a book.

Chouf in Tunisia has hosted the Chouftouhonna Festival, or “The Festival of Feminist Art.” The festival is a celebration of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO) that creates space for LBT women to express and discuss issues and challenges they face in the region. Chouf also creates opportunities for group members to collectively redefine feminism, and to create and share media such as an illustrated guide on sexual health and legal security. They also have introduced art as a method of self-expression and activism and cross-country partnerships and regional collective action to demand the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Guyana Trans United also hosts monthly support group sessions to provide regular support for the group's members, their families and other loved ones.



**"We have also been able to get sexual minority women to begin to build a sense of community and family with each other which has been especially beneficial to those who are not on our online social media platform and who do not have any substantial link to other sexual minority women outside the networks WHER provides."**

**—WHER, FRIDA Grantee Partner since 2014**





Agrupacion Lesbofeminista Segundo  
Patio, FRIDA grantee partner since 2014

## CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING AND WORKSHOPS

Heteronormativity, a word that describes a prism through which people rigidly define appropriate sexual behaviour and gender expression, plays a defining role in the legitimisation of gender and sexual discrimination and inequality in both private and public spaces. It is one of the most powerful tools used to control of women's and LGBTQI people's sexualities, bodies, dignity, expression, pleasure and self-identification. A majority of the groups' work has therefore focused on consciousness raising and specific skill-training to dismantle conventional binaries and norms that restrict full expression of the self.

YFem in Namibia has gathered young women to provide **education on their sexual and reproductive rights**, and to inform them on how to address issues of violence, discrimination, internalized oppression, and homophobia. In the 2014-15 grant-making cycle, YFem trained 35 young women through informal meetings.

WHER in Nigeria has also held workshops with similar goals, creating awareness on health issues specifically for sexual minority women, and providing information on access to legal services and other support services with the aim of **improving young women's self esteem and confidence**. The impact of these workshops has reverberated thanks to their online platform, which has increased the diversity and reach of the audience.

Trans Mreza Balkan has adopted this strategy and has held meetings focused on issues that concern the trans community, ranging from health, legal rights and activism. They have brought in healthcare and legal professionals to these spaces, recognizing the key role those individuals play in the provision of LBTQI friendly services rights for trans people. Using the grant from FRIDA, Chouf was able to begin developing their **website to raise awareness around LBT issues** in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region.

As part of their community building initiative, Trans Mreza Balkan held an interactive workshop for the trans community in Bosnia and Herzegovina exploring topics such as gender and social norms, health and legal status in the region and trans-feminism\*. As a result of this workshop, some participants became members of Trans Mreza Balkan and are now assisting in the group's regional activities.

YFem held a **Lesbian Sexual Rights Workshop** which trained 13 peer facilitators on ways to make safe sex workshops more fun and engaging, and on how to cover topics like safe sex, sex toys and sexual negotiations. Chouf has conducted workshops for the LBTQI community in Tunisia on Digital Security, legal rights training and fundraising and offers self-defense classes to its members. The Radical Queer Affinity Collective have also conducted 4 feminist self-defence workshops following requests from members of their community. Colectiva Feminista Rabiosa has held seven feminist political-training sessions throughout the year, which cover feminist theory, trans-gender identities and lesbofeminism. In addition creating a safe space for knowledge sharing, these workshops have served as a platform to **mobilize feminist political activism** and devise the most relevant - and safe- strategies.

*\* As defined by Robert Hill: "a category of feminism, most often known for the application of transgender discourses to feminist discourses, and of feminist beliefs to transgender discourse."*



## Podrška za trans osobe na Balkanu

Kome se možeš obratiti za informacije i podršku u tvojoj zemlji

VIŠE...

Trans Mreza Balkan launched their online platform to raise awareness about the diverse identities and experiences in the trans community

## STRONGER VOICES FOR BIGGER CHANGE

The LGBTQI organizations that FRIDA partners with have used advocacy and lobbying as both a tool and a resource to advance their feminist activist work. WHER, in partnership with other Nigerian LGBTQI organizations, prepared a shadow report and statement with examples of recent violations of the rights of LGBT people. The documents were presented at the 56th African Commission on Human and People's Rights to advocate for the protection of LGBTQI rights; bringing attention to the human rights violations in Nigeria on the basis of perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity; this advocacy led to the Coalition of African Lesbians granted observer status at the commission.

Agrupacion Lesbofeminista Segundo Patio use musical performances by their band, Segundo Patio, as a tool for resistance and public advocacy. You can check out their music on soundcloud by following this link: <http://bit.ly/1qd25te>



Because of the flexible and responsive funding that FRIDA provides, the groups have also been able to take up action at critical moments. In Argentina, following the suicide of a young lesbian after her family responded negatively to her sexual orientation, Colectiva Feminista Rabiosa published a public statement to increase awareness regarding LBTQI rights and issues. The statement\* inspired a profound response in the media and prompted interviews with group members in local and national media. This led to the increased visibility around homophobia and the need for families to support young lesbians.

Guyana Trans United held a peaceful protest to fight for justice for the families of two trans persons who were murdered, raising awareness among the Guyanese public and turning up the pressure on the judiciary for accountability. The suspect was arrested but not prosecuted; suggesting progress but a continued need for work to be done.

*\*The statement (in Spanish) can be read here: <http://bit.ly/1TDZ4cT>*



GTU holding a peaceful protest to fight for justice for the families of two trans persons who were murdered

# CONCLUSION

In the countries where they operate, FRIDA's grantee partners are among the only organisations that identify as feminist and/or maintain a focus on LBTQI rights. They are sometimes the only ones training LBTQI persons on their rights, creating safe spaces for expression and self care, and advocating for their political and social emancipation. Their diverse strategies, impact and bravery in the face of hostile environments continues to reinforce FRIDA's commitment to supporting groups working on LBTQI rights.

In our last call for proposals in 2015, FRIDA received 55 applications from groups whose primary or secondary focus area is LBTQI rights. This indicates that there is a strong need for increased support to young feminists working on LBTQI rights. In the 2015/16 grant cycle, our participatory grantmaking process resulted in the selection of 6 new groups working on LBTQI rights: TransVoice in Indonesia, Sapfo Collective in Lithuania, HOLAAfrica in South Africa, Haus of Khameleon in Fiji and a sixth group which (for security reasons) chooses to withhold their name and location.

## OVERALL IMPACT AND OUTREACH ACHIEVED

### 14 YOUNG FEMINIST GROUPS

The total number  
of FRIDA grantee  
partners working  
on LBTQI rights

**USD 107, 214**

The total amount  
spent on  
funding these groups  
working exclusively  
on LBTQI issues

### WORKING TO CREATE SAFE SPACES

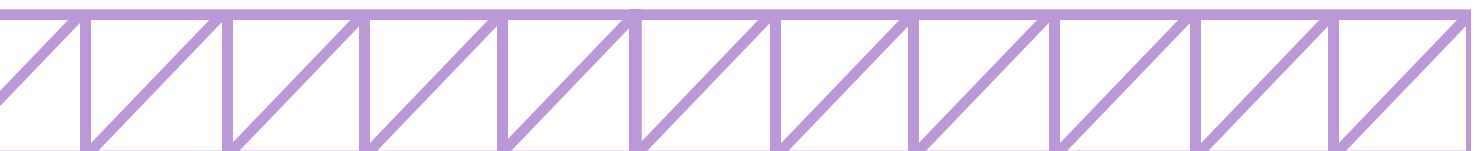
They are building safe  
spaces both online and  
offline

### SMASHING HETERONORMATIVITY

They are challenging  
gender norms and  
stereotypes that limit the  
world to a binary

In a world filled with injustice, it seems almost impossible to imagine a reality where pleasure, fun and art is possible for everyone. The agenda of women's movement around the world is largely focuses on advocating for lives that are being lost every day in hate fuelled murders, protesting rape and sexual assaults, and advocating for the social and mental health of women and other groups marginalized as a result of their gender or sexuality. **FRIDA believes in recognizing the importance of valuing pleasure and desire as a core part of how we move beyond pain and suffering.** We recognize that bodies are not only to be protected as sites of potential violence, but rejoiced as sources of joy, desire, creativity and imagination. **FRIDA grantee partners have illustrated this through political and social realms, as well as through the strategies they use: art, conversation, workshops, celebration, dance, music, and protest.**

We encourage you to read more about FRIDA's work and the grantee partners we support on the our website and we urge you to give power and support to girl and young women led LGBTQI work. For more details on how to support FRIDA and its grantee partners, visit our website: [www.youngfeministfund.org](http://www.youngfeministfund.org)







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## Text & Design by FRIDA

Special thanks to all groups featured who lent us their valuable time, spoke of their experiences and learnings and shared some of their images with us.



**FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund**

**Flexibility Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action**

## **Special Report No. 2, May 2016**

Founded in 2010, FRIDA is the only youth-led fund focused exclusively on supporting global young feminist activism to advance social justice movements and agendas. We believe in the collective power, expertise, and innovation of young feminist organizers to address root causes and structures of inequality in order to create lasting change in their communities.