

When the going gets tough



FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

Flexibility Resources Inclusivity Diversity Action



We are living in a moment of never-seen-before crisis. Not only are we all exhausted, we are also continuously overwhelmed and tired of pretending that business as usual can rise to meet the challenges that have plagued the world in the last year and a half. These challenging times require new and creative ways of building and sustaining ourselves, our work, and our lives. Business as usual is no longer enough.

As we try to make sense of what living, traveling and working in the present times means, the pandemic has really pushed us as an organization. **FRIDA has always centered care at the core of everything we do and COVID-19 has really tested the way we run as a decision-making body committed to strengthening young feminist organizing worldwide.**

Many FRIDA community members, including staff and advisory, are located in countries that are fighting mutant variants of the coronavirus and struggling to keep up with the pace of vaccinating entire populations. We have lost near and dear ones or know someone close who has, we are fighting depression and we continue to stare at uncertainty to the point of asking ourselves "How much more can we take?" **A main ray of hope during this time has been to stay rooted and connected to the young feminists on the ground showing brilliant examples of movement building, resilience and proactiveness during a time of global crisis.**

FRIDA's feminist funding priorities dictates that we continue to catalyse young feminist organizing in powerful ways to ensure that they are strengthened, sustained and nourished to do their job of fighting oppressive forces, especially during these unprecedented times. In valuing this mission and in keeping with the present circumstances, starting this month, FRIDA has officially moved into Core Operations Mode (COM).

What does this mean?

FRIDA is prioritizing only those activities that are necessary to fulfill its mandate as an organization. All other objectives, goals and projects have been revised and accordingly cancelled or postponed to next year. Staff members are now working a 28-hour work week, with reduced to calls, continued communication via email with a continuous and care-centered work planning for 2022 to ensure that we enter the next year with more preparedness. Among the key things that we will continue to hold during this period are:

- Renewed grant support to all existing grantee partners
- Supporting existing grantee partners with accompaniment programs, capacity strengthening programs and opportunities to access special grants for specific needs
- Preparing for a new call for proposals in 2022 (stay tuned!)
- Identifying staffing needs and recruitment for smooth functioning of the organization
- Working on a sustainable budget for the rest of the year and beyond





Why are we doing this?

FRIDA is a close-knit community of young feminists, many of whom are based out of the Global South nations still fighting the virus, living in renewed lockdowns and trying to keep up with the slow pace of vaccination drives. Some of us have either contracted COVID-19 in the past or have family members who have. This has taken a toll on our mental health and hindered our ability to show up at our workplace with complete presence. We are navigating grief, loss, confusion and pain in the present moment and it has been hard for us to admit how this has impacted our lives as professionals, feminist activists and workers.

The pandemic has been a sharp reminder of continuing to care for ourselves, as feminist workers, as we set examples of what a healthy, sustainable and nourished working style looks like in philanthropy and beyond. COM is an intentional collective tool that centers wellbeing by ensuring that FRIDA's staff and board focus on the core operational components needed to run the organization. **In the midst of our current challenges, the most important way of resisting is by centering our collective wellbeing and questioning what we need to do rather than what we should.**

The way forward

We acknowledge that we have never done this before, while also witnessing that we are living in a moment that is equally new and has never been encountered. FRIDA is committed to document and share learnings from this process, to strengthen how we can continue to center care, and respond to changing contexts in our workplanning, but also to more broadly share our learnings and reflections with other feminist organizations, and the wider FRIDA community. **The young feminist organizers that we seek so much inspiration from continue to remind us of our purpose, our intention and our roots in this fragile world.**

The pandemic has put us in a tough spot as we fight high tides, stormy weather and difficult terrains. It has required us to restructure, reassess and rest, differently. One thing is clear, we can only navigate this storm, with the help of our community, and the knowledge that we are held as much as we hold.

Ace designer Vidushi has captured the essence of what we are going through beautifully in the below image. In it, you see a bunch of women and non binary folks fixing, polishing, and mending the boat in order to face the high tides that await us outside. If we are to face rough weather, we have to be strong and sturdy and do it together, as a collective.



We want to reassure our wider FRIDA community that COM doesn't mean that we will not be present; it just means that, for now, the FRIDA team has to be present differently and with new boundaries. We are so thankful for your belief and trust in us, as feminist funders and movement enablers. We are also deeply grateful to our donor community for allowing us to redefine ways in which we navigate the present circumstances.

As we embark on this restorative journey, we hope to bring you with us. **It's our firm belief that rest is an integral part of movement and that business unusual, is what these trying times require of us.**

With love and hope,
All of us at FRIDA 🧡

