



FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

Flexibility Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action

The Young Feminist

PLURIVERSE

Weaving constellations of feminist organising



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DEFINITIONS:

YFOs: We have chosen the term Young Feminist Organisations (YFOs) to refer to the diversity of collectives, groups, and organisations led by young feminists.

Pluriverse: A Pluriverse is 'a world where many worlds fit'. To express what we have learned in this research, we use the metaphor of a 'Feminist Pluriverse'. We borrow this metaphor from the Zapatista, indigenous women's movement in Mexico and Latin American based sociologists to help emphasise that each YFO represents a unique and co-existing realm of possibilities of how to go about young feminist organising.

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SUMMARY

The Young Feminist Pluriverse is a narrative report that explores in greater depth the way continuous, flexible financial and non-financial support influences the strength and evolution of young feminist organisations and groups (YFOs). This research also inquires into how FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund's (FRIDA) accompaniment enables YFOs to create positive impacts with their communities. Based on FRIDA's theory of change, the research aims to illustrate the way continuous funding and support enables YFOs to create change under four areas:

- Changing individual or community attitudes, practices or consciousness
- Increasing access to resources and opportunities
- Changing norms, culture and exclusionary practice
- Changing laws or policies

The report synthesises a 9-month study commissioned by FRIDA and carried out by Kirsten Williams (Recrear International). The methods used to inform the research include: 5 learning visits, 42 in-person and 5 online semi-structured interviews and the review of FRIDA's publications and internal documents. Learning visits consisted of 2-day participatory workshops using a range of creative techniques such as painting, theatre, creative writing and other reflective practices to facilitate individual and collective reflections. Designed with the spirit of participatory action research, the visits were intended as opportunities for group learning and celebration, rather than an exercise in purely data-gathering.

At the core of the report are 5 in-depth case studies which help convey the complexity and uniqueness of each young feminist group that FRIDA supports. Each group profiled is comparable in lifespan (they have been in operation for 7 to 10 years) and in their relationship with FRIDA (they have been grantee partners for 5-9 years). Yet, each group interacts with and operates within unique political and social contexts, holds a distinct understanding of the way in which they are part of the local and global feminist movements, and differs in their approach to social change.

What brings together the study is the metaphor of 'a feminist pluriverse'. A pluriverse is 'a world where many worlds fit!'. With this metaphor, the report makes a strong statement about how financial and non-financial support can enable each group to become precisely who they are, celebrating differences rather than promoting a standardisation of what feminist organising might feel or look like. Each group speaks and relates differently to feminist organising, and yet there are many experiences of growth that connect these groups to one another. Together, they create a forceful energy which allows for a local understanding of feminism, whilst enabling a connected social movement.

Young feminist groups invite us to imagine and experience other possible worlds. Worlds where girls, young women, trans and intersex youth feel safe to express themselves, claim their rights, lead systemic change for a more just society and flourish. YFOs represent spaces to explore what these different worlds might look like, without being prescriptive. Recognising and respecting all of these distinct localised experiences, FRIDA and YFOs contribute to enriching the term 'feminism' with new meanings, stories, nuance and possibility. Together they illustrate what it takes for young feminist organising to flourish.

So, what have we learned about the way FRIDA's support enables YFOs?

- **Small flexible funding makes big waves:** Continuous small funding alongside non-financial support act as key building blocks towards sustainability. FRIDA was the first donor for many groups; they used the funding provided to pay a staff person, secure an office, or pilot their dream projects. The early steps they take with these funds paves the way for their desired growth or sustained organising.
- **Encouraging autonomy and confidence:** First-time funding, and continuous financial and non-financial support directly boosts the confidence of groups. Groups develop skills and know-how around managing funding, which can provide the confidence and support to attract other donors.
- **Providing the freedom to shape their own organisational trajectory:** FRIDA is adamant about reaffirming to groups that they hold the decision when it comes to defining the direction, pace and trajectory of their evolution. YFOs value this freedom. Unrestricted core funding paired with capacity development opportunities attends to the soil and roots of the groups.
- **Supporting underfunded areas:** YFOs channel resources towards areas that are hard to source funding for, such as work in conflict-affected areas, legal work, marches, healthcare of a staff member, stipends etc.
- **Being integrated into a wider feminist pluriverse:** YFOs value being able to connect with other YFOs, women's rights CSOs and women's funds at regional and international levels through FRIDA.

What does the research tell us about FRIDA's theories, principles and approaches?

This research unearthed reflections and perspectives which confirmed our assumptions, theories and ways of working:

- **Young Feminist Organising is a niche area of funding:** YFOs face challenges to resource their work. This may be because they work in thematic areas different from that of donors or because of a lack of formality in their internal systems. In some cases, being unregistered disqualifies YFOs from obtaining resources. Within the broader spectrum of feminist funding, young feminists have limited options. This is why FRIDA's niche is critical.
- **Non-financial support is vital to groups flourishing:** YFOs are taking the opportunities to develop their internal mechanisms as an organisation through capacity development grants. They also seek out and cherish every opportunity to learn from other YFOs through Solidarity exchanges/collaborative grants.



- **Creating opportunities to convene at the national/regional/international helps to strengthen the feminist movement:** Every time grantee partners have had the chance to connect to the wider feminist movements, whether at the national, regional or international level - they return with greater clarity and excitement about how their work contributes to system change.

On YFOs specifically:

- **YFOs are extensions of their community:** Most YFOs are constantly informed by their communities, because they inhabit them - they are experts of their own realities. As such, strengthening YFOs also indirectly empowers their communities.
- **They promote a sense of family and solidarity within young women and girls:** YFOs are one-of-a-kind spaces where community members can completely be themselves, grow as individuals, develop lasting friendships and a sense of family.
- **YFOs encourage a localised exploration of feminism:** YFOs provide spaces for people to explore and digest, in a localised form, what feminism means to them. FRIDA holds space for different forms and ways to understand feminisms, without imposing any single vision.
- **Community members feed back into YFOs growth:** The young women who have passed through these groups as members, program participants, volunteers or allies look for ways to enable the flourishing of YFOs.
- **Young feminist organisers are sparking meaningful change:** YFOs are using diverse strategies to catalyse and contribute to change in their communities. Their lived experiences and understanding of the context enables them to carry out relevant initiatives that challenge the status quo and spark systemic and individual level change.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY FRIDA

In 2010, FRIDA became the first donor to exclusively support young feminist groups and organisations (YFOs) around the world. Almost a decade later, we take the time to reflect and understand how our grantee partners have evolved accompanied by FRIDA's continuous support. The Young Feminist Pluriverse is a narrative report that dives into the experiences of young feminist groups that have received continuous support by FRIDA over the last 5 to 9 years. It is meant to help FRIDA and all its partners reflect on the power, implications, and challenges of FRIDA's unique funding model. A forthcoming report on FRIDA's participatory grantmaking will more broadly comment on the value and challenges of this model. To do this exercise with an external perspective, FRIDA contracted Kirsten Williams from Recrear International.

Over the course of 2019, Kirsten visited 5 grantee partners in Georgia, Mexico, Nigeria, Morocco and Lebanon to reflect with them over their organisational experiences. Accompanied by filmmaker Fanny Lindstrom (Georgia/Mexico/Nigeria/Morocco) and Ghinwa Daher (Lebanon) from What Took You So Long, they conducted learning visits carrying out a two-day participatory research workshop and interviews with core team members, participants, civil society representatives and feminist movement advocates. The groups visited are characterised for having a lifespan of 7-10 years and an ongoing relationship with FRIDA for the last 5 to 9 years.

This research seeks to:

- Assess the impact of FRIDA's consistent support on the grantee partners;

- Explore the changes that YFOs have sparked and contributed to;
- Reflect on the theories, principles, approaches that inform FRIDA's funding and funding+ support;
- Observe the changes within a YFOs in terms of growth and development;

This research builds upon what we already know about the state of young feminist organising based on the 2016 AWID and FRIDA publication: 'Brave, Creative, Resilient²'. Young feminist organising has proliferated globally. They predominantly work in addressing gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights, as well as political and economic empowerment for women. They engage with numerous communities including: Women Human Rights Defenders, at risk youth, students and LGBTQI youth. They tend to work collaboratively with other parallel movements across different generations. YFOs adopt and experiment with a variety of organisational models that best suit their context, location and political relationship. Although many YFOs are registered, a significant percentage either chooses or are forced to remain unregistered. They are critically under-resourced and face regular threats to their safety and security. They also use creative and innovative strategies to make their organising possible.

¹(Kothari et al, 2019)

²(AWID & FRIDA, 2016)



Building on this research, this report narrates the ways in which YFOs contribute to the transformation of their communities and of wider young feminist movements.

How does FRIDA support its grantee partners?

Through a model of participatory grant making, applicants of FRIDA's grants decide who will become a grantee partner. The selected YFOs have access to both funding and funding+ support.

Funding Support:

- **Core Grant:** Flexible core funding that the groups may put towards any need they have as an organisation.
- **Capacity Building Grant:** A grant to strengthen the group, and to enhance the capacities, skills and abilities of their members.
- **Special Travel Grant:** A grant to support representatives of grantee groups to travel to local, regional, international meetings, convenings and forums that add value to their organising and contribute to their community, collective or organisation.
- **Solidarity Exchanges Grant:** A grant to enable groups to meet and learn from other YFOs.
- **Special Collaboration Grant:** A grant to support collaborative, intersectional and/or intergenerational projects led by two or more organisations.
- **Resource Mobilisation Grant:** A grant to strengthen grantee partners' capacity to fundraise and mobilise resources.
- **Transformation/Exit Grant:** A grant to help groups graduating from FRIDA to adjust and prepare for the end of the funding relationship.

Funding + Support:

- **Accompaniment Program:** An advisor or a grantee partner are paired with another grantee partner for a 2-year period to accompany each other over a FRIDA journey of learning and growth. FRIDA provides them with financial and institutional resources to implement a grantee partner driven project.
- **FRIDA convenings:** FRIDA organises regional, international and thematic convenings to strengthen and encourage a community of learning between grantee partners, providing them with opportunities to create new skills, knowledge and networks.
- **Support from FRIDA regional focal points:** FRIDA has regional focal points who work to build and maintain a relationship with each grantee partner. Focal points also serve as the link between grantee partners and different parts of the FRIDA community (Such as advisors and grantee partners from other regions).
- **Webinars and online learning opportunities:** FRIDA organises online learning opportunities that speak directly to the needs of grantee partners. These opportunities are both regional



A Pluriverse is 'a world where many worlds fit'.

To express what we have learned in this research, we use the metaphor of a 'Feminist Pluriverse'. We borrow this metaphor from the Zapatista and indigenous women's movement³ and Latin American based sociologists to help emphasise that each YFO represents a unique and co-existing realm of possibilities of how to go about young feminist organising. In a moment when the global feminist movement gains more visibility and donors increase support for women's rights and feminist work, there is a risk of homogenising their experience⁴. Instead, the pluriverse celebrates how each group looks, speaks and behaves differently, and yet they co-exist and build common threads together to end the patriarchy.

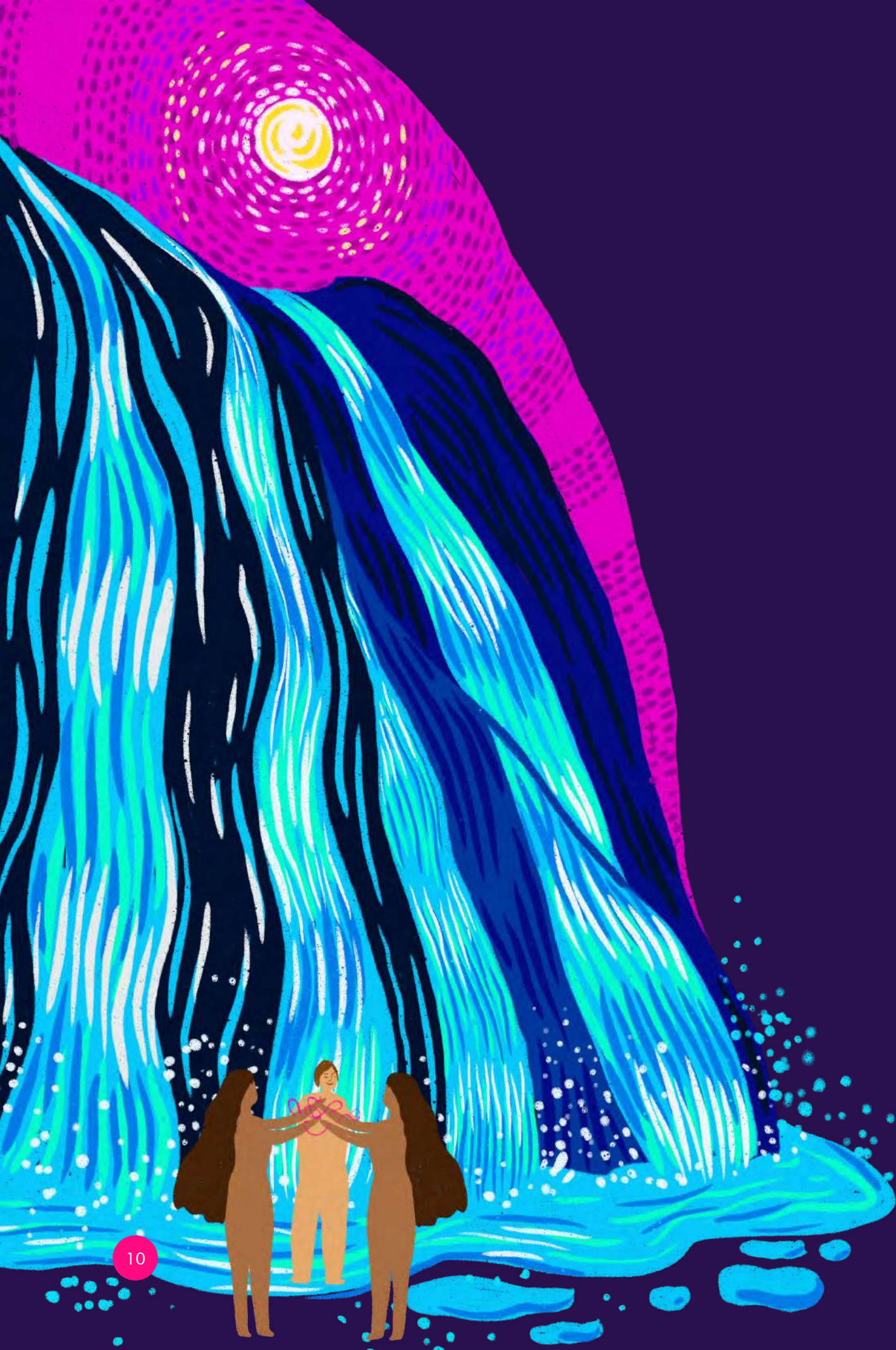
This metaphor helps tell the story of why FRIDA's support matters. Funding is not an exercise that seeks to homogenise groups within a specific vision of feminism. The opposite, FRIDA's funding model is a curious one which accompanies diverse YFOs to become the most actualised and powerful versions of themselves. FRIDA's model wants to celebrate, support knowledge exchange, and hold space for the different parts of the feminist pluriverse. This report seeks to honor the voices of the girl, young women, trans and intersex-led groups.

Often, YFOs inhabit external environments that directly challenge the change they are trying to bring forward. What weaves these groups together is a commitment to push through and resist the boundaries they perceive as oppressive. The mere existence of YFOs embedded in deeply patriarchal societies is an act of resistance.

³ The emergence of the Zapatista National Liberation Army represented one of the first consolidated organisations to advocate for the rights of indigenous women in Mexico. Since then, a movement of indigenous women from across the country have come forth to assert that racism, sexism and economic exploitation are simultaneous and complementary struggles (Castillo, 2016).

⁴ (Selica Zinn & Anderson, 2020).





Young feminist groups invite us to imagine and experience other possible worlds.

At the heart of the report are 5 case studies of grantee partners that were visited during the learning visits. Reading each case study, you can learn more about: who they are and what they bring to the world [Vision and Impact], the contexts they find themselves in [External Environment], their internal dilemmas and discoveries [Organisational Growth and Learning], and, finally, what they have learned with FRIDA and what FRIDA could also learn from them [Learning with FRIDA]. The unique growth paths that each group pursues does not exist in a vacuum: they take form in conversation with their external environment, their bold piloting and careful explorations, rich debates, moments of crisis, networks of support and a huge quantity of resilience and determination.

The second half of the report, 'Infinite Ways to Spark Change', frames key lessons learned and reflections around FRIDA's Theory of Change⁵, expressed through the Garden of Change. This section also allows us to appreciate the interlinked nature of the four areas of change:

- Changing individual or community attitudes, practices or consciousness
- Increasing access to resources and opportunities
- Changing norms, culture and exclusionary practice
- Changing laws or policies

The report concludes with recommendations on how FRIDA and donors can continue to strengthen young feminist organising.

The lessons captured through the experiences of these YFOs contributes to literature on young feminist organising, youth civil society and organisational growth and development. By looking at the intersection of these thematic areas, this research brings anecdotal evidence to an understudied subject. In recent years, the topic of resourcing youth-led groups and movements has become popular in grey literature⁶. **This research compliments these past studies by zooming into the intimate experiences of these groups.**

⁵(FRIDA, 2018)

⁶(Gioacchino, 2020)

METHODOLOGY

This research does not profile all of FRIDA's long-term grantee partners. Instead, we go deeper into a handful of case studies. Each grantee partner has something specific to teach us about the significance of supporting young feminist organising. While these case studies are not representative of all grantee partners, they are meant to expand the awareness on the importance of funding young feminist organisers. **By spotlighting different grantees in detail, we set the intention of celebrating the various forms in which young feminists organise.** This study was informed by a total of: 5 learning visits, 38 in-person and 5 online semi-structured interviews and the review of FRIDA's publications and internal documents. The baseline for this report are FRIDA's publication and unpublished documents such as the end-of-year reports that long-term grantee partners have submitted to FRIDA.

Yet, the learning visits source the richness of the 5 stories shared in the core of this report. Grantee partners in Georgia, Mexico, Nigeria, Afghanistan (but visited in Morocco), and Lebanon came together as a team to share their stories and experiences in a two-day participatory workshop hosted in each country. Each visit created space for having fun and celebrating the group's journey until now. We encouraged groups to invite whoever they felt should be part of the process, irrespective of how long they have been with the organisation or what role they play. This gave them the opportunity to learn from one another and have thoughtful conversations about the challenges, realities and opportunities facing the group. The methodology utilised in the 2-day workshops pulled on experiential techniques, reflective practice exercises, and participatory action research (PAR) traditions. The research exercises utilised theatre, painting and creative writing to make the research process stimulating and

accessible. As a practice, PAR breaks away from the idea of research as distant, extractive and singularly defined by the external researcher. Instead, PAR honors the experience of people in the room and their different ways of knowing. Moreover, PAR integrates system thinking and power analysis inspired by the experience of diverse social movements, feminist, critical-race and queer theory and practice⁷.

Over the course of two days, each team mapped the group's evolution, tracing their path from their foundation to present day. On this map, the groups displayed three factors: external factors, internal factors, and their relationship to FRIDA. The external factors tell the story of what surrounds the group (overarching cultural, social and political context, but also specific events that impact the group's work). The internal factors shed light on the emotional experiences and organisational systems that the group went through while working to achieve it's vision/s. Lastly, groups were invited to think through the various forms in which they felt supported by FRIDA.

To go deeper into external factors, each group observed the actors in their ecosystem. Through an exercise of Presencing Theatre - a technique born out of Theory U⁸, groups explored how actors interrelate. In other words, they acted out the ecosystem that surrounds the group. As for the internal factors, groups had the chance to engage in storytelling through either a talking circle, a theatre skit, a writing practice, or a storyboarding exercise. Through these reflective practices they articulated the internal triumphs and dilemmas that have accompanied the story of their organisational/group. The data collected during each learning visit was triangulated with a series of 9 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with core team members, civil society practitioners and participants of the group's programs. The in-person interviews were conducted with 12 members of civil society or the

⁷(Cahill, Cerecer & Bradley, 2010)

⁸Theory U articulates how individuals, organisations and systems shift their consciousness from ego-system to eco-system awareness. Theory U explores how each level of the system can unlearn what does not serve them to then tap into an emerging future (Scharmer, 2009). It was developed by Otto Scharmer out of the Presencing Institute at MIT, an action research body.

feminist movement familiar with the group, 11 participants of the group's activities, 15 core members of the group. For other long-term grantee partners not visited, the researcher scheduled online interviews with a member of the core team, and, when possible, with at least one participant of their programs. **The 3 other grantee partners informing this study include: Xitatli Mujeres (Nicaragua), Radio Udayapur (Nepal) and Crested Crane Lighters (Uganda).**

Each group profiled in this study was invited to review the case studies in which they feature.

Limitations of the research

There are a few limitations worth considering to frame the results of the research. First, not all the groups could be visited for reasons including safety issues, political instability in the country and availability of the group members. Although a handful of other grantee partners were interviewed via Zoom, interviews were carried out predominantly with the leader of the group and one other team member or participant of the group's activities. The insight from these groups was therefore less in-depth.

Second, time and resources were a limitation in terms of being able to program longer visits. Dedicating two full-days to a research workshop, in addition to extra days for filming and interviews, was a considerable and generous time commitment for group members. Language barriers also meant that at least for the visit to Helping Hand (Georgia), the researcher was accompanied by a translator. This meant that there was less time and depth for some of the group reflections and interviews. Those who spoke English, namely the group's leader, were more likely to speak up.

It's also worth commenting on the challenge of drawing out a 'collective voice' for the groups. There was a noticeable tendency for the leaders of the groups to hold a lot of the organisational knowledge and history. More often than not, these same leaders are the ones who have the networks and hold the closest relationship with FRIDA. For this reason, you might observe that some group profiles carry the voice of the leader more than others. We recognise that institutional knowledge is not always held equally throughout an organisation.

Lastly, each group has a way of speaking and seeing the world informed by their environment. Each in-depth case study seeks to strike a balance between their unique language, and the language of the wider feminist and funding context. To help make sure their voice is accurately captured, the researcher kept an active channel of communication with each group and shared their profiles written here for consent and fact-checking.





HELPING HAND, GEORGIA

HELPING HAND, GEORGIA

VISION AND IMPACT

Who are they today?

Helping Hand is an organisation committed to sparking the civic engagement of young women and girls in Georgia. Through a powerful network of volunteers, they nurture the leadership, life skills and sense of self of young women and girls in Tbilisi, and in conflict-affected regions. Their programs include: volunteering programs with day centers and shelters, radio talk show programs on women's and human rights, leadership and women's rights training and public awareness activities. Among fellow CSOs, they are seen as pioneers in spurring volunteering culture in Georgia.

In 2008, after the war, Tiko Meskhi, Nino Gogvadze, Khatuna Gabashvili met Kathleen Starostka, a Georgian-American volunteer. The following year the four young women established Helping Hand as an NGO. By the end of 2009 they were also joined by Nino Todua, a former colleague at the Public Defender's office. Tiko and Nino Todua took up the helm of the organisation in 2012 when most co-founders moved to the US. That same year, Helping Hand acquired their first office. Their core team consolidated when Elza Patsuria, a former participant in their programs for the conflict affected regions, joined the staff. The organisation counts on 3 paid staff, 100 active volunteers and over 1000 volunteers in their database.

At first, Helping Hand relied on donations from American women living in Georgia close to the organisation. Even so, family members often pitched in to cover costs. For a few years they hopped from office to office struggling to find a place to safely organise and afford the rent. In 2010, they won their first project grant from the Women's Fund in Georgia. Through the Women's Fund,

Helping Hand learned about FRIDA and became a grantee partner in 2014. Through FRIDA's core grants, they could pay a sufficient stipend for their 3 staff. Over the years, Various Helping Hand members attended FRIDA international convenings; and later, in 2018, Helping Hand hosted FRIDA's regional convening.

Still, funding their work has been a daunting task. In 2016, they leveraged a FRIDA Resource Mobilisation Grant to strengthen their capacity to fundraise. The international funding arriving to the Caucasus is limited, especially for feminist work, and the competition is steep as the number of feminist groups in Georgia increases⁹. Beyond the Georgia's Women Fund, and occasional year-long government bids, there are very few national donors that Helping Hand can turn to.

⁹(Jakeli, 2018)



What do they aspire to?

They dream of reaching young women and girls all over Georgia, especially in the hard-to-reach and conflict-affected regions. In their future, they imagine volunteer activities integrated as a mandatory part of the Georgian education system. In this way they believe they can improve gender equality and rights. They envision building volunteer centers exclusively led by and serving young women and girls.

They are now planning for an organisational transition aimed at enabling younger members to assume leadership roles in the team. To prepare for this, however, current staff members are seeking to improve Helping Hand's financial sustainability. Until now, they have been able to secure funding on a yearly basis, or maximum two-year basis from other donors. Even so, FRIDA is the only stable donor that provides flexible core funding. They aspire to generate independent funding resources and become less dependent on institutional donors.

What are they doing to get there?

Helping Hand has invested a lot of time developing programs that can have a powerful impact on the lives of young women and girls. This attention ensured that the organisation matured in its programming and vision of change. The focus on programming was also an integral component to demonstrate the value of their work to donors and partners. In 2020, Helping Hand places an emphasis on fundraising as they transition out of being a FRIDA grantee partner.

To help take this step, FRIDA provided them with a transformation/exit grant and a resource mobilisation (RM) grant. The transformation grant is in place to allow groups to transition out of being grantees. Meanwhile the RM grant is intended to help groups with mobilising local/regional or even international funding with the accompaniment of a FRIDA regional advisor. Helping Hand's team is working closely with the advisor, in-person and virtually, to update their website, design fundraising events and set-up informal meetings with donors. Helping Hand hopes to leverage these grants to hire an expert to help them actualise their fundraising action plan. Part of this plan includes cultivating an individual donor base, collecting membership fees, and improving access to donors.



EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

What's the ecosystem around them like and how do they interact with it?

Reflecting over their evolution in their 10 years of existence, the group identified 5 main external factors that shaped their work throughout the organisation's life:

Culture barriers to civic engagement and feminist organising:

A representative survey conducted by CRRC-Georgia, a non-profit research body, describes a general lack of formal civic engagement in Georgia. Civil society only started taking shape in the post-soviet era¹⁰. Helping Hand's staff assert that when the organisation began, there was an overall absence of civic participation and volunteering culture. By taking steps to integrate young women and girls as volunteers for local day centers, they were doing something that was entirely novel.

The young feminist movement is also a fairly nascent phenomena in Georgia. Other civil society and feminist practitioners understand why, groups like Helping Hand might feel more comfortable identifying as a youth and women-led organisation, rather than claiming to be feminist-led. Feminists like Salome Chagelishvili¹¹ at the Women's Fund in Georgia and member of the Independent Group of Feminists (IGF) Georgia, echoed that many groups prefer to adopt a women's rights narrative over the language of feminism. Upholding the feminist banner in this conservative environment where the Church plays an influential role is deemed radical.

As an organisation committed to working with the government, Helping Hand is careful about not doing or saying anything that could jeopardise their work. Yet Helping Hand remains committed to opening

spaces that allow young women and girls to learn about feminisms at their own pace. Young feminists emerge from these nurturing environments. Many of the young and newest members of Helping Hand are honest about their ongoing, curious yet cautious exploration of feminism. Some were more comfortable embracing the term than others.

Even if Helping Hand does not explicitly present itself as a feminist organisation, other CSOs and feminists still regard them as a part of the feminist movement. This is because they share a common goal: to end the patriarchy.

Low levels of awareness about violence against women and women's rights:

As an issue, gender-based violence (GBV) has struggled to be recognised and adequately responded to in Georgia. Although the situation is improving, GBV is still largely disregarded and underreported. Despite the existence of a Gender Equality law since 2010, institutional mechanisms to enforce the law are still being put in place. Additionally, a 2018 Asian Development Bank (ADB) report cites how women's rights are often seen as a threat to predominantly 'male politicians', but also 'female politicians' who fear that stressing women's rights will undermine them¹². Seeing this situation, Helping Hand emerges as an alternative space for young women to develop themselves and counter these realities. **The fact that girls and young women volunteering at Helping Hand become more aware and indignant of these circumstances, is an important contribution to sparking a generational change in attitudes towards gender-based violence.**

¹⁰(CRRC-Georgia, 2018)

¹¹(AWID, 2020)

¹²(ADB, 2018)

War:

War has been a pervasive force in Georgia's history. Since the end of the Soviet era, violent conflict has sparked over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, breakaway regions that fought for autonomy from Georgia. The violence and internal displacement of people was most grave during the Abkhazian conflict in 1992 and the Georgia-Russia war of 2008. Violence against women and early marriages, were accentuated due to the political conflict. There are virtually no legal mechanism that protect young women and girls¹³. Although there is a ceasefire, recognising the independence of these conflict-affected regions continues to be a point of contention for the Georgian government. Helping Hand began just a year after the 2008 war. **This climate of instability and violence both shaped and informed their work. It surfaced in Helping Hand's members a deep desire to reach young women and girls in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Along the way they realised that development actors, including the state, were resistant to support work in these regions due to the contentious nature of the conflict.**

The prevalence of harmful traditions, culture and stereotypes:

The status of women's rights in Georgia is markedly constrained by conservative socio-culture norms and stereotypes. For example, a 2009 nationwide survey illustrating the public perception that women are expected to carry out domestic unpaid work¹⁴. These patriarchal attitudes are rationalised normatively as part of Georgia reclaiming its cultural identity following the end of the Soviet Union. This explains why the staunch defense of Georgian culture today is also accompanied by references to traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Helping Hand's team had a lot to say about the challenges they found navigating a conservative society where the role of the Church is deeply entrenched and respected. This has made the work of supporting more progressive issues, such as abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, increasingly difficult.

Young women's lack of participation in economic, social and political spaces:

Young women's political participation and economic empowerment is also limited by the traditional norms and stereotypes. The ADB (2018) Georgia Gender Assessment report indicates that among young women aged 15-34 only 19% are employed, compared to 34% of young men. This discrepancy is explained by the disproportionate degree of unpaid care work assumed by young women. In politics, female politicians are a rarity. Although this is improving, Georgia ranks 114th out of 144 for women's political empowerment and is considerably behind other countries in the South Caucasus region.

The members of Helping Hand iterated that they found themselves embedded into an ecosystem that feels unsupportive of young women and girls. Members desired for other actors in their ecosystem to be more involved in transforming these norms.



¹³(Cárdenas, 2019) and (ADB, 2018)

¹⁴(ADB, 2018)

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH:

What are the internal mechanisms, questions and dilemmas that accompany them as they evolve?

In its 10 years of existence, Helping Hand has carved a unique and valued space in civil society. Here are the 5 main factors that have most shaped their internal evolution and growth.

Small core staff and a large network of volunteers:

Helping Hand considers their set up both a strength and a weakness. Helping Hand has an incredible base of support, knowledge and skills. Yet, the organisation can afford to hire no more than 3 paid staff. Many of their former volunteer coordinators have left in search of more financially stable work. Yet, the three past volunteers interviewed for this study were resounding in their gratitude towards the organisation for facilitating their personal and professional growth. Many of these young women now work in larger CSOs including Caritas International and McLain Association for Children. They proudly take the initiative to talk about and embed Helping Hand's work even further within Georgia's civil society. Relying on a rotating pool of volunteers brings new energy to the organisation. However, this also means most of the organisational know-how rests with Helping Hand's three staff members: Elza, Nino and Tiko.

For Helping Hand's leaders, it's not obvious what it looks like to step back so others can step up. As the learning visit unfolded, the members of Helping Hand recognised that there had not been many explicit and in-depth conversations around sustainability. Especially, reflects Tiko, in terms of transitioning the organisation to new and younger leadership. During the interviews, some of the members identified the possible opportunity for Helping Hand to integrate more of its membership in decision making

processes. This could alleviate the leadership from feeling pressed to find solutions and draw on the power of the collective to help problem solve.

Helping Hand's programmes to empower young women and girls:

Helping Hand's office is a second home for young women and girls who come to volunteer. Salome, a young 21 year-old studying mathematics says that "Helping Hand is a place you can develop yourself". Within one year of volunteering she participated in the first peace hackathon with girls and young women from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. She also learned how to manage a project and lead a group for the first time. Elza, a volunteer who came to know Helping Hand through the Internally Displaced People's (IDP) program in Abkhazia, today oversees all of Helping Hand's radio broadcasting programs. This is her way of channelling her passion to reach girls and young women in conflict-affected regions. Helping Hand believe in the multiplier effect of their work: girls that enter as volunteers quickly become advocates for other young women and girls just like them.

When Helping Hand started, they never imagined that their efforts could contribute towards policy and more systemic change. Thanks to their consistent track record in supporting day centers and shelters for children and elderly, they garnered recognition at a national level. **They lobbied for the institutionalisation of volunteerism and managed to have it integrated in the 2015 Youth Policy Document.** That same year, the government began a partnership with Helping Hand to institute a nationwide volunteer program: **Volunteer for Georgia (serving both young women and men).** Today they are considered pioneers in establishing a culture of civic engagement in Georgia. Despite this, the area of change 'changing laws and policies' is the one area within FRIDA's reporting system where Helping Hands does not report under. When asked, Tiko answered that it didn't occur to her to check this area of change. Now, she would view it differently.

A permanent virtual database of volunteers:

The development of a virtual database has been crucial to improve Helping Hand's organising and facilitating the management of volunteers. Having this internal system in place, Helping Hand was also able to request management training via the FRIDA Capacity Development grant. These management skills complemented the internal systems they were developing, and vice-versa.

Limited experience with other donors, including individual donors:

Although Helping Hand relies on donor funding, they also acknowledge the lack of donors willing to fund longer-term projects, especially on gender issues and within conflict-affected regions. This leaves Helping Hand to work on a predominantly project-to-project basis. The program 'Radio My Voice', that has been sustained over the years by FRIDA funding, is an exception. Meanwhile individual donations are uncommon given the lack of individual-giving culture in Georgia. This is a culture they intend to challenge as they implement a new fundraising strategy part of their transition out of FRIDA.

What has it meant for Helping Hand to be supported by FRIDA?

Helping Hand members commented that their programming and organisational structure has developed along with their accompaniment from FRIDA.

Continuity as a critical building block:

In the first few years of existence, Helping Hand took every opportunity to build civic engagement among young women and girls. They responded sporadically to needs as they arose in their environment. With FRIDA's arrival in 2012/13, Helping Hand began to experience continuity in their programs. The consistent funding over the last 5 years breathed new possibilities to build upon and strengthen their programs. It also meant that they could address problems more fully and not within the limit of a year-long project grant. They could break from the all-too familiar dilemma with donors: when the funding stops so do the projects. As Tako, one Helping Hand's 18-year-old volunteers, described it: "Helping Hand is a flower, and donors like FRIDA are the ones that help the organisation bloom".

That being said FRIDA is also Helping Hand's only continuous donor, and certainly the only one that has provided flexible core funding which has been key to paying staff. Tiko admits they are a bit scared about the future. But they also feel brave, she says. They knew the time would come when they would have to leap in terms of their fundraising strategy.



Facilitating work in conflict-affected areas:

Helping Hand has specifically credited FRIDA funding as crucial to launching their work in conflict-affected areas. Previously they had not been able to find willing donors. At best, they were able to pilot minor initiatives with small funds of no more than 800 USD. FRIDA's willingness to support work in these regions made it possible for Helping Hand to launch the women's clubs with greater resources and reach. They know that if they want to keep up work in conflict-affected regions, they will have to mobilise independent funds. For now, they put on hold their women's clubs until they can secure the organisation's basic operational resources, especially as they transition from FRIDA. All the same they believe their relationship to FRIDA will help them gain trust from donors.

FRIDA's convenings as spaces for learning and networking:

In Helping Hand's lifetime, key staff has had the opportunity to attend two international FRIDA convenings. Their participation in these convenings had a direct impact on their program design. For example, their participation in FRIDA's 2014 Digital Storytelling Workshop at the Grantee Convening in Thailand, inspired the design of their program 'Radio My Voice'. They also shared their enthusiasm about being asked to play the role of host organisation in the 2018 FRIDA convening held in Tbilisi for the Central Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central and North Asia (CEECCNA) region. This provided an opportunity for more of Helping Hand's members to also access these critical regional feminist spaces. It was also their first time organising an event of this scale. They learned a lot from the experience of organising and valued meeting other grantee partners. **The team shared that FRIDA's trust in Helping Hand to host the event made them feel valued and boosted their confidence.** Through Helping Hand, FRIDA was able to develop a deeper contextual understanding of feminist organising in the Caucasus region and network with other groups.





REFLEXIÓN ACCIÓN FEMINISTA (RAF) (MÉRIDA, MEXICO)

REFLEXIÓN ACCIÓN FEMINISTA (RAF) (MÉRIDA, MEXICO)

VISION AND IMPACT

Who are they today?

Reflexión Acción Feminista, also known as RAF, is an unregistered young feminist collective based out of Mérida, the capital of the state of Yucatán, México. RAF was initiated in 2014 by a small mixed-gender group of university students from the Faculty of Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY). Feeling disappointed by the lack of critical and experiential reflections accompanying International Women's Day on campus, they began to organise activities to ground feminism in their everyday lives. They saw a need to host and nurture environments exclusively for young women. Within a year they had become an entirely young women led collective dedicated to creating safe women-only spaces.

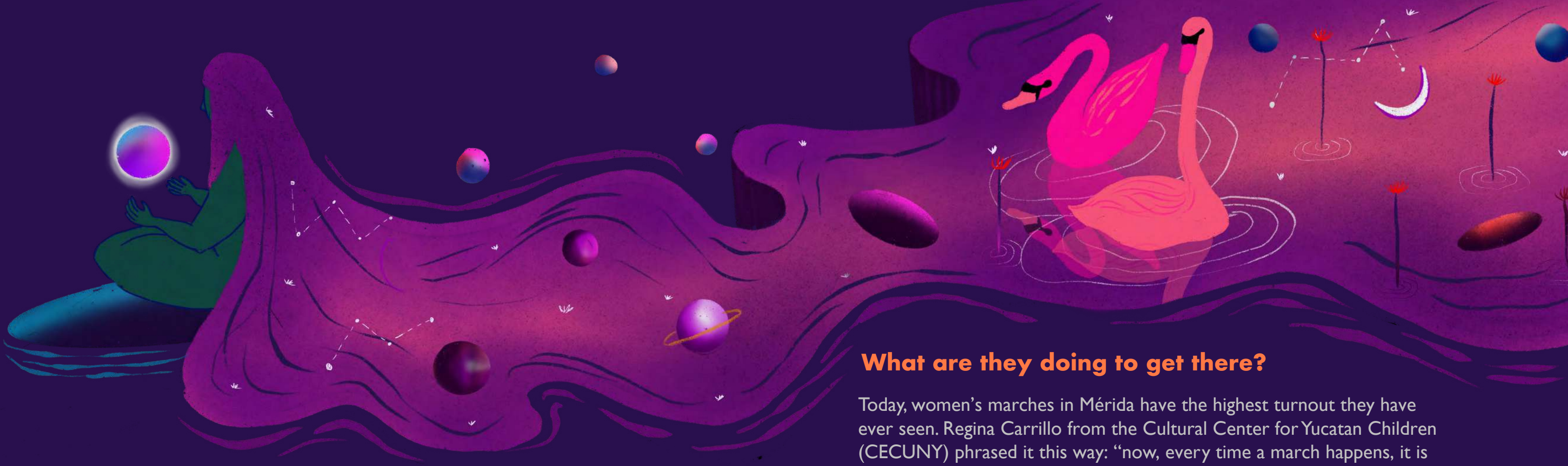
RAF's greatest desire is to activate the agency of young women to reject patriarchy in all its forms. Embracing the power and talent of each member of the collective, they organise actions that help spark the young feminist movement in Mérida. They are regarded by those around them as taking a public and radical stand on the issues they care about such as abortion, safe bike mobility for women and stopping street harassment. They open spaces for young women to connect and reflect upon their lived experiences of male aggressions while exposing young women to alternative ways of being together. They are a clear example of a group explicitly immersed in and championing the young feminist movement. Their horizontal young-women-only collective consists of 5 full-time members, affectionately named 'full moons', 5 part-time members, or 'waning-moons' and 10 new

members, or 'new moons'. Currently, none of the full-time members at RAF receive a stipend or salary. They all work in established CSOs or as consultants and dedicate their free time to RAF. In 2014, a year after their formation, RAF received their first grant from FRIDA. Soon after, they also began receiving support from Fondo Semillas, a Mexican women's fund. They found out about and applied to Semillas without any involvement from FRIDA. Yet they consider that the familiarity of these funds with one another could make their application stronger. The support from these two donors has been integral to RAF being able to better define their lines of work, connect to national feminist networks and sustain their street activism. They have also used support from both FRIDA and Semillas to realise some of their biggest projects including producing their documentary 'No Estamos Solas' (We are not alone).

Being an unregistered collective, they get administrative support when needed from Kookay, an established Mérida-based civil society organisation. This has allowed them to access funding from Semillas that only gives funds to registered entities. This relationship to Kookay also permitted them to have a sounding board on topics including whether or not to formalise.

RAF's scope is centered in the city of Mérida, but they have begun to extend some of their activities to rural and Mayan indigenous communities in Yucatán.





What do they aspire to?

RAF dreams of growing the young feminist movement in Mérida. To make this possible, they collaborate as part of an integral movement with other feminist collectives mobilising to challenge the patriarchy and model other systems. **They walk unapologetically towards their goals because they trust that what is seen as 'radical' today, can become more normalised and accepted tomorrow.**

The full-time members aspire to dedicate themselves fully to the collective without needing a second job. They imagine receiving a dignified pay to carry out their work at RAF. Although they are all under 30, they already imagine a future of the collective where other young women are leading the way.

What are they doing to get there?

Today, women's marches in Mérida have the highest turnout they have ever seen. Regina Carrillo from the Cultural Center for Yucatan Children (CECUNY) phrased it this way: "now, every time a march happens, it is historical". Those in the feminist movement and close to the group say that RAF has played a major role in this surge in participation. Each RAF member has a talent which they use to support the marches: they are filming, leading the drummers, coordinating with other collectives, and organising reflective activities throughout the day. While seeking out more donors, the team is exploring how to stay true to RAF's essence. They are also thinking about offering services, such as consulting, to generate independent revenues.

RAF has come to the decision that becoming a registered civil association will enable them to access more funds. Still, they approach formalisation with caution. They don't want to become like many of the organisations they see. **They observe how many established CSOs are constrained by bureaucracy and internal policies. In RAF's view, these organisations' focus on maintaining neutrality prevents them from actively and meaningfully taking part in the most radical street activism, led by the feminist movement.** Even with the clarity of who they are, RAF remains uncertain and fearful of the future. Irene Cahuich, a professor from the UADY who has known RAF for many years, comments that to become financially stable, they need to overcome the fear of failure.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

What ecosystem do they belong in? How do they interact with it?

Yucatán is a state historically conservative towards women's rights. This has made for an environment that is slow and resistant to the change brought on by the feminist movement. RAF identified the following four factors that most shape their external environment:

Generational change:

The 1916 National Feminist Meeting held in Mérida set a precedence for the local feminist movement. It's no surprise that the women that championed the feminist movement 30 years back are now heading up CSOs in Mérida. They are the very same organisations, like Kookay, that now contract young feminist activists, including members of RAF. These 'mujeres ONGeras' (NGO women), as RAF members call them, are seen as great supporters. RAF members also see them as belonging to a world of institutional change, public policy and systems that they are less interested in. There is a recognition and appreciation for those who have paved the way before. At the same time, they acknowledge that what was radical before is no longer so. **Without dismissing those who work in public policy, RAF members consider they are most useful and needed in mobilising street activism. They treasure their ability to take a radical unapologetic stance in their feminism.**

As RAF sees it, these radical postures exist more comfortably within social movements and collectives rather than in NGOs. The presence of grassroots collectives is growing with young people. RAF team member Itzel Evia shares "Five years ago, I knew of only one other collective beyond RAF. Now we are hearing from many new voices. This is really healthy for the feminist movement." (translated from Spanish).

Repression and backlash:

In every critical instance of violence against women, RAF and fellow collectives from the young feminist movement in Mérida respond by mobilising in the streets. For example, in 2017 Mérida was shaken by the femicide of a local human rights defender, Emma Gabriela, following a custody battle for her children. One thousand five hundred people flooded the streets in protest. RAF mobilised to help coordinate and document.

When there have been attacks against other vulnerable populations, including for example the LGBT+ community, RAF has also stood in solidarity with these groups. They consider that being a true ally means showing up for those who are part of building the same social fabric that will end the patriarchy.

National and International campaigns:

RAF joins campaigns launched by global and regional young feminist movements. On the 24th of April 2016, RAF co-organised the #VivasNosQueremos #24A march, following a wave of marches kicked off in Argentina to denounce violence against women. Five-hundred people came out to protest in Mérida. They also helped organise #25N, an international march to denounce violence against women, the international 'Green Action Day' to demand women's rights to safe and legal abortions and International Women's Day (IWD). The last IWD, held in 2019, was groundbreaking: it was the first women-only march in Mérida and a total of 1000 women turned out.

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH:

What are the internal mechanisms, questions and dilemmas that accompany them as they evolve?

Reflecting on their evolution as a collective, RAF picked out the following five internal factors that have informed their learning and growth:

Lack of time for the collective:

The girls unanimously signalled time as being a key internal factor limiting their participation with the collective. They find themselves at a stage in their life when they feel responsible for supporting their own livelihood, and, in some cases, for supporting their families financially. Taking on other civil society jobs or consultancy work inevitably means that they struggle to dedicate the time that they'd like to RAF. One member expressed this as: "I end up committing my free time to RAF. RAF is often my 2nd or 3rd work shift of the day".

Over-extended core team:

Even so, their hearts remain deeply seeded in the collective, and in their spare time they come together and organise activities. In between jobs, studies, family and RAF, they wind up feeling over-extended. There is a desire to look towards the future and resolve the question of RAF's sustainability. However, this comes with a lot of weight, pressure and emotionality. One of the civil society interviewees explains this internal dilemma: "Most members are in a unique moment of having recently graduated or finishing studies. The pressure to earn for themselves and be successful will continue to mount now more than before" (translated from Spanish).

The 5 full-time members at the core of RAF know that their work depends on alliances with other collectives and the support from their part-time members. They are grateful and proud to be surrounded by such a supportive community. They also acknowledge there has been a learning curve in finding a meaningful and non-exhausting way to engage them. Thus far, this has meant putting a cap on the number of part-time members they take on, and forgiving themselves for not being able to attend most events of other collectives.

Their personal lives also add an emotional load to the practical concerns of sustaining their livelihoods. RAF members lean on each other for emotional support. They trust their friendship and give themselves permission to come undone and be vulnerable. One of their internal practices as a collective is to call an 'encuentro de apapacho' - a warm, caring gathering. It's a call to simply be there for each other, especially in difficult times.

Defining the groups identity:

In all of this, they also identified a tension between their individual and collective identity. The collective has welcomed different expressions of feminism - and have needed to distinguish between their personal vs their collective voices and views. For example, in the past there have been incidents of backlash from men during their events. Some of RAF's members have adopted a confrontational stance towards aggressors. However, in some instances this has led to RAF being reported or threatened. This might put RAF's reputation as well as the personal safety of their members at risk. Discussing these situations, they have asked themselves: How do individual actions affect the whole?



Aware that their cause is not recognised in the Nigerian development agenda, WHER also uses the strategy of articulating themselves with other movements/areas such as: sexual and reproductive health and rights, the feminist movement and human rights movement among others. In this way they can leverage their seat at these various tables to advocate for the LGBTQI+ community. After extensive and heated debates, they decided to endorse a collective stand. When personal views vastly differ from the group's voice, that person can project those views in their **own independent projects and not during the collective's events and activities.** These questions have contributed to generating a culture of ongoing and open dialogue: they are moulding their collective identity by coming together to talk honestly, brutally, and lovingly about where they each stand. There is a lot of discovery, newness and uncertainty in everything they experience.

Feminist Funds:

RAF talks about the relationship with FRIDA and Fondo Semillas as fairly different, but equally meaningful. With Semillas they learned to adopt certain basic structures in order to receive and manage the grant. This has helped them professionalise. Meanwhile, through FRIDA they have begun to shift and heal their relationship with money. Itzel clearly recalls one of the first in-person workshops they attended with FRIDA. The subject was 'Women and Money'. The conversation, she says, helped them unlearn the idea that power and money are inherently bad. Paola, adds: "I'm no longer ashamed to eat from the money of our funds". RAF expresses a desire to develop a better capacity to manage funds. In the meantime they continue working on absolving the guilt about using the funds to retribute their work.

What has it meant for RAF to be supported by FRIDA?

In 2020, RAF celebrates five years as a FRIDA grantee partner. RAF members describe that by receiving support, they felt recognised for the work they have been doing for the young feminist community.

Learning to manage funds:

The full-time members of RAF channel the core funds they receive towards a collective pot that they distribute across key areas: audio-visual communications, self-defense, abortions, and bike mobility for women. They offer workshops, dialogues and informational sessions around each of these thematic areas.

Prior to becoming a grantee partner with FRIDA, they had never received such substantial financial support. The dialogue with FRIDA spurred internal discussions about the use of money. While FRIDA promotes a flexible funding model, it took a long time for RAF members to find the confidence to use the funds as liberally as FRIDA offers them.

When RAF first received the FRIDA general grant, the core members were afraid to spend the funds. They recount how they continued to take money out of their own pockets or barter services with local vendors/businesses in order to run their activities. Bartering substitutes financial transactions with exchanges of products or services, and it is a common practice amongst grassroots collectives in Latin America. By having access to more financial resources, they don't have to barter as much. This frees up some of their time and makes exchanges more agile. Yet, this raises an interesting question for funders: what does it look like to introduce money without eroding the practices and social capital of grassroots groups?

Nowadays they feel more relaxed about spending money. Even so, they are interested in receiving more in-depth training to become more adept at responding to administrative, financial and legal matters in the collective. Especially given their intention to formalise soon.



Learning to be more vulnerable in the relationship with FRIDA:

During the first couple of years, RAF also shied away from asking bold questions and sharing their doubts with FRIDA and Fondo Semillas. Although they knew the support was there, they weren't clear on what questions to ask. This, however, is changing. For example, RAF applied to a Solidarity exchange/collaborative grant with FRIDA, but they never heard back. During the learning visit to inform this research, RAF members asked for clarification to the FRIDA LAC focal point. As it turned out, there was a communication error within FRIDA that resulted in RAF not yet learning they were awarded the grant. This was a misunderstanding handled with transparency, care and respect by FRIDA. The group commented: "We are only recently doing the exercise of following-up. Two years ago, we would not have done it." The attention FRIDA invests in building trust into the relationship makes all the difference.

They also reflected on the value of being accompanied by a FRIDA advisor throughout 2017/18 and currently in 2020 as part of FRIDA's accompaniment program. **The advisors have worked alongside RAF to further develop their lines of work, for example around feminist self defense and identifying international festivals where they can showcase their documentary.**

Learning from other young feminists in the region:

RAF values the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences with other collectives. They think back to critical moments like attending the FRIDA Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) convening in 2016 or the Bicycle Mobility congress in Mexico as some of the moments that have characterised their experience with the fund. Through the Solidarity Exchange/Collaborative Grant, they will now have the opportunity to meet with 'La Frida Bike collective' in Brazil. **RAF knows these encounters with other YFOs to be powerful, with La Frida Bike collective they see the opportunity to learn from a like-minded group that has successfully experimented with mobilising independent resources.**





WHER, NIGERIA

WHER, NIGERIA

VISION AND IMPACT

Who are they today?

The Women's Health and Equality Rights Initiative (WHER), is an organisation that promotes the wellbeing and protection of the rights of lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority women in Nigeria through advocacy, education, empowerment, psychosocial support, and research. By offering workshops on financial management, mental health and security (among other topics), they create a safe and caring community for the Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) women. They are based in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, and every year they reach around 600 women in 6 regions of the country.

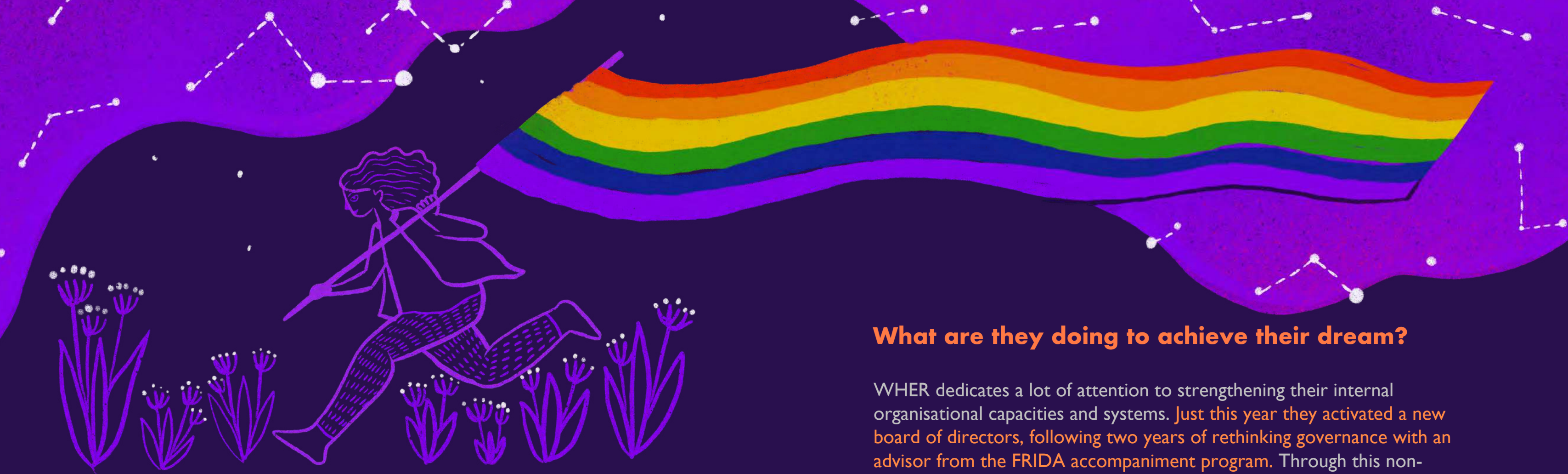
WHER started in 2010 as an informal collective to bring together LBQ women across Nigeria. They were one of the first LBQ organisations in Abuja. One year later, they registered as a nonprofit. In those early years, their activities were less frequent, and the community largely met online. By 2013, WHER received their first grant from FRIDA and shortly after from Mama Cash. The project management skills and financial management systems they developed, via the Capacity Development Grants, enabled them to more convincingly articulate their needs and strategies when applying to Mama Cash. Akudo, one of the group's founder shares: "If FRIDA and Mama Cash general support wasn't there at the precise moment when the anti-LGBT law (Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act¹⁵) passed (2014), we wouldn't be here."

Instead of facing closure, they were able to use FRIDA funding to cover their first paid staff. They also launched their first series of empowerment workshops for LBQ women not only in Abuja but around the country. Today they have 10 donors, 3 of which provide general support. With this support, they have consolidated their work and proudly boast an office, a safehouse, 8

paid staff, two interns, and over 14 volunteers. At the end of 2019 they transitioned out of being a FRIDA grantee partner. WHER and FRIDA are now endeavouring in their new partnership to run a Comic Relief funded program to strengthen young LBQ groups across Sub Saharan Africa (SSA).

Participants of WHER's programs credit the organisation for allowing them to develop themselves personally and professionally. An intern at WHER explains how at WHER she learned how to manage projects, facilitate a workshop, and more profoundly listen to the experiences and needs of other fellow LBQ women. Fisayo, WHER's program officer cites how WHER allowed her to break into work with civil society.





What do they aspire to?

WHER members dream of being able to live in a country where young LBQ women can comfortably live out their lives, feeling respected in their sexual identities. They dream of Nigeria repealing its anti-LGBT law: the SSMPA.

Since 2010, WHER has been steadily growing in resources, staff and program capacity. They expect for this growth to continue; foreseeing a scale up in the size and reach of their programs. Their journey is what instills confidence in them. Their geographic reach has expanded, their programs are more comprehensive, they have a strong grant management track record, and they have become an active contributor in women's rights and feminist and queer policy spaces. They intend to broaden their services and make greater inroads to reach young LBQ women in rural areas and smaller cities with less access to safe spaces. They are equally motivated about strengthening the support for this community across Sub-Saharan Africa.

What are they doing to achieve their dream?

WHER dedicates a lot of attention to strengthening their internal organisational capacities and systems. Just this year they activated a new board of directors, following two years of rethinking governance with an advisor from the FRIDA accompaniment program. Through this non-financial support, groups are paired with experts in thematic areas the groups deem relevant. With this new board in place they have been able to organise their third strategic review process, bringing together board members, WHER staff and LBQ members. While they are developing stronger accountability mechanisms, they also continue to prioritise participatory decision making with their community.

Meanwhile, they are active contributors to human rights forums at the national and international level. This includes the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Union and the Pan African International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). As their reputation grows, they foresee more opportunities to work with women's rights organisations. They also consider that LGBTQI+ issues are getting more visibility and more funding attention. This is a result of increased visibility of the community itself. WHER considers this an achievement given that their efforts over the years to empower the LBQ community psychologically, financially are strengthening their voices. They intend to demonstrate to donors that they have a sound track record in managing grants and carrying out powerful and relevant programs.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

What ecosystem do they belong in? How do they interact with it?

Nigeria, like most of Sub-Saharan Africa, is conservative and strongly patriarchal towards women and queer people¹⁶. The Global State of Feminist Organizing report notes that more than half of the YFOs in SSA feel unsafe due to threats and attacks from traditional authorities. Groups that work with minority women populations including sex workers, people living with HIV, disabled persons and LGBTQI+ persons are especially vulnerable to such threats¹⁷. Below WHER identifies the 4 external factors that most shape their work:

Laws and policies:

In 2014, the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) was passed into law. The act makes same-sex marriage punishable for up to 14 years in prison. Additionally, the assembling of same-sex groups can lead to a sentence of up to 10 years. According to WHER's executive director, this Bill was passed just as the LGBTQI+ community started to become more visible in Nigeria. With more attention there is more risk.

For WHER and other LGBTQI+ organisations, the passing of the SSMPA was the realisation of their worst fear: this Act marked a clear before and after. Before the Act, LGBTQI+ individuals limited their actions for fear of significant legal repercussions. **Paradoxically, now that the Bill has passed, WHER members feel more emboldened than before to continue pushing forward with their work. In the meantime, they are also actively lobbying alongside other LGBTQI+ groups to abolish the Act. Through strategic litigation, engaging gatekeepers and the media they are exerting pressure. WHER is also conducting sensitisation and values clarification**

workshops for different stakeholders whose support could further enable the litigation process. Yomi, the Executive Director of the International Center for Advocacy on Rights to Health comments that revoking the SSMPA has been a unifying force for the LGBTQI+ community.

WHER accepts the risk that comes with organising for LBQ women because, as Akudo shares, "this is who we are". WHER is one among many LBQ grantee partners operating in a context where their work is criminalised. FRIDA believes funding these groups is critical precisely because of the vital yet precarious nature of their organising.

Public opinion:

The non-tolerance towards the LGBTQI+ community from the wider public has deeply affected WHER staff and community members. Their work is delicate and risky. According to a report commissioned by the Initiative for Equal Rights (2017), 90% of Nigerians are in favor of the SSMPA. Yet the report also signals that family tolerance towards LGBTQ+ persons is improving, even if only slightly. Beyond the risk of imprisonment, every day the LBQ women WHER supports have to carefully navigate familial and societal spaces that are largely homophobic.

Social exclusion and risks for LBQ women:

The degree of tension that LBQ women face between law enforcement, families and religion is distressing. These forces tend to interrelate: Religion permeates everything in Nigerian society, families uphold religious beliefs as part of their culture, and law enforcement exerts its power governed by these beliefs. A WHER staff shares that it's a hard line to follow. They cherish a lot about their culture including their family, going to church, and attending social and cultural events. Yet, these are the very spaces where they feel the need to moderate their appearances and behaviour.

WHER's programs also recognise that social exclusion in Nigeria is tied to an individual's level of education and access to resources. LBQ women feel the pressure to become educated and successful in order to be taken more seriously. For this reason, many of WHER's training programs focus on skilling LBQ women to participate in the formal economy. One of their main programs, funded through FRIDA's core grant, is a financial empowerment training series.

WHER members also explain that social exclusion is a real concern facing staff and the LBQ women they serve. Most staff have to lie about their whereabouts. The same applies for program participants. Having to hide their identity also explains why WHER struggles with staff attrition. Particularly as young women enter adulthood, there is an increasing expectation that they will marry, this is usually the point at which WHER loses participants and staff. And yet, WHER respects these decisions because they advocate for the safety of their community above all.

Civil Society and political environment:

WHER's staff expressed how there is a great deal of resistance in Nigeria to make room for LGBTQI+ rights within women's rights. Buky Williams, the Executive Director of Education as a Vaccine (EVA), an organisation working to improve the health and development of young people, explains that many CSOs in Nigeria learn to do work within the limits of what is culturally comfortable. These organisations will work within a narrow range of themes within women's health and rights. The local civil society practitioners interviewed shared that international organisations also tend to exercise restraint in their programmatic focus. They talk about dismantling the patriarchy, but do not necessarily uphold feminist values. **Given the government's punitive stance on LGBTQI+ organising, CSOs that wish to engage governments may stay clear of organisations like WHER.**

This is a dejecting reality for WHER staff. They invest a lot of time engaging with international institutions at the highest levels to evoke policy changes and often leverage 'health' as an entry point to advocate for LBQ rights. In 2014, for example, they prepared a shadow report in conjunction with other Nigerian LGBTQI+ organisations for the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Despite their efforts, these encounters rarely lead to much. WHER members feel drained and disappointed by these spaces where their participation seems tokenistic and their proposals are not seriously considered. WHER is working to include language around sexuality in women right's policy agendas and programming.



ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH:

What are the internal mechanisms, questions and dilemmas that accompany them as they evolve?

WHER keeps a steady rhythm of activities and programs. This makes it so that they are pressed to find the time to come together as a team. During the learning visit that informed this study, they took a moment to surface their individual burning questions about the organisation. Their questions included: How do we create an inclusive program that explores intersectionality with other groups? How can we focus our programs on improving the security of the trans women that we have become more inclusive of? How do we create an atmosphere where staff practice intentional self-care and are conscious about personal mental health? How can we raise multi-year funding to sustain the organisation and keep staff motivated/committed?

By discussing their burning questions, and the stories behind them, they arrived to identify 4 internal factors that have most shaped the organisation.

Self and collective care:

WHER began to think more concertedly about self and collective care with the passing of the SSMPA. Because of the risks involved in organising, WHER had to have open and honest conversations with their community members about what safety and security look like. A need for addressing mental health stood out. As WHER developed its capacity to provide psychosocial support, WHER team members also began to experience the challenges of dealing with second hand trauma. They acknowledge

that as a team, self care and collective care are usually overlooked. During their team retreats, the tendency is to focus on the operational work. Presently, they are working on making self-care and collective care a more intentional practice and not just a conversation.

Intersectionality:

WHER members shared that they learned about intersectionality as a concept and practice during the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) gathering in Brazil in 2016. The AWID International Forum is one of the largest feminist covenings and FRIDA offers Travel Grants to enable grantee partners to participate. Today, WHER promotes intersectionality by collaborating and aligning with other movements and women's groups. In the last few years, they have become more attuned to the diverse experiences of young LBQ rural women, disabled women, trans women and other minority women groups. A WHER participant from the women's economic empowerment series admits that she was critical about the trans community until she met trans and intersex youth through WHER's programs.

As an organisation, WHER has also begun to train the leaders of a trans women's organisation with the intention of helping them consolidate as a group. Instead of co-opting the space of trans women, they believe it's more useful to support that community in establishing itself.

Aware that their cause is not recognised in the Nigerian development agenda, WHER also uses the strategy of articulating themselves with other movements/areas such as: sexual and reproductive health and rights, the feminist movement and human rights movement among others. In this way they can leverage their seat at these various tables to advocate for the LGBTQI+ community.

Organisational growth and development:

The organisation has gone from being a volunteer run organisation to having 8 paid staff persons, 15 volunteers, two interns, an office and a safe house. WHER credits these developments to the consistent general support they've received from FRIDA, Mama Cash and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. Through this support, they were able to prioritise investing in basic capital for the organisation's day-to-day operations (such as renting an office and buying computers).

In the future, their preference is to have a few donors that support multi-year funding. This intuition is in line with research that affirms that flexible, multi-year funding makes groups more resilient¹⁸. In this way they can avoid the exhaustion of constantly submitting short-term proposals. Moreover, WHER shared that most funding destines 85% towards direct project costs, with 15% at best earmarked for administrative costs, making the general or core support they do receive even more valuable. Being WHER's first grant (a core grant), FRIDA set the bar for how the organisation wants their donor relationships to feel like: accessible, intimate and brave.

Safety and Security:

Still today, LBQ women in Nigeria are not able to be public about their sexual identities for fear of rejection and safety. Aggression and violence towards this group is high¹⁹. Many of WHER's members shared personal stories attesting to this reality. For this reason, WHER has established a safe house to shelter young LBQ women who have been rejected by their families and, in some cases, received death threats. AWID and FRIDA's (2016) research findings revealed that "more than half of survey respondents regularly feel unsafe or threatened because of the work they do".

FRIDA has been very attentive to questions of safety and security with its grantee partners. FRIDA's regional focal points and advisors are key resources when groups feel their security is at risk. Focal points can liaise with YFOs to identify the best response whether it means reallocating funding, or more often connecting the groups with other relevant actors. FRIDA is well connected with networks, organisations and contacts that can provide the necessary support. Working as a constellation, young feminist entities show they desire to stand in solidarity and support one another. Feeling part of and supported by this network is important to WHER. It's also clear that WHER has its own feminist and LBQ networks in SSA that FRIDA values.



What has it meant for WHER to be supported by FRIDA?

Building resilience through general support:

Since 2010, WHER had begun the groundbreaking work of creating safe spaces for LBQ women to gather and grow together. During their first year of operation they were already aware that the SSMPA was about to be passed - making it a lot more challenging for them to organise safely and securely as a group. General support helped them secure an office and paid staff to continue their work.

Prioritising their organisational development:

As mentioned earlier, WHER is committed to strengthening itself as an organisation. Through FRIDA's capacity development grants, WHER has been able to dedicate resources exclusively to sharpening internal systems. It has particularly served them to buy practical accounting and financial management softwares, like Quickbooks, and to receive training to better manage these programs.

Connecting with the wider feminist and LGBTQI+ movements:

Another turning moment for WHER's staff, enabled by FRIDA's Travel Grant, was their participation in the 2016 AWID forum in Brazil. This was one of the few times they got to be in the room with other young feminists, as well as LBQ activists from all over the world. It was also the first time they met FRIDA staff face-to-face. During the event they got to participate in donor-led sessions and receive practical insight into donor perspectives and requirements.

Accompanied growth:

FRIDA has been an important donor relationship for WHER. As WHER's co-founders, Akudo talks about how the two organisations accompanied each

other's growth. Their relationship has been imbued with friendship, respect and admiration for one another. As WHER transitions from being a FRIDA grantee partner, they now engage with FRIDA as a partner. As of 2020, they will be resourcing and supporting emerging LGBTQI groups in

Sub-Saharan Africa via a Comic Relief Grant they jointly won. For this collaboration FRIDA draws from its grant making experience and WHER from its LGBTQI movement background. It's a natural progression in the kind of relationship they have been building with FRIDA.

WHER is also bearing witness to FRIDA's rapid growth. WHER's leader, who has known FRIDA the longest, is aware that FRIDA is learning and adjusting to its new phase of development. Most notable is the wave of new staff joining FRIDA: now WHER is communicating with multiple FRIDA staff. For WHER, having one point of contact with FRIDA helps keep the communication clear. This is especially important for them given that they manage multiple donor and partner relationships. **What makes FRIDA unique to WHER is the personal and warm quality of their communication.** They worry this is at risk with the current expansion. However, WHER also trusts that FRIDA is thinking critically about how to **stay conscious through this moment of growth.** In the 2020 publication "No Straight Lines", FRIDA's guide and resource for funders choosing to support young feminist organising, they highlight how communication matters. Captured in the words of a grantee partner "Having approachable points of contact helps to dismantle the unequal power dynamic that so often characterises communication"²⁰.





SAHR, GLOBAL

SAHR, GLOBAL

VISION AND IMPACT

Who are they today?

Strategic Advocacy for Human Rights (SAHR) works to improve access to formal justice for the most vulnerable and marginalised survivors of gender-based violence. Their mission is to end impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes and hold perpetrators accountable by practicing the law through a feminist lens.

The seeds of SAHR were planted in 2004 when at the age of 17, Singapore-born Natasha Latiff, traveled for the first time to Afghanistan. There she connected with her own multiethnic Muslim roots, as a 4th generation immigrant with roots in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, South-east Asia and China. She also connected with the experiences of young girls and women. Their silence was deafening. The rise of radical islam created a stifling environment for young women and girls in Afghanistan. The US declaration of the war on terror fueled radical Islam even further. Women faced human rights abuses, yet they had very little access to the law. This experience is what inspired Natasha to become a human rights lawyer.

In 2008, SAHR was started as a collective centered on supporting and training human rights defenders and lawmakers in addressing cases of violence against women. In 2011, Natasha was joined by Sara Bergamaschi, an Italian Arabic-speaking human rights advocate working in the MENA region. Sara would go on to co-lead the organisation towards growth and sustainability. As SAHR's work in Afghanistan deepened, the international support network around SAHR grew - especially in the US. They believed

that formalising the group would help them to acquire funding. In 2013, they registered as a 501c3 in the US. One of their co-founders was Afghani-American and they had the support of a US-based legal firm to help register. They made a conscious decision not to register in Afghanistan for safety and logistical reasons. In fact, as of 2019 they stopped their case work in Afghanistan due to security concerns. **They are currently managing cases in South Sudan, Vanuatu and Bangladesh.**

The organisation is formed by 26 young women (between team, board members, advisors, consultants and fellows) from a variety of disciplines, working remotely across 16 countries. This currently includes 10 young women in the core team, 5 of which receive partial stipends and 5 of which are volunteers. Since 2019, one core team member's stipend is covered by FRIDA while the 4 other members are covered by crowdfunding efforts, and recent support from a foundation. Over the years they've also worked with many volunteers across South Asia, Europe, Middle East, Central and South America and the US.



What do they aspire to?

SAHR dreams of being able to work with more women human rights defenders in the Global South. They are interested in taking on more cases of systematic and widespread sexual violence, and train defenders to become specialised feminist practitioners in this field. **To date they have trained over 124 human rights defenders and lawmakers. Through their work they intend to cement feminist practices of law that promote survivor-centered access to justice and end impunity of powerful offenders.**

SAHR's team envisions driving the organisation into its next stage of growth. This includes being able to pay their core team decent wages, expand the capacity of their legal team, and generate more opportunities to come together in-person as a team.

What are they doing to achieve their dream?

SAHR is currently undergoing a significant re-structuring process. They are re-organising the way they work, redefining their roles and re-strategising fundraising approaches. Well aware of the unique challenges of working remotely, they are now setting a precedent to meet at least once a year as a team. November 2019 marked the first time they met as a team.

To grow as an organisation, they are prioritising building new funding relationships. This includes approaching entities like family foundations and looking into large private donations.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

What ecosystem do they belong in? How do they interact with it?

SAHR's ecosystem is unique precisely because their team works virtually from the US, India, Singapore and Greece. For most of their organisational life, SAHR's work was centered in Afghanistan. Here they interacted closely with women lawmakers and human rights defenders, and young women victims. Other actors which indirectly affect their work included police, prosecutors, courts, families and other broader forces such as islamisation, patriarchy, war, insecurity and income inequality. Meanwhile the members of SAHR's staff based in the US, where they are formally registered, focus on supporting cases from a distance while fundraising and building visibility for SAHR.

In the backdrop, there have been 5 external factors that they identified as most influencing the organisation.

Militarisation:

To set the context for SAHR, Natasha spoke of the militarisation of Afghanistan. When she first visited Afghanistan in 2004, the country was in the midst of the war on terror and the rise of radical Islam. According to the UN Human Rights office in Afghanistan, the armed conflict critically wounded, killed and exposed Afghan women to human rights abuses. Beyond the war, 90% of Afghan women experienced at least one form of domestic violence²¹. SAHR's founder noticed that in this environment, young women were afraid to speak up.

US militarisation was accompanied by a vision to liberate women. This had the effect of making women's rights work inherently political and in

support of the US occupation. It also coupled feminism with humanitarianism, strategically used to justify the war on terror²². In SAHR's early years, they handled constant questions about their political alignment. **To untangle themselves from the politicised nature of women's rights work, they framed their work as promoting 'community health'**. Afghanistan continues to be at war with the Taliban, and a US withdrawal remains possible but undefined. In 2019, SAHR paused its work in Afghanistan; worried about the security of its staff due to some specific incidents.

Even so, SAHR has every intention to continue working cases elsewhere. It has been a challenging moment of transition - SAHR doesn't have the same level of background and network in other countries. It's an arguably unique position compared to most YFOs FRIDA supports given that members of the team are not currently based in the countries where SAHR works. Nonetheless, they aren't the only group that has had to rethink and reorganise the way they work. **For this, donors have an important role to play to accompany groups through precarious moments of re-orientation.**

Rise of Islamic Feminism:

Parallel to the militarisation of Afghanistan, SAHR also signalled the rise of Islamic Feminism as a critical factor shaping their work. Following her first visit to Afghanistan, SAHR's co-founder, Natasha, felt compelled to translate books on gender equality in Islam to the local languages in Afghanistan, Dari. This follows the concept of Feminist Ijtihad: the ability to challenge oppressions and injustices through a women-focused and feminist interpretation of religious texts²³. Islamic feminists including Fátima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, Ziba Mir Hosseini, Zainah Anwar and Amina Waduds, and the translation of feminist texts, made feminism accessible for muslim women.

²¹(Oriya, 2018)

²²(Keddie, 2016)

²³(Keddie, 2016)



For SAHR, Islamic Feminism has been an important way to relate to other young Muslim women regionally and litigate more effectively within local justice systems. Likewise, SAHR work directly with Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim Family²⁴, to support mapping laws on guardianship of women under Muslim Family Law in Afghanistan. Islamic Feminism also became a platform for Muslim women's activism, in a space mostly dominated by the West. With the language of Islamic Feminism, Muslim women activists who were historically overshadowed by western feminists from Europe and USA became relevant and powerful as activists in their own right. Meanwhile, SAHR could also appreciate the parallel spread of the global feminist movement that has helped SAHR become more visible and fundraise for its work among a US audience. SAHR demonstrates that YFOs can interact with different expressions and movements of feminism.

Online platforms and social media:

SAHR also describes the internet and social media as an important force that facilitated their remote and global work. It also made it safer to support work in Afghanistan when it no longer became safe to be on the ground. Natasha shares that there have been many times when she could refer to YouTube to learn how to better cross-examine, draft a complaint, or investigate a crime scene. For SAHR making legal skills accessible is essential, many of the human rights defenders they work with don't have the privilege of going to law school. As for social media, it is a space where SAHR can publicise its work and interact with the global feminist movement. The advent of movements like #metoo and #8M have helped SAHR find platforms to share its work and feel connected to a wider movement.

Passing of Laws:

SAHR contributed to drafting of provisions of three critical laws for women in Afghanistan. In 2009, SAHR submitted model provisions on rape law for The Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (ELAW), in 2014 they submitted model provisions on victim and witness protection for the Criminal Procedure code, and in 2017 submitted legal reasoning to repeal the "honour defence for murder" and model provisions on rape law for the new Penal Code. SAHR also submitted a dossier of model provisions for family law reform, drawing upon texts from dozens of classical and contemporary scholars. The draft bill incorporated many of SAHR's recommendations and though eventually the Parliament of Afghanistan refused to pass the bill, through SAHR's contributions, they have set the wheels in motion for Afghan Family Law to one day reform. Since then they have been able to defend cases under these very laws. This has reaffirmed the importance of fighting for changes at the judicial level.

Security:

Working on violence against women cases has also posed different security risks for SAHR's staff and the young women they represent. More often than not, SAHR has to keep a low profile and protect their identity, the identity of their partners and victims' identity. SAHR's Afghanistan-based staff member left the country in 2015 due to personal security.





ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH:

What are the internal mechanisms, questions and dilemmas that accompany them as they evolve?

SAHR is a small organisation. The network structure in which they exist creates challenges, but also opens up opportunities for them as a group. During the learning visit that informed this study, SAHR's team was able to connect to the internal dilemmas of the organisation and explore them together. Here are the five factors they signalled:

Quality of relationship between team members:

SAHR's team recognises that the relationship between team members is the glue that keeps the group together. They found that working remotely has its costs, especially when some team members have never met in person. They identified certain tensions in the relationships between team members that made doing the day-to-day work difficult. This became clear when, finally gathered in the same physical space, they began to bravely name those challenges in front of each other. The nature of these tensions stem from the different cultural backgrounds of team members, their employment in other full time jobs, and having only two partially paid staff. These dynamics are heightened by a history of challenging moments that had yet to fully heal.

What made the difference in their relationship has been creating the time to be together in person. For example, the two current directors of the organisation met in person for the first time in Egypt

in 2013 where one of them was based. They spent a month living together and learning about one another under the backdrop of the Egyptian revolution. This entirely transformed their working relationship. Likewise US-based members, Stephanie, Alana and Amelia, have valued the moments when they could come together as a team to organise fundraising events.


Donors that are in the unique position of working remotely, like FRIDA, could provide insight on how to make remote work effective and meaningful. Sharing the challenges and triumphs of remote organising may inspire relevant groups to better own and make the most of their model.

Internal communication:

Internal communication was another factor they found important to their organisational health. They credit online working platforms for facilitating their work across different countries. At the same time, they struggle to reconcile people's different work styles, time zones and communication preferences.

Lack of Clarity around Roles:

In their 10 year history they have tried different organisational strategies, and gone through changes in leadership. During these moments of turbulence, the core team worked towards a mission they were all passionate about, but without clear strategic direction. They are now trying to become conscious of how to align personal and organisational growth so that their work can have more energy, clarity and power. Reaffirming the roles they want to take on is one of the practices SAHR team members did during the learning visit.



Amidst the years of trial and error, something that most YFOs and youth-led groups are familiar with, SAHR has also shown to be extremely resilient. Amelia, a SAHR board member, says in an interview that this stems from their complete dedication: “they’ve gone through many iterations of their work - there’s a lot of resilience they have learned through those processes”.

Balancing their employment & work with SAHR:

Like many other FRIDA grantee partners, SAHR’s core team members balance SAHR work with their other employment. As such, they struggle to dedicate more time to the organisation. They also mention that the lack of clear strategic direction has led to confusion on where to dedicate time and attention. The fundamental question that would accompany them in these moments is: what does the organisation need the most right now?

Discovery of organisational culture:

Aside from defining strategies, roles and programs, SAHR also reflected on the organisational culture they wanted to create. This is where a lot of the intangibles of their day-to-day work belong. They named practices like two-way accountability, self and collective care and open and honest communication as integral to enabling their work. **This raises the following question: How can donors support or accompany groups with the more intangible aspects of their growth?**



What has it meant for SAHR to be supported by FRIDA?

SAHR began as a collective in 2008 and registered as a 501C3 by 2013, the same year they became a FRIDA grantee. Natasha remembers reading the FRIDA website and seeing a match with SAHR in FRIDA's commitment to support young feminist with grassroots initiatives in the Global South. She recognised her work in FRIDA's call. Through FRIDA, SAHR has been able to access project funding, general funding, capacity development grant, solidarity exchange/collaborative grant and travel grants to meet other grantee partners.

Boost of confidence and the capacity to experiment:

SAHR received its first grant ever from FRIDA. This felt important to SAHR because, in their words, "FRIDA took a chance on us where other donors would have seen a mess". The flexible and dynamic nature of FRIDA's funding gave SAHR the space to experiment and 'come into our own skin'.

Funding for legal work is invaluable because it is scarce:

SAHR explains that most donors do not fund work on legal cases. Moreover, doing case work is lengthy and costly. This is one of the reasons that most of their FRIDA core funding has been dedicated to their programmatic work. The remaining funding they have channelled to cover a partial stipend for one core team member. SAHR knows that in order to manage a greater volume of cases of a higher profile, they will have to make a significant leap in funding.

SAHR's team believes they are on the cusp of moving from small grants to operating with 50,000 USD a year. While they are soon to transition out of being a FRIDA grantee partner, they would like FRIDA's support to cross this bridge. In the meantime, Alana, one of SAHR's core team members, shares that they are keen to find seed funding or an incubation program that could offer personalised financial and technical support to prepare SAHR to handle larger donors.

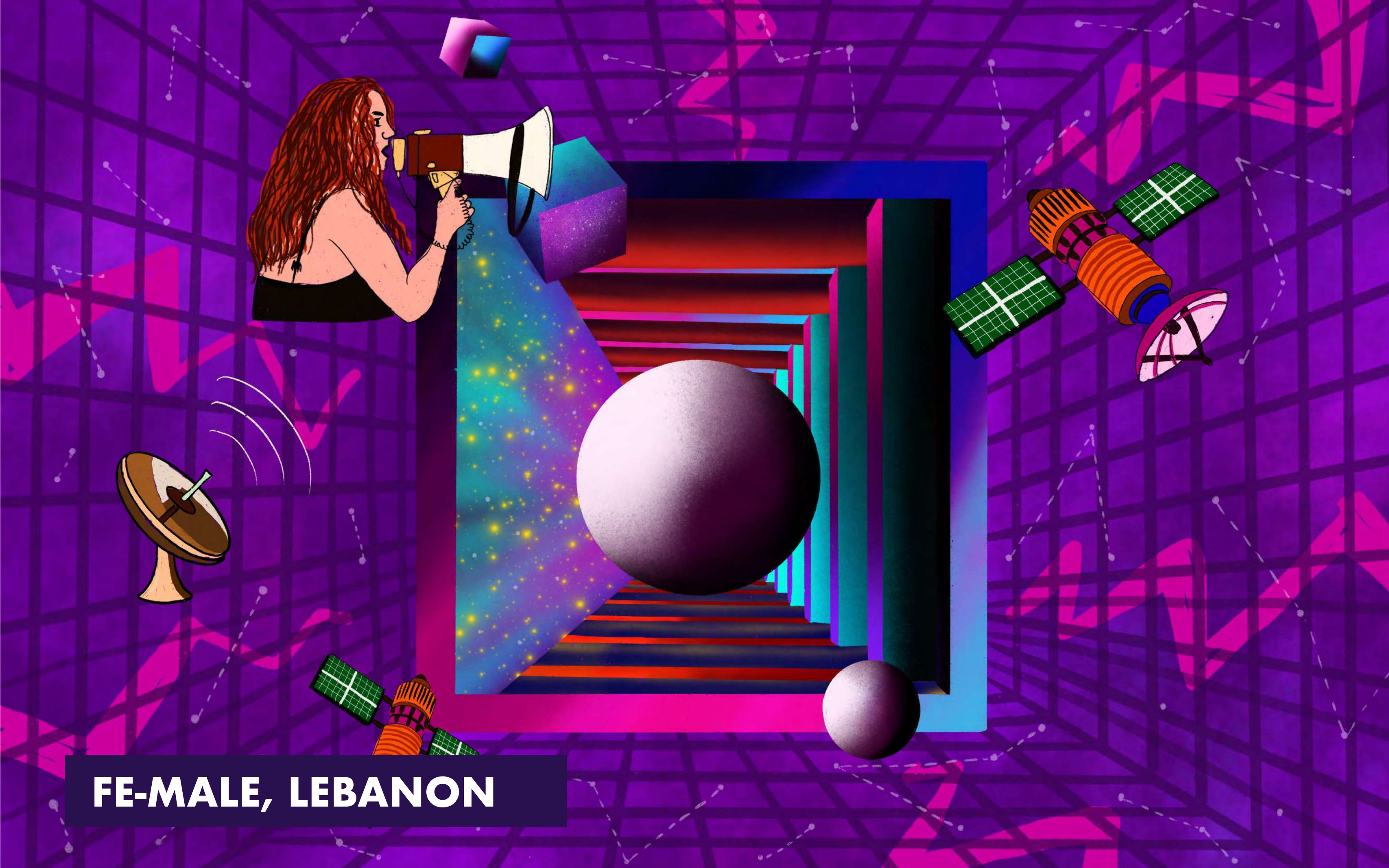
Learning through other FRIDA grantee partners:

SAHR has also valued the learning that has taken place through the FRIDA solidarity exchanges/collaborative grant. First in 2017, Natasha went to India on behalf of SAHR where she met with The BuSSy Project, (FRIDA grantee partner based in Egypt) a performing arts collective that shares untold stories about gender in different communities. Together they learned about practices of safe storytelling for survivors of gender based violence. The BuSSy Project's approach and thematic work was something entirely new and unfamiliar to the legal contexts that SAHR operates in.

Following the learning visit that informed this research, the whole SAHR team got to connect with L'Union Féministe Libre (UFL), a Rabat based grantee partner advocating and protecting the rights of sexual minorities in Morocco. This was also made possible via FRIDA's solidarity exchange/collaborative grant. Given that both groups work on defending cases of violence against women (and operate in the MENA region/Islamic contexts), they made the most of their time together to learn from one another's practices. SAHR's team also got to meet and work with the Blue Club, a feminsit filming collective and fellow FRIDA grantee partner from India. For the majority of SAHR members, it was the first time they had contact with other YFOs supported by FRIDA.

Unaware of everything FRIDA offers:

In the hustle of their day-to-day work, SAHR admits that they might not be aware or make use of everything FRIDA has to offer. They have not taken part in the capacity strengthening webinars FRIDA provides for its grantee partners, for example, and they don't necessarily follow opportunities to attend FRIDA convenings. Contact with FRIDA has largely been through the group's founder, Natasha. Although she noticed FRIDA was offering financial management webinars, at the time SAHR perceived it as valuable for more formal organisations, and therefore, not seeing itself as an NGO (despite its formal status) but rather as a collective, did not attend. Today, developing their internal mechanism, administrative capacity and leveraging their NGO status is a priority.



FE-MALE, LEBANON

FE-MALE, LEBANON

VISION AND IMPACT

Who are they today?

Fe-male is an organisation that is committed to activating and building up Lebanon's young feminists. Fe-male began in 2012 when Hayat and Aalia, Fe-male's co-founders, saw a lack of gender sensitive voices in the media. To counter this reality, they started Sharika wa Laken, the first radio show in Lebanon that addresses women's rights from a feminist perspective. In the group's formative years, use of radio and social media platforms allowed the core team and volunteers to continue working in a dispersed way. In 2013, Fe-male registered as an NGO, and by 2014 Fe-male received its first grant with FRIDA. This allowed them to acquire their first office, a rented room in the headquarters of the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL), an established sister organisation. By 2017, they were able to pay their first full time staff member. Fe-male went from managing a 4,000 USD grant with FRIDA, to operating an organisational budget of 40,000 USD a year later. This growth has been possible thanks to the new donors and partners

Fe-male was able to attract. The support from FRIDA was critical for the group to acquire those second and third donors. It's rare to find donors who support emerging groups with no previous record working with big donors. Fe-male says that FRIDA helped make it so donors

could trust their ability to manage a grant. Hayat shares, even if the funds are small, receiving them year after year helped them to build their capacity. To date they have 9 donors: 2 provide flexible core funding, the other seven are project-based. Even though they manage a far greater budget today, they say they continue to appreciate FRIDA because of the flexibility to cover non-project costs, and address activities that directly relate to their feminist agenda and activism. Even today, Fe-male recognise that for most non-feminist donors, feminist areas of work are not a priority. This is what makes FRIDA crucial. They have a team of 6 staff, 40 volunteers and 5 board members. Their latest point of pride is finally having their own office space, complete with a workshop room.





What do they aspire to?

Fe-male's members believe that through digital advocacy, gender sensitive coverage on the media and positive portrayal of women they can support girls and young women to become the future political leaders of Lebanon. Fe-male's members are also enthusiastic about the possibility of becoming leaders in an emerging feminist movement across the MENA region.

Now that Fe-male has formalised into an NGO, they are keen to find an organisational management model that is aligned to their feminist principles. They are thinking critically about how to conserve their activist and volunteering spirit as they continue to grow the organisation.

What are they doing to get there?

As of 2019, Fe-male is experimenting with a new organisational structure. In this new modality, Fe-male has elected a new board from young active members and assigned two co-directors to manage the day-to-day work of the organisation.

Fe-male is also present with the revolutionary movement that surged in the country since October 17th, 2019. **They are actively mobilising young women to manifest in the streets and raise their concerns.** Fe-Male has been actively engaged in the revolution through online mobilisation, protesting, creating feminist murales, participating in coordination meetings with different feminist and revolution groups to support organising efforts. **They believe the revolution can bring systemic change aligned with feminist principles.**

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

What ecosystem do they belong in? How do they interact with it?

On October 17th, 2019, the streets of Lebanon were taken over by civic protests that sparked a strong revolutionary movement against corruption and poor governance.²⁵ The learning visit for this study happened only two-months later, while the protests were in their ninth week. More than an anti-government protest, the ‘October Revolution’ is about overthrowing a sectarian system that is seen as prohibiting social integration of Lebanon’s various ethnic groups. In a country that has already weathered a civil war, the socio-economic state of Lebanon is a cross-cutting concern that shapes all parts of society, including young feminist organising. Fe-male identified the following four external factors as most impactful on their work:

Economic social crisis:

Lebanon is in the midst of an acute economic and social crisis, punctuated by the October revolution. Even prior to the revolution, the country was seeing growing inflation and an exodus of young people, particularly young women and girls, emigrating abroad. The UNDP ‘Spotlight on Youth in Lebanon’ report (2015) confers that “a large percentage of female youth do not enter the labor force or exit very early and become economically inactive, especially in periphery areas”. Roua, one of the Fe-male volunteers, says she too thought about leaving but added “if I leave, then who will carry on the work of bringing about change?”.

Since the start of the revolution, the situation has become more precarious. Banks closed for two weeks, and thereafter exercised informal capital control where individuals could withdraw no more than 200 USD a week.

²⁶Fe-male reflected on how this affects them on two levels. One, they are considerably limited in their ability to draw funds from their account to do things like pay stipends and project expenses. Second, the individual members of the group, like most Lebanese, are feeling the pinch of the economic crisis and are thus less able to volunteer. Given the context, Fe-male’s leadership knows they can’t expect volunteers to give as much of their time to participate in and help organise Fe-male’s activities.

Indeed, one of Fe-male’s members interviewed was at the frontlines of the revolution in Tripoli, another major Lebanese city. As she described it, “everything in Tripoli is at a standstill”. There, differently from Beirut, she explains, people simply cannot go back to work. She counts herself among the majority in the city that are unwilling to cede until there is a critical response from the government.

With the exacerbating economic crisis and the revolution, Fe-male has decided to postpone running certain activities such as their feminist clubs, especially in rural areas. Since the start of the revolution, advocating for feminist causes has becoming more difficult. Women’s rights and feminism are less valued in a moment where radical political change is considered to be a greater priority. Even so, Fe-male, alongside other feminist allies, have been an active part of the revolution. The turnout shows that women of all ages are mobilising. Fe-male has been one of the front-line organisations mobilising young women and girls as well as articulating feminist principles aligned with the revolution. They are echoing the call for major systemic change.

Women's rights context:

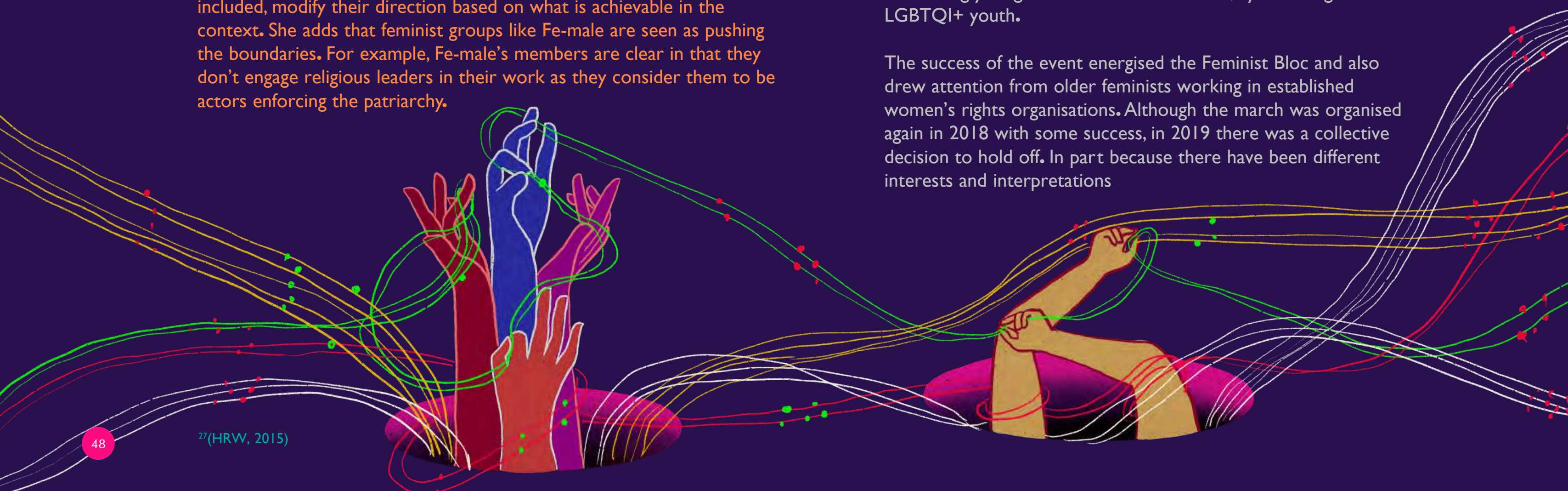
In Lebanon there are 15 different personal status laws based on the various recognised religious communities. A study conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2015 reviews that all sectarian status laws are fundamentally discriminatory towards women, young women and girls. The laws and the religious courts are prejudiced against women when it comes to divorce and custody of children, for example²⁷. Fe-male understands this as certain cultural norms manifesting into legal injustices.

Yet, many women's rights organisations tend to compromise their discourse and their actions because of religion, patriarchy and the sectarian laws. The Director of Programs at Abaad, a national gender equality organisation, acknowledges that larger organisations, themselves included, modify their direction based on what is achievable in the context. She adds that feminist groups like Fe-male are seen as pushing the boundaries. For example, Fe-male's members are clear in that they don't engage religious leaders in their work as they consider them to be actors enforcing the patriarchy.

Women's marches and The Feminist Bloc:

Everyone interviewed, including the members of Fe-male, had a different take on the state of the feminist movement. Although there isn't consensus on whether or not a young feminist movement exists in Lebanon, there is clear uptake in feminist interventions and initiatives. In 2017, a network of young feminist collectives and organisations, Fe-male among them, formed the Feminist Bloc. Together they work to coordinate around specific feminist interventions. For example, inspired by the International Women's Day (IWD) march in New York, in 2017 the Feminist Bloc organised the biggest IWD march Lebanon had seen to date. Even though young feminists were at the helm of organising this march, the participation was intergenerational and intersectional - welcoming young female domestic workers, Syrian refugees and LGBTQI+ youth.

The success of the event energised the Feminist Bloc and also drew attention from older feminists working in established women's rights organisations. Although the march was organised again in 2018 with some success, in 2019 there was a collective decision to hold off. In part because there have been different interests and interpretations



of feminism between generations. Sara, an activist forming part of the Knowledge Workshop, a Public Feminist Library, and the Feminist Bloc, observed that the Bloc is in a learning process.

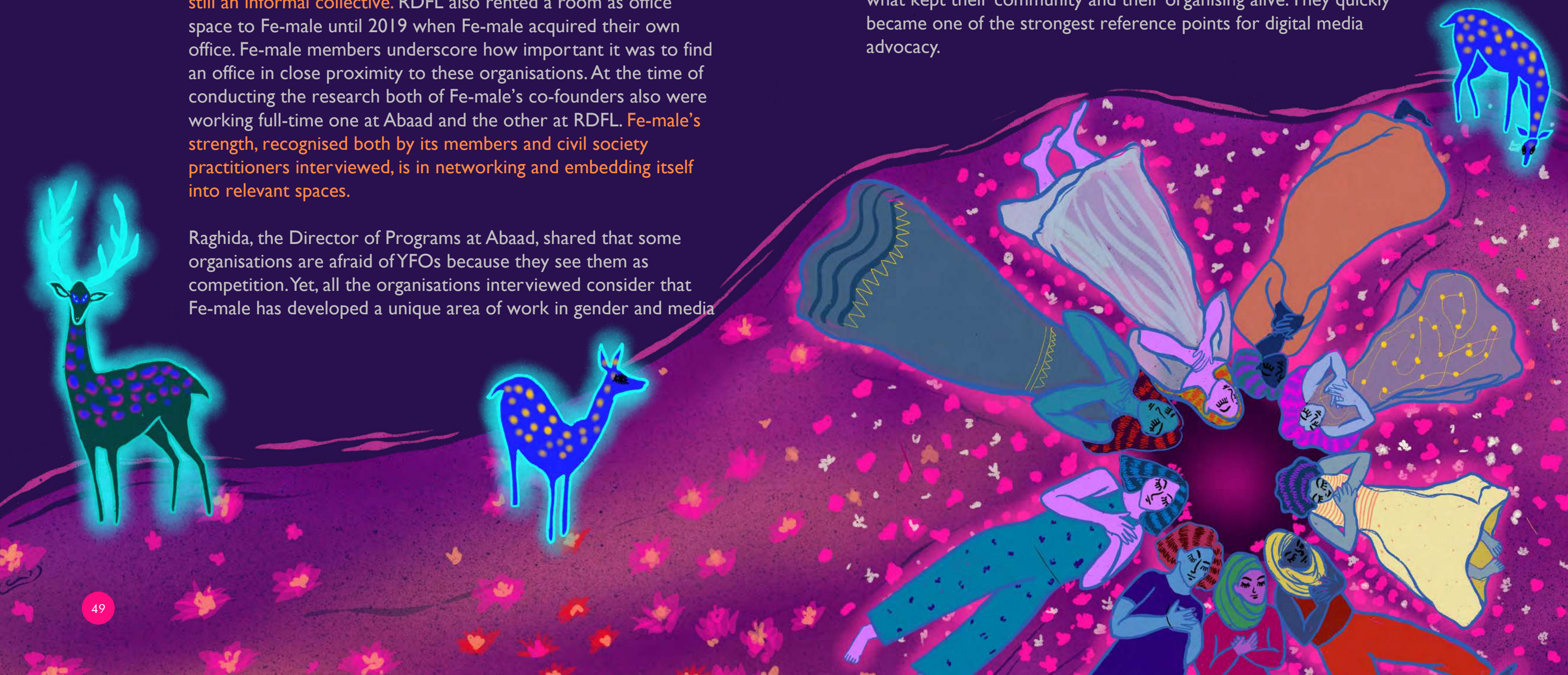
In Fe-male's experience, there is evidence that feminist organisations are showing up for one another. For example, Fe-male's close relationship with established organisations Abaad and RDFL allowed them to apply and access grants when Fe-male was still an informal collective. RDFL also rented a room as office space to Fe-male until 2019 when Fe-male acquired their own office. Fe-male members underscore how important it was to find an office in close proximity to these organisations. At the time of conducting the research both of Fe-male's co-founders also were working full-time one at Abaad and the other at RDFL. Fe-male's strength, recognised both by its members and civil society practitioners interviewed, is in networking and embedding itself into relevant spaces.

Raghida, the Director of Programs at Abaad, shared that some organisations are afraid of YFOs because they see them as competition. Yet, all the organisations interviewed consider that Fe-male has developed a unique area of work in gender and media

advocacy. What they have to offer can be in conversation with the work of other groups, rather than in competition.

Influence of social media:

Fe-male grew due to its strength in advocating for women's rights on social media, on the radio and on television. Especially in the early years, when Fe-male was still organising informally, without an office and without funding - their mastery of social media is what kept their community and their organising alive. They quickly became one of the strongest reference points for digital media advocacy.



ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH:

What are the internal mechanisms, questions and dilemmas that accompany them as they evolve?

Going into their 8th year as an organisation, Fe-male finds itself in a critical moment of growth. The burning questions that surfaced from the group included: How do we keep the volunteering spirit alive to ensure sustainability? How do I develop my skills to better support Fe-male? When will we have gender equality in our society and community? Within this revolution, economic and social crisis, how are we going to proceed? How do we adapt? What are the next steps? How do we mitigate conflicts to ensure a healthy and feminist work environment? Knowing that we are a small organisation, what is the better management style, flexible or rigid? How long will Fe-male last? Upon reflecting about the internal factors that have shaped Fe-male, these points surfaced:

Becoming a critical feminist actor in Lebanon:

Interviews with the Kvinna to Kvinna women's fund, Abaad, RDFL and the Knowledge Workshop recognised that Fe-male plays an important role in activating feminism in Lebanon. **Although the vision of feminism varies between these actors, they all value the ground Fe-male is breaking on gendered perspectives in the media.**

Despite the segmented nature of Lebanon's feminist organising, Fe-male opens up channels of communication and tries to broker collaboration. This is exemplified in their broad network and close relationship with various different actors.

Transitioning structures:

For most of its organisational life, Fe-male identified as being a collective, operating in the activist space rather than in formal civil society. **Fast forward to today and they find themselves challenged by how to reconcile being an NGO while staying true to their activist roots and feminist principles.**

Becoming a more formal civil society organisation challenges Fe-male's characteristically bold feminist voice. They have historically been unafraid to address topics like abortion, that other more established national organisations avoid. Fe-male is not willing to moderate their activism because of religious discourse.

They also expressed concern in seeing their organisational and volunteering spirit dim since entering a 9-5 schedule. Now, they are asking themselves questions like: how do we allow our young women staff to have flexible hours while keeping up our commitments to our projects and our donors? Fe-male's current leaders admit that, although they have had experience with managing small teams, leading an organisation is an entirely different challenge.

It leaves a worthy question for donors about how to support young feminist organisations that chose to formalise in finding a form that is flexible, dynamic and feminist.



Leadership and management:

2019 was a significant year for Fe-male. It was the year they got their own office. It was also the year they separated leadership from management. The co-founders, Hayat and Aalia, transitioned to the board of directors, while other members like Mariam remained as full-time staff in the organisation. Prior to this, Hayat and Aalia supervised every detail of the organisation's operations on a volunteering basis, and found this ultimately challenging.

Attracting more funding:

Despite Fe-male's growth, they continue to prioritise securing funding. They are concerned that the socio-economic and political climate will affect donors' willingness to continue funding groups in Lebanon. Moreover, they are worried that in this backdrop, women's rights and feminist concerns will get sidelined or become politicised.

Solidarity with members and volunteers:

The intimate connection they have developed with their members and volunteers remains at the heart of the organisation's spirit. Fe-male's members are adamant about creating a space that is for young women. Other civil society organisations interviewed see in Fe-male a deep care and consideration for building an organisation that is represented by the women they aim to serve.



What has it meant for Fe-male to be supported by FRIDA?

FRIDA as a partner and not just a donor:

As one Fe-male member said “It’s very hard to find a partner that shares the same feminist values you do”. FRIDA was Fe-male’s first donor. Although the grant was small, Fe-male explains that it was crucial to cover their feminist organising and Fe-male’s capacity development. **Fe-male’s founder describes a deep trust with regards to FRIDA and they value FRIDA’s reference when they apply to other donors.**

Bringing visibility to the MENA region:

The members of Fe-male are passionate about the work they do, also because they often feel the MENA region is underrepresented in feminist spaces. They actively seek out regional and international events to participate in. Fe-male member Roua recalls having traveled to Jordan for FRIDA’s ‘MENA Barcamp’ in 2016, a gathering for YFOs mobilising in the region. Thanks to the FRIDA travel grant, Roua got to meet other YFOs working in the region and share how Fe-male organises.

Fe-male members reflect that they would like to see more of the MENA region’s experience represented in FRIDA’s publications. They also acknowledge that underrepresentation from the MENA region in feminist spaces is something they have also experienced in international events including the Women’s and Girls Rising conference in New York.

Yet Fe-male members are motivated by the prospect of bringing the voice of their region into the room.

A desire to learn a feminist management approach:

Fe-male’s team had a clear ask when it came to management. They wanted to learn about feminist approaches to organisational management and leadership. They see FRIDA as a role model for organisational management. However, they don’t know how to strike a balance between nurturing their feminist spirit, and embracing their NGO status.

Unaware of everything FRIDA has to offer:

Fe-male’s team is not fully aware of all the ways that FRIDA can support them. Fe-male staff, for example, expressed that they would like to receive mentoring from FRIDA. However they weren’t aware of the existence of an accompaniment program. Similarly, they aren’t aware of the possibility of getting funding to attend convenings. Covering work that otherwise goes unfunded: Fe-male, like other grantees, utilise FRIDA funds to cover work that other donors do not currently cover. For example, they use the funds towards organising marches, but also for things like obtaining health insurance for a their Palestinian staff member, who would otherwise not have it.

INFINITE WAYS TO SPARK CHANGE

In its 'Garden of Change' (Theory of Change), FRIDA describes its vision of a world where girls, young women, and trans* youth "have the voice, agency, visibility, resources and opportunities to create lasting change in their communities and help build a more just and sustainable world." However, young feminists organisers work is often undervalued, unrecognised and untrusted in both wider society and in philanthropic spaces. As a result, in addition to working with YFOs, FRIDA works towards influencing Philanthropic and Funding Institutions.

By providing young feminist organisers with resources, leadership opportunities, and the capacities they might need to spark social change and build movements, FRIDA wants to contribute indirectly to strengthening Local Communities and Social Justice Movements. FRIDA's theory of change identifies four key domains in which they create social change:

- Changing individual or community attitudes, practices or consciousness
- Increasing access to resources, services and
- Opportunities Changing harmful norms, culture and
- Exclusionary practice Changing laws or policies

This section zooms out of the case studies to observe the broader significance of FRIDA's support to YFOs. Analyzing the data collected in the learning visits, interviews and grantee files, this section discusses how YFOs that receive continuous support are creating change under each domain.



CHANGING INDIVIDUAL OR COMMUNITY ATTITUDES, PRACTICES OR CONSCIOUSNESS

YFOs very existence challenges patriarchal societies and with it individual and community attitudes, practices and/or consciousness. Most of FRIDA's grantee partners report under this domain of change as their main area of change. These are the ways in which the grantee partners relate to this domain:

YFOs nurture the leadership of young women, girls and trans youth in their communities:

Participants of YFOs' programs could clearly identify how they saw themselves transforming over time through engaging the YFOs. This included becoming **more confident and self-aware, becoming more acutely conscious of the patriarchal norms around them, learning more about their socio-economic environment, developing new skills and developing new ambitions.** For example, an interviewee from Radio Udayapur in Nepal recounts how her training in the radio's technical center inspired her to become a volunteer facilitator of HIV awareness building activities in rural Udayapur. She stresses that in rural Nepal most young women are embedded into a society where early childhood marriage is a norm and women are discouraged from speaking up; she attributes her personal and professional growth to her participation with the organisation. Throughout the grantee reports and interviews, there were countless stories like this one.

YFOs design programs informed and inspired by their communities:

YFOs are able to contribute to this precisely because they are predominantly (75%) staffed by young women, girls and trans youth who directly represent the community they serve²⁸. **They understand**

and experience the social realities they work to transform. For vulnerable communities, this representation is especially important. For example, Crested Crane Lighters, a YFO in Uganda, works to improve the lives of sex workers through capacity building, rights advocacy and economic empowerment. The organisation is run by sex workers. As such, they can provide a more sensible and targeted care for the community they serve as well as design interventions in the wider communities they live and work in. In fact, a notable feature of the YFOs interviewed and visited is how most engage their community in the strategic planning of the organisation. These communities receive support from YFOs but they are also invited to have agency in deciding how that happens. It's a shift in consciousness: from facing a reality alone, to facing it together. Building the skills and participation within their own constituencies also ensures the sustainability of the organisation.

YFOs are changing narratives and shifting perspectives:

YFOs use a number of strategies to shift dominant narratives in the wider community that they live and work within. They are often acting in contexts where fundamentalist rhetoric and conservative propaganda and views shape the dominant narratives on gender and sexuality. **To combat this, they hold spaces for public discussion, protest, and form counter narratives to change wider-community perceptions, attitudes and consciousness.** For example, the work of Salud Mujeres (grantee partner in Ecuador) has been aimed at de-stigmatisation of abortion by holding spaces for debate and increasing awareness on abortion to demystify abortion and transform it into a subject that is not considered taboo. Furthermore, they facilitate increased access to information on abortion by translating key information into Kichwa (an indigenous language in Ecuador) to ensure that indigenous women and the communities they live in had access to this information.

INCREASING ACCESS TO RESOURCES, SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

These are the ways in which the grantee partners who participated in this study recognise their change under this domain:

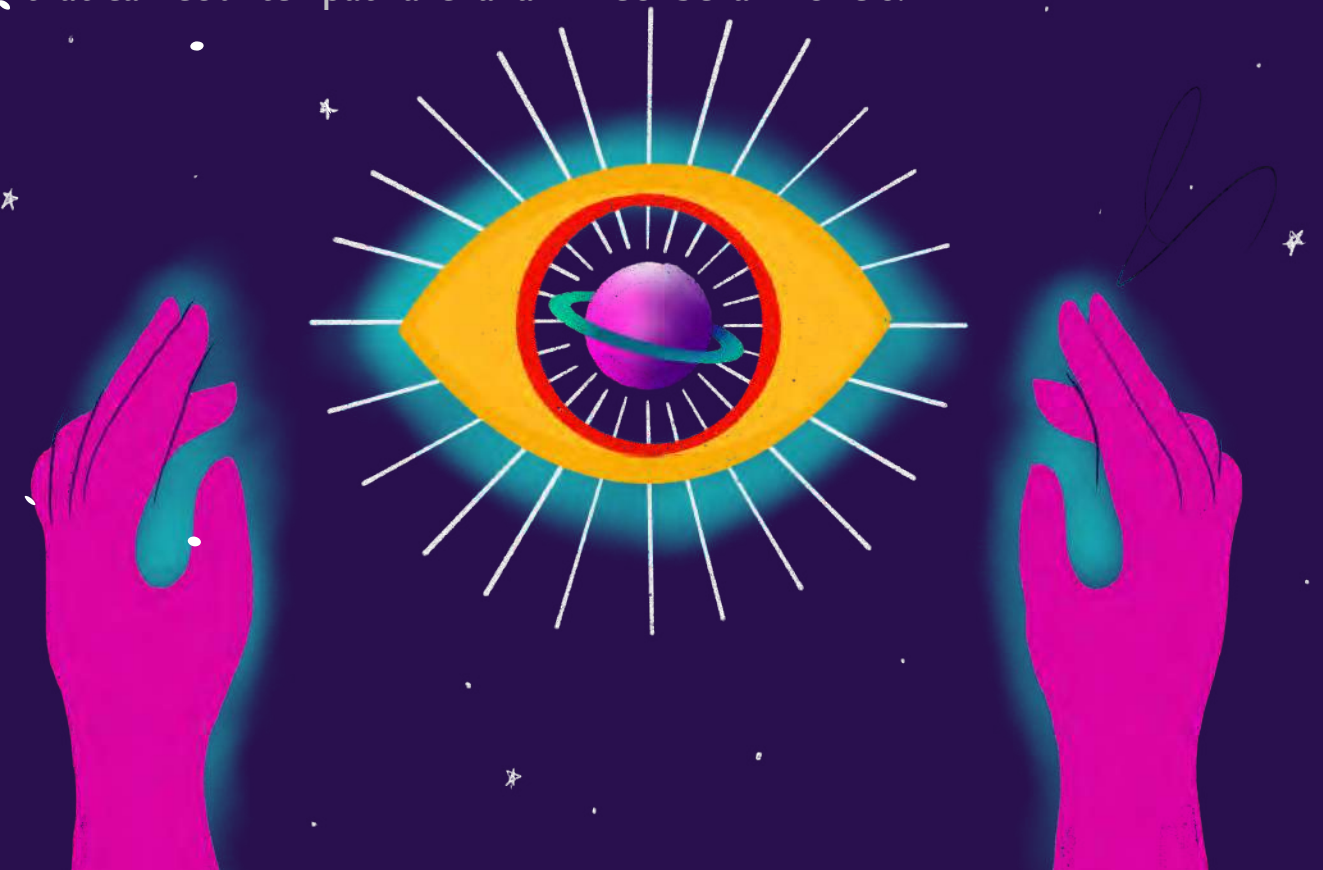
Creating a support system for young women in the community:

The YFOs understand the importance of providing mutual support and care. It's not a coincidence that 'family' is the word that participants interviewed used the most to describe the YFOs. The glue to the resourcing and capacity to create impact of most of FRIDA's grantee partners is their **attention to providing a caring environment where young women and girls can feel fully accepted. Creating safe spaces and the provision of psycho-social support for their community is a critical area for YFOs.** WHER has done this through an online safe space for sexual minority women and later on created a physical space through the creation of a safe house to shelter young LBQ women who have been rejected by their families. The majority of program participants interviewed recounted that they found in the YFO a second home that could inspire and nurture their growth in a life-changing way. It expands their idea of community. This creates bonds of affection which oil the work of groups that are often underfunded and rely on volunteers.

Accessing new opportunities particularly within civil society and the feminist ecosystem:

As mentioned before, participants of YFOs programs grow personally and professionally through their engagement with the groups. **YFOs share**

information about opportunities and services within their communities, and most commonly provide capacity strengthening opportunities, for example Radio Udayapur's radio journalism training, WHER's career building and entrepreneurship skills training, supporting sexual minority women to become financially independent. Many of the participants interviewed either go on to work with the YFO, if possible, or go on to work with established CSOs. Even those that move on, still consider their engagement with these YFOs as a critical stepping stone. Meanwhile others look to nourish the broader feminist family supported by FRIDA. Some of these individuals go on to play advisory, board and staff roles for FRIDA as seen with members of WHER (Nigeria), HOLAAfrica (South Africa) and BuSSy (Egypt) respectively. These young women are taking up leadership in shaping alternative systems that can counter patriarchal and neoliberal models.



CHANGING NORMS, CULTURE AND EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICE

Young feminist activists and their groups or organisations very existence disrupts the status quo and reshapes norms. Their initiatives have challenged negative cultural, traditional and exclusionary norms and sparked the reimagining and changing of norms which affect their lives. While groups are often reluctant to identify their work as shifting norms, particularly burgeoning groups that are just starting their relationship with FRIDA, this changes over the years of continuous support. Groups now 7-10 years old can more clearly observe how they are effecting change in norms, culture and exclusionary practice. These are the ways in which the grantee partners who participated in this study recognise their change under this domain:

YFOs work with stakeholders to bring about more holistic change:

YFOs show that they are increasingly able to work with stakeholders, as well as their communities, to bring about transformative change. When Crested Crane Lighters began its work to defend their rights of sex workers and LBQ women, they had a limited relationship with other stakeholders in their environment. Over the years, they were able to start holding consultations with law enforcement officials to understand their perspective on police brutality towards women minority groups. Crested Crane Lighters learned to liaise between their community and the police in a way that directly informed their programs. This has lead to a considerable drop in police harassment towards sex workers. Learning how to bridge between different actors is a big opportunity to bring about systemic change.

Building value through collaboration and participation in civil society and feminist spaces:

The experience of FRIDA's Nepal grantee partner Radio Udayapur demonstrates the value of belonging to other groups, organisations and networks beyond your own. Radio Udayapur is Nepal's third young women-led community radio. All of their core team members work in other organisations beyond Radio Udayapur, which focuses on intersecting issues. **Working in this way, they have managed to build a solid base of support for the group, enabling a collective effort to shifting norms and culture in their wider community.** The downside is having an over extended core team working multiple jobs. This was a reality echoed by RAF, SAHR and formerly Fe-male. Having staff members active in other like-minded organisations is a strategy born out of the impossibility of paying full-time staff members. This being said, this also creates a great degree of solidarity between organisations that might otherwise not work together. This tendency for young feminist organisers to be active with different groups promotes collaboration and breaks away from a tendency to exclusively see other groups as competition.



Making feminism familiar and visible:

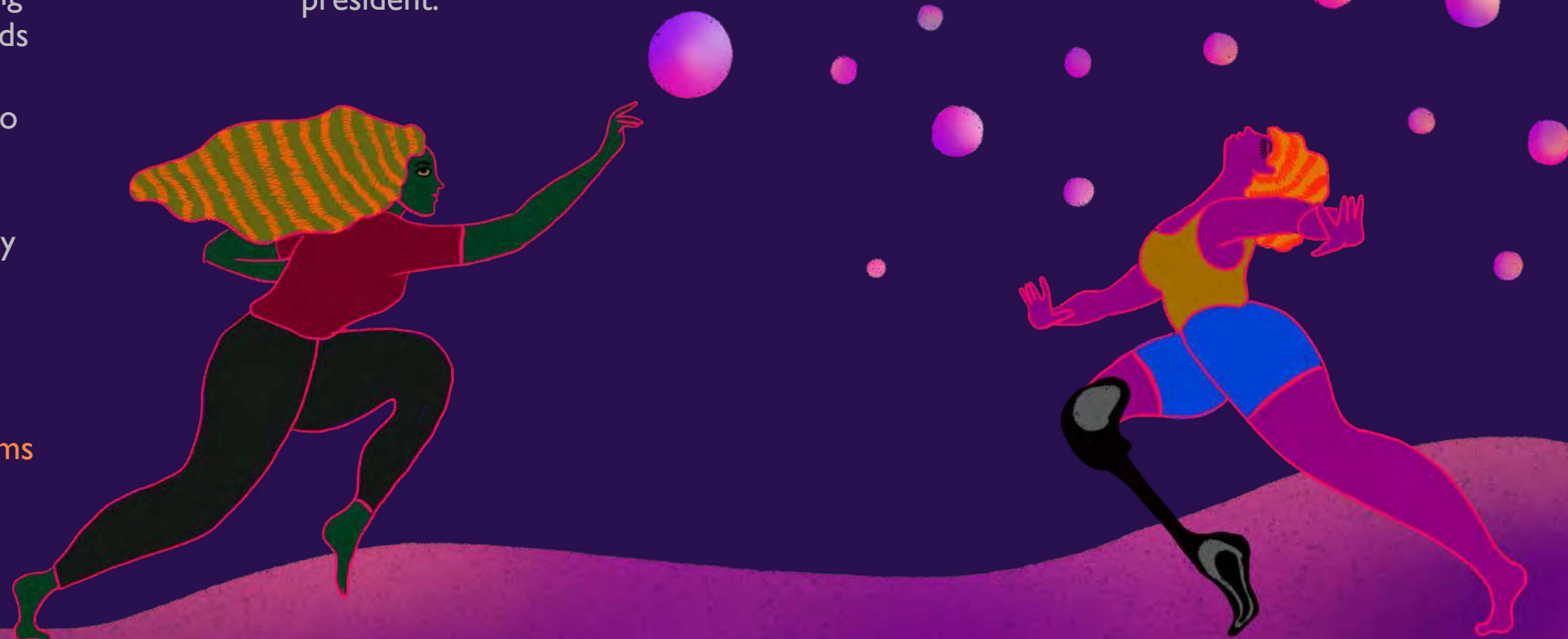
Groups like Fe-male, RAF and Radio Udayapur that directly nourish the feminist movement in the public eye are an integral part of the feminist pluriverse. They make important and brave contributions to challenging social norms. These YFOs are more explicit about being feminists. RAF, for example, was the first group to host women-only events in Mérida. Young and older feminists recount that this was a controversial decision at the time. Yet one RAF member shares, “It’s not about being against men but being for women”. Today RAF, other fellow collectives and CSOs are celebrating the way such women-only initiatives disrupt social norms.

Yet, not all grantee partners have the scope or safety to take their feminism public. For example, Salud Mujeres in Ecuador works to make safe abortions more accessible to young women. They are comfortable speaking to educated urban audiences, yet they wanted to develop more inclusive language to reach young women in rural areas. Likewise Helping Hand consciously avoids language that could threaten their relationships with government, families and other key stakeholders. They chose to interact with the system, in order to eventually transform it.

Eventhough these YFOs don’t adopt feminism as a banner, they will advocate for women’s rights and behave in ways that celebrate feminist principles. They avoid using language that might stir resistance, yet they work strategically to shift perspectives, practices and norms that oppress girls, young women, trans and intersex youth. **They carefully read the norms around them while thoughtfully finding their own way to challenge them.**

Expanding young women’s imagination on political action and participation:

More often than not, women’s participation in politics is limited and even dissuaded in the contexts that YFOs inhabit²⁹. For this reason, it is significant when young women can begin to imagine their communities and their countries being led by bold, brave women. Many young women participating in the YFOs programs shared that they saw future political leaders in the leader(s) of the YFOs. Others interviewed commented that since their participation with the YFO, they themselves have begun to dream about becoming the future leaders. In this research we found some vivid examples of this desire for meaningful and disruptive political action such as Roua, a member of Fe-male, leading young women to stand in the revolution in Tripoli (Lebanon), or Esma, a blind-activist and Helping Hand volunteer who has become a respected voice on disability issues in Georgia. It also expands their imagination for leadership, like Utibe (*name changed) a member of WHER who dreams of being Nigeria’s first openly queer president.



CHANGING LAWS OR POLICIES

Young feminist activists elicit changes to policy, rules and legislations to respond to the realities and needs of young women, girls and trans youth. However, of all the domains of change, this is the one that groups report the least under. Most YFOs' missions don't explicitly address this area of change. Most groups, with the exception of SAHR, did not set out with an explicit intention to change laws. Their tendency at the beginning tends to be strengthening their community. In addition, collective and sustained efforts are important to this area of change. For this reason YFOs might not conceive that the work they do is directly changing laws and policies. However it's clear that many of them are in fact, building towards this change. Particularly for FRIDA's longer-term grantee partners, who show that they are gradually developing the capacity to work on changing laws or policies. **Over time, YFOs' reputation, networks and capacity grow so that this area of change becomes more possible.**

These are the ways in which the grantee partners who participated in this study recognise their change under this domain:

Passing laws that protect women:

SAHR and Fe-male are of the few long-term FRIDA grantee partners that have worked towards passing laws protecting women and girls. The three laws that SAHR helped pass (along with other actors) have enabled them to better defend young women. Meanwhile, Fe-male was a critical voice in the campaign to pass Law 293 in

Lebanon: a piece of legislation that protects women victims of domestic violence. **By contributing to passing such laws they are creating institutional mechanisms in favor of women that did not exist before.** These are important building blocks to creating new worlds. Passing legislation also takes coordination and collective work. Fe-male for example, don't consider that they passed the law 293, but rather than they were part of a group of feminist collectives and organisations advocating for this change.

Lobbying policy makers:

Many YFOs are inherently doing the work of lobbying policy-makers, even if it's not part of their missions. Helping Hand for example has been engaging closely with Georgia's Ministry of Education over the years to lobby for national civic education for young people. Meanwhile WHER is actively working on getting sexuality incorporated in women's rights agendas and policies. Being active participants in these spaces also gives them insight into what it would take to repeal discriminatory laws like the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act. Yet not all YFOs believe their feminist organising needs to reach a policy level. As a collective, RAF is wholly dedicated to feminist street activism. They get into regular debates with older feminist mentors who, now working in more formal civil society spaces, argue that RAF could make greater change at that level. Although YFOs like RAF have a different primary focus, they still support the work of legislative change that other groups are endeavoring; they believe their work is complementary.



REFLECTIONS ON SUPPORTING YFOS

A few defining factors emerge with regards to how groups access resources and opportunities. First, YFOs in major cities, especially capitals, have access to a wider network of civil society support and greater awareness of funding opportunities. Second, YFOs whose strategic lines of work are in line with trends and donors access funding more easily. Third, groups that are registered have access to a greater range of donors. The AWID and FRIDA (2016) Global State of Feminist Organizing report cited that 50.6% of FRIDA's applicants were unregistered groups. Although FRIDA supports unregistered groups, most donors do not. This is when informal YFOs like RAF, or previously Fe-male recur to fellow women's rights CSOs that are registered.

The significance of first time funding:

FRIDA was the first stable donor for all the groups visited and interviewed during this research. Many of these organisations were 2-4 years in existence before FRIDA arrived. **Building a relationship with FRIDA as a donor gave them confidence, more stability, and continuity in their programs. The act of funding emerging groups for the first time provides the energy and nourishment to carry out their mission, and builds capacity to attract further funding. Donors are far more willing to support a group that has experience managing a grant.**

During the learning visits, all groups mapped out their organisational life and pointed to how FRIDA's support spurred skill development, continuity and ability to grow. Most of their pre-FRIDA work was one-off or short-term, largely dependent on volunteers' availability. With continued support, they could dream of running yearly activities, reaching more remote communities, and starting to take more seriously the possibility of building a full-time team.

Redefining the 'donor' - grantee partner relationship:

FRIDA recognises and values the importance of relationship building with grantee partners and seeks to nurture this by communicating with the groups in a way that is friendly, human, and accessible. All YFOs engaged in the research pointed to this behaviour as breaking their perceptions of donors.

Different contexts to 'organisational' growth:

The specific context of civil society and the feminist movement in the country/region is an important variable in a group organisational growth. Over the last 7-10 years, each organisation has had a different growth path.

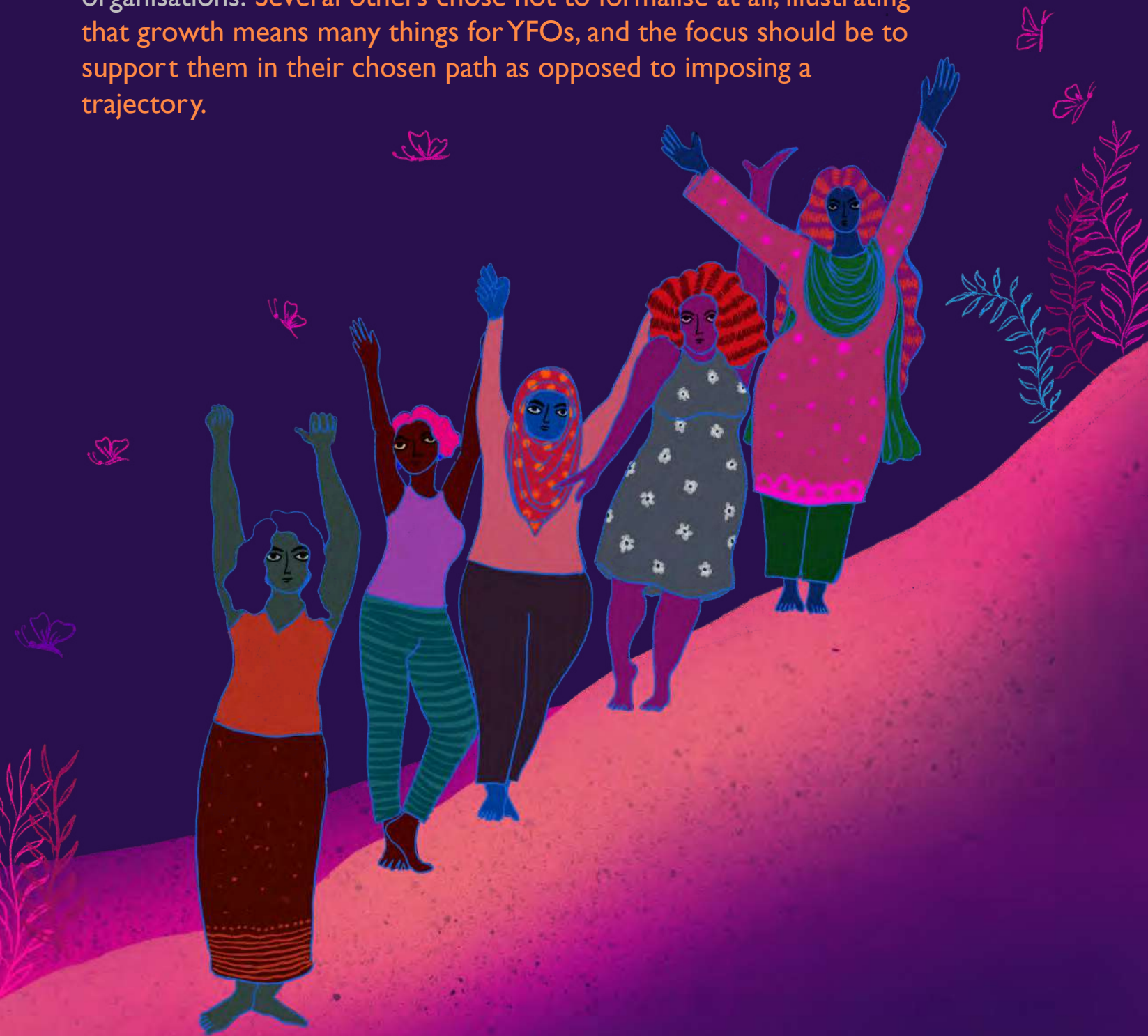
Groups like Fe-male and WHER have steadily grown their resource wealth over the last 10 years. Both have a wide range of donors, 9 of which are stable funders for WHER and 3 for Fe-male. Meanwhile, Helping Hand has two stable funders. These three groups operate in capital cities, yet the available funding across geographical regions is not the same. AWID & FRIDA (2016) found that in Sub Saharan Africa YFOs are better aligned with donors in terms of their priorities. Meanwhile "47% of the organisations surveyed from CANZUS and Western Europe, and 46% of the survey respondents from LAC report that the issues they work on are difficult to fundraise for".

Meanwhile, groups like RAF, SAHR and Helping Hand have had slower growth. For the first two, FRIDA is their only stable funder, and they cannot yet afford to hire full-time staff. Although the resource growth has been slower, these groups are nurturing other capital in the organisation. This includes networks, organisational wellbeing and technical know how.

The different growth paths of these groups - comparable in lifespan and relationship with FRIDA as a donor - show organisational growth is dependent on a variety of factors.

For example, the visibility and recognition of YFOs varies based on the state of civil society and movement building within their local context. RAF, based in the small city of Mérida, engages with a small yet lively civil society. While RAF is visible and well-known, recognition has not necessarily translated into more funding. Yet, the high degree of collaboration and the solidarity between the feminist organisations in Mérida, means RAF has access to non-financial resources and a higher capacity to implement their programs with little financial resources. Meanwhile, in Abuja, a large capital city, local civil society is vast, international actors are numerous, and there is an NGO-isation of the feminist movement. In this case, feminism largely exists within formal civil society as opposed to informal collectives. WHER has access to more networks and potential donors. However, CSOs are also more likely to compete. The work of feminist organisations is siloed, and collaboration is limited to formal partnership agreements. In other words, there isn't necessarily a linear relationship between visibility and attracting funding, and the ability to implement the work. Groups make use of financial and non-financial capital available to them to run their activities and ultimately ensure their sustainability.

Lastly, formalisation happens in the moment groups consider it to be useful to their evolution, if at all. For some like WHER and Helping, this needs to happen from the very beginning. Others, eventually arrive to the decision after experiencing their feminist organising as a collective - like Fe-male and RAF. Others like Mujeres Xitlali would like to formalise in theory, but find themselves in an unfavorable and dangerous environment due to strict laws for social organisations. Several others chose not to formalise at all, illustrating that growth means many things for YFOs, and the focus should be to support them in their chosen path as opposed to imposing a trajectory.



Leadership in YFOs:

There is a clear relationship between the personal growth of core team members and that of their group/organisation. In most cases, the groups were founded by leaders in their teens/early 20's, who grew up with the organisation into their 30's. In all of the groups interviewed, except for one, the founder still holds the leadership position. The growing experience and skills of the leaders spill over and strengthen the groups. Yet, of the YFOs that were visited, 2/5 of the leaders articulated that they were only now thinking about how to transfer their knowledge and skills into the organisation/group. What these founders have in common is that they more often than not hold institutional relationships on behalf of their group. This is a tremendously useful attribute to help groups flourish³⁰. The challenge lies in passing these relationships and the capacity to network to other members and/or future leaders of the group.

Stable leadership and decision making is an integral part to making organisations thrive.

There is an inevitable learning curve that YFOs face with regards to organisational development. It leaves a question of whether donors can engage their grantee partners early-on in more critical reflections around their triumphs, challenges and desired evolution. **Having a pulse on YFOs' relationship to their current growth path can also better inform donors on how to support them in non-financial ways. Moreover, with greater support in developing leadership and organisational development skills early on, the groups might be able to consolidate and deepen their reach.** Instead of assuming horizontality, donors can open a more honest conversation with YFOs around leadership. This can give donors insight into how to more appropriately accompany groups through their growing pains.

Groups value technical support:

As groups consolidate, they begin to look at what could be strengthened in their own internal systems and strategies. Grantee partners appreciate technical sessions that can provide practical knowledge to develop their groups. During a regional convening for African grantee partners, the director of Ugandan grantee Crested Crane Lighters recalls that all the feminist groups in attendance sought sessions to help solidify their internal structures and systems. This is where efforts like the FRIDA accompaniment program and capacity development grants can come in handy.

For those that had engaged with the accompaniment program, they commented on the value of their contributions and personalised attention. They stressed it was most impactful when it was in-person, as opposed to online. Grantee partners that had little or no face-to-face engagement with FRIDA expressed a desire to learn directly and in-person from FRIDA. SAHR, for example, had not met any FRIDA staff until the learning visit that informed this study. In that opportunity, they discussed resource mobilisation strategies with one of FRIDA's then outgoing co-directors (Devi Leiper O'Malley). In that moment they saw FRIDA playing the role of a board member invested in the team and with useful knowledge to inform them.

Attending convenings, events and trainings:

Grantee partners want to connect with other YFOs; they find that these opportunities inspire them, provide them with visibility and new contacts. Those who have attended FRIDA's convenings and other national, regional and international events recall these moments as critical to opening their eyes to the broader feminist movement. They describe it as a moment of feeling part of something greater. For members of Radio Udayapur (Nepal), Mujeres Xitali (Nicaragua), Helping Hand (Georgia) and RAF (Mexico), participating in these events represented the first time they ever travelled outside of their city and country to take part in an event of such scale.

These lessons spurred by YFOs participation in wider feminist gathering reinforces why FRIDA offers Travel Grants to participate in these spaces. A 2018 review of FRIDA's convening spaces underlines the many ways these gatherings add value to groups. YFOs cherish them for creating safe spaces for the feminist community to gather, re-energise, re-strategise, strengthen their capacity on resource mobilisation. **They also appreciate the convening role FRIDA plays to bring a dynamic group of young feminists together.³¹ Additionally, tapping into FRIDA's network and the support provided through solidarity exchange grants, YFOs can get to know one another. It allows them to be introduced to other forms and expressions of feminism, while sharing their own.** As part of the Solidarity Exchange/collaborative grant, groups have the agency to propose which grantee partner they would like to meet and what they think they can learn from the exchange. All groups that took part in a solidarity exchange pointed to these moments as important learning grounds. These encounters are re-affirming for groups, they provide inspiration and a sense of organisational sisterhood; they plant the seeds for future collaborations.

³¹(Maseko & Sawas, 2018)

A network of supportive partners:

Many groups also value how FRIDA connects them to other donors. Even though every region has a different funding landscape, FRIDA's global and regional presence helps them offer localised support. Mujeres Xitali in Nicaragua, for example, shared that they were connected to FRIDA via el Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM). YFOs, like Fe-male and WHER, also springboard from FRIDA to larger women's funds close to FRIDA like Mama Cash. The embeddedness of FRIDA within a larger network of funders, philanthropic institutions and organisations helps strengthen the fabric in the Feminist Pluriverse. In this way, the feminist movement can be upheld beyond what FRIDA alone can provide.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONORS

In its first decade as a funder, FRIDA has supplied YFOs with confidence, resources, networks and excitement about creating a world where more girls, young women and trans* youth can thrive. FRIDA's reach has also broadened tremendously - expanding from supporting 13 grantee partners to 181 in early 2020.

The experience of supporting these groups also offers wisdom that can inspire FRIDA's new strategic direction. Although the following recommendations are derived from FRIDA's experience, they are offered here as a worthwhile reflection for all funders. For a more in-depth series of recommendations consult FRIDA's recent publication 'No Straight Lines' (Selica Zinna & Anderson, 2019).

Permit more vulnerability as a fund:

Across the board, YFOs have a resounding admiration for FRIDA. From where they stand, FRIDA is thriving inside and outside. They are the feminist organisation to emulate. In their mind, FRIDA doesn't struggle. Widely speaking, they see donors as highly functional entities, but rarely do they see their internal challenges. Yet, groups encounter conflicts and growing pains in their path of discovering feminist organising. These conflicts are already hard enough to grapple with, let alone talk about. It could be very powerful, and revolutionary, to see donors own their organisational vulnerability. **To hold up a mirror to the donor triumphs, as well as growing pains, and talk about how they**

breathe through them, can help YFOs become more comfortable with their own. For example, demystifying the romanticised view of FRIDA held by many grantee partners, can help bring FRIDA even closer to its grantee partners. This can lead to more radical accompaniment too. Could the progression of the Happiness Manifesto be the 'Owning our Vulnerability' series. It's the kind of shift, similar in nature to Failure Reports³², that is needed - not only in feminist spaces, but in the wider philanthropic and development community.

Support leadership and autonomy of YFOs:

Many of the YFOs in this study began when their founders were in their teens or early 20's. They grew up with their organisations. In fact all the groups visited and interviewed are either still led or co-led by their founder(s). Their founders are pillars in the organisation. Most of them admit that the transfer of knowledge and leadership transition has not been at the forefront of their minds. Yet, most of these leaders say they want the group to continue to have young leadership. It's a piece to sustainability that can often be overlooked in the excitement and demanding nature of bringing to life an organisation.

FRIDA gives groups the freedom to define their growth trajectory, including whether or not they want to remain a 'young' feminist group. Similarly, other donors are having direct conversations with their grantee partner to ask them "how can we support you in your chosen path of growth without imposing?"³³

Even so, for groups that do express this intention to keep their leadership young, donors could also offer insight on this topic. Even the most beloved founders can be unsuspectingly creating dependency in the group. It could be meaningful to create a space for young founders, at an early or intermediary stage of their leadership, to come together and think critically about their role.

³²Failure Reports are a growing trend in publications that share the failures and challenges that namely international organisations face in running their activities. Read more: (Ghedi Santur, 2019)

³³(Selica Zinn & Anderson, 2020).

Offer organisational accompaniment on conflict:

Knowing that conflict is a part of life, including the lives of organisations - how can donors accompany YFOs to transform and grow from their conflicts? FRIDA for example can think about making the accompaniment program also available for the purpose of groups to transform internal conflicts. By pairing groups with practitioners skilled in conflict resolution for groups of this nature, YFOs can feel supported through their moments of crisis rather than afraid to reach out. As it turned out, in the learning visits, a couple of the groups struggled with significant internal conflicts. These are the kinds of real and frequent internal tensions that groups face but rarely get to surface honestly with donors for fear of losing legitimacy. **In the right moment, having an external person accompany the exploration of a conflict can significantly help groups overcome the tensions that keep them from flourishing.**

Clarify and reassert your offer as a donor:

What is reassuring about the emerging feminist funding climate, is that different kinds of support, not just financial, are being offered to YFOs. It's a significant plus for young feminist organising. Yet, FRIDA is also learning that with so much richness in the support, some of their offering might be overlooked. For example, all the FRIDA grantee partners visited have leveraged core grants and capacity development grants. However, it was common that groups were not aware of other types of support such as Travel Grants, Solidarity Exchanges, Special Collaborative Grants and/or accompaniment program grants. One group, for example, expressed a desire to meet with another YFO in their region. They were not aware that the Solidarity Exchange is available to them to do just that. **Having a clear and succinct overview of the full range of funding and funding + support could help YFOs make the most of FRIDA's offer.** Likewise, donors who are broadening the ways they accompany and resource groups can think creatively about how to communicate this to their target communities. YFOs

signal the importance of donors making their offering clear and easy-to-digest.

Make a curated list of events:

Most groups do not get to know about, or have the resources to participate in feminist events. This is often because grassroots organisations don't have the additional energy or the network to become aware of international/regional/national opportunities. For example, WHER highlighted that they might not have gone to the AWID 2016 forum if not prompted by a partner organisation. At the time, WHER did not know they could access these kinds of events with FRIDA support. **One concrete proposal they put forth was that FRIDA could offer grantee partners a monthly curated list of different opportunities/training/conferences.** Cooperating as a feminist funding community, perhaps there's an opportunity to pool together such resources across many donors.

Broaden team participation to national/regional/international gatherings:

FRIDA maintains a relationship with its grantee partners by working closely with a point person. In most cases, this happens to be the group's leader. Since such leaders tend to hold the group's knowledge and know-how, they are also most likely to regularly attend FRIDA's event. Funders and INGOs have broadly noticed that there is the tendency to develop and invest in certain individuals³⁴. It might be valuable to distribute knowledge within different members of the organisation: participation in training events and conferences are invaluable learning grounds. **Donors could consider encouraging grantee partners to have open and honest conversations about sharing self and professional development opportunities, so as to strengthen collective ownership within the team.**

Continue to build the movement digitally:

YFOs are mobilising digitally. They use social media to campaign and promote their work, they organise through online remote working platforms, and connect online with the wider national, regional and international feminist movements. Some use digital platforms to deliver their program; examples are the online radio shows organised by Radio Udayapur and Fe-male which curate and make available gender-focused content. However, most YFOs' primary work happens in-person. Around the world the resilience of YFOs is undoubtedly tested by the current COVID-19 crisis. This will at least in the medium term put a pause on their physical organising. It's a moment of vulnerability that donors will have to carefully attend to. Specifically, how can donors help YFOs make a transition to digital organising?

Continue developing a networked approach to supporting YFOs:

YFOs are independently cultivating close relationships with collectives and established CSOs in their communities. The leaders of these CSOs act as mentors but also as partners seeing opportunities to complement their own work with that of the YFOs. This localised network of support is something donors can encourage by funding peer support from feminist CSOs.



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Weaving constellations of feminist organising



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