

Fund for Gender Equality

Annual Report 2018-2019



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Annual Report 2018-2019

Contents

05	Foreword
06	An Ever-Evolving Feminist Grantmaking Programme
12	Women's Civil Society Organizations of the Future
18	2018 Key Results and Highlights
22	Africa
24	Americas and the Carribean
26	Arab States
28	Asia and the Pacific
30	Europe and Central Asia
32	In Focus: "Re-think. Experiment." Where Social Innovation Meets Feminist Programming
44	In Focus: South-South Cooperation
48	Soaring to New Heights after the FGE
50	<i>In My View</i> . Op-eds from FGE partners
54	List of Grantees

Foreword

Ten years ago, a bold vision became a lived reality.

The Government of Spain bravely told the world it was not doing enough for the most vulnerable women and girls. Spain made a commitment to do more, US\$ 65 million to be exact. The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) was born.

A decade later, we at the FGE are proud of our work, our partnerships and our results.

Our feminist grantmaking, backed by the United Nations and centred on women's civil society organizations, has brought real change for women and girls. It has pushed forward lasting advances in political and economic empowerment around the globe.

To share just some of the victories:

In Mexico, the political landscape has shifted drastically in part due to FGE-assisted advocacy and training. Today, Mexico boasts the **second highest percentage of women representatives in Parliament, globally.**

In India, through an FGE grant, 8,000 Dalit women **broke out of a form of modern slavery** entailing the cleaning of human waste from dry latrines.

Domestic workers in Brazil have organized to claim their rights. FGE grantees drove national adoption of an ILO convention that stipulates decent terms for compensation, working conditions and other fundamentals, protecting the existing 7 million domestic workers, mostly indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

The FGE has been a courageous experiment with other similar initiatives of large magnitude following suit. The European Union and United Nations Spotlight initiative have made a €500 million commitment to end violence against women. Canada's newly announced Equality Fund will invest CAD\$ 300 million to leverage funds of more than CAD\$ 1 billion for women's organizations and movements in the Global South. The Government of the Netherlands has established a series of funds and injected over €200 million to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

We applaud these efforts, and urge more donors and United Nations Member States to follow suit and invest in the power of women.

We might not know the future, but we have the legacy of our past and the momentum of the present to carry forward and continue to find new and innovative ways to achieve gender equality by 2030, a central commitment of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In solidarity,

The FGE Team (listed alphabetically):

Elimane Bousso, Sara de la Peña Espin, Rana El Houjeiri, Caroline Horekens, Nancy Khweiss, Eugenia Lollini, Cynthia Sjamsu and Catherine Wolf.

An Ever-Evolving Feminist Grantmaking Programme



The FGE has one guiding purpose: to support national, women-led civil society organizations in achieving women's economic and political empowerment and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As UN Women's global grantmaking programme dedicated to working with civil society, the FGE transforms financing from diverse donors into high-impact initiatives led by women. We invest in their ideas and abilities to pursue interventions benefitting women and girls most at risk of being left behind. Almost 97 per cent of projects target at least one vulnerable group, and 70 per cent involve two or more groups.

01

Our Grantmaking Principles

The FGE embraces an empowerment philosophy rooted in its feminist core values. It applies this approach to both its grantmaking model and the practices of its team. It does not simply award grants. Instead, using a validated methodology, it comprehensively engages with grantees to achieve greater and more lasting impacts that extend far beyond the lifecycle of the grant.



Looking forward

To maintain the highest standards of quality, transparency and impact, the FGE has regularly refined its grantmaking to better respond to grantees' needs.

In 2018 and 2019, the FGE embarked on several processes of research, self-reflection, analysis and experimentation. It drew lessons on how it can become a more effective catalyst for women's organizations of the future, such as through redefining donor-grantee relationships, fostering women-centred project design and prioritizing organizational strengthening for grantees.



The project funded by the FGE took us to new places we had never been before. The technical assistance, the exchanges with other grantees and the political support were extremely useful.

**Valentina Zendejas,
Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir,
Mexico**

The FGE is a unique fund that recognizes the importance of the production of feminist knowledge through alternative and innovative tools.

**Maissan Hassan,
Women and Memory Forum, Egypt**

Thank You to Our 2018-2019 Partners!

Active Donors

Governments: Germany, Israel

Private and Philanthropic Sector: Fondation Chanel

UN Women National Committee: United Kingdom

Founding Donor: Spain

Key Past Donors: Japan, The Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland

**Technical Partners: UNDP, Parsons, School of Design,
Columbia University, former UN Behavioural Insights Unit**

Women's Civil Society Organizations of the Future



Through a research-action initiative, the FGE is generating knowledge on women's organizations - their challenges, needs and promising practices for sustainability and resilience. Using design methodologies, UN Women and civil society representatives have co-created four solutions. Testing them and learning from the findings will help the FGE better support its key constituency.

02

Women-led civil society organizations play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality. Yet amid shrinking space for civil society and increased competition for limited funding, they must adapt, innovate and transform the way they operate. This may encompass rethinking their programming, management style, funding models, and mobilization and partnership strategies.

Funded by the Government of Denmark through UN Women's Innovation Unit and in collaboration with the Parsons School of Design, the FGE's research-action initiative explores new support modalities aligned with current and future needs. It aims to address the following question:

How might the FGE and UN Women at large better support women's organizations to stay relevant, and be agile, resilient and sustainable agents of change in ever-changing, complex contexts?



During the workshop we built conditions to promote experimentation. Continuous exploration paired with collective reflection must be integrated in feminist action processes. Opening new spaces, new methodologies, new ways to do and be – all are essential in the creation of alternatives for a more inclusive society.

**Kemly Camacho,
Cooperativa Sulá Batsú, Costa Rica**

Rethinking resource mobilization for more sustainable organizations is critical for women and girls to thrive in the future. The workshop was a great opportunity to step back as women's rights and gender development practitioners and take a look at what the future could hold for feminists.

**Moiyattu Banya,
Girls Empowerment Sierra Leone (GESL)**

In order to be a positive force to promote gender equality, donors need to do more listening and learning. That is why FGE's effort to engage women's rights organizations in free-flowing and creative brainstorming on innovative ways to support in different contexts is so crucial.

**Joanne Sandler,
Gender at Work**



Preliminary analysis has confirmed that the most significant challenge faced by women's civil society organizations is insufficient funding. Other limitations include short project timeframes and difficult operating contexts. Philanthropic entities are the main source of funding, although many organizations generate their own resources. Most organizations are willing to explore alternative programmatic, funding and organizational approaches, such as decentralized and flatter organizational structures, and co-creation with beneficiaries.



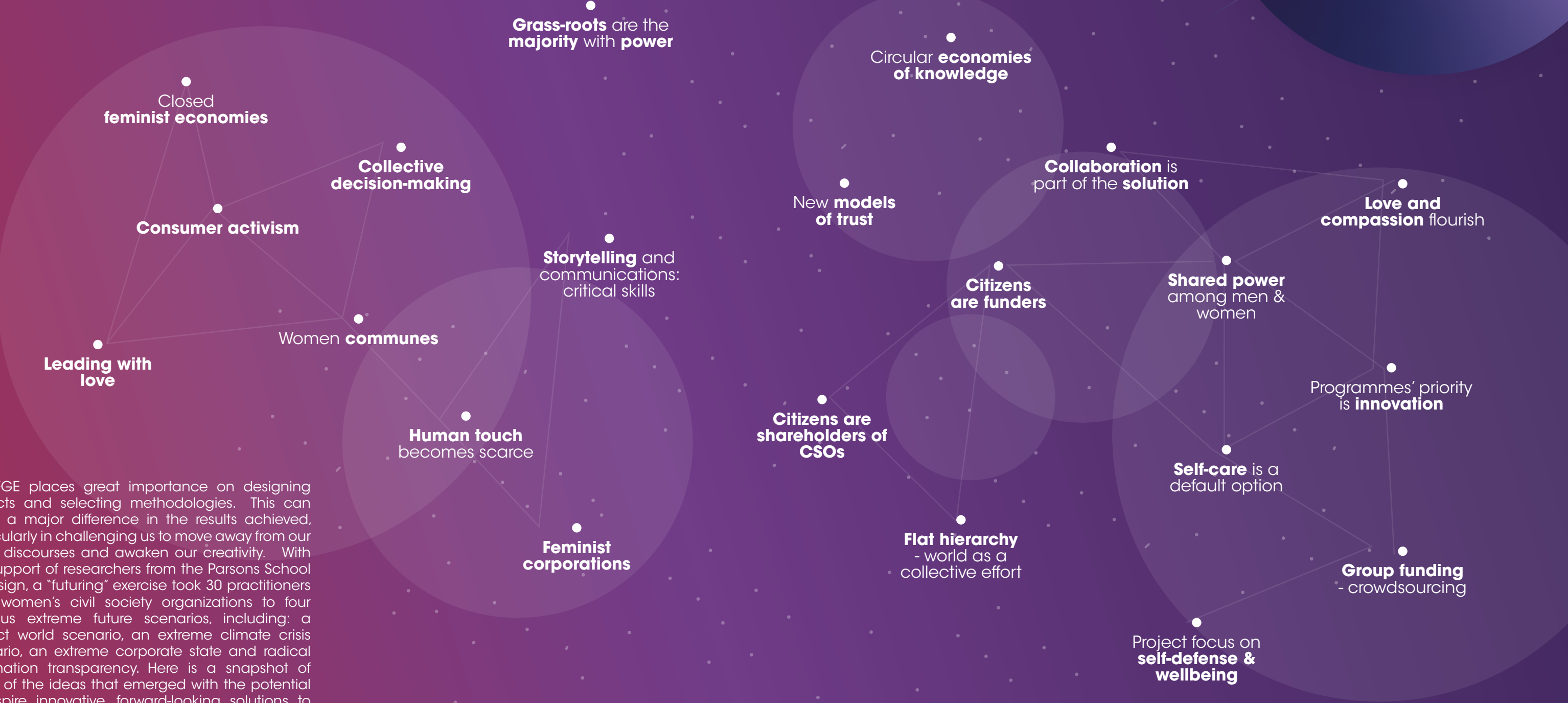
More specifically, the research identified:

- Challenges such as competition for funds, dependency on donor funding, donor-driven agendas, project-to-project funding and work overload
- Needs, including to expand networks and space for reflection, experimentation and growth
- Solutions among women’s organizations, such as the diversification of funding sources (e.g., consultancy-based model, selling materials or renting spaces)
- Solutions among donors, such as more accessible funding, application and reporting processes, and diversification of grants, including for organizational effectiveness and for smaller organizations

In a prototyping workshop using design innovation methodologies, practitioners from UN Women, women’s civil society organizations and other experts co-created possible solutions for better support to organizations. Four solutions are being tested.

In Mexico, an inclusive and feminist human resource successful approach will be turned into consultancy services for other civil society organizations by offering step-by-step guidance on a replicable and upscalable model, as an alternative source of income. In Rwanda, a virtual support network for women’s organizations and social entrepreneurs will harness existing resources, knowledge and skills, using a mentorship model. In Viet Nam, an adaptable meeting binder will foster new ways of working and a creative mindset. Globally, a co-created grantmaking modality will challenge the existing donor-grantee relationship and seek to better address organizational challenges.

Exploring Future Scenarios



The FGE places great importance on designing projects and selecting methodologies. This can make a major difference in the results achieved, particularly in challenging us to move away from our usual discourses and awaken our creativity. With the support of researchers from the Parsons School of Design, a “futuring” exercise took 30 practitioners from women’s civil society organizations to four fictitious extreme future scenarios, including: a perfect world scenario, an extreme climate crisis scenario, an extreme corporate state and radical information transparency. Here is a snapshot of some of the ideas that emerged with the potential to inspire innovative, forward-looking solutions to organizations’ current and future challenges.

2018 Key Results and Highlights



Results-based management helps FGE grantee partners track progress towards their ultimate objective: navigating complex issues and societal norms to achieve a more equitable world by 2030. Here are key aggregate results from the past year, as well as some examples of project results and a few real-life stories of empowerment and change for inspiration.

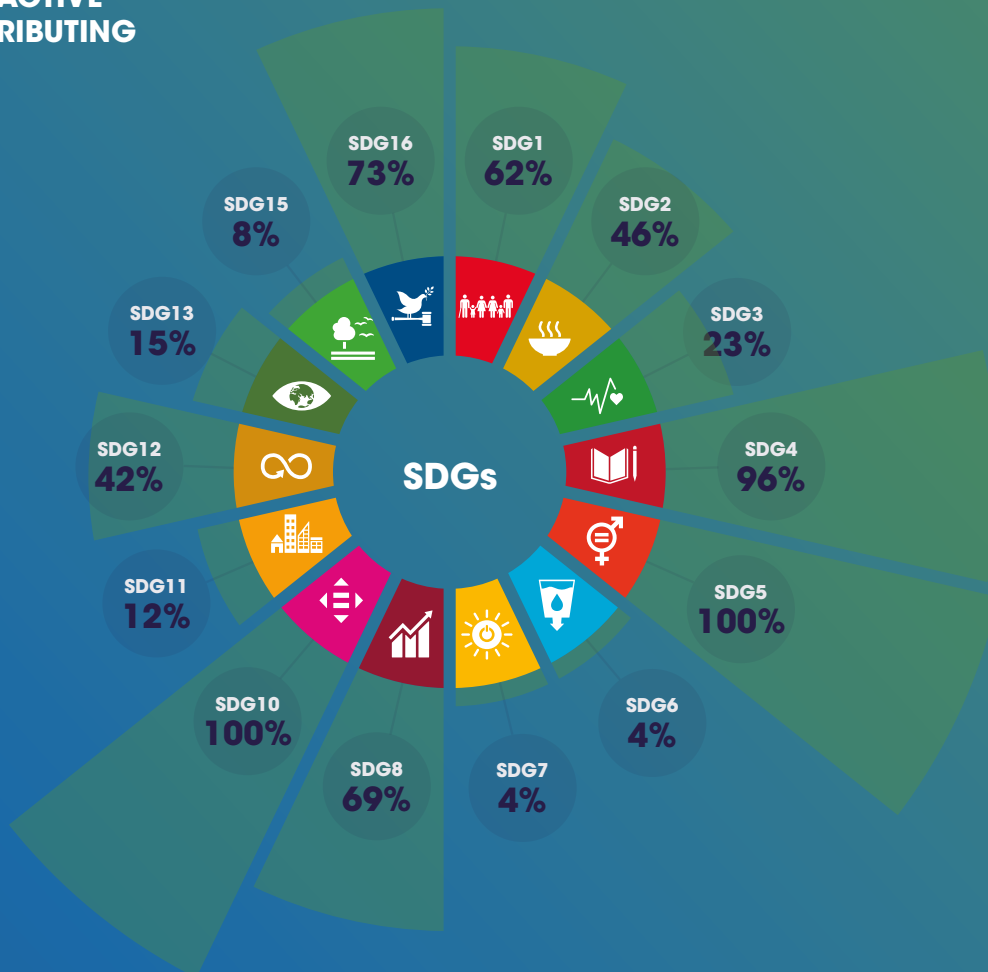
03

GLOBAL PROGRESS at a Glance

2018
ACTIVE PORTFOLIO

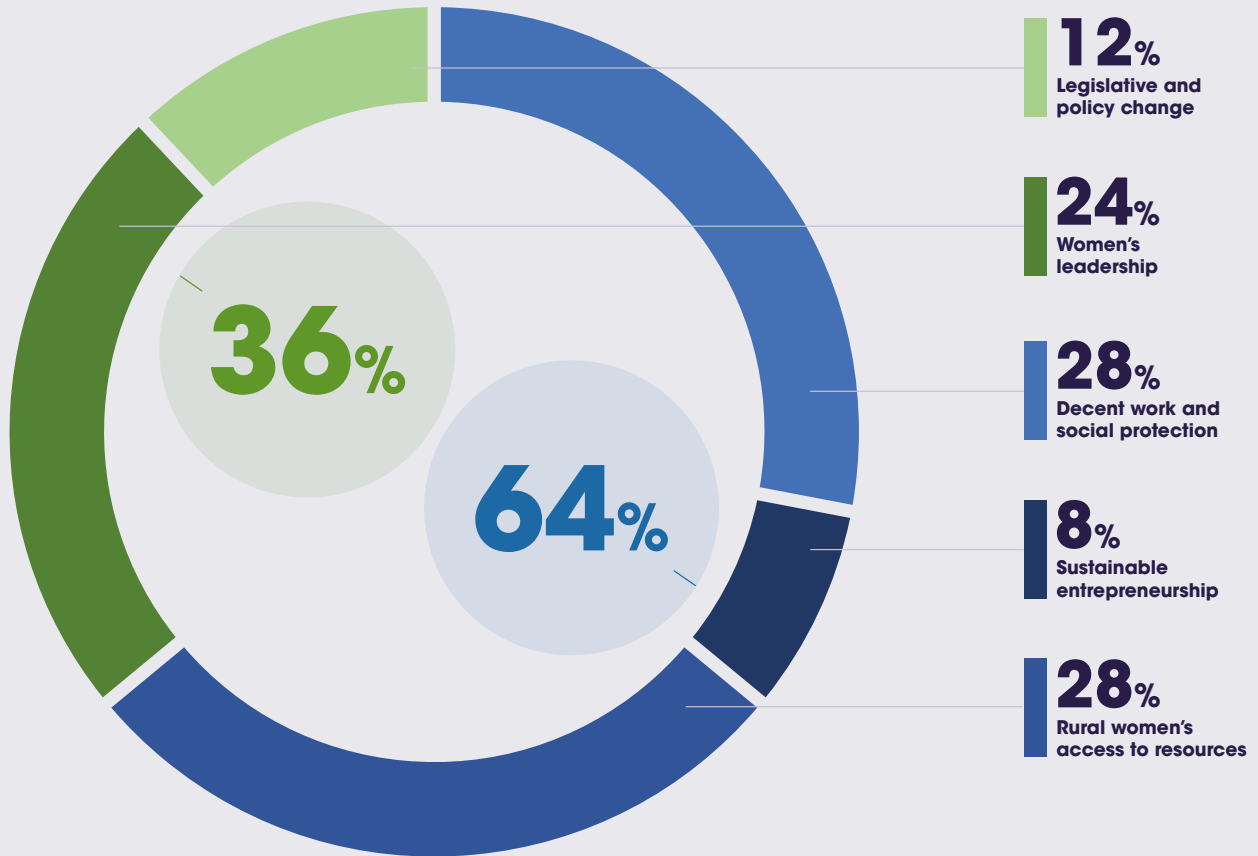


PERCENTAGE OF ACTIVE
PROJECTS CONTRIBUTING
TO EACH SDG

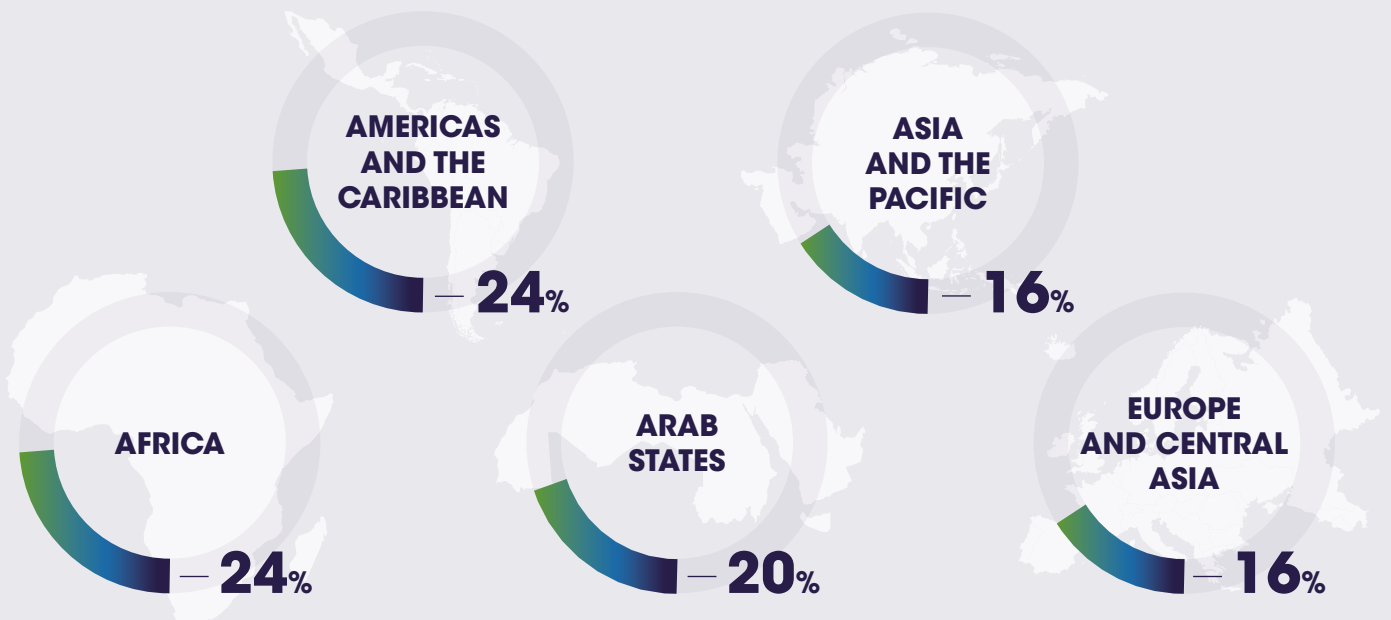


THEMATIC AREAS

- Political empowerment - 9 projects
- Economic empowerment - 16 projects



GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION



DIRECT RESULTS GLOBALLY

from 2018 active projects

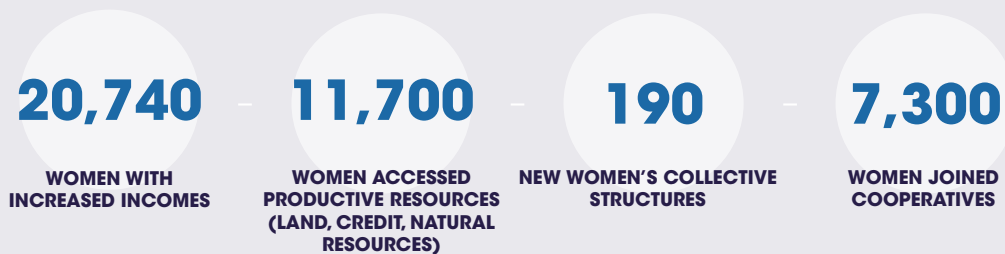
BENEFICIARIES



OVERALL RESULTS



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT



Africa

In **Tanzania**, trainings, sensitization and capacity-development sessions provided by the Pastoral Women's Council, an FGE grantee, empowered 6,120 pastoralist Maasai women. They started or grew businesses, improved their livelihoods and gained greater control over decision-making related to their households, land and natural resources. Achieving targets up to eight times larger than original baselines, the project established 64 active women's microcredit groups in 2018 using the Village Community Bank methodology, helping women save over US\$ 82,300. Through support and guidance to four women's *bomas*, or self-managed livestock solidarity groups, over 500 Maasai women increased their access to over 107,230 hectares of land.

Nigeria's 2006 National Gender Policy requires that women occupy a minimum of 35 per cent of elected and appointed government positions. Yet they only hold less than 6 per cent of seats in Parliament. FGE grantee Alliances for Africa (AfA) is training women candidates so they are better equipped to win elections. It has created a nation-wide network of more than 2,500 women politicians and political aspirants, secured the support of over 50 male politicians and 9 political parties as allies, and increased the abilities of 30 civil society organizations to advocate for women's greater role in politics.

2018 Active Portfolio

6

PROJECTS

7

COUNTRIES

US\$ 2.2

MILLION
PORTFOLIO
VALUE

22,000

DIRECT
BENEFICIARIES



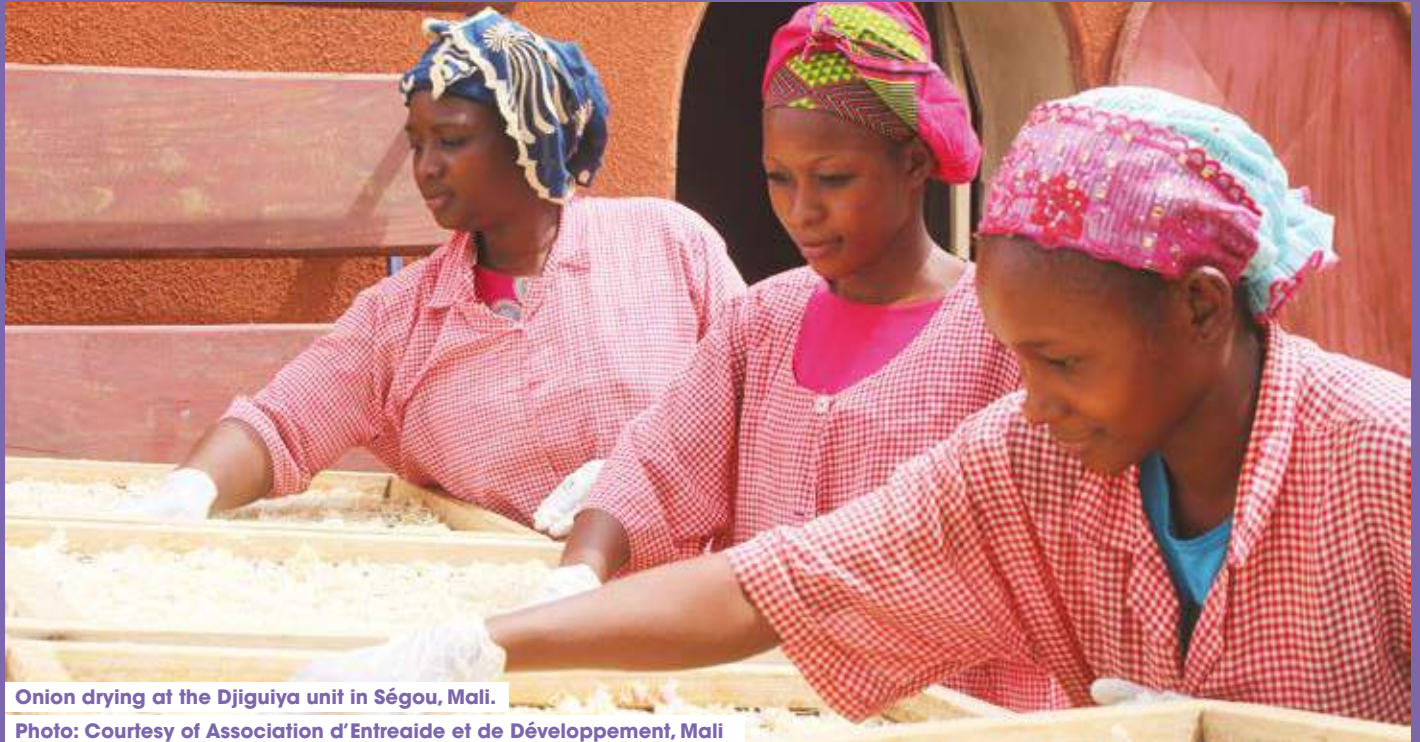
Maasai women from a micro-credit group applying new beading skills for higher product value.

Photo: Courtesy of Pastoral Women's Council, Tanzania

STORY OF EMPOWERMENT

Mali

Coming together to claim rights and well-being



Onion drying at the Djiguiya unit in Ségou, Mali.

Photo: Courtesy of Association d'Entraide et de Développement, Mali

The local authorities in Ségou, Mali, had contacted small agri-business entrepreneur Mariam Kouyaté several times about the poor quality of her products. Despite having attended various trainings, she struggled to sell them. It was only when she approached one of the multifunctional resource centres created by the Association d'Entraide et de Développement (AED) through an FGE grant that she learned food processing techniques that allowed her to access new markets. "Today, my products have a better quality and are sold in many places. I am currently serving eight businesses with them," she says.

In Mali's Sikasso and Ségou regions, 750 rural women entrepreneurs like Mariam have increased their incomes through services provided by the centres. New revenue has allowed 360 of them, including women with disabilities and women heads of household, to become financially independent.

In a country ranking 156th out of 183 nations on the world Gender Inequality Index, rural women farmers face many challenges to develop and sell their products, act as entrepreneurs and advocate for their rights.

The provision of technical skills alone is not enough. For that reason, AED for the past three years has been helping women come together to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and tools for their businesses to flourish. It also encourages them to become staunch advocates for their rights. The organization has assisted over 1,800 women to band together in agricultural cooperatives. Networks of women promoters of agricultural and food production known as REPUTARs provide space to learn and apply advocacy strategies.

Namaro Coulibaly, President of a REPUTAR in Sikasso, used to struggle to negotiate with local authorities. After attending AED workshops on women's rights, leadership and advocacy, she was able to persuade the Regional Council to reserve two facilities worth US\$ 60,000 for the operation of an agri-food processing business that employs 25 women. "The workshops contributed, without a doubt," reflects Namaro, who points out that the women's products now reach new markets in Mali as well as Burkina Faso.

A cohort of 50 women leaders participate in community debates and actively advocate for the rights of women entrepreneurs, with results including new policies giving women ownership of farmland. AED's larger public awareness efforts are estimated to have reached half a million Malians, ensuring that they know women have rights.

Americas and the Caribbean

Almost 400 women working in garment or textile factories in northern **Honduras** learned to advocate for their labour rights and contest workplace abuses through trainings provided by an FGE grantee, the Colectivo de Mujeres Hondureñas (CODEMUH). They reached out to co-workers and took collective action against low wages, “flexible” or no contracts, and sweatshop conditions. CODEMUH provided legal aid to 130 women workers, and medical assessments to 100 suffering from occupational diseases. This helped women win over 70 percent of cases brought to the Honduran Institute of Social Security, gaining compensation for work-related illnesses and the rehiring of wrongfully terminated workers.

Across rural Saint-Michel-de-l’Atalaye in **Haiti**, 1,440 women boosted agricultural productivity by learning organic farming. The Solidarité des Femmes Haïtiennes (SOFA), an FGE grantee, provided training as well as agricultural equipment, and encouraged women to join cooperatives. Aware of the disproportionate suffering of women farmers after major natural catastrophes, SOFA also created a bank of organic seeds to provide a safety net.

2018 Active Portfolio

6

PROJECTS

6

COUNTRIES

US\$ 2

MILLION
PORTFOLIO
VALUE

14,300

DIRECT
BENEFICIARIES



STORY OF EMPOWERMENT

Bolivia

Building a future in a dynamic industry



María Martha Gutiérrez during a break at work in La Paz municipality.

Photo: Courtesy of Red Hábitat, Bolivia

When María Martha Gutiérrez shared her idea of becoming a construction worker with her husband, he discouraged her. "You are going to have a hard time in an industry where women are not welcome," he said. Those words stayed in her mind but did not deter her.

María Martha had faced challenges before. A mother of four, she had her first baby at the age of 17. Coming from a low-income family, she began working in her early teenage years, first, as a nanny, and then as a cook and a cleaner, before becoming a construction worker.

"I started the job to meet the economic needs of my family, but also because, as opposed to other sectors, you know that you are going to get paid," she says.

Construction is one of the most dynamic and crucial parts of the Bolivian economy, absorbing around 8.8 per cent of the national workforce or 471,000 workers, according to the International Labour Organization. Even though women only account for 4.5 per cent of the total construction workforce, more and more are entering it. Like María Martha, most are indigenous women who head their household and have little or no education.

Red Hábitat, an FGE grantee that is well known in Bolivia for its fight for equality and against discrimination, has

encouraged women construction workers, helping them learn to master their trades and stand up for their rights.

María Martha is currently employed with a construction company linked to a local municipality of the city of La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. "Trainings helped me to get a salary increase," she says. Further, she is now firmly convinced that there is not a single thing that men can do better than women. Both at work and with her family, she feels valued and respected.

As members of the Association of Women Construction Workers (ASOMUC), María Martha and other colleagues participated in 2018 in Bolivia's first national meeting of women construction workers. They developed proposals for equal pay and compulsory trainings for men and women construction workers, as well as gender-segregated bathrooms and dressing rooms in the workplace to reduce high rates of sexual harassment. Negotiations with authorities have started, and María Martha hopes to see these aspirations become a reality in the near future.

On a personal level, she dreams of becoming a professor of construction management who can help other women workers achieve their economic independence.

Arab States

In **Yemen**, the Youth Leadership Development Foundation, an FGE grantee, organized a national conference drawing more than 380 political party members and leaders to examine challenges for women in politics. The conference adopted an action plan with recommendations to shift parties towards greater gender sensitivity. Six out of seven parties signed on, agreeing to enhance women's participation in their ranks, encourage women as leaders, and advocate for women's rights in party agendas. Three of the seven political parties have formally integrated changes in their bylaws.

In eight governorates in **Egypt**, the Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) used an FGE grant to establish a network linking the National Council for Women, political parties, NGOs, universities and community development associations. Together, they galvanized 10,000 citizens and 1,200 university students to talk about gender equality, and challenge the obstacles keeping women out of political roles. A media campaign and communications materials with colourful illustrations and colloquial language mobilized activists from all walks of life. Learning programmes for 100 young women from professional syndicates, trade unions, NGOs, universities and political parties helped a new generation build leadership and advocacy skills to break remaining barriers.

2018 Active Portfolio

5

PROJECTS

5

COUNTRIES

US\$ 1.7

MILLION
PORTFOLIO
VALUE

13,600

DIRECT
BENEFICIARIES



Participant in a national conference sharing her perspective on the barriers women face within political party structures.

Photo: Courtesy of Youth Leadership Development Foundation, Yemen / Ameen Nasher

STORY OF EMPOWERMENT

Lebanon

Becoming a true businesswoman



Ibtissam Jaber collecting sumac berries to use in the products she sells.

Photo: Courtesy of the Lebanon Family Planning Association for Development & Family Empowerment / Mohammad Fawaz

At first, Ibtissam Jaber, 46 and a mother of seven, was hesitant to join her village's newly established agricultural cooperative. Her husband did not like the idea of her working outside the home and initially forbade her to become a member.

In rural communities in southern Lebanon, prevalent social norms perceive men as the primary breadwinners for the household. Women bear the responsibility for child-rearing, domestic duties and other forms of unpaid labour. These factors, along with limited access to financial credit, vocational education and local leadership, significantly hinder women's control over their economic resources.

Yet Ibtissam was eager to contribute to her household income, especially after hearing her friends' stories of growth in a women-led environment. After some convincing, her husband agreed to let her join the cooperative, organized by the Lebanon Family Planning Association for Development and Family Empowerment (LFPAD), an FGE grantee. She soon learned to prepare and conserve food products with attractive packaging, and to use social media to promote products for sale.

LFPAD trains rural women like Ibtissam to produce, innovate, brand and market traditional Lebanese foods. An agri-food line emerging from four newly founded cooperatives, NESWA, allows women to sell their products to national and regional markets under a competitive business model and consolidated social enterprise.

So far, the project has helped 300 women transition from being small-scale, home-based producers to full-scale, market-competitive entrepreneurs. "This year, I sold at a very well-known agri-food exhibition in Beirut," Ibtissam exclaims. "Every morning I woke up, sent my children to school and then traveled to Beirut—like a true businesswoman!"

Her products generated US\$ 4,000. "Never in my life had I imagined I would earn so much money," she says. "When I used to sell only from home, I only earned US\$ 200 per week."

Savings have allowed her to invest in new production materials, pay for her children's school fees and cover other daily expenses.

Ibtissam can also point to changes in family dynamics in her household. "Gender relations have improved. My husband became more flexible," she says. "And now, one of my daughters is following my footsteps and wants to become a member of the cooperative as well!"

All of these gains have encouraged Ibtissam to help other women by training them as agri-entrepreneurs. She teaches well-honed techniques to produce pickled olives, molasses and jams, working for another former FGE grantee, the Amel Association.

Asia and the Pacific

As an FGE grantee, Banteay Srei has provided essential capital, materials and technology to empower rural women in **Cambodia's** Battambang and Siem Reap provinces. More than 200 women generated new income streams from agriculture and livestock, on their own as well as through specialized cooperatives. Some trained as beauticians and tailors, and started their own businesses. Food security and health have improved, and young women have found the economic security to delay marriage at a very young age.

The Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), in partnership with sister organizations, has applied an FGE grant to accelerate progress in women's political representation in **Bangladesh, India, Nepal** and **Sri Lanka** especially among marginalized Dalit women. Joint advocacy campaigns with Dalit women activists, media visibility, and evidence-based research to highlight policy gaps and possible alternatives galvanized national attention. The most recent elections saw a significant milestone; almost 14,400 out of 35,000 local elected representatives were women, half of whom were Dalit women.

2018 Active Portfolio



A Banteay Srei project participant growing vegetables in Pong Teuk village.

Photo: Courtesy of Banteay Srei, Cambodia

STORY OF EMPOWERMENT

Samoa

Embracing new norms to end the harm of old traditions



Luisa Siasoi (left); Lina Chang, President of SVSG (centre) and Faauu Maoama (right) holding a scholarship cheque to support Faauu's university studies.

Photo: Courtesy of SVSG, Samoa

Faauu Maoama is a young woman from Satitoo, a coastal village on Upolu, Samoa's second largest island. She is one of four daughters of Luisa Siasoi, whose life has been shaped by being a Nofotane woman.

The term usually refers to Samoan indigenous women marrying outside their home village—and it has traditionally been associated with stark discrimination. Nofotane women are often denied any voice in decision-making, have limited access to paid employment and are highly vulnerable to domestic abuse. "I remember my mom's struggle to provide us with basic needs. For her, living day by day was the priority, not my education," says Faauu.

Fortunately, her mother came across the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG), an FGE grantee. She became one of 5,200 Nofotane women in 182 villages who took part in livelihood trainings and gained links to job markets. The SVSG also raised awareness among 630 employers on their legal responsibilities when employing the women.

As a result, Nofotane women now increasingly appear in jobs that are productive, secure and deliver a fair income. Over 80 per cent of sensitized employers have legally registered their employees, thus allowing Nofotane women workers to access entitlements and protection under the Samoan labour and employment relations regulations.

While traditionally community leaders would not have permitted Faauu's mother to join the livelihood trainings, this time, the men of the Satitoo village council endorsed the exercise. SVSG's persistent outreach to village leaders has made 2,100 of them vocal advocates of the women's inclusion in family and village matters.

Everything she learned made Faauu's mother rethink the importance of skills and education, and she encouraged her daughter to study hard. In 2018, Faauu enrolled at the National University of Samoa with a scholarship from an SVSG partner. "My mother's positive attitude is my source of inspiration," she says.

Europe and Central Asia

The number of women in leadership positions in **Albania's** State Police and Ministry of Defense increased following Government adoption of the first-ever National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security. The approval of the plan in 2018 was the result of years of advocacy and activism led by FGE grantee Shoqata e Grave me Probleme Sociale (AWSP). It mobilized civil society organizations working on Resolution 1325 to unify their advocacy under a powerful umbrella coalition.

In **Turkey**, the "POWER Project" of the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), an FGE grantee, mobilized 260 volunteer trainers to work with 3,000 young women from Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir. They cultivated leadership skills, improved literacy and gained greater awareness of decision-making processes. Participants have shared what they learned in their own communities by conducting peer trainings and becoming community leaders. Complementary training of municipal officials and NGO representatives instilled a new sense of their roles in backing women's participation in decision-making.

2018 Active Portfolio

4

PROJECTS

4

COUNTRIES

US\$ 1.3

MILLION
PORTFOLIO
VALUE

6,000

DIRECT
BENEFICIARIES



Official launch of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in Tirana, Albania on 31 October 2018.

Photo: UN Women / Yilka Parllakuaption

STORY OF EMPOWERMENT

Kyrgyz Republic

Navigating her way out of vulnerability



Sahiba posing outside of her house.

Photo: UN Women / Catherine Wolf

When Sahiba tested positive for HIV in her early forties, her world was turned upside down. To seek medical care, she had to leave her factory job in Russia to go home to the Kyrgyz Republic, which meant finding another way to support her two daughters.

Soon after returning home, Sahiba was diagnosed with a tumor. At the hospital, medical staff discriminated against her due to her HIV status. As medical bills and overdue rent payments piled up, she did not know where to turn.

Her story is unfortunately not uncommon. In the Kyrgyz Republic, women are often limited to lower paying jobs and face much higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts. Women living with HIV struggle with additional obstacles from high levels of stigma.

The AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW), an FGE grantee, promotes the social and economic empowerment of vulnerable women in the Kyrgyz Republic, including those living with HIV, single mothers, partners of drug users and former prisoners. Since 2017, it has brought together 27

public and private organizations in a referral network. It links vulnerable women to 650 services through a trained cohort of 32 state and civil society social workers. Almost 100 vulnerable women have accessed medical, social, legal and employment services, and 25 have found employment.

One is Sahiba. Through AFEW, Sahiba received psychosocial counselling to help her cope with her HIV diagnosis. She learned about her rights as well as the basics of financial management, entrepreneurship and how to develop a business plan.

With the support of her finance coach, Sahiba drafted a proposal and was awarded a grant to start a small business producing peanut butter. She now supports not only herself but also her two daughters and newborn granddaughter, and dreams of expanding her business to include chickpea paste, too.

Looking to the future, Sahiba says, "Now I am sure that I want to live. And I am totally sure that I am talented enough to make my dreams come true."

In Focus: “Re-think. Experiment.” Where Social Innovation Meets Feminist Programming



In 2018, the FGE tried its first social innovation initiative, “Re-think. Experiment.”. Grantee partners explored the application of design-thinking methods to women’s rights programming and feminist grantmaking. The objective? Come up with tested models to solve women’s empowerment challenges and catalyse significant social change.

Why innovation?

Following its first independent evaluation in 2017, the FGE realized that grantee projects were not tapping into the full potential of the organizations behind them. Much more could be achieved with the same or even fewer resources.

A self-reflection exercise gave rise to a series of questions. Are we—grantmakers and project implementers—working in the most effective and efficient ways? Are projects designed to respond to the real needs of women who are furthest behind? What alternative approaches and tools can lead to more transformative results? These questions were the starting point of “Re-think.

Experiment.” It challenged nine grantees in 11 countries to find and experiment with new approaches to specific problems preventing them from achieving a desired result. They asked questions like: “How might rural women from disadvantaged communities transition from small-scale producers to profitable entrepreneurs?” “How can we find creative solutions to keep women’s rights on the political agenda in a conflict setting?”

Unpacking and solving complex and “wicked” issues like these requires engaging with unusual actors, exploring new points of view and trying innovative solutions.

What do we mean by social innovation?

For the FGE, social innovation puts beneficiaries at the centre of project design through more flexible and co-creative processes. It uses a range of tools from design and systems thinking and behavioural science, with the ultimate objective of creating positive impacts in the lives of women and girls.

At a different level, innovation also entails better responding to the needs of civil society by exploring alternative partnership dynamics and grantmaking models.

Overall, it means being ready to challenge our assumptions, re-think our approaches and experiment with new strategies for greater and longer lasting impact.



IMPACT

Human-centred design approach and feedback loops ensure focus on what works for project beneficiaries



SUSTAINABILITY

Systems thinking, human-centred design and stronger capabilities enhance ownership beyond a one-off project



COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Prototyping, iterations and early testing during project design limit the potential for failure

Women-centred design

Over eight months, grantees identified a challenge, conducted research among potential project beneficiaries, ideated possible solutions, and selected, prototyped and tested one of them. They drew on tailored coaching and training sessions by specialized experts and the FGE along with US\$ 15,000 for experimentation added to their grants.

The guiding principle was to place beneficiaries – mostly women from disadvantaged groups – at the core of the process.

Rather than jumping to designing an intervention and creating a results-based framework as the FGE usually requires, grantees devoted several months to initial research and reflection. They set aside previous knowledge and assumptions, and opened up to a deeper understanding of the women they work with, empathizing with their context, their needs, their challenges, their daily lives and their emotions, with

the help of tools such as actors' maps, and journey and emotional maps.

While all grantees had extensive experience working with the populations they serve, new insights emerged. This helped them conceptualize challenges in different ways and see the nuances more clearly. In some cases, it completely transformed the definition of the problem into one that responded better to the needs of target beneficiaries.

With a specific statement defining the challenge, grantees opened up again to a broad spectrum of possible solutions before selecting one for prototyping and testing. These processes were conducted with their own colleagues, partners, project beneficiaries and international peer innovators, using co-creation methods. Seven organizations have completed the process, while another two had to delay the experiment due to political and contextual constraints.



We gained more insights on how to improve our methods and adapt them to the realities of the majority we are unable to reach.

Atikha, Philippines

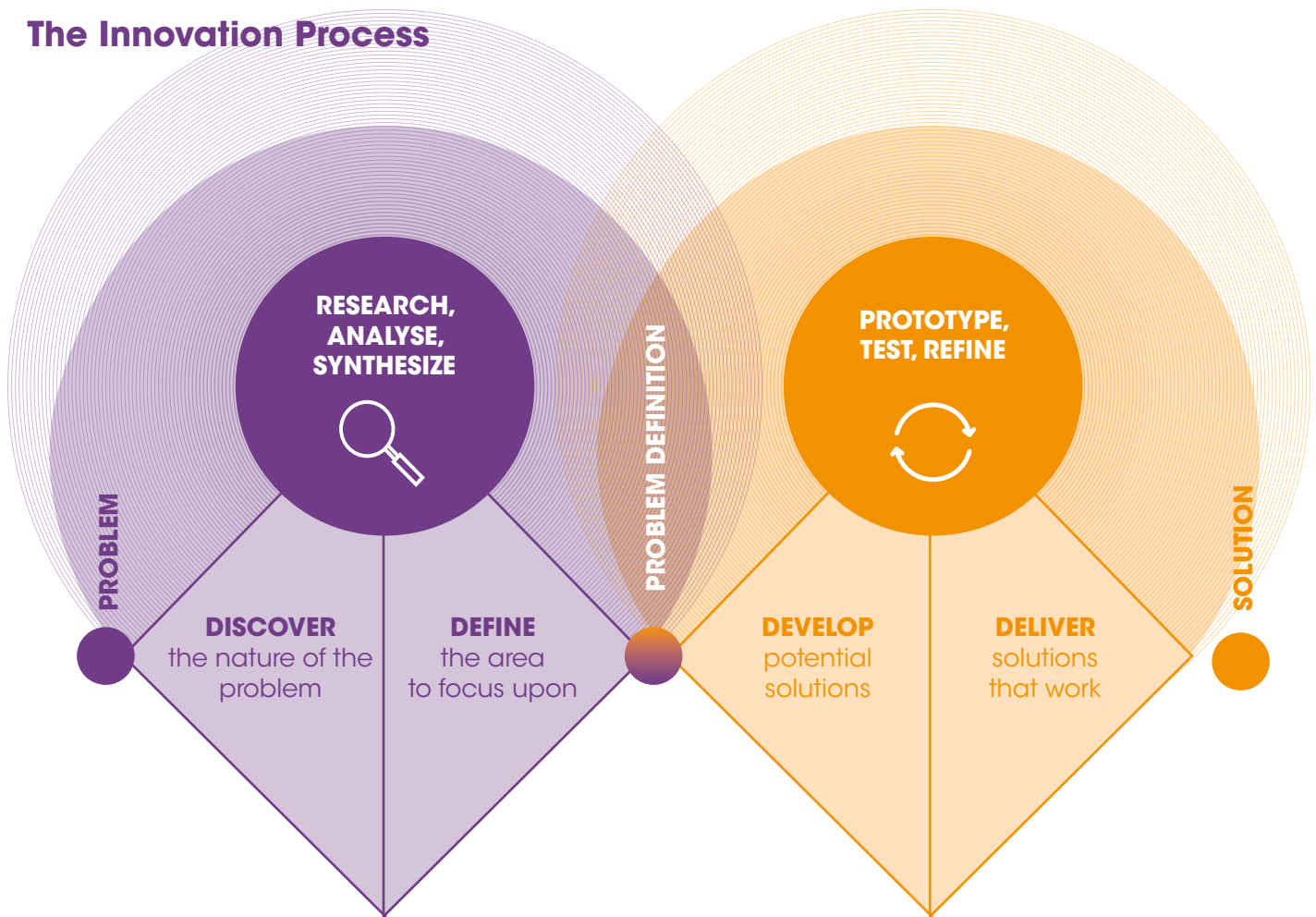
We thought we knew everything about the issue, but the interviews showed there are things we had not understood.

Pastoral Women's Council, Tanzania

In a development sector of increasing complexity, women's organizations are demanding new exchange, learning and innovation spaces to generate cost-effective, impactful and sustainable solutions for the multi-dimensional challenges that women face. "Re-Think. Experiment." is a unique framework fostering those spaces and institutional capabilities, unconstrained by procedural limitations.

María Tarancón, Social Innovation Expert and "Re-Think. Experiment." Consultant

The Innovation Process



Adopted from Design Council (2015)

Boosting Migrant Workers' Savings Choices with Behavioural Insights

Behavioural science provides useful knowledge about human decision-making. The FGE and its grantee partners are increasingly trying to apply such insights to maximize the effectiveness of interventions.

In collaboration with a team of researchers from Columbia University and the University of Cambridge, for example, the FGE and NGO Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative are expanding ongoing efforts to support Filipino women migrant domestic workers to return home earlier and in a better financial condition.

Evidence shows that women who set up migration goals prior to their departure are more likely to come back and reintegrate successfully. It also highlights opportunities for more salient communication to aid in better decision-making. This intervention will test: (1) a commitment contract for women to sign upon their departure setting up savings goals for work abroad, and (2) an online calculation tool so women can more easily plan and manage finances for immediate and long-term benefits.

OVERVIEW OF GRANTEE EXPERIMENTS



CHALLENGES



SOLUTIONS



RESULTS & FINDINGS

ALLIANCES FOR AFRICA (AfA), NIGERIA



A community outreach meeting discusses tradition and its role in advancing women's political leadership.
Photo: Courtesy of AfA / Israel P.C.



The Ili-Noyo tradition promotes male participation in community decision-making and prohibits women from taking an active part



Establish a group that will spearhead an advocacy campaign promoting inclusive leadership



10 men were involved in group discussions and co-creation of a campaign; this changed attitudes towards women's participation

Men became champions of women in decision-making and have encouraged families to send girls to school

330 people have advocated for change through the campaign

Grantee applied new knowledge to other projects

Weak coalition to monitor implementation of the recently adopted National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security



SHOQATA E GRAVE ME PROBLEME SOCIALE (AWSP), ALBANIA



Participatory and all-inclusive process with coalition members to raise awareness, and build capacities and ownership



Increased motivation, ownership and participation of civil society organizations

Participatory creation of working groups

Common needs identified and joint priority action plans co-created

AWSP is integrating innovation tools in everyday work

ATIKHA, PHILIPPINES



Grantee Atikha is testing a Facebook iTV programme that provides valuable information to Filipino women migrant domestic workers about their saving and investment opportunities.
Photo: Courtesy of Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative



Limited participation of Filipino migrant domestic workers and their family members in a programme that supports their successful return home



Migrant workers-led weekly web-based TV programme posted on social media as a complement to or substitute for the training programme



iTV programme reached 3,000 women (double the expected number)

Over 1,000 women and family members joined the reintegration programme, increasing participation by 50 per cent after only a few weeks

Increased sense of pride and community among women who watched or participated in the iTV programmes



CENTRO DE DOCUMENTACIÓN Y ESTUDIOS (CDE), PARAGUAY



Weekly radio programmes by and for domestic workers inform and encourage them to actively engage



Faster growth in affiliation rate

Increased pluralism and participation in the unions, especially of young women

More workers voice their demands

Policy advancements influenced



The low number of domestic workers joining unions limits the effectiveness of advocacy



Rural women producers of cheese, honey and wool struggle to sell their products in male-dominated markets



Communication and marketing campaign highlighting women's life stories and the organic aspect of the products



Women feeling heard and valued, and having a sense of a place in society

Women feel stronger and more independent; they go outside of their homes more often

(Note: campaign not fully rolled out yet)

EL-GHAITH ASSOCIATION, ALGERIA

LEBANON FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY EMPOWERMENT (LFPAGE), LEBANON



Agri-food businesswomen from rural Lebanon experiment with new fruit jam recipes.
Photo: Courtesy of LFPAGE



Product innovation: enhancing product value by using different recipes and production techniques from Italy



Four new products showed market potential (quality, taste and "Italian" brand), adding technical value and variety to the cooperatives' agri-food production base

Women producers with capacities to think creatively and invent new recipes

Women with increased self-confidence and interest in taking on leadership roles in the cooperatives and communities



Small-scale traditional agri-food producers struggle to sell their products despite trainings and organization in cooperatives



Engage in conversations about writing a will with educated Maasai men and women



Five men began the will-writing process; one allowed his wife to register property in her name

Issue talked about openly for the first time

Men sharing their personal stories changed perceptions and attitudes towards will-writing

Grantee invited to the district council to speak about the issue for the first time

Low levels of women's education identified as a critical issue, with some initial mobilization around addressing it

PASTORAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL (PWC), TANZANIA

Women from the pastoralist Maasai communities struggle to access land and property to carry out productive activities

CASE STUDY

Women domestic workers in Paraguay make their voices heard



In Paraguay, Marciana Santander and Higinia Vázquez, members of the SINTRADESPY domestic workers' union, launch the first radio programme of "Doméstica Ñe'ê" ("The Voice of the Domestic Worker" in the local Guaraní language).

Photo: Courtesy of CDE, Paraguay / Javier Medina

The Centro de Documentación y Estudios (CDE) in Paraguay supports domestic workers in organizing to claim decent work conditions and equal pay, including through forming associations and unions. Two unions, SINTRADI and SINTRADESPY, engaged in "Re-think. Experiment." This is a snap-shot of their innovation journey.

“

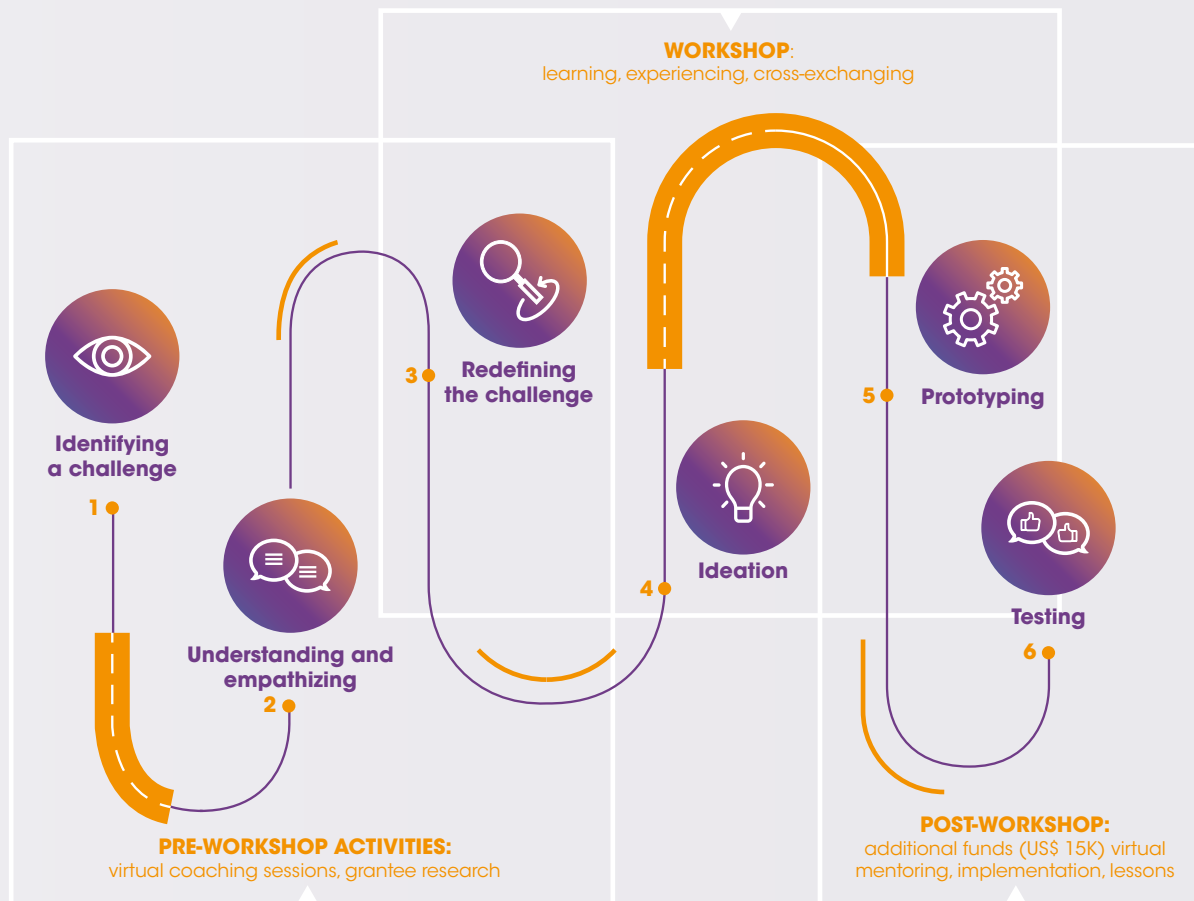
The best aspect of this exercise was to be able to have conversations [with beneficiaries] at such a personal and emotional level. It was a very special moment.

Lilian Soto,
Associate Researcher and Project
Coordinator at CDE

We never thought nor imagined ourselves doing radio. But after, I said: we are experts, we can talk about our experience. Many people have participated, and the messages they sent are impressive. Now they call me and ask what they can do to be in the union.

Librada Maciel,
Secretary General of SINTRADI

The “Re-think. Experiment.” Process



1. Identifying a challenge

The CDE defined its initial challenge as domestic workers, leaders and activists facing work overload, and economic and emotional challenges. How could the organization help them find spaces for relaxation, community and solidarity that would bring more energy to their activism?

2. Understanding and empathizing

Research and consultations with project beneficiaries used informal interviews, journey maps, “a day in the life of...” techniques and emotional maps. Key findings included: women domestic workers value spaces of leisure and quality time with the family; there is a need to feel valued and important; collective actions are a powerful tool; there is a need for charismatic leadership and for spaces of trust to share experiences and advice among peers; and rights awareness is a critical first step.

3. Redefining the challenge

Based on the research insights, the CDE refocused its challenge around attracting more domestic workers to join the unions. This would lighten the workload of their peers, while strengthening the base of the unions as well as their reach and advocacy capacity.

4. Ideation

The CDE and union members agreed to organize a large fair to make the issues and demands of domestic workers visible and to attract new affiliates. It was a family-friendly, festive event. At the FGE global prototyping workshop in Istanbul, however, Atikha, a grantee from the Philippines that also supports domestic workers, offered a new idea: a radio show developed by and for domestic workers. The notion greatly resonated with the CDE team, which decided to bring it back to colleagues and activists.

5. Prototyping

During the workshop, the CDE team sketched a broad radio show concept and made a mock programme soundtrack. After returning to Paraguay, the team shared the new idea with women from the unions, who immediately and enthusiastically took it on. They continued to refine the concept and plan steps to implement it.

6. Testing

The CDE and the two associations established partnerships with two radio stations. They prepared communication and radio training for future radio hosts, who quickly started to develop scripts and rehearse with the support of CDE communication experts. The women engaged a popular singer to compose and sing the main cover song for the programmes. Ten programmes were broadcast.

Key results after five weeks of radio programmes

- The union gained 13 new members in five weeks, compared to 15 over five months using more traditional door-to-door recruitment. Another 40 women expressed interest in joining, representing a potential 40 per cent increase in membership.
- Participation and pluralism in the unions has increased, including through young, grass-roots members taking leadership positions through the radio programmes.
- Self-confidence and social communication skills have improved, especially among women conducting the programmes.
- The voices and demands of domestic workers have been more widely heard with over 4,200 downloads of the 10 radio programmes.
- Public visibility helped persuade both the Senate and the Congress to approve an equal minimum wage for domestic workers, one of the associations' key demands. The new law is expected to be endorsed in July 2019 after 10 years of advocacy.
- The CDE built an emotional connection with domestic workers, strengthening and enriching the relationship between both partners.



Main challenges

- The end of the experiment interrupted the radio programmes and the enthusiasm and momentum generated. The CDE is looking for additional funds to continue with them.
- The significant investment in time to design, prepare and implement this solution weighed on both the grantee and beneficiaries. Women's activists had to sacrifice limited hours with their families to attend trainings, preparatory meetings and broadcasts. While they all say it was worth it, the CDE is trying to find better ways to implement future iterations.

Spotlight on the innovator: Celina Barrios



Celina (middle) hosted a radio programme by and for domestic workers, and is a leading voice of the SINTRADI domestic workers union in Itapúa, Paraguay.

Photo: Courtesy of CDE, Paraguay / Frédéric Hayen

A nanny and a law student, Celina Graciela Barrios Maciel is no stranger to the realities of domestic work in Paraguay. The youngest of four siblings, she followed her mother and two sisters into becoming a domestic worker at the age of 16.

After joining SINTRADI, the union of domestic workers in the Itapua department, Celina thought she had to take a further step by enrolling as a law student. "I understood the importance for someone to know the laws and defend the rights of domestic workers," she says.

When she heard about the radio programmes being developed by the CDE, she joined other members of the union to develop one called "La Hormiguera" – Spanish for "ant hill", symbolizing hard work and strength when coming together. Training and the direct support of communication professionals made the women comfortable and skilled as broadcasters.

"The first radio programmes were tough," Celine remembers. "There were many silences. But now I don't have problems to give an interview to defend the rights of domestic workers. The Hormiguera gives us the possibility to speak on behalf

of those who cannot speak. We interview our peers and learn about their stories, and now we are also able to learn new things that help us in our daily work."

The CDE's communications specialist, Giovanna Guggiari, describes a palpable transformation among the young activists participating in the radio shows. "Empowerment comes from self-expression," she explains. "They interviewed all sorts of actors from professionals to politicians and public authorities. This has positioned them at a different level, one of great value, inside their unions and beyond."

Today, Celina is one of the key voices in her organization. On 8 March 2019, the Municipality of Encarnación awarded her a special "Inspiring Stories" recognition for her work as main host at "La Hormiguera" and as a domestic worker. For the first time, she dared to deliver a live speech when she collected the prize in front of a large audience that included the most important authorities in her city.

Celina dreams of finishing her degree and becoming a lawyer for domestic workers. "In a few years, I can see myself protecting the rights of domestic workers, giving advice to domestic workers organizations," she says.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

What we learned about social innovation



Social innovation works for gender equality and women's empowerment

These topics are extremely complex. Social innovation tools and strategies allow practitioners to identify new solutions and partners, and unlock the potential of women and men in different ways. Before going to long-used, default and not always effective approaches, it is useful to take a step back to re-think and experiment, and use feedback loops to inform successful strategies.



Innovation requires shifting focus to the design process

It calls for a significant time investment in research, consultations, analysis, testing and iteration before jumping to a project framework. While contrary to development practitioners' usual practices, investment in design pays off once solutions are tested.



Social innovation is in women's organizations' DNA

Most women's organizations are used to questioning assumptions, establishing different emotional connections, exploring new strategies, working collaboratively, and being imaginative and resourceful. Navigating the new yet somewhat familiar waters of social innovation felt natural for grantee partners.



Innovation allows greater responsiveness to real needs and triggers more sustainable social impact

Shifting the perspective to that of project beneficiaries can completely transform perceptions of challenges, interventions and measures of impact. This is especially the case when factoring in not-so-visible aspects such as beneficiaries' emotions and aspirations.

Social innovation is not rocket science



Doing grantmaking and programming differently is possible. There are many tools and methods from different fields that foster deeper understanding of beneficiary populations, and can improve project design and implementation. Co-creation is one approach that most grantees quickly adopted. Coaching and in-person trainings were praised as extremely useful and necessary to learning.

Social innovation is not for everyone



Organizations' leaders and employees need to be ready to step out of their comfort zone. They must recognize and question assumptions, and be open to doing things differently. It might not always be the right moment or context to introduce social innovation.

"Re-think. Experiment." was the first time that the FGE intentionally and systematically applied social innovation in its grantmaking and programming. The results, insights, new and exciting experiences, and closer ties among organizations made it worthwhile for the FGE team, participating grantees and beneficiaries.

Grantees have expressed high levels of satisfaction and enthusiasm with the initiative, which in some cases has overtaken a large part of their programming. All have started to apply new tools or methodologies to their internal organizational processes and project design. A deeper understanding of beneficiary needs on multiple levels allows them to tighten bonds and embed emotional aspects into projects. Most experiments have gone beyond what was intended either by the organizations or the beneficiaries, indicating strong ownership and relevance.

One aspect for future consideration is the complexity and time-consuming nature of such an effort, both for participants and facilitators. It

requires securing sufficient time and expertise. Another issue arose around the face-to-face prototyping workshop. It made a significant difference in the learning process, to the extent that some grantees would have preferred to have it as a starting point rather than in the middle of the process.

Looking forward, the FGE will apply learning from this experience in new funding cycles. We are ready to iterate, improve and further explore new ways of grantmaking that answer better to the needs of the organizations we serve.

This has never been more important than in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where high ambition for change requires innovation to accelerate progress. Much depends on comprehensive analysis of complex issues along with iterative processes with room for failure and learning. Social innovation should become a habit among practitioners. UN Women, through the FGE and its grantee partners, is already well on the way to embracing it.

In Focus: South-South Cooperation



South-South and triangular cooperation are increasingly recognized as primary accelerators in achieving the global SDGs. Knowledge exchange between countries and development partners has significant potential to define the most powerful gender equality strategies and policies. Key issues include ensuring the central role of civil society and reaching women and girls in marginalized positions.

05

In its fourth grantmaking cycle, the FGE launched a South-South initiative to enhance grantees' capacities to achieve lasting impacts. Through exchange visits between grantees from different countries working on similar issues, the FGE aimed to: (1) foster the sharing of knowledge, including results, challenges, opportunities, experiences and lessons learned; and (2) explore collaboration in advancing common gender equality priorities.

The visits go beyond classrooms or classical convenings. They power dynamic, field-level exchanges on actual change models with a strong possibility for replication and scaling up. Issues covered so far by grantees from Armenia, Kenya, Lebanon and Nigeria have included the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in agri-business; access to social protection, in particular for women in the informal sector; and women's participation in electoral processes.

Several additional exchanges are now in the works, starting with a grantee visit from Palestine to Paraguay on advocacy models to redefine public debate around equality and non-discrimination for domestic workers. Grantees from Algeria and Tanzania will have the opportunity to share ideas and strategies around improving rural women's access to markets, diversifying production and scaling up women's agri-businesses in marginalized communities.

Looking to the future, the FGE hopes to move beyond single visits to catalyse broader learning experiences in strategic areas such as women's entrepreneurship and market participation, or advocacy and leadership. Developing triangular cooperation through the active promotion of partnerships and links among grantees and with innovative international platforms has strong potential to deliver a multiplier effect.



Fostering South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange amongst grantees is a priority of UN Women. Not only does such cooperation help overcome the traditional North-to-South aid approach and the prescriptive development model, but it also has the potential to identify gender equality strategies beyond country borders.

Maria-Noel Vaeza,
Programme Director, UN Women

Learning from models for women's entrepreneurship in agri-business (Armenia - Lebanon)

In September 2018, the Lebanon Family Planning Association for Development and Family Empowerment (LFPAGE) visited the Green Lane Agricultural Assistance NGO (Green Lane) in Armenia to exchange insights on how to help rural women entrepreneurs improve their marketing skills, food safety techniques and quality production standards.

The FGE also backed LFPAGE's participation in the "Harvest Festival of Rural Life and Traditions", which brought together 20,000 farmers, entrepreneurs and spectators in Yerevan, Armenia. LFPAGE's beneficiaries - rural Lebanese women - exhibited their products at the event.

At the "Women in Agriculture Conference", the two grantees were among 15 women's groups supported by the FGE who shared lessons on rural women's entrepreneurial development with more than 10 national and international development agencies, ministries and UN entities.

LFPAGE and Green Lane plan to continue exchanging experiences on social enterprises and to attend joint trainings in marketing and branding with another field visit to Lebanon planned for July 2019.



Agri-business entrepreneurs attending a training course on food safety management in Tyre Region, Lebanon.

Photo Courtesy of LFPAGE / Mohammad Fawaz



By visiting Green Lane's farm, I was able to see first-hand what methods are required to produce organic foods. It inspired me to bring eco-friendly processing techniques back to our programme in Lebanon.

**Cecilia Chami,
Project Director, LFPAGE**

Strategizing to overcome roadblocks to political participation (Kenya - Nigeria)

In 2002, the African Union pledged to achieve gender parity in political participation. Countries such as Kenya and Nigeria have pledged to pursue a minimum one-third share of women in parliamentary seats, yet women have yet to attain equality in political leadership. They occupy only a fifth of seats in the Kenyan Parliament and 5.6 per cent in Nigeria's House of Representatives.

To facilitate cross-national learning on closing the gender gap, the FGE organized the "Learning and Exchange Forum" in Kenya in October 2018. The three-day event

provided a platform for two grantees, Alliances for Africa of Nigeria and Uraia Trust of Kenya, to learn from each other's experiences, share lessons and exchange best practices in overcoming barriers to women's political participation. These comprise stereotypes that discourage women from contesting elections, electoral violence and economic constraints, among others.

The two adopted a cross-border strategy to sustain their solidarity in countering common roadblocks.



Meeting of FGE grantee partners Uraia Trust and Alliances for Africa in Kenya.

Photo: Courtesy of AFA

Soaring to New Heights after the FGE

As the FGE's 2018 independent evaluation confirmed, 96 per cent of projects supported by the Fund continue after finalization. The FGE regularly receives news from current and past grantees about awards, additional grants or long-term impacts leveraged through their initial partnership with the Fund. This section presents a selection of some of the recent ripple effects reported by grantees this year.

06

Additional funds for replication and upscaling in Armenia and Tanzania. Two current FGE grantees, the Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) from Tanzania and Green Lane from Armenia, have secured additional funding to expand their current projects. PWC garnered \$1 million from the Government of Norway (Norway's Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad) to scale up its work in other villages. Green Lane has secured a new \$160,000 grant from UNDP to replicate project strategies in other regions.

Gender Action Councils expanded to all municipalities in Georgia. Between 2013 and 2016, using an FGE grant, the Fund Sukhumi piloted the first institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming at the local level in Georgia. It helped establish Gender Action Councils in three municipalities, drawing together local authorities, civil society, community leaders, the media and the private sector. The councils conducted gender assessments and prepared work plans with budget allocations, which produced a series of achievements that in turn led to the official establishment of councils in all 64 municipalities of the country. Only 50 percent are operating to date, but they are developing gender policy plans and strategies, including for the localization of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Model for girls' education in technology rolled out nationally in the Dominican Republic. After a three-year FGE-funded programme ended in 2013, the Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF) continued its mission of closing the gender gap in information technology in the Dominican Republic. It piloted math, science and technology clubs for girls in the poorest areas of the country where they could learn without struggling with prevalent stereotypes discouraging their interest in technology. Club members increased their marks in those disciplines, and 80 per cent continued their education in universities or technological institutes. No pregnancies or school dropout were registered among them. The model was so successful that CIPAF received additional support from UNESCO and then the Ministry of Education, with the latter signing its first agreement with a feminist organization. From 300 girls supported in 7 public school clubs at the start of the FGE pilot, 90 schools now host clubs that have introduced more than 3,400 girls to technology. The Plan for Equality in the Information Society prepared with the support of the FGE in 2012 has become the basis for the current draft law for the National Strategy for the Society of Information and Knowledge.

Grass-roots women changing governance in Kenya. Between 2013 and 2015, the FGE supported GROOTS Kenya to mobilize over 5,000 grass-roots women and men in over 100 community groups championing women's political leadership in three counties. Today, the number of groups has grown exponentially to 740, expanding to another three counties. The movement supported 55 women candidates to run for office in the 2013 general election, of whom 4 were elected or appointed at the county level. In 2017, the groups helped 67 women aspirants, who won 6 seats in county assemblies and 3 seats in the national Parliament, with a further 2 appointed to local government. Application of a Gender Tracking Framework and Tool to assess progress in the counties has spurred significant changes such as the allocation of \$1.5 million for clean cooking energy in a local development plan, and the appointment of four women in local finance and planning bodies.

Women's empowerment gains consolidated in India. A pilot project implemented by PRADAN and Jagori from 2010 to 2015 with an FGE grant engaged over 75,000 marginalized rural women living across four states of India to organize into self-help groups and raise their voices against discrimination. The successful model was replicated in PRADAN's subsequent interventions, allowing it to reach another 274,000 women in over 21,000 self-help groups. As a result, around 2,500 village organizations have taken actions to stop gender discrimination. These figures are only one illustration of the major changes in mindset and social norms unfolding within communities. In many villages, women are entering roles once reserved for men, and there is increased sharing of unpaid care work. Women's collectives have given shape to alternative support systems, offering para-legal aid to survivors of gender-based violence, and advocating with local services for relief and justice.

Stronger domestic women's civil society movements in South America. With FGE support, the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) strengthened 22 women workers' organizations from 2013 to 2015. For most of these groups, it was a first-ever chance to receive direct financial support to advance a regional agenda for women workers' rights across Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Important legislative reforms occurred in the three countries as a result. The successful management of funds allowed some of the organizations to consolidate, grow and obtain more financing. In 2017, FMS was selected by the Government of the Netherlands to manage the Latin America and the Caribbean component of their "Leading from the South" initiative, a 40 million euro funding facility for women's organizations.

In My View: Op-eds from FGE Partners

This year, the Fund wanted to provide a space for grantee partners to reflect on their experiences working on the frontlines to advance women's rights. This op-ed section brings their voices to the fore. The FGE is proud to have strong partnerships with these always committed and inspirational organizations.

07

A New Approach Inspires Transformation

**By Nune Sarukhanyan,
President of Green Lane, Armenia**

For Green Lane and its partner women's groups, 2016 was the year when we understood that Armenian women in agriculture have more capacities and skills than we had been tapping into before.

We had always focused on agricultural development grants as our main area of expertise. In 2015, when I saw the Call for Proposals from UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, I decided to take a shot and apply. We usually had supported women farmers on their agricultural technical skills, yet I felt something was lacking. It was important that they became more active in political and social spheres besides boosting their economic empowerment. I wanted them to feel happier in their families and communities.

With the FGE grant, we provided our traditional trainings and small grantmaking to improve production and processing of berries, dried fruits, herbs, greens, non-traditional crops and bee-keeping. We also facilitated sessions about gender issues, improvement of communication and skills, small farm management and decision-making. This new approach allowed us to stand closer to the women, better understanding their needs. They became members of our "green family".

FGE grantee Green Lane has supported women in rural Armenia to develop skills related to entrepreneurship and agriculture, while also learning about gender issues and advocacy for their rights. They now market diverse products under a new umbrella brand called "Green Village". And the number of women holding local leadership positions in their communities has increased seven-fold.



Photo: Courtesy of Green Lane /
Lusine Mkrtchyan

Then the transformation began. We noticed the farmers becoming more self-confident, skillful and flexible. They participated in all the meetings with utmost attention, particularly looking forward to the trainings on gender issues.

Today, the women are taking a more active part in the community, trying to find joint solutions on local issues with governing bodies, participating in nation-wide conferences and exhibitions, being more vocal in public and advertising their products. One woman ran as a candidate for a position in community leadership and another as a delegate of the National Assembly.

It is difficult for us to wrap this project up but we will continue to work with our women farmers until they become self-sustaining. We are also trying to review our strategy and make our activities more dynamic, moving beyond agriculture.

Thanks to this important project, we are on another level.



Arev Nersisyan, a group leader from Berd community in Tavush region in Armenia, harvesting raspberries in her plot.

Photo: Courtesy of Green Lane / Sergey Melkumyan



Representatives from domestic workers' associations in Mexico learn and discuss about the new national social security pilot programme addressed to them.

Photo: Courtesy of ILSB, Mexico / Río

A Critical Push for Policy Change

By Christian Aurora Mendoza, Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir, Mexico



Photo: UN Women / Ryan Brown

The Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB) is a Mexican feminist organization promoting gender equality and women's leadership and movements. While we initially focused on women's empowerment, from their knowledge through capacity-building processes, in 2016, we decided to jump into the policy advocacy field to influence the political agenda.

Luckily, that was also the year we received a grant from the FGE to advocate for a social responsibility agenda related to care work. With this project, we were looking for new ways to comprehensively address the political agenda around domestic work as well as paid and non-paid work in Mexico, and to advocate for public policies on care work and domestic workers' labour rights.

We spent the following three years conducting thorough research, advocating, communicating and supporting women workers' organizations. As a result, ILSB increased its capacity to influence the public and policy agendas. FGE support was critical. For years we had been unsuccessfully trying to obtain funding to work on these issues, which we believe are paramount,

being at the base of inequalities between men and women. Excellent results have triggered a ripple effect and helped us access other funding sources to sustain the effort.

Beyond funding, the alliance with the FGE also allowed us to be part of trainings, exchanges with other organizations at regional and global levels, and relevant international events. It has brought visibility to our work beyond our country.

As we conclude our close collaboration with the FGE and UN Women in Mexico, we can observe how we have been able to contribute significantly to substantive and sustainable changes. Care work today is on the political agenda and an issue of public interest, and domestic workers' labour rights have seen the biggest advances in our whole history.

Undoubtedly this is the result of many years of history and the work of many women and strong-willed people. We had the privilege to contribute thanks to the trust and support from the FGE.

To position domestic and care work on political and public agendas in Mexico, FGE grantee ILSB supports women workers to learn about their rights and become involved in voicing their demands. It conducts research on the contribution of domestic workers in the economy, undertakes policy analysis, drafts policy recommendations and raises public awareness. Among other accomplishments backed by the group, national authorities for the first time have publicly committed to ratifying ILO Convention 189, which could potentially improve the lives of 2.4 million domestic workers and beyond.

LIST OF GRANTEES

Africa

BENIN

Association Nationale des Femmes Agricultrices du Bénin (ANaF)

Initiative for Empowering Women Farmers in Benin – “Miguézé!”

US\$ 305,000

KENYA

Uraia Trust

Enhancing Political Capacities of Women

US\$ 384,997

MALI

Association d'Entraide et de Développement

Rural Women Entrepreneurship Support Program

US\$ 334,121

NIGERIA

Alliances for Africa (AfA)

Implementing 35% Affirmative Action in 5 States in Nigeria by 2018

US\$ 400,000

SOUTH AFRICA AND UGANDA

Women's Net

Increasing Women's Decision-Making and Influence in Internet Governance and ICT Policy for the Realization of Women's Rights in Africa

US\$ 257,520

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

Pastoral Women's Council (PWC)

Empowering Pastoralist Maasai Women in Ngorongoro District, Northern Tanzania

US\$ 560,001

Americas and the Caribbean

BOLIVIA

Taller de Proyectos del Habitat Urbano y Rural (Red Hábitat)

Women in Construction: Towards their Political and Economic Empowerment

US\$ 269,166

GUATEMALA

Asociación de Trabajadoras del Hogar a Domicilio y de Maquila (ATRAHDOM)

The Rights and Economic Empowerment of Women

US\$ 264,166

HAITI

Solidarite des Femmes Haitiennes (SOFA)

Strengthening of the Rural Organic Farming Feminist School of Saint Michel the L'attalaye Farm

US\$ 364,166

HONDURAS

Asociación Colectiva de Mujeres Hondureñas (CODEMUH)

Human Labour Rights of Women Maquila Workers

US\$ 369,170

MEXICO

Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoire (ILSB), AC

Empowerment for an Agenda of Social Responsibility in Care Work

US\$ 214,166

PARAGUAY

Centro de Documentación y Estudios (CDE)

Empowering Women for Political and Economic Equality in Paraguay

US\$ 509,000

Arab States

ALGERIA

Association El Ghaith

Self-Promotion of Vulnerable Groups (Women and Girls) by the Creation of Income-Generating Activities

US\$ 375,000

EGYPT

Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers

Enhancing Women's Political Participation

US\$ 260,000

LEBANON

Lebanon Family Planning Association for Development & Family Empowerment

Promotion of the Economical Status of Rural Women in South Lebanon

US\$ 425,000

STATE OF PALESTINE

Mother's School Society – Nablus

Empower Women for Their Dignity and Future

US\$ 280,000

YEMEN

Youth Leadership Development Foundation

Women in Politics

US\$ 340,000

Asia and the Pacific

BANGLADESH, INDIA, NEPAL, SRI LANKA

Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO)

Strengthening Policies and Budgets for Dalit Women's Economic Rights in South Asia

US\$ 400,000

CAMBODIA

Banteay Srei – Citadel of Women

Sustainable Economic Empowerment of Cambodian Women (SEECW)

US\$ 400,000

PHILIPPINES

Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives Inc.

Coming Home: Reintegration Program for Domestic Workers from the Philippines

US\$ 569,925

SAMOA

Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG)

Economic Empowerment of "Nofotane" Women in Rural Samoa

US\$ 200,000

Europe and Central Asia

ALBANIA

Shoqata e Grave me Probleme Sociale (AWSP)

Women Rights - From Concept to Albanian Reality

US\$ 290,000

ARMENIA

Green Lane Agricultural Assistance NGO

Economic Empowerment of Rural Women Groups through Capacity Building

US\$ 315,000

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

AIDS Foundation East-West in the Kyrgyz Republic

Our choice. Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women in Kyrgyzstan

US\$ 300,000

TURKEY

Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV)

Politics for Women: Empowerment through Representation (POWER) Project

US\$ 355,000

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