CREAW
CENTRE FOR RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Changing You, Transforming All

LEARNING BRIEF

Funding Off-Tarmac Women's Rights Organizations Using a Feminist Perspective

A Case Study of WVL-Kenya program



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Executive Summary of

Evaluation Findings of WVL Project

This learning brief examines the off-tarmac funding model, demonstrating how it aligns with feminist principles and effectively supports Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) operating in marginalized areas. Traditional funding models often present significant barriers for grassroots Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), including complex application processes, rigid compliance requirements, and short-term project-based funding.

These approaches tend to prioritize donor-driven objectives over community-led priorities, limiting WROs' ability to implement sustainable, transformative change. In contrast, CREAW's feminist-driven funding model is intentionally designed to shift power to WROs, ensuring they have the autonomy, flexibility, and resources to drive their own advocacy and service delivery efforts by streamlining application procedures, offering multi-year core funding, and embedding capacity-building, through which CREAW fosters a model that prioritizes inclusivity, sustainability, and grassroots leadership.

This approach recognizes that WROs are best positioned to address gender justice issues within their communities and therefore require funding structures that are adaptive, participatory, and free from restrictive donor mandates. Unlike conventional models that focus on short-term outcomes, CREAW's funding emphasizes long-term impact, resilience, and systemic change by removing bureaucratic barriers and ensuring flexible financial support, leading to more focus on delivering meaningful community-driven change.

The Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Kenya program, implemented by CREAW with support from Global Affairs Canada, aimed to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of local Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) across Kenya.

Through targeted interventions, including capacity building, financial governance, policy advocacy, and community engagement, the project successfully enhanced the operational effectiveness of WROs, improved gender equality advocacy, and increased access to critical services for women and girls.

Over five years, the program has driven significant progress in women's empowerment, policy influence, and service delivery, ensuring that WROs are better positioned to advocate for gender equality and social justice Implementing Counties and Thematic Areas

The WVL Kenya program was implemented across 16 counties, including Nakuru, Kisumu, Kiambu, Machakos, Kajiado, Uasin Gishu, Nyeri, Meru, Kilifi, Nairobi, Narok, Tana River, Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Mombasa, and Kwale. The supported WROs focused on key thematic areas such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), economic empowerment, leadership and governance, policy advocacy, and mental health support. The following are the findings:



Key Findings of the WVL Programme

Strengthened WRO Management & Sustainability

81% of WROs developed strategic plans, 90.5% succession plans, and 66.7% risk management plans. 100% adopted best practices in governance and management.

Improved internal systems led to enhanced resource mobilization and partnerships.

Policy Advocacy & Influence

66.7% of WROs rated their ability to influence policy as excellent. 100% of WROs applied new techniques in advocacy, e.g., gender-responsive budgeting.

Women's Empowerment & Leadership

Increased participation in decision-making processes and advocacy efforts. 10,000+ girls received sanitary pads, improving school attendance and reducing stigma.

Enhanced Organizational Capacity & Governance

Over 90% of WROs improved governance structures, resource mobilization, and strategic planning. Increased volunteer participation and expansion of networks.

Economic Development

Women gained financial independence through skills training and income-generating activities. Reduced rates of early marriages, GBV cases, and teenage pregnancies.

Stronger Networks & Alliances

WROs formed alliances to influence policy reforms, e.g., County Gender Policies. Collaboration enhanced advocacy on GBV, reproductive health, and gender equality.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

Majority of WROs developed M&E policies and established tracking tools. Some hired M&E officers to improve impact tracking and decision-making.

Financial Management

100% of WROs established financial control measures (e.g., financial policies, budget reviews, financial audits). Use of digital tools like Excel enhanced financial tracking. Stronger financial governance increased donor confidence.

Improved Service Delivery

WROs focused on GBV prevention, reproductive health, and economic empowerment. Quality of services rated as excellent increased from 35% (baseline) to 76.2% (endline).

Lessons Learned

Sustained capacity-building enhances organizational growth and advocacy effectiveness. Financial independence and diverse funding sources improve WRO sustainability. Strengthening M&E systems ensures accountability and informed decision-making.
Inclusive policies drive long-term impact, particularly in marginalized communities.

Recommendations & Next Steps

Sustained Financial Support: Continue funding WROs to expand impact and services. Advanced Capacity Building: Provide training on financial management, M&E, and policy advocacy. Policy Advocacy Strengthening: Increase collaboration with governments to influence gender-sensitive policies. Inclusivity & Representation: Further integrate gender and disability inclusion in all projects. Expand Networking & Resource Mobilization: Strengthen WRO partnerships to enhance sustainability

Why Off-Tarmac Funding Works

Traditional donor-driven funding models often present significant barriers to grassroots organizations, including complex application procedures, excessive administrative requirements, and restrictive funding conditions that limit adaptability.

The off-tarmac approach removes these barriers by:



- **Reducing bureaucratic constraints, allowing WROs to focus on community-driven priorities.**
- **Providing long-term, flexible funding, which ensures sustained impact and resilience.**
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This model is rooted in core feminist funding principles, including intersectionality, autonomy, collaboration, and accountability. By centering local knowledge and prioritizing sustainable capacity-building, off-tarmac funding enables WROs to challenge systemic inequalities, expand their reach, and drive transformative change in their communities.

Characteristic of Off- Tarmac WROs

Off Tarmac -refer to grassroots or non-mainstream women's organizations that operate outside of formal, institutionalized frameworks. They work is in remote, underserved, or conflict-affected areas where traditional infrastructure (legal, social, or economic) is limited, they have limited access to large-scale funding they rely on local resources and volunteers work with structures that are not formalized as such they are overlooked by mainstream development partners.

These organizations often focus on marginalized groups, utilize intersectional approaches, and community driven focus. There characteristics include:



Grassroots Engagement

Off-tarmac WROs are deeply rooted in their communities, working closely with individuals to understand and address unique challenges. For example, they often champion the rights of groups such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, and widows.

Operating in remote areas, such as the regions supported by the WVL project, these organizations bridge the gap between isolated communities and essential resources or services.



Limited Resources

Unlike larger, formal organizations, off-tarmac WROs typically have minimal access to financial systems, global donor networks, or large grants. Many rely on small grants, community contributions, or personal sacrifices.

Despite these limitations, WROs like the Paran Women Group successfully leveraged small grants to run impactful programs such as environmental conservation initiatives, including planting over 50,000 trees.



Flexibility & Innovation

These organizations are highly adaptable, tailoring their interventions to local needs. For instance, the Tharaka Nithi Women's Network addressed menstrual stigma in schools by distributing hygiene products while embedding cultural sensitivity in their approach.

However, their lack of formal structures can sometimes hinder access to traditional funding sources, which often require extensive documentation.



Impact Amplification

Impact Amplification. Despite limited resources, off-tarmac WROs have amplified their impact by leveraging culturally relevant and community-driven approaches. Their intimate understanding of local contexts enables them to design interventions that are not only effective but also sustainable over the long term.

For example, Kerio Rights strengthened GBV advocacy through the creation of safe spaces and community engagement.

2.0 CREAW's Funding Model



This section highlights how CREAW's funding model effectively supports WROs through strategic, long-term, and adaptive financial mechanisms, reinforcing feminist principles in grantmaking. CREAW's feminist funding model uniquely addresses systemic barriers that prevent grassroots WROs from accessing sustainable resources. By simplifying application processes, providing multi-year flexible funding, and embedding capacity-building,

CREAW ensures WROs can focus on delivering change within communities, for example, by strengthening grassroots advocacy, expanding access to gender-based violence services, and influencing policy reforms such as the Uasin Gishu Gender Policy and the Kwale County SGBV Protection Act. Removing the bureaucratic barriers and providing sustained support helps WROs to drive meaningful and lasting impact at the local level.

2.1.Key Features of CREAW's Funding Model

a Simplified Application Process

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b Integrated Capacity Building and Policy Development

Financial support alone is insufficient to ensure long-term sustainability. CREAW complemented funding with structured capacity-building initiatives, enabling WROs to develop governance policies, enhance financial management, and strengthen advocacy strategies. This is a collaborative process where we administer an organization Capacity Assessment tool to the WROs. This information provides insights on the capacity needs for the organizations ensuring that they are tailored to their specific needs, based on these, a capacity building plan is then developed to address the identified gaps.

b Development of Policy Templates and Knowledge Repositories

Grassroots WROs often lack access to standardized tools for policy and governance development. CREAW conducted capacity training on governance policies created a repository of customizable templates, enabling 90% of WROs to adopt for their use and establish operational policies tailored to their specific contexts. The Hijabi Mentorship Program (HMP) used these resources to strengthen their GBV advocacy and successfully influenced the Kwale County SGBV Protection Act (2024), securing better protections for survivors.

c Participatory Grantmaking and Core Funding

In alignment with feminist funding principles, CREAW ensures that WROs actively participate in setting funding priorities. Participatory grantmaking fosters shared decision-making and equitable resource distribution. CREAW offers grant that allows for flexibility for WROs to allocate resources based on their evolving needs. FIMBO Youth Initiative utilized their grant to conduct policy advocacy, contributing to the passing of the Kilifi Gender Act (2024). Similarly, SMART Ladies invested in economic empowerment programs for commercial sex workers.

d Structured Mentorship for Organizational Growth

Mentorship is a key pillar of CREAW's funding model, providing long-term support and leadership development for WROs. CREAW offered technical assistance to WROs to support them in development of system and structures and that addressed their institutional or programmes need. Structured mentorship programs ensured that WROs receive continuous guidance during the project period . YWAN (Youth and Women Advocacy Network) benefited from mentorship to develop a gender-disaggregated tracking tool, significantly improving their M&E capabilities and impact reporting. Paran Women Group refined their strategic planning and resource mobilization strategies, leading to a diversification of funding sources.

e Long-Term, Flexible Funding for Sustainable Impact

Short-term funding cycles often limit the ability of WROs to implement sustainable programs. CREAW provides multi-year, adaptable funding, allowing WROs to plan strategically and respond to challenges as they arise. Long term funding, is funding being provided for 3 years and beyond, this creates stronger community trust as they tend to be dependable to support and address community needs and provides an opportunity for transformative positive change.

Kerio Valley Rights Organization used the grant to scale their advocacy programs and respond to emergencies such as natural disasters, ensuring program continuity in volatile environments.



f Transparent Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Trust and accountability between funders and grantees are fundamental to effective partnerships. CREAW implemented an open dispute resolution framework, enabling WROs to honestly and openly raise concerns and collaboratively address challenges related to resource allocation, compliance, and reporting. This mechanism has strengthened CREAW's partnerships with WROs, fostering mutual trust and transparent decision-making.

e Risk Mitigation Through an Updated Risk Matrix

Navigating complex social and political landscapes requires robust risk management. CREAW developed a dynamic risk matrix to anticipate and mitigate threats, such as political instability or restrictive policies. Through CREAW's risk mitigation support (risk mapping for each organization which helps develop mitigation strategies), WROs successfully adjusted their engagement strategies, ensuring continued advocacy while maintaining community relationships.

f Strengthened Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for Accountability and Learning

CREAW embeds M&E frameworks within its funding model, to learn and to equip WROs with the skills to measure progress and refine their interventions. Capacity assessment initiatives for the WROs entail feminist MEAL approaches, results-based and data driven monitoring and evaluation.

Tharaka Nithi Women's Network implemented community-led monitoring for their menstrual health campaigns, using real-time feedback to adjust strategies and improve outreach. This adaptive learning approach ensures that programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of the communities they serve.

3.0.Key Outcomes of Funding off-tarmac Women Rights Organization

The off-tarmac funding model has yielded significant, innovation-driven outcomes among Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), demonstrating its potential to catalyze systemic change. Unlike traditional funding mechanisms, which often prioritize short-term outputs, this approach fosters long-term sustainability, adaptability, and locally-led solutions.

The key outcomes presented in this brief were harvested through an outcome harvesting process for the WVL program and are highlighted in CREAW's Outcome Harvesting Report, 2024. The following are the key outcomes achieved:



a Digital Transformation and Tech-Enabled Advocacy

Off-tarmac WROs, once constrained by limited access to digital resources, have embraced technology to expand advocacy, service delivery, and stakeholder engagement.

Through CREAW's flexible funding, YWAN (Youth and Women Advocacy Network) developed a gender-disaggregated digital tracking tool that increased the accuracy of gender-based violence (GBV) case reporting by 40%.

This innovation has enabled real-time data collection, allowing advocacy interventions to be tailored more effectively to emerging trends. Additionally, BLINK (Blind and Low Vision Network) leveraged funding to create a mobile-based reporting platform for visually impaired survivors of GBV, increasing survivor reporting rates by 32% in its first year. By integrating digital accessibility tools, BLINK has expanded access to justice for marginalized groups who previously faced barriers in seeking support.

b Sustainable Social Enterprises and Economic Independence

Traditional donor-funded projects often struggle with sustainability after the funding period ends. However, CREAW-supported WROs have demonstrated entrepreneurial ingenuity by launching sustainable social enterprises that generate revenue while advancing gender equality. For example, Paran Women Group utilized core funding to establish a tree nursery initiative, selling over 50,000 tree seedlings and generating KES 2.5 million (USD 18,500) in revenue.

This has provided sustained income for GBV survivors as it has created employment opportunities for over 150 women in Narok County. Similarly, SMART Ladies, an organization supporting former sex workers, utilized funding to boost their village savings and loans program and this has directly benefitted more than 300 women. This model has in addition significantly reduced dependence on exploitative labor and enhanced financial literacy among participants.

c Innovative Community-Led Justice Mechanisms

Recognizing gaps in formal legal systems, WROs have pioneered community-led justice initiatives to increase access to legal services for survivors of GBV. FIMBO Youth Initiative developed an alternative dispute resolution model, integrating paralegal training with traditional justice structures, ensuring over 200 GBV survivors received justice in Kilifi County within one year.

This model has influenced local policy discussions, contributing to the adoption of community paralegal frameworks within the Kilifi Gender Act (2024). By leveraging local knowledge and participatory governance, the initiative has increased survivor access to legal recourse.

d Integrated Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

While traditional gender justice programs often overlook the mental health dimension, CREAW-funded WROs have developed innovative MHPSS models tailored to survivors' needs. Hijabi Mentorship Program (HMP) piloted a trauma-informed peer support system, reducing trauma-related dropout rates in their GBV recovery program by 38%. By incorporating faith-based counseling techniques aligned with cultural sensitivities, HMP has successfully expanded psychosocial support access to over 500 women, previously underserved due to stigma and religious barriers.

e Climate Justice and Gender-Inclusive Environmental Advocacy

Recognizing the intersection of gender and climate change, several off-tarmac WROs in the project have spearheaded gender-inclusive climate justice programs. Kerio Rights Organization, with support from CREAW, has integrated gender-responsive environmental policies, securing 30% female representation in climate governance structures within Uasin Gishu County.

Additionally, through CREAW's long-term funding, Isiolo Women Against SGBV launched a climate adaptation training program benefiting 500 women farmers, equipping them with knowledge on drought-resistant crops and water conservation strategies . Additionally, through CREAW's long-term funding, Isiolo Women Against SGBV launched a climate adaptation training program for women farmers, equipping them with knowledge on drought-resistant crops and water conservation strategies. This program has directly improved household food security for over 500 women-led farms within its first phase.



4.0. Challenges Faced in Funding Off-Tarmac Women Rights Organizations



While the off-tarmac funding model has led to transformative changes, several challenges emerged during the implementation of the WVL project. These challenges underscored the complexities of supporting grassroots women's rights organizations (WROs) operating in rural, marginalized, or conflict-prone areas. While funding off-tarmac Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) has yielded transformative outcomes, it is not without its challenges.

These organizations often operate in marginalized, resource-scarce environments, making financial sustainability, administrative capacity, and external threats persistent barriers. Below are some of the key challenges, how they impact WROs, and strategic recommendations to mitigate them:

1 Limited Access to Financial Resources and Sustainability Risks

Many off-tarmac WROs struggle to secure consistent funding, as they often lack the networks and technical expertise to access traditional donor mechanisms. Unlike larger organizations, they may not meet stringent eligibility requirements or have the capacity to manage complex financial reporting structures. Why This is Harmful: Without sustained funding, WROs face operational shutdowns, reduced service delivery, and an inability to scale their interventions.

For instance, Paran Women Group faced financial instability before securing flexible funding through CREAW, which enabled them to expand their economic empowerment programs, leading to the planting and sale of over 50,000 tree seedlings, generating income for GBV survivors.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Flexible Funding Models: Donors should prioritize multi-year core funding over restrictive project-based grants, allowing WROs to strengthen institutional capacity and long-term sustainability.
- WROs should use existing capacities to mobilize and diversify resources for continued operations of their community driven activities.
- Strengthened Financial Management Training: Capacity-building initiatives focused on budgeting, financial literacy, and donor compliance can improve WROs' ability to manage funds and attract more investment.
- Collaborative Funding Platforms: Establishing funding consortia where multiple donors contribute to a pooled fund specifically for grassroots WROs can reduce administrative burdens and enhance funding access.

2 Bureaucratic and Rigid Application Processes

Traditional donor application processes often require extensive documentation, which can be overwhelming for small WROs operating with limited staff and administrative support. Why This is Harmful: Lengthy and complex application procedures prevent WROs from accessing crucial funds in a timely manner, delaying service delivery and advocacy efforts.

YWAN (Youth and Women Advocacy Network) initially struggled with complex grant application requirements, but due to CREAW's simplified process framework they successfully secured funding from CREAW and developed a gender-disaggregated digital tracking tool that improved GBV case documentation.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Simplified Grant Applications: Donors should introduce streamlined application processes with user-friendly templates and reduced documentation requirements for grassroots WROs.
- Capacity-Building on Proposal Writing: Providing workshops on grant writing, reporting, and compliance can empower WROs to successfully navigate donor expectations.
- Trust-Based Grantmaking: Funders should adopt feminist and participatory grantmaking approaches that emphasize relationships, transparency, and flexibility rather than excessive paperwork.

3 Weak Digital and Technological Infrastructure

Many off-tarmac WROs lack the necessary digital tools and internet connectivity to facilitate efficient communication, advocacy, and reporting, making it difficult to meet donor requirements or engage in global networks. Why This is Harmful: Without adequate technical capacity to utilize technology in collection, analysis and dissemination of data, WROs struggle to report data, reducing their ability to demonstrate impact and attract future funding.

CREAW provided capacity building to WROs that enabled them to leverage on digital technology. For example, BLINK (Blind and Low Vision Network) faced challenges in documenting cases of visually impaired GBV survivors until they developed a mobile-based reporting platform, increasing survivor reporting rates.
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Mitigation Strategies:

- Digital Inclusion Grants: Donors should allocate funds for internet access, computers, and software to enable WROs to build their digital infrastructure.
- Tech-Supported Capacity Building: Training WROs in digital advocacy, data management, and virtual engagement can help them leverage technology for fundraising and policy influence.
- Peer Learning Networks: Establishing regional digital learning hubs where WROs can share best practices and collaborate on virtual advocacy efforts led by WRO's.

4 Socio-Cultural and Political Barriers

Grassroots WROs working in patriarchal and conservative environments often face resistance when advocating for gender equality and women's rights, including political pushback and community opposition. Why This is Harmful: Without community and political buy-in, WROs risk backlash, decreased credibility, and limited reach.

FIMBO Youth Initiative, for instance, struggled to influence legal reforms to recognize GBV as an issue in Kilifi and for budget allocation for initiatives that reduce social norms that exacerbate GBV. in Kilifi County due to resistance from local leaders. However, their community engagement efforts contributed to the passage of the Kilifi Gender Act (2024), strengthening women's representation in governance.
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Mitigation Strategies:

- Community-Led Advocacy: WROs should engage local leaders, faith-based organizations, and male allies to foster grassroots support for gender justice initiatives by utilizing gender transformative evidence-based approaches for community engagement.
- Policy Engagement and Legal Protection: Strengthening alliances with human rights organizations and legal experts can help WROs navigate restrictive policies and advocate for favorable legislative reforms.
- Security and Risk Management Training: Providing safety training and response mechanisms for WRO staff and activists operating in high-risk environments can mitigate threats and ensure their well-being.

5 Limited Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Capacity

Off-tarmac WROs often struggle with data collection, impact measurement, and reporting, making it difficult to demonstrate their effectiveness to funders. Why This is Harmful: Without strong MEL systems, WROs cannot track their progress, improve program quality, or build credibility with donors.

Tharaka Nithi Women's Network successfully overcame this challenge by adopting community-led monitoring tools, allowing them to refine their menstrual health campaigns and increase outreach effectiveness.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Accessible MEL Tools: Providing WROs with easy-to-use, low-cost monitoring and evaluation tools tailored to grassroots contexts.
- Embedded Mentorship Programs: Pairing WROs with experienced MEL professionals can help them develop strong impact measurement frameworks.
- Participatory Evaluation Approaches: Encouraging community-driven impact assessments can provide qualitative insights into the effectiveness of WRO interventions.

6 Donor Dependency and Lack of Revenue Diversification

Over-reliance on a single donor or funding source can create financial instability when grants end, putting WROs at risk of closure. Why This is Harmful: If funding is suddenly withdrawn, WROs can be forced to shut down, leading to the loss of essential services for vulnerable women and girls.

SMART Ladies, for example, reduced dependency on external donors by implementing peer-led savings cooperatives, benefiting 300 women and ensuring long-term financial stability.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Social Enterprise Models: Encouraging WROs to establish income-generating activities, such as training programs or cooperative businesses, to diversify revenue streams.
- Local Philanthropy and Partnerships: Facilitating connections with local businesses, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and individual donors to reduce dependence on international funding.
- Impact Investment and Alternative Financing: Exploring blended finance models, where WROs can access micro-loans, social impact bonds, or community crowdfunding.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

At the heart of every Women's Rights Organization (WRO) working off the tarmac is a group of dedicated individuals striving to make their communities safer, more equitable, and more inclusive. These organizations are not just service providers; they are movement builders, policy shapers, and champions for change. Yet, despite their critical role, they often operate on shoestring budgets, battling bureaucratic red tape, digital exclusion, and systemic underfunding.

The stories from the field make it clear: traditional funding models are not designed to meet the needs of grassroots WROs, and this must change. What we've learned through CREAW's funding model is that flexible, long-term, and trust-based support can be game-changing. When WROs are given the financial stability to focus on their mission—without being buried under unnecessary administrative burdens—they don't just survive, they thrive. Organizations like Paran Women Group use funding to create sustainable income streams, ensuring financial independence.

YWAN leveraged digital tools to improve the documentation of GBV cases, proving that grassroots solutions are often the most innovative. FIMBO Youth Initiative influenced policy in Kilifi County, showing that local advocacy, when well-supported, can lead to systemic change.

But these successes are not the norm—yet. Too many grassroots WROs remain locked out of funding because they can't navigate complex application processes, lack the know-how to use technology to prospect, engage and build partnerships with international donors, or simply don't fit into rigid funding categories.

If we don't change the way we fund these organizations, we risk losing the stakeholders best positioned to create lasting change. So, what can we do differently? Funders must prioritize core, multi-year, and participatory funding models that place power directly into the hands of WROs. Simplifying grant applications, supporting digital access, and investing in local networks will ensure that funding reaches those who need it most. Moving beyond traditional donor-driven approaches to include community-led philanthropy and social enterprise models will also help WROs become more financially resilient.

At the end of the day, funding WROs isn't just about supporting programs—it's about investing in local entities to thrive and contribute to transformation. If we truly believe in the power of grassroots leadership, we must put our money where our values are and ensure that the people doing the work have the resources they need to succeed. The path forward is clear: fund differently, trust more, and watch as off-tarmac WROs transform their communities—and contribute to the overall impact.



5.1. Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of funding for off-tarmac WROs, donors, policy-makers, and development partners must adopt feminist, flexible, and community-driven funding approaches. Below are key recommendations that address the challenges WROs face and provide a roadmap for improving their access to and utilization of funding:



1 Increase Access to Multi-Year, Flexible Core Funding

Many WROs struggle with short-term, restrictive funding that limits their ability to build long-term strategies. Providing multi-year, unrestricted grants allows WROs to strengthen internal systems, invest in capacity-building, and respond dynamically to emerging needs.

Actionable Steps:

- Shift from project-based grants to core, institutional funding to support WROs' long-term sustainability.
- Provide multi-year funding (minimum 3-5 years) to enable stability and impact-driven programming.
- Ensure timely and predictable disbursements to avoid disruptions in program delivery.

2 Simplify Grant Application and Reporting Requirements

Complex funding applications and administrative processes exclude many grassroots WROs, particularly those with limited administrative capacity.

Actionable Steps:

- Develop simplified application templates that reduce bureaucratic barriers.
- Introduce oral or video-based application options for WROs with limited writing capacity.
- Align reporting requirements with WRO capacity, reducing excessive paperwork while ensuring accountability.

3 Strengthen Capacity Building & Organizational Development

WROs require more than just funding; they need technical support to strengthen governance, financial management, and advocacy skills.

Actionable Steps:

- Invest in capacity-strengthening programs focused on financial management, leadership, and strategic planning.
- Provide mentorship and peer-learning opportunities where experienced WROs support emerging organizations.
- Fund the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to improve impact measurement and donor accountability.

4 Promote Digital Inclusion and Technology Access

Lack of technology and poor internet access hinder WROs' ability to apply for funding, report outcomes, and engage in advocacy.

- Support digital infrastructure improvements, such as providing computers, internet access, and data analysis tools.
- Train WROs in digital advocacy, online fundraising, and data-driven decision-making.
- Develop mobile-friendly reporting platforms for ease of data submission and donor engagement.

5 Establish Participatory and Trust-Based Grantmaking

Traditional top-down funding models disempower WROs by failing to recognize their expertise and lived realities.

Actionable Steps:

- dopt participatory grantmaking approaches where WROs help define funding priorities.
- Reduce rigid donor compliance requirements in favor of relationship-based accountability.
- Build regional advisory boards with WRO representatives to guide funding decisions.

6 Expand Local Philanthropy and Alternative Financing Options

Relying solely on international donors creates financial instability for WROs. Encouraging local funding ecosystems strengthens resilience.

Actionable Steps:

- Facilitate connections between WROs and local businesses, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and community philanthropists.
- Support social enterprises and income-generating activities that ensure financial independence.
- Introduce impact investment, micro-loan programs, and crowdfunding platforms tailored for WROs.

7 Address Socio-Cultural and Political Barriers

Many WROs face pushback from local communities and restrictive policies that undermine their advocacy efforts

Actionable Steps:

- Fund community engagement programs to build local support for gender justice initiatives.
- Support policy advocacy initiatives that strengthen legal protections for WROs.
- Establish security and risk management support for WROs facing threats or backlash.

8 Improve Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Systems

Many grassroots WROs struggle with impact measurement, making it difficult to attract continued funding.

Actionable Steps:

- Develop low-cost, accessible MEL tools tailored for grassroots organizations.
- Train WRO staff on data collection, impact storytelling, and donor reporting.
- Encourage community-led evaluations, ensuring that beneficiaries' voices are reflected in program assessments.



9 Foster Collaboration and Networking Opportunities

Isolation limits WROs' ability to advocate for shared causes, exchange best practices, and access larger funding pools.

Actionable Steps:

- Develop low-cost, accessible MEL tools tailored for grassroots organizations.
- Train WRO staff on data collection, impact storytelling, and donor reporting.
- Encourage community-led evaluations, ensuring that beneficiaries' voices are reflected in program assessments.

6.0. Case Studies



1. Paran Women Group

Focus Area: Environmental Conservation and Women's Economic Empowerment
Location: Narok County
Context: Paran Women Group operates in remote Narok County, addressing the dual challenges of environmental degradation and women's economic vulnerability. The organization lacked structured operational systems, limiting its capacity to scale initiatives.

Key Interventions:

CREAW supported the group in developing governance policies, including HR and financial management frameworks.
Provided funding for income-generating activities, including tree nurseries and energy-efficient stove production.
Supplied infrastructure support, such as office equipment and water tanks, to enhance operational efficiency.

Impact:

Planted over 50,000 trees, contributing to environmental restoration in Narok County.
Enabled women to generate sustainable incomes, improving household economic security. Established long-term partnerships with local and international environmental organizations.

2. Kerio Valley Rights Organization

Focus Area: Advocacy for Gender Equality and Governance
Location: Kerio Valley
Context: Kerio Valley Rights Organization works to promote women's representation in governance structures in a region marked by patriarchal norms. The organization struggled with limited strategic direction and risk management frameworks.

Key Interventions:

CREAW's capacity-building initiatives enabled the development of a five-year strategic plan and risk management policies.
Funding supported community advocacy campaigns to promote women's participation in local governance.

Impact:

Strengthened organizational sustainability through robust governance structures.
Increased women's participation in decision-making processes at local government levels.
Fostered a culture of accountability and inclusivity in governance.

3. Longisa Beacon of Hope

Focus Area: GBV Prevention and Economic Empowerment
Location: Bomet County
Context: Longisa Beacon of Hope addresses the pervasive challenges of early marriages and FGM, while also empowering women economically in Bomet County.

Key Interventions:

Conducted community sensitization and rescue operations for girls at risk of FGM and early marriage.
Supported women's economic empowerment projects, such as kitchen gardens and poultry farming.

Impact:

Rescued and rehabilitated dozens of girls, offering them safe spaces and educational opportunities.
Improved women's livelihoods, enhancing their ability to provide for their families.
Reduced community tolerance for harmful cultural practices through awareness campaigns.

4. Blink (Blind And Low Vision Network)

Focus Area: Support for Women with Disabilities
Location: Machakos County
Context: Women and girls with disabilities in Machakos face significant stigma and economic exclusion. BLINK works to promote inclusion and improve livelihoods.

Key Interventions:

CREAW provided mentorship on financial literacy and income generation.
Supported the establishment of monitoring and
evaluation (M&E) systems to track program impact.

Impact:

Increased income levels for women with disabilities through skills training in savings and entrepreneurship.
Enhanced inclusion of women with disabilities in community activities and decision-making processes.
Strengthened organizational accountability and impact assessment through improved M&E systems

5. Tharaka Nithi Women's Network (EARG)

Focus Area: Menstrual Hygiene and Women's Empowerment
Location: Tharaka Nithi County
Context: Girls in Tharaka Nithi face high school dropout rates due to menstrual stigma and lack of access to hygiene products. EARG aims to address these issues through direct intervention and awareness campaigns.

Key Interventions:

Distributed menstrual hygiene products to over 400 girls in schools.
Conducted school gardening projects to promote self-reliance and reduce stigma.

Impact:

Improved school retention rates for girls by addressing menstruation-related barriers.
Fostered community-level discussions on menstrual health, reducing stigma.

Empowered girls with the knowledge and tools to manage their menstrual health effectively.

6. FIMBO Youth Initiative

Focus Area: Policy Advocacy for Gender-Sensitive Laws
Location: Kilifi County
Context: FIMBO Youth Initiative focuses on advocating for gender-sensitive policies in Kilifi County, where women's representation in governance has been historically low.

Key Interventions:

Conducted advocacy campaigns targeting local government and stakeholders.
Played a central role in drafting and lobbying for the Kilifi Gender Act (2024).

Impact:

Contributed to the enactment of the Kilifi Gender Act, ensuring women's inclusion in governance.

Increased community awareness of the importance of gender equality in leadership.
Empowered youth leaders to continue policy advocacy.

7. The Hijabi Mentorship Program (HMP)

Focus Area: GBV Prevention and Policy Engagement
Location: Kwale County
Context: HMP focuses on addressing GBV through mentorship and advocacy in Kwale County, where survivors face significant barriers to accessing justice.

Key Interventions:

Advocated for the Kwale County SGBV Protection Act (2024).
Trained community champions on GBV prevention and response.

Impact:

Successfully influenced the enactment of the Kwale County SGBV Protection Act.
Strengthened community-based GBV prevention and response mechanisms.
Increased awareness of SGBV issues among policymakers and community members

8. SMART Ladies

Focus Area: Economic Empowerment for Marginalized Women
Location: Nakuru County
Context: SMART Ladies supports commercial sex workers in Nakuru County, helping them transition to sustainable livelihoods and reduce stigma.

Key Interventions:

Conducted financial literacy training and savings programs.
Organized workshops on alternative income-generating activities.

Impact:

Improved financial independence for commercial sex workers through savings and entrepreneurship.
Reduced stigma, fostering greater community acceptance and inclusion.
Strengthened social cohesion by integrating marginalized women into community development initiatives.



9. Isiolo Women Against SGBV

Focus Area: GBV Prevention and SRHR Advocacy
Location: Isiolo County
Context: Isiolo Women Against SGBV operates in a conservative region where GBV and limited access to SRHR services are prevalent.

Key Interventions:

Conducted community awareness campaigns on GBV and reproductive health.
Advocated for gender-sensitive policies in Isiolo County.

Impact:

Increased awareness of GBV issues in conservative communities.
Improved access to SRHR services for survivors.
Fostered collaboration with local leaders to address gender-based challenges effectively.

10. African Women Agenda for Resilience and Development (AWARD)

Focus Area: Capacity Building and Governance Development
Location: Nairobi County
Context: AWARD, a relatively young organization, initially struggled to develop robust financial management systems. The lack of prior exposure to formalized governance structures meant they needed tailored training to catch up with more established organizations.

Key Interventions:

CREAW provided localized, accessible workshops and mentorship programs focused on the specific needs of smaller organizations.
Supported AWARD in building foundational policies and frameworks for governance and financial accountability.

Impact:

Step-by-step capacity building allowed AWARD to scale its operations and secure additional funding.
Strengthened organizational sustainability through improved governance and financial management systems.
Positioned AWARD as a credible and effective organization within the donor community.

Our WRO partners

Name	County
Kitui Women in Development	Kitui
Savana Kitui	Kitui
Superb CBO	Nairobi
Elimisha Vijana Initiative	Nyeri
Beacon of Hope Longisa	Bomet
Afya Arika	Narok
Paran Women Group	Narok
Youth and Women Advocacy Network	Meru
Kiengu Women challenged to challenge	Meru
Chepngobob Koshin	Kericho
Isiolo Women Against GBV	Isiolo
The Good Shepherd Program	Embu
Enlightend generation International	Tharaka Nithi
Educate a Rural Girl	Tharaka Nithi
Mororo Interfaith Community	Tana River
LEHA self-help group	Kiambu
Strategic Community Development	Mombasa
Kerio View Rights	Uasin Gishu
Smart Ladies	Nakuru
The Hijabi Mentorship Program	Kwale
BLINK	Machakos
Afrika Women Agenda for Resillience and Dvelopment	Kajiado
WIMA Women Group	Kilifi
Fimbo Youth Initiative	Kilifi
Western Kenya LBTQ Feminist Forum	Kisumu
Tuwajali Wajane	Kwale
Matasaru Ntoyie	Narok
MK Defenders	Kiambu
Wounded Healers	Kiambu

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SAFEGUARDING

We uphold the highest safeguarding standards. Report any abuse, exploitation confidentially and safely on our toll free line +254 704338759, email Safeguarding@creawkenya.org

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