



# Feminist Futures. Forged in Fire.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-29



**URGENT ACTION  
FUND**  
FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS  
ASIA & PACIFIC

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Staying true to our core value, “defenders first, always,” the visual theme of UAF A&P’s Strategic Plan 2024-2029 is the portrayal of an alternate vision of the world that women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders are trying to create. It is inspired by mythical shapeshifters and animals whose bodies and collective movements adapt and defend in creative and resourceful ways in their resilience against (climate) change.

The “world,” in this strategic vision, visualises our drive to be fluid in our response to the rapidly-changing contexts we operate in, and is built with shape-shifters from our regions like the Bay-backed Shrikes, Cardinal Myzomela, Peacocks. These mythical creatures and birds represent the innate ability of feminist activists and defenders to flow like water through crises, bending and expanding, shrinking and pausing according to the needs of their circumstances. The visuals illustrated to drive home our vision for this strategic plan is our homage to the resistance and resilience of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders of Asia and the Pacific.

## Note from the Board

If we have learned anything from the past few years, it’s that things can change quickly and intensely. The impact of the pandemic, political upheaval, economic catastrophe, and climate disaster across the regions of Asia and the Pacific are both immediate and slow-burning. We continue to be inspired by women, trans, and non-binary defenders who show us how to withstand fires, and ride waves, and use them for growth.

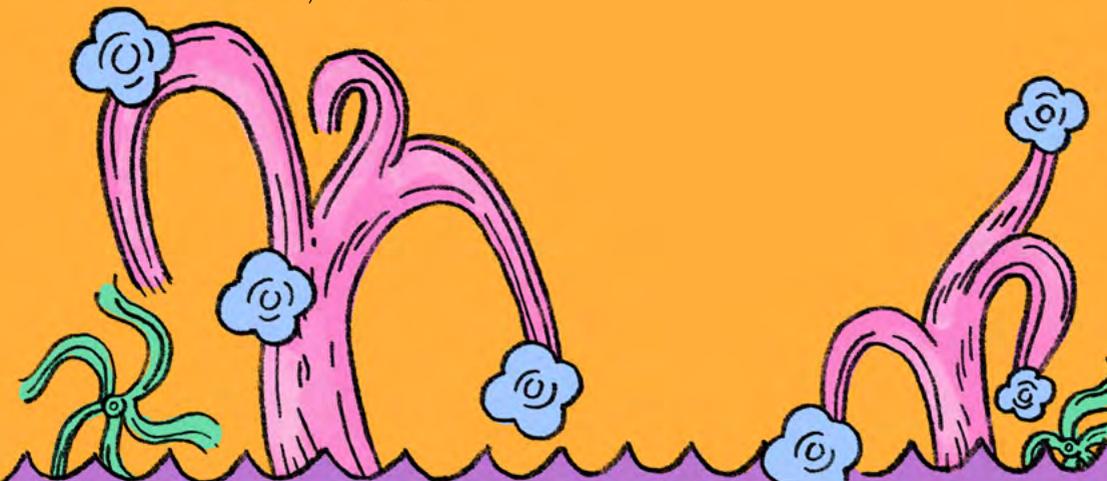
Against this backdrop, we are grateful for our community’s creation of this Strategic Plan, reminding us of our purpose and fundamental values, and setting a clear course towards a future we want. Through this strategy, we will:

- **Provide** urgent and holistic resources for women, trans, and non-binary defenders resisting the poly crises of our times;
- **Identify** and cultivate sources of funding in our own regions—inviting, embracing, and sparking the generosity that lives in our cultures;
- **Learn** and lead in feminist wealth building so that our future strategies and communities can grow and flourish;
- **Remain** authentic and committed to the embodiment of the liberation we strive for—dancing, laughing, and resting as a community in solidarity.

We look forward to moving steadily ahead, with a sense of adventure and love towards our future.

**Devi Leiper O’Malley and Ivy Josiah**

*Co-Chairs, UAF A&P Board*



# Note of Gratitude

UAF A&P has been in existence since 2018 and in that time until now, we have grown stronger and bigger, and deepened our roots in the regions that we live, exist and work. Through our growth, we stumbled, rose up, surveyed our landscape with curiosity and kindness. Our insightful voyage gave us many milestones to learn from and adapt as we moved forward.

Our journey to our current strategy came to life through advice and insights of Pacific and Asian women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders who crossed our paths virtually or in person, our team, advisors, past and present board members. Their wisdom and participation has and continues to improve our line of sight and help us to be better prepared for what may emerge over the next five years. Our aim through this strategic plan is for feminist and social justice movements led by women, trans, and non-binary people move closer to their vision of a thriving existence that is interconnected and interdependent with the earth and other living beings.

*Vinaka vakalevu, shukriya, ma'lo, terima kasih, dhonnobad, salamat,* deep gratitude to our team, Board, and all of you who continue to travel with us and guide UAF A&P.

**Virisila Buadromo and Vinita Sahasranaman**  
Co-Leads, UAF A&P

# Defenders First, Always.

**WE ARE A FEMINIST FUND THAT BOLDLY  
RESOURCES AND POWERS WOMEN, TRANS, AND  
NON-BINARY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THEIR  
CRITICAL DEFENCE OF PEOPLE AND PLANET.**



# Our Guiding Values

OUR VALUES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE WORK WE DO AND ARE THE FIRST STEP IN UNDERSTANDING OUR STRATEGY.

WE ARE OFTEN DEFENDERS' FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE AS THEY RISE UP TO MEET THE FUNDAMENTAL DEMOCRATIC, GENDER, AND CLIMATE CRISES OF OUR TIMES.

When state and non-state actors respond to women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders' resistance with harm, UAF A&P meets them with **audacious care and trust**. Defenders navigate risks, threats, and challenges they face in their activism on a daily basis. We accompany them in their journeys of resistance and resilience with our security and well-being rapid response grantmaking, and our transformative individual and collective resourcing of safety and care. We also embrace **creativity as crucial to the work of political resistance**, working with 'artists' to shift harmful narratives.

We resource women, trans, and non-binary defenders as **an antidote to the harm caused by the conjunct of patriarchy, white supremacy, and the ongoing practices of colonisation with the destructiveness of late-stage capitalism**. The solutions advanced by the defenders and movements we resource are absolutely essential to the **political, economic, cultural and legal transformations** that are required to reorient the ways humans engage with each other and with the planet.

DEFENDERS FIRST ALWAYS

REFORGE RISK AND RELATIONSHIP WITH AUDACIOUS CARE

INNOVATE AND LEARN TO EVOLVE

REFORM POWER





## DEFENDERS FIRST, ALWAYS

The lives and experiences of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists, across the diverse contexts that make up Asia and the Pacific, are the starting and end point of all we do. In this era of perma—and polycrises, **we meet defenders at the intersections of the democracy, gender, and climate related emergencies.** Very often as their first line of defence.



## INNOVATE AND LEARN TO EVOLVE

Our evolution is annealed in the politics and nuance of critical, interconnected reflection. Defenders first means **our learning and unlearning is shaped by our accountability with and to the movements we work with.** We are reformed by and with the political stances and contexts of the defenders, and by what it means to meet them with audacious care.



## REFORGE RISK AND RELATIONSHIP WITH AUDACIOUS CARE

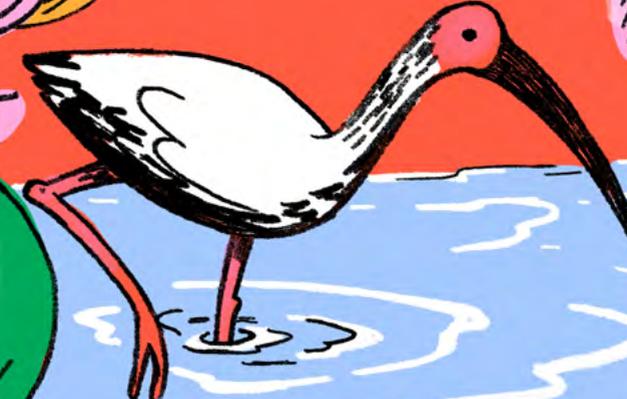
Now is the time for audacious care: the innovation required to meet the challenges of perma—and polycrises mean we cannot shy away from risk—we must hold it with care and centre the authority of the defenders we work with. They demand from us that we reforge risk and relationship **with a contextual and political feminist practice of collective care.**

And our times demand that our framing of risk and relationship embrace people and planet in equal and interdependent measure. In doing so we repurpose the tools of **flexibility, solidarity, co-responsibility, trust, and love: to forge new forms of risk and relationship.**



## REFORM POWER

The embers of defenders' resistance and resilience spark new fires and forms of power, as **we leverage our multiple positions to interrogate and innovate the power politics** of redistributing privilege and resources.



# Integrating where we've come from to guide us to what comes next

IN ARTICULATING THE STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, UAF A&P HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY THE INSIGHTS DERIVED FROM OUR EMERGENT LEARNING FRAMEWORK, ESTABLISHED IN 2017, WE ARE THE FOURTH URGENT ACTION FUND IN THE SISTER FUNDS NETWORK. WE WERE FORGED BY AND FOR THE MOVEMENTS OF WOMEN, TRANS, AND NON-BINARY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.

Rapid response grantmaking is in our shared Sister Funds DNA.

The crises in Myanmar and then in Afghanistan as well as the COVID pandemic were major inflection points for our team.

IN OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS, SUPPORTED BY OUR ADVISORS NETWORK, WE GRANTED APPROXIMATELY

**\$7.9**  
MILLION USD

TO **1649**  
WOMEN, TRANS, AND  
NON-BINARY HUMAN  
RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND  
ORGANISATIONS IN  
**25**  
COUNTRIES IN ASIA AND  
THE PACIFIC, MOST OF  
THEM FOR SAFETY AND  
WELL-BEING.

MORE THAN  
**95%**  
OF THE GRANTS WERE MADE  
TO DEFENDERS IN COUNTRIES  
RANKED BY CIVICUS AS  
REPPRESSED, FOLLOWED BY GRANTS  
TO OBSTRUCTED, CLOSED OR  
NARROWED COUNTRIES.

BETWEEN 2018-2020  
BEFORE THESE CRISES OCCURED,  
WE HAD DISTRIBUTED A TOTAL OF

**205**  
GRANTS

HOWEVER IN 2021, WE DISBURSED

**428**  
GRANTS

MORE THAN DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF  
GRANTS THAT WERE GIVEN OUT THE  
PREVIOUS THREE YEARS COMBINED.

IN 2022, THE NUMBER OF  
GRANTS INCREASED BY ANOTHER.

**32%**  
TO A TOTAL OF  
**566**  
GRANTS

When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021, we were one of the first funds to successfully move money directly into the hands of activists and defenders in not just Kabul but other provinces of Afghanistan.

Our work in Afghanistan was fundamentally informed by our learnings from our response to the Myanmar crisis, and grounded in our Emergent Learning model, which continues to support the development of our Security and Well-being Grants and our suite of resourcing resilience grants as we put defenders first, always.



# Forging Feminist Futures: our next five years

GROUNDING IN EMERGENT STRATEGY  
AND EMERGENT LEARNING

UAF A&P's work—and our ability to meet rapidly changing contexts and the diverse needs among women and non-binary defenders in Asia and the Pacific—is fundamentally framed by our unique approach that combines emergent strategies and Emergent Learning principles. **We are grounded in a feminist politics of trust and connection: with each other and the world we live in.** We are relational, and have used that relationality to map out our next five years.

Our Organisational Learning Question articulates the political vision of our work for the period. The **four Key Questions** focus on particular sets of relationships and organisational goals for our work, and operate across all the programmes of UAF A&P.

This diagram sets out the four Key Questions and the Organisational Learning Question that will frame the work of UAF A&P in this Strategy, and identifies the relationships that are at the core of each Key Question:

IF WE: IN RELATIONSHIP WITH:

...resource and accompany defenders in Asia and the Pacific with audacious care and trust in their journeys of resistance and resilience and...

Women and non-binary Human Rights Defenders

...unleash collaboration that powerfully resource the multiple needs of defenders and diverse feminist movements of the regions and...

Movements, women's funds, and other allies

...co-create bold cultures of sharing that release abundant resources for the work of the defenders and feminist movements in their distinct contexts and...

Donor and other resources ecosystem

...together with the board share power, grounded in trust, learning, care, and joy...

UAF A&P

THEN WE WILL...

**boldy resource and power** women and non-binary Human Rights Defenders as critical to the defence of people and planet.

The following diagram shows the interrelationship of the Organisational Learning Question, the Key Learning Questions, and the programme nested question and the hypothesis that support its exploration in the context of the Key Learning Questions.

**ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING QUESTION**

	Key Learning Question 1	Key Learning Question 2	Key Learning Question 3	Key Learning Question 4
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis
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Programme Nested Question	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Hypothesis



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