



Annual Project Narrative Progress Report **Window on Women Human Rights Defenders**

Reporting Period:
1 January – 31 December 2023

<p>Project Title: The Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders in crisis and conflict affected countries</p> <p>Project Numbers: Global: 00131366 Afghanistan: 00131365</p>	<p>PUNO(s): UN Women</p>
<p>Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2023</p> <p>Report Submitted by: UN Women as the Secretariat of the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund Name: Sophie Giscard D’Estaing & Matthew Rullo Entity: UN Women Title: Officers in Charge (acting) Emails: s.giscarddestaing@unwomen.org matthew.rullo@unwomen.org</p>	<p>Implementing Partners: N/A</p> <p>Project Locations: Global – Secretariat based in New York and Geneva</p>
<p>Project Description: The WHRDs Window’s overall objective is to ensure that WHRDs, whether in their native countries or exile, have access to adequate protection support mechanisms, as well as to guarantee their secure and equal participation in key advocacy events/meetings to promote women’s rights and reflect women’s needs in political decision-making, peacebuilding, and humanitarian response. The WHRD Window serves as a demand-driven, multi-partner funding mechanism for rapid, flexible support, to enhance the protection and participation of women human rights defenders. The scope for requests is purposely diverse and open, to encompass demands to support WHRDs' meaningful participation and protection.</p>	<p>Total Approved Budget (2022-2023) : Total: USD 1,289,749 Global (00131366): USD 635,131 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 654,618</p> <p>Total budget transferred to the Secretariat during the reporting period: Total: USD 725,859 Global (00131366): USD 372,446 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 353,413</p> <p>Project Start Date: April 1, 2022 Project End Date: December 31, 2025 Total Duration (in months): 45 months</p>
<p>WPHF Outcome the Project is contributing to: WPHF Outcome 5: Ensuring that women and girls’ safety, physical and mental health, and security are assured, and their human rights respected.</p>	
<p>WPHF indicator the Project is reporting on: 5.4 Number of WHRDs supported through flexible funding (type of support, age group, country of origin)</p>	

Summary

This report covers the consolidated results achieved by the United Nations Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund’s (WPHF) funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) between 1 January and 31 December 2023¹.

The Window for WHRD’s overall objective is to provide rapid, flexible assistance to protect WHRDs working in and/or from conflict and crisis settings, as well as advance their advocacy efforts. The program is comprised of two components. The Safety Net stream provides emergency funding, in partnership with international and national non-governmental (INGO) partners, to WHRDs at risk as a result of their activism and work. The Advocacy Support stream provides direct logistical support to WHRDs to facilitate their advocacy and participation in local, national, regional, or international events, or other forms of decision-making.

Following Funding Board approval in September 2021, the Secretariat officially launched its Window for WHRDs on the 18 January 2022 on the margins of the first ever UN Security Council open debate, chaired by Norway, on the protection and participation of WHRDs and peacebuilders. In the first six months of the year, the Window developed its partnership, implementation and management processes. These led to the operational launch of Advocacy Support in June 2022, and Safety Net programming in September 2022.

In 2023, across the two funding streams, the Window successfully supported 369 WHRDs (39.3% young women between 18-29 years) from 18 countries, and their 1,103 dependents² in crisis and conflict settings. Of these, a total of 182 WHRDs from Afghanistan (54.4% 18-29 year olds) were supported under both streams, including 662 dependents (under the safety net stream). Since its launch, the Window and its partners have supported 456 WHRDs across 22 countries.

Specifically, under the Advocacy Support stream, the Window has supported 39 of these WHRDs (25.6% young women between 18-29 years), through 13 individual and delegation requests to participate in strategic fora. This funding has assisted participants to share their valuable insights and recommendations at forums which they may not have been able to access.

369	39 Advocacy Stream
WHRDs	
supported	330 Safety Net Stream
From 18	39.3% WHRDs
countries	18-29 years old

Further to the onboarding of five INGO partners in 2022, a total of 330 WHRDs (40.9% young women between 18-29 years) were supported through the Safety Net Stream, with funds primarily used to support temporary or permanent relocation, livelihoods, medical care, mental health support, digital equipment and security and protection. Responding to an urgent funding gap, this has helped protect and support these women to continue their activism in the most challenging and threatening contexts around the world.

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit also made significant progress in increasing the number of eligible requests by 26.2% with an eligibility rate³ of 57.8% in 2023. This is attributed to the updating its application

¹ This report represents the consolidated progress and results of the WHRD Unit, with disaggregation for Afghanistan (00131365) and for Global (00131366).

² Support for dependents is provided only through the Safety Net Stream

³ Eligibility rate refers to the total number of proposals received over those longlisted (for advocacy stream this means brought forward to the advisory committee, while for the safety net stream refers to eligible proposals transferred to NGO partners).

forms, website and articulating clearer information on the scope of the support provided under the WHRDs Window.

During the reporting period, WPHF also conducted its first global impact survey with 186 WHRDs from 12 countries across Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, with the objective to demonstrate the impact of the safety net funding to facilitate the protection of WHRDs. The findings reveal that over 68% of WHRDs face continued threats as a result of their activism and work, however just over half of all WHRDs indicate that the grant has reduced their risk (either to a very high or high degree), and 61% note that the threats have reduced some of the risks. While the safety net grants have been critical for WHRDs to improve their protection, 45% of WHRDs continue to face new threats, including new arrest warrants, threats to family members even if the WHRD is relocated, raids on homes, risk of being displaced after relocation, physical attacks, illegal detention, being followed, online threats as a result of continued activism, and death threats, among many others. This also demonstrates that while safety net support has increased WHRDs' overall protection in the immediate and medium-term, in many cases various challenges remain for the long-term period. Political action and continued funding to WHRDs from/working in crisis and conflict-affected contexts remain critical.

Finally, the Window for WHRDs has adapted and updated various strategies for better reach and diversity, including refined eligibility criteria, the more precise tracking of multiple identities and reprisals, and support to WHRDs for advocacy and safety plans. Following rising needs and increasing number of applications received, three additional INGO partners were selected and approved for partnership by the WPHF Board in 2023. Moving into 2024, the Window for WHRDs will continue to incorporate lessons in consultation with its INGO partners and directly from WHRDs themselves to increase timeliness and efficiency of operations and increase visibility for the Window.

1. Results and Progress Achieved

Outcome 1: Increased access of WHRDs in crisis and conflict settings to protection mechanisms and advocacy opportunities, for their safe participation in the promotion of human rights and peace

The intended outcome of the Window for WHRDs is to increase 'access of WHRDs in crisis and conflict settings to protection mechanisms and advocacy opportunities, for their safe participation in the promotion of human rights and peace'. This is linked to the WPHF's Theory of Change and Outcome 5: enhanced safety, security, and mental health of women and girls and their human rights respected. Overall, in 2023, the Window for WHRDs saw a large volume of requests under both the Safety Net and Advocacy Support streams for support. The diversity of applicants in terms of intersectional identities and thematic work profiles among applicants demonstrates that the Window is proving to be an accessible mechanism for WHRDs from and working and living in conflict and crisis affected countries.

In 2023, the Window provided critical support to 369 WHRDs and 1,013 of their dependents⁴ from 22 countries. Close to 40% of WHRDs supported were between the age of 18 and 29 years old (39.3%), and almost half of all WHRDs (49.3%) supported were from Afghanistan. By stream, 13 requests from 39 WHRDs were supported for advocacy initiatives in various regional, national and international events and meetings focused on increasing the advocacy efforts of WHRDs, while 330 WHRDs supported with safety

⁴ A total of three WHRDs were provided two safety net grants bringing the cumulative total of unique WHRDs to 453. Support for dependents is provided only through the Safety Net Stream

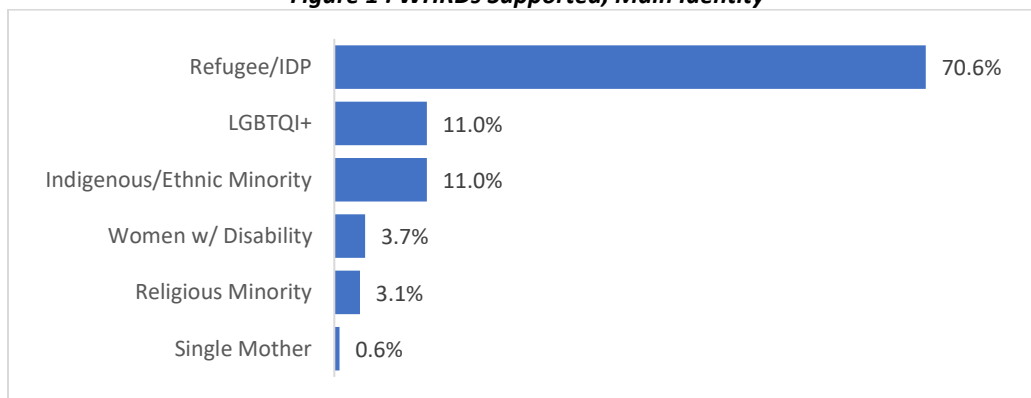
net grants. Cumulatively, since 2022, 456 WHRDs have been supported through both streams, of which 210 are from Afghanistan.

Table 1: WHRDs Supported by Funding Stream and Region, 2023

2023	Advocacy Stream	Safety Net Stream	Total
Africa	15	126	141
Arab States	3	8	11
Asia & Pacific ⁵	10	175	185
LAC	11	17	28
Europe & Central Asia	-	4	4
Total	39	330	369

The Window for WHRDs is proving to reach a diverse range of WHRDs, including those facing exclusion, and made vulnerable by forced displacement, ableism, ageism, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity, ethnic ties, religious affiliations, and discrimination against indigenous people, among others. In 2023, of all WHRD which identified having multiple and interesting identities (n=163), 70.6% of WHRDs were refugees or internally displaced (IDPs), followed by 11.0% who identified as LGBTQI+ and indigenous/ethnic minorities, respectively. Another 3.7% identified with living with a disability, 3.1% as being from a religious minority group, and 0.6% as a single mother. Of these, 40.5% of WHRDs supported during the year identify as having multiple and intersecting identities.

Figure 1 : WHRDs Supported, Main Identity



The thematic areas of advocacy of the WHRDs supported by the Window is also diverse, from preventing conflicts, calling for cease fires, advocating for climate security justice, exercising freedom of expression, providing psychosocial assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), monitoring and documenting human rights violations, to delivering humanitarian assistance. This shows that the experiences and expertise of WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis-affected contexts are not confined to the promotion and protection of women’s rights or “women’s issues”, and are essential to resolving conflicts, ensuring accountability, and offering pathways to justice and peace.

⁵ Afghanistan is included in this region

Table 2: WHRDs Thematic Areas of Advocacy⁶

Women's Rights	34.4%	Ethnic Rights	3.5%	Economic Rights	1.3%
SGBV	9.9%	Education Rights	2.2%	Child Rights	0.9%
Human Rights	8.8%	Climate Security	2.0%	Education	0.9%
Media/Freedom of Expression	7.2%	Youth Rights	2.0%	Food Security	0.7%
Justice/Legal	6.4%	SRHR/Health	1.5%	Humanitarian	0.4%
Peacebuilding/Conflict Resolution	5.5%	Disability Rights	1.3%	Mental Health/Psychosocial	0.4%
Forced Displacement	3.7%	Political/Voting Rights	1.3%	Land Rights	0.2%

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit made significant progress in increasing the number of eligible requests by 25.6% with an eligibility rate⁷ of 57.9% in 2023. This is attributed to the updating its application forms, website and articulating clearer information on the scope of the support provided under the Window. Under the safety net stream, the main reasons for rejection remains the non-eligibility of countries for support, threats dating back to more than two years ago, and request for long-term livelihood and humanitarian support. Under the advocacy support stream, the main reasons are related to requests for programmatic activities, participation in capacity building opportunities, or participation in visibility events without advocacy plans.

Safety Net Stream

Under the safety net stream, cases of supported WHRDs demonstrate the hostile environments in which WHRDs operate. They are first and foremost impacted by protracted conflicts and crises, and increased militarization. In addition to facing physical attacks, harassment and intimidation, kidnapping, and arbitrary detention, “sexual and gender-based violence remains an ever-present threat”⁸ to WHRDs. Their multiple and intersecting identities such as displacement, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, among others, are risk-multipliers. The objective of such threats is to silence the voices of WHRDs, peacebuilders and activists and force them out of public life, where they are not seen as equal nor legitimate actors.

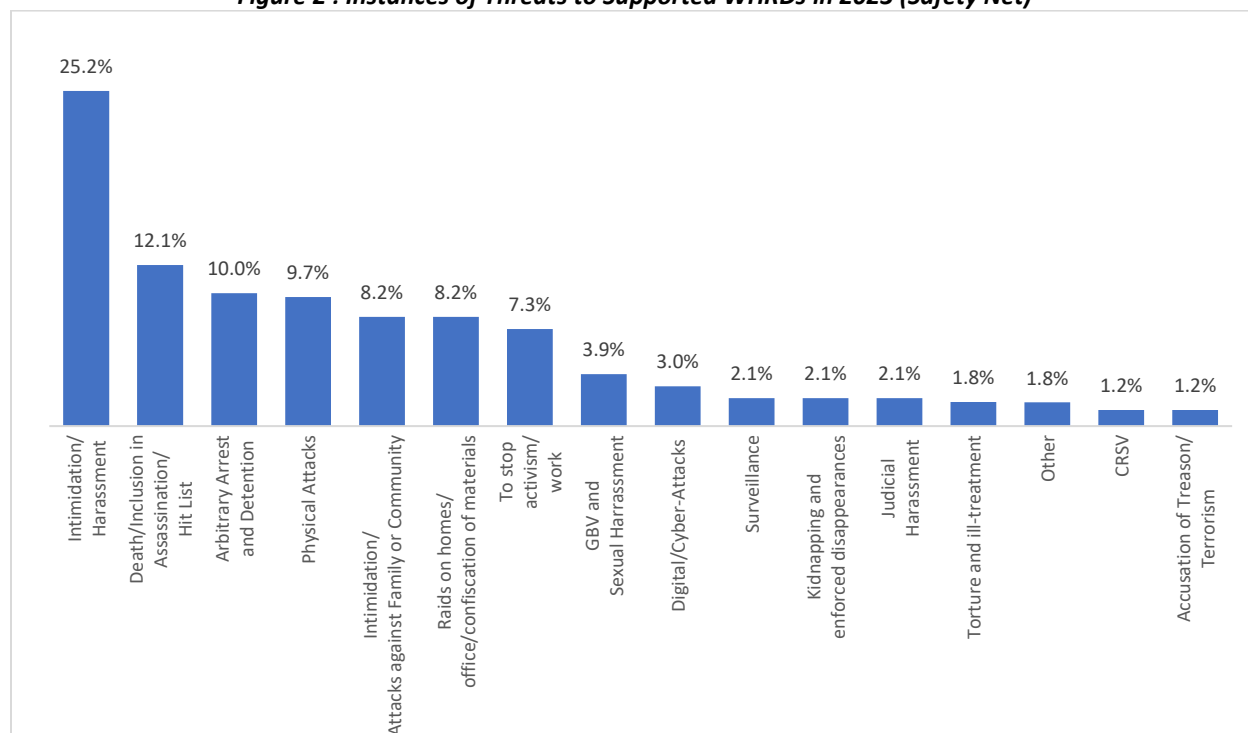
In 2023, instances of threats against WHRDs were varied. Most predominantly, 25.2% of supported WHRDs faced various forms of direct harassment and intimidation, followed by 12.1% who received death threats or were included on assassination lists, 10.0% who experienced arbitrary arrest or detention, and 9.7% who were victims of physical attacks. Other WHRDs reported intimidation to family members (8.2%), the raid of their homes, offices or confiscation of material (8.2%), and 7.3% were forced to stop their activism in fear of harm.

⁶ Cumulative (2022-2023)

⁷ Eligibility rate refers to the total number of proposals received over those longlisted (for advocacy stream this means brought forward to the advisory committee, while for the safety net stream refers to eligible proposals transferred to NGO partners).

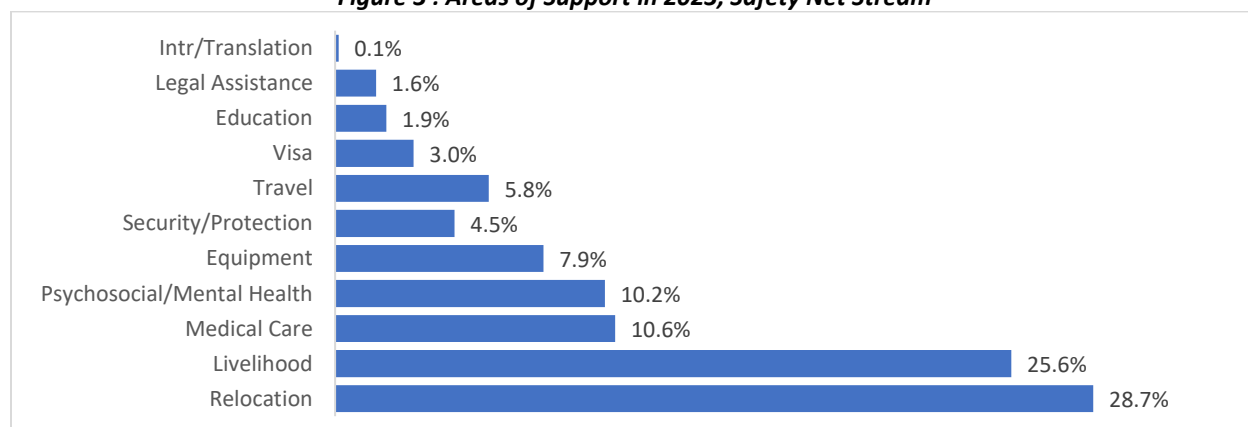
⁸ Mary Lawlor, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, UN Doc A/78/131, 7 July 2023,

Figure 2 : Instances of Threats to Supported WHRDs in 2023 (Safety Net)



With a no one-size-fits-all approach to the protection of WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected countries, the Window has demonstrated it is flexible enough to meet intersectional needs. Under the safety net stream, the Window for WHRDs Unit operates in partnership with trusted INGO partners who are the ultimate decision holders. Shortlisted applications by the Unit are shared with an INGO partner covering the region, who in turns reviews further, analyzes the needs and context, and applies its organizational criteria to make a final decision for support. Beyond covering traditional temporary relocation and livelihood costs, the Window has approached protection holistically, including support for dependents, as well as psychological and medical assistance, digital equipment, and trainings on safety and security online and offline. Of the 330 WHRDs and their dependents supported under this stream, relocation was supported in 28.7% of instances, followed by livelihoods (25.6%), medical care (10.6%), psychosocial and mental health (10.2%), and equipment (7.9%). The average investment for each Safety Net case was USD 3,969.

Figure 3 : Areas of Support in 2023, Safety Net Stream



Advocacy Stream

Under the advocacy stream, a total of 39 WHRDs were supported through 13 requests, including eight delegations, to directly share their inputs and recommendations at strategic engagements and decision-making processes at national, regional and international levels. With an average investment of USD 2,766 each, the Window for WHRDs Unit covered the travel costs of the WHRDs, including flights, accommodation, visa fees, and terminal expenses to facilitate their participation in key decision-making processes, events and meetings.

This funding has enabled WHRDs to amplify their voices and advocate at a range of events, including the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), multilateral conferences such as COP28 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, regional events such as the 4th Edition of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum in N'Djamena, Chad, the 188th session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the 42nd Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the rights and welfare of the child (ACERWC). Without this funding, several WHRDs reported that their participation would have not been possible otherwise. Enabling local WHRDs to apply as delegation has strengthened coalition building and collective actions.

Figure 4 : Level of Advocacy Initiatives Supported in 2023



2. Impact

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit and its INGO partners⁹ carried out its first global impact survey with WHRDs who received safety net grants during the year with the overall objective of demonstrating the impact of the funding mechanism on providing protection support to WHRDs in conflict and crisis affected countries in order to advocate for more financing towards the protection of WHRDs.

WHRD 2023 Impact Survey¹⁰

In 2023, WPHF conducted its first global impact survey with 186 WHRDs from 12 countries across Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, of which 39% are between the ages of 18 and 29 years. The objective of the survey was to measure to what extent safety nets for WHRDs facilitates the protection of WHRDs working in/from conflict and crisis affected countries, and of their dependents, and in order to advocate for more financing towards their protection. WPHF administered the survey drawing on strict ethical approaches and protection ethics, including encrypted survey software to ensure WHRDs could participate in an anonymous and protected way. Moving forward, impact surveys will be conducted yearly to track trends over time, and to assess the value and need for safety net support .

Of WHRDs surveyed, 74% responded that the grant has enabled them to continue their activism to some extent or to a great extent, drawing on various strategies to keep them safer. They illustrate various protective strategies that they have been able to adopt as a result of the grant to help mitigate the threats and risk. Specifically, more than half (51%) of WHRDs relocated either within their own country or to another country as a refugee, while 7%

⁹ See Output 1.1 for more about NGO partnerships

¹⁰ Complete findings of the survey are forthcoming in 2024.

also reduced their movements in public to maintain a low profile and 6% applied new digital security measures to protect their identity or continue online activism in a safe way.

"I have now moved to live in secret and manage protests against the explicit violation of the fundamental rights of Afghan women behind the scenes without personally trying to stay and operate in Afghanistan as much as possible if the anti-security situation intensifies." (Afghan WHRD)

"[I maintain a] low profile. I do not take calls from unknown numbers, while traveling I observe movements around me, recording any phone call received." (DRC WHRD)

Other examples include changing their phone number, continuing their activism online, changing their routes home, hiring a security guard, recording phone calls, developing a security plan, among others. In only a few cases, did WHRDs indicate that they would stop their activism work because of the risks to them and their families.

While the safety net grants have been critical for WHRDs to improve their protection, 45% of WHRDs continue to face new threats, including new arrest warrants, threats to family members even if the WHRD is relocated, raids on homes, risk of being displaced after relocation, physical attacks, illegal detention, being followed, online threats as a result of continued activism, and death threats, among many others.

The findings also reveal that over 68% of WHRDs face continued threats as a result of their activism and work more broadly, however just over half (51%) of all WHRDs equally indicate that the grant has supported the reduction of risks either to a very high or high degree).

Despite these continued threats to themselves and their families, WHRDs remain committed to continue their activism and work. As a result of the survey findings, the Window for WHRDs will advocate for increased financing for WHRDs and additional political support for the protection in the longer term¹¹.

WHRD Impact Profiles¹²

Advocacy Stream

Championing rural women's responses to climate injustice in the DRC

In December 2023, three WHRDs (one WHRD between 18 and 29 years) were supported through the advocacy stream to attend the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP28). For one year, the delegation documented the traditional practices that rural women are putting in place to adapt and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. The delegation highlighted the expertise of local women and their organizations in responding to climate insecurity and injustice, and advocated for the recognition of their lived experience and acknowledgment as legitimate actors in the negotiations for and about them. COP28 was an opportunity for the delegation to call for compensation for women who are directly impacted by climate change in rural settings and to advocate for direct funding channelled to women's organizations responding to climate insecurity.

Supporting indigenous WHRDs accountability efforts in Colombia

In November 2023, eight eco-feminists (four WHRDs between 18 and 29 years) attended the 188th session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on the "Protection of Women Defenders of Land, Territory and the Environment" in Washington. With the support through the advocacy stream, the delegation was able to testify in front of the IACHR and expose the harassment and persecution inflicted on women defending land rights in Colombia. The delegation also called for the adoption of the recommendations issued by the Commission to guarantee the safety and well-being of women human rights defenders. They stressed that ensuring the protection of WHRDs is a fundamental step towards the implementation of the country's peace agreement, and urged for the recognition of their critical roles in the construction of lasting peace.

Standing with Afghan WHRDs to amplify the voices of women against the impact of Taliban restrictions on women's mental health and economic conditions

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Please note that all names and identifying details have been anonymized for protection and security reasons.

In June 2023, the Window provided direct logistical support for an Afghan WHRD to participate in the enhanced interactive dialogue on Afghanistan during the 53rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). In this dialogue, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAW) presented their report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan¹³. Various United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, other relevant human rights mechanisms, and non-governmental organizations both from Afghanistan and the diaspora were present at the event. The event was followed by a side event, “Afghan Women’s Perspectives on the Restrictions, Economic Issues, and Mental Health” in Geneva which was jointly hosted by the office of the Special Rapporteur and the coordination of WGDAW to share findings of a national mixed methods study. This advocacy initiative enabled the WHRD to amplify and elevate the voices of women inside Afghanistan and also explore the rich and nuanced findings and recommendations gathered from the study on the topics of restrictions on women, economic issues and mental health. As a result of this meeting, the WHRD was able to establish direct channels with the HRC and some Member States to ensure the inclusion of Afghan women’s voices in policy-making circles and the UN system. As a follow-up to an additional side event with academic partners, the WHRD published a policy brief on the impact of Taliban restrictions on women’s mental health and economic conditions.

Safety Net

Supporting WHRDs at threat for fighting corruption and women’s empowerment

Under its safety net stream and in partnership with an INGO partner, the Window supported a Sudanese WHRD working in a media centre on sensitive corruption cases and women’s empowerment, who after the revolution in 2019, was detained and suffered a serious injury which is still affecting her daily life and work. After the start of the war, she left with her family to a northern state. She refused to take sides, and as a result, she was accused of being a supporter of one of the factions and started receiving threats, explicitly asking her not to conduct any human rights work. The WHRD received a grant to cover safe transport to leave the country, three months of living costs, and health treatment.

Sustaining fragile women’s rights ecosystems in conflict and crisis affected settings

Following the earthquakes in southern Türkiye and northern Syria, the WHRDs Unit provided nine Syrian WHRDs (three young women) with Safety Net grants to address their immediate needs such as temporary relocation, health care expenses, and basic necessities. Beyond enabling the WHRDs to alleviate financial burdens and providing crucial stability during times of crisis, the protection grants facilitated their ability to resume their activism and work in their communities. The WHRDs were able to contribute to the international community’s response to the earthquake by providing first-hand testimonies to international organizations and diplomatic representatives on the needs on the grounds and the challenges faced by affected communities. Furthermore, the protection support help WHRDs secure employment and career opportunities, as evidenced by appointments to leadership positions within women’s rights movements.

Protecting the voice of the Afghan WHRDs inside the country

After the Taliban takeover in August, 2023, a bold Afghan WHRD started fighting for her rights and the rights of other women in the streets. She organized demonstrations and participated in several other protests fighting for the rights of women and girls in the country. The WHRD was also active on online platforms advocating for Afghan women’s rights. As a consequence, she and her son were arrested by the Taliban in October 2023, and held for three months. During her captivity, she endured torture and multiple acts of cruelty, all due to her activities as a human rights defender. Upon her release, Safety Net funding allowed her to respond to her urgent medical needs, relocate with her family to a safe location in-country, obtain psychological support, and pay livelihood expenses.

Output 1.1: Efficient, effective, and timely management and implementation of WHRD Window is ensured

¹³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/125/67/PDF/G2312567.pdf?OpenElement>

The Window for WHRDs Unit undertook and coordinated all day-to-day tasks necessary for the smooth management and delivery of the Window, ensuring compliance with approaches and procedures set out in its project document and concept note.

In 2023, the WHRDs Window Unit convened its civil society and UN partners for an online mid-year review (two meetings, one focused on the advocacy stream and the other on safety net stream) where it documented best practices and collected feedback on the Window's scope, processes and procedures. As a result, the Unit:

- Reviewed, adopted, and circulated the ToR of the Advocacy Committee¹⁴.
- Reviewed and adopted clear criteria for repeated support under the Advocacy Support stream.
- Developed standardised methodology and criteria for repeat grants under its Safety Net stream.
- Adopted criteria to prioritize requests from WHRDs from civil society backgrounds, and made vulnerable by displacement, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Developed and agreed on criteria to prioritize requests for advocacy support to attend fora where women have been traditionally marginalized.
- Updated its Safety Net and Advocacy stream application forms available in both Word format and an online platform in six languages (English, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, French, and Spanish).

Throughout the year, the Window for WHRDs Unit continued to review requests from WHRDs submitted through the WPHF web portal or email. It guided applicants who sought support to fill in application forms and redirected applicants, as necessary, to appropriate streams. Cases not eligible to be supported through the Window were referred to other relevant mechanisms. For example, the Unit redirected to other partners those requests for protection grants from WHRDs outside of the Window for WHRDs geographical scope.

OHCHR Partnership

In 2023, the partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued. OHCHR actively participated as a member of the Advocacy Committee, helping review Advocacy Support applications, providing recommendations, identifying relevant entry points for applicant's advocacy, amplifying visibility and influence of the window, and ensuring synergies between advocacy applications for similar events, while avoiding duplication of funding.

In line with the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Advocacy Committee developed in 2023, OHCHR conducted due diligence, ensured diversity, provided feedback on the eligibility of applications, helped finding entry points to augment the meaningful impact of support, advised on potential risks and reprisals related to the applicant's advocacy plan and recommended mitigation measures. In addition, OHCHR has been actively engaged with the WPHF WHRDs Window unit to discuss challenges, lessons learned, and best practices throughout the year.

Importantly, WPHF and OHCHR collaborated to address potential reprisal cases of WHRDs who were at risk due to their collaboration with the United Nations. This joint effort aimed to enhance the accountability of the United Nations and contribute to the documentation and addressing of reprisals

¹⁴ The WPHF WHRDs Window's Advocacy Committee (comprised of UN Women, OHCHR and civil society representatives coordinated by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security) is an advisory group which provides expert advice on shortlisted applications under the Advocacy Support mechanism, and facilitates coordination to reduce duplication of support and amplify the impact of the WHRDs efforts. The Committee also contributes to sharing information on the Window to various networks to increase support to WHRDs in their diversity.

against WHRDs. As a result, when potential risks arose, the Window evaluated any threats that might have been associated with collaboration with the United Nations and took a proactive approach by sharing application details with OHCHR, obtaining consent from WHRDs in advance. In response, OHCHR conducted dedicated meetings with the WHRDs to comprehensively discuss the security risks and threats.

Selection and onboarding of INGO partners for Safety Net implementation

In February 2023, WPHF launched a new Call for Proposals (CfP) under its safety net stream to identify new INGOs, particularly to address the increasing demand in Afghanistan and Myanmar and further reach at risk WHRDs in Asia. A total of 50 proposals were received from INGOs and, following a technical evaluation, the WPHF Funding Board selected the three additional INGO partners¹⁵ in April 2023, including Gender Equality Network (GEN) and Mina's List.

Following the selection, a Harmonized Approaches for Cash Transfers Micro Assessment (HACT) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Assessment (PSEAH) were conducted through a third party, as required by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO). All organizations assessed have been evaluated as low risk. Areas of improvement have been identified with recommendations for each organization. The HACT, PSEAH assessments, and project documents were approved by the Funding Board on 6th December 2023. INGO partners will be onboarded in 2024, including the development of a PSEAH implementation plan.

INGO Partnerships

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs continued to strengthen its partnership with five current INGO partners under the safety net stream. Partners played a multifaceted role in the overall functioning of the Window, including in the verification and assessment of applications, expediting the transfer of grants to WHRDs, and ensuring continuous financial management and progress reporting on a quarterly basis.

- ▶ Agir ensemble pour les droits humains (AEDH)
- ▶ East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (Defend Defenders)
- ▶ Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF)
- ▶ Front Line Defenders (FLD)
- ▶ Madre, in consortium with the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF)

Based on their work on the safety net stream, four INGO partners received costed extensions into 2024, to respond to the number of applications received and high needs of WHRDs, especially from Sudan and Afghanistan. Partners continued to also provide invaluable strategic guidance, and maintained consistent communication with WHRDs. Their active participation in annual evaluations, monthly coordination calls, and quarterly updates, where challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned are openly discussed with WPHF, contributed to the Window's overall knowledge management. Their communication efforts further amplified the visibility of the Window and underscores the collective importance of the mission in supporting and safeguarding women human rights defenders globally.

Monthly coordination meetings held throughout 2023 served as an important platform for the Window for WHRDs and its INGO partners to maintain a proactive and effective partnership in responding to emerging needs of WHRDs from/working in conflict crisis-affected countries. These meetings serve to evaluate progress, allowing the Unit to assess the status of ongoing transferred cases to partners, discuss specific issues and challenges, and collaboratively find solutions. The sessions facilitated open

¹⁵ The name of the third NGO partner is not mentioned for safety/security reasons.

communication, knowledge exchange, sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and the creation of a learning environment for both the WPHF WHRDs Window and its INGO partners.

In addition, the Window for WHRDs conducted bilateral quarterly calls with each INGO implementing partner. The quarterly meeting provided a comprehensive reflection on the preceding quarter, offering INGO partners a space to showcase their initiatives and activities. This structured engagement serves as the optimal avenue for our partners to spotlight key successes and results achieved in supporting WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis-affected countries. The meetings facilitate candid discussions about challenges or bottlenecks faced, particularly in the realm of grant management and other operational facets. By addressing these challenges collectively, we foster a collaborative problem-solving approach. Equally important, these sessions unveil the key actions planned for the upcoming quarter.

Importantly, as a result of this partnership with WPHF, which allowed dedicated funding to women human rights defenders and enhanced coordination with other actors, INGO partners reported having expanded their support to WHRDs and improved their gender-sensitivity approach to protection throughout the year.

Proposals Received

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit completed the technical review of 1,640 proposals from WHRDs under both streams from 72 countries in 6 languages, in addition to a call for proposals for new INGO partners with 50 proposals received. 929 proposals (or 62.3% of proposals received) were transferred to INGO partners for verification under the Safety Net stream, and 20 (or 11.5% of proposals received) forwarded to the Advocacy Committee under the Advocacy Support stream, and of which 17 were recommended by the Committee. The majority of requests under both streams come from Afghanistan (46.3%), followed by Sudan (20.3%), the D.R.C (6.9%), and Uganda (3.6%).

2023	Proposals Received/Reviewed	Countries	Longlisted, Transferred to INGOs or Advocacy Committee	Shortlisted ¹⁶
Advocacy	148	41	20	17
Safety Net	1,492	62	929	929
NGO Partners	50	N/A	31	7
Total	1,690	72	980	953

Cumulatively, since 2022, a total of 3,272 proposals have been received from 87 different countries, with 941 proposals being transferred to INGO partners and the Advocacy Committee. 81 of these were received by potential INGO partners. 1,417 proposals (or 48.7% of proposals received) were transferred to INGO partners for verification under the Safety Net stream, and 33 (or 11.7% of proposals received) forwarded to the Advocacy Committee under the Advocacy Support stream, and of which 29 were recommended by the Committee. The majority of requests under both streams come from Afghanistan (61.8%), followed by Sudan (11.0%), the D.R.C (5.7%), and Myanmar (2.4%).

Cumulatively (2022-2023)	Proposals Received/Reviewed	Countries	Longlisted, Transferred to INGOs or Advocacy Committee	Shortlisted ¹⁷
Advocacy	281	52	33	29

¹⁶ Under the Safety Net stream, proposals transferred to NGO partners (longlisting) and shortlisting is the same. Under the Advocacy stream, shortlisted are those recommended by the Advocacy Committee.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Safety Net	2,910	75	1,417	1,417
INGO Partners	81	N/A	60	15
Total	3,272	87	1,510	1,461

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit continued to receive applications for both streams through an encrypted webpage, to ensure online safety and ‘do no harm’ principles. The management of all documents and communications with partners are also password-protected, with access limited to the Window Unit only. Committed to the safety and security of the WHRDs who engage with the Window, sensitive cases were also communicated through Signal, and shifted, as advised by its partners, to open-source video-conferencing software such as JITSI for sensitive online meetings and information sessions. In 2024, the WHRDs Window Unit will continue giving priority to the online safety of its partners and explore ways to further strengthen its cautious use of information technology.

Risks Management

Drawing on discussions during quarterly meetings with implementing INGOs, the Window for WHRDs workshop in 2022, and a series of engagements with the Advocacy Committee members, the Unit’s Risk Matrix was updated. Notably, these modifications included:

- Updated mitigation measures on facilitating financial transfers to WHRDs more promptly;
- Additional risk mitigation measures regarding fraudulent applications identified in specific locations and cases of funds being diverted from eligible WHRDs;
- Elaborated language on reprisals and increased WHRDs’ risks due to more exposure and visibility following WPHF’s support, as well as risks for travelling without Mahrams;
- Detailed definition of WPHF’ reputational risks and addition of new mitigation measures to address the potential perception of WPHF as a bureaucratic funding mechanism, not fit to respond to WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis settings;
- Additional mitigation measures to reduce the risk of duplication of funding between WPHF and existing funding mechanisms providing similar emergency support; and
- Edited language regarding mitigation measures to address sustainability issues, given the unanticipated proportion of livelihood requests.

Going forward, the Window for WHRDs Unit will continue to revise this matrix every quarter, to account for evolving protection, security and logistics challenges facing WHRDs and the Window’s processes, and capitalize on feedback provided during quarterly calls by implementing INGO partners.

See Appendix C for updated Risk Matrix.

Output 1.2: Monitoring and evaluation of best practices and lessons to ensure flexible and responsive support to meet evolving needs of WHRDs is generated and utilized

The Window for WHRDs Unit organized and participated in several consultations with WHRDs, civil society organizations, UN Women, and OHCHR to inform the design of the Window, and ensure these stakeholders usefully contribute to regular review and refinement of its processes.

Consultations with INGO partners, UN Agencies, CSOs and WHRDs

In 2023, a total of 13 follow-up calls with supported WHRDs under the advocacy stream were conducted to discuss: i) advocacy objectives achieved; ii) challenges encountered; iii) reprisals faced, or any potential further risks; iv) impact of protection mitigation measures and need for any further protection support; and v) follow-up advocacy plans, capitalizing on outcomes of participation in this initiative. These

exchanges constitute an enriching learning space for the WHRDs Window Unit, enabling it to improve its support for WHRDs, and shape WPHF's ways of working. For instance, following advice from one of the supported delegations, WHRDs Window Unit started including all applicant delegation members (rather than only the focal point) in email exchanges in order to avoid misunderstanding, communication gaps, and ensure full access on procedures and type of support provided by the WHRDs Window Unit. Moreover, feedback collected during these discussions on best practices and learnings on women's meaningful participation fed into WPHF's global advocacy.

In cases where intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN were identified or alleged, the WHRD Window Unit sought consent of the participant to share details with the OHCHR reprisals team, for their follow-up to help document the case, and for the eventual inclusion in the SGs report on reprisals.

In June and July 2023, the Unit also organized two mid-year reviews with the Advocacy Committee composed of UN Women, OHCHR and the NGO Working Group on WPS, marking one year after the launch of the WHRD Window. These two meetings assessed progress to date, took stock of challenges and lessons learned, and identified recommendations for the way forward.

Throughout the year, the WPHF valued online and in person honest exchanges with WHRDs as a way to improve support provided, remain fit for purpose and stay updated on the local needs, priorities, challenges and opportunities. Among others, the WPHF convened an online meeting with a delegation of Afghan WHRDs, in Afghanistan and in exile, who highlighted the worsening situation for women activists, and women and girls, in general. The primary focus was to delve into the challenging circumstances faced by Afghan WHRDs and understand their specific needs. During the comprehensive discussion, the WHRDs highlighted the escalating risks and challenges particularly encountered by protestors, as a direct consequence of their human rights activities. Furthermore, they highlighted an unprecedented demand for psychosocial and mental health support, as well as high demands for visa and visa extension costs, and livelihood needs. This collaborative dialogue allowed the Unit to gain valuable insights and recommendations on how to better address the needs of Afghan WHRDs.

In December 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit met with two supported WHRDs visiting Geneva. For instance, during the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) coordinated by the WPHF Global L-Hub in December 2023, WPHF hosted a meeting that brought together refugee-led/refugee focused CSOs partners and supported WHRDs. This gathering was a valuable opportunity for direct interactions between WPHF and its CSOs and women human rights defenders partners, which allowed participants to know more about each other's work and potentially collaborate.

In 2023, collaborations were conducted with other actors including WPHF Board members such as Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, for the dissemination of their global survey to WPHF's networks as well as to WHRDs who could voluntarily participate. The survey aimed to map WHRDs' risks and challenges and monitor the situation of women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries. The findings were included into Kvinna till Kvinna's report "The state of women human rights defenders 2023".¹⁸

Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2023, the Window for WHRDs Unit sustained its utilization-focused, flexible, and 'do no harm' approach to monitoring and evaluation to minimize the burden for both WHRDs and implementing INGOs. Follow-up calls with INGO partners and advocacy stream recipients, as well as anonymous post-support surveys under the advocacy stream were administered, to understand more about the impact of participation in

¹⁸ [The state of women human rights defenders 2023 \(kvinnatillkvinna.org\)](https://www.kvinnatillkvinna.org/en/2023/06/2023-the-state-of-women-human-rights-defenders)

local, national, regional and global advocacy efforts. The Unit strengthened its M&E system by tracking new variables such as threats and intersectionalities of WHRDs supported under its Safety Net stream, and information disseminated through country briefs, including one specifically on Sudan¹⁹.

As part of the WPHF WHRDs Window M&E strategy, a pilot global impact survey was carried out in June 2023 in collaboration with INGO partners carried with a small sample of WHRDs supported under both streams with the objective to test and gather feedback on the impact of the protection and participation grants provided by the WPHF WHRDs Window. Based on this pilot, WPHF launched its first global impact survey for WHRDs supported in 2023 under the Safety Net stream with a similar aim of documenting the impact and to understand the sustained impact of the emergency and protection grants on WHRDs supported by the Window on WHRDs. Findings and recommendations will also be used to advocate for increased financing among the international community for the protection and participation of WHRDs from conflict and crisis-affected countries. Participation in the survey was voluntary, anonymous and confidential, and encrypted software used to ensure the mitigation of digital risks to WHRDs. The preliminary findings from the impact survey are found in Section 2 above, and an advocacy brief will be developed and disseminated in 2024.

In 2024, the WHRD's Unit will continue to share the best practices and lessons learned resulting from its monitoring and evaluation processes with the WPHF Funding Board, as well as donors, and feminist civil society organizations more broadly.

Output 1.3: Advocacy and visibility to increase access and support to WHRDs protection and participation on the global stage is promoted

During the reporting period, in collaboration with the WPHF Communications Team, the WHRD Unit worked to help reinforce visibility best practices among its NGO partners and beneficiaries. These guidelines outlined 'do no harm' principles for its communications, including anonymization of individuals or organizations to ensure protection and informed consent for use in public awareness-raising and visibility initiatives.

A series of outreach initiatives were launched throughout the year to drive visibility of the critical needs of WHRDs in fragile settings and the added value of the Window with civil society networks, UN Member States, and potential donors. Moreover, advocacy support provided through the Window between June and December 2023 enhanced the participation and influence of WHRDs at a series of influential forums, generating awareness about the crucial role of WHRDs, as well as the increasing risks they face in speaking up (See Section on Impact).

Advocacy and Visibility Events

A variety of advocacy and visibility events were conducted in 2023 to increase the visibility of WHRDs. In March 2023, the Permanent Missions of Norway and Colombia to the United Nations, Front Line Defenders and Defend Defenders, and the WHRDs Window Unit co-sponsored a launch event of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders report, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the successes achieved²⁰. The UN Special Rapporteur highlighted how support from the international community, including funding mechanisms such as the

¹⁹ [Brief of WHRDs in Sudan](#)

²⁰ UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs report 'Success through perseverance and solidarity: 25 years of achievements by human rights defenders', U.N. Doc. A/HRC/52/29, (2023)

WHRDs Window, contribute to sustaining the work and amplifying the impact of WHRDs²¹, stating *“funding is therefore essential, and the support provided by a number of States to the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund funding window for women human rights defenders is welcome in this regard.”*²²

In 2023, at the request of the Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Window for WHRDs Unit facilitated a meeting between UN high-level senior management and a delegation of Afghan WHRDs in Pakistan, to discuss the situation of women's human rights in Afghanistan, the increasing pushback, and international community’s response. Following this consultation, the Window for WHRDs Unit also arranged a follow-up meeting with the Afghan delegation on concerns about reprisals, intimidation, and check on their security and safety. This meeting also served as a way to collect additional information regarding threats and challenges faced by WHRDs in Afghanistan and exile, especially in Pakistan.

Building also on the momentum of the UN Security Council Debate on Women Peace and Security in October 2022, and in preparation to the WPHF 2023 Invest-In Women Global Summit, the Window for WHRDs Unit organized, in collaboration with the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, a closed briefing with UN Security Council Member States signatories of Women, Peace, and Security Commitments, highlighting the challenges and needs of WHRDs and showcasing the support provided by WPHF.

On the sidelines of the 2023 Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, the WPHF 2023 Invest-In Women Global Summit, [a video](#) was developed on the increased targeting against WHRDs, including topics of gender-based violence due to sexual orientation and gender identity, intimidation and harassment of dependents, and kidnappings and forced disappearances, to advocate with Member States and the international community to accelerate financial and political commitments to protect and support WHRDs. A Syrian young WHRD supported by the Window was provided the opportunity to participate in an interactive civil society dialogue on the impacts of innovative financing tools such as the Window for WHRDs. She also briefed on the barriers impeding WHRDs’ participation in decision-making processes in peacebuilding efforts in conflict and crisis affected contexts, the lack of accessibility to and awareness of funding opportunities, fears of retaliation, and visas constraints when the decision-making process is taking place in northern countries. The WHRD also provided recommendations on how to better support the protection of WHRDs, considering intersectionality while continuing to guarantee their participation, and recommendations for awareness and advocacy campaigns that focus on the challenges faced by WHRDs, establishing peer-to-peer support networks, enabling WHRDs to connect, share experiences, and provide advice, and providing legal support.

Throughout the year, the WPHF Secretariat leveraged its communications channels to highlight the global impact of the Window for WHRDs and the support provided to its beneficiaries through both streams. A larger campaign was launched on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day (November 29), 11 days before the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to showcase key achievements of the Window for WHRDs in 2022 and the different types of advocacy and protection support provided to WHRDs and their dependents. The campaign was promoted on X – formerly known as Twitter – generating over 1,200 impressions and recording an impressive average post engagement rate of 10.51%.

²¹ ISHRGlobal, "Success through perseverance & solidarity: 25 years of achievements by human rights defenders", (Minutes: 23:46 – 24:07) available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hflaunxjN0> (2023)

²² Ibid. Paragraph 95.



At the regional level, as part of the strategy to strengthen collaboration with non-governmental organizations in Asia and the Pacific, the Window for WHRDs Unit was invited to contribute to a closed meeting led by the the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Myanmar on the situation of human rights defenders in the country. An analysis of the gendered challenges faced by WHRDs from/working in Myanmar and the imperative of delivering protection support through with an intersectional approach was presented.

As part of the WPHF’s regular funding cycle donor mission in Colombia in 2023, a young climate justice activist was also invited to connect with women’s civil society organizations in Narino, and to directly brief WPHF donors on the needs of women climate activists in the country.²³

Overall, as noted earlier, WHRDs themselves have been advocating on local, regional, national and international stages, calling for increased attention to the risks of WHRDs, for the incorporation of refugees women’s voices in the decision-making processes and the development of global refugee policies, to the persistent threats and abuses faced by WHRDs protecting land, territory, and the environment in Colombia, advocating for the recognition of the key role women CSOs play in the overall stabilization of the Lake Chad region process as active agents of peace, and urging for refugee women and in girls’ rights in the MENA region to an inclusive, safe, and secure digital existence. For example, a young WHRD supported from Syria to attend the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) highlighted how important funding mechanisms as the WPHF WHRDs Window are to sustaining the existing of young human rights defenders from conflict and crisis affected countries and their work *“Some of us don’t have the luxury to go to our governments and reach out for support, and many of the countries in the Global South don’t have youth representation. Funds such as WPHF, which supports youth*

²³ See 2023 WPHF Secretariat Annual Report

civil society organizations and young women peacebuilders working in conflict and crisis-affected countries, are the only way we can exist.”²⁴

Challenges to the meaningful participation of WHRDs

- ▶ **WHRDs’ participation is confined in civil-society spaces:** WHRDs highlight that their participation is restricted to areas outside the decision-making rooms, such as pre-forums, side-events and pavilions. A woman human rights defender reported feeling demotivated after her participation in an international forum, *“It is hard to be spoken on behalf of. You do the hard work, and nobody appreciates that. Frontlines workers need to be appreciated more and their work recognized”*. Restricting the participation of WHRDs from countries in crisis and conflict has the effect, of *“preserving the imbalance in power dynamics between local civil society actors, international non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, and Member States”*. Governments will tend to be officially represented inside, while the challenging voices of civil society activists will remain outside. There is a significant risk that the situation in the country in question will end up being ignored.
- ▶ **Reduced Access due to logistical barriers:** WHRDs also face persistent and significant logistical barriers to their participation in meetings and decision-making processes. At the international level, holding meetings in global North countries where WHRDs’ participation is conditional on obtaining a visa, is one of the main logistical limitations to WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected countries, particularly when they are forcibly displaced. Another limitation highlighted by WHRDs is the obligation to have an observer status to be able to participate in meetings, this has the effect of favoring the participation of WHRDs who are linked to internationally recognized organizations or who have the most exposure to the international community, thereby excluding WHRDs working at grassroots level. One WHRD supported described that she was not able to directly make a statement in front of the ACERWC, as her organization does not hold an observer status. As a result, she had to convince another organization with which she collaborated with in the past to include a reference in their statement on the situation of children rights in her country. Even with this strategy, WHRDs often face long and complex accreditation application processes, mainly done online, which favors participants with the easiest access to digitalization. Additionally, the lack of interpretation in different languages in certain forums further limits the inclusiveness of participating WHRDs to those who are the most literate.

Website and Information Sessions

In 2023, in collaboration with UN Women Country/Regional Offices and its INGO partners, a total of five information sessions with WHRDs were conducted in six languages, with approximately 52 people in attendance. Information sessions with WHRDs were offered to share information to civil society organizations and WHRDs of funding opportunities offered by the Window. Another information session was conducted with 42 potential NGOs representatives that have experience working with WHRDs in fragile and conflict-affected contexts in Asia and the Pacific, and was followed by the launch of a second call for proposals for NGO Partners.

To manage timeline expectations, the Unit also updated its website to include a clear outline of the decision-making processes within its two funding streams, as well as further clarity the scope of the Window and its eligibility criteria.

Capacity Strengthening: WPHF Global Learning Hub (L-HUB)

In 2023, based on the needs and priorities identified in WPHF’s Annual CSO survey in 2022, WPHF’s Global L-HUB carried out a capacity strengthening webinar for local women peacebuilders, humanitarians, and human rights defenders and their organizations on self-protection and self-care for WHRDs in conflict and crisis affected contexts in collaboration with organized in collaboration Agir Ensemble pour les Droits

²⁴<https://wphfund.org/in-her-own-words-ruby/>

Humains (AEDH). The webinar provided a space for WHRDs to exchange practical tools to navigate the daily challenges encountered within their practice. Particularly, the webinar delved into the different steps to develop a security plan from identifying risks and threats to mapping available protection services available and developing an action plan to be set in motion if threats occur. The session was held online in English with simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, French, and Spanish with a total of 41 WHRDs and CSO representatives across 20 countries in attendance. This interest was echoed as well by individuals and CSO partners of the WHRD Window who have consistently highlighted safety and security as critical topics. Following the webinar, a tip sheet was produced²⁵ and disseminated through the WPHF L-HUB newsletter. The WPHF Secretariat launched its Global L-HUB initiative in 2021 to connect civil society partners to reinforce their capacities, strengthen their networks, exchange best practices, and provide mentoring opportunities to local CSO leaders working to build peace and respond to crises across the globe.

3. Best Practices, Lessons Learned and Adaptations

Based on continuous dialogue and consultations on the Window's operations and processes with key stakeholders, and taking stock of best practices, challenges and lessons learned, the Window for WHRDs Unit has already been able to address some of the teething issues experienced as with programming in complex operating environments. Throughout the year, several best practices have emerged, as well as various lessons learned and adaptations for improved decision making and improvement of the Window.

Advocacy Stream

▶ **Aligning meaningful participation and protection in Advocacy Stream**

In addition to operating in contexts of conflict and crisis, WHRDs supported through the Window are confronted with intersecting forms of oppression based on sex, race, and other forms of discrimination, which not only pose a barrier to their participation, but directly act as risk-multiplier when they do participate. While in some instances participation can be seen as a form of protection, the participation of WHRDs can also impact their safety and security, and that of their dependents. To balance the participation of WHRDs and their safety, WHRDs are asked during the application process to list the potential risks related to their participation in the targeted event, meeting, and decision-making process. In 2023, the Unit also strengthened its security procedures when requests are considered, applicants are asked to further indicate whether they have faced threats due to their activism in the past and whether their participation in the event could trigger any reprisals. If risks are identified by the applicants, in collaboration with OHCHR, the WHRD Unit organizes security assessment calls to discuss potential mitigation measures the WHRDs can adopt (e.g. keeping the location and date of the meeting secret, and to inform a trusted relative of the measures to take in the event the suspected threats occur). The calls are also an opportunity for the WHRDs to be informed of the resources available within WPHF and outside if such risks arise. A follow-up call is organized two weeks after the event, and WHRDs Window Unit uses this as an opportunity to monitor potential reprisals. In 2023, the Unit also started contributing to the documentation of cases of retaliation in collaboration with the UN. If an application for safety net refers to linkages with the UN has put the WHRD at risk, they are referred, with their consent, to the team in charge of reprisals at OHCHR for further support and documentation.

²⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SuNFdVizRWrU0EkQFJIQMZl0Tn5W7mMt/view?usp=drive_link

▶ **Drawing on feminist approaches**

Under its advocacy support stream, WHRDs or their delegations who participate in events as official representatives of their communities are asked throughout the application process and during follow-up calls to elaborate on the engagement of communities in elaborating their advocacy plan, and how they plan to report back to them after the event/meeting/decision-making process. This share-back, a key feminist principle has enabled WHRDs to bring forward the voices of their communities and return back the results of their participation.

Furthermore, to recognize the lived experiences of WHRDs and in recognition of their extensive and diverse experience, the Window does not require a speaking role in advocacy events, meetings, or decision-making processes, in order for an application to be eligible.

In 2024, the window will work to further publicize funding opportunity with grassroots networks. Under the safety net stream, depending on the contexts, the WHRDs Window use different criteria to prioritize requests one example is prioritizing applications from WHRDs currently hiding or at borders with continued presence of threats. The WHRDs Window can also prioritize requests from WHRDs at risks who did not get support in the past months from another organization.

Safety Net Stream

▶ **Increasing transparency and building trust**

Building a relationship of trust with WHRDs from/ working in conflict and crisis affected contexts is a pre-condition for achieving the effectiveness of the support provided. The number of requests for support made under the safety net stream varies from region to another, with requests lower in Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the reasons for this trend could be a lack of confidence in UN mechanisms, which can be described by civil society as top-down and bureaucratic. To ensure the continued objective of fostering equal enabling partnerships based on mutual trust, the window has increased transparency about its eligibility criteria now available in six languages, and decision-making processes and INGO partners by making the information available on its website. The scope of the Window and the type of support that can be covered have also been clarified and published. This has had a positive impact in the rate of eligible applications under both streams in the last year, with an increase of 26.2% of received proposals that are either transferred to INGO partners or the Advocacy Committee.

▶ **Raising numbers of demands for humanitarian and livelihood support under the Safety Net Stream**

Under its safety net Stream, the Window provides flexible grants to cover a wide range of support, including support for dependents, psychological and medical assistance, digital equipment, access to legal services, and trainings on safety and security, among others. The WHRDs Window also provides short-term livelihood support in cases where it enhances the protection of WHRDs and their dependents and/or ability of recipients to continue or resume their activism. However, in 2023, a high number of requests for livelihoods with no direct link to protection were received, particularly in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis and from displaced WHRDs in transit or third countries, with no access to support-system or income-generating activities. In the case of applications from WHRDs which were eligible (with a link to protection), the Window also observed repeated submissions for support from these WHRDs after funds have expired, and risks were addressed, raising important questions about the sustainability of supporting livelihoods needs. While the WHRDs Window Unit is committed to maintaining flexibility to respond to the most urgent requirements of WHRDs at risk, it was established to respond to urgent short term funding needs for advocacy and protection support.

To manage expectations, the safety net eligibility criteria has been updated to include a strict timeline of two years based on the understanding that the impacts of threats can last and impede WHRDs from continuing their activism over the long term and after the threats happened during which the WHRD is eligible to apply. In addition, the WHRDs Window Unit and its INGOs partners have conducted honest and transparent discussions with applicant WHRDs on the short-term and emergency nature of the support provided under this partnership. INGO partners have been equally encouraged to discuss the sustainability of the support before it is provided. While it falls outside its mandate, the WHRDs Window Unit recognizes the need for longer-term humanitarian assistance and resettlement support particularly for forcibly displaced WHRDs. In line with this, the WHRDs Window Unit echoes the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders' calls for Member States to adopt and amend visa policies to facilitate WHRDs' access to humanitarian visas²⁶, and provide flexible long-term funding to WHRDs, taking into account the limitations they may face when living in territories where banks are sanctioned²⁷.

Both Advocacy and Safety Net Streams

▶ Operational delays due to working in complex conflict and crisis affected setting:

Due to the nature of working in complex environments, operational challenges related to the due diligence processes of eligible WHRDs working at the grassroots level caused some delays in approvals for both streams. As per the guidelines of the Advocacy Committee, committee members (UN Women ,OHCHR, and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security) have up to seven days, depending on the urgency of case, to undergo due diligence processes (including evaluation of risks related to the WHRDs participation) at international, regional and national levels to ensure comprehensive verification. In addition, as part of the WPHF Secretariat, the WHRDs Window Unit who is hosted by UN Women, and has been impacted by the change of UN Women's financial system in 2023 which created delays when providing direct support under the advocacy stream.

Similarly, under the safety net stream, the time the NGO partners required to complete verifications within their networks also regularly exceeded initial calculations, including because reference contacts sometimes were found unreachable . This is partly due to contexts where access to the internet has been restrained, and communication is lost with the applicant WHRDs during the process, or in cases of displacement where WHRDs access to digital equipment is challenging. Finally, finding adequate and safe ways to transfer support to WHRDs in contexts where access to banking services is limited or non-existent, has been a fundamental challenge which also impacted the rapidity of delivery of support. As a result, the WHRD Unit has adjusted language on the website to manage applicants' expectations of the timeframe and ensuring the steps and processes are more transparent. In addition, applicants are now encouraged to share as much information as possible from the initial phase, including providing as many reference contacts as possible as alternative focal points to reach out to during the due diligence process. In the Asia and Pacific region, where solicitations of the safety net stream have continued to grow, the Unit has also finalized the capacity assessments of three additional partners to accelerate the release of support and better respond to the needs of the WHRDs from/working in those countries.

▶ Supporting WHRDs from intersectional backgrounds

²⁶ Mary Lawlor, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, UN Doc A/78/131, 7 July 2023.

²⁷ Mary Lawlor, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, UN Doc A/78/131, 7 July 2023.

After the first six months of operation of both streams, in consultation with INGO and UN partners, risks that information on the Window's funding opportunities might be confined to circles of more experienced WHRDs with well-established links with the international community was found. As a result, the Window has adopted new well-defined criteria prioritizing WHRDs from civil society and living with intersectional backgrounds²⁸. To ensure the diversity of the WHRDs who have access to the Window's Advocacy Support, the Unit also established well-defined renewal criteria²⁹, and as part of the overall M&E strategy, the Window now diligently tracks multiple identities and intersectionalities. To improve the dissemination of information regarding the type and modalities of support provided, in 2024, the Window is planning to organise targeted information sessions for local and diverse WHRDs in collaboration with other UN entities, its INGO partners and networks of WHRDs.

▶ **Increase investment in WHRDs' mental and physical wellbeing**

A continued area of concern is the scarcity of trusted and culturally sensitive psychosocial support services available for WHRDs from/working in conflict affected contexts who have experienced trauma and urgently need assistance to continue their work. The percentage of WHRDs seeking psychosocial and health-related assistance was unanticipated in 2022 (18.3% of instances) and saw a slight increase in 2023 in the numbers of WHRDs applying for grants which will enable them to access support for their well-being (21.2% of health and psychosocial requests in 2023). INGO partners noted that even if this demand was not routinely accorded as a top priority in their requests, an overwhelming number of WHRDs supported nonetheless explained that they face health challenges that impede their ability to continue their work, and that a significant proportion would appear to face psychological trauma, even if they may not be comfortable expressing this openly. The WHRDs Window Unit mapped and publicized information on available psycho-social referral pathways and encouraged INGO partners to cover for costs of psychosocial support. Moving forward, the WHRDs Window will continue investing in the mental health of WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected countries, and further research into options to address these proactively.

▶ **Going beyond funding – best practices in capacity and knowledge exchange opportunities**

Going beyond funding is critical in ensuring WHRDs have the tools they need to continue their advocacy or protection, and the investment in capacity strengthening linked to their work essential. In contexts of conflict and crisis, the needs of WHRDs, both in terms of protection and participation remain unmet. This is accentuated by the absence of state-led protection mechanisms and safe opportunities for them to participate and/or strengthen their capacities. During the reporting period, prioritization of providing supported WHRDs with capacity strengthening opportunities in areas of protection was carried out. In this regard, Defend Defenders offered digital security trainings to all WHRDs support as a complement to the protection grant provided. In addition, the WHRDs Window Unit has also invested in AEDH's project to set up an online platform, currently being developed by the organization, which will offer training on digital and physical safety. Furthermore, in collaboration with the WPHF Global L-Hub, and as mentioned

²⁸ As per the Advocacy Committee terms of reference (ToR), priority will be given to applications to (i) WHRDs attending fora where women have been traditionally marginalized, including spaces related to, disarmament, counterterrorism, human rights, drugs and crime, harm reduction networks, digitalization, climate security, land rights, international financial institutions, among others; and (ii) applications of WHRDs from civil society and marginalized communities, e.g. women with disabilities, LGTBQI+, youth, small ethnic or religious communities.

²⁹ The applicant must demonstrate links between the previous advocacy meeting/event supported and the new advocacy support opportunity, and how both opportunities are building on each other; and show added value of this new advocacy support opportunity to human rights and peace activities. Support can be provided up to 2 times during the same calendar year, to ensure diversity of women supported through the window.

above, the window organized a webinar on self-protection and self-care. Building on these best practices, the Window will continue in 2024 to explore potential capacity building areas that WHRDs can access, including on through WPHF's partner AEDH, on digital security.

4. Planned 2024 Priorities

In 2024, and subject to the availability of funds, the Window will prioritize the following objectives:

Expanding its support and reach:

- Onboarding of 3 new INGO Partners covering Asia and the Pacific region;
- Organizing targeted information sessions for grassroots/local and diverse WHRDs in partnerships with INGO partners, UN entities, etc.

Increase timeliness and efficiency of operations of both streams:

- Better respond to advocacy and safety net applications and to ensure continued needs-driven innovation and flexible support;
- Organise WHRDs Window Workshop with INGO partners to reflect on ways of working, best practices, lessons learned and future opportunities;
- Exchange with relevant key actors to exchange lessons learned, needs and support.

Enhance awareness and advocacy for more support to WHRDs in crisis and conflict settings:

- Events with key partners, updating the Communication Strategy of the Window and develop Window/WHRDs-focused communications material;
- Organise an advocacy event with key partners around WHRDs International Day;
- Increase resource mobilization, in particular for the global portfolio, by leveraging WPHF-donor engagements and, when possible, organise exchanges with WHRDs.
- Increase advocacy and protection capacity for WHRDs through the provision of L-HUB capacity strengthening opportunities and exchanges on areas of advocacy, well-being and psychosocial support, and documenting human rights abused through evidence

5. Appendices

Appendix A: WHRD Window Brief

Appendix B: Process Map of Window

Appendix C: Risk Matrix

6. Indicator Based Performance Assessment

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
<p>Project Outcome: Increased access of WHRDs in crisis and conflict settings to protection mechanisms and advocacy opportunities, for their safe participation in the promotion of human rights and peace</p>	<p>1. Number of WHRDs supported through Safety Net funding (by age group and country of origin) Baseline: 38 (2022) Target: N/A</p> <p>2. Number of WHRDs supported through Advocacy Support (by age group and country of origin) Baseline: 19 (2022) Target: N/A</p>	<p>Safety Net Stream Total: 330 WHRDs supported (40.9% 18-29 years old) with protection grants in 2023. Cumulatively, 394 WHRDs supported (39.1% 18-29 years old) Global: 158 WHRDs supported (34.2% 18-29 years old) with protection grants. Cumulatively, 197 WHRDs supported (31.0% 18-29 years old) Afghanistan: 172 WHRDs supported (47.1% 18-29 years old) with protection grants. Cumulatively, 197 WHRDs supported (47.2% 18-29 years old)</p> <p>Advocacy Stream Total: 39 WHRDs supported through 13 requests (25.6% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 62 WHRDs supported through 24 requests (22.6% 18-29 years old) Global: 29 WHRDs supported through 11 requests (27.6% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 49 WHRDs supported through 19 requests (24.5% 18-29 years old) Afghanistan: 10 WHRDs supported through 2 requests (20.0% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 13 WHRDs supported through 5 requests (15.4% 18-29 years old)</p>	N/A
<p>Output 1.1 Efficient, effective, and timely management and implementation of the WHRD Window is ensured</p>	<p>1.1a Selection and onboarding of new INGOs partner(s) Baseline: 5 (2022) Target: 1-2 (2023)</p>	<p>In 2023, a call for proposals was launched for new INGO partners to support the safety net stream, particularly in Afghanistan and Myanmar. Three additional INGO partners were selected by the Funding Board and went through a HACT and PSEAH assessment. They will be onboarded in 2024 (one partner under global funding, one partner under Afghanistan funding, and one partner under both).</p>	N/A
	<p>1.1b OHCHR partnership is continued for quality technical and advisory support Baseline: 0 Target: partnership continued</p>	<p>Yes. The partnership with OHCHR continued with the review of advocacy support applications, identification of entry points for advocacy recipients, amplifying visibility and influence of the window, and advising on risks and reprisals related to applicant's advocacy plans.</p>	N/A
	<p>1.1c Number of requests received and screened (by stream) Baseline: 333 (2022) Target: N/A</p>	<p>Safety Net Stream: 1,492 proposals received and reviewed for eligibility. For WHRDs from Afghanistan, a total of 742 proposals were received (49.7% of all safety net proposals). Cumulatively, a total of 2,910 proposals received and reviewed, with 1,917 from Afghanistan, or 65.8% of all proposals. Advocacy Stream: 148 proposals received and reviewed for eligibility, with 17 from Afghanistan. Cumulatively, a total of 281 proposals reviewed, with 56 from Afghanistan.</p>	N/A

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
	1.1d Types of additional support provided to WHRDs Target: referrals, training, protection planning, etc.	In 2023, the Unit contributed to the documentation of retaliation in collaboration with the UN. In cases where participation in a UN led event has put the WHRD at risk, they are referred, after their consent, to the teams in charge at OHCHR for further support. Training through the WPHF Global L-Hub and resources disseminated on mental health was also carried out.	N/A
	1.1e Risk and mitigation strategies table is reviewed and revised, as needed Target: Quarterly	Risk and mitigation matrix reviewed and updated in 2023	N/A
Output 1.2 Monitoring and evaluation of best practices and lessons to ensure flexible and responsive support to meet evolving needs of WHRDs is generated and utilized	1.2a Participatory review and consultation process with INGOs, WHRDs, CSOs and UN agencies conducted Baseline: 0 Target: Bi-Annually	Yes. Review and consultations processes conducted with INGOs, UN Agencies, OHCHR and WHRDs supported through the Advocacy Stream. In addition, the Unit mapped and publicized information on available psycho-social referral pathways.	N/A
	1.2b Annual global consolidated data analysis to assess quality of support provided and how women have used it	The first annual impact survey for WHRDs was administered and findings to be disseminated through an advocacy brief in 2024. In addition, new tracking of intersectionalities, reprisals and other variables through the WPHF's management information system.	N/A
Output 1.3 Advocacy and visibility to increase access and support to WHRDs protection and participation on the global stage is promoted	1.3a Number of information sessions conducted with various stakeholders to disseminate information on the WHRD window Baseline: 4 (2022) Target: 4-5 (per year)	Six information sessions conducted, including sessions for WHRDs in Colombia, Ukraine, Sudan and both anglophone and francophone countries. Cumulatively, 10 information sessions have been conducted.	N/A
	1.3b Number/Type of advocacy and visibility events conducted and knowledge products produced to increase visibility for more support and recognition of WHRDs contribution to peace and risks Baseline: 2 (2022) Target: 2 (per year)	Seven key events/visibility campaigns conducted or knowledge products produced: i) Co-sponsored launch event - UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders report celebrating the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders ii) A closed briefing with UN Security Council Member States signatories of Women, Peace, and Security Commitments iii) On sidelines of 2023 Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, the WPHF 2023 Invest-In-Women Global Summit, a video was developed on the increased targeting against WHRDs iv) International WHRDs Day Campaign aimed at amplifying the impact of the WPHF WHRDs Window v) Participation in closed session led by the the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Myanmar on the situation of human rights defenders in the country vi) WHRDs dialogue as part of the WPHF's regular funding cycle donor mission in Colombia in 2023 vii) Advocacy brief on WHRD Window	N/A

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
	1.3c Number of WHRDS who have accessed capacity sharing opportunities through the L-HUB Baseline: 0 (2022) Target: N/A	41 WHRDS/CSO representatives from 20 countries participated in capacity strengthening webinar on self-protection and self-care for WHRDS in conflict and crisis affected countries through the WPHF Global L-Hub	N/A

WPHF FUNDING WINDOW FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

December 2023



Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund

A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

Background

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) play critical roles during and after conflict, working across the human rights-peace and security-development nexus, at community, national and international levels, often at grave risk to their own lives. Yet too often the work of human rights defenders goes uncredited and unacknowledged.¹

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and 23 years on from the first UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security (1325), WHRDs from and working in conflict and crisis affected contexts continue to face limited access to funding opportunities. While civil society organizations at global, regional, and national levels lead in the protection of human rights defenders, the scarcity of financial resources dedicated to their protection and participation often limits their ability to respond adequately to the increasing needs of WHRDs. These funding requirements are especially pressing in emergency contexts, where WHRDs face multiple layers of intersecting needs and insecurities.

In his 2022 annual report on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General described the protection of WHRDs as “*a collective moral responsibility*”² and urged the international community to strengthen its support for WHRDs, peacebuilders, and members of civil society. Notably, he calls on Member States to, “*provide an enabling environment for women human rights defenders, provide both material and political support to their work and their organizations, and prevent and respond to specific threats or reprisals against them.*”³

The United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) is a global partnership mobilizing critical financing for women's rights organizations and peacebuilders and supports quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize

key peacebuilding opportunities. In January 2022, WPHF officially launched its Window for WHRDs on the 18 January 2022 on the margins of the first ever UN Security Council open debate, on the protection and participation of WHRDs and peacebuilders.

Facts and Figures

- ▶ Across the globe, women human rights defenders have increasingly been targeted in recent years with attacks intended to silence their advocacy and prevent them from participating in public life.
- ▶ Women are much more likely than men to be targeted with sexual and gender-based violence and to be subjected to verbal abuse, surveillance, and online violence. While all activists are targeted with defamation, smear campaigns and online and offline hate speech, the attacks against women human rights defenders typically target their personal behavior, their moral conduct, or their sex lives. Those who attack women's rights activists are often emboldened by discriminatory laws
- ▶ In 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) verified 29 cases of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists in eight conflict-affected countries. This, however, is widely believed to be a huge undercount.⁴
- ▶ Data surveyed by UN Women indicates that about one third of women who briefed the UN Security Council between Jan 2021 and May 2022 faced reprisals.⁵
- ▶ In its 2022 annual global analysis, Front Line Defenders, an NGO partner of WPHF WHRD Window, recorded the targeted killings of 401 HRDs for their human rights work, of whom 17% identified as women, including transwomen.⁶

[1] UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (2023) *Success Through Perseverance and Solidarity: 25 Years of Achievement by Human Rights Defenders*, 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council, <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F52%2F29&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

[2] UN Secretary-General (2022) *General on Women and Peace and Security, S/2022/740*, para 104 (b), <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/N2261486.pdf>

[3] *ibid*, paragraph 105 (a) [4] *Ibid*. [5] *Ibid*.

[6] Front Line Defenders (2022), *Global Analysis 2022*, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2022>

The WPHF Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)

Receiving requests on a rolling basis in six languages, WPHF WHRD Window offers two types of support:

- ▶ **Safety Net** (in partnership with NGO partners) emergency protection grant up to USD 10,000 for WHRDs at risk due to their activism. This covers costs including short-term relocation, psychological or legal support, and protection expenses (e.g., computers, security cameras, security software).
- ▶ **Advocacy Support** (arranged at by WPHF WHRD Unit) to cover logistical expenses for participation in a meeting, event, or decision-making process at the national, regional or international level, which contributes to advancing human rights and peace. WHRDs can apply individually or as a delegation. Support includes flights, ground transportation, visa fees, accommodation, translation, daily subsistence allowance for five working days, and accessibility for WHRDs living with a disability).

Who does the WPHF Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders support?

- ▶ **Gender:** A woman, those who identify as a woman, it includes lesbian, gay, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) human rights defenders.
- ▶ **Age:** 18 years old and above
- ▶ **Country:** from/working in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.
- ▶ **Activism:** individually or in association/coalition with others, formally or informally, act to promote or protect human rights - including women's rights- in a peaceful manner, at the local, national, regional, or international level.

SAFETY NET:

Threats and Risks:

- Demonstrates current or past serious security risks, for her and/ or her dependents, because of her activism

AND/OR

- Demonstrates that risks are or have been such that her ability to sustain her participation in defending human rights and peace is threatened.
- Past threats should have taken place within the past two years.

Grant and duration:

- Funding requested may not exceed USD 10,000, nor cover needs beyond a planned 6-month period.

ADVOCACY SUPPORT

Future Advocacy Plans:

- Attend or lead an advocacy initiative that will advance human rights and peace.

Timeframe:

- Event/meeting/decision-making will happen in the next 6 months.

Application:

- At least 6 weeks in advance.

Duration:

- Maximum of 5 days (excluding travel days)

Strategic Opportunities:

- Priority to applications to attend fora where women have been traditionally marginalized.
- Priority to applications of WHRDs from civil society and marginalized communities, e.g., women with disabilities, LGBTQI+, youth, and small ethnic or religious communities.

The WPHF Funding Window for WHRDs Impact

Since its operationalization in September 2022, the WPHF WHRD Window has supported **456 WHRDs** from **22** countries, plus **1221** of their dependents.

36.8% of WHRDs supported are young women, between 18 and 29 years old.

Advocacy Support has provided the opportunity for participants to share their valuable insights and recommendations at forums to which they may not have otherwise been able to access. Some of these have briefed high-level international forums. For instance, a WHRD who briefed the UN Human Rights Council in June 2022 helped persuade this body to adopt a resolution that keeps the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan as a priority item on its agenda. As important, in September 2022, a Congolese delegation promoting women's rights at the local level were supported to attend a national-level workshop on inclusive humanitarian response, leading to the inclusion of three gender-specific recommendations in the workshop's outcome note.

Safety Net funds have primarily been used to support livelihoods, relocation and mental health support. A smaller proportion of WHRDs have been supported with security and protection equipment, travel, and legal assistance. While the requests have been varied, the Window has demonstrated it is flexible enough to meet these multifarious needs. Responding to the urgent funding gap, this has helped protect and support these women to continue their activism in the most challenging and threatening contexts around the world.

Overall, in the first months of operations, the sheer volume of applications has underscored the need for this type of support. The diversity of personal identity and thematic work profiles among participants demonstrates that the Window is proving accessible to a range of intersectional audiences. Feedback from anonymous post-support surveys among Advocacy Support participants furthermore highlights the value of this new mechanism.

Visit WPHF WHRD Window website:

<https://wphfund.org/whrds/>

About WPHF

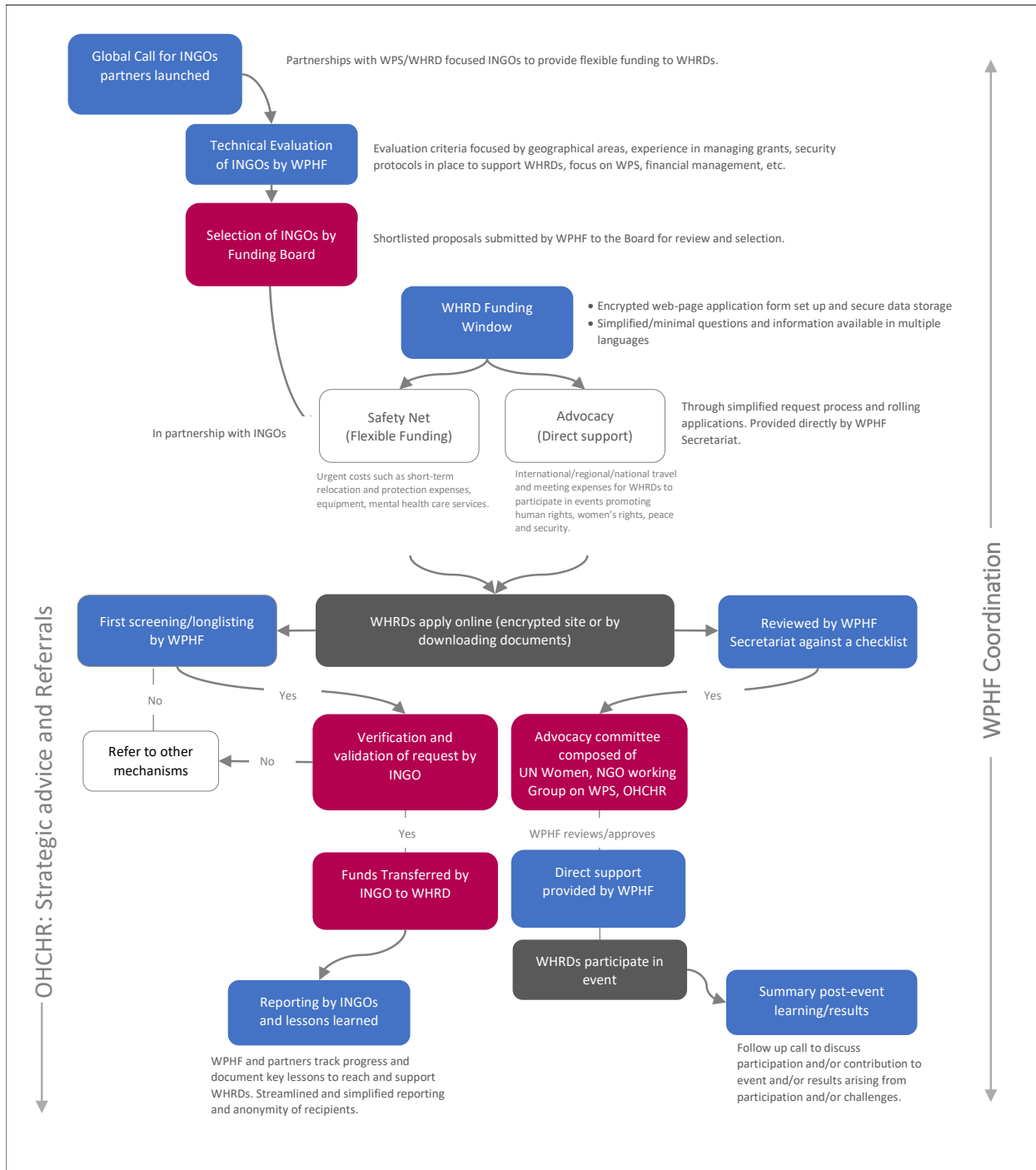
The United Nations Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) mobilizes critical support for local and grassroots civil society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism supporting quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded over 1109 local women's organizations working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace in 43 countries. In addition, WPHF has supported the participation and the protection of 332 women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders in 22 countries.

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WPHFund.org



Appendix B : Process Map of WPHF Window for WHRDs



Appendix C: WHRD Window Risk Matrix

TYPE OF RISK	Likelihood 5=Very High 4=Likely 3=Possible 2=Unlikely 1=Rare	Impact 5=Extreme 4=Major 3=Moderate 2=Minor 1=Insignificant	RISK MITIGATION MEASURES
Operational and Implementation Risks			
<p>Support provided under the WPHF WHRDs Window is delayed and does not respond to WHRDs emerging and urgent needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays in financial transfers to INGOs partners under the Safety Net Stream and subsequent delays in supporting applications received. For advocacy support the WHRDs window disburses funds through means that are cumbersome and not accessible to WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis-affected contexts WPHF WHRDs Window develops a reputation for not being able to respond as rapidly as and responsively as claimed in certain regions. WPHF WHRDs window INGO partner is not able to consider the case, as the request is not aligned with the costs that can be covered. Applicants do not respond to INGO partners' email when contacted to validate their applications, because applicants do not recognize the connection between the WPHF WHRDs window and the INGO partner. Consequently, the application gets rejected for impossibility to verify the case. Applicants / References' lack of access to communications tools, including internet, 	Unlikely (2)	Major (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear, quick and more adequate procedures for release of second tranche and cost extensions to Safety Net INGO partners are agreed, set up and communicated to INGO partners by the WHRDs window unit. UN Women procurement/operations processes and bottlenecks are reviewed and discussed with UN Women Headquarters to improve travel support advocacy stream. WPHF WHRDs window unit requests WHRDs to apply for advocacy support at least 6-weeks before the event takes place to ensure there is enough time to provide adequate support. Approval criteria are regularly reviewed and adjusted with INGO partners, as necessary, in response to the types and numbers of applications, as well as percentage of cases approved. Three additional safety net INGO partners will be onboarded to increase capacity for Afghanistan and the Asia region due to high number of applications. WHRDs window unit regularly reviews geographical scopes and WHRDs costs covered by each INGOs to identify gaps and ensure the window can respond to requests and support is available where should be. Names of WPHF WHRDs Window INGO Partners are available online and, if applications are transferred to INGO partners' review, WHRDs window unit informs WHRDs that they will be contacted by our INGO partner on the status of their application under the safety net stream. WPHF WHRDs window unit transparently and directly communicates with applicants of the advocacy stream in order to manage expectations on process to follow and timelines for DSA disbursement and mitigate risks of independent booking arrangements. Applicants are also promptly informed via email when delays are expected in support provision.

delay WHRDs Window Unit and INGO Partners verification processes.			
<p>WHRD's increased risks due to/following WPHF's support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts may face further risks and threats during and/or due to the support provided. • WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts supported under the Advocacy Support stream face reprisals after taking part in events/meeting/decision making processes. • WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts supported under the Advocacy Support stream might be at risk for traveling without Mahrams. 	Rare (1)	Major (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict sensitive approach is employed; utilized simple processed to avoid burden on applicants is used; protected data and information, with careful dissemination of information, including information on the amount of financial support to be provided, which is only communicated to the WHRD. • Public reports/messaging on this funding do not mention names, geographical location, or sensitive information, unless approved by the WHRDs. • All INGO partners providing safety net support undergo a PSEAH assessment every 24 months and the WHRDs window unit monitors the implementation of recommendations. Among others, the PSEAH assessment requires that INGO partners hold training for all personnel and have mechanisms and procedures in place to report SEAH allegations. • WPHF WHRDs window unit and INGO partners regularly exchange on these cases and directly check on/with WHRDs to make sure prompt context-adjusted actions can be taken if new risks arise, • In the provision of advocacy support process to assess, mitigate and follow up on reprisals is used, including for cooperation with OHCHR, and redirection to the WPHF WHRDs Window Safety Net stream when needed. • In the provision of advocacy support, WHRDs window unit applies option for funding accompaniment by male guardians to Afghan women (known as Mahrams), to increase feasibility and protection of WHRDs wishing to attend events. Before her travel is approved, the WHRD is asked to clarify whether for her safety she should be accompanied by a Mahram. • The WHRD window unit exchange regularly with other WPHF funding streams, the UN Women Country Office and implementing INGO partners, to review evolution of political/security risks that may affect applicants.
•			•
<p>WPHF WHRDs Window is not accessible to grassroots WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts and/or living in situations of vulnerabilities or with intersecting forms of marginalization i.e. displacement, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, ethnicities, religious minority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to support is limited to a capital level/elite group of well-connected women human rights defenders. • WHRDs working at the local level might not be able to provide a well-known reference 	<p>Possible (3)</p> <p>(although level of risk varies by region)</p>	Major (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents and information are publicized in six languages. • Wide dissemination of information through webinars, social media posts, information session and meetings with multiple types of stakeholders are shared with INGO networks, to encourage applications from outside main cities and WHRDs from different backgrounds and living in different conditions. • Application templates (in six languages) are revised in December 2022 and December 2023 to ensure simplicity of the application is balanced with the need for clarity on essential information. • Profiles of supported WHRDs are regularly reviewed to improve targeted outreach to rural women working at local community level and in different living conditions.

<p>person, as they might not have particular connection to more established international/national organizations.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under advocacy support stream, WPHF WHRDs Window Unit and the Advocacy Committee use prioritization criteria for WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts living with multiple intersecting forms of marginalization.
<p>Contextual Risks</p>			
<p>Mistrust of the United Nations impacts the WPHF WHRDs Window’s reputation as a trusted funding mechanism for WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHRDs do not apply to WHRDs window because they are against statements and/or actions taken by other UN agencies to which WPHF is perceived to be linked to. Following approval of their advocacy application, WHRDs are not granted visas or accreditations to participate in events. For advocacy support, WHRD might not feel at ease communicating/sharing information with people they do not know or have not been introduced to. 	<p>Rare (1)</p>	<p>Moderate (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WPHF WHRDs Window unit uses every public/closed door, formal and informal, opportunity to communicate on its values, grantmaking principles and mandate focused on mobilizing and channeling funding to WHRDs and works to strengthen its partnerships with trusted and experienced INGOs working with WHRDs. When appropriate, WPHF WHRDs Window publicly emphasizes how civil society organizations have equal participation and decision-making powers over the Fund’s strategic direction and funding decisions as Board members of the WPHF. WPHF WHRDs Window considers cultural sensitiveness and makes sure that the organizational culture and internal processes effectively empower women human rights defenders. Each application is assigned to a specific staff member to better communicate and facilitate partners’ communications.
<p>Challenges related to financial operations in crisis context delay or impede the Window to operate efficiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts pay large fees to open and close accounts in USD, just to receive transfers from the WPHF WHRDs Window and its INGO Partners. Bank accounts of WHRDs frozen and impossibility to withdraw cash. Authoritarian regimes, DeFacto Authorities, Occupying Authorities might impose increasing scrutiny on sources of international funding, even with alternative money transfer mechanisms. 	<p>Unlikely (2)</p>	<p>Major (4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INGO partners review and adapt verification/ disbursement processes to increase efficiency and speed of disbursement to WHRDs and overall support under the safety net stream. Alternative transfer options such as Money Gram, Dahabhsiil, travel checks, the Hawala system, as well as other informal ways of collecting support in cash as used, such as transfers through relatives or friends in third or bordering countries. Under the safety net stream, INGO partners collaborate through monthly calls in sharing best practice on safe and efficient funds transfer mechanisms, to speed up disbursements into Afghanistan and other countries. WPHF WHRDs window unit works together with UN Women Country Offices on localized, flexible banking options. For Safety Nets stream, INGO partners work through/with their regional/local CSOs networks to facilitate transfers via these organizations.

Financial Risks			
<p>Duplication of Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants benefit from multiple sources of funding to address the same risks. 	<p>Unlikely (2)</p>	<p>Minor (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WHRD Window Unit INGO partners consult and coordinate with other UN and INGO entities regarding previous or parallel funding to WHRDs. Information on the INGO partnerships is included on the website, so it is clear which organizations are supporting Safety Nets implementation, and to reduce the number of applications these organizations receive in parallel from the same applicants. Receiving funding from another source is not eliminatory. However, the applications shall include information on how funding is complementary and not a duplication to WPHF's support.
<p>Funds being diverted from eligible WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraudulent applications selected. Third parties request funding in exchange for being listed in an application as third parties. Funding is diverted to groups on the UN Sanctions list. 	<p>Unlikely (2)</p>	<p>Minor (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the safety net stream, INGO partners conduct due diligence and a thorough verification of each application to verify the identity of the woman, threats and her role in human rights activism, including through consultations with references. Under the advocacy support stream, the WHRD Window Unit conducts due diligence consultations with members of the Advocacy Committee. In cooperation with other protection mechanisms, a list of individuals/ organizations with a proven record of sending fraudulent applications will be developed. The process of release of funds and potential risks of money transfers are reviewed and discussed in the monthly coordination meetings with INGOs. Application forms state that being a reference person should be on a voluntary basis and unpaid. INGO partners do not disclose information on the amount of funds granted to anyone other than the WHRD supported.