

FEMINIST  
OPPORTUNITIES  
NOW



# FON ASIA PARTNERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE 15TH AWID INTERNATIONAL FORUM



15th AWID International Forum: Rising Together  
2 - 5 December 2024  
Bangkok, Thailand



## Background

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) International Forum is a transformative global event that convenes feminist, women's rights, gender justice, LBTQI+, and allied movements. Held in December 2024, the 15th International Forum served as a space for participants to connect, reflect, and strategize on advancing gender justice and intersectional advocacy worldwide. As a convening, it was a response to the urgency to promote stronger and more coordinated engagement and action by feminists, women's rights, and other social justice advocates, organizations and movements. It provided opportunities for meaningful engagement across diverse contexts, fostering dialogue and collaboration among actors committed to feminist ideals. The Forum's unique environment facilitated personal transformation and collective strategizing, offering participants a platform to share experiences and amplify their advocacy efforts.



## Objectives

FON South Asia partners participated in the AWID Forum 2024 with support from CREA to enhance their advocacy capabilities, document key learnings, and confront shared challenges. The Forum aimed to amplify structurally silenced voices, strengthen feminist movement-building, and foster partnerships for sustained global action. This report captures the rich experiences and reflections of participants, documenting how their engagement contributed to the overarching goals of gender justice and intersectional equity.

## Selection of Participants

The selection process for participants for the FON delegation to the 15th International AWID Forum was carried out exclusively through an application process opened for partners of FON. Among the 31 applicants, ten (10) representatives from CSOs (1 from each CSO) were chosen to attend the session based on the criteria below:

- The organization has to be a FON partner.
- Applicants needed to demonstrate how their advocacy priorities and organizational missions aligned with the goals and themes of the AWID Forum.
- Preference was given to organizations that have had fewer opportunities to participate in global forums in the past year, ensuring inclusivity and diversity.

- The quality and feasibility of the applicants' proposed action plans for utilizing the learnings from the Forum in their local and regional advocacy work.

The selected participants represented diverse feminist movements and advocacy areas, including LGBTIQ rights, disability justice, sex worker advocacy, and climate justice. Their collective experiences reflected a tapestry of perspectives, enriching the Forum's discussions with insights drawn from their local and regional contexts. Participants hailed from varied geographies and communities, ensuring a diverse representation of voices and approaches to feminist advocacy.

SI No.	Name of Participant	Name of Organisation	Country
1	Mahfuz Alam	Ashar Alo	Bangladesh
2	Purabi Chowdhury	Badabon Sangho	Bangladesh
3	Rabeya Sultana	Nice Foundation	Bangladesh
4	Sheuly Sharma	Jago Nari Unnayon Sangstha (JNUS)	Bangladesh
5	Md Yasin Ali	Noboprobhaat Foundation	Bangladesh
6	Adhil Suraj	Equite Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
7	R.A Isuruni Umayangi Ranasinghe	Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC)	Sri Lanka
8	Satya Ramanayaka	Diversity and Solidarity Trust (DAST)	Sri Lanka
9	Sivalingam Santhiramathy	Social Welfare Mandram	Sri Lanka
10	Diyanagiri Thenu Lakal Ranketh Perera	Venasa Transgender Network	Sri Lanka

In addition to the FON country partners from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, from the CREA FON team Sudipta Mukhopadhyay - FON team lead, and Saeda Bilkis Bani - FON Program Coordinator also participated in the AWID Forum.

## Key Activities and Sessions

Participants attended a broad spectrum of plenaries, workshops, and interactive sessions designed to address critical global issues. Below is a comprehensive list of sessions attended by FON participants:

### Getting to Know each Other

South Asia partners along with the CREA FON Team Lead and Program Coordinator attended the introductory dinner organised by IPPF with the FON consortium members and partners from other regions. This was an



excellent opportunity to get introduced to each other as a shared community of practitioners.

### **Plenaries:**

- Main Plenary: Connect in Struggle and Solidarity
- Main Plenary: Heal Through the Power of Movements
- Main Plenary: Thrive With Feminist Wins and Resources
- Closing Plenary: Rising Together

### **Key Sessions:**

#### ***Intersectionality and Advocacy***

- Intersectional Feminist Organizing for a Just Economy
- Beyond Borders: Empowering Stories at the Crossroads of South Asian Intersectionality
- Collective Power as Alchemy: Queer and Trans Feminist Responses to Fundamentalisms
- Building Transfeminist Coalitions Across Borders
- Voices from Outer Mongolia: Squeezed but Steadfast

#### ***Gender and Climate Justice***

- Gender, Climate, and Systemic Linkages: Feminist Analysis of Climate Change
- Cultivating a More Enabling Environment: Strengthening Women's Resilience in Conflict-Affected and Climate-Vulnerable Communities
- Challenges to Face the Climate Crisis: Afro-Feminist Approaches in the Caribbean

#### ***LGBTIQ and Sex Worker Advocacy***

- Free Bodies, Free Spirits: Amplifying Trans Voices
- Resilience and Resistance: Strategies by LGBTIQ and Sex Worker Movements Against Fundamentalists and Anti-Gender Actors in the Sahel and Beyond
- Rethinking Violence Against Women from the Perspective of Sex Workers
- Roses in the Concrete: Sex Worker Movement-Building in a Shrinking Funding Environment
- Beyond Decriminalization: A Vision of a Place That is Ours



#### ***Feminist Funding and Resource Mobilization***

- Thrive With Feminist Wins and Resources
- Unlocking the Future of Feminist Tech Funding

- Meet the Funder Opportunities
- Show Us the Money for Feminist Movements
- Feminists, Funding, and Protracted Crises: Seeding a Just Transition
- Connection Circle: Politics of Funding for Young Feminist Organizations

### *Creative Advocacy and Healing*

- Visual Voices: Art as a Tool for Social Change
- Feminist Cinema: Short Film Program
- Short Film Screening: Feminism
- Heal Through the Power of Movements
- Morning Qigong and Haiku: When the Body Says Yes (Summer/Late Summer Fire/Earth)
- Theoretical Performance: We Push the Sky
- Activist Touchpoint: Meet the Feminist Fund

### *Advocacy and Systemic Change*

- Protecting Disability Justice in GBV Responses: What Feminists Need to Understand and Do Better
- Building Advocacy: Intimate Partner Violence in Queer Relationships
- Casting Strategic Direction to Mainstream SOGIESC Rights Within Social Justice Movements
- Strategies Challenging Online Violence
- WHRD Strategies Challenging Online Violence

### *Labor, Migration, and Community-Led Efforts*



- Breaking the Chain: How One Dalit Women’s Trade Union Won Asia’s First Enforceable Supply Chain Agreement Against Gender-Based Violence and Harassment
- How Migrant Women Workers Organize to Realize Our Rights
- Advancing Towards Trade Unions and Feminist Movements: Alternatives and Struggles

## Issue Specific Reflections from Participants

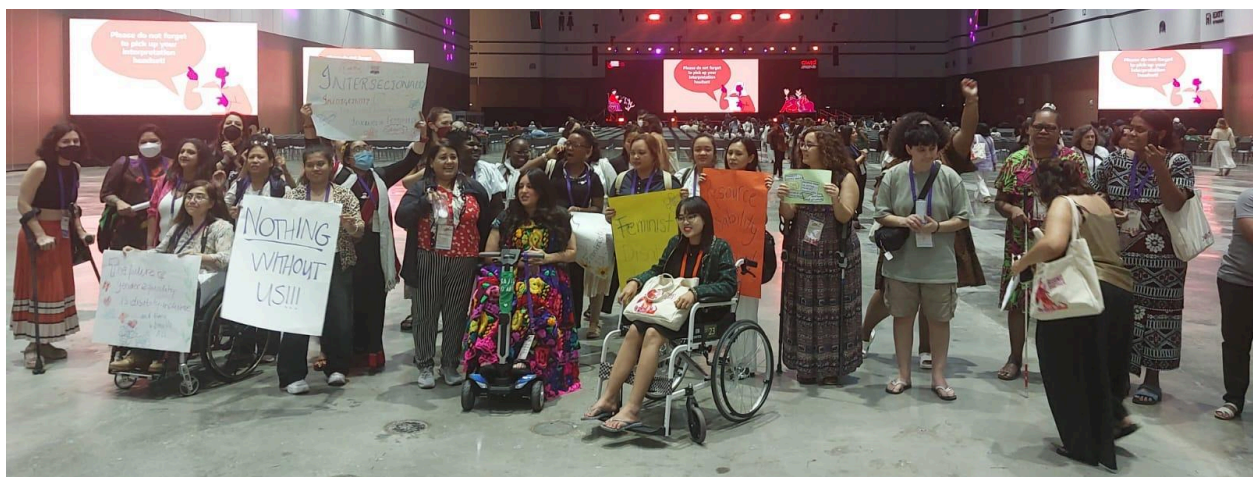
### Exposure to multifaceted issues

The diversity of events in AWID provided a platform for participants to engage in discussions, share experiences, and collaborate on strategies to advance gender equality and inclusive development globally. Each event addressed different aspects of the challenges faced by structurally excluded groups, ranging from the gendered impact of climate change to disability justice and the elimination of gender-based

violence. The diverse range of topics covered reflect the multifaceted nature of the issues addressed at the AWID.

### Intersectionality and Justice

Participants deeply engaged with the concept of intersectionality, emphasizing how overlapping identities shape individuals' experiences of inequality and oppression. Migrant women workers shared stories highlighting the compounded impact of labor exploitation and gender-based discrimination. Sessions illustrated how feminist advocacy must address these layered injustices through comprehensive and inclusive strategies. Discussions on disability justice emphasized the importance of involving women with disabilities in decision-making processes, highlighting their critical role in shaping inclusive feminist agendas.



### Movement Building and Solidarity

The power of collective action resonated strongly throughout AWID. Grassroots movements—such as Dalit women-led trade unions achieving enforceable agreements against workplace harassment—offered inspiring examples of resilience and strategic advocacy. Participants also reflected on the role of regional solidarity, particularly in addressing the shared struggles of marginalized groups in the Global South. The resilience of LGBTIQ and sex worker movements in regions like the Sahel showcased the transformative potential of building coalitions across intersecting movements.

### Creative Advocacy and Storytelling

Creative approaches to advocacy emerged as a recurring theme. Sessions like "Feminist Cinema: Short Film Program" and "Visual Voices" demonstrated how storytelling, art, and cultural traditions can amplify marginalized voices. Participants shared how creative tools, such as flash mobs and interactive performances,



foster healing and solidarity while challenging oppressive narratives. These approaches were complemented by discussions on integrating technology and media literacy into advocacy efforts, ensuring that feminist messaging reaches diverse and global audiences.

### **Feminist Funding and Resource Mobilization**

The AWID Forum highlighted the urgent need for trust-based, flexible funding models that empower local organizations. Discussions on feminist funding mechanisms underscored the importance of aligning resources with movement priorities and fostering long-term partnerships. Participants from sex worker advocacy groups shared insights on overcoming funding challenges, advocating for decolonized approaches that prioritize grassroots empowerment. Sessions on feminist tech funding revealed innovative ways to support organizations working in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable communities, emphasizing the value of sustainable and adaptive funding models.



### **Gender and Climate Justice**

Sessions on climate justice revealed how environmental crises disproportionately impact women, particularly in caregiving roles. Afro-feminist approaches offered valuable frameworks for addressing these challenges, emphasizing systemic change and gender-sensitive policies. Participants explored the intersections of gender, climate, and systemic inequality, recognizing the need for integrated advocacy strategies. The role of women workers in climate resilience efforts—from factory workers to community organizers—was a recurring theme, highlighting their leadership in addressing both immediate and long-term environmental challenges.

### **Breakfast Meeting with The Ambassador of France in Thailand**

On the sidelines of AWID an excellent opportunity emerged for FON South Asia partners where FON partners had an opportunity to meet the French Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Mr. Jean-Claude Poinboeuf. Partners were grateful to the Ambassador in being provided this opportunity and being able to directly share about their work in the meeting.



## Key Takeaways

- **Strengthened Networks:** Connections forged at the Forum paved the way for future collaborations and partnerships.
- **Enhanced Advocacy Skills:** Participants gained practical tools and strategies for intersectional advocacy, funding, and coalition-building.
- **Personal Growth:** Exposure to diverse perspectives inspired participants to lead local initiatives and refine their advocacy approaches.
- **Global Solidarity:** Stories of collective resilience reinforced the importance of shared efforts in confronting systemic injustices.
- **Creative Innovations:** Participants returned with actionable ideas for integrating creative and technological tools into their advocacy work.

## Achievements



The AWID International Forum was a **deeply impactful experience** for FON participants, offering them the chance to connect with diverse struggles and advocacy strategies across global feminist movements. Through sessions and discussions, participants **gained fresh insights into the resilience of structurally silenced communities and the transformative power of collective action.** They reflected on how intersecting factors like gender, race, class, and ability shape experiences of exclusion, often compounding the challenges faced by those on the margins. They were especially **moved by stories of the Rohingya people’s perseverance, human rights violations in Palestine, and the coalition-building efforts of LGBTIQ and sex worker movements in the Sahel.** Addressing caste-based discrimination and integrating disability justice into responses to

gender-based violence emerged as key lessons from the Forum.

*Each day, I met a lot of feminists from different spaces. The forum reminded me how important storytelling is and how it can be incorporated into work and movements. ~ Rabeya Sultana*

Participants also **delved into the role of creative advocacy, exploring how storytelling, art, and cultural traditions can amplify voices that are often silenced and challenge oppressive narratives.** Strategies like feminist cinema and flash mobs were highlighted as innovative ways to foster healing and build solidarity, while also engaging broad and diverse audiences. These discussions reinforced how creative tools can strengthen feminist movements by cultivating cultural and collective practices within communities.

The Forum shed light on the intersection of climate justice and gender equity, with **participants learning about the disproportionate impacts of environmental crises on women, particularly those in caregiving roles.** Afro-feminist strategies for tackling systemic barriers and advocating for

gender-sensitive climate policies stood out as crucial takeaways. Examples of women's leadership in building climate resilience underscored the importance of connecting climate action with gender equity and peacebuilding efforts.



*This was my first global feminist forum. We have to change our advocacy strategies. We don't always need to talk about the violence and hatred but also about healing, for ourselves and our communities. Through these types of sessions, we can increase support. However, one challenge I faced was talking to funders. There was a specific space to talk to them, but it could have helped if they had segregated funders according to the region they were funding. It's quite hard in the long run to access funding for our organizations, so we have to come up with a solution to self-sustain regional organizations. ~ Satya Ramanayaka*

**Feminist funding and resource mobilization emerged as critical themes throughout the Forum. Participants emphasized the need for trust-based, flexible funding models that prioritize grassroots empowerment and align with feminist values.** They reflected on the severe funding gaps faced by sex worker organizations and the dwindling resources for disability-related advocacy. Building transparent and trusting relationships with funders, while fostering long-term partnerships, was seen as essential for sustainable change. Sessions on feminist tech funding provided innovative solutions for supporting organizations operating in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable areas.

Another major focus was leadership development. **Participants recognized the importance of investing in grassroots capacity building to address systemic inequities and empower emerging leaders.** Decentralized power structures and survivor-centered approaches were discussed as vital, alongside the need to train authorities in fostering trust and accountability when addressing intimate partner violence and systemic discrimination.

A recurring theme throughout the Forum was the **significance of self-care and collective well-being.** Participants noted that prioritizing mental health is essential for sustaining advocacy efforts over the long term. They found inspiration in sessions that explored practices for strengthening feminist solidarity and building cultures of mutual support. Healing practices, including movement-based workshops and

community-driven initiatives, were celebrated as critical for creating stronger, more sustainable movements.



Participants also reflected on some of the challenges within feminist advocacy. These included the underrepresentation of activists from South and Southeast Asia in discussions about the Global South, a lack of trust in women-led organizations, and declining funding opportunities for feminist approaches in areas like HIV response. Addressing these gaps was seen as key to ensuring equitable access to resources and more diverse representation.

The Forum also highlighted the **importance of innovative organizing and digital advocacy**. Participants explored strategies for combating online violence and disinformation, emphasizing the need for decolonial and feminist protection models. Community-driven approaches to safeguarding structurally silenced voices in digital spaces were identified as critical for fostering inclusive and resilient movements.

*The movement is a power that can change global challenges. Love and care should be centered. I loved CREA's Love Letter Booth. I also engaged with sex workers' rights movements. I met a person whose organization started the 16 Days of Activism campaign and shared a photo with us. ~ Purabi Chowdhury*

The inclusive and transformative environment of the Forum fostered a sense of **shared purpose and solidarity, inspiring action at both local and global levels**. The deep connections formed among participants and the rich exchange of ideas were celebrated as key outcomes of this unique gathering.

## Challenges Faced by Participants

While the Forum provided an enriching experience, participants encountered several challenges:

- **Overlapping Sessions:** Concurrent scheduling limited their ability to attend all relevant sessions, creating difficult choices and missed opportunities. The broad range of sessions, coupled with limited time for personal reflection, required them to prioritize carefully, which they sometimes found restrictive.
- **Language Barriers:** Multilingual sessions posed communication challenges, reducing inclusivity and engagement for some participants.
- **Navigational Issues:** The vast space made locating sessions difficult, resulting in hurdles.

- **Technical Difficulties:** Device malfunctions and app-related issues hindered access to critical information and engagement tools.
- **Networking limitations:** The large gatherings and limited breaks hindered meaningful connections and discussions with donors and other participants.

Participants also noted underrepresentation in some thematic discussions, particularly from regions like Southeast Asia, which limited the breadth of perspectives on Global South solidarity. Additionally, the lack of sufficient time for in-depth discussions in certain sessions was a recurring concern.

## Recommendations

- **Capacity Building:** Providing participants with ongoing training in advocacy, digital security, and resource mobilization to strengthen their impact within feminist movements. Tailored workshops should address region-specific challenges and priorities.
- **Enhancing Accessibility:** Future AWID forums should ensure inclusive design, offering comprehensive interpretation services and user-friendly navigation tools. Addressing logistical barriers will enable broader and more meaningful participation.
- **Sustained Collaboration:** Facilitating continuous engagement among participants through post-event networking opportunities and collaborative projects. Building long-term partnerships will amplify the collective impact of feminist advocacy efforts.
- **Inclusive Representation:** Prioritizing the inclusion of diverse regions and communities in discussions, particularly those underrepresented in past forums. This will enrich dialogues and ensure that all voices are heard.

Implementing these next steps and recommendations, we can build on the valuable insights and perspectives gained from individuals' and organizations' participation in the 15th AWID International Forum, ultimately contributing to the ongoing pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment globally.





To see the photos and videos from the forum, click [here](#).

