

Annual Project Narrative Progress Report

Window on Women Human Rights Defenders

Reporting Period:
1 January – 31 December 2022

<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 2022</p> <p>Report Submitted by: UN Women as the Secretariat of the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund Name: Ghita El Khyari Entity: UN Women Title: Head of the Secretariat, Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund Email: ghita.khyari@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 563,890 Global (00131366): USD 262,685 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 301,205</p> <p>Total budget transferred to the Secretariat during the reporting period: Total: USD 563,890 Global (00131366): USD 262,685 Afghanistan (00131365): USD 301,205</p> <p>Project Start Date: April 1, 2022 Project End Date: April 1, 2023 Total Duration (in months): 12 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 Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund’s Window on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) between 1 January and 31 December 2022¹.

The WHRD Window’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 (NGO) 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. Between the two funding streams, the Window has successfully supported 83 WHRDs (29.8% young women between 18-29 years) from 17 countries, and their 221 dependents² in crisis and conflict settings.

Under the Advocacy Support stream, the Window has supported 19 of these WHRDs (21.1% young women between 18-29 years), through 11 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. Some of these have influenced decisions at high level forums, such as persuading the UN Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution that keeps the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan a priority item on its agenda. Just as valuably, the Window has also realized early results in facilitating networking and learning between participants. The two separate Congolese delegations whom the Window supported to attend COP27, met in Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt), where they developed joint advocacy strategies about the impact of climate change on indigenous women and those living in rural communities.

83 WHRDs supported	19 Advocacy Stream
	64 Safety Net Stream
From 17 countries	1 in 3 WHRDs 18-29 years old

Further to the onboarding of five NGO partners, a total of 64 WHRDs (31.3% young women between 18-29 years) were supported through the Safety Net Stream, with funds primarily used to support livelihoods, relocation and mental health support. 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.

The sheer volume of applications in the first six months of operations (over 1,500 requests received), coupled with the positive feedback from anonymous post-support surveys among Advocacy Support participants, have served to prove the need and value of this new mechanism for WHRDs. The Window Unit is mindful of the risks involved in this programming, which have already changed in nature and priority in a few short months. However, the unit is closely monitoring these, and nimbly adjusting to keep on top of evolving challenges.

¹ This report represents the consolidated progress and results of the WHRD Unit. Two additional reports – one for Afghanistan (00131365) and one for Global (00131366) have also been produced.

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

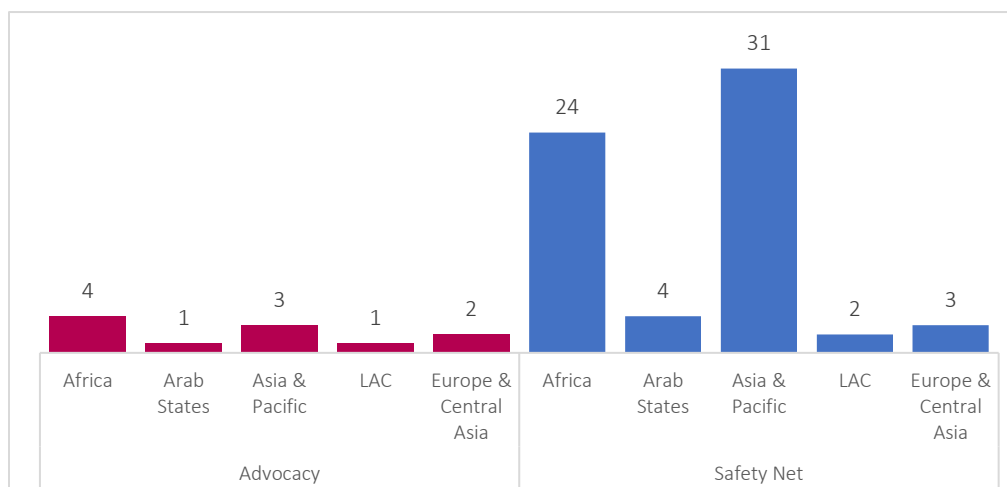
1. Results and Progress Achieved

Outcome 1: The Window for Women Human Rights Defenders in crisis and conflict affected countries is established and delivery of flexible funding and advocacy support for WHRDs is ensured

The utility and complementarity of supporting the protection and participation needs together of WHRDs is borne out by the very high volume of applications received. The Window was conservative in the first months in its approach to outreach, in order to ensure its ability to respond to the needs. Yet both the Safety Nets and Advocacy Support streams have received a large volume of applications, which were reviewed quickly and efficiently. The diversity of personal identity and thematic work profiles among participants moreover demonstrates that the Window is proving to be accessible to a range of intersectional audiences.

In the first six months of operations, the Window provided support to a total of 83 WHRDs and 221 of their dependents,³ through 76 requests from 17 countries.⁴ Almost 30% of these WHRDs were young women between the ages of 18-29 years old.

Figure 1 : WHRDs Supported by Funding Stream, by Region

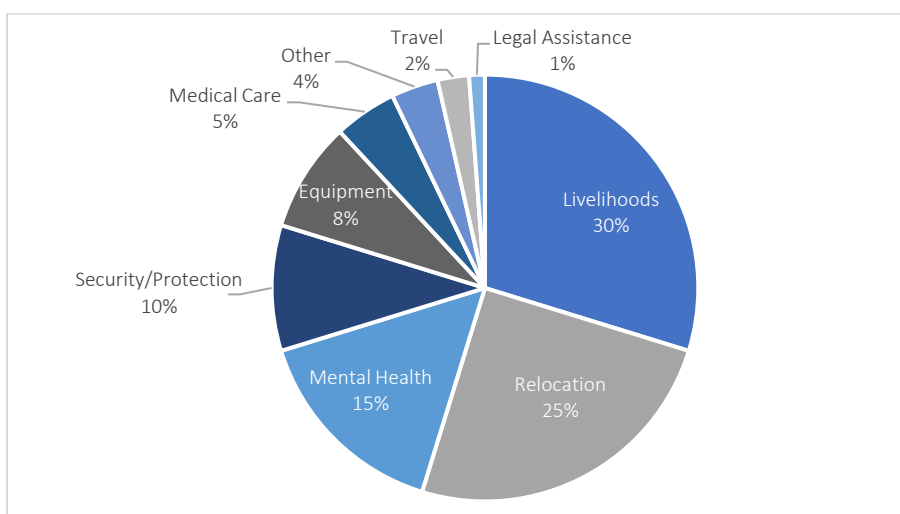


Under the Safety Net Stream, through NGO partnerships, the Window supported 64 WHRDs and their 221 dependents, with funds primarily used for livelihoods (30%), relocation (25%) and mental health (15%) (Figure 2). A smaller proportion of WHRDs were supported with security and protection, equipment, travel and legal assistance. The average investment for each Safety Net case was USD 5,500, and 31.3% of Safety Net recipients were between 18 and 29 years. While the requests have been varied, the Window has demonstrated it is flexible enough to meet these multifarious needs.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Afghanistan, Cameroon, Colombia, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen.

Figure 2 : Areas of Support (Safety Net)⁵



Under the Advocacy Support stream, a total of 19 WHRDs - including women of indigenous backgrounds, living as refugees - were supported through 11 requests (4 delegations and 7 individual requests). 21.1% of these WHRDs were between 18 and 29 years old, with an average investment of USD 2,742 each. This funding has amplified the advocacy opportunities and influence of women’s voices at a range of events, including high-level international forums, as well as at regional and national levels.

WHRD Impact Profiles⁶

The differentiated impacts of climate change on women and girls

In November 2022, the Window supported five WHRDs (including three young women) from DRC and Colombia to attend the COP27 United Nations Conference on Climate Change,⁷ where they called for increased representation of women and girls who are directly affected by climate change in conflict and crisis contexts. Going beyond logistical assistance, the Window has also facilitated a space for exchange and networking between WHRDs. The WHRD Unit organized an introductory call between the two participating Congolese delegations, who then met in Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt), to reflect on joint advocacy strategies that will raise awareness about the impact of climate change on indigenous women and those living in rural communities.

The impact of threats and risk on mental health of a refugee⁸

A young WHRD received a Safety Net grant through the WHRD Window to overcome a precarious mental health situation during her exile in a second country. The WHRD is a national activist and prominent on social media, providing a platform for young women to converse on gender equality, gender-based violence and other social taboos. As a result of her activism, she has been the target of multiple threats, both online and indirectly through her family, forcing her to leave her country. The applicant had been planning to continue her activism from abroad, calling for an end to violence across the region. However, the continuation of threats and online trolling, compounded by hostile speech and practices related to her refugee status, took a toll on her mental health. Safety Net funding has allowed her to address her urgent medical needs, as well as those of her family, so she can regain the strength to continue defending women’s rights and intersectionality in her region.

⁵ Based on 84 tags of primary and secondary support. Multiple types of support can be provided to WHRDs.

⁶ Please note that names and identifying details have been anonymized for protection and security reasons.

⁷ WE DO (2022) Women’s Participation in the UNFCCC: 2022 Report, https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WEDO_ParticipationNumbersBrief_2022.pdf

⁸ The name, country and all identifying details for this Safety Net profile have been removed, for the protection of the individual

Recognizing the expertise of women's organizations in addressing sexual and gender-based violence in Lebanon

In November 2022, the WHRDs Window provided logistical and financial travel support to a WHRD from Lebanon to facilitate her participation in the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) hosted by the UK Government in London. This participation allowed the WHRD to share the experience of her organization in responding to SGBV in a conflict and crisis-affected context, underscore the challenges in addressing SGBV, and advocate for the recognition and inclusion of WHRDs, as well as the expertise of local women's organizations in the international response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as meaningful partners, not just implementers. The WHRD's appeal for quality, multi-year and flexible funding to these local organizations was, moreover, positively received by Member State donors. By way of follow-up, the WHRD secured a subsequent meeting with the British Embassy in Lebanon.

Raising the voices of refugee women and youth from ethnic minorities in Ukraine

Two young Ukrainian WHRDs, who have been actively engaged in facilitating the relocation of Ukrainian Roma refugees, delivered recommendations to German and EU authorities at the 'Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative.' They urged decision-makers to include Ukrainian youth and Roma civil society organizations in consultation processes, to increase understanding of the diverse needs of Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people and ensure policy-making addresses these. Through this initiative, the delegation was also able to strengthen its partnerships with other civil society organizations working on Roma issues, allowing them to share and plan joint activities that will enhance visibility on Roma women's concerns in Ukraine, as well as help this community access socio-economic and capacity-building opportunities.

Advocating for the protection of women's rights in Afghanistan

Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, Afghan WHRDs have bravely raised their voices about the abuse of human rights, particularly for Afghan women and girls. The Window has provided direct logistical support for two prominent Afghan WHRDs. The first, advocated at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June for an urgent debate about the issues affecting women and girls in Afghanistan. As a result, in July 2022, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to ensure that the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan remain a priority on its agenda. The second WHRD contributed to an interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan in September 2022, also at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where she provided concrete recommendations to the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan. This advocacy trip furthermore allowed her to meet and strengthen partnerships with other Afghan women attending the same Human Rights Council session, to review challenges and lessons learned for more effective, coordinated, and inclusive advocacy. In addition, following her participation in the Human Rights Council in June, the Window also supported the first WHRD to travel to New York in September 2022, where she briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan. Through her powerful statement, she increased the visibility of the dire, and continually deteriorating situation of women's rights inside Afghanistan.

Output 1.1: Efficient, effective, and timely management and implementation of the Funding Window for WHRDs is ensured

Following Funding Board approval in September 2021, the Secretariat officially launched its Window for WHRDs on the 18 January 2022. 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.

OHCHR Partnership

The WHRD Unit began consultations with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in January 2022, leading to the formalization of a partnership through an official exchange of letters in June 2022. This committed OHCHR to providing strategic advice for the Window's design and dissemination of information, both globally and at country levels. OHCHR provided: key inputs to application processes and forms; advice on screening of sensitive applications from locations where OHCHR has a field presence; and referrals of cases to the Window. In addition, OHCHR agreed to and has

actively participated as a member of the Advocacy Committee, helping review Advocacy Support applications and provide recommendations to:

- Increase coordination and mobilize further support that may amplify visibility and influence;
- Identify additional, relevant entry points the applicants' advocacy; and
- Avoid duplication of funding to applicants.

Selection and onboarding of I/NGO partners for Safety Net implementation

In January 2022, the WHRD Unit launched a global call for proposals (CfP) to identify NGOs interested in partnering with the WPHF in the verification of WHRDs requests, and delivery of Safety Net protection grants. The Unit received a total of 31 proposals, of which it shortlisted eight. The WPHF Board selected the following five NGO partners during its 2 March 2022 meeting:

- Agir Ensemble pour les Droits Humains (AEDH);
- Defend Defenders - East and Horn Africa Human Rights Defenders;
- Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF);
- Front Line Defenders; and
- Madre, in consortium with the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF).

Following selection, a Harmonized Approaches for Cash Transfers Micro Assessment (HACT) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Assessment (PSEAH) were conducted, as required by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO). These led to a set of recommendations for each organization, along with the development of a PSEAH follow-up and capacity-building plan, which the WHRD Unit has reviewed quarterly. All NGO partners were on-boarded by September 2022.

WHRD Window Management

The WHRD 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 the Concept Note.

The WHRD Unit drafted all required documents for the efficient, effective, and timely implementation of the Window's mandate. Based on best practices and feedback from feminist civil society organizations, as well as women peacebuilders and human rights defenders from/working in conflict and crisis-affected contexts, the WHRDs Unit developed user-friendly and simple application forms available in Word format and through an online platform in six languages (English, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, French, and Spanish). To ensure smooth implementation and adequate information collection, the WHRD Unit held an online session on 21 April 2022 with NGO partners, which reviewed, adjusted and approved the required documents.

Online applications for both streams are received through an encrypted webpage, to ensure online safety and 'do no harm' principles. The management of all documents and communications with partners are password-protected, with access limited to WHRD Unit staff only.

In 2022, the WHRD Unit reviewed requests from WHRDs submitted through the secure WPHF web portal or email. The WHRD Unit guided applicants who sought support to fill in application forms and redirected applicants, as necessary, to appropriate streams. Cases that were not eligible to be supported through the Window were referred to other relevant mechanisms. For example, the WHRD Unit redirected requests for protection grants from WHRDs outside of the WHRDs Window geographical scope to NGO partners.

In addition, the WHRD Unit developed a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategy to guide the approaches and processes for robust, yet flexible, monitoring, evaluation, and results-based reporting for the WHRD Unit and NGO partners. The principles of the strategy are based on both utilization-focused M&E and ‘do no harm’ approaches, minimizing the burden for both WHRDs and implementing NGOs in reporting, and focusing on key variables about the WHRDs and the threats they face. The WHRD Unit also conducted follow-up calls and anonymous post-support surveys with WHRDs supported under the Advocacy stream, to understand more about the impact of participation in national and global advocacy efforts.

Calls for Proposals

During the reporting period, the WHRD Unit launched three calls for proposals (NGO partners, Advocacy and Safety Net), and undertook the technical review of 1,551 proposals from WHRDs via both streams from 58 different countries in 6 languages. Of these, 478 were transferred to NGO partners for verification (Safety Net), and 29 forwarded to the Advocacy Committee (Advocacy Support). The majority of requests under both streams come from Afghanistan (77%), followed by DRC (4.4%) and Myanmar (2.1%).

2022	Proposals Received/Reviewed	Countries	Shortlisted, Recommended or Transferred to I/NGOs
Advocacy	127	32 countries	12
Safety Net	1,424	50 countries	478
NGO Partners	31	-	29
Total	1,582	58 countries	416

Risks

Drawing on discussions during a 30 November – 1 December 2022 workshop (including the WHRD Unit, NGO partners and Advisory Committee members), plus a series of quarterly calls in mid-December with implementing I/NGOs, the WHRD Unit updated the Risk Matrix. Notably, these modifications include:

- An additional risk around embezzlement, given the elevated number of fraudulent applications NGO partners have identified in specific locations;
- Edited language, upgraded risk and elaborated mitigation measures around facilitating financial transfers to WHRDs, since these challenges have proved even greater than expected;
- Additional mitigation measures to reduce the risks against women due to the process;
- An elaboration of reputational risks, as these shift, with the high number of applications the Window has had to reject from Afghanistan; and
- Additional mitigation measures to address sustainability issues, given the unanticipated proportion of livelihood requests.

Going forward, the WHRD 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 NGO partners.

See Appendix C for updated Risk Matrix.

Output 1.2: Monitoring and evaluation of best practices and lessons for WHRDs support in crisis and conflict settings is enhanced

The WHRD 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.

As of October 2022, the WHRD Unit started a series of monthly Safety Net coordination calls with NGO partners. These meetings provided an opportunity for the WHRD Unit to review progress and cases transferred to NGOs, and also facilitated an exchange between partners regarding challenges and best practices, so the WHRD Unit could seek solutions jointly.

The WHRD Unit held a two-day workshop on 30 November-1 December 2022, bringing together NGO partners and Advisory Committee members, to reflect on the Window's pilot phase, including progress achieved, challenges encountered and to identify opportunities to refine operations and impact. The WHRD Unit drafted a workshop report, including draft planning for 2023, which will be shared with the WPHF Funding Board in 2023.

In December 2022, the WHRD Unit began quarterly calls with each of the NGOs, which sought feedback on their individual implementation experiences, requests and suggestions. Notably, these meetings identified challenges in supporting the high volume of requests from WHRDs in Afghanistan. In response, the WHRD Unit has begun outreach, and will launch a second call for proposals (CfP) in early 2023 for an NGO partner based in Asia. Taking into account recommendations from the Board from the first WHRD Window CfP in 2022, this call will prioritize organizations with a feminist approach.

Under this output, the WHRD Unit also administered anonymous post-support surveys to assess ease of the application process, timeliness, and effectiveness of Advocacy Support programming. Results from the reporting period indicate that 92% of respondents felt that the process was 'secure/safe,' 50% felt the support was provided 'quickly,' and 33% felt that the application was 'extremely easy' to complete, while another 67% felt it was 'relatively easy.' Overall, 75% of WHRDs who completed the survey were satisfied with the support provided, including the follow-up by the WHRD Unit.

In 2023, the WHRDs Unit will continue to share the best practices and lessons learned resulting from these 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 developed Communications Guidelines to help enforce visibility best practices among its NGO partners and beneficiaries. These set out principles to ensure all Window communications 'do no harm' and secure the informed consent of any named individuals or organizations before these are used for any 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 2022 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.

Advocacy and Visibility Events

During the reporting period, the Window organized two key visibility and advocacy events, and contributed to the wider communications campaigns and initiatives of the WPHF. The Window launched officially on 18 January 2022, with a global online event, *Accelerating Support for WHRDs on the Front Lines of Conflict and Crisis*,⁹ including remarks from Sima Bahous, Executive Director from UN Women, and OHCHR Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris. Held in the hours preceding the first ever UN Security Council debate on the protection and participation of WHRDs and peacebuilders, this also gave a platform for WHRDs from Afghanistan, Libya and Myanmar - along with feminist international civil society organizations - to advocate around the needs and gaps in advancing the protection and participation of WHRDs from conflict and crisis-affected countries.



The WPHF 100 Day Countdown to International WHRDs Day campaign amplified the voices and calls to action of WHRDs and key stakeholders, through a series of social media posts, including video contributions from WHRDs supported through the Window, along with partner UN entities, WPHF Board members, and donor Member States. The campaign was promoted across all WPHF social media channels, constituting a combined audience of approximately 30,000 followers, and generated over 63,000 impressions on Twitter and LinkedIn alone.

⁹ UN Web TV, “Accelerating Support for Women Human Rights Defenders on the Front Lines of Conflict and Crisis”, January 18th 2022, available online: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1j/k1joyv2faf>

The WHRD Unit built on the momentum of the UN Security Council Debate on Women Peace and Security in October 2022¹⁰ to facilitate dialogue among UN entities, Member States, and WHRDs. The Unit organized its first ever in-person event, *Defending Human Rights Has a Cost: Investing in the Protection and Participation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Conflict and Crisis Settings*¹¹ in Geneva, in the sidelines of the International WHRDs Day (29 November). This event sought to influence the international community to recognize the contributions of WHRDs and the risks they face. Speakers, who included the Norwegian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva and WHRDs from Afghanistan and Colombia, called on the international community to accelerate financial and political commitment to protect and support WHRDs in conflict and crisis-affected countries. The event culminated in a call-to-action video, to further amplify the demands of WHRDs and the other speakers.

On behalf of the Window, partners, such as Defend Defenders, publicized these funding opportunities at various forums which convened national and regional human rights networks, including the 73rd ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR).

During the reporting period, the WHRD Unit also delivered four targeted information sessions, to apprise UN colleagues and civil society actors of opportunities offered by the Window. Two information sessions were conducted through UN Women Peace Security Humanitarian Resilience (PSHR) and OHCHR Communities of Practice, which aimed to increase coordination and referrals from UN Women and OHCHR country-level offices to the Window for WHRDs. With support from UN Women Libya, and to encourage more applications in this country, a third session open to WHRDs from and/or working in Libya was hosted in December 2022, and attended by 48 WHRDs. Following the session, a Q&A sheet was developed and shared with interested WHRDs. An information session was also conducted for NGO applicants during the CfP phase.

WHRD advocacy and influence on the international stage

Pursuing a strategy to expand WHRD advocacy, the Window has assisted WHRDs to address a variety of issues, including human rights violations, the rights of minority groups, peace, climate change, and forced displacement. WHRDs attended international events, supported by the Advocacy stream, which ranged from international UN-led events, such as the 51st session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, or briefing the UN Security Council, to multilateral conferences, such as COP27 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and national-level initiatives, such as a workshop in DRC on inclusive humanitarian response. WHRDs were supported with flight tickets and accommodation costs, as well as visa fees and terminal expenses.

In 2023, the WHRD Unit will continue the engagement of WHRDs supported through the Window, at their discretion and to the extent they feel comfortable, in institutional capacity-sharing and peer exchanges through the L-HUB and other means. These initiatives will seek to strengthen WHRDs' strategic advocacy efforts and communications, by sharing their experiences with others supported through the Program.

2. Lessons Learned and Adaptations

In the first six months of operations, several lessons and adaptations have been made to ensure the continued flexibility and timeliness of support to WHRDs. Having engaged in continuous dialogue and consultations on the Window's operations and processes with key stakeholders, and taken stock of early

¹⁰ United Nations Secretary General, Report on Women and Peace and Security, October 2022,

¹¹ UN Web TV, 'Defending Human Rights Has a Cost: Investing in the Protection and Participation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Conflict and Crisis Settings', 01 December 2022, available online: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1t/k1tuye65yb>

best practices, challenges and lessons learned at a workshop on 30 November - 1 December 2022 with NGO partners and Advisory Committee¹² members, the WHRD Unit has already been able to address some of the teething issues which may be expected of new programming in complex operating environments. Close monitoring and analysis of data has moreover raised important questions about the types of support the Window provides.

Balancing risks and benefits

- The safety of the WHRDs supported through the Window has remained a priority during these first months of implementation. In one instance, where adequate protection mechanisms were not identified to attenuate the risks associated with participation, the WHRD Unit took the decision not to proceed with a planned Advocacy Support request. In August 2021, the Window received an application from an Afghan delegation and their male guardians (*Mahrams*) for an advocacy event inside the country. As part of the due diligence process to assure 'do no harm' principles, the WHRD Unit held a series of consultations with participants of the proposed delegation, the UN Women Country Office, and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which assessed logistics, risks and mitigation measures. In view of the particularly elevated violence against women protestors and wider threats facing all women activists in the country at the time, the WHRD Unit decided that this initiative's risks outweighed the likely benefits, so did not pursue this initiative.

Demand for livelihood support

- The WHRD Unit has been surprised that the largest proportion of requests under the Safety Net stream have been for livelihoods assistance. The Window strictly focuses this type of support on cases where short-term income assistance will significantly enhance the ability of recipients to continue or resume their activism. However, the level of this demand, and emerging probability that recipients will ask for repeat support after funds have expired raises important questions about the sustainability of supporting livelihoods needs. On one hand, the Window is committed to maintaining flexibility to respond to the most urgent requirements of WHRDs at risk, which includes reinforcing eminently fragile ecosystems of WHRD activism in protracted emergencies. However, the Window is also conscious that it is not structured or financed to provide long-term humanitarian assistance. The Unit will reflect further in 2023 on policy decisions around livelihood support.

Psychological needs of WHRDs

- The percentage of WHRDs seeking psychosocial and health-related assistance was unanticipated. NGO partners noted that even if this demand was not routinely accorded 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. Research with and by other aid organisations confirms that ongoing stigma and lack of reliable mental health services in many crisis contexts indeed impedes the ability of WHRDs to seek adequate help. In 2023, the Window plans to conduct further research into the mental health needs of WHRDs and options to address these proactively. This will involve mapping and sharing information on reliable psycho-social referral pathways and organising information sessions and exchanges on wellbeing for WHRDs in specific contexts.

¹² The Advocacy Committee (comprised of UN Women, OHCHR and civil society representatives coordinated by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security) reviews and provides feedback on Advocacy Support applications

Notwithstanding the delays, staggered operationalization delivered benefits

- As may be anticipated with new and ambitious programming in complex environments, the Window experienced some initial delays. The launch of Safety Net operations was postponed from April 2022 until September 2022, due to challenges in identifying an adequately qualified company to conduct the HACT assessment for NGO partners. To avoid holding back the Advocacy Support stream, this launched first in June 2022, followed by the Safety Net stream, as soon as completion of the HACT and PSEAH permitted the finalization of NGO contracting arrangements. This staggered approach ultimately proved beneficial, in that it provided time to ensure systems were in place and the application processes ran smoothly from the start.

Ensuring clear expectations to WHRD applicants

- The challenges carrying out due diligence processes of eligible WHRDs in conflict and crisis settings also caused some delays in approvals for both streams. To ensure comprehensive verification of Advocacy Support requests, Advocacy Committee members (UN Women, OHCHR) sometimes required additional time to verify the profile of applicants with their colleagues at field level. For the Safety Net stream, the time the NGO partners required to complete similar verifications with their CSO networks also regularly exceeded initial calculations. As a result, the WHRD Unit has adjusted language on the website to manage applicants' timeline expectations and making more transparent the steps and processes required. In addition, the limit to daily subsistence allowance provided through the Advocacy Support stream was adjusted to five days (minus travel), encouraging applicants to condense their engagements and networking into this period, and facilitate a more equitable distribution of funding.

3. Planned 2023 Priorities

In 2023, and subject to the availability of funds, the Window will prioritize the following objectives:

Visibility and Advocacy Priorities

- Raise visibility of the Window and the work/challenges of WHRDs through the publication of human-interest testimonials, highlighting the support and impact of the Window on their lives/work, with a view to increasing advocacy opportunities for WHRDs and raising further funding with Member States and private sector donors.
- Organize interventions/side events at key relevant opportunities, including: i) International Women's Day (8 March); ii) presentation to the UN Human Rights Council of the Special Rapporteur on HRDs, regarding WHRDs in conflict settings (March); iii) international WHRD's Day (29 Nov); and iv) the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 Dec).
- Deliver a series of targeted webinars and social media campaigns by region/country, and amplifying communications via feminist/CSO networks, to increase knowledge about this funding opportunity among a diversity of potential applicants, particularly at the grassroots level.

Operational Priorities

- Refine operations, to ensure continued needs-driven innovation and flexible support, including updating of application documents, website and rejection letter language, clarifying selection criteria and in turn increasing the percentage of eligible applications.
- Issue new call for proposals for additional NGO partners under the Safety Net Stream, with a focus on Asia.

- Establish collaboration with additional UN entities, as well as organizations to whom Safety Net applicants can be referred for longer-term livelihood support, including support for psychosocial support for mental and physical well-being.
- Increase advocacy and protection capacity for WHRDs through the provision of L-HUB and training to NGO partners, on how to engage in UN/international advocacy spaces and digital security/data protection.
- Facilitate virtual networking events for learning and solidarity among WHRDs at regional and global levels, to increase the impact of their advocacy initiatives.
- Analyze trends of support and impact through post-support surveys.

4. Appendices

Appendix A: WHRD Window Brief

Appendix B: Process Map of Window

Appendix C: Risk Matrix

5. Indicator Based Performance Assessment

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
Project Outcome: The Window for Women Human Rights Defenders in crisis and conflict affected countries is established and delivery of flexible funding and advocacy support for WHRDs is ensured	1. Number of WHRDs supported through flexible funding (type of support, age group, country of origin)	Global: 84 WHRDs supported (29.8% 18-29 years) (AFG: 29, CMR: 3, COL: 3, DRC: 14, ETI: 1, ETH: 1, LBN: 1, LBY: 1, MMR: 4, NGA: 1, PHP: 1, SSD: 6, SUD: 7, UGA: 1, UKR: 6, YEM: 1) Advocacy Stream: 19 WHRDs supported through 11 requests (21.1% 18-29 years) Safety Net: 64 WHRDs supported (31.3% 18-29 years)	N/A
Output 1.1 Efficient, effective, and timely management and implementation of the Funding Window for WHRDs is ensured	1.1a Window is established with both type of supports open for applications Baseline: 0 Target: all aspects of window is established by end of April 2022.	Window for WHRDs launched on 18 Jan 2022 with global online event. The Advocacy Stream became operational in June 2022 and the Safety Net Stream in September 2022.	Delays in Safety Stream due to challenges in HACT assessments for NGO partners
	1.1b Selection and onboarding of I/NGOs partners Baseline: 0 Target: N/A	Five NGO partners were onboarded and contracted to provide support through the Safety Net Stream	N/A
	1.1c OHCHR partnership is secured for quality technical and advisory support Baseline: 0 Target: partnership secured	OHCHR partnership secured for quality technical/advisory support including the design and implementation for the Window and key inputs on processes, screening and referrals. They also participate as a member of the Advocacy Committee under the Advocacy Stream.	N/A
	1.1d Number of requests received and screened (by stream)	A total of 1,551 requested received from WHRDs and screened (127 through the Advocacy Stream and 1,424 through the Safety Net Stream)	N/A
	1.1e Risk and mitigation strategies table is reviewed and revised, as needed	Risk and mitigation strategy reviewed and updated. Future updates will be carried out on a quarterly basis.	N/A
Output 1.2 Monitoring and evaluation of best practices and lessons for WHRDs support in crisis and conflict settings is enhanced	1.2a Participatory review and consultation process with I/NGOs, WHRDs, CSOs and UN agencies conducted Baseline: 0 Target: Bi-Annually	Yes. Review and consultations processes conducted with NGOs, UN Agencies, OHCHR and WHRDs supported through the Advocacy Stream.	N/A
	1.2b Annual global consolidated data analysis to assess quality of support provided and how women have used it	Anonymous post-support surveys disseminated to Advocacy Support Stream WHRDs focused on timeliness and security of new funding window. In addition, a total of 10 post-support interviews were conducted with WHRDs to assess the challenges and impact of their participation in global advocacy efforts.	N/A
Output 1.3 Advocacy and visibility to increase access and support to WHRDs protection and	1.3a Number of information sessions conducted with various stakeholders to disseminate information on the WHRD window	Four information sessions conducted, including two sessions through UNW PSHR and OHCHR communities of practice, one session with UNW Libya and a global information session for NGO applicants during the Cfp phase.	N/A

Results	Indicators	Progress Achieved against Targets	Reasons for Variance
participation on the global stage is promoted	1.3b Number/Type of advocacy and visibility events conducted to increase visibility for more support and recognition of WHRDs contribution to peace and risks	Three key events/visibility campaigns were conducted: i) Accelerating Support for WHRDs on the Front Lines of Conflict and Crisis; ii) 100 days countdown to International WHRDs days (visibility campaign); and iii) Defending Human Rights Has a Cost: Investing in the Protection and Participation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Conflict and Crisis Settings.	N/A
	1.3c Number of women supported through direct logistical support for advocacy for peace and women's rights	19 WHRDs supported through 11 direct logistical support requests (4 delegations and 7 individual requests)	N/A

THE WPHF FUNDING WINDOW FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

December 2021



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 risks to their own lives. Despite their critical contributions, WHRDs face limited access to funding opportunities. While civil society organizations (CSOs) 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 the ability of CSOs to effectively respond to the increasing needs of WHRDs, especially in complex conflict and crisis-affected contexts, which constitute the sites of multiple layers of intersecting needs and insecurities.

A recent open letter from the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security, signed by 381 feminist organizations from 88 countries, called Member States and the UN to do more to protect and support WHRDs and to ensure safe spaces for their voices to be heard, noting that *“At present, few practical resources are available in urgent, life-threatening individual cases of defenders at risk, and the responsibility of providing protective measures falls largely on other civil society organizations. This represents a critical protection gap that both States and the UN must work with civil society to urgently address.”*^[1]

Echoing their voices, in his 2021 annual report on Women Peace and Security, the UN Secretary General called Member States to take concerted action to make *“rapid and flexible funding available for the protection of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in emergency individual cases.”*^[2]

Against this backdrop, WPHF has established a new funding window dedicated to support the participation and protection of WHRDs working in and on crisis and conflict settings.

Facts and Figures

- ▶ WHRDs are particularly at risk when they challenge systems linked to violence, such as political power structures, gendered power relations, and patriarchal notions of the role of women in the family and society.
- ▶ WHRDs are at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence and rape, and are targets of femicide, judicial persecution, sexual violence, attacks against their reputations, violence within the home and the organizations where they work, and arbitrary gender-based travel bans.
- ▶ In 2020, OHCHR verified **35 cases of killings of women human rights defenders**, journalists, and trade unionists in seven conflict-affected countries with data surpassing the reported numbers for 2019 and 2018.
- ▶ In the month leading up to the August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the United Nations had already documented **a record number of women killed in the country** in 2020, including **civil society activists and journalists, and the targeting of academics, medical personnel, and women judges in the Supreme Court, amongst many others.**

[1] NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, 2021 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women Peace and Security, September 2021, <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021-WPS-Civil-Society-Open-Letter-English-1-September.pdf>

[2] Report of the UN Secretary General on women and peace and security, 27 September 2021, paragraph 107. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/S_2021_827_E.pdf

A New Funding Mechanism: The WPHF Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders

Building on existing mechanisms and lessons learned and working in close collaboration with its UN and INGO partners, WPHF approved in September 2021 the establishment of a new funding window to support the protection and participation of WHRDs working for inclusive peace and humanitarian action – [The WPHF Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders](#). With seed funding from the governments of Norway and Germany, the new funding mechanism will launch in January 2022. Receiving requests on a **rolling basis**, the new WPHF window will provide flexible funding and logistical support to Women Human Rights Defenders, in particular women peace activists, **from crisis and conflict-affected areas**, operating at **community, national, regional and/or international levels**.

What type of support will the WPHF Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders provide?

The WPHF Funding Window for WHRDs will offer two types of support:

- ▶ **A flexible funding safety net** to cover urgent costs, such as, short-term livelihood and protection expenses, including but not limited to equipment (*computers, , security cameras, security software*), internet, self care, legal assistance, relocation costs, etc..for up to a 10,000 USD.
- ▶ **An advocacy support through direct logistical support** to arrange and cover logistical expenses (transportation,visa fees, accommodation, translation,daily subsistence allowance, accessibility for WHRDs with disability) to participate in, either individually or as a delegation, a meeting, event or decision-making process, at the national, regional or international level, which contributes to advancing human rights and peace.

[3] OHCHR, Fact Sheet No.29, Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights, p 2.

About Us

The 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 480 civil society organizations in 26 countries working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace.

[WPHFund.org](https://wphfund.org)

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

“Human rights defenders are identified above all by what they do, and it is through a description of their actions and of some of the contexts in which they work that the term can be best explained.”³ Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are commonly defined as **women**, or those who identify as women, who 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 local, national, regional, or international levels.

General Criteria:

- ▶ **Gender:** Woman or identifies as woman
- ▶ **Age:** 18 years old and above
- ▶ **Country of Origin:** from conflict and crisis affected contexts, either in country or relocated due to risks.
- ▶ **Human Rights Activities:** has been peacefully leading human rights activities in or for her community either individually or through a civil society organization.

Additional Criteria per Type of Support

SAFETY NET:

- ▶ **Threats and Risks:**
 - Demonstrates current or past serious security risks, for her and/ or her dependents, because of her commitment to human rights and peace.
- 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.

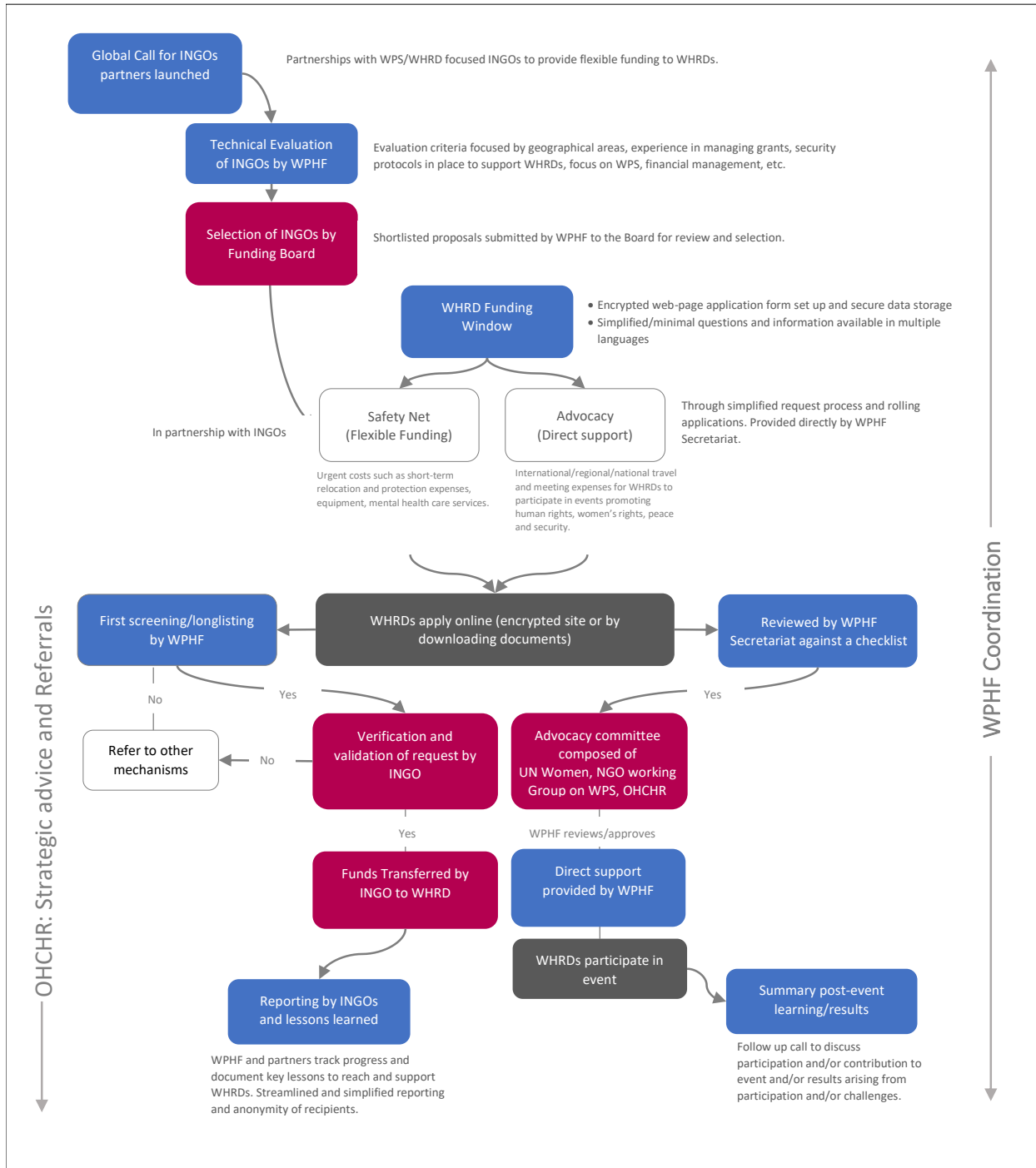
ADVOCACY SUPPORT

- ▶ **Future Advocacy Work:** Provides information on the logistical support needed to individually or as a delegation attend a national , regional, or international meeting, event or decision-making process, as part of her / the delegation advocacy work for human rights and peacebuilding in crisis and conflict affected contexts.
- ▶ **Time Frame:** Event, meeting or decision-making process will occur in the next 6 months.

Visit the *WPHF Window for Women Human Rights Defenders* website: <https://wphfund.org/whrds/>



Appendix B : Process Map of WPHF Window for WHRDs



Appendix C: Risk Matrix

Type of Risk	Degree of Risk	Risk Mitigation
Financial transfers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women do not have access to bank accounts Women pay large fees to open and close accounts, just to receive this transfer Authoritarian regimes are imposing increasing scrutiny on sources of international funding, even through alternative money transfer mechanisms 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used alternative transfer options such as Western Union, Money Gram, Dahabhsil, travel checks, the Hawala system Utilized advice of UN Women Country Offices on localized, flexible banking options For Safety Nets, NGOs working through their CSO networks to facilitate transfers via these organizations
Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased risks against women due to the process 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed conflict sensitive approach; utilized simple processes to avoid burden on applicants; protected data and information, with careful dissemination of information Public reports/messaging on this funding did not mention names, geographical location, or sensitive information, unless approved by the WHRDs In the provision of Advocacy Support, introduced process to assess, mitigate and follow up on reprisals, including for cooperation with the UN In the provision of Advocacy Support, also introduced option for funding accompaniment by male guardians to Afghan women (known as Mahrams), to increase feasibility and protection of WHRDs wishing to attend events The WHRD Unit exchanged regularly with other WPHF funding streams, the UN Women Country Office and implementing NGO partners, to review evolution of political/security risks that may affect applicants (notably re Afghanistan)
Reputation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHRD Window develops reputation for not actually being as quick, flexible or accessible as claimed 	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continually reviewed and adjusted approval criteria, with NGO partners, as necessary, in response to the types and numbers of applications, as well as percentage of cases of approved Updated language in rejection letters and on website in Dec 2022, to further clarify Window's decision-making processes and to manage timeline expectations NGO partners collaborated through monthly calls in sharing best practice on safe and efficient money transfer mechanisms, to speed up disbursements into Afghanistan
Embezzlement of funds through fraudulent applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High proportion of applications from specific locations identified as fraudulent 	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs conducted thorough verification of each application Systematic rejection of applications in case of suspicion of fraud Development of a list, in cooperation with other protection mechanisms, of individuals/ organizations with a proven record of sending fraudulent applications Minimized the number of intermediaries involved in verification of applications and transfer of funds

<p>Leaving No One Behind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to support is limited to an elite group of women 	<p>Low (although level of risk varies by region)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents and information publicized in six languages • Disseminated information through webinars and NGO networks, in the Window's six languages, and started planning additional social media outreach, to encourage applications from outside main cities • Revised application templates (in six languages) in Dec 2022 to ensure simplicity of the application is balanced with the need for clarity on essential information • Regularly reviewed profiles WHRDs supported by country, to identify geographies for further targeted outreach to women working at local community level and in rural areas
<p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are limited for emergency support, but longer-term livelihood needs for WHRDs are unmet, and applicants apply for repeat livelihoods funding 	<p>Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity provided on website and in other communications that this funding responds to the urgent protection needs of WHRDs in crisis and conflict settings that relate to their human rights activism • Renewal of support being considered on a case-by-case basis, based on the changing needs. • WPHF and partner NGOs will also explore additional programmes that can support the women. This is short-term support provided, whilst the Unit is mapping and looking to provide more information on the website and to those rejected for this funding with longer-term and alternative solutions
<p>Sanctions lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is diverted to groups on the UN Sanctions list 	<p>Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly coordination meetings with NGOs regularly reviewed the process and risks of money transfers • For women inside Afghanistan, the funds are being transferred in smaller tranches • Due diligence was undertaken thoroughly for each application to verify the identity of the woman and her role in human rights activism. The NGOs sought this through references. For the Advocacy Support stream, the WHRD Unit conducted due diligence consultations with Advocacy Committee members
<p>Funding mechanisms duplication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants benefit from multiple sources of funding to address the same risks 	<p>Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WHRD Unit and implementing NGOs consulted other UN and NGO entities re previous or parallel funding to individual WHRDs • The Window added information on the NGO partnerships to the website, so it is clear which organisations are supporting Safety Nets implementation, and to reduce the number of applications these organisations receive in parallel from the same applicants • The Window started to map and consolidate information to publicize referral pathways on website and to rejected applicants about alternative funding mechanisms • This Window recognizes that the needs are many and the support often very limited and may not cover all the costs, therefore receiving additional funding is not eliminatory. However, the applications include a question on current, existing or past funding support received