



LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Resourcing Women and
Trans Led Disability
Rights Movements in Asia

6 – 8 FEBRUARY 2020
WOMEN'S FUND ASIA

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Women's Fund Asia (WFA) held a Disability Rights Convening (DRC) which brought together 28 women and trans disability rights activists from eight countries. The Convening was a first of its kind for WFA and is part of WFA's Linking and Learning strategy which brings together partners and activists across the Asia region to facilitate spaces for networking, sharing, learning and solidarity building. The convening aimed to:

- ◆ Map challenges and opportunities for feminist activists and organisations being led by women and trans people with disabilities in the region.
- ◆ Facilitate a political and safe space for feminist activists with disabilities from the region, for networking, learning, and collective reflecting.
- ◆ Ensure in-depth learning for WFA on supporting rights of women and trans

people with disabilities in Asia, informing WFA's grantmaking, and influencing philanthropy strategies.

The convening was centred on the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us" and was led by disability rights activists from the region. Nidhi Goyal, a disability rights activist from India, was the lead facilitator of the convening. Niluka Gunawardena, a mental health rights activist from Sri Lanka, served as co-facilitator. In addition, a Steering Committee composed of the two facilitators, activists, and WFA grantees Pratima Gurung (Nepal), Dinni Mahmud (Indonesia), and Maulani Rotinsulu (Indonesia) led the development of the agenda with support from the WFA team.

The key themes and recommendations from the convening are presented in this report.

Recognising Marginalisation and Celebrating Intersectionality

Women and trans people with disabilities face multiple and intersecting barriers to meaningful inclusion in economic, social, and cultural spheres. While the global literacy rate for people with disabilities is 3%, for women with disabilities it is 1%. Trans people are conspicuous in their absence in this data. The intersections that shape personhood of individual women and trans people with disabilities are often hidden. Within the disability rights movement itself, certain groups such as trans people, indigenous women, sex workers with disabilities, and people living with psychosocial disabilities, among others, face unique forms of marginalisation.

The discussions highlighted that the disability rights movement is not a homogeneous group. There is a need to acknowledge the diversity within, and to see that diversity as a strength. The focus on intersectionality provided a space to articulate vulnerabilities, as well as leadership and organising capacities of the disability rights activists present in the room. There was a clear acknowledgement that there is tremendous resilience in the movement. Through the Human Library session, activists shared how they turned their personal experience of violations and trauma into activism to fuel change.

Working to Ensure Accessibility and Inclusion

There is an urgent need to take into account the varying access needs of people with different disabilities in both digital and physical spaces. Simultaneously, it must be acknowledged that access requirements for one group may conflict with those of another. The inclusion of disability rights in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the adoption of United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by many countries open up avenues for civil society advocacy at national and international levels with governments and with other movements. There is an urgent need to support rights-based advocacy work for people to access sexual and reproductive health and rights and to strengthen the important but invisible de-institutionalisation efforts, which disproportionately affect women and trans people. Digital spaces, public and private spaces, education facilities, disaster preparedness programmes, among others, must be equipped to be inclusive of diverse access requirements. There is a need to advocate for increased use of sign language. The issues of accessibility and digital security must be addressed together rather than seen as siloed issues. Securing the economic rights of women and trans people with disabilities is critical to reduce the stigma and violence they face.



Funding and Resourcing

Despite the overall increase in money committed to gender equality worldwide, only 1% reaches women's organisations or movements on the ground. The bulk continues to go to international organisations that are based in the Global North. Only 3% percent of human rights foundation funding, and 2% of OECD human rights funding, goes to people with disabilities. Despite scarcity, there are opportunities—especially through women's funds—to change this dynamic and co-create a healthier resource ecosystem that furthers the agenda of the feminist movement.

Participants laid out recommendations for the funder community to increase and improve their support to women and trans led disability rights work. The agenda should be set by disability rights groups themselves rather than funders. Funders must invest in outreach strategies which actively seek out and engage with a wide range of such organisations. They should also support unregistered and smaller groups at the front line of the movement, accommodating their geopolitical realities, and think of ways to ensure accountability without getting caught in bureaucracy. Efforts should also be made to accommodate multi-layered access in grant application packages, communications, and in meeting spaces, and incorporate accessibility as an

organisational practice or culture. Funders must acknowledge the high costs of assistance needs, like sign language interpretation and wheelchair access, and increase budgets accordingly. Funders should provide core and multi-year grants for ongoing work, including building leadership capacity and organisational sustainability. There is a critical need to fund research, emerging intersectional issues, and varied strategies. Funders must be open to regular listening and learning from those working on the ground; they must build their own capacities to work with such groups and include them on their boards or as partners.



Movement Building through Institutional Building

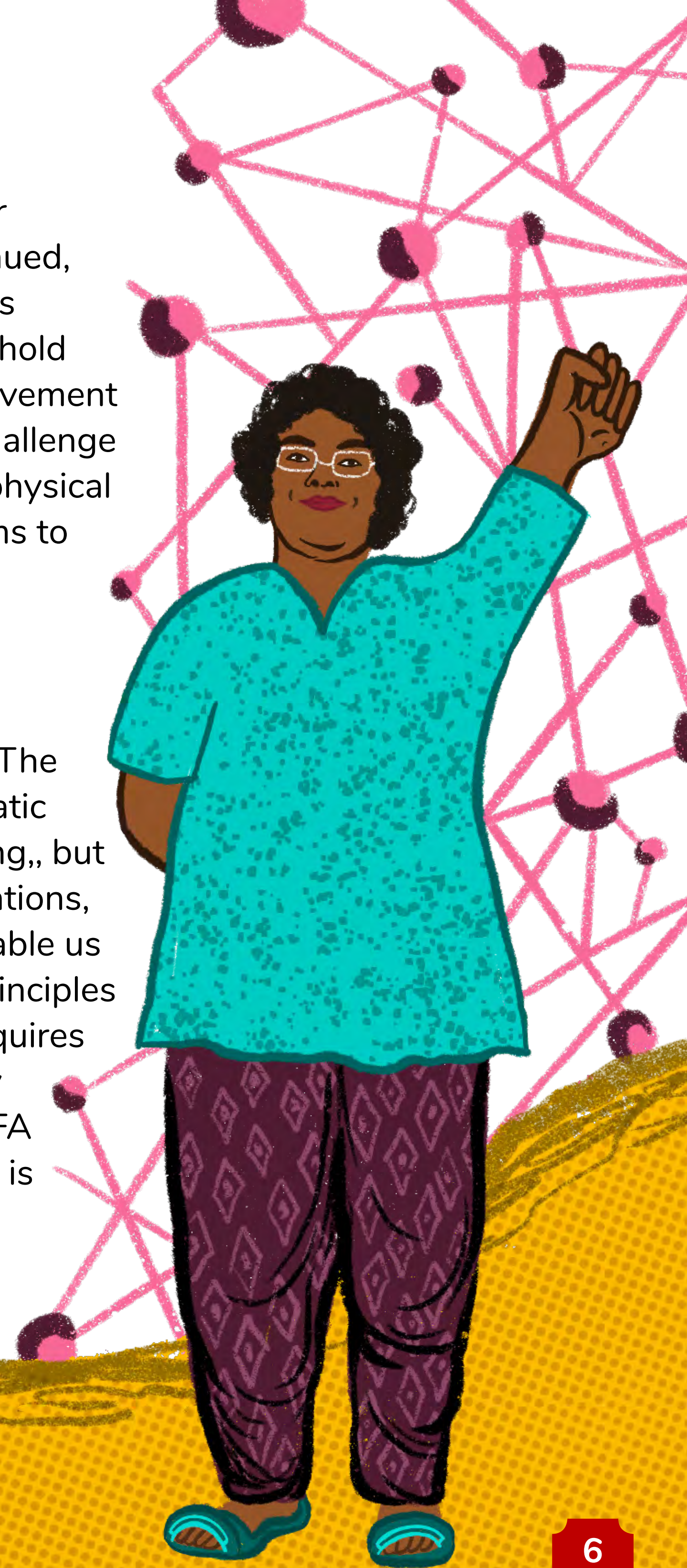
The third day of the convening was dedicated to building the institutional skills and capacities of organisations present, with an aim to strengthen feminist groups and feminist movement building. Women and trans led disability rights groups have reported that their leadership is not valued in many spaces; there is little systematic investment or opportunities for growth, development, and skill building; and weak institutions and processes lead to scarce funding. The sessions were facilitated by Vinita Sahasranaman, a feminist strategist and an Organisational Development (OD) expert.

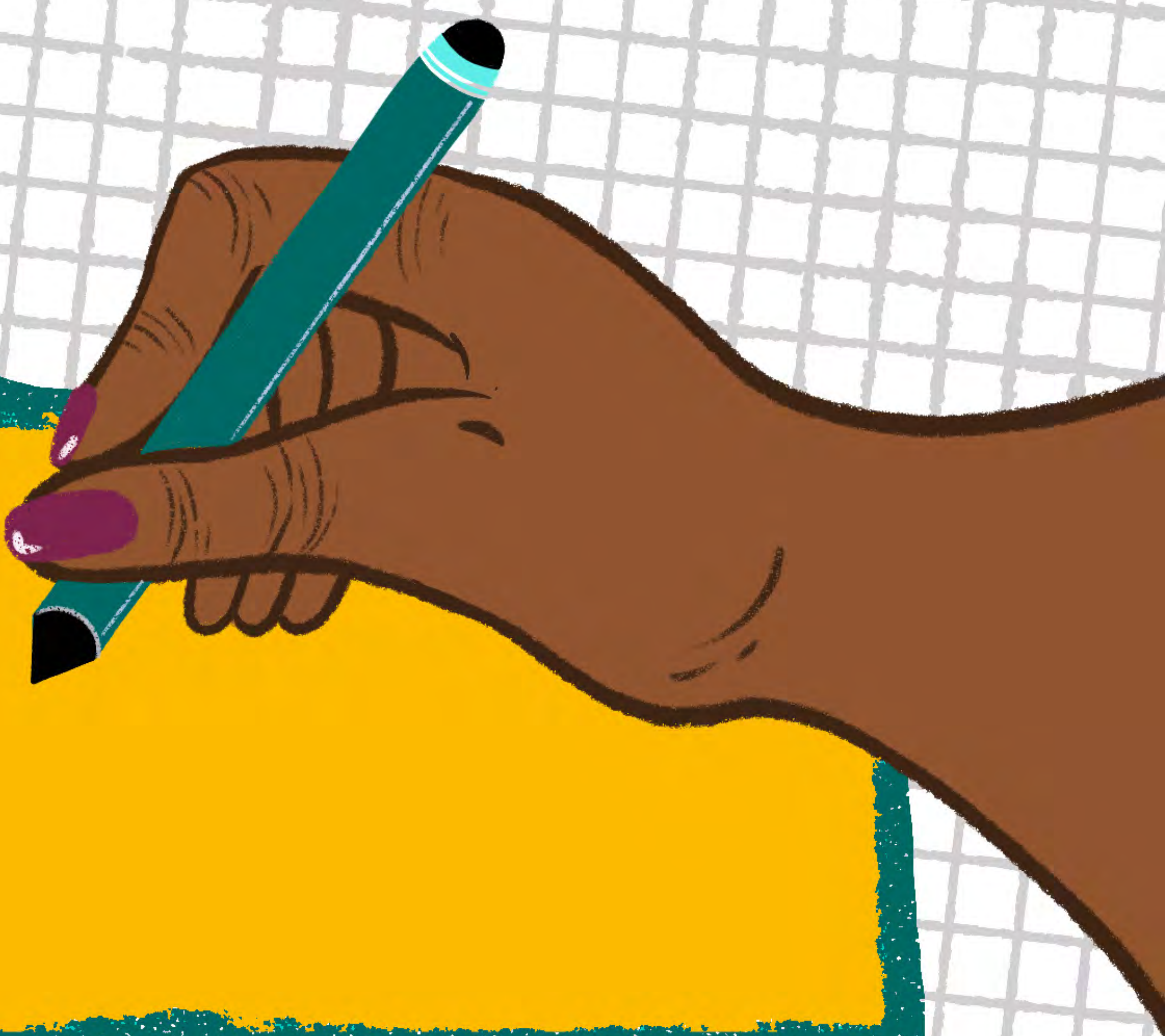
The OD-related workshop day highlighted the key factors that should be taken into consideration while managing organisational growth and change, and on working collaboratively. These include factors like long-term sustainability of funds, staff, and their skills, making sure that collaborators agree on values and commitments. Scaling programmes could provide opportunities for the group to experiment. The discussions around leadership in organisations generated challenges and possible ways to introduce new structures, such as a second line of leadership within the institution. The workshop on fundraising highlighted honing specific skills on meeting potential funders, differentiating between core support and programme grants, budgets, and crowdfunding.

The Way Forward

The convening highlighted the need for greater cohesion, sustainability, and meaningful, continued, and action-oriented intersectionality. There was tremendous resolve among the participants to hold space for each other, and to strengthen the movement through compassion and kindness. A critical challenge to be tackled is inaccessibility—of mobility, of physical spaces, of organised spaces, and of mechanisms to access justice and well being.

WFA also learned from the recommendations on inclusion, better funder support, reasonable accommodations, and access for participants. The learnings will not only feed into our programmatic strategy of grantmaking and linking and learning,, but also institutional processes of MEL, communications, and our own budgeting and logistics. It will enable us to take steps to improve how we implement principles of inclusion. In the current climate, inclusion requires resources; this needs to be recognised not only by us as a feminist fund but all the funders. WFA is committed to ensuring that this engagement is an ongoing process.



An illustration of a brown hand with purple nail polish holding a teal marker, positioned as if about to write on a yellow sticky note with a teal border. The background is a light gray grid pattern.

The following visual recordings were created live during the convening and provide a an overview of the three-day Disability Rights Convening.

GAPS

OPPORTUNITIES

DISABILITY CONSCIOUSNESS

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

DISSEMINATION of DATA

RIGHTS-based ADVOCACY

STRUCTURED NETWORKS

NON-RECOGNITION of SEXUAL + REPRODUCTIVE rights

EMERGENCE of LEADERSHIP

COLLABORATIVE interventions ACROSS MOVEMENTS

LACK OF DATA

LACK OF ACCESS

SOCIAL STIGMA

DISASTER MANAGEMENT TRAINING

— EDUCATION

— HEALTH

— INFORMATION

— LANGUAGE

POLICIES LIKE CRPD, CEDAW and SDGs

DISABILITY HAS BECOME A CORE ISSUE ACROSS sectors

NEGLECT from FAMILIES

TOKEN REPRESENTATION

IMPROVING skills to FUNDRAISE

BUILDING SYNERGY with SDG commitments

INVOLUNTARY INSTITUTIONALISATION

INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

USE OF LOCAL + NATIONAL CENSUS

GLOBAL & REGIONAL PLATFORMS

WEAK LEGAL frameworks

INVISIBILISATION

VOICES RISING to counter SILENCE

LISTENING to each other

UNEVEN INCLUSIVE INTERSECTIONAL PRACTICES

LACK OF PARTICIPATION & REPRESENTATION

VOTING BOOTH ACCESSIBILITY

Leaving No One Behind

LEARN MORE ABOUT MULTIPLE DISABILITIES AND THEIR INTERSECTIONS with SOCIAL, ECONOMIC and POLITICAL CONTEXT

MAKE EFFORTS TO BE AS INCLUSIVE AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT RESORTING TO TOKENISM

LEARN ABOUT MULTIPLE LAYERS OF ACCESS and PRACTICE THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

CONTINUE TO BUILD LEADERSHIP AMONG WOMEN & TRANS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

RIGHTS-BASED ADVOCACY TO IMPROVE EDUCATION, HEALTH (including SRHR), LIVELIHOOD STATUS OF WOMEN and TRANS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

CROSS-MOVEMENT CONVERSATIONS

IDENTITIES CANNOT BE PEELLED OFF

COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTIONS across movements

POLITICAL & ECONOMIC FACTORS at WORK

COLLECTIVE GLOBAL ADVOCACY

BREAKING Silos

VOICELESS VOICES

NOT A HOMOGENOUS identity

WWDs not part of DISABILITY movement

everyWHERE BUT NOWHERE

PERSIST

MULTIPLICITY of GENDER

WHAT are our PRIORITIES

UNRECOGNISED BY GOVT.

STILL HAVE TO PROVE OURSELVES

INTRA-MOVEMENT WORK

PRIORITISING ACCESSIBILITY

LACK OF INFUSION across MOVEMENTS

INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

FINDING allies

PHYSICAL & DIGITAL are INTERCONNECTED

DIVERSITY is STILL UNDERSTOOD in FRAGMENTS

MULTIPLE levels of WORK



SIGN LANGUAGE (S)
NOT RECOGNISED
OFFICIALLY BY
COUNTRIES

INADEQUATE
FACILITIES FOR
EDUCATION in
SIGN LANGUAGE

LACK OF ACCESS to
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC &
POLITICAL INFORMATION

BARRIERS & REALITIES deaf people ENCOUNTER

ATTITUDES TOWARDS
deaf people

LACK OF SOCIAL
inclusion

LACK OF ACCESS TO
INFORMATION ON
OVERALL WELL BEING,
INCLUDING SRHR

LACK OF FUNDING
to INCREASE the
use of
SIGN LANGUAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY SONAKSHA

INTERSECTIONALITY:

making it real

UNIQUE MARGINALISATION

RESILIENCE

STRENGTH in DIVERSITY

MULTIPLE EXCLUSION

RECOGNITION

AUTONOMY

HETEROGENEITY of IDENTITIES

SELF DETERMINATION

AGENCY

BREAKING the silos

MULTI-LEVEL ACCESS

GENDER AFFIRMATION & SEXUAL RIGHTS

ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

CONSENT

ALLIES

SOLIDARITY

COLLECTIVE ACTION

ILLUSTRATED BY SONAKSHA



FUNDERS CHECKLIST

SUPPORTING WOMEN and TRANS led
DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENTS



AMP UP YOUR
OUTREACH STRATEGY

SUPPORT
UNREGISTERED
groups

SUPPORT smaller
groups

LEARN about
MULTI-LAYERED
access

INCLUDE COSTS
for REASONABLE
ACCOMMODATION

PROVIDE CORE and
MULTI-YEAR grants
FOR ONGOING WORK
incl. CAPACITY BUILDING
& SUSTAINABILITY

LET the AGENDA
be set by the
movement

DON'T FOCUS
on numbers

DIVERSIFY YOUR
PORTFOLIO &
YOUR INSTITUTIONS

USE YOUR
ACCOMPANIMENT
strategy

RESOURCING WOMEN AND TRANS LED DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

A Checklist for Funders

1. Information Is Power, Share It!

Funders must invest in outreach strategies which actively seek out and engage with a wide range of groups, including those without an online presence (rural and remote) to create awareness about opportunities. The outreach messaging must clearly state that you support women and trans people with disabilities and cater to multiple accessibility needs.

2. Learn about Multi-layered Access

Funder websites, proposal formats, and overall communication should be accessible to varied disability rights groups. Translate application packages. Encourage creative forms of applications, such as video or audio, for those who find long, textual application formats challenging. Make your grantee meeting spaces inclusive. Funder organisations must incorporate accessibility as an organisational practice.

3. Support Unregistered Groups

Many women and trans led disability rights groups work voluntarily. They may not meet the criteria to officially register their organisation. In some contexts they may need to stay off the radar if they are working with constituencies that face institutional and societal discrimination and violations. Funders need to reflect on how the money pipelines can be made smoother and accessible to women and trans led disability movements.

4. Size Does Not Matter

A large number of disability rights groups are “small” in terms of outreach, budget, and size of the organisation. Yet they undertake the most critical work at the ground level and are the front line defenders of the movements. This ground work needs support. It is critical that funders invest in smaller organisations through multi-year, core funding and simultaneously invest in strengthening the institutional capacities and processes.

The checklist has been derived from the discussions with the DRC participants who actively provided suggestions and demands for

funders to improve their support to the rights of women and trans people with disabilities.

RESOURCING WOMEN AND TRANS LED DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

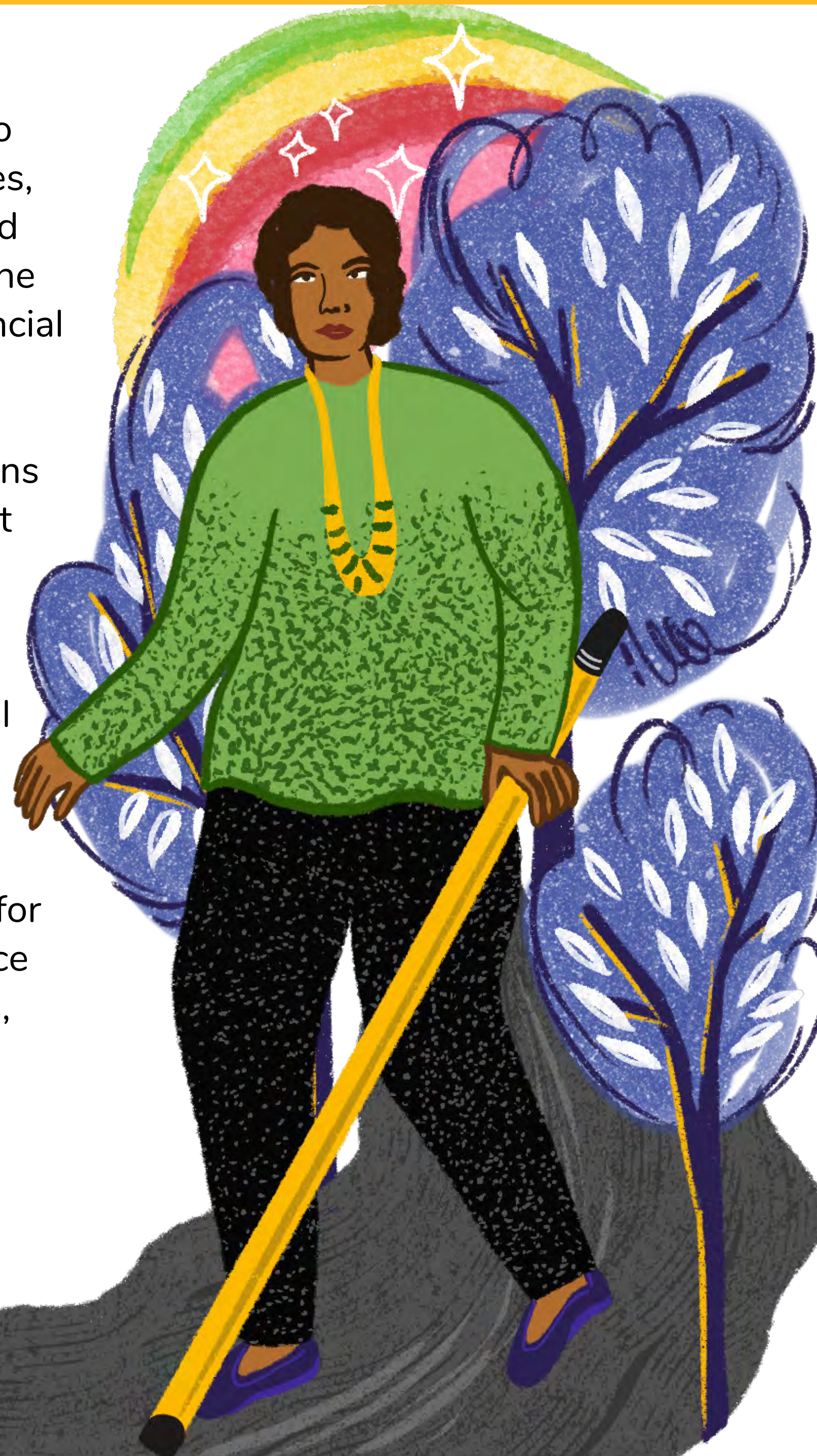
A Checklist for Funders

5. Invest in Sustainability and Resilience

Most disability rights groups find it hard to sustain their work, respond to emergencies, meet fair salaries on a sustained basis, and strengthen the organisation while doing the everyday work. Some don't have the financial strength to deepen/expand. Some work in the contexts of conflicts and/or natural disasters. Core support to women and trans led disability rights groups will ensure that the work can be innovative and grow.

6. Invest in Ensuring Inclusion

It is critical that funders take the additional costs borne by disability rights groups into consideration while allocating grant amounts for them. For example, during travels or workshops, they need budgets for their own and their constituents' assistance requirements—sign language interpreters, accessible venues, and access assistants, among others.



7. Our Rights, Our Voices, Our Agenda

Support robust disability rights movements, by understanding the needs on the ground. If groups consider creating life-skill capacities of WWDs¹ a crucial need, give them that space. Many community-based groups provide support and services to improve education, health and livelihood of PWDs². These are basic rights long denied; increase your support to these for disability rights groups. Be open to re-examine your strategies and policies.

8. Diversify Your Portfolio

Support multiple strategies to support diverse, dynamic and multi-layered disability rights movements. The rehabilitation of persons with psychosocial disabilities from institutions is highly invisible, expensive, and long-term work. Resources are required to support de-institutionalisation³ and rehabilitation strategies from rights-based perspectives. Support research as it remains a low funding priority but a high need. Focus on funding diverse issues and perspectives.

1. Women with Disabilities
2. Persons with Disabilities

3. De-institutionalisation is the process of replacing long-stay psychiatric hospitals with less isolated community mental health services.

RESOURCING WOMEN AND TRANS LED DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

A Checklist for Funders

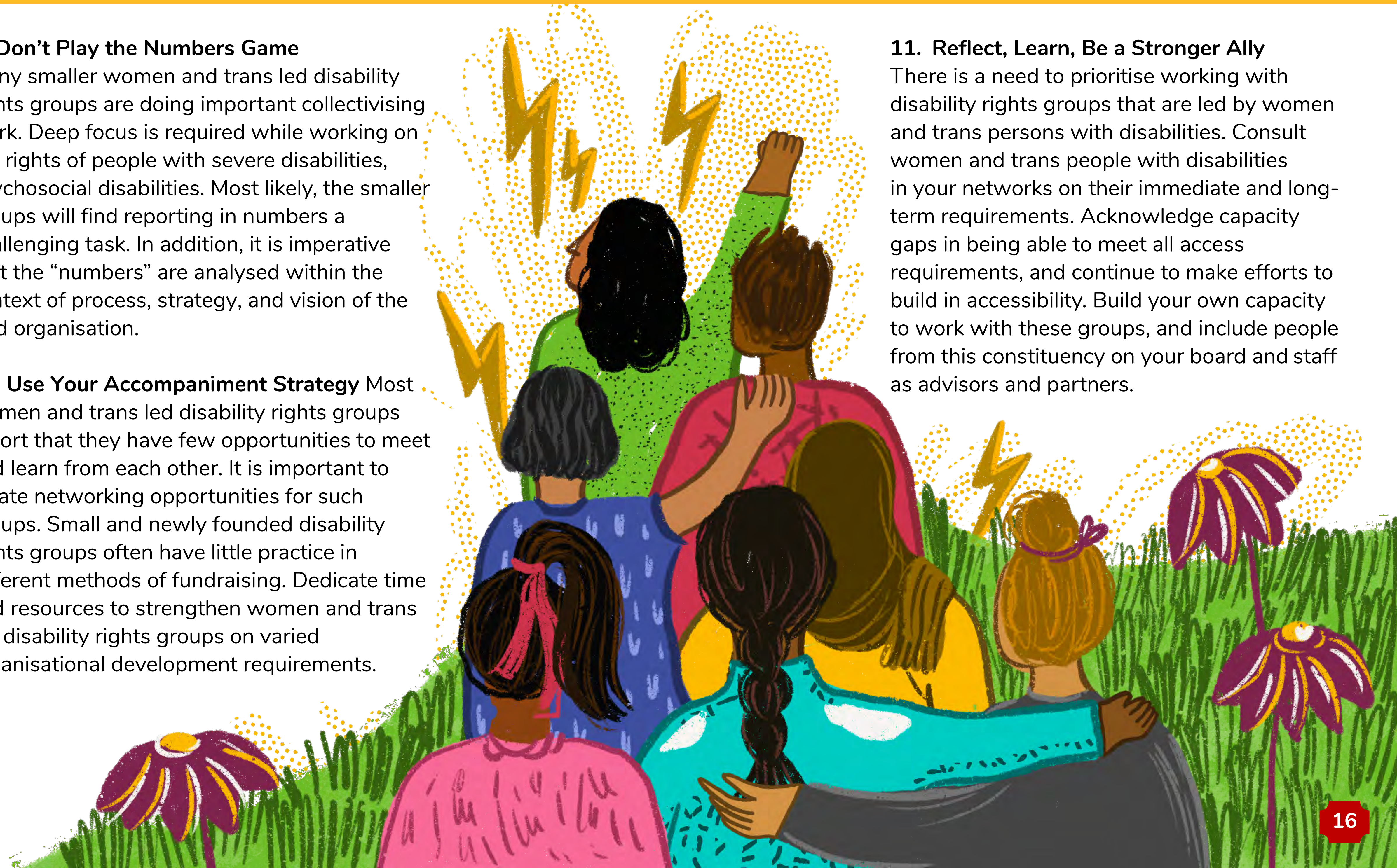
9. Don't Play the Numbers Game

Many smaller women and trans led disability rights groups are doing important collectivising work. Deep focus is required while working on the rights of people with severe disabilities, psychosocial disabilities. Most likely, the smaller groups will find reporting in numbers a challenging task. In addition, it is imperative that the “numbers” are analysed within the context of process, strategy, and vision of the said organisation.

10. Use Your Accompaniment Strategy Most women and trans led disability rights groups report that they have few opportunities to meet and learn from each other. It is important to create networking opportunities for such groups. Small and newly founded disability rights groups often have little practice in different methods of fundraising. Dedicate time and resources to strengthen women and trans led disability rights groups on varied organisational development requirements.

11. Reflect, Learn, Be a Stronger Ally

There is a need to prioritise working with disability rights groups that are led by women and trans persons with disabilities. Consult women and trans people with disabilities in your networks on their immediate and long-term requirements. Acknowledge capacity gaps in being able to meet all access requirements, and continue to make efforts to build in accessibility. Build your own capacity to work with these groups, and include people from this constituency on your board and staff as advisors and partners.



Acknowledgements

WFA is grateful to the **28 disability rights activists from eight countries in Asia** who participated actively at the convening, shared their experiences and visions for vibrant, inclusive and resilient women and trans led disability rights movements.

As WFA we are grateful for the trust placed in us by our partners and fellow activists in organising this critical learning space. DRC 2020 was not a “one-off workshop” for us—it was a space that contributed to our learning and growth as a feminist institution.

A big shout out to our amazing facilitators, **Nidhi Goyal** and **Niluka Gunawardena**, who brought ideas and action, as well as joy and laughter to the convening. Also to **Vinita Sahasranaman**, who led an exciting day on Organisational Development for the participants; and **Kasia Staszewska** (Resourcing Feminist Movements Coordinator, AWID), who agreed to our last minute request and shared with us an insightful presentation on feminist funding ecosystem.

A big thank you to the Steering Committee, who kick-started agenda setting for the convening: **Nidhi Goyal, Niluka Gunawardena, Pratima Gurung, Dinni Mahmud, and Maulani Rotinsulu.**

This meeting would not have been possible without the **eight language and sign interpreters, the six access/support assistants, and the two live transcribers.**

A big thank you to our documentation team—**Kayonaaz Kalyanwala** for ensuring we don't miss a nuance, and **Sonaksha Iyengar** for her tremendously inspiring art which showcases agency, choice, and solidarity to carry forward the struggle. Thank you to Sonaksha for also designing this report, and **Barrier Break** for ensuring that this report is as accessible as possible.

We especially thank our funders for their continued solidarity and their commitment to supporting feminist movements in Asia.

Finally, a big thank you to all of **WFA's staff** and the logistics consultant, **Kaushalya Kumarage**. As the WFA team, we are committed to ensuring that this engagement is an ongoing process. We are also committed to being held accountable to the movements and fulfil our role as the resourcing arm of the movements, contributing to co-creating our feminist agendas in the region.





Women's Fund Asia