

Annual Project Narrative Progress Report

Window on Women Human Rights Defenders

Reporting Period:
1 January – 31 December 2024

<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 2024</p> <p>Report Submitted by: UN Women as the Secretariat of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Name: Tonni Ann Brodber Entity: UN Women Title: Head of WPHF Secretariat Email: tonni.ann.brodber@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 (2024): Total: USD 1,171,868 Global (00131366): USD 599,844 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 572,024</p> <p>Total budget transferred to the Secretariat during the reporting period: Total: USD 1,171,868 Global (00131366): USD 599,844 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 572,024</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 2024¹.

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 2024, across the two funding streams, the Window successfully supported 320 requests with 344 WHRDs (44.2% young women between 18-29 years) from 25 countries, and their 1,123 dependents² in crisis and conflict settings. Of these, a total of 152 unique³ WHRDs were from Afghanistan (51.2% young women between 18-29 year olds) were supported under both streams, including 739 dependents (under the safety net stream). Since its launch, the Window and its partners have supported 738 requests with 775 WHRDs across 25 countries.

344 WHRDs supported in 2024	40 WHRDs through the Advocacy Stream	\$11,135 average size of request
	304 WHRDs through the Safety Net Stream	\$3,722 average size of request
From 25 countries		44.2% WHRDs 18-29 years old

Specifically, under the Advocacy Support stream, the Window has supported 40 WHRDs (12.5% young women between 18-29 years), through 16 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.

Further to the onboarding of three additional INGO partners (for a total of five) in 2024 to ensure increased access of protection of WHRDs in underserved countries, a total of 304 WHRDs (48.4% 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

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 Please note that WHRDs can reapply for multiple grants. For a given reporting year, the number of requests is presented, potentially including multiple WHRDs, whereas for cumulative values, the unique value is presented.

support these women to continue their activism in the most challenging and threatening contexts around the world.

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs received a total of 1,539 proposals from 65 countries and in six languages under both streams, and which used secure channels, including WPHF's encrypted webpage and Signal for sensitive cases. Just over half of all proposals under the safety net stream (50.3%), were transferred to INGO partners for verification, and 21.3% forwarded to the Advocacy Committee under the Advocacy Support stream, of which all except one were recommended by the Committee. The majority of requests under both streams is consistent from the previous year and come from Afghanistan (39.6%), followed by Sudan (22.5%), the D.R.C (11.3%), and Myanmar (5.8%).

During the reporting period, WPHF also conducted its second global impact survey with 156 WHRDs supported in 2024 from 14 countries across Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, 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 77.5% of WHRDs face frequent threats as a result of their activism and work (86.5% in Afghanistan), however just over half (57.6%) of WHRDs indicate that the grant has still helped reduce the risks and threats they face (51.7% for Afghan WHRDs), and 35.9% have been able to continue their activism to a large extent (39.2% for Afghan WHRDs). While the safety net grants have been critical for WHRDs to improve their protection, 59.2% of WHRDs (45.9% for Afghan 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 development of disability accessible application forms to be launched in 2025, 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 onboarded in 2024. Moving into 2025, 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 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 2024, 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 2024, the Window provided critical support to 344 WHRDs and 1,123 of their dependents⁴ from 25 countries. Over 150 WHRDs supported were between the age of 18 and 29 years old (44.2%), and almost half of all WHRDs (48.3%) supported were from Afghanistan, followed by Sudan (16.3%), and the D.R.C (14.0%). By stream, 16 requests from 40 WHRDs (4 requests with 40 WHRDs from Afghanistan) were supported for advocacy initiatives in various regional, national and international events and meetings focused on increasing the advocacy efforts of WHRDs. Under safety net grants, 304 WHRDs were supported, along with their 1,123 dependents (151 WHRDs from Afghanistan). Cumulatively, since 2022, 775 WHRDs have been supported through 738 requests through both streams, of which 362 (46.7%) have been from Afghanistan.

Table 1: WHRDs Supported by Funding Stream and Region, 2024

2024	Advocacy Stream	Safety Net Stream	Total
Africa	8	103	111
Arab States	2	29	31
Asia & Pacific ⁵	23	165	188
LAC	7	7	14
Europe & Central Asia	0	0	0
Total	40	304	344

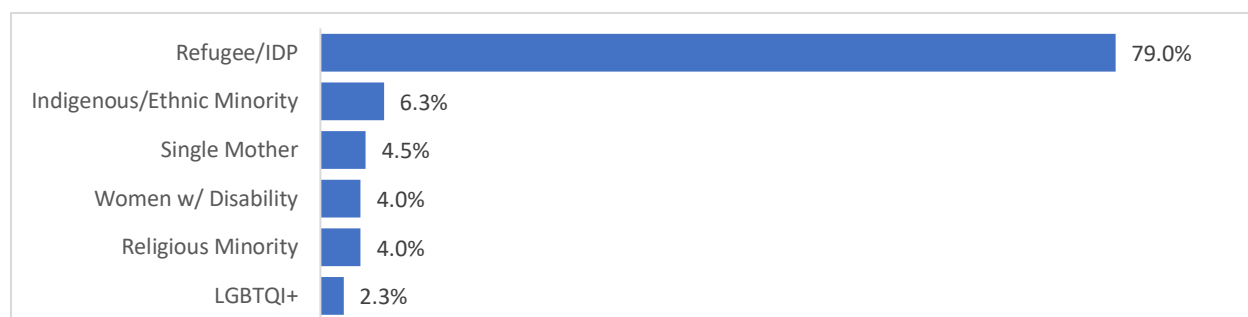
The Window for WHRDs is proving to reach a diverse range of WHRDs, including those facing exclusion, and made vulnerable by forced displacement, ableism, ageism, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and /or gender identity, ethnic ties, religious affiliations, and discrimination against indigenous people, among others.

In 2024, of all WHRD supported which identified having multiple and intersecting identities (n=165 or 48.0%), 79.0% of WHRDs were refugees or internally displaced (IDPs), followed by 6.3% from an indigenous/ethnic minority group, and 2.3% who identified as LGBTQI+. Another 4.5% identified as a single mother, while respectively 4.0% identified with living with a disability and being from a religious minority group. Overall, 17.1% of WHRDs supported during the year identify as having multiple and intersecting identities.

⁴ A total of 25 WHRDs were provided multiple grants since the Window’s establishment, bringing the cumulative total of unique WHRDs to 775, or 800 for non-unique. Support for dependents is provided only through the Safety Net Stream

⁵ Afghanistan is included in this region

Figure 1 : WHRDs with intersecting identities, main identity, 2024



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.

Table 2: WHRDs Thematic Areas of Advocacy (2022-2024)⁶

Women's Rights	34.5%	LGBTQI+ Rights	3.8%	Child Rights	1.1%
Human Rights	10.2%	Forced Displacement	3.8%	Political/Voting Rights	1.1%
SGBV and CRVS	8.9%	Climate Security	2.8%	Disability Rights	0.9%
Media/Freedom of Expression	8.5%	Ethnic Rights	2.5%	Mental Health/Psychosocial	0.5%
Peacebuilding/Conflict Resolution	6.5%	Youth Rights	1.9%	Food Security	0.5%
Education Rights	5.0%	SRHR/Health	1.4%	Humanitarian	0.5%
Justice/legal	4.3%	Economic Rights	1.3%	Land Rights	0.3%

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs Unit saw a slight decrease in the eligibility rate of applications received under both streams – from 57.9% to 48.9% - the majority of which because the application was incomplete (85.5%), it was outside of an eligible country (15.5%), or the applicant was below 18 years old and/or male (6.2%)⁷.

Under the safety net stream, of the 708 WHRD applications transferred to INGO partners in 2024, just under half were not supported (45.6%), with the main reason being the lack of evidence of threats related to human rights work (38.8%), followed by incomplete or unverifiable information (19.5%), and current support or referrals to other organizations (13.5%). In 8.9% of cases, it was also due to the falsification of information or the request for long-term livelihood and humanitarian support (7.5%), which is not eligible under this Window, as women and girls in crises desperately seek any access to resources dedicated to improving the condition of women and girls in conflict and humanitarian contexts.

In line with this in 2025 the Window will continue to work closely with INGO partners who have access to real time data on the ground to verify the identity of WHRDs who apply for support under the window,

⁶ Cumulative (2022-2024) for both safety net and advocacy streams

⁷ 2.7% of applications were specifically received by a male applicant

and the nature of their activism to ensure resources intended for WHRDs in conflict and crises are not misallocated.

Under the advocacy stream, while many applications came from women who work on gender equality and women's empowerment, they were not from conflict/crises settings, or whose applications did not consist of impactful advocacy strategies. In order to address these challenges, the Window will coordinate with partners in 2025 on best practices, lessons learned and strategies to overcome challenges on the eligibility and verification of applications. In addition, the Window will also roll out a referral process for women who are not eligible for support under the window, to enhance access to other feminist service providers at the community, national, regional and international level. It will also upload disability friendly templates onto the WPHF webpage. Moreover, the Window will seek to onboard an INGO partner in 2025 who can provide dedicated support to WHRDs who apply for advocacy support to develop and implement comprehensive advocacy strategies in the lead up, during and after engagement in national, regional and international advocacy events/platforms.

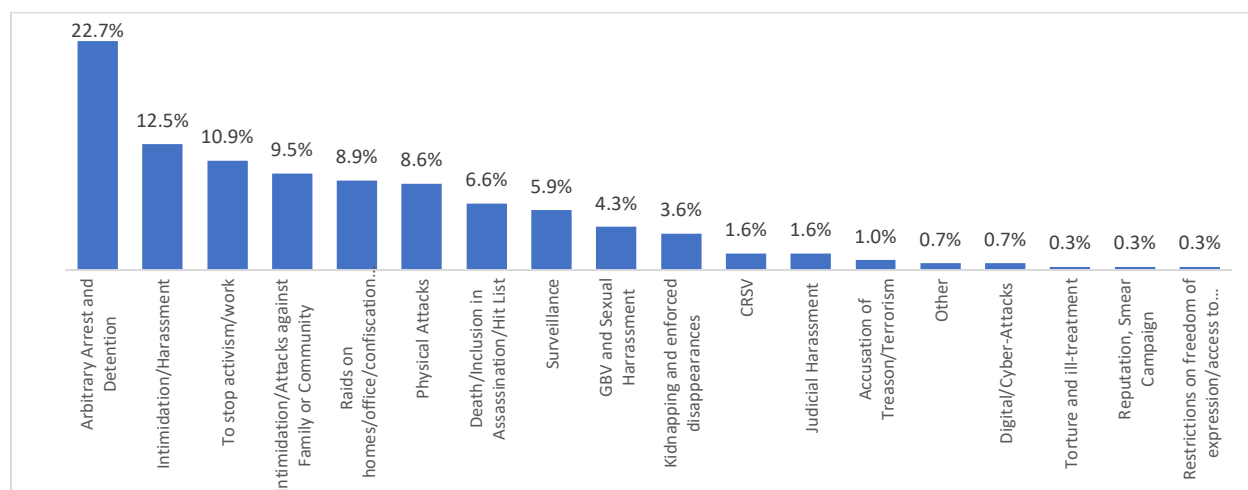
Safety Net Stream

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 2024, instances of threats against WHRDs were both alarming and varied. Most predominantly, 22.7% of supported WHRDs faced arbitrary arrest and detention, followed by 12.5% who were intimidated or harassed, 10.9% who were forced to stop their activism in fear of harm, and 9.5% whose family experienced intimidation or were attacked. Other WHRDs reported raids of their homes, offices or confiscation of material (8.9%), 8.6% were physically attacked, and 6.6% who faced death threats or were included on hit lists.

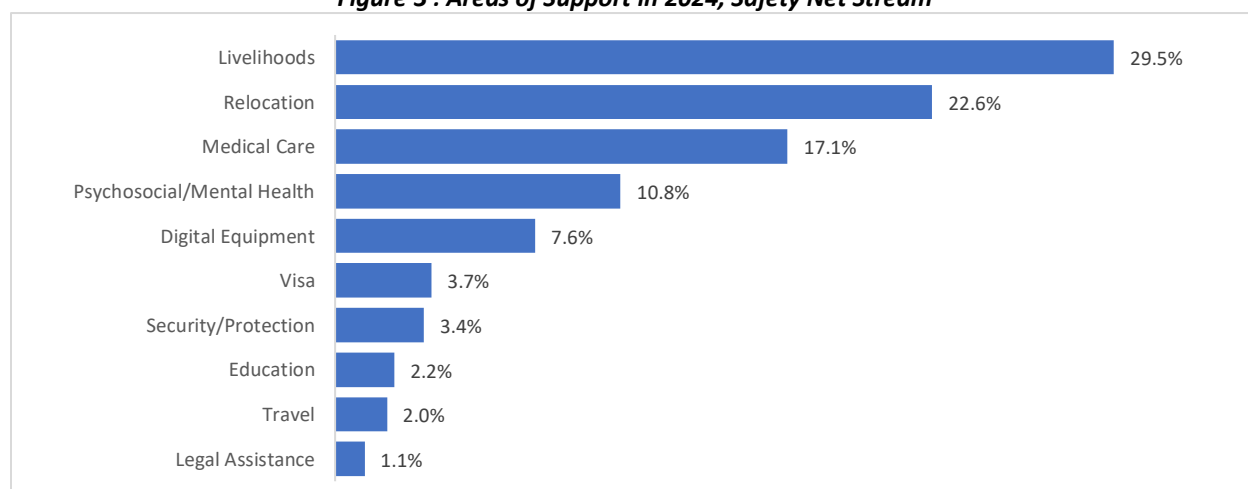
⁸ Mary Lawlor, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, UN Doc A/78/131, 7 July 2023,

Figure 2 : Instances of Threats to Supported WHRDs in 2024 (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 304 WHRDs and their dependents supported under this stream, livelihoods⁹ was supported in 29.5% of instances, followed by relocation to another location or country (22.6%), medical care (17.1%), psychosocial and mental health (10.8%), and digital equipment (7.6%), among others. The average investment for each safety net case was 3,722 USD.

Figure 3 : Areas of Support in 2024, Safety Net Stream



⁹ Support for livelihoods generally revolves around support to continue daily work/activism. Some examples include payment for rent, food, medical expenses and other utilities.

Advocacy Stream

Under the advocacy stream, a total of 40 WHRDs were supported through 16 requests, including ten delegations, to directly share their inputs and recommendations at strategic engagements and decision-making processes at national and international levels. With an average investment of 4,454 USD for each event, the majority at the international level (95.0%), 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 68th Annual Commission on the Status of Women, the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference, and various Human Rights Council Sessions in Geneva, and UNSC briefings in New York on topics related to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls in countries such as Afghanistan and Sudan. 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.

2. Impact

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs Unit and its INGO partners¹⁰ carried out its second 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 2024 Impact Survey¹¹

In 2024, WPHF conducted its second global impact survey with 156 WHRDs supported under the safety net stream from 14 countries across Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, 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 77.5% of WHRDs face frequent threats as a result of their activism and work (86.5% in Afghanistan), however just over half (57.6%) of WHRDs indicate that the grant has still helped reduce the risks and threats they face, and 35.9% have been able to continue their activism to a large extent. Support related to relocation within their country or elsewhere, livelihood support such as food and secure accommodation, the purchase of security cameras and new phones, and addressing trauma through psychosocial support and accessing medical care are among the few areas WHRDs highlight as helpful.

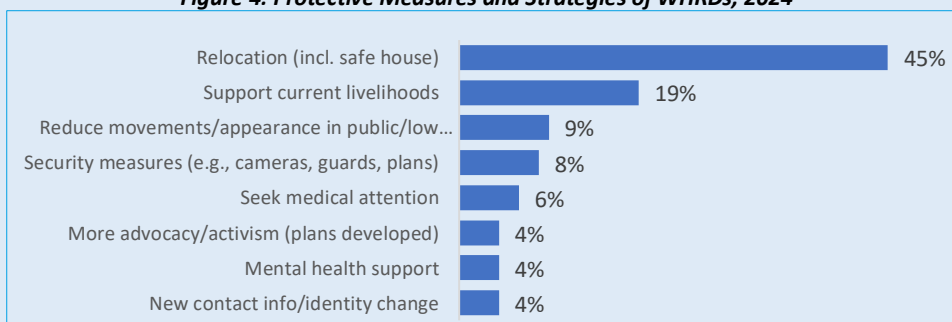
“When I was released from prison, I was not in a good financial situation. I was in debt [for] rent, electricity, water, etc. This help helped me to pay off some of those debts and [buy] a mobile phone. I also went to the doctor when I was sick, and it solved some of my problems. I was [also] able to relocate, rent a new house, and live my life in Afghanistan.” (WHRD from Afghanistan)

“I managed to relocate to another place, I managed to install security cameras, we managed to pay for my son's university semester, we were also able to buy food in those moments when we had to go out and take refuge in another place.” (WHRD from Colombia)

“The grant was useful in meeting my protection needs as I was able to get out of my city, where I had been arrested twice and harassed by phone..my exit [helped] me in terms of personal safety.” (WHRD from Sudan)

WHRDs highlight several protection measures and strategies which they have been able to adopt to keep them and their families safe. The majority highlight that relocation (44.8%), including finding a safe house is the first strategy, followed by supporting their current livelihoods (18.8%) and minimizing their movements/travel, avoiding public spaces and keeping a low profile (9.4%). WHRDs have also used the small grant to address medical and mental health issues. In a few cases (4.2%), WHRDs have conversely increased their activism and advocacy work.

Figure 4: Protective Measures and Strategies of WHRDs, 2024



While the safety net grants have been critical for WHRDs to improve their protection, 59.2% of WHRDs continue to face new threats, including threats to cease their activism and work (32.6%), death threats and their names

¹⁰ See Output 1.1 for more about NGO partnerships

¹¹ Complete findings of the survey are forthcoming in 2025.

being includes on hit lists (14.1%), arbitrary arrests detention (8.7%), digital and cyber attacks (7.6%), torture (6.5%), among many others.

"I can't work outside the house and in the community without fear. Most of the time when I go out, I leave my smartphone at home because I am afraid that they will check it at the checkpoints and I will be arrested."
(WHRD from Afghanistan)

"The nature of the threats is related to hostility and social tensions. They come from my certain members of the neighborhood who violently reject my community work with women, LGBTQI+ girls in my country."
(WHRD from Cameroon)

"As a journalist, I am subject to withholding information from official sources and to interrogation...I now live in a state of war, and my family [is] exposed to death and direct targeting because of the publication of the violations of the occupation against unarmed civilians." (WHRD from Palestine)

This 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, and WHRDs safety and protection is an on-going concern. Political action, advocacy and continued funding to WHRDs from/working in crisis and conflict-affected contexts remain critical.

WHRD Impact Profiles¹²

Advocacy Stream

Accountability and Justice for Afghan Women

A delegation of three WHRDs from Afghanistan working on women's rights and gender-based crimes in their home country, attended the side event, [*Countering Gender Apartheid & Gender Persecution in Afghanistan: Call for Global Action for Codification and Accountability*](#), during the 68th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) in New York. This was followed by two days of advocacy meetings with various Member States and policymakers, including the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Women, Peace, and Security Caucus in Congress, where they presented key findings and recommendations. Additionally, they raised the challenges faced by Afghan women refugees in Pakistan and India to advocate for resettlement opportunities. policymakers from the United States.

The Window for WHRDs conducts feedback sessions with WHRDs who receive advocacy support from the WPHF. During the feedback session with the aforementioned delegation of Afghan WHRDs, they shared that as a result of their participation, the delegation played a pivotal role in advocating for Afghan women's rights, exposing gender-based crimes to the international community, and ensuring Afghan women's perspectives were reflected in global decision-making. The WHRDs also shared that their participation in CSW 68 enabled them advocate on the behalf of Afghan women, and network other WHRDs and international actors, enabling them to amplify their voices on critical issues. Their advocacy pushed for the recognition and inclusion of gender apartheid as a crime in legal frameworks, engaged governments and partners, and mobilized private sector and donor networks to secure sustainable support for Afghan women's rights. These advocacy efforts significantly contributed to maintaining global attention on gender apartheid in Afghanistan and the systemic violations of Afghan women's rights. Continued engagement with policymakers, legal experts, and international bodies has reinforced calls for accountability, including recent discussions on potential international legal mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), and highlight the essential role of WHRDs in ensuring that gender-based crimes in Afghanistan remain a priority on the global agenda.

Empowering Women's Leadership at CSW68: A Haitian WHRD Advocates for Gender Equality and Political Representation

In March 2024, a WHRD from Haiti was supported through the advocacy stream to attend CSW68 in New York, United States. A co-founder of a dynamic feminist organization in Haiti, her work focuses on social justice and promoting women's human rights, particularly focusing on women's political representation. During CSW68, she

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

was invited by the Equality Fund to join a panel discussion where she addressed the challenges faced by feminist organizations in Haiti and detailed the types of support her organization offers to young feminists on the ground. During this panel, she also issued a call to action to funders, donors, and government representatives to enhance their support for civil society organizations in Haiti. CSW68 was an opportunity for the WHRD to continue advocating for policies and actions that advanced gender equality, with a focus on creating inclusive frameworks to address GBV and ensure that gender perspectives were fully integrated into decision-making processes.

Safety Net

Continued Risks in D.R.C

In January 2024, Agir ensemble received a protection request for two WHRDs in Eastern DRC who had been threatened with death after denouncing an arbitrary arrest by a local commander. The threats escalated, leading to intimidation, arrest, and risks to their families, and the WHRDs expressed their need for temporary relocation due to the deteriorating security situation. Following the verification and approval process of AEDH, the WHRDs received urgent support through Western Union, including \$1,900 and \$2,690 respectively for their relocation, and support for their dependents. \$50 was also allocated for a medical diagnosis. Additionally, funds were provided to replace stolen computer equipment, enabling the HRDs to continue their work in reporting the ongoing crises in the DRC. Two weeks later, further funding of \$310 and \$410 was provided for medical and psychosocial support, based on the WHRDs' diagnoses. During their relocation, one of the WHRDs' mother was kidnapped and murdered, and both WHRDs' homes were set on fire. In response, Agir ensemble provided exceptional reintegration support of \$1,250 for their socio-economic integration in the relocation town of Kalemie, as they were unable to return.

Young Activists in Exile, Libya

With urgent financial support provided through safety net grants, two young Libyan women pursued their activism in exile in Tunisia. Cousins hailing from a small town in western Libya, both were active in youth community groups and feminist spaces raising awareness of women's rights, the right to education and women's economic empowerment as well as bringing young men and women together to revitalize the community. Due to the participation of men and women in mixed activities and allegations of promoting non-Islamic ideas, conservative members in Libya expressed opposition to the activism of two young WHRDs. They received threats via social media and phone calls which forced them to stop their open activism. In early 2023, Libyan security forces raided a house where the two WHRDs were spending time with friends. In March that year, their cousin, also an activist in the same groups, was kidnapped and after a period of enforced disappearance appeared in a video on the social media page of a Libyan security service where he, clearly under duress, stated that he had converted to Christianity and was leading a network for proselytization. This event triggered their entire family to be victims of incitement and stigmatization by the community and prompted the two WHRDs to flee Libya for fear of their safety. In Tunisia, both struggled to meet their basic needs and applied for assistance from the WPHF WHRD Window. The financial support helped both to gain a sense of stability and to access psychological assistance. This enabled them also to focus on their personal development and on their activism. Both pursued opportunities to further their education and have been involved at distance in local youth groups and in assisting other activists who have fled Libya.

"The support has helped me achieve a certain goal and improve my living conditions. I would also like to commend the professional and friendly treatment of the organisation's [EMHRF] staff. They were always available to respond to my inquiries and support me every step of the way." (A Libyan WHRD)

In Her Own Words: Amina's¹³ Story, Sudan.

At 26 years of age, Amina is a vibrant woman human rights defender whose work in democracy, women's rights and legal support has contributed to the growing movement for democracy and human rights in Sudan. Because of her commitment, the work has exposed her to personal threats from state and non-state actors. She says,

¹³ Name changed for protection/security

“As a member of the resistance committees in my area, we were continuously questioned, accused of receiving funds from external parties, and even accused of being allies to the military by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) soldiers who were controlling the area where I lived in Southern Khartoum. We were also aware that the RSF soldiers were tracking people who uploaded information on Meta (formerly Facebook) and then raiding their homes. Between October and November 2023, the RSF soldiers raided my house and took my phone and laptop. Amidst all that, the RSF soldiers continued to intimidate my colleagues and I by demanding our support on social media. When these threats persisted, my family and I left Khartoum and went to White Nile State where I began to work with shelter centres that provide support for internally displaced people (IDPs). The threats continued through the neighborhood youth aligned with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), vowing to invade White Nile State if we did not support them online.

When the war broke out and the RSF invaded Al Jazirah State, the work that I was doing on documenting human rights violations was disrupted because I lost communication with my contacts. For 9 months, my family and I struggled to survive in White Nile state until someone from my networks sent me the link to the WPHF grant’s application. Because of the internet cut offs, I had to travel to the borders of South Sudan to find connectivity and complete my application process.

In February 2024, I finally received a grant, which I used to pay for a visa and a ticket to relocate, where I stayed for about 3 weeks. I then used the rest of the funds to cater for my relocation to another country and rent a house in the city for two months, during which time I registered as a refugee. I also sent some of the grant money back to my family in Sudan. This grant had a big impact on my mental health. I didn’t feel safe at all in Khartoum or White Nile states. I also couldn’t work. Since I arrived in Country X, I feel safer and generally better about my wellbeing. Regarding work, I can now go back to documenting human rights violations in my country.

Under the advocacy stream, key results and impact also occurred for WHRD. In 2024, post-advocacy surveys were conducted with 37 WHRDs¹⁴. Approximately 68% reported that the support enabled them to achieve their advocacy objectives at the events they attended. Additionally, 82% stated they were able to fully or partially influence policies, recommendations, decisions, or outcomes related to the event's theme. For example, WHRDs engaged with national governments at COP27 in Egypt, advocating for indigenous youth and climate change. They also played a key role in establishing a national security task force and a mixed advocacy framework bringing together civil society, legislators, and ministry representatives. The impact of WHRD’s engagement in advocacy opportunities is also seen in other areas. Many WHRDs (43.8%) noted increased confidence in public speaking and received invitations to participate in further advocacy initiatives. Another 34.3% highlight the key result was their ability to provide recommendations to other policies and strategies, while 12.5% reported mobilizing new resources for their advocacy work and establishing new partnerships with donors, respectively.

¹⁴ In 2024, A total of 37 WHRDs participated in the post-advocacy survey.

Figure 5 : Types of changes occurred for WHRDs as a result of participating in advocacy events, 2024



Despite the success, 42% also reported experiencing reprisals or intimidations following their participation participating in their respective advocacy events.

3. Progress Achieved

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

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.

Management of Window (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.5)

In 2024, 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 Committee¹⁵.
- 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).

¹⁵ 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.

Throughout the year, the Window for WHRDs Unit, which consists of a team of 2 staff members, and 2 consultants, continued to review requests from WHRDs submitted through the WPHF web portal or email. The WHRD Unit reviews these applications to ensure they meet eligibility criteria of the window (18 years and above, a country in crisis/conflict, and a WHRD). Compliant proposals are transferred to one of 8 INGO partners, who conduct further review and verification of the information. The final decision to approve or reject the application lies with the INGO partner, and once the application is approved, a grant commensurate to the needs of the WHRDs, and not exceeding USD 10,000 is disbursed by the INGO partner to the WHRD. If the application is not approved, the INGO partner contacts the WHRD to notify them of the decision.

Similarly under the advocacy support stream, the Window reviews applications submitted by WHRDs to ensure alignment with the window's eligibility criteria. Once the eligibility criteria is met, the Window forwards the application to an advocacy committee that consists of UN Women country office WPS-HA focal points, HR focal points from OHCHR, and the WPS INGO working group. Two endorsements from the advocacy committee members are needed for approval, and subsequent approval from the Deputy Head of the WPHF Secretariat prior to processing of logistics and administrative support to facilitate travel of the WHRDs to the relevant event/platform.

In 2024 the Window for WHRDs 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.

Selection and onboarding of INGO partners for Safety Net implementation (1.1.3)

In May 2024, the three new INGO partners selected in 2023 were onboarded (Gender Equality Network (GEN) and Mina's List¹⁶), to enhance access to protection support for WHRDs from Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. This was particularly important given the number of applications received from WHRDs and to manage the increased caseload of those eligible. Since 2022, an average of 837 proposals a year from Afghanistan have been submitted, with 120 supported per year.

OHCHR Partnership (1.1.4)

In 2024, 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

¹⁶ The name of the third NGO partner is not mentioned for safety/security reasons.

accountability of the United Nations and contribute to the documentation and addressing of reprisals 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.

INGO Partnerships (1.1.10)

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs continued to strengthen its partnership with eight 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
- ▶ Mina's List
- ▶ Forum Asia
- ▶ The Gender Equality Network (GEN)

Based on their work on the safety net stream, four INGO partners (Defend Defenders, AEDH, EMHRF and FLD) 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 2024 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 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, which allowed dedicated funding to WHRDs 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 (1.1.6)

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs Unit completed the technical review of 1,539 proposals from WHRDs under both streams from 65 countries in 6 languages¹⁷. Just over half of all proposals under the safety net stream (50.3%), were transferred to INGO partners for verification, and 21.3% forwarded to the Advocacy Committee under the Advocacy Support stream, of which all except one were recommended by the Committee. The majority of requests under both streams is consistence from the previous year and come from Afghanistan (39.6%), followed by Sudan (22.5%), the D.R.C (11.3%), and Myanmar (5.8%).

2024	Proposals Received/Reviewed	Countries	Longlisted, Transferred to INGOs or Advocacy Committee	Shortlisted ¹⁸ (% of received)
Advocacy	80	33	18	17 (21.3%)
Safety Net	1,459	57	734	734 (50.3%)
Total	1,539	65	752	751 (48.8%)

Cumulatively, since 2022, a total of 4,730 proposals have been received directly from WHRDs from 96 different countries. Over half of all requests under both streams come from Afghanistan (53.7%), followed by Sudan (14.5%), the D.R.C (7.4%), and Myanmar (3.4%).

Close to half of all submitted proposals (49.2%) have met compliance and been transferred to INGO partners and the Advocacy Committee, of which 33.6% have been supported after successfully meeting all criteria. The rate is significantly higher for the advocacy stream (80.4%) versus the safety net stream (32.5%), where WHRDs and other activists tend to apply irrespective of their eligibility.

Cumulatively (2022-2024)	Proposals Received/Reviewed	Countries	Longlisted, Transferred to INGOs or Advocacy Committee	Shortlisted ¹⁹
Advocacy	361	62	51	46
Safety Net	4,369	85	2,151	2,151
INGO Partners	81	N/A	60	15
Total	4,811	96	2,262	2,212

In 2024, 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 2025, 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, including exploring viable

¹⁷ English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Dari and Pashto

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and secure options to automate the application process under the safety net stream, to reduce the timeframe between receipt of an application, to transfer and disbursement of an approved grant by INGO partners.

Advocacy Support – Logistical Support from WPHF (1.1.7, 1.1.8)

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs continued to work closely with the Advocacy Committee, which consists of UN Women, OHCHR and various INGO and CSO partners to review applications submitted by WHRDs to participate in national, regional and international advocacy events/platforms. The committee proved to be an invaluable resource in confirming the identity of WHRDs, verifying their activism, and supporting networking and other strategic advocacy opportunities between WHRDs and key women, peace and security stakeholders, including Member States, UN agencies/entities, and INGOs and CSOs. The advocacy committee in some instances flagged unverifiable cases, including one from DRC, which further enhanced the ability of the window to prevent disbursement of funds to individuals that are not WHRDs, or engaged in human rights activism.

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs, linked consenting WHRDs supported with the WPHF Global Learning Hub (L-HUB), which seeks to create synergies and networking between CSOs and women leaders, and provide opportunities to strengthen their capacity in a plethora of areas related to WPS-HA. L-HUB has also extended access to INGO partners to participate and/or as external facilitators. In 2025, L-HUB will continue to invite consenting WHRDs to be included in monthly newsletters and participate in L-Hub initiatives.

In 2024, the Window leveraged the networks of its key partners to facilitate meetings between WHRDs and executive level representatives of various institutions whose mandates include gender equality, women's empowerment, and human rights. For example, the WPHF convened a meeting between a delegation of Afghan WHRDs with the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda. This was a unique opportunity for the delegation to amplify the voices, needs and concerns of Afghan women and girls, to the leadership of a UN entity, and to call for greater accountability from the de facto authorities in Afghanistan for violations against the rights of women and girls, exclusion of women in decision-making process, and allocation of resources to address the escalating needs of women and girls affected by repressive laws and regulations issued by the Taliban.

Risks Management (1.1.9)

Drawing on discussions during quarterly meetings with implementing INGOs, the Window for WHRDs workshop in 2024, and a series of engagements with the Advocacy Committee members, the Unit's Risk Matrix was updated and approved by the Funding Board. 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.
- In line with a new Non UN Organisation Policy applied by MPTFO in 2024, additional partner oversight measures have been initiated by the Window and the Operations Unit in 2024, including drafting a schedule and agenda for spot checks for the Window's INGO partners to enhance accountability for resources intended for WHRDs in conflict and crises settings.

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 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 and Dialogues with INGO partners, UN Agencies (1.2.1)

In 2024, a total of seven out of 14 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.

Coordination with Organizations and Networks on WHRD needs (1.2.4)

In 2024, the Window for WHRDs facilitated meetings between WHRDs and other actors including UN Women, OHCHR, and Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. The Window also created spaces where WHRDs could interact directly with donors concerned with the WPS agenda, and the protection of human rights in conflict and crises settings, including in November through the Window's Visibility Event themed "Leave No WHRD Behind", which sought to unpack persisting/emerging barriers and obstacles that WHRDs continue to face in terms of their activism on human rights, and protection needs that compromise their ability to continue their critical work in the defense of the rights of women and girls.

Monitoring and Evaluation (1.2.3)

In 2024, 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 local, national, regional and global advocacy efforts. The Unit strengthened its M&E system by tracking new variables such as multiple intersectionalities, and carrying out periodic rejection analysis to inform the Window’s decision-making process and find solutions with INGO partners to increase eligibility under its safety net stream. In 2024, the Window also began the process of exploring options for the automation of the proposal process to increase the efficiency of the Window, as part of the larger WPHF strategy.

As part of the WPHF WHRDs Window M&E strategy, the second global impact survey was carried out in 2024, in collaboration with INGO partners, with the 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 2025.

In 2025, 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

Information Sessions (1.3.1)

In 2024, the Window on WHRDs, organized two information sessions aimed at presenting the available funding mechanisms for WHRDs. The first session, held on July 24, was attended by 33 WHRDs in Myanmar and was designed to ensure broader accessibility, with live interpretation in Burmese. This session was attended by a diverse group of individuals committed to advancing human rights in Myanmar, along the window’s INGO partners, GEN. As a result of these efforts and other information dissemination, the number of applications from WHRDs in Myanmar increased by 115% from the previous year.

The second session, held on August 14, concentrated on Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, also providing a thorough overview of funding opportunities for WHRDs in these countries. The session equally served as an important platform for fostering collaboration, strengthening networks, and sharing insights into the challenges and needs faced by WHRDs in these regions. A total 47 WHRDs attended.

Capacity Strengthening: WPHF Global Learning Hub (L-HUB) (1.3.2)

In 2024, based on the needs and priorities identified in WPHF’s Annual CSO survey in 2023, WPHF’s Global L-HUB carried out a total of two dedicated help desk sessions on the role of the L-HUB and how WHRDs can access capacity strengthening resources and opportunities. The session was held online in English and French, with a total of 53 WHRDs and CSO representatives across 21 countries in attendance. In addition, 13 WHRDs (along with 289 CSO representatives) attended six capacity strengthening webinars on a variety of topics including theater for women’s rights in crisis and conflict-affected settings, using video to protect and defend human rights, and inclusive and gender-responsive action to address food insecurity, among others. 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.

Facilitation of Dialogue between UN Member States and WHRDs (1.3.3)

In November 2024, the Window on WHRDs hosted a visibility event, “Leave No WHRD Behind”, which provided a unique opportunity for WHRDs who have received support from the Window, and INGO partners of the window, to dialogue with UN Member States, including Norway, Germany and Belgium on challenges that WHRDs continue to face in conflict and crises settings, and how the Leave No One Behind UN principle can be better applied for enhanced protection of WHRDs, and inclusion of WHRDs in decision-making processes related to peace, security and humanitarian action.

Advocacy and Visibility Events (1.3.5)

In November 2024, the WHRD Window hosted a visibility event, “Leave No WHRD Behind”, which provided a unique opportunity for WHRDs who have received support from the Window, and INGO partners of the window, to dialogue with UN Member States, including Norway, Germany and Belgium on challenges that WHRDs continue to face in conflict and crises settings, and how the Leave No One Behind UN principle can be better applied for enhanced protection of WHRDs, and inclusion of WHRDs in decision-making processes related to peace, security and humanitarian action.

The Head of the WPHF Secretariat also facilitated a [live online conversation](#) with WHRDs from Syria, Venezuela and a representative from Defend Defenders in November 2024. The conversation explored what motivates and drives WHRDs to do the difficult and dangerous work they do on a daily basis, the challenges they face in exile, and key messages for diverse stakeholders concerned with protection and advocacy support for WHRDs in conflict and crises settings.

Throughout the year, the WPHF Secretariat also leveraged its communications channels to highlight the global impact of the Window for WHRDs and the support provided to its beneficiaries through both streams. The WPHF Communications team amplified the messages of WHRDs delivered at key events including messages from a young Afghan woman attending the June 2024 Human Rights Council Session in Geneva, the messages of indigenous WHRDs at COP 29, and the messages of WHRDs from Syria, Afghanistan and Sudan among others shared at the November 2024 Leave No WHRD Behind Visibility Event.

4. 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.

Timeliness of processing applications for safety net grants in an emergency, conflict, crises setting

One of the challenges in 2024 has been the volume of proposals received in 2024 compared to 2025, and the backlog – given the human resources, it is has been challenging to keep up – the current review process involves the use of HubSpot and proposals are reviewed manually, as well as the review and verification process once transferred to INGO partners. An analysis from 2023-2024 on the time between the receipt of an application for protection support from a WHRD to an approved grant is disbursed reveals that this process can take up to an average 6.5 months (≈195 days), putting many WHRDs in continued danger and risk. Given that the protection support is urgent, and life saving the WHRD Window

has begun to explore safe and viable options to automate currently manual review processes under the safety net stream, and in 2025 will aim to find solutions. Paramount to this exploration is the safety and security of personal information of WHRDs, and the application of the Do No Harm Principle, and data storage, data management, and data protection minimum standards.

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 who sought psychosocial and health-related assistance in 2024 was in 27.9% of instances, an increase from 2023 (20.8% of instances), indicating the continued need and urgency for mental health and medical services for WHRDs. 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.

Maximising the Impact of Advocacy Support provided to WHRDs

A key challenge identified at the 2023 WPHF retreat (and backed by feedback from WHRDs who have received advocacy support from the Window) is a need to explore ways to enhance the support they provide to WHRDs to lead and participate in national, regional, and international decision-making spaces, and moving beyond logistical support provided by the Fund. This would contribute to sustaining outcomes during and after participation in advocacy events. Moving beyond direct advocacy support and providing additional capacity strengthening opportunities would help to consolidate results. As such, the WHRD Window seeks to explore partnerships with INGOs and CSOs who can provide capacity building support to maximise the presence of WHRDs in decision-making spaces at the national, regional and international to deliver on the WPS agenda, and to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in conflict and crises settings.

Customised support to address the specific needs of WHRDs

During the November 2024 Window Visibility Event, WHRDs had the unique opportunity to present to member states the challenges they continue to face in conflict and crises settings in the defense of human rights and women human rights. Key challenges identified included access to asylum-seeking/refugee status, and related documents to allow them to safely live, and work in host countries. Other challenges identified included the lack of tailored support for WHRDs who face specific challenges due to the nature of their work, including journalists, who face extreme threats due to their access to public spaces/platforms to highlight human rights, and women and girls' rights violations. In line with this the WHRD Window will work closely with WHRDs, INGOs and CSOs to develop strategic strategies to influence policy on funding mechanisms for women and girls, including WHRDs in conflict and crises settings, including convening platforms in 2025 to present evidence based knowledge products on persisting/emerging gaps in the protection and advocacy ecosystem for WHRDs, and recommendations on how these gaps can be addressed by stakeholders concerned with the GEWE, peace, security and humanitarian development nexus.

Human Resource of the Window for WHRDs and prioritization of the mental health and wellbeing of the WPHF staff

In 2024 the WPHF Window for WHRDs allocated USD 15,000 to address the needs of the staff of the WHRD Unit, including staff capacity strengthening and ensuring the well-being and mental health of personnel. While this budget line was not fully utilized in 2024, the WHRD Window has drawn important lessons from the best practices of its INGO partners, including the onboarding of a mental health consultant who can provide support to staff of the window, specifically those who are involved in the day to day processing of applications from WHRDs who have gone through harrowing and traumatic experiences. In 2025, the Window for WHRDs will seek to implement some of these best practices to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of staff at the Window remains a priority that is adequately addressed moving forward.

5. Planned 2025 Priorities

In 2025, and subject to the availability of funds, the Window will prioritize the following objectives:

- ▶ In collaboration with INGO partners, develop and disseminate knowledge products on the situation of women and girls in crises and conflict as strategy to influence policy on funding mechanisms for WHRDs specifically, and women and girls more broadly.
- ▶ Launch a new call for proposals for onboarding of an additional INGO partner to provide capacity support to WHRDs who receive advocacy support to strengthen their advocacy efforts in the lead up, during and after engagement in national, regional and international advocacy platforms.
- ▶ As part of WPHF, explore the automation and digitization of the application process under the safety net stream to reduce the time frame between the receipt of an application for protection support and the disbursement of the approved grants
- ▶ Conduct information sessions on the Window and areas of support to increase the number of diverse women, with intersecting identities, including those working on LGBTQI issues, disability rights in regions where the window is operational
- ▶ Dedicated resource mobilisation efforts to increase funding of the WHRDs window for continued access to protection and advocacy support for WHRDs from conflict and crises settings.

6. Appendices

[WHRD Window Brief](#)

Appendix A: Process Map of Window

Appendix B: Risk Matrix

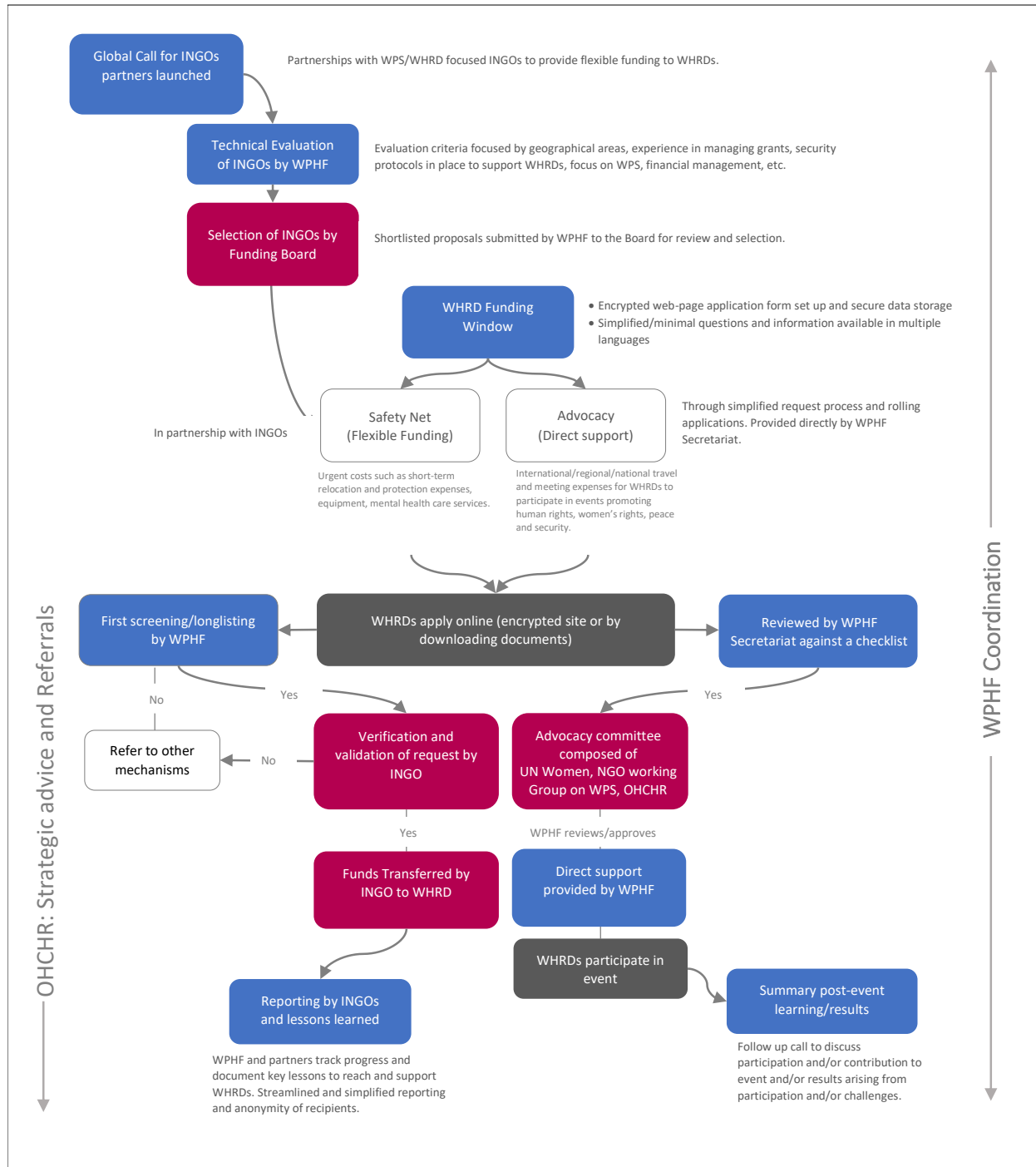
7. Indicator Based Performance Assessment

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
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	1. Number of WHRDs supported through Safety Net funding (by age group and country of origin) Baseline: 38 Global; 26 AFG (2022) Target: N/A 2. Number of WHRDs supported through Advocacy Support (by age group and country of origin) Baseline: 19 Globa; 3 AFG (2022) Target: N/A	Safety Net Stream Total: 304 WHRDs supported (48.4% 18-29 years old) with protection grants in 2024. Cumulatively, 677 unique WHRDs supported (43.1% 18-29 years old), and their 2,344 dependents. Global: 153 WHRDs supported (41.8% 18-29 years old) with protection grants. Cumulatively, 343 unique WHRDs supported (35.7% 18-29 years old), and their 854 dependents. Afghanistan: 151 WHRDs supported (55.0% 18-29 years old) with protection grants. Cumulatively, 334 unique WHRDs supported (50.6% 18-29 years old), and their 1,490 dependents. Advocacy Stream Total: 40 WHRDs supported through 16 requests (12.5% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 98 unique WHRDs supported through 40 requests (18.6% 18-29 years old). Global: 25 WHRDs supported through 12 requests (12.0% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 70 unique WHRDs supported through 31 requests (20.3% 18-29 years old) Afghanistan: 15 WHRDs supported through 4 requests (13.3% 18-29 years old). Cumulatively, 28 unique WHRDs supported through 9 requests (14.3% 18-29 years old)	N/A
Output 1.1 Efficient, effective, and timely management and implementation of the WHRD Window is ensured	1.1a Selection and onboarding of new INGOs partner(s) Baseline: 5 (2022) Target: 1-2 (2023)	Three additional INGO partners were onboarded (Gender Equality Network, Forum Asia, and Mina's List) focused on Myanmar, the Phillipines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Overall the Window now parterns with five INGO partners.	Exceeded the target by one to accommodate the increase in proposals from Afghanistan
	1.1b OHCHR partnership is continued for quality technical and advisory support Baseline: 0 Target: partnership continued	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.	No variance
	1.1c Number of requests received and screened (by stream) Baseline: 333 Global; 1218 AFG (2022) Target: N/A	Safety Net Stream: 1,459 proposals received and reviewed for eligibility. For WHRDs from Afghanistan, a total of 595 proposals were received (40.8% of all safety net proposals). Cumulatively, a total of 4,369 proposals received and reviewed, with 2,512 from Afghanistan, or 57.7% of all proposals. Advocacy Stream: 80 proposals received and reviewed for eligibility, with 14 from Afghanistan. Cumulatively, a total of 361 proposals received, with 70 from Afghanistan (19.4% of all advocacy proposals).	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.	Not achieved consistently in 2025. INGO partners have been supporting some referrals, although not achieved by all partners. However, 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. Additional referrals in other areas will begin in 2025.	Lack of consistent referral databases across all INGOs and WPHF. In 2025 WPHF customize this to fit the unique and specific needs of WHRDs in conflict and crises settings.
	1.1e Risk and mitigation strategies table is reviewed and revised, as needed Target: Quarterly	Risk and mitigation matrix reviewed and updated in 2024	No variance
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. Monthly coordination calls held with INGO partners in 2024, and quarterly bilateral monitoring calls held with each of the 8 INGO partners of the window. 1 workshop hosted for INGO and UN partners of the window.	Review and coordination increased from bi-annually to monthly with INGO partners.
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)	Two information sessions conducted, including sessions for WHRDs in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Philippines , and Sri Lanka in English and Burmeseo. Cumulatively, 11 information sessions have been conducted with WHRDs from over 10 countries.	Variance of two information sessions. Two additional help desk sessions however were conducted by the Global L-HUB on the objectives and opportunities.
	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)	One key event hosted in November 2024, “Leave No WHRD Behind” providing an opportunity for WHRDs who have received support from the Window, and INGO partners of the window, to dialogue with UN Member States, including Norway, Germany and Belgium on challenges that WHRDs continue to face in conflict and crises settings, and how the Leave No One Behind UN principle can be better applied for enhanced protection of WHRDs, and inclusion of WHRDs in decision-making processes related to peace, security and humanitarian action.	Variance of one due to lack of staff capacity from Jan 2024-June 2024. Recruitment of a new coordinator took place during this time and a new coordinator onboarded in June 2024.
	1.3c Number of WHRDS who have accessed capacity sharing opportunities through the L-HUB Baseline: 0 (2022) Target: N/A	53 WHRDs and CSO representatives from 21 countries participated in two live held desk sessions on the role of the WPHF Global L-HUB and how WHRDs can access capacity strengthening opportunities. In addition, 13 WHRDs (along with 289 CSO representatives) attended six capacity	N/A

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
		strengthening webinars on a variety of topics including theater for women's rights in crisis and conflict-affected settings, using video to protect and defend human rights, and inclusive and gender-responsive action to address food insecurity, among others.	

Appendix A : Process Map of WPHF Window for WHRDs



Appendix B: 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.

person, as they might not have particular connection to more established international/national organizations.			<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.
Contextual Risks			
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. <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. 	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	<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.
Challenges related to financial operations in crisis context delay or impede the Window to operate efficiently. <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. 	Unlikely (2)	Major (4)	<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			
Duplication of Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants benefit from multiple sources of funding to address the same risks. 	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	<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.
Funds being diverted from eligible WHRDs from/working in conflict and crisis affected contexts <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. 	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	<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.