

Terms of Reference - Feminist research & field-building consultant(s)

DEADLINE TO APPLY - 15 MAY 2025

The Urgent Action Fund, Asia & the Pacific (UAF A&P) is recruiting a research & field-building consultant(s), individually or as a team, to conduct research from a decolonial feminist framework to offer an articulation and vision of collective care that comes from our region, and to communicate this vision globally.

Context

UAF A&P is a feminist fund that supports women, trans, and non-binary activists and movements in Asia and the Pacific by co-creating a safe environment for them to sustain their work and thrive. Guided by feminist values, we provide individuals, organisations, and their communities with urgent grants and strategic support to strengthen their safety and well-being. Since our establishment in 2018, we have given over USD 10 million in grants across 34 countries in our region.

In a context of grief and loss during the pandemic, UAF A&P recognised the importance of connection during crisis and used it as a nudge to strengthen our commitment to collective care. We began with the assumption that collective care, beyond self-care, is a key ingredient for movements and their sustainability, starting with concepts such as wellbeing, respite, and connection. This opened up a new set of possibilities as we continued on our organisational journey of putting care at the centre.

We developed our Enabling Defenders (ED) programme on the heels of the pandemic, beginning with the Oasis of Care convenings, which aimed to find a way to 'convene differently' with activists. In 2021, UAF A&P's Webs of Safety and Care (WSC) grants, as part of the ED programme, began translating an early vision of 'collective care' into practice by providing collective care as a tactical offering to activists and movements.

The WSC grant supports women, trans, and non-binary organisations and their networks with resources to strengthen their response to the risks and threats they face in their work. The framework situates activists and their work holistically, defining four dimensions of safety and care (and therefore risk): social and cultural support, legal and political protection, economic viability and sustainable livelihood, and health and wellbeing. These dimensions are practised by individuals, organisations, and communities and apply across the personal, relational, and contextual realms.

To date, we have provided 75 WSC grants in 18 countries. Three years into our WSC grantmaking, the task ahead is to deepen our understanding of collective care in Asia and the Pacific, collectivise the lessons, the knowledge held by activists and movements in our region, and communicate this learning externally to contribute to field-building on collective care.

Despite the use of the terminology of collective care and its rise in feminist spaces globally, its cultural relevance to Asia and the Pacific is under-explored. As a political endeavor, we can understand collective care as an alternative to capitalist patriarchal ways of being and relating, and is intrinsically about transformation -- that another world is possible. However, the ways of talking about care as a concept in English do not necessarily resonate with our contexts. The understanding of collective care as an alternative political ethos is also complemented by its application as a set of practices within social movements as a strategy for sustaining the work and ensuring the wellbeing of activists.

We recognise the importance of not watering down the political endeavor into 'practices' that help provide only coping mechanisms to patch up the failure of institutions in caring for people. At the same time, women, trans, and non-binary activists are dealing with challenges such as burnout and exhaustion in the immediate plane of reality, which involve crisis and risk. They must simultaneously situate themselves in a world that they are trying to challenge and change.

For UAF A&P, this operational context poses a set of questions as we navigate ways of ensuring that activists and movements can continue their work safely and sustainably. A key challenge is to not prescribe top-down concepts of collective care to communities and movements (i.e., 'translate' existing theories of collective care into culturally relevant forms), but to collect and share the existing knowledge from the ground up. It is from these starting points that we see the need to deepen and critically examine the concept of collective care to ensure it is accountable to activists and movements.

Scope of work

This project will centre UAF A&P's values and work with methodologies that speak to collective care. This means exploring decolonial feminist methodologies and working with grounded theory, and staying accountable to grantee partners. Beginning with desk research to understand what knowledge already exists about collective care, we will build out a qualitative research methodology that speaks to our research questions (please refer to the concept note for further context).

It is critical for this project to find the methodologies that can work towards our tensions and questions. The methodology will centre the knowledge held by UAF A&P's WSC grantee partners by looking at both existing data and knowledge that UAF A&P holds, such as grantee reports, learning documentation, and staff experiences, as well as conduct additional data collection with grantee partners through creative and participatory methods. Where possible, the research should draw from multiple ways of knowing and engage with multi-lingual modalities, drawing from the diversity of our region as a strength rather than a limitation.

On the basis of our WSC grantmaking, the consultant(s) will work closely with UAF A&P's staff, advisors, and grantee partners throughout all phases of the project. Rather than being limited to 'participation', we hope that the project will engage feminist knowledge systems in its collectivity, engaging in processes such as collective sensemaking, validation, and completing the feedback loop to our partners.

Key deliverables and timeline

1. Inception report - The consultant(s) should propose a methodology and provide a brief literature review. (Jul 2025)
2. Final report - We envision a written report that provides a comprehensive overview of the research, context, methodologies, and ways forward. (Draft ready by Dec 2025, finalisation by early 2026)
3. External communications (e.g. article) - The findings of the research may be written up as an op-ed or other editorial and pitched to media outlets addressing specific audiences (e.g. Alliance Magazine or other related publication). We may explore other ways of

communicating the results, for example through social media, art, or other creative modalities.
(early 2026)

Other deliverables may be added as the project develops and according to the consultant's availability and proposed methodology and outputs.

Qualifications

- Familiarity with knowledge production using grounded theory and utilising decolonial feminist methodologies
- Ability to think critically, write clearly, and distill abstract ideas into accessible language and formats
- Understands the risks and security concerns of activists, and is able to uphold confidentiality and data security requirements
- Familiarity with the geographical, linguistic, cultural, historical, religious, ecosocial diversity of our region
- Is willing to expand and challenge their own understandings of the concepts we work with, and challenge us
- Must be inclusive towards trans, intersex, and non-binary defenders
- Experience with activism in our region a plus
- Knowledge of a language/languages other than English a plus

The consultant(s) should be familiar with research as a method of knowledge production while also recognising that research has been historically extractive and harmful for many communities in our region. They should also be willing to push the boundaries of what has been accepted as research and experiment with creative methodologies, while also being able to communicate the results concretely to an external audience.

UAF A&P works with and from a diverse set of contexts, both regionally and in terms of lived experience. We are interested in recruiting a team of 2-3 consultants that represent the diversity of our region and come with complementary skill sets. Applicants may apply as a team or as individuals, with the expectation that UAF A&P may match individual applicants to work together.

How to apply

Interested applicants should submit a proposal to info@uafanp.org by **15 May 2025**.

The proposal should outline an initial methodology, timeline, budget, team composition (if applicable and including - names, pronouns, current roles, short background, and location of all team members), and answer the following questions:

- What does decolonial feminist research mean to you, and what is your proposed methodology?
- How will your positionality affect the research, in terms of power and subjectivity?
- What would be an exciting way to communicate the results of a project like this, in addition to a written report?
- Budget
- Timeline