

count me **IN!**

2020 Annual Report and Final Report



30 June 2021

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women
Dutch Gender Platform

The vision of the Count Me In! Consortium (CMI!)¹, a Strategic Partner of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is: ‘Counting in’ the voices of women, girls and trans people to advance gender equality and respect for their human rights. Our Theory of Change (ToC) holds that:

Women’s rights defenders and organisations – particularly those that are self-led by the constituencies they represent, and that act collectively within larger social movements - play an essential and catalysing role in bringing an end to the inequality and injustice experienced by many millions of women, girls and trans people worldwide, and in securing respect for gender equality and justice.

Since its launch in 2016, CMI! has implemented more than 1,000 initiatives to strengthen Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), Women’s Rights Organisations (WROs) and feminist movements to lobby and advocate for their human rights, build collective power, hold decision-makers to account, and change laws, policies and social norms. This work has been driven by women, girls and trans people who face multiple and intersecting oppressions, and who have often been structurally excluded from full and equal participation in society.

CMI! has four strategic intervention areas, reflected in the CMI! ToC: capacity building; strategic resourcing; direct lobbying and advocacy (L&A); and knowledge building and strategic communications. These strategies contribute to strengthened internal capacities, expanded constituencies, articulated political agendas, and new and/or deeper alliances (outcomes 1-4) of self-led women’s, girls’ and trans people’s rights movements so that they are in a better position to change social norms, attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviour and practices (outcome 5); change policies and laws (outcome 6); and increase control over resources and decision-making (outcome 7). We focus in particular on strengthening activism to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV), advance economic justice and ensure sustainable resourcing for WROs.

This report features select highlights of CMI!’s work in 2020 (stories of change across CMI!’s thematic areas and using complementary strategies) alongside a summary of CMI!’s key successes and lessons learned during the five-year programme.

1. CMI! in the 2020 context

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly shaped CMI!’s work in 2020. While viruses don’t discriminate, people, systems and policies do. The pandemic has exposed failures and weaknesses in economies and health systems worldwide, exacerbating existing inequities in every region of the world. Gender-based systems of discrimination – patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia – intersect with other discriminatory systems, including ableism, ageism, racism and white supremacy, xenophobia, religious persecution, classism and colonialism to limit and harm the well-being, lives and security of women, girls and trans people. Measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly lockdowns, put some of CMI!’s key constituencies at even greater risk of violence and human rights violations than they normally face.

In many places – from India to El Salvador, Uganda to Palestine – the pandemic has been used to increase repression, surveillance and militarisation, to further erode human rights and persecute human rights defenders. Autocratic leaders around the world are using this moment to become even more deeply entrenched, and deepen divisions between people of different ideological positions so that there is less chance for dialogue and discussion in the moment and, dangerously, also into the future. Women, girls and trans people are particularly at risk, both because they are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and because they are barred from decision-making to address the problems that most affect them. On 6 April, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

¹ The Count Me In! Consortium (CMI!) is a strategic partner of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CMI! consists of member organisations Mama Cash, including the sex worker-led Red Umbrella Fund (RUF), the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), CREA, Just Associates (JASS) and the Urgent Action Fund Sister Funds [Urgent Action Fund (UAF), Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-Africa), Urgent Action Fund Latin America and Caribbean (UAF-LAC) and, since 2018, Urgent Action Fund Asia & Pacific (UAF-A&P)]. The Dutch gender platform WO=MEN is CMI!’s lobby partner.

called for a ‘ceasefire’ in domestic violence amidst what he identified as a ‘horrifying global surge in domestic violence’ directed at women and girls, during lock-downs imposed by governments as a response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Executive Director of UN Women also called attention to the situation, which she described as a ‘shadow pandemic’.

The unrelenting activism against anti-Blackness, which included mass global mobilisations triggered by persistent police violence in the United States, has affected many contexts in which CMI! works. With a focus on the lives of Black and Afro-Descendant people, the movement has raised awareness about systemic racism and how it works. The movement has created momentum for rethinking and redefining the role of police, including ensuring accountability for extra-judicial killings. It has also drawn attention to the ongoing need for safety and security for activists – especially women and girls - who are targeted by violence rooted in patriarchal and white supremacist structures.

Crises also present opportunities. CMI! contributed to accelerated online global feminist organising, such as the South Feminist Futures Festival, which created an online space for activism, dialogue, reflection and celebration of South-South/Third World feminism. We successfully adapted plans to physically convene and influence the dialogue around the 25th anniversary of Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, as reflected in JASS’s ‘*Women Radically Transforming a World in Crisis*’ series. Launched in April, the series consisted of virtual conversations on community radio, podcasts, webinars, and social media about the crisis and feminist strategies for transformative change. The series engaged hundreds of activists around the world in topics such as learning from the COVID-19 crisis (318 participants) and global South feminism as an antidote to rising authoritarianism (280 participants). JASS was subsequently invited to submit the latter topic as a session at the Global Philanthropy Project *Shimmering Solidarity: Global Rights Summit* (March-June 2021), where the CMI! Consortium also organised a session on funding feminist movements so they can win.

CMI! and partners worldwide seized the chance in 2020 to raise awareness about and advance feminist responses and approaches to the multiple problems the world faces including the need for robust public health systems and social services, address climate change, and curb criminalisation, corporate power and extractivism, among other things. For example, AWID organised feminists globally to articulate and focus attention on alternative, feminist propositions to the post-COVID-19 economic recovery, including via the #FeministBailout Action Week campaign in July, and publication and distribution of a manifesto, *From a Feminist Bailout to a Global Feminist Economic Recovery*, with principles and actions synthesising contributions from feminist movements around the world.

Finally, CMI!, in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has helped increase attention to digital safety for WROs, WHRDs and feminist organisations and their access and meaningful participation in different multilateral forums through our membership in Generation Equality Forums’ Action Coalition 6 (AC6), on feminist movement building and leadership, discussed in more detail below.

2. Addressing Gender-based Violence in the context of COVID-19 through direct and indirect lobby and advocacy

Many governments responded to the pandemic with lock-downs and shelter-in-place restrictions, measures that put many women, girls and trans people at increased risk of violence. CMI! responded to this situation using diverse, reinforcing strategies at multiple levels.

2.1 Support for women and girls facing or at-risk of gender-based violence in Palestine

The first story of change describes the strengthened capacity – improved skills and infrastructure to pursue their mission and grow in influence, scale and power (outcome 1) – of Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD). With a rapid response grant from Urgent Action Fund, PWWSD was able to adapt their strategies for supporting women and girls facing or at-risk of

gender-based violence or domestic violence (DV) in response to COVID-19. Their actions were critical for contributing to the safety and security of individual women and girls (outcome 9).

PWWSD works with women in Gaza to address GBV/DV in their communities through advocacy, political participation, counselling and other mental health support. Much of this work is in-person, and was thus profoundly circumscribed by the government-mandated social distancing and the lock-down. At the same time, the need became even greater. PWWSD found that the psychological impact and pressures caused by the uncertainty of the pandemic, and social distancing and shelter-in-place restrictions were contributing to higher rates of GBV.

With the rapid response grant, PWWSD quickly set up a new system for providing phone and online counselling sessions and support to women and girls in need. In addition to addressing GBV/DV, PWWSD counselled, advised and provided clients accurate information around the prevention and spread of COVID-19. Counselling sessions also addressed issues of stress, anger and time management, as well as problem-solving.

In total, PWWSD reached 435 women through outreach calls from their counselling team and sent more than 3,000 text messages to provide information about COVID-19 from the World Health Organization to women and their families. The team conducted 390 phone counselling sessions for 265 GBV/DV cases, that served 257 women and 8 men, on issues related to physical, verbal, psychological, economic, social and cyber violence. Advice and tools were provided via both a hotline and WhatsApp by PWWSD's civic educators and psycho-social specialists. Other calls fielded were to offer mental health support to treat depression, anxiety, fear and worry due to the impacts of the pandemic. In addition, emergency supplies, called 'dignity kits', were provided to 89 families, a majority of whom are living in marginalised areas, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is important to note that the protection sector's capacity had been severely impacted by COVID restrictions and PWWSD was one of the very few organisations that remained fully functional during the crises.

Alongside counselling, during the first phase of the pandemic (March to May), PWWSD conducted a much-needed in-depth analysis of the situation for women and girls experiencing GBV/DV in the context of the lock-down and shelter-in-place restrictions. PWWSD issued a report with a set of recommendations for strengthening implementation of policies and practices to help women and girls achieve equality and social justice for all without discrimination.

2.2 Strengthening voices and awareness of gender-based violence in the COVID-19 context at the UN level

The second story of change focuses on CMI!'s effectiveness in strengthening internal capacities, mobilisation capacities and development of a common political agenda of sex worker rights organisations (outcomes 1, 2 and 4) through supporting their engagement in dialogue at the UN level about GBV in the context of COVID-19.

Given the severe repression that CMI! constituencies often face in their countries, the UN offers an important mechanism for influencing and holding governments accountable. CMI! has worked with global partners and experts from marginalised communities to build their capacities to engage with UN systems and consider UN engagement as a tool for national-level advocacy and movement building.

In 2020, in response to evidence (like that seen by PWWSD) of increased violence against women related to the pandemic and responses to it, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women Dubravka Šimonović launched a call for submissions on the topic, with a focus on domestic violence. In response to the Special Rapporteur's call (and despite the debilitating impact of the pandemic on their communities), CREA and 17 partners – groups of women with disabilities (WWD), lesbian and bisexual women, transgender, queer and intersex persons (LBTQI), gender non-confirming persons (GNC) and sex workers – across South Asia and East Africa used the opportunity to influence UN-level recognition and action by gathering their experiences, learnings and

recommendations on gender-based violence and collectively submit a [report](#). CREA and partners worked together to interview and gather on-the-ground data and stories to document the pandemic's impact.

The report concurred with the Special Rapporteur's understanding of gender-based violence as a pervasive and systemic human rights violation. It went on to focus attention on intersecting forms of gender-based violence faced during the COVID-19 pandemic by key CMI! constituents (WWDs, LBTQI and gender non-confirming persons and sex workers) who rarely feature in both conversations and data on violence against women, and are invisible in most pandemic policies at country and state levels. The report included specific case studies from several countries. For example, Bar Hostesses Empowerment and Support Program (BHESP) working in Nairobi, Kenya did a comparison between the period of March to May 2019 and 2020. In 2020 they found nearly three times more incidents of violence against sex workers. Twenty percent (20%) of these cases involved violence from intimate partners.

Jointly formulating the content of the report was an important part of the capacity strengthening process. The report outlined the need for and urgency of using the term 'gender-based violence' instead of 'violence against women' to ensure consideration and understanding of the violence perpetrated against those who challenge the gender binary. It also suggested consideration of 'family' violence and 'intimate partner' violence, rather than 'domestic' violence, which is often interpreted more narrowly.

The report also recommended approaching GBV through an intersectional lens that takes account of the complex and dynamic interplay of gender, class, caste, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, ability and other factors. This dynamic plays an important role in how LBTQI and GNC persons, sex workers and WWD experience violence as well as circumscribing their access to justice. They reported a rise in hate crimes and physical and sexual violence from law enforcement agencies and landlords. Almost all partners reported exclusion from government relief packages and measures. At the same time, the report highlighted effective strategies employed by communities to cope with increased violence and the pandemic situation, including establishing support hotlines, shelters and social protection services, gathering data and documentation of people's stories, providing legal support and banking systems.

The UN Special Rapporteur received a total of 274 submissions globally to her call, based on which her report was submitted to the UN General Assembly. While the report was a laudable effort to capture various aspects of violence against women, its weaknesses – which include conflation of GBV and violence against women, scant attention to trans people and sex workers' rights – underscore the importance of CMI!'s continued engagement with UN bodies. Most important, the process of collectively sharing crucial insights and engaging in high-level advocacy strengthened partners' lobbying and advocacy experience and contributed to global feminist movement building.

2.3 COVID emergency fund for sex workers and #CountingSexWorkersIn Campaign

As noted, the pandemic has exacerbated discrimination and challenges faced by sex workers around the world. As a result of COVID-19 and lock-downs, many sex workers have been pushed further into poverty and precarious existence. Their risk of criminalisation and police violence, which was already high, has only increased. Many sex workers have lost most, if not all, of their livelihoods, particularly their ability to generate income. They lack access to basic necessities, including food and shelter, yet are excluded from government relief programmes and face persistent barriers to health care services.

In response to this situation, CMI! members came together to establish a COVID-19 sex workers' emergency fund. CMI! offered small grants (EUR 1,500 to 6,000) to existing CMI! partner sex worker organisations around the world for actions to enhance resilience in the face of the COVID emergency. In response to the initiative, 48 groups developed a work plan and received a grant to carry out COVID-response activities that enhanced organisational sustainability (outcome 1) and enabled them to implement efforts to support sex workers' safety and security (outcome 9). For example, a sex worker-led group in El Salvador used the grant to establish contacts with the attorney general's

office for human rights, the women's institute, and to learn about and respond to the situation of sex workers in forced isolation or who have been arbitrarily criminalised by security agents and medical personnel during the pandemic. As a result of these efforts, the group strengthened its capacity to more effectively engage in lobby and advocacy efforts and defend sex worker's human rights, including filing for release from forced isolation and filing lawsuits against public authorities during the pandemic.

Alongside of these efforts, from October 26 to November 10, 2020 CMI! (led by CREA and RUF) conducted the groundbreaking *Counting Sex Workers In!* [campaign](#) to put a spotlight on sex worker-led advocacy and highlight the voices and perspectives of sex workers of all gender in order to build the awareness of those active in advancing women's rights and gender justice, including policy makers. The campaign contributed to a number of outcomes, especially mobilised constituencies (outcome 2) and increased alliances (outcome 4). The campaign was launched with a [webinar](#) event co-organised with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects. The event touched on achievements, good practices and promising innovations to enhance participation, representation and decision-making power of sex workers, as well as key challenges, especially in the context of COVID-19. The discussion highlighted the importance of including sex workers and sex worker advocates as part of the UN Women-led campaign, 'Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future', which demands equal pay, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to women's needs, and women's equal participation in political life.

The campaign called attention to the frequent experiences of discrimination, harassment and violence experienced by sex workers, and highlighted sex work in the context of bodily integrity and workers' rights, challenging the more common lens of moral judgment. The campaign included a series of accessible and up-to-date [fact sheets](#) in multiple languages addressing a variety of pertinent issues, including: a comparison of legal frameworks around sex work; the funding landscape for sex workers' rights organisations; the positioning of sex workers' rights as women's rights; violence in the lives of sex workers; sex work and migration; sex work vs. sex trafficking; sex work in the Dutch and international context; and sex work and COVID-19.² The campaign also included an animation video in both Hindi (61,000 views) and English (6700 views). The campaign came to a close with a Teach-In for AWID members that drew 279 participants from 75 countries, the majority from CSOs and community-based / grassroots organisations. The campaign succeeded in drawing significant attention and engagement on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, the website and via email.³

2.4 Influencing policy and increasing awareness in the Netherlands of GBV in the COVID-19 context

Following the onset of the pandemic, CMI! took action to increase awareness in the Dutch parliament on the consequences for gender equality and women's rights. CMI!, led by WO=MEN, initiated a lobby and advocacy effort to build bipartisan political and financial support (outcome 6 and 7) for gender equality and women's rights organisations and activists, including WHRDs. CMI!'s activities included engagement with Minister Kaag and with Members of Parliament, who raised questions in parliament about the increase of gender-based violence and the risks for women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and activists due to lock-downs. In opinion articles, media outreach and interviews, WO=MEN raised attention in major Dutch media about the effects of the pandemic and

² <https://www.mamacash.org/en/counting-sex-workers-in-campaign>

³ Selected highlights are [Twitter](#): Total impressions: 175,386 (number of times people saw the tweet on twitter); Total engagement: 3,684 (number of times people interacted with the tweet); Total media views of GIFs and Videos: 2,874; [Facebook](#): Total reach: 50,633 (number of unique users who saw the post); Total engagement: 2,781 (likes, reactions, comments, shares); Total views on campaign-related videos and GIFs: 1,565; [Instagram](#): The campaign featured a total of 29 posts (including graphics, GIFs and IGTV videos) along with conducting two polls, one on myth-busting (reaching 3,355 users) and the other on 'what is sex work' (reaching 2,269 users); Total impressions: 19,048 (number of times the post was seen on IG); Total reach: 16,270 (number of unique users who saw the post); Total views on campaign related IGTV and GIFs: 2,137

lock-downs on women's rights.⁴ In September, WO=MEN published a report on the consequences of COVID-19 for gender equality and women's rights. The [report](#) included several recommendations for the Dutch government, including a call to dedicate more funding to feminist grantmaking and core funding of WROs to enable them to respond in crises like COVID-19. As a result of these efforts, the global backlash against gender equality and women's rights, and attention to gender-based violence has become a broader political issue on the national level, and not just a development cooperation issue. MPs from a variety of committees, including Education, Culture and Science, as well as Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Development Cooperation demanded more political attention and support from the government for gender equality and women's rights, WROs, WHRDs and activists worldwide. Finally, while there will be cuts in the International Trade and Development Aid budget due to lower economic expectations, the new subsidy framework for civil society – in which gender equality and women's rights are cross-cutting themes – has been excluded from these cuts, with specific reference made to the Power of Women, Women, Peace & Security, and Leading from the South funds.

3. Economic Justice: Strengthening feminist knowledge and organising capacity in the struggle against extractivism and corporate power

CMI! insists that transformation of the current economic system is a precondition for gender equality, as well as environmental justice. We continue to support WHRDs who are criminalised for their efforts to resist land grabs and displacement of communities, part and parcel of the current corporate-dominated extractivist economic model. CMI! challenges the systemic injustices that disproportionately impact women and girls (from land grabs to labour rights violations and GBV in the world of work), while advancing feminist, green and people-centred economic alternatives and solutions.

Following from CMI!'s support to women, girls and trans people who are organising to protect, access and exercise control over land, territories and natural resources, it became clear that feminist knowledge-building on the actors, trends, and dynamics of financing extractivism was sorely needed. WHRDs often face huge difficulties and great danger in resisting extractive projects because of enormous power differentials between those driving the projects and the communities that seek to stop them. When communities want to contest or oppose a project, they often have to go to great lengths to determine who is behind the project due to the complexity and opaqueness of transnational financial arrangements. Moreover, the levers of accountability are often not existent, or virtually impossible for communities to use. Even public financing mechanisms, which in theory are more accountable, may hide behind indirect financing or insulate themselves from real challenges to their practices.

To address this need, in 2020 CMI! produced a briefing paper summarising the extensive research we undertook on the funding of extractive projects and a set of popular education tools aimed at supporting communities seeking more information to support their strategies related to unwanted ongoing or proposed such projects. The tools fill a critical gap for feminist organisations by enabling communities to more easily identify funders behind extractive projects and strategies and pressure points on which to focus advocacy (outcome 3).

The briefing paper is the result of research in conjunction with social movements and grassroots organisations and includes three cases of extractive land grabs in Honduras, Indonesia and Zimbabwe as well as information on tracking financing flows. The briefing paper will serve as the basis for a set of tailored advocacy materials and outreach to specific policymaker and key stakeholders, including the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch development bank FMO, highlighting the need for greater congruence between investment portfolios and political

⁴ <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/03/24/vrouwenrechten-en-emancipatie-juist-nu-a3994805>; <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/coronacrisis-zet-vrouwenrechten-wereldwijd-onder-druk-b0672d28/>; <https://www.trouw.nl/opinie/polen-en-turkije-willen-een-verdrag-tegen-vrouwengeweld-verlaten-dat-heeft-ook-gevolgen-voor-nederland-b73e466a/>; <https://www.wo-men.nl/in-de-media-bestanden/1594822369.pdf>

commitments on gender equality and human rights, as illustrated in the case of Agua Zarca which led to the murder of Berta Cáceres.

4. Sustainable Resourcing of women's rights organisations: Equality Fund consultation and Action Coalition

As the threats to women's rights and well-being worldwide increase in the context of the pandemic, the urgency to adequately resource the full diversity of feminist movements has never been greater. Fortunately, in the past five years CMI! has made incredible gains in both making and advancing the case for sustainable resourcing of feminist organising (outcomes 6, 7 and 9). The final year of the first CMI! programme comes to a close with yet another milestone reached: in 2020 AWID concluded one of the most thorough and extensive feminist movement consultations ever undertaken to provide actionable recommendations at 'the design and build phase' of a ground-breaking government funding programme for women's rights and feminist movements. Collaborative advocacy by CMI! and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Global Affairs Canada between 2016-2017 contributed to the momentum, which ultimately materialised in a historic \$300 million (CAD) contribution from the Canadian government in June 2019 to launch the Equality Fund, dedicated to leveraging more resources to advance women's rights and gender equality around the world.

CMI! has long recommended that funders ensure leadership and participation of the constituencies they aim to support. In this sense, the request from the Equality Fund for AWID to organise such a consultation and gather recommendations from WROs, particularly at such an early stage in the development of the funding mechanism, is in and of itself a reflection of the significant impact of CMI! advocacy over the past several years. This includes the crucial Money and Movements convening and work of CMI!, as well as CMI!'s work to influence the Spotlight Initiative, supported by the Dutch Ministry's of Foreign Affairs 1% funding, which included consultation with more than 400 activists around the world to develop a series of recommendations on the programme implementation, and successful follow-up advocacy that led to implementation of several of these recommendations.

AWID engaged with more than 1,000 activists and organisers from at least 66 countries in both in-person and online meetings to gather input for the Equality Fund. Beyond the historic opportunity to influence the new funding model, facilitation of the consultation process was a strategic chance to engage feminist movements in shaping a feminist fund so it can live up to its potential to be a transformative, responsive, and accountable resource for feminist social change.

The results of the consultation featured in the report: [*'High Hopes and High Expectations. Feminist Movements Recommendations to the Equality Fund'*](#), published in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. While the recommendations resulting from the consultations are specific to the Equality Fund, the lessons are relevant more broadly. Together, they form a set of standards for a feminist fund, in a cross-regional cross-movement perspective. These standards relate to issues such as grantmaking for feminist movements; forms of governance that embed true accountability; and critical debates about the role of gender lens and impact investing in advancing, or deterring, social change. The report was shared with both the Equality Fund and the wider CMI! global feminist community. In the report-back to Equality Fund leadership and staff, AWID provided video testimonies from eight activists who engaged in the consultations process, in order to bring in their voices directly. Overwhelming positive feedback was received from both Equality Fund staff and governance, and the activists in the consultations. In the words of Caroline Kouassiaman, Executive Director of ISDAO, an activist-led fund dedicated to strengthening and supporting a West African movement for gender diversity and sexual rights by adopting a flexible approach to grantmaking and building a culture of philanthropy committed to equality and social justice: 'This has been one of the most comprehensive and consultative processes (...) [which] for me optimises what I see as feminist organising and feminist leadership, recognising that expertise and knowledge exist in so many of us and exists in many forms and bringing folks into the conversation and not only bringing them into the room but giving them a microphone, creating spaces for different generations, different experiences

within activism to be able to engage and contribute experiences and knowledge, I think was incredibly powerful.’

AWID has since received requests from diverse activists and funders interested in replicating this experience as a best practice and learning more about participatory processes, such as movement consultations.

Complementing the efforts directed toward the Equality Fund, AWID and Mama Cash also launched a new report focused on bilateral and multilateral funders, [‘Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements’](#). Cataloguing nine leading bilateral and multilateral funding programmes that succeed in directly funding feminist movements, particularly in the Global South, the report highlighted a series of enabling practices – building blocks – that can be replicated, scaled up, or adapted by others interested in resourcing feminist movements better.

Action Coalition 6 (AC6)

The decision by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take up leadership of Generation Equality Forums’ AC6, on feminist movement building and leadership, and to send in a proposal jointly with CMI!, marks another significant achievement this year. (The Ministry has explicitly stated that the decision for this initiative came as a direct follow-up to CMI!’s Money & Movements convening in Kenya in 2018.)

The lessons learned from the Equality Fund consultation and the building blocks identified in the ‘Moving More Money’ report have fed into CMI!’s broader long-term advocacy to move more and better resources to feminist movements in the AC6 on Feminist Organising, where AWID serves on behalf of CMI!. CREA additionally serves as a civil society lead in AC6. In the Netherlands, WO=MEN has and will continue to ensure knowledge exchange, strategising and cooperation among member organisations involved in the AC6 and ongoing dialogue with the Ministry.

5. Building collective strength to defend and advance women’s rights

This section features four stories of change that illustrate the importance and effectiveness of CMI’s strategic resourcing and capacity strengthening strategies for feminist organising.

5.1 Successful mobilisation against gender-based violence in Senegal

CMI! contributed to a significant improvement in feminist organising and public awareness and law around GBV in Senegal this year (outcome 1-4 and 6). A UAF-Africa rapid response grant to JGEN Women Global Entrepreneurship, in Senegal, supported the group, comprised of young women, in their advocacy campaign #DAFADIOT, which means ‘It is time’. The campaign was launched in 2019 in response to a rise in rape and murder cases of women and girls in several cities, and an increase in incest. In Senegal, rape was considered a minor offence under the penal code, with a maximum prison sentence of ten years, and convictions of rape were rare. Some male leaders had publicly trivialised the increased violence, which sparked outrage from women’s movements and the public at large. JGEN Women Global Entrepreneurship aimed to seize the opportunity to mobilise feminists, women’s rights and youth organisations to advocate and influence the government of Senegal to criminalise rape.

The campaign included training of 30 CSOs comprised of young defenders of women’s rights on GBV, and then a public [launch](#) together with the Ministry of Women, Family and Child Protection and

the trained CSO representatives. JGEN also conducted community mobilisations to inform women and municipal leaders about the legislative proposal. JGEN also strengthened its alliances with the Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers (AJS), FAADEV African Women Active for Development, WALLU and Gendji Hip Hop (young feminist rappers and defenders of women's rights), and GRAG, a research group specialising in the sexual and reproductive health of young people and women in Africa. This partnership has made it possible to keep statistics on violence against women and girls in Senegal. The campaign received significant attention in the press and social media⁵ and resulted in an unanimous vote in Parliament to criminalise rape. On January 10th, 2020, President Macky Sall signed the decree into law (outcome 6). The new law sets a minimum of 10 years and a maximum life sentence.

5.2 Supporting Nicaraguan activists' sustainability in contexts of simultaneous crises

In 2020 CMI! focused particular attention on WHRDs in Nicaragua, who are facing simultaneous crises. Feminist and social movements in Nicaragua have faced severe human rights violations since the start of the political crisis triggered by the authoritarian political regime of Daniel Ortega in 2018, including repression of social protests, criminalisation, attacks to freedom of expression, digital surveillance, physical and sexual violence and murders against activists. Since the beginning of the political crisis, UAF-LAC has increased its support to Nicaraguan WHRDs, in order to respond effectively to their demands. (In 2018, grants awarded in Nicaragua increased by 1300% (from 4 to 52 grants) in comparison to those awarded in 2017.) UAF-LAC established alliances with local feminist organisations that have allowed them to maintain solid knowledge and understanding of the situation.

In recent months, the Nicaraguan government has implemented new strategies to control the actions of organisations, including new repressive laws – which purport to regulate ‘foreign agents’ and ‘cybercrime’ – that restrict receipt of funding and limit freedom of expression. The COVID-19 pandemic, socio-economic and health crisis have exacerbated existing threats to WHRDS and women. In 2020 UAF-LAC delivered a total of 34 emergency grants which enabled activists to continue their activism and keep themselves and their families safe. With UAF-LAC support, Nicaraguan WHRDs have been able to strengthen a collective care approach on their own strategies, plans and protocols (outcome 1), receiving proper accompaniment to do so. Their strategies included temporary relocation and the strengthening of digital security practices, and enhanced physical protection measures at their homes and offices. Many WHRDs also incorporated strategies for psychosocial accompaniment after experiencing physical violence, persecution and harassment by police and paramilitary forces. UAF-LAC also increased participation in solidarity and advocacy spaces with regional and global allies (outcome 4), which has been key to achieve a larger visibility of the human rights violations in the country.

5.3 Amplifying women's voices in Honduras and Central America

The pandemic and related restrictions have intensified the need for, as well as the challenges in, creating platforms in which women's voices and solutions, as critical first responders to crisis, can be amplified. With CMI! support in 2020, JASS Mesoamerica was able to strengthen and expand its women-led community-based community radio programme, ‘Tercas con las Esperanza/Stubborn with Hope’. The programme is a means to connect and inform thousands of people dealing with devastation, isolation and lack of essential needs for their survival. The programme has contributed

⁵ <https://www.dakar7.com/video-ceremonie-de-lancement-de-la-campagne-de-plaidoyer-dafadiot/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px6Uy0l66OQ>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hebn2jpSSlw>; <https://emediasn/ENCORE-DES-CAS-DE-VIOL-D-ENFANTS.html>; https://www.dakaractu.com/Criminalisation-du-Viol-au-Senegal-J-Gen-mene-le-combat-a-travers-une-campagne-de-plaidoirie-Dafadiot_a173216.html; <https://twitter.com/hashtag/dafadiot>; <https://www.infosdujour.sn/societej-gen-campagne-de-sensibilisation-contre-la-violence-faite-au-femme-etau-enfant/>; <https://instagram-wap.com/p/Bzlv-IUAMX1>; https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fvruFGhc32wcYkgvpDVxmE5cZCTA-vnY/view?usp=drive_web

to increased knowledge, skills and confidence to analyse, strategise and mobilise (outcomes 1-4). It has amplified women's political voice (outcome 9) more generally.

The programme, which was created in 2012, centres indigenous and rural women's voices in both community education and national advocacy efforts. It broadcasts nationally in Honduras and re-broadcasts regionally, in Mexico City. In a creative response to the limitations of internet connectivity, JASS turned the radio segments into short podcasts and shares them through WhatsApp – in rural areas of Honduras and beyond. By integrating music and art, the programme reaches a wide audience and allows for a better understanding and public conversation around women's needs, demands and solutions. It creates space for women to come together to build connections, and share information and strategies for organising and survival together. For example, a segment in April focused on women's perspectives on the pandemic, putting a spotlight on rarely covered or overlooked issues, such as care work, and offering a narrative that showed how women are the drivers of the economy through care work in the home. As one indigenous woman shared, 'listening to myself in a national broadcasting radio station has been empowering and makes me feel like my life matters'.

Despite the challenges of broadcasting from home due to COVID-19 (e.g. limited internet capacity and lower quality of the broadcast), the radio programme has been instrumental in sharing critical information from authorities and organisations about staying safe through the pandemic and, more recently, concerning Tropical Storm Eta. In this way, JASS was able to highlight the disaster's impact from a feminist perspective while mobilising support for immediate needs (e.g. providing direct solidarity and support, and connecting to urgent action funding mechanisms). The radio programme's high reach has proven to be a powerful tool in building women's voices for stronger leadership, participation, and speaking up about the issues that affect them. Building on the successes in Honduras and Mexico, JASS has adapted the radio programme model in Southern Africa.

5.4 A stronger, more visible movement of single women in Rajasthan, India

CMI's multi-year support of the Association of Strong Women Alone (ASWA) in Rajasthan, India yielded resounding results in 2020. Mama Cash supported ASWA to challenge the social exclusion of single women through organising, raising awareness, building single women's confidence (outcome 1), building alliances with other women's rights organisations (outcome 4), collectively fighting for justice and rights (outcome 5) and increasing political participation of marginalised, low-income women (outcome 7).

Single women – including widows, unmarried, separated and/or divorced women – account for more than 50 million people in India. Prevailing social norms are such that single women are commonly not recognised as heads of households and are seen exclusively as dependents. Single women are often denied control over economic resources, and commonly face discrimination and violence. Patriarchal norms and oppressive caste and community customs mean that many single women face restrictions on what they can wear, what events they can attend, their ability to travel alone or live independently, access to education and social benefits, including pensions. According to Indian law, low-income, single women are entitled to a pension, and this is often their only source of income. However, information about claiming a pension is not easily available, and securing access to a pension requires going through a long, bureaucratic process. As elsewhere, the COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced and worsened the inequalities and injustices that single women in India face.

Throughout 2020, ASWA assisted at least 13,000 single women from marginalised communities to claim their rights to public benefits, including pensions, access to electricity, land rights, child care support, food and grain rations. ASWA stepped up its work with single women farmers, many of whom were prevented from harvesting their crops and accessing their pensions and other entitlements due to COVID-19. ASWA also supported single women in pursuing justice in at least 40 cases of violence against them. As elsewhere, as a consequence of the pandemic ASWA saw an increase in cases of violence against single women. In collaboration with the National Forum For Single Women's Rights alliance, of which it is a member, ASWA also organised to commemorate

International Widow's Day (observed by the UN) to raise awareness of violations of human rights that women suffer in many countries following the death of their spouses.

Mama Cash's core support grant has helped enable ASWA to grow its membership to an impressive 70,000 low-income and single women in the state of Rajasthan (outcome 2). As Dr. Ginny Shrivastava, one of the founders and now senior advisor of ASWA explains, ASWA is not implementing a 'project' but responding to the issues raised by the single women themselves in their lives in the hamlets, villages, towns and cities of Rajasthan. In 2020, a momentous result was achieved when 29 single women won election in the local level self-governance bodies in Rajasthan (outcome 7). The victory demonstrates single women's success in breaking down barriers and putting a stop to the stigma that limits them. It is also a notable step forward for the increased political participation of marginalised, low-income women, a recognition of their leadership and important role in their community and a boost in their self-confidence and the confidence of other women from their villages who supported and campaigned for them. The victory came after months of capacity strengthening and support from ASWA to its members, including literacy and leadership training programmes, mentoring, awareness-raising about the elections and related procedures, as well as advocacy campaigning at the local and national level. It is worth noting that many of the now-elected women were threatened and defamed because they were running for public office.

Their case illustrates the kind of pressure and real risk that single women often encounter when breaking down social barriers and fighting their exclusion. Even if they had not won, merely by standing for election they have helped change the image of single women in society from weak and vulnerable to strong, determined, brave and independent women. The ASWA story highlights the fact that it can take years to build support and strengthen single women's leadership and resilience, but it is a direct and effective path to equality. With more marginalised, single women elected to hold political office in India, there is a greater chance that their voices will be heard and their issues taken seriously.

6. Five years of Count Me In! (2016-2020)

The progress and concrete results achieved this year represent just some of the already ripe fruits of five years of CMI!. With the use of diverse, complementary strategies, CMI! members have contributed to incredible momentum at multiple levels for feminist activism, gender equality and justice. CMI! has successfully bridged regions, sectors, movements, and issues to create powerful new alliances; facilitated development of unified agendas for action; strengthened collective protection of WHRDs in many countries around the globe; strengthened organising, advocacy and lobbying capacities of WROs from local to global levels; increased the knowledge and engagement of diverse allies and champions; spread key messages via new and traditional media; fostered creative protest; influenced policymakers; and pushed for new and better funding for feminist movements.

Both the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and the End-of-Term Evaluation (ETE) have confirmed that CMI! succeeded in raising the profile of WROs and WRHDs and the feminist movements to which they belong, in policymaking circles and with key-decision makers. The ETE notes that CMI! has contributed significantly to enhancing security, well-being and feminist leadership of WROs and WHRDs and that CMI!'s strategies for constituency engagement 'translate well across geographical categories and focus areas.' The ETE also confirmed that CMI! contributed to changes in laws and policies in all regions and at all levels, from the local to the global, across all three thematic areas (Gender-Based Violence, Economic Justice and Sustainable Resources). CMI! strategies have contributed to positive changes as well as 'holding the line' by blocking threats to women's, girls' and trans people's safety, security and well-being. As described above, we have played a key role in shaping the set-up and structure of new funding initiatives like Leading from the South, Spotlight and the Equality Fund that support women's rights and we have successfully linked partners with an enlarged network from which to seek funding.

An important finding in both evaluations confirms a key assumption of CMI!: that close, long-term, and supportive partnerships has ensured that CMI! members are providing effective capacity

building support for partners' lobbying and advocacy initiatives. This relates to another important assumption in the CMI! theory of change: that deep social change processes are context-specific, complex and non-linear. Negative reaction and political 'backlash' are part of the process, and, indeed, very often a response to the success of organising, lobbying and advocacy by women's, girls' and trans people's rights movements. Every year WROs and WHRDs experience challenging contexts that are, in part, a response to their increasing strength and effectiveness. The evaluations of CMI! confirmed that CMI! members are able to respond collectively to the economic, geographic, political, social and other contextual dynamics of where they work through relationships that are characterised by trust and by their shared political vision. These two attributes have allowed members to respond quickly and efficiently to opportunities when they arise, as well as to crises and events that negatively affect partners and wider society. CMI!'s ability to move quickly and pivot, often in ways that are unplanned, has been recognised as a strength of the consortium – by members, partners, evaluators, allies and the Dutch government alike, particularly in the complex work of movement building.

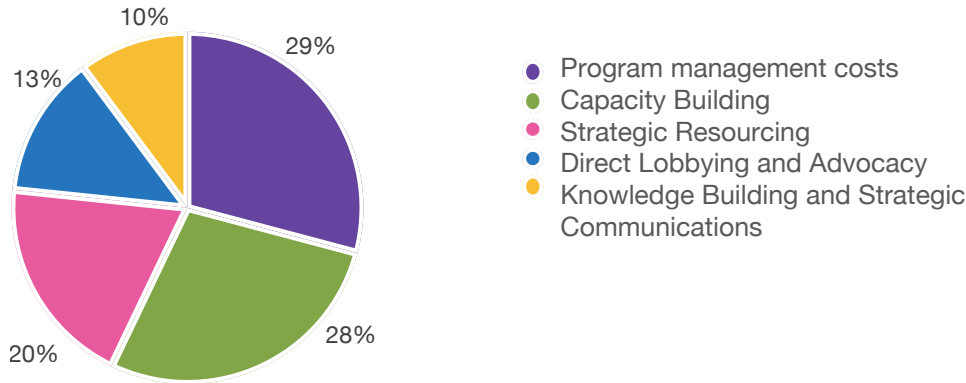
Lessons learned

As observed in the ETE, the need to support the building of feminist movements is more evident than ever, especially in the context of increased repression and emerging threats, like those happening as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the successes of the first five years, we will also take some important lessons forward into the next phase of CMI!. Among other things, we will further develop how we use our ToC as a strategic planning tool during, among other spaces, our bi-annual consortium meetings in order to continue to test our assumptions and bring in learnings. As suggested in the ETE, we will more closely monitor follow-up and implementation of legal and policy changes in order to better understand the impact of CMI!'s work and ensure that we can 'hold the line' against possible backlash. We will explore ways to strengthen capacity building efforts toward crisis preparedness, resilience and response, including digital approaches, as this is a pressing need for feminist movements. And we are committed to developing a stronger collective narrative about our work to help make the case for supporting feminist movements and building awareness and understanding about how social change happens, while continuing to centre WHRDs and WROs voices in that narrative.

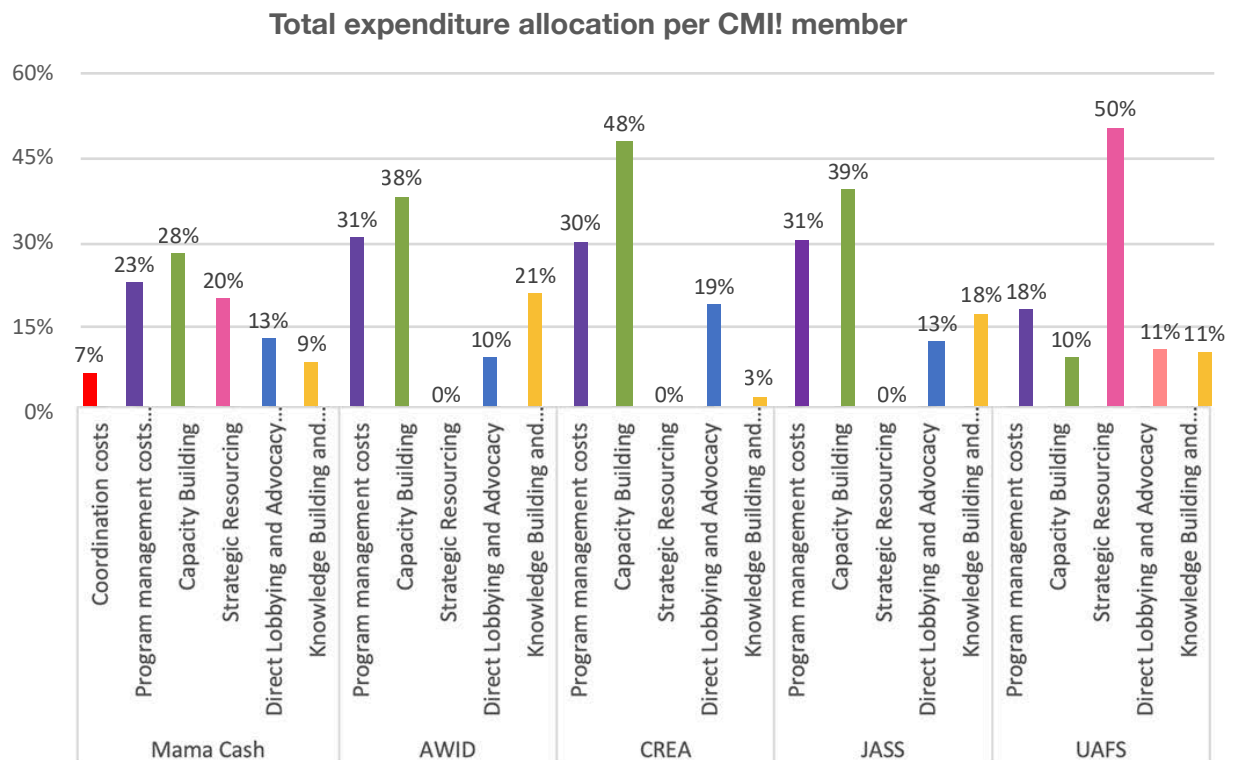
Annex

The graphs below present total CMI!’s expenditure in 2020 and a breakdown per CMI! member.

Total expenditure allocation



Programme expenditures by strategies



- I. **Strategic resourcing:** The grantmakers in CMI! (Mama Cash (incl. RUF) and the UAFs) made 119 core and rapid response grants to WROs and WHRDs, accounting for 20% of CMI!’s expenditures.
- II. **Capacity building:** 28% of CMI!’s expenditures were directed to capacity strengthening of women’s rights organisations and WHRDs. CMI!’s resources supported 72 different dialogues, convenings, training institutes and alliance building meetings.

These activities allowed CMI! partners to strengthen collaborative relationships and to build alliances and solidarity across borders and movements.

- III. **Knowledge building and strategic communications:** CMI! supported 37 research and media engagement initiatives to build and share knowledge to support the advocacy work of feminist movements. This work accounted for 10% of CMI!'s total expenditures.
- IV. **Direct lobby and advocacy:** CMI! engaged in 25 direct lobby and advocacy efforts to advance agendas to eliminate gender-based violence, secure economic justice and promote sustainable resourcing for women's rights, accounting for 13% of CMI!'s expenditures.

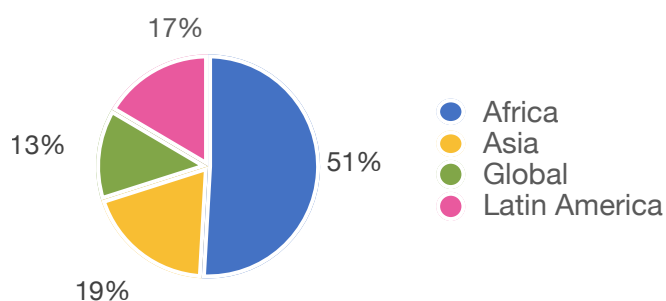
Activities* by geography and theme

1. Strategic resourcing

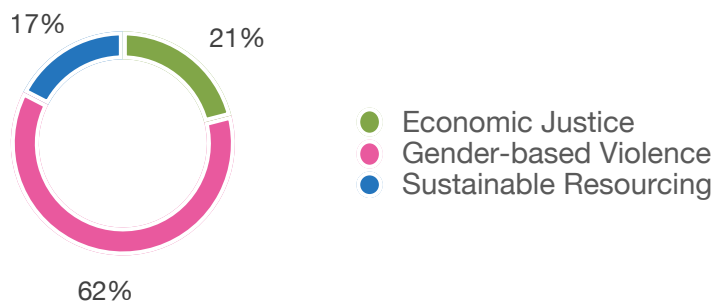
Core support and rapid response grants were distributed:

- 1) **geographically:** 51% of all grants were distributed in Africa, 19% in Asia, 17% in Latin America and 13% globally.
- 2) **thematically:** 62% of grants funded activities of feminist groups and WHRDs in eradicating and preventing gender-based violence, 21% in seeking economic justice, 17% of grants were dedicated to sustainable resourcing of feminist groups and WHRDs.

Strategic resourcing per geography



Strategic resourcing per theme



Mama Cash and the Red Umbrella Fund provided 31 core support grants, allowing CMI! partners to cover general operating costs, build their organisational capacities, and determine their advocacy priorities. The three Urgent Action Funds made 125 rapid response advocacy and security grants to strengthen and sustain women's and feminist organisations and WHRDs poised to make important gains or facing serious threats. This number is, in part, so high due to the extra rapid response grants made in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

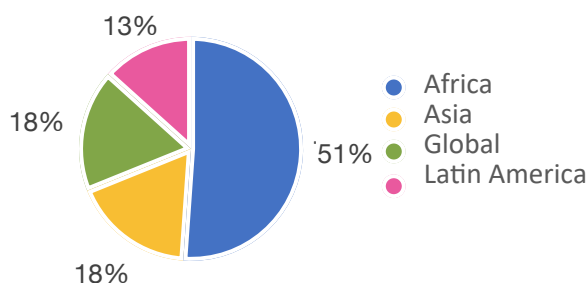
*Activities are not equivalent to expenditure per strategy

2. Capacity building

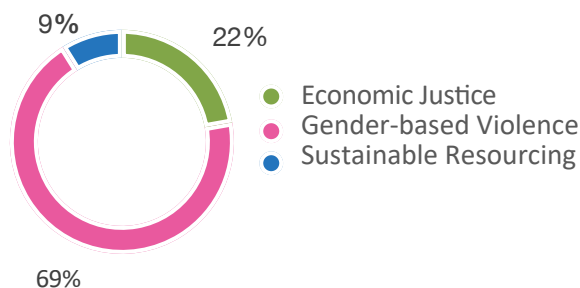
Capacity building activities took place:

- 1) **geographically:** 51% of activities in Africa, 18% globally, 18% in Asia, and 13% in Latin America;
- 2) **thematically:** 69% of activities were focused on gender-based violence, 22% on economic justice and 9% on sustainable resourcing.

Capacity building per geography



Capacity building per theme



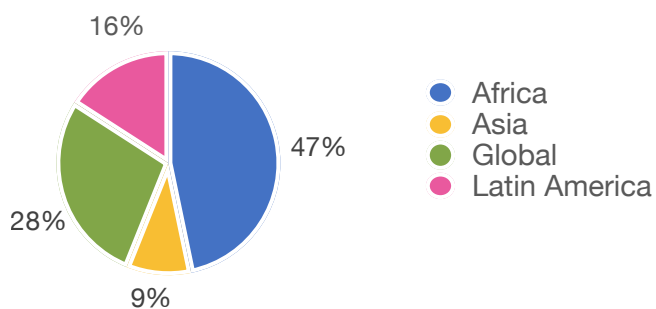
These capacity building activities created time and space for activists to share experiences, learnings and strategies and to build the analysis and trusting relationships that were crucial to strengthening sustainable social justice movements.

3. Knowledge building and strategic communications

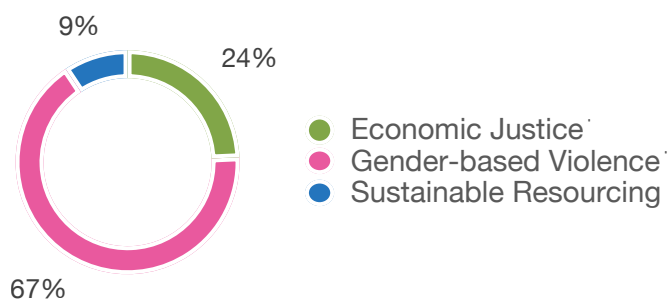
Initiatives were divided as follows:

- 1) **geographically:** 47% of all initiatives were organised or funded in Africa, 28% of all initiatives operated globally, 16% in Latin America and 9% in Asia;
- 2) **thematically:** 67% of initiatives were focused on eliminating gender-based violence, 24% on securing economic justice and 9% on promoting sustainable resourcing.

Knowledge building and strategic communications per geography



Knowledge building and strategic communications per theme

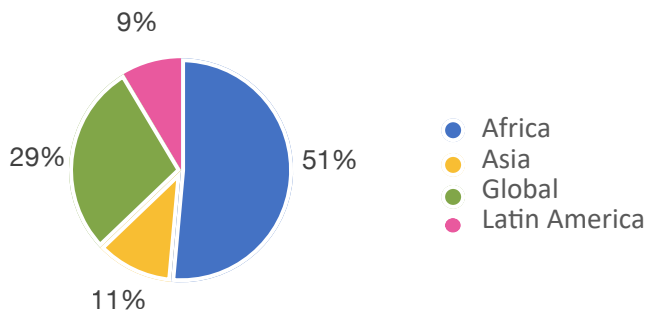


4. Direct lobby and advocacy

The following charts show CMI's work to advance lobby and advocacy agendas:

- 1) **geographically:** 29% of the work was carried out internationally; in Africa (51%), Asia (11%) and Latin America (9%) the work was carried out at national and regional levels;
- 2) **thematically:** 71% of our efforts were directed at eliminating gender-based violence, 19% at securing economic justice and 10% at promoting sustainable resourcing for women's rights.

Direct lobby and advocacy per geography



Direct lobby and advocacy per theme

