

A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms

Morphing Cultures of Resistance
and Audacious Care

ANNUAL LEARNING REPORT 2023



**URGENT ACTION
FUND**
FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS
ASIA & PACIFIC

In the intricate dance of nature, [slime moulds](#) emerge as fascinating entities, drawing a poetic parallel to contemporary feminist crisis response and the tireless work of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists around the world.

Slime moulds are [creatures that don't conform](#). At first glance, the slime mould – a simple organism that defies conventional categorisation as either plant or animal – may seem an unlikely muse. Yet, it is precisely in its unique characteristics and behaviours that we find resonant with feminist movements across the Pacific and Asia.

Urgent Action Fund, Asia & Pacific's Annual Learning Report 2023 – *A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms. Morphing Cultures of Resistance and Audacious Care* – is a reflection of another year where conflicts and struggles took new forms that demanded new ways of organising and resourcing feminist movements and activism. Like the remarkable ability of slime moulds to navigate complex environments and find the most efficient paths to resources, UAF A&P's work with defenders followed similar unconventional paths.

Slime moulds spread out in search of food, connecting disparate points into a cohesive network. This behaviour, as represented in *A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms* mirrors the work of feminist human rights defence which, in the face of adversity, weaves intricate support networks.

The adaptability of slime moulds finds another striking similarity with feminist movements. When faced with unfavourable conditions, slime moulds, like feminist movements, can transform, splitting into individual cells or merging to become a single entity – demonstrating incredible flexibility and resilience. In 2023, as human rights defenders and

activists confronted an ever-changing landscape of threats and challenges, they consistently adapted their strategies to resist repression. Whether advocating for policy changes, providing direct support, or mobilising communities, their ability to morph and respond to the needs of the moment was critical.

The ability of slime moulds to connect, adapt, collaborate, and persist offers a powerful metaphor for the ongoing struggle for human rights, gender equality, and climate action in times of shrinking civic spaces and environmental and climate crises. As we reflect on UAF A&P's work in 2023, we see the same qualities: a deep interconnectedness, a commitment to collective action, and an unyielding resilience. These parallels, explored in *A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms*, remind us that, like the humble slime mould, feminist movements are capable of creating profound change through seemingly small but essential actions, ultimately weaving a tapestry of justice and equality that spans the globe.

Credits

[Co-Leads](#)

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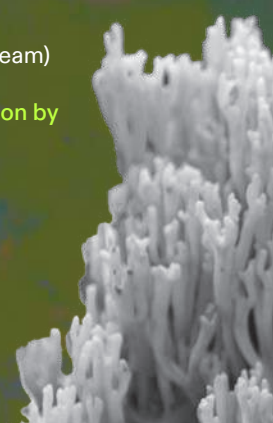
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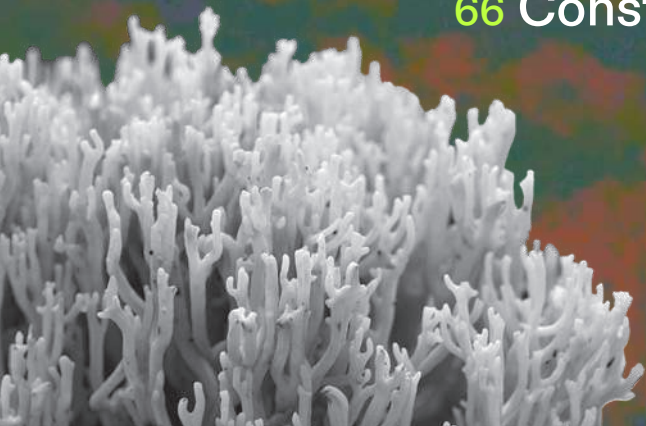
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Salt water purifies
Salt water sanitizes
Salt water disinfects

So
I clean my wounds with salt water

Salt water rolls down my face
Salt water dampens my pillow
Salt water
in the veins of your friends
in the corners of your eyes
and in the streams between us

Salt water
sanitizes the stitches we sewed
on open wounds
and our cut-opened
hearts...

Don't want to expect the
worse
But cannot force myself to
demand the best



So one day
If that day ever comes
Salt water will evaporate
And in the atmosphere that it goes to
I peacefully breathe in your existence.

I'll plant a mangrove tree of hope
and nurture it with salt water

Wishing that one day
If that day ever comes
In the air that this tree produces
I feel your presence with me
through my nostrils
fills my lung

Keeps me alive
Nurtures my spirit
Carries me on...

- Poem by **Ying**, a Southeast Asian youth,
for her Myanmar friends and comrades.¹

¹ About Fear, Anger, Resistance


Growing Solidarities

Reflections from the Board

As we reflect on the past year and look towards another, we breathe in the fear, grief, anger, strength, persistence, and courage of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders in our regions. As civic spaces continue to shrink and extremist forces rise, we are resolute in hope because defenders on the frontlines deserve and demand us to be.

‘Defenders First, Always’ is the primary objective and founding principle of our new Strategic Plan, and sits strongly in our hearts and heads as the Board of Directors. Over the past year, we went through significant transitions, saying goodbye to founding Directors and welcoming in the next generation. While we moved through this change, we made sure to continue being composed of defenders as well as allies from different sectors across Asia and the Pacific. This diversity ensures the eclectic mix of skills, experiences, and perspectives needed to uphold the strongest duty of care for this feminist fund.

We are incredibly grateful for the daily work and dedication of the team who deliver the most audacious care to defenders – from disbursing grants in moments of urgent crisis and great risk to cultivating quiet spaces for rest and resilience; from mobilising more resources today, to setting sights on new resources for the future. We also appreciate that this work cannot be done without the support of a community of advisors from across the regions that provide essential information and counsel for UAF A&P to be as responsive and caring as possible.



As we enter a new strategic phase, we will continue to be resolute, and “plant a mangrove tree of hope and nurture it with salt water.” We will watch it grow strong and resilient, standing firm against the tides of adversity to reimagine the world.

In solidarity and co-responsibility,
Devi Leiper O'Malley and *Wy Josiah*
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors, UAF A&P


Dissident Shapes

Note from the Co-leads

2023 was the year of humanity in crisis. The year that defied all codes of morality, ethics, and ways of living together on this planet. The year countless children were killed, orphaned, disabled, and traumatised by war, while the world silently watched. The year people from underrepresented regions reminded us that conflict and war exists in their lands too – and that their struggles are being ignored and erased.

In this reality, 'crisis' has taken on a whole new meaning. It has become a constant state of existence. For us in philanthropy, it has raised difficult and existential questions. It has emphasised what we always knew – that some geographies (and therefore, people) are so radical that they are either erased or forgotten. Yet, they rise, resist, and persist.

In 2023, the Asia and Pacific regions faced their own silent crises – ones that did not make it to the headlines, and ones from previous years (such as in Afghanistan and Myanmar) that entered the longer arc of crisis. For women, trans, and non-binary people in these countries, life became very challenging, and UAF A&P reminded the world about their reality and the need for continued support.




When the state of the world appears bleak, we turn to our planet for hope, energy, and power. We draw inspiration from Dr. Yvonne Underhill-Sem's words:

"..we can be audacious in our oceanic thinking. This means that rather than be destabilised or rendered paralysed by the rain and winds that come from many directions, that are variously deflected or intensified, deep ocean currents can keep us on track."

On the UAF A&P drua*, we are both the steerers and navigators sharing responsibilities, depending on each of our individual and collective energy levels, the scale and urgency of what needs to be achieved at a particular time. In navigating the past year, we learnt about emerging currents and became familiar with the difference between surface currents and deep ocean currents. The same way different currents play a role in determining how the ocean distributes heat energy through the planet, which in turn regulates and stabilises climate patterns, we are closely studying the currents linked to the world within (that is, how we remain a learning organisation) and the world beyond (how the world outside of Pacific and Asia impacts our work and action).

While this learning report offers a glimpse into everything we have done and learnt in 2023, in this note, we would like to share four mantras we have embraced in 2024. We offer these in the hope that they provide respite, and perhaps even a spot of laughter, to all those who are on their own leadership voyages.

* Traditional Fijian twin hulled boat used for voyages by indigenous sailors.



#1: The act of doing is liberating.

Ya'ni, there is a lot of noise around us on any given day. The anti-gender and anti-rights movements are upon us in full throttle. Governments being ruled by Far Right political parties have and will continue to severely limit the resources we have available to redistribute to activists in our regions. And our immediate philanthropic communities will continue to push us to (re)claim our space as feminist crisis responders.

It is within this context that we believe we are a community of doers. Every grant that reaches an activist in need gives us hope and purpose. In 2023, we proactively created new offerings for communities of defenders we had not supported before. In collaboration with our amazing and connected advisors, we reached out to them and asked for their feedback on what they needed and the barriers preventing them from accessing our grants. We listened to them and acted on their guidance. For example, we co-developed a grants call with our advisors from the sex workers community across Asia and the Pacific, and invited sex workers' rights activists to apply for our rapid-response grants. Our advisors and team members accompanied them through the application process and we were able to support their unique needs.


We, thus, call on our feminist accomplices and allies within philanthropy and bilateral funders to increase investments to trusted infrastructures that directly transfer money to movements that are holding the line between survival and extinction. We also encourage funders and allies to influence programmes and individuals within their organisations to hear directly from us and the movements we support, understand the needs of activists on the frontlines of human rights defence, and offer flexible, trust-based funding.



#2: Care is at the centre of building feminist organisational culture.

Both our regions – Pacific and Asia – are tumultuous and volatile. Therefore, the crises that impact our grantees also impact our team. In 2023 alone, two of our team members faced threats to their own lives and safety. This was an extremely troubling situation for all of us. The support extended by every person in our team made sure that the affected staff felt safe and knew that we would do everything in our power to keep them safe. We realise that this will recur as crises extend and expand, perhaps with greater frequency. But we now know that we are prepared and fearless to face these challenges. Yes, we are scared that our actions may not be enough to counter every hostile reaction that obstructs our way, but the choice of inaction is catastrophic.

We call on our funding partners to recognise that the cost of doing business in a crisis is financial *and* emotional – and equally an opportunity for transformation. We need more funders to resource our feminist crisis resourcefulness and response. Fund us, fund grassroot feminist movements, fund the future.



#3: Grantmaking is a whole lot of common sense. **And some innovation.**

Simplicity is at the heart of grantmaking. In 2023, we did a set of things that increased our 'absorptive' capacity. For example, we did more outreach and involved different program team members, which strengthened our understanding of the diverse contexts in our regions. We accompanied potential grantees in person and helped them submit their grant applications. This, in turn, increased demand for our support, which outside of a heightened crisis,

is an indicator of the effectiveness of our feminist resourcefulness and crisis response – and makes a strong case for increased investment to match our absorptive capacity.

We have been innovative in our ways of creating wealth in service of our movements. We have embraced the tensions between creating wealth (that relies on capitalist structures) and feminist values (that wholly defies capitalism) and found middle ground. As a feminist fund, we have risen to our purpose – redistribution of funds in our regions – and are on a path to financial reparations, and one day, sustainability. As feminist funders, we invest in a liberated and regenerative world, unimaginable for many but always a possibility for movements. We trust the work of our movements so we invest in their and our future. This work requires innovative thinking and risk-taking similar to how capital markets use future contracts to hedge and secure prices that work for their business models as well as speculate where prices will go next. The difference between our work and theirs is that ‘care’ for people and the planet is at the centre of how we reframe risk and relationships.

We call on funders to take risks – now is not the time to shy away. Hold risk with care and centre the authority of the defenders we work with. In doing so, we repurpose the tools of flexibility, solidarity, co-responsibility, trust, and love to forge new forms of risk and relationship.

#4: We can overcome (almost) everything with fashion, food, books, and humour.

Ok, not everything. Obviously. But they can certainly help us overcome a bad day or distract us when the world seems to have turned against us. As Co-Leads of UAF A&P, we take great pride in not taking ourselves too seriously and poking fun at each other all the time. One of us is a great fashion-forwarder



and the other is an eager muse. Jokes apart, we derive tremendous strength from our regional power and politics expressed through our fabrics, prints, and silhouettes. They help us claim spaces (which are usually situated in cold places with grey/black palettes) and make our point.

We leave you with these top finds on what kept us inspired as we traversed through crisis after crisis with care:

[No Country for Eight-Spot Butterflies](#)

(aka [The Properties of Perpetual Light](#)) by Julian Aguon

[How to Stand Up to a Dictator](#) by Maria Ressa

[The Incarcerations](#) by Alpa Shah

[What Storm, What Thunder](#) by Myria Chancy

[Brotherless Night](#) by V.V. Ganeshanathan

[Stories We Come With](#) edited by Shazia Usman

[Rooted](#) by Mia Kami (song)

[History](#) by Mia Kami (song)

[Rangoon Sisters](#) (website)

[Everything the Light Touches](#) by Janice Pariat

[Me'a Kai: The Food and Flavours of the South Pacific](#) by Robert Oliver

In solidarity and co-responsibility,

Virisila Buadromo and Vinita Sahasranaman

Co-Leads, UAF A&P

Diverse Forms, Same Furies

State of Human Rights in 2023





Capitalist forces are increasingly dictating the state of democracy in the Global South, leading to a rise of authoritarian regimes and an absolute clamp down on civil society. Anti-gender, anti-climate, and anti-rights narratives that work against feminist movements and human rights defence are fuelled by this toxic combination of capitalist greed, extractivism, and authoritarianism. As a result, there has been a steady increase in human rights violations around the world, but particularly in the Global South.

In Asia and the Pacific, human rights defenders and activists face severe restrictions, ranging from imposition of laws and regulations to curbing access to resources, criminalising their activities, and punishing those who persist. Women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders resisting shrinking civic spaces, gender-based violence, LGBTQIA+ discrimination, and the environment and climate crises are the most impacted.



Shrinking Civic Space

As of 2023, over 2.4 billion people live in places where state and non-state forces routinely imprison, harm, or kill dissenters with impunity¹. Eight Asian countries (Afghanistan, China, Hong Kong, Laos, Myanmar, North Korea, Vietnam, and Bangladesh) are ranked 'Closed' on the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) due to severe restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly and a high level of state control over freedom of expression, including surveillance and censorship. Eight countries (India, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand) are marked 'Repressed,' while five countries (Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Malaysia, and Bhutan) are categorised 'Obstructed.' Four countries (Japan, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, and South Korea) are marked 'Narrowed,' while Taiwan remains the only country that's 'Open,' showing the region that democratic elections and open civic space are possible.

The situation is slightly better in Oceania, where three countries (Fiji, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea) are ranked 'Obstructed,' while four countries (Australia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu) are marked 'Narrowed.' Several countries are marked 'Open' (Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, and Tuvalu) and no countries are 'Closed' or 'Repressed.'

1 Rights Reversed: A Downward Shift in Civic Space, CIVICUS



As per the CIVICUS Monitor Report (2023), the top five civic space violations in Asia and the Pacific in 2023 were intimidation, censorship, detention of protestors, prosecution of human rights defenders, and detention of human rights defenders².

The Taliban raided homes of women human rights defenders in **Afghanistan**, while **Bangladesh** and **Cambodia** saw severe crackdown on the opposition, activists, journalists, and dissenting voices in the run up to elections. **Indonesia**, too, witnessed increasing threats to West Papuan activists, academics, journalists, environment and climate justice defenders, indigenous rights and pro-democracy activists before the Presidential elections. In **Myanmar**, the military junta jailed thousands of activists, students, artists, lawyers, politicians and critics on fabricated charges, in addition to other human rights violations like killings, rape, and torture. In **India** and **Pakistan**, activists and journalists were targeted and intimidated by authorities, with media and civil society censorship hitting new lows. **China** continues to face extreme censorship, while **Vietnam** blocked hundreds of websites and social media posts. **Kashmir** and **West Papua** faced heavy military deployment amidst their respective struggles for self-determination. In the **Philippines**, red-tagging of activists persisted, particularly Indigenous rights activists, while **Hong Kong** authorities announced that eight exiled democracy activists will be prosecuted for life for alleged national security offences.

In fact, a [joint analysis](#) by KontraS and FORUM-ASIA found that **51% of human rights violations in Asia pertain to Southeast Asian countries**. These range from judicial harassment (287 cases) and arbitrary arrest and detention (254 cases) to physical violence. Myanmar and Vietnam recorded the most such incidents of violations, while 85% of violations (517 cases) were attributed to state actors. The defenders most at risk were found to be women human rights defenders, pro-democracy defenders, and land, environment, and indigenous people's rights defenders.

In the Pacific, too, journalists faced intimidation and harassment - especially in **Papua New Guinea** and **Samoa**. **Tonga** and **Nauru** had incidents of lack of transparency around a ferry tragedy and asylum seekers respectively. The situation in **Fiji** was more promising, with the new government repealing a law that restricted media freedom and repairing relations with trade unions. However, given the country's history of repeated military coups, democracy and civic freedoms cannot be taken for granted.

In **Australia**, a proposed constitutional amendment to establish a consultative body aimed at giving Indigenous people a say in matters that concern them was downright rejected by voters after a polarising campaign filled with disinformation and racial abuse.

Civic space is also being repressed by states and fossil fuel corporations to curb the pressure from environment and climate justice activists to take immediate and large-scale action. In 2023, hundreds of climate protestors were arrested in Australia, parts of **New Zealand**, and across the Asia and Pacific regions.



Gender Inequality & Discrimination

The progress of civil society and feminist movements' decades-long efforts against gender inequality, violence, and LGBTQI+ discrimination has taken a hard-hit due to growing anti-gender and anti-rights narratives and movements. Conservative forces and police crackdowns are putting LGBTQI+ lives at risk across Asia and the Pacific, while women continue to face gender-based violence and restrictions on their rights.

Afghanistan is witnessing gender apartheid under the Taliban, while Rohingya women in refugee camps face abuse, rape, trafficking, and death in **Myanmar**. **South Asia** still records a high number of incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, including rape. Homosexuality remains a crime in **Malaysia**, while the Supreme Court of **India** ruled that the legalization of same-sex marriage is outside its ambit of jurisdiction and a matter for the Parliament to decide. Further, India's proposed New Penal Code fails to protect LGBTQI+ rights. In **Pakistan**, political and Islamist groups put existing legal protections for transgender people at risk and resulted in increased violence against them.

Despite this, 2023 saw some wins: the UN recognised that laws criminalising consensual same-sex activity between women is a human rights violation, **Nepal's** Supreme Court passed an order to register same-sex marriages, a **South Korean** High Court judgement gave legal status to same-sex couples while ruling on a case considering a same-sex partner's right to spousal coverage under the national health insurance service, **Taiwan's** Legislative Yuan passed a bill granting full adoption rights to same-sex couples and lifting restrictions on registering same-sex marriages between Taiwanese


and foreign nationals, India passes its long-pending Women's Reservation Bill, **Japan's** parliament passed the country's first law addressing anti-LGBTQ discrimination (albeit a watered-down version) and appointed five women to the cabinet, **Fiji** removed legal obstacles for married women's participation in elections.

Environment and Climate Crisis

The climate crisis is a global emergency. 2023 was the hottest year on record, and climate inaction continues to have a plethora of immediate and drastic long-term consequences. Asia was the most disaster-hit region in 2023, while the Pacific islands are among the most vulnerable to climate change – grappling with major economic losses, but also the loss of indigenous and local knowledge, cultural sites, identity, spiritual connection to the land and sea, and ways of living. **Vanuatu** is the most vulnerable country in the world, and was hit by two devastating cyclones in 2023, while **Tuvalu** announced itself as the first digital nation in the world in an effort to preserve its sovereignty and culture in light of territory loss and displacement due to climate change.

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, Ecological Threat report (2023), ecological threats and climate change are known to exacerbate armed conflict, which will increase over time in states with lower levels of peace and high climate variability. This is likely to happen in the aftermath of ecological shocks and before, during, and after food and resource insecurity.





As highlighted earlier, there has been a notable shift in the closure of civic spaces available for Environment and Climate Justice defenders and activists to challenge, oppose, and express their sentiments on environmental and climate justice issues. States are criminalising activists, and this trend was evident in **Vietnam, India, Australia**, and other parts of the regions in 2023, pushing environment and climate justice activists to self-regulate, scale-down operations, and restrict their activities. Policies and laws were utilised to curb dissent and crackdown on human rights defenders and activists through red-tagging, passage of Anti-Terrorism laws, security laws, and other policies. Non-state actors (like private corporations) continue to exert influence and intimidation on defenders opposing their extractive methods.

"It is not possible to have zero risk or little risk because when we expose ourselves to the regime, and surely the retaliation will come, it's just a matter of time."

Environment and Climate Justice Activist

Despite these challenges, women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders are coming together to share stories and knowledge, grieve, celebrate, care for each other, build solidarity, and find new ways of challenging and resisting the many forces of oppression.





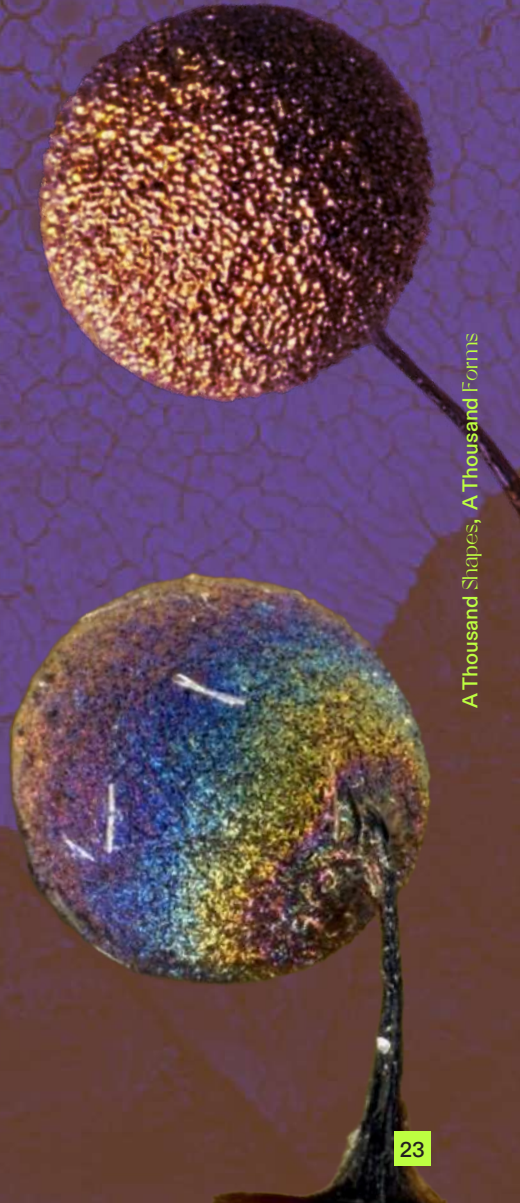
There is hope
There is strength
There is power
There is change
In you and I (you and I)
In you and I
There is hope
There is strength
There is power
There is change
In you and I (you and I)
In you and I

Like the wind we still move
Like the waves we rise high
Like the sun we never die

Like the wind we still move
Like the waves we rise high
Like the sun we never die

We are standing
Hear our calling
We are rooted to the ground
We're here to stay
No staying quiet
We stand united
We are rooted to the ground
Can't tear us down
We're here to stay

"Rooted" by Mia Kami



Intimate Coalitions

Our Response to Crises

1. 2023 was a year of contraction and expansion.



We took inspiration from feminist activists and human rights defenders who are constantly adapting to changing situations and ongoing, intersecting, and compounding crises, to sustain and strengthen themselves and their movements. Their innate ability to expand and contract, run and recede, and change forms in response to evolving needs taught us to do the same.

After an intense 2022, where we received an overwhelming number of grant applications from Afghanistan and were one of the first funds to move money directly into the hands of defenders, 2023 was about responding to ongoing, long-term crises and micro-emergencies that continue to need our attention and support. We took time to pause, assess the evolving contexts of our regions, reflect on our work and impact so far, and recalibrate our crisis-response so that it meets the diverse

UAF A&P's purpose is to resource and power women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists in their critical defence of people and the planet.

needs of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists. We streamlined and strengthened our internal processes, team capacity, and strategies to better support feminist movements in Asia and the Pacific.

2. Our understanding of the nature of crises expanded.



We recognised that some crises are immediate while others are ongoing, and we need to tweak our response to each based on the situation and evolving needs of defenders. We understood the importance of supporting defenders and activists in developing early warning systems that preempt risks and major crises, and continuing to support them after major crises – such as in the case of Afghan and Burmese defenders who were able to evacuate from their respective countries but continue to need support and accompaniment to survive and thrive in a new country.

Our understanding of who we have traditionally considered a human rights defender also expanded, and we pushed ourselves to become more intersectional and build bridges with all social justice movements fighting for

the well-being of people and the planet. This included supporting Environment and Climate Justice defenders, artists working on human rights or cultural rights defence, and feminists in non-feminist-led groups.

While a lot of organisations are now talking about the need for urgent action during crises, and extending support before and after crises, we have been doing this since 2018 and understand the nuances of what it takes and what it means to be there for human rights defenders taking bold risks in moments of need. We come from movements that we fund and we have direct relationships with activists which allows us to know early and respond proactively when contexts worsen. Our team is from and based in Asia and the Pacific, and thus, have lived experience and a deep understanding of the complex socio-political contexts and challenges faced by women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders in the regions.

"We can't talk about resilience, whether its resilience in surviving or resiliency or sustainability in their campaigns, if the communities are heavily impacted by poverty and inflation."

Environment and Climate Justice Activist

3. We proactively reached out to activists from underrepresented communities and regions to understand their evolving needs.

We listened to sex workers' rights activists, environment and climate justice defenders, and LGBTQI+ activists from across



Asia and the Pacific, and designed our programs and grantmaking approach based on the feedback we received. While we had an inkling of their unique needs, we didn't have adequate data to confirm the same. We created grant offerings (including dedicated rapid-response grant calls for sex workers' rights activists and environment and climate justice defenders) based on the suggestions and insights shared by activist groups, grantees, and advisors during our proactive outreach.

Our first open call for proposals to support sex workers' rights activists facing risks or in need of urgent support for reorganising, strategising, and capacity building used language and illustrations that empowered and uplifted the rights of sex workers in our regions. We supported 43 activists in 2023, a majority of them from the Pacific. [More details in chapter 3.](#)

Based on our learnings from 2022, we experimented with multi-year Webs of Safety and Care grants and other participatory and collaborative forms of resilience-building this past year. We learned that the well-being of defenders cannot be achieved without having their essential needs met, which range from sustainable income for daily survival to healthcare provisions. Multi-year Webs of Safety and Care grants ensured activists could conduct comprehensive risk assessment in the first year and design sustainable initiatives according to the results of the assessment the following year. [More details in chapter 3.](#)

We gave a Resourcing Resilience grant to an activist from West Papua who sought to provide business training to nine women activists living with HIV & AIDS so they could get back on their feet.

Our outreach in the Pacific and presence at the Pacific Feminist Forum propelled our interactions and relationships with Pacific activists and organisations (some of who are now our advisors), and enabled us to move beyond the capital cities and connect with activists in places like Samoa, Vanuatu, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, and West Papua, among others. This deepened our understanding of the issues faced by Pacific islanders and activists, and grant applications from the region increased multifold.



4. We deepened and widened our network of advisors, which enhanced our participatory grantmaking capabilities and made us more responsive to crises.

As of 2023, we have 161 advisors based in 23 countries across Asia and the Pacific. They are activists themselves and come with deep knowledge and connections to local and regional women's, LGBTQ+, and human rights movements. They were recruited through targeted outreach, and are rooted in and relevant to the countries, regions, thematic sectors, and issues covered in our mandate. They also play a critical role as part of our early warning systems and ability to anticipate opportunities and crises that need urgent response. They give valuable insights into regional and



local trends, provide applicant and partner referrals, advise us on convenings and strategic planning, and offer accompaniment to grantee partners with their grant application submissions. Their input and network have enabled us to expand to geographies where we didn't have prior presence, and our country-outreaches in [Indonesia](#), the Pacific, and [Sri Lanka](#) in 2023 would not have been the same without their guidance and participation.

5. We tried to mobilise philanthropic giving within our own regions – inviting, embracing, and sparking the generosity that lives in our cultures to disrupt the oppressive patriarchal forces that fuel crises around the world.

We believe that narratives around women's rights, LBTQI+ rights, and human rights defence need to shift to encourage more philanthropic support and funding. By reframing philanthropy as 'sharing' resources and power, we hope to cultivate more flexible, trust-based, and long-term funding for feminist activists and movements in the Asia and Pacific regions.




Australia is at a pivotal moment in philanthropy: USD 2.6 trillion is being passed onto the next generation of Australians by 2040 and the Australian Government has committed to doubling philanthropic giving by 2030. There is tremendous untapped potential to activate feminist philanthropy in Australia to support women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders, especially in the Pacific. In response to this, we formed a coalition of feminist funders who resource movements in the Pacific to influence the culture of giving and activate feminist philanthropy in Australia. Our initial experiments were a series 'Curated Conversations,' co-hosted by International Women's Development Agency and the Pacific Feminist Fund that brought together an intimate group of Australian philanthropists and gender equality advocates to share good practices of feminist funding, reflect on barriers to change, and find practical ways to expand and unite the community of Australian philanthropists investing in feminist movements. What we learnt from the two conversations is that Australian philanthropists are generous to their local communities, state, and nation, but more persuasion is needed for them to align to their government's commitment to their Pacific family, work together "to realise our shared vision for a stable, secure and prosperous region, and to support the aspirations of Pacific island countries."¹

6. Our learning practices are an ongoing experiment in feminist ways of gathering, reflecting, and learning together.

External meetings and events (where more than four team members participated) offered us the opportunity to strengthen our team's ability to use our feminist learning tools, such as the


¹ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/pacific-partnerships>



Before Action Reviews and After Action Reviews, to clarify our thinking and processes. In our annual team huddles, we continue to stretch the boundaries of collective thinking and offer grace and space for lived experiences to have their say. We also champion alternate approaches of learning and accountability for the feminist ecosystem, reiterating that measurement is political. We are a part of the ‘Shift The Power’ movement, where we work with global and community-led organisations to interrogate power inherent in our feminist [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning approach](#), and seek change in how we measure, evaluate, and know the effectiveness of the work we do. Further, we are a part of several other learning groups that are looking to adapt and adopt ways to learn that are transformative and feminist in their approach and language.

2023 also marked the end of our first five-year strategic plan (2018-23). We reflected on our impact in the last five years and carved out our vision, values, and commitment for the next five. We commissioned an [Organisational Review](#), which was designed as a participatory process that included representatives from all parts of our ecosystem – from human rights defenders and their organisations, to UAF A&P’s advisors, funders, staff, and Board members.

UAF A&P’s vision for the next five years is to boldly resource and power women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists defending people and the planet.

The image features two pink jellyfish against a dark, textured background. The jellyfish on the left is larger and more prominent, with its bell and tentacles clearly visible. The jellyfish on the right is smaller and positioned lower. Both jellyfish have a translucent, pinkish-red bell with vertical ridges and numerous long, thin tentacles hanging from the bottom. The background is a mix of dark brown and blue tones, creating a moody atmosphere.

The findings from our organisational review informed the creation of a [new five-year strategic plan \(2024-29\)](#) as a flexible framework built on our existing and newly-framed feminist principles of funding. It imagines the world we want to manifest through imaginative resourcing, building collaborations, and supporting defenders and organisations to hold the line against gender and climate injustice, among others. Our overarching values continue to ground our work and purpose, and allow us to respond to the evolving needs of activists, communities, movements and the contexts in which we work.

In forging feminist futures, we put defenders first, always.

We meet defenders at the intersections of the democracy, gender, and climate related emergencies. Very often as their first line of defence.

We reforge risk and relationship with audacious care.

We cannot shy away from risk—we hold it with care and centre the authority of the defenders we work with.

Our values

We reform power.

We leverage our multiple positions to interrogate and innovate the power politics of redistributing privilege and resources.

We innovate and learn to evolve.

Our learning and unlearning is shaped by our accountability with and to the movements we work with.

[Read our Strategic Plan 2024-29.](#)

Patterns and Pathways

Grantmaking at a Glance

450 grants

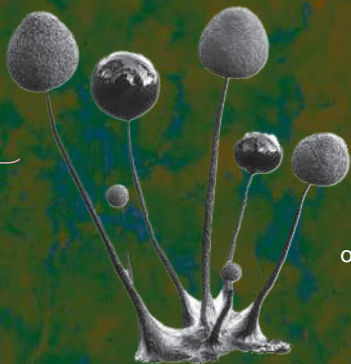
= approx. USD 2.4m

in **27** countries across
Asia and the Pacific
to women, trans and non-binary
human rights defenders



In 2023, we disbursed a total of 450 grants (amounting to approx. USD 2.4m) to women, trans and non-binary human rights defenders and activists in 27 countries across Asia and the Pacific.

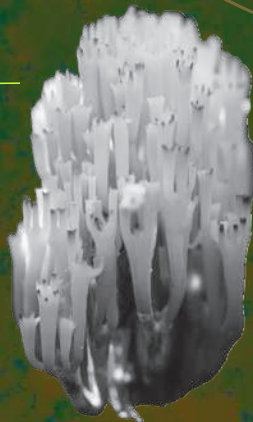
62% of our grants pertained to safety and well-being, 22% to resourcing resilience, and 16% to support organisations conducting safety and care needs assessments for defender communities. 23% of our total grants across categories supported LGBTQI+ defenders in 16 countries while 14% of total grants went to Environment and Climate Justice defenders in 18 countries. 2% of our total grants went to activists with disabilities, making us realise that we need to work on making our grants more accessible.



23%
of our total grants across
categories supported
LGBTQI+
defenders in
16 countries

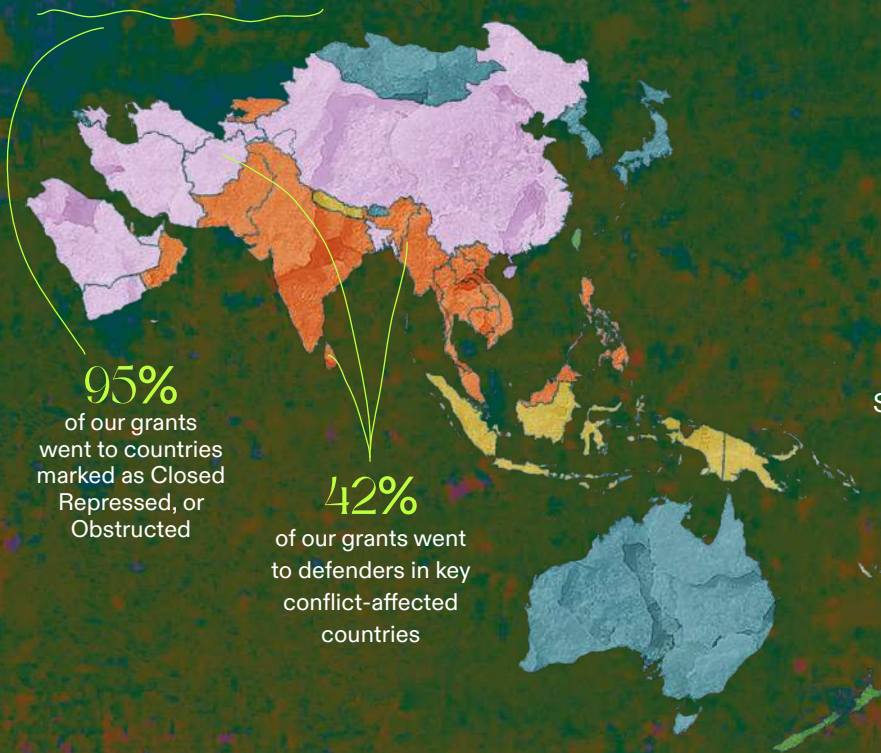


2%
of our grantees were
activists with
disabilities
making us realise that
we need to work on
making our grants
more accessible



14%
of total grants went to
Environment and
Climate Justice
defenders in
18 countries.

Closed Repressed Obstructed Narrowed Open



95%
of our grants
went to countries
marked as Closed
Repressed, or
Obstructed

42%
of our grants went
to defenders in key
conflict-affected
countries

95% of our grants went to countries marked as Closed, Repressed, or Obstructed in the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) while 42% of our grants went to defenders in key conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. We also expanded our regional representation by remitting grants to six new countries in the Pacific: Samoa, Palau, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, West Papua, and New Zealand.

Regional distribution of our grants also changed dramatically since the previous year due to our strategy shift and face-to-face consultations with women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders, activists, and advisors in the Pacific (Fiji and Papua New Guinea) in April 2023. The experience and learnings derived from these conversations placed our team in a better position to engage and collaborate with defender communities regarding challenges faced and support needed to make strategic decisions, learn, build capacities, and redistribute resources with sister networks in the Pacific.

2023 Grants by CIVICUS' Monitor Status

38%
Closed

29%
Obstructed

28%
Repressed

3%
Narrowed

2%
Open

190 grants
=

USD 643,204

went to the

'Emergency/crisis' grants

75 grants: Afghanistan

21 grants: Sri Lanka

55 grants: Myanmar

42%

of total grant-making
for the year

Over the past 12 months, 190 grants went to the 'Emergency/crisis' key locations - Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (total: USD 643,204). This is broken down to: Afghanistan-75, Sri Lanka-21 & Myanmar-55. Grants to these 3 locations accounted for 42% of total grant-making for the year.

2023 Grant types breakdown

Security & Well-being



301
Grants

1.48
million Total USD

"This grant made a huge difference to us because we felt that we can have that assurance that we can turn to someone when we are in danger.

UAF A&P grants made me and my organisation feel safe because of their immediate response through their funds."

Security and Well-being grantee from the Philippines

Resilience-X



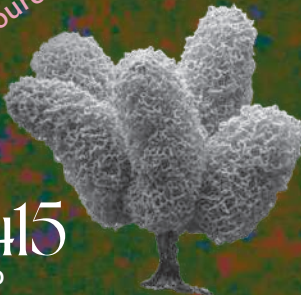
13
Grants

140,020
Total USD

Resourcing Resilience

81
Grants

385,415
Total USD



"UAF A&P's grant has enabled me to weave a resilient tapestry of support that extends far beyond immediate needs. This robust network represents an invaluable asset for navigating future challenges and solidifying my long-term impact as a human rights defender."

First intersex Resourcing Resilience grantee from Southeast Asia

Webs of Safety & Care



54
Grants

385,967
Total USD

Crisis Response Grant



1
Grants

8,393
Total USD

Nepal
earthquake
grantee

"UAF Asia Pacific has been instrumental in saving the lives of high-risk non-binary individuals and women defenders who are at the forefront of safeguarding civic and political spaces in extremely authoritarian countries. UAF-AP has preserved the dignity of these Women's Rights Defenders (WRDs). I witnessed a situation where one WRD was on the verge of eviction, but your fund helped her maintain a roof over her head and provided food for her children. More importantly, it enabled her to continue exercising her rights to organise and mobilise communities to challenge dictators in Myanmar. Similarly, there are numerous instances where the UAF resilience fund has empowered some WRDs to foster resilience-building at the community level, enabling people with meagre means to maintain hope to exercise their agency. Although the timing of fund processing could be fastened, we understand the limitations you may have in your end. Your fund embodies what a flexible, light weight and empowering feminist funding mechanism should be all about."

Advisor from Southeast Asia

*Resilience X Grants pertain to exceptional, one-off circumstances that extend beyond our usual mandate.

** Crisis Response Grants pertained to the Nepal earthquake.



We gave a Resourcing Resilience grant to a women's organisation working on gender equality and democracy in South Korea for their advocacy efforts for the 9th CEDAW review process. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international United Nations treaty that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promotes women's and girls' equal rights. The grantee monitored the government's implementation, delivered oral interventions, and facilitated policy dialogues with the support of the grant.

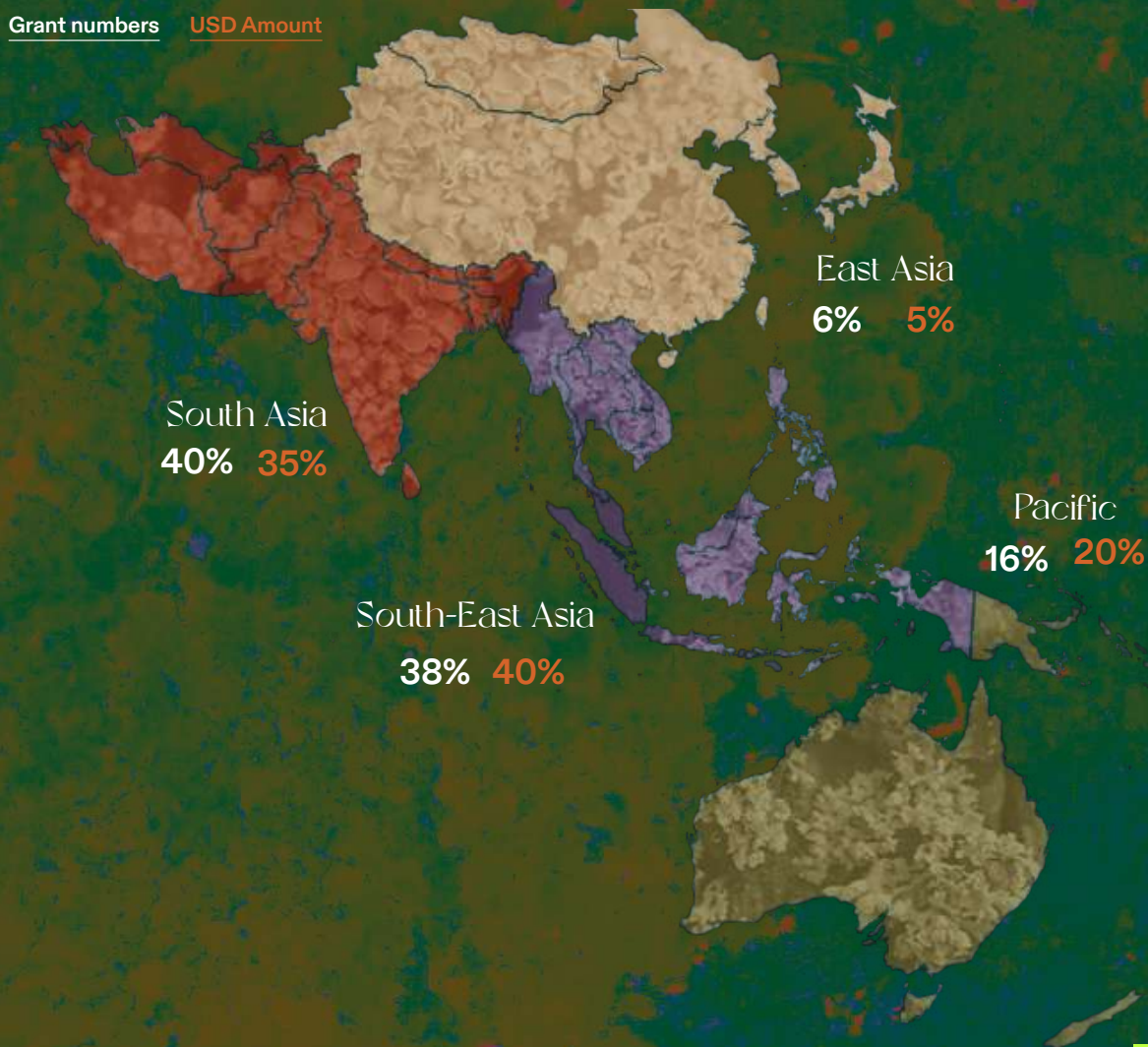


We gave Security and Well-being grants to women human rights defenders from Afghanistan who evacuated to Pakistan when the Taliban took over. The grant money covers visa costs to seek asylum in other countries and also keep them safe in light of the Pakistan government's crackdown on Afghan refugees.

2023 Regional distribution percentages

Grant numbers

USD Amount



A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms

Fractals of Power

Webs of Safety and Care

In 2023, we received 133 applications for our Webs of Safety and Care (WSC) grants – a 133% increase since last year (57 applications). Of this, 41 applications were approved and we disbursed grants worth USD 298,387 in total (double the number and amount compared to 2022).

Applications Received

126 applications from
17 Asia-Pacific countries
covering all four sub-regions

1 regional
application

5 countries outside
Asia-Pacific

Top three countries: **20%** Afghanistan **12%** Thailand **12%** India

Applications were from:

53% South Asia **37%** Southeast Asia **4%** East Asia **2%** Pacific **5%** outside Asia-Pacific

Applications Approved

41

applications from 13
Asia-Pacific countries
covering all four
sub-regions

1

regional
application

Breakup: 20% Afghanistan 12% Thailand 12% India

Applications were from:

53%
South Asia

37%
Southeast
Asia

4%
East
Asia

2%
Pacific

5%
outside
Asia-
Pacific

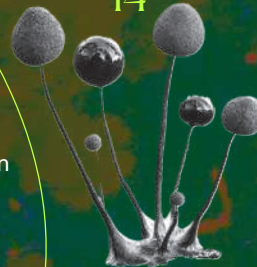
Thematic breakup:

18



Women's Rights, Women's Human
Rights, Violence Against Women
/ Gender-based Violence, Ethnic
and Religious Minorities

14



LGBTQI+

6



Environment
and Climate
Justice

2



Sex Workers
Rights

1



People with
Disabilities
LGBTQI+

21 grantees applied to conduct a holistic safety and care assessment and 20 grantees applied to create and expand safety and care structures for women, trans, and non-binary defenders (14 of whom are 2022 WSC grantees) within the ambit of our Webs of Safety and Care framework, which includes legal support, sustainable livelihood, community and social support, and physical and mental safety and security.

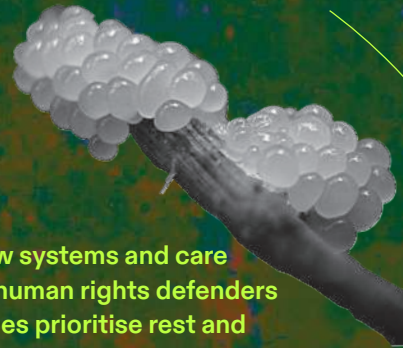


Assess:

Grantees conduct a holistic assessment of the risks and threats they face as an individual or part of a collective or movement.

Focus group discussions to identify gaps in safety and care needs

Strategize how to holistically address the identified gaps and needs



Create:

Grantees create new systems and care practices that help human rights defenders and their communities prioritise rest and rejuvenation, build resilience, and provide holistic well-being and care.

Community police programme with women officers

Digital app where incidents of violence can be reported and tracked

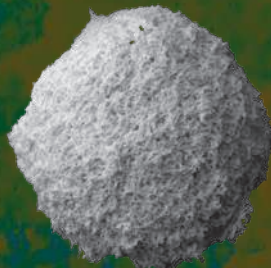
Safe house that integrate shelter, mental health services, language lessons, digital training, life skills training, internships, and legal support

Wellness and Respite Centre for Sex Workers' Rights Activists

Testing centre for STI and HIV, psycho-social counselling, and self-care practices

The activities proposed and implemented by them under our four categories – Assess, Create, Build, and Connect – are as follows:

Build:



Grantees expand or deepen existing initiatives that cater to the safety and well-being of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders, their organisations, and networks.

Curriculum development and capacity building on security issues

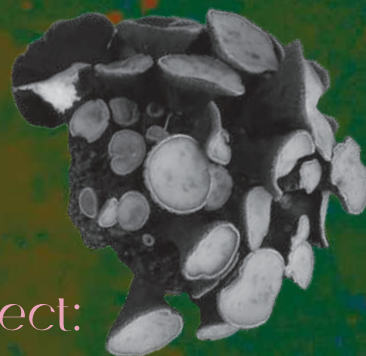
Knowledge building on legal risks, safety and well-being of defenders, and digital security

Peer support mechanisms

Fellowship that nurtures younger LGBTQI+ activists

Training of trainers to build capacity and awareness on stress management, burnout prevention, self and collective care

Connect:



Grantees share their learnings, ideas, and experiences within their own community or across movements to promote practices of well-being and collective care for greater resilience.

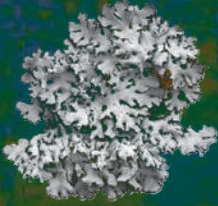
Movement building and capacity building

Legal aid toolkit in various local languages that can be shared and scaled

'Rest and Resist' conference for grassroots activists

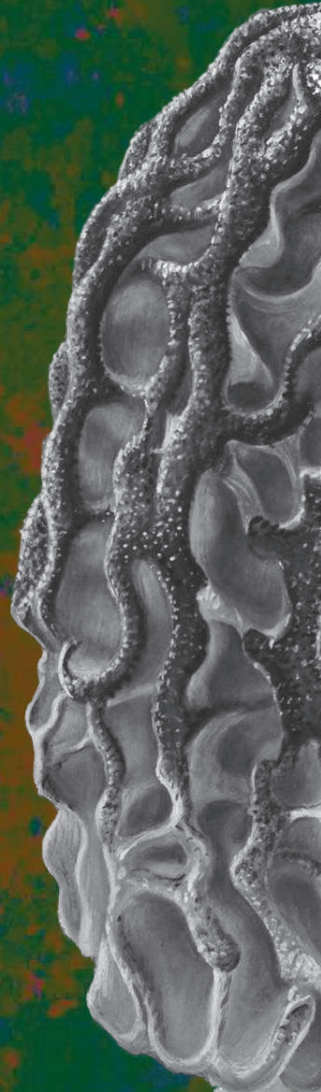
Local psycho-social counselling support net

Regional space for LGBTQI+ activists to gather, learn, and discuss issues on safety and care



"We created a safe house and safe space for 8 pro-democracy activists and 2 children to continue their activism on human rights, environmental rights, transitional justice, and pro-democracy activities of Myanmar, like campaign, advocacy, networking, building capacity through trainings and workshops, and also provided training for their psychosocial and mental health support. Safe house residents and survivors have gotten safe space, food, internship opportunities, skill development training, well-being training, transitional justice training, networking with other organisations, job opportunities for their future, and relevant documents to stay here. Some former safehouse residents are continuing human rights advocacy work through freedom of speech with the media and creating safe houses for environment and human rights defenders."

Webs of Safety and Care grantee from Southeast Asia





"We are one of the first feminist and national level solidarity and resilience support groups for supporting ocean women defenders. When we first started inviting victims to the group, we understood that they had different and changing definitions of care v/s what we assessed based on the needs based assessment as the holistic approach of care. Care for some members meant listening to their stories and their versions of the incidents, supporting them with writing and documenting these stories as well as even agreeing to share a meal with them. While we implemented our framework of legal aid and well-being support through our training and field-interactions with victims, this new learning of the diversity in care, was very useful to develop a "personalised approach" towards the implementation of the program. We also found that smaller, semi-formal advocacy/solidarity groups v/s the traditional trade union approach was more impactful in delivering the objectives of the program to the victims. It also provided a space for victims like fisherwomen to discuss business and livelihood trends with each other and keep up to date with the latest news and information."

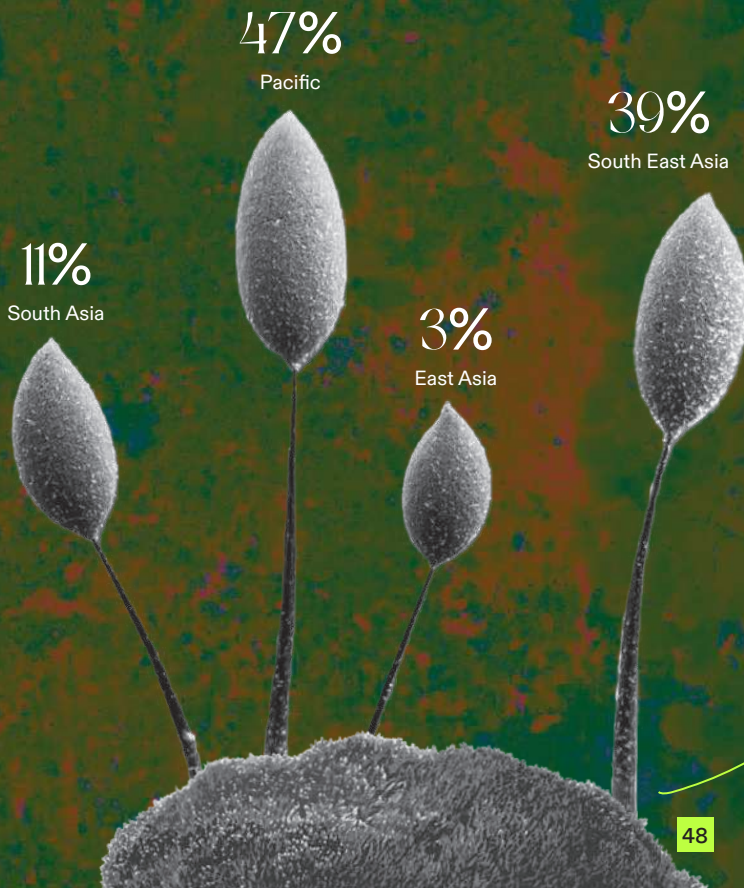
Webs of Safety and Care grantee from South Asia

A World Worth Defending

Supporting Environment and Climate Justice Defenders

In the last decade, the backlash faced by Environment and Climate Justice (ECJ) defenders has reached unprecedented levels. Caught between the intersecting lines of patriarchy, gender norms, authoritarianism and closing civic spaces, women, trans, and non-binary defenders of our planet have faced very high levels of violence and persecution. Recognizing this, our overall support to ECJ defenders expanded significantly last year.

We offered 66 grants worth USD 330k (marking a 150% year on year increase) to ECJ defenders in 18 countries. 25% of these grantees were also LBTQ+ activists.



We also conducted a needs assessment study to understand the risks, threats, and challenges faced by ECJ defenders. We realised that they are at the heart of all the repercussions of closing civic spaces in the Asia and Pacific regions, but despite these high levels of risk, they continue to shape-shift, remain agile in their tactics, and have embraced the reality of arrest, detention, profiling, and slandering.

The Pacific islands, in particular, face an existential crisis. Yet, they are not accorded the prominence they deserve in the global climate change discourse. There is an urgent need to build bridges between feminist funds and ECJ movements in all their diversity, while those working at the intersections of environmental and climate justice have a lot to learn from feminist crisis response.



A Security & Well-being grant was offered to indigenous environment and land rights activists in Indonesia facing legal charges due to their resistance to mining. Their island is very remote with accessibility issues.

Our grants team provided accompaniment, helping the group with their application in Bahasa. No report was filed because of language barriers - an example of the need for language justice especially in relation to Indigenous resistance. The grantee partner and their community's activism focuses on advocating for the indigenous women of a remote tribe who live on the coast and inland forests in North Maluku

province, to defend their land and forests from the deprivation of living space – an ongoing issue created by nickel mining corporations operating in their customary territories. The indigenous community has been conducting protest actions since 2019; also protesting to the regional government over the determination of village boundaries that were created without consultation and not in accordance with the historical background of the traditional people of the region. As a result, the activists' community has experienced multiple threats and incidents, from the local police and the mining company, including intimidation, threat of arrest and imprisonment, attacks on identity and reputation. They used the grant for legal assistance, security infrastructure, an unarmed security guard, self-care, temporary relocation and secure transportation.

"We are nothing without our islands."
Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, Marshallese poet and climate activist
Read our learnings on Environment and Climate Justice movements [here](#).

Defiant Bodies

Supporting Sex Workers' Rights Activists

UAF A&P awarded a total of 43 grants to partners in 12 countries, 25 of whom were trans sex workers.

**From the 43 grants disbursed, 21 went to the Pacific:
18: Fiji
1: PNG
1: West Papua**

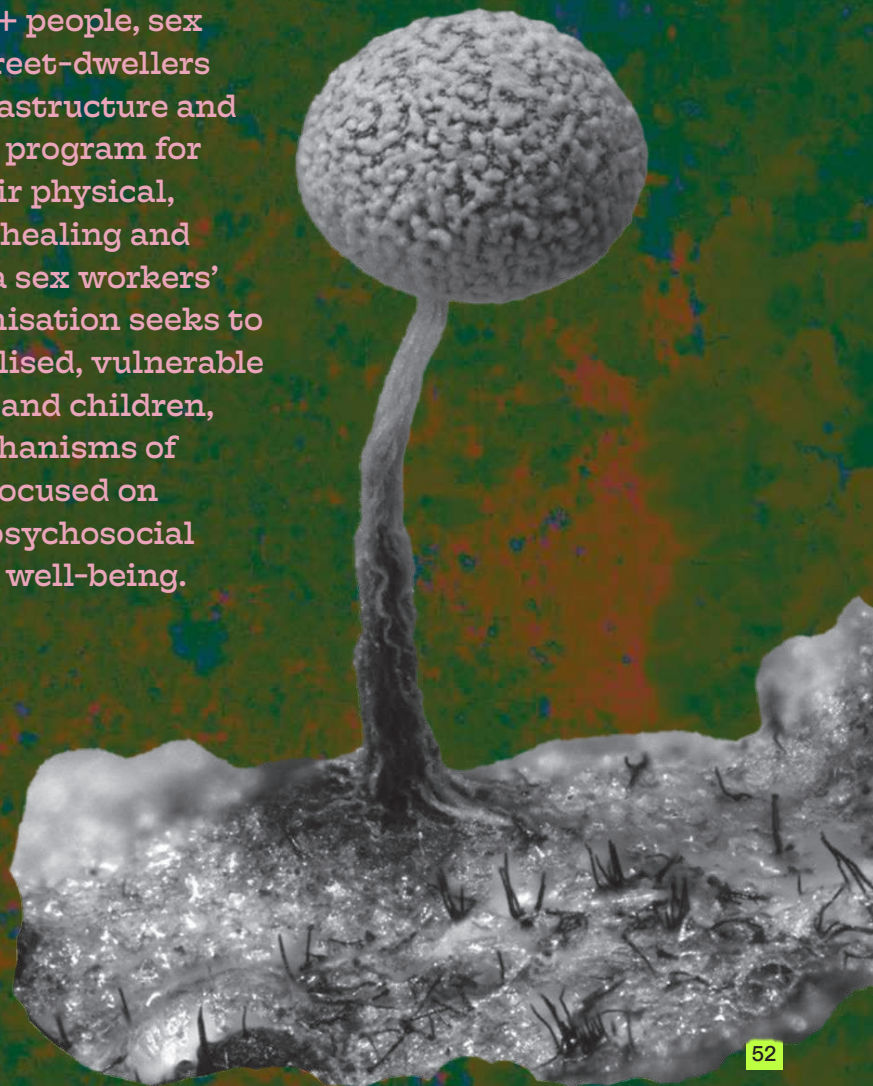
We launched an open call for sex workers that was co-conceptualised and designed with our advisors from the sex worker community. This included designing the call for proposals which used language and illustrations that empowered and uplifted the rights of sex workers and their life. UAF A&P awarded a total of 43 grants to partners in 12 countries, 25 of whom were trans sex workers.

Following the launch of our first open call for Sex Worker activists in July last year - inviting activists and defenders in Asia and the Pacific facing risks or in need of urgent support for reorganising, strategising, and capacity building - to apply for rapid response grants to sustain their movements. From the 43 grants disbursed, 21 went to the Pacific: Fiji (18); PNG (1), and West Papua (1).

The large number of grants to Fiji in this thematic sector was a clear indication of the influence of two Fijian advisors - both sex worker activists - who were inspired when attending our Oasis of Reflection convening in Nepal in June 2023. On their return to Fiji, they created awareness of our grants in their community and provided accompaniment support with the application process. The act of applying for our grants was significant as it visualised the needs of their community and signalled their first step to becoming independent by acquiring resources to support their livelihood and activism. Further, the realisation that they too are entitled to support from funders like UAF A&P inspired hope.



A Security and Well-being grant was offered to a Fijian organisation that provides safe shelter for marginalised women, LGBTQ+ people, sex workers, and street-dwellers to enhance security infrastructure and develop a collective care program for residents to support their physical, emotional, and spiritual healing and well-being. Founded by a sex workers' rights activist, the organisation seeks to restore hope to marginalised, vulnerable LGBTQ+ people, women and children, through developing mechanisms of support and awareness focused on gender-based violence, psychosocial counselling, and holistic well-being.



Unsettled Canopies

Unmet Needs of Activists

In 2023, we received a total of 720 grant applications out of which 270 were declined.

220 (80%) of these applications qualified as unmet or unresourced needs of defenders and organisations.

58 of these requests were from Afghan defenders seeking funding for basic survival needs.

Despite our best efforts, there continue to be a large number of human rights defenders and activists who we haven't been able to support. In 2023, we received a total of 720 grant applications out of which 270 were declined. 220 (80%) of these applications qualified as unmet or unresourced needs of defenders and organisations. 58 of these requests were from Afghan defenders seeking funding for basic survival needs. The remainder pertained to programmatic support or long-term funding needs that are outside the scope of our mandate.


For example, a women's organisation in Sri Lanka requested a Resourcing Resilience grant to assist their community in generating income and food security through workshops on farming and food processing. Their request was declined as such an initiative needed a longer duration and sustained funding which is outside the remit of our USD 5000 Resourcing Resilience grant.

A number of Afghan activists who had managed to relocate to Pakistan also reached out for financial support as they had no means of income and needed help with living expenses. Since our Afghanistan strategy has evolved from supporting Afghan defenders' basic survival needs to prioritising applications that are aligned to our core mandate as a rapid response feminist fund, the requests had to be denied.

The Colours of Care

**Fostering Care in the
Time of Crisis**





‘Care’ is our political position to sustain feminist movements led by women, trans, and non-binary human rights activists confronting and resisting multiple systems of oppression and crises. It means acknowledging their lived realities, ensuring their voices count, and recognising that risks, threats, and trauma are not just personal but collective and generational in nature.

‘Collective care’ is our strategy while working with feminist activists and their movements to disrupt systems of oppression so that people and the planet can flourish. This manifests in our internal processes and programmes that are based on forging deep relationships with activists doing transformational work, so that they feel seen, heard, understood, and supported. We also believe in the power of connection, joy, and celebration, and are committed to creating spaces where activists can spend time together, reflect on their journeys, and collaborate with each other.

In 2023, we conducted a preliminary scoping study to understand the needs and visions of women, trans, and non-binary defenders in Asia and Pacific. We learned:

1. Physical spaces that foster collective care for women, trans, and non-binary activists are few and far between in Asia and the Pacific.

Activists need access to spaces where they can rest, seek respite from years of oppression, heal from generational trauma and burnout, share their stories and indigenous knowledge, build solidarity and connections, learn and strategise, and make space for joy.

2. One size doesn't fit all.

The meaning and manifestations of collective care are context-specific, personal, local, and differ from culture to culture. They can refer to retreats and workshops that integrate feminism, activism, and spiritual transformation; learning centres; focused time for healing and reflection; documentation of stories and knowledge; safe spaces for marginalised communities to rest and rejuvenate; or access to psycho-social counselling support. Collective care requires tailored approaches informed by each individual's particular situation and context.

3. A nuanced understanding of care is needed.

Scholarship on collective care is fairly new, especially in the Asia and Pacific regions. More research on collective care practices, and more dialogue with activists from the regions are needed.

Holding space within these forums for sharing the lived experiences of indigenous communities, rather than focusing primarily on numerical results, would help gain a better understanding of the diverse needs of women, trans, and non-binary activists.

Based on these learnings, we continued to invest in existing and new experiments that foster collective care, including building resilience centres and safe houses, creating peer-learning opportunities and referral networks, providing accompaniment and capacity-building support at different stages of building and managing physical infrastructures of collective care, and keeping room for failure by focusing on learning and adapting to ensure these spaces meet the diverse and evolving needs of activists.

Building Resilience Centres in Asia and Pacific

One of our ongoing experiments to foster collective care in our regions is to create and support physical infrastructures of care, which are few and far between in Asia and Pacific. In 2023, we supported three such initiatives in India and Indonesia to set up and run resilience centres, identify defenders and activists from our networks in need of respite,

connect them to the relevant centres, and curate experiences and specific interventions to centre the needs and well-being of activists. This followed our earlier scoping of resilience centres in Asia and Pacific in 2022. Across these initiatives, we learnt aabout what it takes (in terms of human, material, and other resources) to actualise the vision of collective care for activists. We learnt that physical infrastructures often serve larger communities facing conflict and not only human rights activists and defenders.

Physical infrastructure of care that cater to human rights defenders and activists serve as a place for finding and advocating for peace, and a safe space for the expression of identities that are under threat. These initiatives need support and long-term accompaniment to continue to exist and serve the unique needs of defenders. More importantly, and to our earlier point on the emerging infrastructures and narratives around collective care, such initiatives need space for experimentation and rigorous documentation that will further thought leadership on collective care.

Convening **with Care** at the Oasis of Reflection

For many activists, particularly women, trans, and non-binary defenders, fun and play can feel too frivolous and superficial in a world that is fraught with violence and oppression. Reclaiming joy and rest as resistance is a strategy that we invest in and experiment with, internally in our organisation as well as in the larger ecosystem. The idea is to disrupt the scarcity, competitive, and patriarchal production-centred contexts we live in.

The Oasis of Reflection - our flagship convening - was **conceptualised** as a space for rest, individual and collective care, celebration, and connection, where participants can bond, feel cared for, and supported. We held our first virtual convening in late 2021 with the intention to co-create an oasis away from the stress of the pandemic and continuous backlash

faced by human rights activists and defenders. We hoped to recreate this in-person in Nepal in June 2023, curating a convening that would help participants feel a sense of collective care and joy.

Over three days, we communed with 24 women, trans, and non-binary defenders from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, China, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, West Papua, and Fiji to reflect on their experiences, challenges, inspirations, and take time out for collective care, rest, and celebration. They identified and mapped risks, threats, early warning signs, and opportunities faced by activists in their respective contexts, and brainstormed on how UAF A&P can better support them in their journeys.

"We need more feminist workshops for activists to overcome guilt for all that we cannot do; to recognise that it's not our fault. Workshops aid power-sharing and movement building."

**Human Rights Activist
from Asia**

"Our challenges are all interlinked. Even if we are competing for funding and other resources, our sisters' success helps everyone in their work and fight. Feminist solidarity is important."

**Environmental Activist
from South Asia**

In ecology, an oasis is a fertile area of a desert or semi-desert environment that sustains plant life and provides habitat for animals and humans. In the same way, we hope our Oases of Reflection become a fertile space for healing, rejuvenation, connection, and joy for human rights defenders and activists in Asia and the Pacific. Our hope is that being in this space, they are inspired to create their own oases in (and for) their communities.

Sister Funds' Strategic Framework on Crisis and Care

The [Urgent Action Funds](#) are a global consortium of feminist funds that provide support for women and LGBTQI+ human rights defenders across the globe. We collectively support feminist activism in more than 160 countries through rapid response grants, coalition-building, collective care and protection, and feminist advocacy. The [Feminist Principles of Philanthropy](#) is a distillation of our collective learning and visioning. We collaborate to affect change in the traditional power dynamics of funder-grantee relationships and interrogate the way in which privilege manifests in these spaces, including our own.

We believe that feminist crisis response and collective care are two sides of the same coin. Without collective care, we cannot sustain feminist movements and the protection of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders. Collective care is our collective responsibility – a radical and political act that propels us to respond to the holistic needs of human rights activists and their communities to mitigate risks and sustain their activism. It is intersectional and context-specific, and we're committed to supporting activists to strengthen their care practices to respond to risks in an efficient and sustainable way.

"Our politics of practice on care is at the heart of who we are and what we do. It is embodied in our feminist values. Care is both a way of seeing and being in the world, and a decision and commitment to transform it to centering sustainability, well-being, empathy, shared responsibility, reciprocity and joy. To root ourselves in care

is to connect our being with what sustains life in all its dimensions. It is to be aware that our roots are woven into a web of life, between people and interdependent beings."

How Can We Ground Ourselves in Care and Dance Our Revolution?

In 2023, our strategic focus on Crisis and Care was seeded, focusing on leveraging our global convening power, collective data and stories, and shared megaphone to forefront the impact of feminist movements, and demonstrate why collective care must be the bedrock of feminist crisis response. Over the next three years, we will focus on feminist crisis response rooted in collective care. To guide our work, we developed a Strategic Framework on Crisis and Care that is the result of our regional work and learning, as well as collective insights and conversations.

Harvesting Abundance

Philanthropy in the Time of Crises

The visibility of multiple and intersecting crises exploded in 2023 – with political, economic, social, and cultural wars mushrooming in every part of the globe. In Asia and the Pacific, some of these conflicts intersected with long-drawn-out ones, such as in Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, and West Papua. Overlaying these crises is the climate emergency, which is slow-burning in some countries, while in others, is a raging, uncontrollable fire that is likely to stop only when it burns itself out. The impact this has had on philanthropy is the recognition that the global crisis is a ‘new normal,’ and a direct

side-effect of this phenomenon is the increase in demand for crisis and emergency response. While this has meant greater access to resources for frontline defenders, how, when, and to whom these are distributed are political questions that new (crisis response) funders must introspect on.

Feminist crisis response centred on care is an approach that the four Urgent Action Funds have honed over 30 years of working in collaboration with women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders around the world. This shared experience and accompaniment through the arc of all major crises in the world is the foundation of our approach. At UAF A&P, our framing of risk and relationship embraces people and planet in equal measure, recognising

their interdependence. In doing so, we repurpose the tools of flexibility, solidarity, co-responsibility, trust, and love to respond to the many crises in our regions.

In 2023, while we witnessed a slow-down in funding, we saw an increase in conditional resources to countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar. In 2022, at the height of both crises, the flow of resources to both conflicts was high and our experience supporting women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders in both countries became the blueprint for how we moved money from donors to frontline defenders in moments of need. We immediately realised that the more visibility a conflict gets through traditional and new media, as well as its proximity to the economic powerbase of the Global North, the faster the flow of resources for the crisis. For example, in 2022 we transferred USD 1.8 million to Afghanistan, out of which 32% was received from new donors who funded us for that crisis alone. In contrast, in 2023, we secured over USD 550,000 as additional funding for our annual budget from women's funds and foundations dedicated to women's rights and gender equality. These funders are our long-term allies and accomplices.

It is also important to recognize that many funders who continue to courageously support our work are tied by state-enforced sanctions and conditions. As a connector between funders and social justice

movements in our regions, one of our roles is to absorb these risks and compliance rules so that resources can freely flow to frontline defenders. Some examples of these conditions include restrictions on banking systems and Government-proscribed lists used to check every grantee. The time and effort it takes to work through these conditions is becoming a significant obstacle. A direct result of this is the emotional toll this additional layer of compliance takes on our team and is worthy of our attention, even if it is considered an occupational hazard by some.

By the end of 2023, through our new five-year strategic plan, we committed to strengthening our case on why climate, human rights, and humanitarian funders should invest in our feminist crisis response and resource collective care. We also recognised that, as a feminist fund, we need to start accumulating wealth for, and in service of, the feminist movements in our regions. As a result, we recruited a wealth and investment advisor who will help us navigate the capital market, guided by an investment policy co-created by our Board and Co-leads. The policy is centred on building wealth, but not on the backs and at the expense of movements led by women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders. This is an experiment we are excited and nervous about, as it falls outside our comfort zone.

Constructing Worlds Otherwise

Revenue and Expenditure

Total income
received for
the year

USD 4,615,865



We received a total income of USD 4,615,865 in 2023 and disbursed 450 grants amounting to USD 2,399,285. Of this, 17% went to the LBTQI+ community. In response to the extended Afghanistan crisis, we disbursed 75 grants amounting to USD 285,080, and 54 grants amounting to USD 263,645 for Myanmar. In addition, 66 grants totalling USD 328,996 supported environmental and climate justice defenders. We also expanded our Webs of Safety & Care grants totalling USD 385,967 to 54 organisations. Our grants and resilience programmes cost USD 3,379,461 (75% of our total budget), while our experiments and learning processes cost USD 886,046 (19% of our total budget). Our Administration costs included overheads, such as insurance, rent, accounting and legal fees associated with governance and compliance in Australia and the Philippines. The total spend for this was USD 243,310 (6% of our overall budget).

The image features a close-up of a glass pitcher pouring water into a glass. The water is captured in mid-pour, creating a dynamic, flowing shape. The background is a dark, marbled pattern in shades of brown and blue. The text 'Financial Summary' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a light green color.

Financial Summary

1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

Financial Summary - For Use in Annual Report United States Dollar

Income & Expenditure Statement

Income		4,615,865	
Gift from M Scott Foundation		3,900,000	

Expenditure

Grant-Making & Resilience Programmes	3,379,461		75%
Other Programmes	886,046		19%
Administration	243,310		6%
Surplus (Deficit)		107,049	

Statement of Financial Position

Assets

Bank Accounts	7,491,556	
Current Assets	533,181	
Fixed Assets	7,797	8,032,534

Liabilities

Current Liabilities	984,476	
Donations In Advance for 2024	1,128,983	
Non-Current Liabilities	4,099	2,117,558

Net Assets

Equity

Accumulated surplus/ (losses)	3,768,548	
Reserve - Deferred Income	521,666	
Reserve - Statutory Accounts	1,624,762	
		5,914,976


2023

A Thousand Shapes, A Thousand Forms




**URGENT ACTION
FUND**
FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS
ASIA & PACIFIC

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