

CREA



ANNUAL
REPORT



2020-21

IMAGE DESCRIPTION OF COVER PAGE:

White cover with nine circles placed in rows of three, below each other.

FIRST ROW FROM LEFT:

FIRST CIRCLE: pink with CREA in white text.

SECOND CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a figure with a human head with long hair and a body of a winged horse, galloping in the sky over clouds, wearing a crown, necklace, and with two flowers on its body.

THIRD CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a long-stemmed flower with pointed edges, open, with a dotted center.

SECOND ROW FROM LEFT:

FIRST CIRCLE: pink-yellow illustration of a person with long hair flying through the sky. The side profile shows earrings, a nose ring, circular patterns and stars on the hair, and patterns on the body, including a large open eye.

SECOND CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of four faces with large eyes looking straight ahead, and wearing either a bindi or maang tikka. One wears a headdress, another is embedded into the edges of a patterned Sun. The fourth's face below is half-covered by a small woven mask.

THIRD CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a sail boat on choppy waters with oars extending out of the boat, while large clouds are set against the background. A dartboard-like Sun has been drawn against the sky over the boat.

THIRD ROW FROM LEFT:

FIRST CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a pinwheel against a background with thick lines that gather together in a circular pattern, at parts.

SECOND CIRCLE: pink-yellow illustration of a figure with wings open and spread out, flying over buildings at a tilted angle with hair flowing in one direction and hands out in the other.

THIRD CIRCLE: pink with ANNUAL REPORT in white text.

FOURTH ROW FROM LEFT:

FIRST CIRCLE: pink-yellow illustration of a figure with a patterned body of a bird flying over stacked books, looking through a telescope with one arm and holding a book in the other.

SECOND CIRCLE: pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a leaf shaded at the veins. The background has thick lines falling vertically.

THIRD CIRCLE: pink with 2020-21 in white.



crea

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Letter from the Executive Director	2
<hr/>	
Letter from the Board 2020-2021	5
<hr/>	
Grappling With the Impact of the Pandemic	6
<hr/>	
The Year in Numbers	10
<hr/>	
Finding and Founding Virtual Spaces	12
<hr/>	
Digital by Design	17
<hr/>	
Voices for the Future	20
<hr/>	
Staying Grounded	26
<hr/>	
A New Strategic Plan: 2021-2025	32



Pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a figure with a human head with long hair and a body of a winged horse, galloping in the sky over clouds, wearing a crown, necklace, and with two flowers on its body.

A Pandemic of Power

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is impossible to open a report on 2020 without acknowledging that our collective global experience has been largely shaped by the pandemic this year. CREA has been radically rethinking our own practices, both in relation to our programmatic work as well as ourselves as an organization, in this time of crisis. The stay-at-home orders in our diverse contexts compelled us to think creatively about how to collectivize, work, and organize together virtually. It also made us further strengthen bridges with our partners, their constituencies, and all our communities.

The complications and challenges that have come with the COVID-19 crisis have also pushed us to reconsider the otherness that has been reinforced or redefined by the pandemic. The global response to the pandemic has created new hierarchies of who can talk, who can travel, and even who can touch. As much as we value the power of the virtual, the loss of physical spaces for our organizing, and our pleasure, has been deeply felt.

The pandemic has upended lives and livelihoods; it has created new barriers for our advocacy; it has exposed

the most structurally excluded to more violence; it has forced many of us to give up our already limited outlets for well-being as we are asked or ordered to do only what is essential.

CREA is deeply invested in examining and challenging the politics of what (and who) is “essential.” Much in the same way we reject hierarchies in the value of chosen labor, we also need to continue to challenge why productivity comes before pleasure. While we have seen countless reports attempting to quantify lost income, how can we capture — and then reverse — our other losses?

As second and third waves crash in some of our geographies, while others begin to emerge from lengthy restrictions, we are left to grapple with vaccine diplomacy. In this, we see new layers of otherness being created: who has one, who does not, and even which vaccine you receive places you in an entirely new, emergent hierarchy that we must continue to challenge at the same moment we are only starting to analyze it.



Geetanjali Misra, CREA's Executive Director at a meeting with staff members.

An Indian person with black hair smiles in a Zoom screenshot dressed in pink, wearing glasses and silver earrings, and seated in front of white shelves with baskets. Four thumbnails of people appear above the main image.

Early in the pandemic, we rejected the language of war, casteism, and ableism entrenched in much of the discourse surrounding COVID-19. As a global organization, we are also acutely aware of global inequity and bear witness to the failures of leadership at national and international levels, every day. But in a time of devastation and isolation, we remain energized by the communities that have mobilized, in person and online.

The year provided unprecedented challenges, but it also offered moments of brightness: CREA turned 20 years old in 2020. Twenty years of building feminist leadership and complicating discourses in order to

strengthen intersectional movements.

Reflecting on our two decades of work, CREA also developed a new Strategic Plan that centers structurally excluded people, because marginalization does not happen in a vacuum. The most pressing challenges we face now, and will continue to challenge post-pandemic, require us to recognize the ways in which the structure of societal architecture perpetuates harms.

Dismantling harmful structures and hierarchies is difficult work. But long-term, local, national, and global feminist movement-building is the only answer to authoritarianism and the pushback to the gains made

on human rights. This last year, CREA also launched the social justice primer *All About Movements* to foster collective feminist movements, and stepped in to lead new consortia that center the voices of those who are too often left out.

Feminists have always done this work of bringing people in: to our movements, to our politics, and along on our journeys. At CREA, we took time in 2020 to celebrate our own teachers, who brought us in to sex work activism, disability rights movements, and so much more. And, sadly, we grieved the passing of many activists and close advisors during the pandemic.

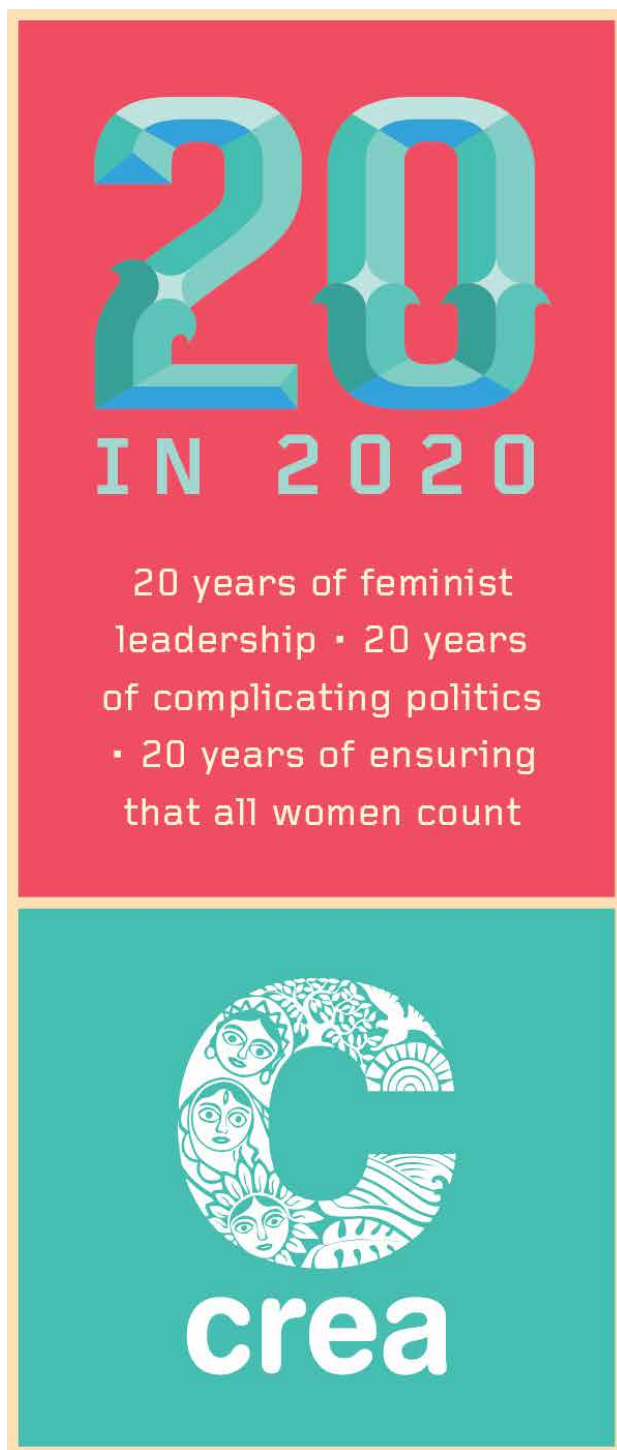
We will keep bringing people in as the emergency created by COVID-19 continues to expose the injustices and faultlines CREA has always strived to overcome. Bringing people in takes time; it takes work. But leaving people out — of our conversations, movements, and spaces — means we undermine our goal of creating feminist futures.

For the past year, we have been told to stay apart, to create distance, and to close our doors. But confronting the challenges of 2021 and beyond requires new commitment and feminist solidarity.

So: Will you join us to bring people in?

Geetanjali Misra

May 2021



CREA turned 20 years old in 2020.

Pink graphic with "20 in 2020" in teal. Below, smaller yellow text reads "20 years of feminist leadership. 20 years of complicating politics. 20 years of ensuring all women count." The white CREA logo appears below on a teal background.



Pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a leaf shaded at the veins. The background has thick lines falling vertically.

Letter from the Board

A LETTER FROM CO-CHAIRS SHILPA PHADKE
AND KANCHAN PAMNANI

Over a year into the COVID-19 emergency, we are more convinced than ever of the power of feminist movements and their ability to adapt, change, and prioritize in moments of crisis. The resilience of CREA's staff, partners, and most importantly the communities with which we work – and the feminist leaders within them – has energized us even in the most difficult moments.

This year, CREA has learned how to navigate new advocacy realities and adjust to evolving legislation, while also transforming our work to meet the shifting needs of partners due to the impacts of the pandemic. Grounding these experiences along with two decades of learning, our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan places CREA to take the next step towards holding open civic space and building the transformative capacity of feminist movements around the world.

As CREA evolved to take on the present challenges, we also looked towards the future. The organization's growth was matched with its focus on institutional strengthening. With support from the Ford Foundation's BUILD grant, as well as three

multi-country, multi-year consortium-based grants from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (two led by CREA), we are reexamining our own systems and power, while helping shift decision making and feminist leadership to the global South.

While it is true that this year accelerated change and created barriers, it also brought many moments of reflection as CREA marked its 20th anniversary. In a year when we were forced to isolate, your presence as an ally has been felt.

To all of the donors, partners, advisors, artists, activists, and co-disruptors who have been a part of this 20 year journey to challenge unjust structures and create the world we want to live in: thank you.



Pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a pinwheel against a background with thick lines that gather together in a circular pattern, at parts.

Grappling with the Impact of the Pandemic

“It is clear that when marginalized communities have the ability to lead their own organizing efforts and collectivize for their needs, they are safer and have access to more avenues of protection.”

– CREA Co-Authored Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: COVID-19 and the Increase of Domestic Violence Against Women

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic it is clear that the public health emergency — and State responses to it — have served to exacerbate the egregious discrimination and violence many structurally excluded people face.

The pandemic continues to disproportionately affect structurally excluded women and girls, persons of diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics, persons with disabilities, and sex workers — particularly because historically these constituencies are the same ones that, through stigmatization, marginalization, silencing, and exclusion, lack access to resources in the community. The most marginalized were left out of government schemes, unable to quickly adapt to virtual spaces, overburdened, isolated, and at risk.

In India, strict initial lockdowns prevented the continuation of CREA’s community-based work, while simultaneously increasing the need for support in rural communities. An influx of migrant workers returning home to their villages from the cities in which they live and work was further complicated by caste-based



Session on International Women's Day where participants shared their experiences, needs, and fears during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two black people are seated wearing medical masks. One is in a dress and is mid-speaking. Two orange illustrated wings appear from this person's back. The other is listening on the side dressed in a t-shirt and jeans.

discrimination and communalism, particularly in relation to service delivery. For frontline workers, who were some of the only groups allowed to interact with community members, it was essential to quickly understand their own needs as well as their biases and how these affect women and girls.

Leveraging CREA's community level networks to ensure an in-person link to non-urban women and girls was critical because their access to the Internet or personal phones was limited. CREA carried out a rapid-response assessment of access to mobile phone technology and the Internet via community-based partners in India, in April 2020, in order to design appropriate responses. It found that the lockdown made it difficult for girls to meet frequently, increased control on their sexuality by their families, and heightened surveillance by the State. Restrictions on using mobile phones and

increased violence added to the hardships during the isolation. Identifying these challenges made it possible to design reimagined campaigns to address the lockdown-specific issues as part of wider public education efforts.



Young girls at the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign in India.

Young girls stand outside in matching yellow and blue shirts and similar white face masks. Green trees are visible at the back.

In East Africa, stay-at-home orders impacted marginalized communities severely. The pandemic and its restrictions created a range of challenges, from complete loss of income to homelessness and lack of access to medical, legal, and justice systems, as well as an increase in arbitrary arrests and violence.

Early in the pandemic, CREA also undertook a needs assessment with partners in Kenya and Uganda working with women with disabilities (WWDs), sex workers, lesbians, and trans people. For most WWDs, social distancing meant further challenges to access to essential goods and services. For communities that are criminalized, such as sex workers, lesbians, and trans people, it meant loss of livelihood and more vulnerability to violence from the State because of the disappearance of social support. For lesbians and trans people who were forced to stay with their birth families, violence within the household became more common as they were cut off from non-familial, supportive social networks.

Recognizing the extent of and risks posed by the isolation, CREA quickly organized closed webinars in East Africa to protect the security and privacy of individuals but also link them to needed resources and support. CREA also directed financial resources to 12 identified partners in different districts and counties across Uganda and Kenya, to support their self-led engagements around gender-based violence (GBV), its manifestations, and implications during the pandemic.

This kind of support, paired with appropriate, accessible, and safe online spaces, was not immediately available in the initial stages of the pandemic. While global North organizations were quick to point out the potential impacts of the pandemic in the global South, spaces for conversation and reflection led from the South were scarce. As a response, CREA organized a series of COVID Talks in English and Hindi. The talks



A Rethink Evening on pleasure and the pandemic, in Uganda.

A black person with long brown, pink, white hair in braids and a pink face mask that is falling down off the nose is speaking with arms half-raised while another black person dressed in blue sits on the side.

focused on the pandemic of power and exclusion, and reimagined feminist futures post-crisis.

Virtual spaces and remote support helped to maintain connections during the isolation, but CREA also provided ten ground-level partner organizations in India with additional funding during this period (including LGBTI groups, sex-worker groups and organizations focusing on other marginalized persons, such as Muslim women). This funding enabled these groups to reach and support those in their communities worst affected by the lockdowns, and to do awareness-raising and share helpful information.

For example, some of the groups organized campaigns around where to seek sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) services during the lockdown, or where to access hormones, antiviral treatment or other kinds of medical treatments or services that trans people or people living with HIV might require. These campaigns also included critical information about what to do in case of family violence (of particular importance to LGBTI persons) during lockdown.



A training on feminist leadership, movement-building and GBV.

A black person, among other participants who are wearing a large sheet of paper over their shoulders, has written "BEAUTIFUL. COURAGEOUS. CONFIDENCE." on the paper worn by the person in front.

CREA was also able to support groups to seize critical advocacy opportunities. For example, CREA provided funds to a trans rights group which works across several states in South India to fight discrimination against trans people in COVID-19 related service delivery and relief programs. This advocacy saw a positive result when the Karnataka Chief Minister met with trans groups to uphold the Karnataka High Court's ruling that all service and relief delivery should be free from discrimination. With CREA's support, the group is continuing its advocacy, ensuring the judgment is upheld and implemented on the ground.

At the global level, through the Count Me In! (CMI) Consortium where CREA co-leads the Sex Workers' Rights Working Group, funding was provided to ten sex workers' groups in South Asia and East Africa to help them through this crisis. Since sex workers who work in person have had their livelihoods eviscerated by the pandemic, the additional funding helped sex workers' groups to advance and protect the rights of sex workers, and advocate for the inclusion of sex workers in countries' social protection and relief schemes.

Supporting national and global advocacy while modifying our own approaches was critical. While some opportunities to deepen areas of work and strengthen digital engagement did arise, COVID-19 restrictions and risks created new barriers for civil society as a whole. International policy advocacy, especially within the United Nations (UN), has primarily moved to the online space as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

Both the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) and Generation Equality Forum (GEF) were conducted primarily online, creating new barriers for civil society participation and engagement, and further reducing the opportunities which civil society had to advocate with UN Member States and other important actors. The virtual space made it mostly impossible to lobby Member States during informal but influential moments. Pre-pandemic, this "in the hallway" lobbying was a critical tool for women's rights advocacy, and these new virtual formats led to lost momentum in some cases.

It was challenging to navigate the loss of advocacy opportunities at the same moment in which violence and barriers faced by partners increased. However, through an always shifting combination of on-the-ground and online approaches, CREA, working with the understanding and support of donors to repurpose and respond, transformed its work to support partners to host Institutes, trainings, and events and create new resources and spaces to further its vision of a just and peaceful world.

The Year in Numbers

3

INSTITUTES

21

SESSIONS/
TRAININGS/TOTS

67

KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES
PRODUCED

958

INDIVIDUALS TRAINED

155

CAMPAIGNS/EVENTS



The infographic features two large circles on a light gray background with a network of dotted lines. The top circle is orange and contains the number 447. The bottom circle is red and contains the number 418,510. Both numbers are in a large, bold, yellow font. Below each number is a label in a smaller, bold, yellow font.

447

ORGANIZATIONS REACHED

418,510

INDIVIDUALS REACHED



Pink-yellow illustration of a figure with a patterned body of a bird flying over stacked books, looking through a telescope with one arm and holding a book in the other.

Finding and Founding Virtual Spaces

In some ways, the pandemic accelerated CREA's already ongoing transformation toward more virtual work, but it also required rapid adaptation. With public civic space suddenly restricted and surveilled, CREA quickly shifted means of working to ensure partners were supported and their evolving challenges and barriers were identified and addressed.

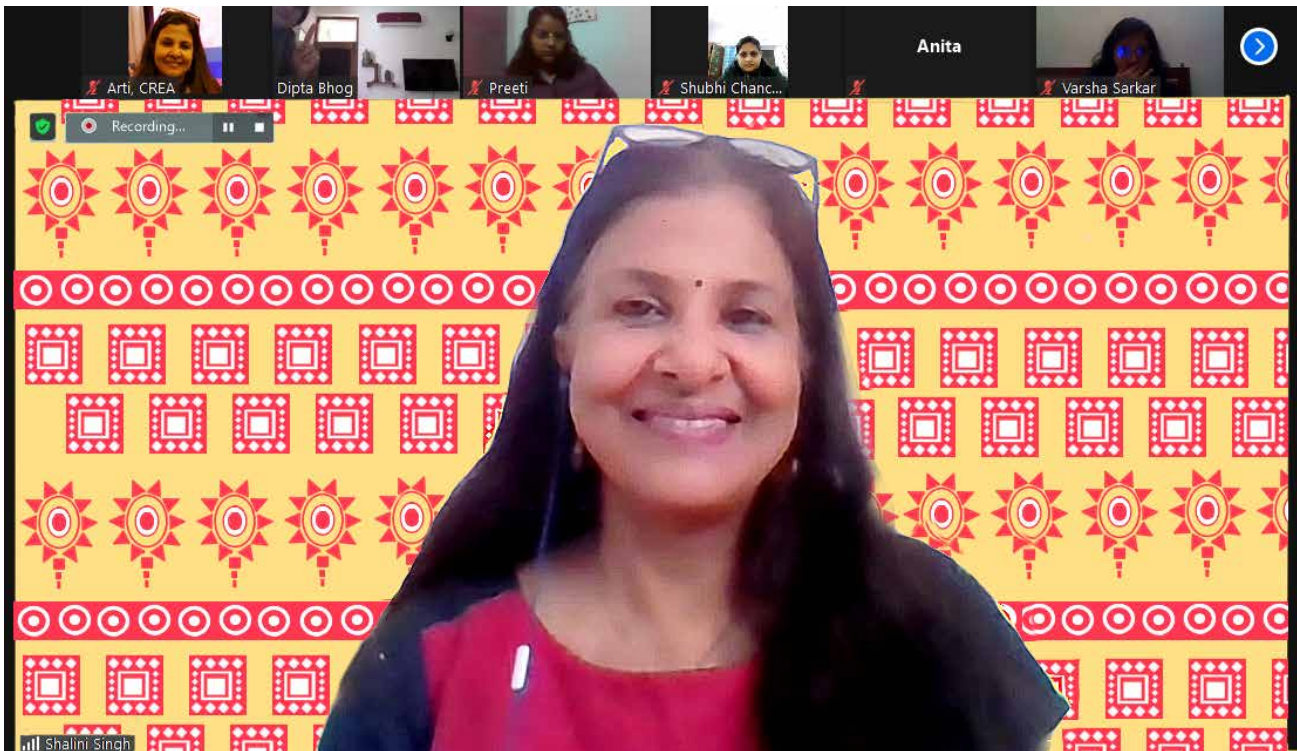
Within the early days of the pandemic, uneven access to technology became clear. As in-person work had to be placed on hold, CREA maintained communication with partner and community-based organizations. We developed ad-hoc spaces of connectivity, such as WhatsApp groups and routine check-in calls with community-based organizations and members of the community. This ongoing correspondence was key to learning how best to work digitally moving forward.

CREA also shifted annual capacity-building Institutes to virtual spaces, in some cases for the very first time. We utilized our previous experience in conducting online Institutes — dating back to 2010 — to guide these new methods of adapting. These Institutes

provide activists and practitioners with a deep and holistic understanding of rights, issues, and intersections between issues such as sexuality and disability or gender and caste.

CREA's Sexuality and Gender Rights Institute - Hindi (SGRI - Hindi) is designed to examine the links between sexuality, rights, gender, and health, and their interface with socio-cultural and legal issues. This year, SGRI - Hindi continued to explore such topics, all the while drawing a connection between the distinct concerns and difficulties that have emerged as a result of the pandemic and its subsequent restrictions.

The participants of these Institutes are often from extreme interior and remote villages of India, in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Many participants had limited access to devices and were dependent on weak and fluctuating internet connectivity. As a result, CREA addressed the existing digital divide by building the capacities of all partner organizations to access technology for sharing and receiving information, devoting time to orienting participants



CREA's Programs Director Shalini Singh, at the Sexuality and Gender Rights Institute - Hindi.

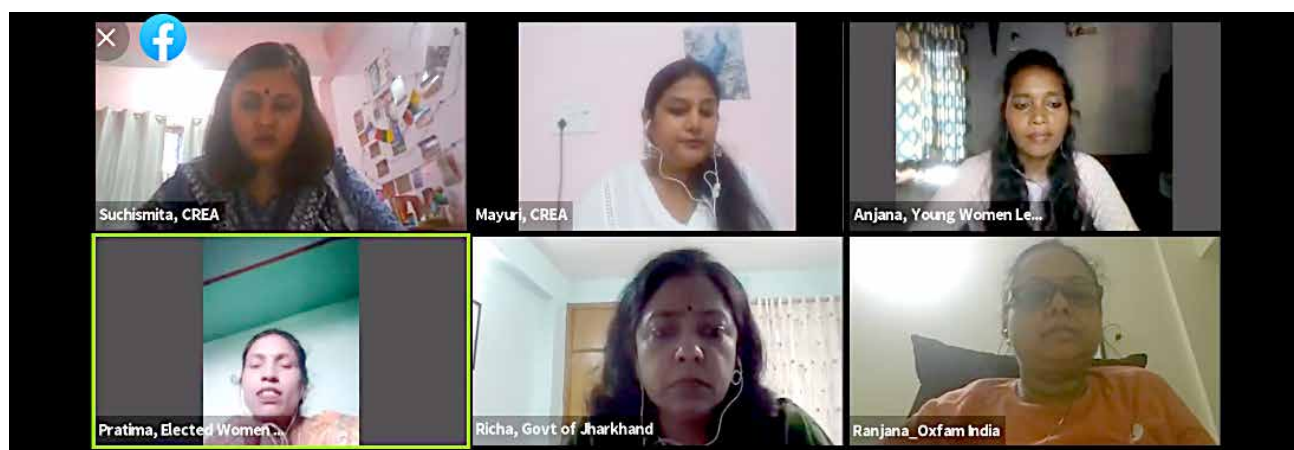
An Indian person wearing a bindi smiles in a Zoom screenshot. The background screen is illustrated with a full red-yellow pattern. Above the main screen are thumbnails of other participants.

on the use of virtual meeting tools on phones and laptops, and working with organizations to ensure Internet packages were purchased. The participants themselves were quick to adapt and learn. Whenever possible, several participants commuted to their offices or locations where they could secure a stronger Internet connection.

As the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions continued, so did reports of increased violence, particularly against sex workers, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, as well as women and girls in general. The spread of the virus pushed people deeper into their homes, taking a toll not just economically, but also psychologically and emotionally. The practice of forced marriage continued, with girls and young women further losing the right to make their own decisions on their bodies and their lives. Within this context, we worked to introduce an online version of the Feminist Leadership,

Movement Building and Rights Institute (FLMBaRI), Hindi, which is designed to strengthen feminist leadership, advocacy, and strategies for building collective power for social transformation.

Over the course of five days, the virtual FLMBaRI Hindi held sessions with experts and discussed topics such as migration, caste, violence, disability, and challenges during COVID-19, as well as power. Although it was difficult to fit the usual Institute style into an onscreen-only format, CREA worked to ensure that the sessions held a mix of mediums from video lectures and movies to interactive discussions. Moreover, the online sessions allowed participants who may not have been able to be there in person — pregnant people, persons responsible for caring for children or elderly persons, persons with constraints to travel, or with a large organization workload — to be a part of the sessions.



'Rethinking Feminist Intervention and COVID-19', an online conversation series in Hindi.

Zoom screenshot with six screens, each featuring a South Asian person listening, while one member on the screen speaks.

Along with the Institutes, CREA began several of its planned training programs virtually. One of our oldest programs, Ibtida ("the beginning" in Urdu), works with a network of community-based organizations to build their feminist organizational leadership and capacity. These are women-led community organizations, working in various sectors such as health and livelihoods and human rights. The Ibtida trainings covered SRHR, and laws around GBV, sexuality, and gender, to increase nuance in the organization's understanding of rights and certain topics, and then inform their subsequent interventions toward rights-based approaches for women.

CREA's online capacity-building also extended to trainers who co-lead and implement programs designed for young girls. These sports and bodily autonomy programs were halted during the first half of the year due to pandemic restrictions. Together with CREA, these trainers developed strategies to stay connected with the girls during lockdown, and prepared for work moving forward, in anticipation of holding in-person programs once again.

Finding virtual spaces sometimes also meant reimagining existing platforms. We used CREA's established

user-friendly information line, which is part of our annual "Badhate Kadam Panchayat Ki Orr" campaign, to connect to women and girls locked in at their homes. This phone-in system was originally designed to promote feminist leadership and SRHR via short audio episodes, where a caller can dial in to select and listen to a specific topic. In light of the pandemic, the episodes were shifted to include themes based on the crises triggered by COVID-19, such as GBV, bodily rights, girls' education, career choice and agency, and early and forced marriages. In 2020, we also expanded the system's reach with the support of partner organizations, and received more than twice as many expected unique callers. In addition to listening to the recordings, the system also provides callers with the option of contributing their experiences, opinions, or queries. This provides a needed space for callers to share their personal stories and struggles. This year, a majority of callers made use of the recording feature, and their input will guide how CREA and its partners further address the ongoing challenges faced by women and girls at the community level.

While the world moved to webinars and online sessions, CREA noticed the absence of public webinars in Hindi. We held a Hindi online conversation series



CREA tested a hybrid model of sessions with small in-person gatherings broadcasted via Zoom and Facebook live stream.

Zoom screenshot with two screens. One shows an ongoing in-person event with six people seated, mid-conversation. The other shows a black person with short hair speaking.

titled “Rethinking Feminist Intervention and COVID-19” on the role of civil society organizations during the pandemic, highlighting the leadership of community-based leaders and State actors, and the impact of COVID-19 on sex workers. Our choice to livestream some of these sessions on Facebook allowed for participation across various parts of India, sometimes with groups of people gathered around one device. The virtual meetings provided space for adolescent girl leaders and Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to widely share their pandemic work for the first time, speaking about the situations in their communities and their efforts to challenge caste-based discrimination and to make basic SRHR services available.

Understanding the different needs in different locations, CREA, together with partners in Kenya, also held virtual conversations around the status of access to abortion rights information and accessibility of such spaces. These conversations revealed the context for abortion rights spaces in Kenya from a community, national, and regional perspective; the opportunities that exist; the legal space; and cross-movement engagement in abortion dialogues — or lack thereof. These conversations highlighted the growing need to create opportunities for advocacy on abortion rights,

particularly for LBQ and trans people, sex workers, and WWDs.

“We convene these spaces to take stock in remembrance of how far we have come and how much more we have to do, at an intersectional level, bearing in mind that as rural LBQ women, we face multiple challenges and hindrances.”

– Participant (from Lira, Uganda) at panel discussion on the state of LBQ women in leadership and decision making positions, organized by the Uganda LBQ Network.

CREA also held its first virtual “Rethink Evening” in East Africa, which is aimed at sparking new conversations about art, feminism, and politics. Through separate sessions running via Zoom, we held storytelling sessions, poetry and other performances, centered on



“COVID-19 Talks” explored South feminist perspectives and experiences of the pandemic.

White event poster reads “Meet the Speakers, CREA COVID Talks, No Return To Status Quo: Imagining Feminist Futures,” with images of five speakers, event details, a patterned border, and a CREA logo.

African philosophy, history and culture and ways of navigating the pandemic, with a vision for the future. These sessions also focused on the importance of wellness, through the use of space, air, sound, dance, and movement.

However, CREA’s webinars were not limited to audiences in India and East Africa, where we predominantly work at the community level. Taking into account the global effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a global South organization, we hosted two “COVID-19 Talks” to explore South feminist perspectives and experiences of the pandemic. Through these conversations, we were able to bring together vital feminist thinkers and practitioners from diverse contexts to reflect, analyze, and imagine, rather than simply sliding into a “new normal,” with no pause for feminist interrogation. The conversations created a space for sharing deeply lived insights and imagining creative feminist responses to the pandemic, as well

as to State and non-State responses to the pandemic, which often created further structures of inequality and exclusion.

The webinars strengthened existing partnerships and created new ones for CREA; we were able to forge many new relationships as a result of these conversations, both in forming alliances with those who came on as speakers, and those who joined as listeners and attendees. Majority of the panelists spotlighted at these sessions were speaking at a CREA panel for the first time, which drew in a newer audience, in turn contributing to new partnerships. For example, we were able to establish partnerships in feminist movements for climate justice based out of the African context and in Hawaii.

Joining and creating these intersectional spaces is core to CREA’s movement-building approach. Even as modes of working shifted dramatically, the importance of maintaining collective action — even online — was clear. To support these efforts, we entered 2021 with a fully digital launch of our newest publication, *All About Movements*. Written by CREA’s Senior Knowledge Advisor, Srilatha Batliwala, it builds on CREA’s earlier primer, *All About Power*. This publication comes at a critical moment when mounting calls for social change are being met globally with stronger oppressive tactics by State and non-State actors. Intended for activists and practitioners, the publication explains what makes a movement feminist, why movements matter, and how movement-building can effectively change existing power structures, whether it be a gathering of hundreds on the ground or a curated movement online. *All About Movements* ignited new digital conversations, and is now available in English, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, and Spanish.



Pink-yellow illustration of a face with mechanical parts/items making up parts of the face, such as a button and levers for eyes, mechanical ears, and a beak at the mouth. Thick vertical lines are in the background.

Digital by Design

As the global lockdowns limited physical interactions, technology became an indispensable tool for activists and advocates. But even before the pandemic mandated work-from-home orders, CREA was examining, exploring, and expanding engagement with technology as a site of activism, rather than as simply a tool for our work. Acknowledging CREA's own need to grow in our understanding and practice of accessibility, digital security, and online organizing, much of our work in 2020 was digital by design.

Indisputably, online space has always been a space for collectivizing and organizing, solidarity, and pleasure. However, we recognize that the power and reach of social media and online spaces are mirrored by increasing State and non-State attempts to block and limit access. For this reason, CREA embedded online civic space within its new Strategic Plan. Online spaces must be protected and expanded as civic spaces to exercise our agency, to articulate our vision for the future, and to demand our rights.

“Criminal law used across the region against journalists and activists have increased, forcing us to think about organizing and movement-building in different ways, to learn more about what our relationship with technology is, and to approach security and safety in a more holistic way.”

– Subha Wijesiriwardena, CREA, Manager, Programs and Innovation; speaking at *Lit Talks on Resisting Authoritarianism in Asia*, organized by the Human Rights Funders Network

In order for technology to play a role in the just and peaceful world we seek to create, it was necessary to center accessibility as central to our digital approaches in 2020 and beyond. CREA believes accessibility should be understood not as a technical or logistical issue but as a wider concept of embracing diversity through collective action to ensure our spaces and communities are open to all.

Our commitment to improving accessibility is core to CREA's approach to understanding technology as a domain: a site of inequality, a site of resistance, a site that contains some of the most pressing political debates and questions of our time. A space in which we must practice politics of deep inclusion.

One such space was the eighth edition of the Disability Sexuality and Rights Online Institute (DSROI). The six-week course took participants from 44 countries through a program to unpack, understand, discuss, and challenge key concepts around the intersections of disability, gender, and sexuality. The participants included donor organizations, feminists with disabilities, disability rights advocates, scholars, and feminist and LGBTI organizations, including: International Planned Parenthood Foundation, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World), White Ribbon Alliance, Intersex Asia, and Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative.

Because the Institute took place during the pandemic, it allowed for discussions around how persons with disabilities are impacted by the crisis, particularly around increased incidences of domestic violence and the lack of access to support mechanisms. The Institute was intended from the beginning to be online and accessible, yet CREA took additional measures to ensure that the learning process would be as flexible as possible so that participants could engage according to their possibilities defined by pandemic dynamics.

As a result of ILGA World's participation and engagement with the intersectional issues in the Institute, CREA was invited to co-organize a Side Event with on sexual and gender diversity and disability at the Human Rights Council with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Intersex Europe. This collaboration helps to advance a disability-centered perspective within ILGA World and their network of more than 1,300 LGBTI groups.

Other participants from the Institute have gone on to implement needs assessments and develop new funding streams to organizations of WWDs; establish new collaborations with feminist collectives with disabilities; explore new work on inclusive sex education curricula; and address disability rights within their organizations' strategic frameworks, creating the sustainable ripple effect across movements.

Examining our own accessibility practices, CREA redesigned and relaunched its organizational website. The updated website provides new information about CREA's work and makes two decades' worth of multi-language knowledge resources much more readily available. CREA partnered with a global South-based accessibility lab to coordinate a full audit and remediation to ensure the site conforms to all Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 standards.

Accessibility requires practical skills and strategies and systems and CREA remains committed to improving all of these. However, our partners and teachers have shown CREA that it is also a state of mind. Through our work and the spaces into which this work takes us (or allows us to create), we try to address who is left out due to their disability. This year, CREA began including alt text and image descriptions as a minimum standard in communications and asking other organizations and funders who interact with us on social media to do the same. As a result, more

partners have begun to implement the practice in their own external communications.

CREA's expanded web and social media engagement provided important platforms for two virtual campaigns. As so many conversations moved online during the pandemic, CREA aimed to highlight voices which are structurally excluded from physical and online civic spaces.

In partnership with CMI, the Counting Sex Workers In campaign included viral videos, mythbusting, polls, and virtual events. The animated campaign videos in English and Hindi have been viewed a total of 60,000 times, with social media messages reaching over 200,000 impressions across channels.

The Counting Sex Workers In campaign launched with a webinar co-sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, featuring advocates from the constituencies alongside the Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The online event emphasized and raised the awareness of hundreds of participants — primarily feminists who had yet to affirm a sex worker rights approach — of understanding the harms caused by criminalization of sex work. The campaign also developed and disseminated animated factsheets and graphics on sex worker rights and debunked myths around sex work, in English, French, Spanish, and Dutch.

One organization, whose work to advance the human rights of sex worker defenders was stalled at their senior level, said that the campaign, especially the panel and a teach-in organized by AWID and the Red Umbrella Fund, had finally enabled the forward motion to release their documentation about sex worker rights defenders. Another prominent women's rights



The Drawing Resistance and Resilience campaign featured stories on GBV.

Illustration with five distinct boxes filled with figures, surrounded by leaves. Some figures have text bubbles with symbols instead of words. A yellow paper airplane flies between the scenes.

leader published an op-ed in OpenDemocracy crediting CREA with shifting her stance to believe that sex work is work.

As the lead of the All Women Count (AWC) consortium, CREA also worked with partners to amplify how community-driven efforts to organize, intervene, and resist issues of violence on the ground have deep value that is often overlooked in top down approaches. AWC collected nine stories of resilience and resistance to GBV during COVID-19 from communities in Lebanon, Egypt, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and India. AWC then worked with global South-based illustrators to create graphic narratives for digital dissemination to reach 65,000 impressions on social media.



Pink-yellow woodcut illustration of a long-stemmed flower with pointed edges, open, with a dotted center.

Voices for the Future

“To be able to make significant changes we want to see for all sex workers in Kenya, we must put in place strategies that will see sex workers represented in all these spaces where decisions about women’s rights are being made”

– At a training convened by CREA and Kisumu Sex Workers Alliance during the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign

Influencing global policy is essential to changing the international standards through which States can be held accountable for their commitments to fostering a more just and peaceful world. Even as CREA shifted toward new forms of remote advocacy work, we also worked to transform these new policy spaces to become more inclusive and adoptive of a feminist approach to decriminalization.

Moving these spaces online as dictated by the global pandemic was a loss for active and prominent civil society organizing. However, despite new barriers and postponed momentum in 2020, CREA amplified efforts to support inclusive advocacy spaces at the UN and beyond.

UN Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures

In two submissions to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (SRVAW), CREA worked with partners to document their experiences and



A conversation in Kenya on the exclusion of sex workers from mainstream organizing, and the ripple effects of this exclusion.

A black person in a surgical mask that has been pulled down stands speaking into a microphone, out of which illustrated dotted lines appear with text: "Voices of sex workers during COVID-19."

advocate for a move from a framework of "violence against women" to one of "gender-based violence." First, responding to the SRVAW's thematic report on rape, CREA worked with partners (RESURJ, Amnesty International, Yale Global Health Justice Partnership) to draw attention to the tendency to overly rely on criminal legal approaches to address GBV. The SRVAW tends toward a valorization of criminal legal approaches to reducing violence, making it important to regularly and consistently ensure that alternative perspectives are clearly and articulately presented.

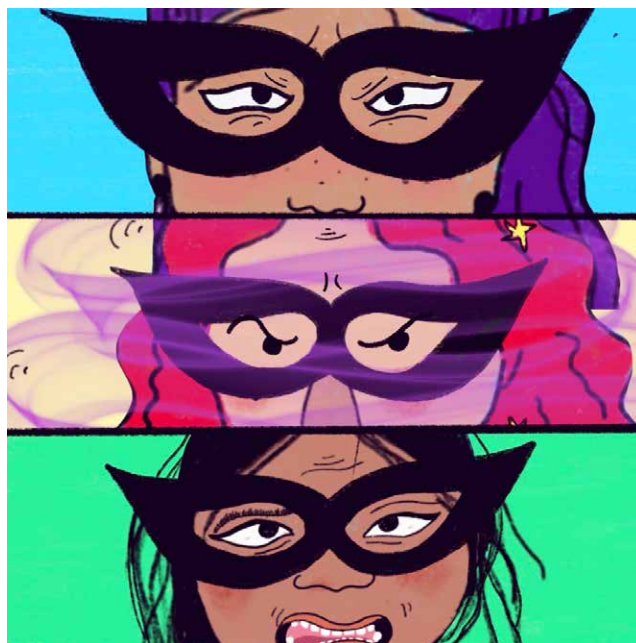
Along these same lines, CREA also worked with sex worker, LGBTQ and disabled women's groups to document their experiences with States responses to rape, especially inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. CREA responded to the call with the primary aim of strengthening partners' voices, skills, and confidence to engage in high-level UN processes and, as part of

the process of collectively formulating the submissions, increase the capacity of our partners to engage in global advocacy in a way that strengthens their national and local advocacy.

As a third submission to UN Special Procedures, CREA also prepared a contribution with Amnesty International, International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, and the Yale Global Health Justice Partnership to the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI) for a thematic report on gender. Faced with the role of anti-feminist and anti-rights actors in shaping public narratives of the meaning of "gender," the submission argued for the imperative of a GBV framework that encompasses violence perpetrated against people because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, as well as those who are or are perceived to be women.



Artwork from the Alumni-produced podcast *Guardianas de la Diversidad* that was supported by an advocacy grant.



Two comic illustrations side by side. First shows three people in black superhero masks and capes, one is sitting in a wheelchair while two stand. Second zooms into their faces showing steely expressions.

Community Voices, Globally

CREA works to open these global spaces because we believe deeply that rights bearers themselves are best placed to advocate on their own behalf. This is as true in the virtual halls of the UN as it is in communities around the world. For this reason, CREA released its first round of Alumni Grants, selecting from competitive proposals from across Institute alumni. In a year when in-person Institutes were impossible, the small grants were given to independent activists embedded in their communities and to small, feminist-led collectives working creatively to carve out a space for advocacy and feminist conversations.

The grants enabled work across multiple issues and regions to amplify the voices of marginalized and structurally silenced women, by creating space for their stories, and founding spaces where their own unique voices and perspectives are heard. For example, a queer feminist-led collective in Trinidad and Tobago

(WOMANTRA) was able to develop a resource for their constituents that helped breakdown national SRHR policy into digestible and accessible digital material to expand audiences and create meaningful engagement for communities with policies that affect them. A South Asian feminist public art collective (Fearless) created a unique online resource on advocacy tools for human rights movements, which use non-traditional approaches and modes such as creative and artistic modes.

Conference of States Parties

This year, CREA aimed to “Queer the COSP.” CREA co-hosted an event at the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities acknowledging the groundbreaking role the activists at the intersection of LGBTQI and disability rights are making around the world. The event was a critical moment to highlight to the COSP the need to challenge the inaccessibility of queer spaces,

homotransphobia within disability movements, and reframe the advocacy spaces for all persons with disabilities. Following the event, CREA and co-organizer, the Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) developed an Easy To Read summary of the event in order to make the information discussed more accessible.

Continuing Beijing +25

As the Latin America review of Beijing +25 stretched into 2020, CREA helped create spaces for narratives that reflect the complex realities of people's lives, as sex workers, as family members who are the primary earners in their families, and as people of all genders with dreams and aspirations. CREA, as part of CMI, supported a representative from the Plataforma Latinoamericana de Personas que ejercen el Trabajo Sexual (Latin American Platform of People who do Sex Work) regional network to participate in the review process. Their participation, as one of only two sex worker groups in attendance, was crucial to ensure that sex workers' perspective and the everyday struggles of sex workers both as individuals and as collectives taking charge of the public narrative and demanding their rights, were captured.

Generation Equality Forum (GEF)

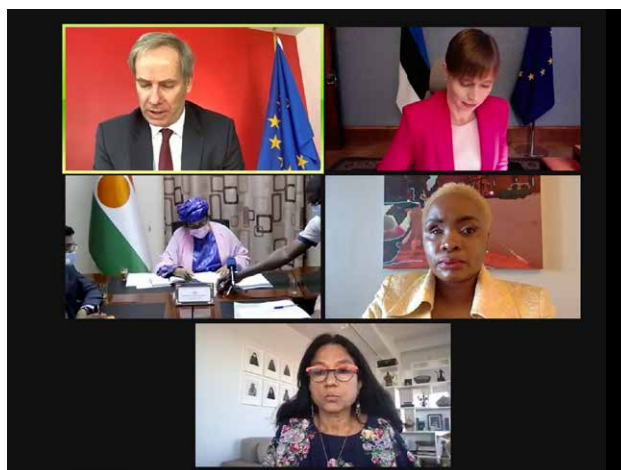
In 2020, CREA was nominated and then selected as a civil society lead to the Action Coalition (AC) on Feminist Movements and Leadership (FM&L) in the GEF process. The ACs, of which there are six, are one of the pillars of the GEF process. CREA has been working together actively with other civil society, as well as State representatives, UN agencies, the private sector, youth organizations and international organizations who are leaders in the AC for FM&L, finally producing and presenting a draft blueprint for action to the public at the Mexico Forum, held from 29-31 March 2021. The draft blueprint calls for more and better funding

for feminist movements, a safe and enabling environment for feminist activism, and greater gender parity in all decision-making spaces.

CREA's leadership in the GEF process brings knowledge built over 20 years, working on strengthening feminist leadership and feminist movements, to an international, multi-stakeholder space. The impact of CREA's rights-affirmative, non-traditional, global South-feminist politics in the space not only influences the setting of an important and a transformative agenda for change, but also ensures the global feminist agenda for social justice and gender equality reaches UN agencies, donors, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), movements, and activists who have great influence in governance and policymaking.

NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum

CREA joined over 27,000 advocates at the virtual NGO CSW65 Forum in March 2021. The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the largest global policymaking body dedicated to gender equality and



CREA Executive Director Geetanjali Misra at CSW Forum event.

Zoom screenshot of five screens featuring five speakers. Some screens show country/region flags in the background.



CREA and CommonHealth advanced conversations on decriminalization of abortion in India, through a webinar series and graphic records.

Illustrated graphic record with a brown woman in a green saree holding up a board titled "Pros and Cons of Decriminalisation of Abortion," while blue and yellow boxes include more information in black text.

women's empowerment, and the virtual nature of the civil society forum had an impact on the scale of the advocacy possible.

Amid shrinking physical and online civic spaces, CREA hosted and co-hosted four CSW events and participated as panelists and speakers at six other events. CREA discussed strategies to practice feminist disability rights organizing with insight from activists based in South Asia and East and South East Africa, and joined its partners of a new consortium, "Our Voices Our Futures", to spotlight women's human rights defenders from across the global South. CREA also worked in partnership with a number of other feminist organizations to collectively develop and amplify demands towards the protection of women's human rights defenders.

CREA Executive Director Geeta Misra joined the European Union delegation at a High-Level Side Event

as one of four selected civil society leaders speaking to the international community's need to adopt feminist strategies towards eliminating violence against women and girls, and the ways in which GBV has grown during the pandemic. CREA was also active in a number of discussions on feminist foreign policy this year, advocating for the importance of global South feminist-led development of intersectional feminist foreign policy.

CREA was integrally involved in feminist organizing online during CSW through active participation in the Women's Rights Caucus (WRC), a body of more than 200 feminist organizations from around the world dedicated to information-sharing and collective advocacy. Within the WRC, CREA worked, as always, to ensure the inclusion of structurally excluded women's voices in the advocacy being conducted around CSW. CREA initiated and led the new Working Group on Accessibility at the WRC, where new guidelines were



The graphic records produced in English and Hindi discussed various aspects of abortion in India, including the historical and legal background.

Illustrated graphic record titled “Pros and Cons of the Existing Law and Proposed Amendments” with related text against a larger orange background. Two people stand on the side with arms raised.

developed to advance the accessibility of all member meetings during this year’s CSW and going forward.

Challenging Criminalization

CREA continued advocacy in 2020 to both challenge the feminist and human rights tendency to embrace the “protectionist” logic that results in or exacerbates criminalization of sexuality, gender, and sexual and reproductive health, as well as directly confront flawed legal frameworks.

In India, CREA partnered with advocates and organizations working at the intersection of disability, law, women’s rights, and young people’s access to safe abortion to curate multi-lingual (Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, and English) digital events focused on bringing in newer and/or younger feminist leaders to speak on this issue, versus older, more well-established advocates.

In Kenya this was done in partnership with Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights - Africa, Women Spaces Africa (an organization that works at the intersection of disability, sexuality, and SRHR), and Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health. The partnership with these organizations helped amplify the reach of the campaign.

Building on our successful 2019 #FlawsinLaws social media campaign, CREA also co-created a seminar series with the same seven South Asian organizations with whom we collaborated on the campaign. When challenging criminalization of sexuality, CREA has called for the clear assessment of how “protective” laws may result in the punishment of young people. While partner organizations have at times engaged with this language with some hesitation, they worked with CREA to develop a learning process to enable them to fully embrace this perspective and more consistently build it into their programming.



Pink-yellow woodcut illustration of four faces with large eyes looking straight ahead, and wearing either a bindi or maang tikka. One wears a headdress, another is embedded into the edges of a patterned Sun. The fourth's face below is half-covered by a small woven mask.

Staying Grounded

“I make my own decisions. I feel confident about myself since I know about my rights. I step out of my house without hesitation, and I want other women and girls in my community to do the same, to do what they want to do because we have the right to do so! I want to raise awareness for all the women and girls in my community about gender-based violence and discrimination and fight it together.”

– It’s My Body (IMB) and SELF Academy participant, Uttar Pradesh, India

The power and potential of virtual platforms allowed CREA to maintain global connections and continue essential advocacy during the pandemic. However, as a global South-based organization, CREA remains intimately connected to local communities. Working with community-based partners is integral to the way in which CREA seeks to create a more just world, because communities are spaces in which patriarchal power is visibly present and thus must be visibly challenged. Presence on the ground is critical to connecting and communicating directly with structurally excluded people, often based in underserved parts of India, East Africa, and other geographies in the global South.

As State after State announced lockdown measures, with India adopting one of the strictest closures in the world in March 2020, CREA halted its community-based work. This decision was made in light of ongoing restrictions of movement, but also because the pandemic and its associated measures required distinct and immediate emergency responses. CREA moved quickly to mobilize networks developed over the last 20 years of community engagement to transform



A young girl participates to raise awareness in Bihar, India, during the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign.

A young Indian girl with dark hair and dressed in pink puts up two posters that say "Women's Rights, Human Rights." Illustrated orange and yellow wings are drawn on her back.

in-person work and maintain an initial virtual link with partners, community-based organizations, and elected women leaders. This vital connection to communities, and feedback on their changing and immediate needs during the pandemic, enabled CREA to adapt our work, all the while keeping in mind the deep digital divide.

Continuing to strengthen feminist leadership at the community level during the pandemic remained a priority even as in-person sessions momentarily stopped. Now in its 10th year, CREA's annual "Meri Panchayat, Meri Shakti" (My Governance, My Power) program works with EWRs at the local governance level to strengthen their leadership capabilities.

The network of informed EWRs proved invaluable during the pandemic. In addition to their leadership role in the village councils, they were some of the

few community members with the authority to move among the people under stay-at-home orders, and also supervised quarantine centers organized for returning migrant families. With rising cases of domestic violence and GBV during the lockdowns, the EWRs led community meetings and events to highlight the roles of multiple stakeholders in addressing these issues. They worked with Health Service Providers, government officials, and even shopkeepers to ensure young girls and women had access to menstruation products and other sexual and reproductive health services. The events and meetings led by local EWRs, held when possible under COVID-19 guidelines, also meant safe spaces for young girls and women to gather with their women representatives so that they could share with, talk to, and ask for specific interventions.

The experience of being able to call upon these networks of community organizations and activists

reinforced the importance of CREA's approach of strengthening capacities of existing community leaders. Through these networks we were able to resume some in-person work in August 2020.

In February 2021, to continue deepening the capacities of EWRs, CREA restarted further in-person work, amending sessions with an acute focus on the effects of the pandemic on existing issues. The EWRs in turn reached out to women, girls, men, boys, and government officials at block and district level, to understand their needs while also hosting sessions to build feminist leadership capacity among these community members.

In addition to local government representatives, CREA also historically works with community-led organizations to ensure that they are better positioned to challenge unjust power structures in their communities. In 2020, CREA worked with its Ibtida network of 30 such women-led organizations to strengthen their organizational feminist leadership capacity. Although most trainings took place online, CREA held a Theory of Change workshop in-person in early 2021 in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This workshop focused on building individual leaders, overall organizational leadership, as well as effective second-line leadership within each organization. The Ibtida network is diverse, with member organizations centered solely around ensuring women's rights and sexuality, and others around livelihood, health programs, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programs (WASH). CREA's overall capacity building also supported the Ibtida organizations to better integrate women's and girls' issues into their programs.

Following these trainings, Ibtida members constructed action plans to address the rights of women and girls — one of which is to work with the EWRs of their village councils. This year, Ibtida members

conducted additional capacity building for EWRs to help strengthen their leadership skills, and then worked with them to quickly and effectively respond with COVID-19 related relief measures. A reflection of CREA's politics of deep inclusion was seen in action when the organizations stepped in to distribute rations to structurally excluded persons such as WWDs, trans people, and single women. They also took charge of quarantine centers to maintain equal provision of facilities to all those in need at the community level, and worked to combat rampant misinformation about public health.

CREA also continued to work with the Ibtida network by providing information in the midst of pandemic restrictions. CREA reached out to government agencies to confirm and communicate ongoing government benefit programs as part of COVID-19 relief. Ibtida members were able to identify the real-life gaps existing between the government plans and the needs in the community, then take action to link structurally excluded people to State-sponsored benefits such as food distribution schemes.

Shifting focus to mobilize on-the-ground feminist networks helped to meet some immediate needs, but for the most marginalized groups, the lockdowns made access to physical space nearly impossible. Young girls remained limited to the borders of their homes, burdened with household work and uncertain about their continued access to education.

In the light of this limited mobility and increased surveillance of adolescents, CREA and partner organizations prioritized hosting the "It's My Body" program in the interim period when the situation in India had improved. Following all precautions and guidelines, we tested the feasibility of the three-day football coaching camp when the health situation allowed. Around 170 girls from the states of Uttar Pradesh and



Young girls just before a football match (part of the “It’s My Body” program), in Jharkhand India.

Adolescents playing football in a field. A goalpost can be seen further down with more adolescents. There are illustrated dotted circular lines drawn across the field and red illustrated birds in the sky.

Jharkhand in India flocked to open fields, dressed in the clothes of their choice, ready to reclaim public spaces.

After months of lockdown, reclaiming physical community space and asserting their visibility was critical for the girls. They challenged norms and stigmas attached to their bodies while playing a sport considered “masculine.” The camps used sport as a medium to navigate conversations on consent, pleasure, bodily autonomy, sexuality, and gender. At a time when these girls had also lost the frequent connection with friends and teachers, these camps acted as safe spaces to ask questions, learn about their rights, and feel comfortable in their own bodies.

CREA also claimed opportunities to create safe spaces

in East Africa with meetings, trainings, and convenings, even when the pandemic dictated that these be of a smaller scale than initially planned. Following lockdown restrictions in Kenya and Uganda, CREA’s East African (EA) team began consulting with partners through email and phone calls. These periods of little to no mobility only heightened the value of community-based networks to collaborate with and find alternative ways of working. For instance, CREA continued providing fiscal and technical support to the Uganda LBQ Network as a supporting partner of the Network. A two-day meeting led to strengthening existing network processes, such as appointing a new steering committee and setting up communication strategies internally. The Network has since held two separate engagements with LBQ women in Lira and Kampala, Uganda to examine the state of LBQ women



The Uganda LBQ Network convened engagements to analyze the state of LBQ women in leadership and decision making positions.

Four black people seated in a row mid-discussion. Behind them is a standing white board and a wall that has been patterned with a red-yellow illustration.

in leadership and decision making positions. During the year, the Network transformed from simply collectivizing and identifying their agenda to becoming a voice as an LBQ network within the larger LGBTQI movement.

Pandemic restrictions disproportionately affected already marginalized groups of persons, including women, LGBTQI persons, and persons with disabilities. In 2020, the Kenyan government pushed forward an agenda to amend the constitution in ways that are not inclusive of women or WWDs. CREA worked with a partner organization, the Kenya Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities, to conduct a two-day convening in order to explain what WWDs stand to lose. The convening ended in a press conference that was subsequently aired on several national television stations.

CREA's EA Team continued amplifying the challenges and exclusion of WWDs in Uganda on International Women's Day. We provided technical and

financial support to the National Union of Women with Disabilities to hold a live panel on the barriers that WWDs face in political participation. This panel was conducted as part of a national television show, one of the only few centering around WWDs on Women's Day.

CREA supported several other partners in raising their voice on International Women's Day in East Africa, with a particular focus on the invisibilization of structurally silenced people (women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming persons) — as important markers in the overall fight for gender equality.

At a time of escalating GBV, CREA with its partner organizations joined the international 16 Days of Activism against GBV, in East Africa and India. Although on a smaller scale with the ongoing pandemic restrictions, women and girls marched with drums in 24 different parts of India within the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh to highlight the mental and physical exploitation and abuse they faced locked in their houses. They conducted discussion



CREA supported its partners in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, India in organizing events to raise awareness on GBV.

A group dressed in green or pink saris are beating drums. A balloon arch hangs above against a blue building at the back. Illustrations have been drawn over the balloons, and near the drums to indicate music streaming out.

circles to emphasize that girls continue to be barred from education and undergo early marriages without consent, and held meetings with stakeholders such as the police, district development authority, health workers, and elected representatives to spread awareness and make action plans.

In Kenya, engagements around GBV focused on building awareness and sensitization, specifically on persons marginalized for their sexuality, choice of work, or perceived abilities, with little to no reporting on violence against WWDs, LGBTQI, and gender non-conforming persons.

Meanwhile, in Kampala, Uganda, CREA also tested a hybrid model of sessions with small in-person gatherings that were broadcast via Zoom to allow more people to join the conversation. A “Rethink Evening” facilitated a space for LBQ and trans people, WWDs, and sex worker advocates to gather and talk about pleasure and controls on sexuality, particularly in the light of an ongoing pandemic. The creation of space

and opportunity to hold conversations with partners and the community held an even larger meaning since restrictions were created around meeting and talking. A second “Rethink Evening” was organized in December 2020, marking the end of the “16 Days of Activism against GBV” campaign. This was a space to talk about the continued violence against sex workers as well as celebrate the resilience of sex worker-led movements.

Finally, recognizing the need to foster new local spaces for raising voices, solidarity, and allyship, CREA began a new collaboration with community radio station Radio Jamia in India. The university-based radio program, which launched its first episode featuring a discussion with Senior Advocate at the Indian Supreme Court Rebecca John around her work defending the right to speak out against sexual harassment, will expand in 2021 to foster a collective resilience among listeners.



Pink-yellow illustration of a person with long hair flying through the sky. The side profile shows earrings, a nose ring, circular patterns and stars on the hair, and patterns on the body, including a large open eye.

A New Strategic Plan: 2021-2025

As 2020 shifted the global landscape, CREA also paused between adapting to new needs and diverse modes of working in order to celebrate a milestone: turning 20 years old.

CREA reflected on its 20 years of accomplishments, its core strengths, the current context, and the specific qualities that CREA can bring to meet today's challenges in order to develop a new five-year Strategic Plan (2021-2025). The process of developing a renewed vision for the future also allowed CREA to embed previously emerging issues as core to CREA's unique mission.

The updated Strategic Plan articulates structural exclusion for the first time, moving beyond the concept of "marginalization" and recognizing that the very architecture of society excludes certain people from demanding their rights. Furthermore, it commits to supporting feminists movements to defend and expand civic space. Part of working to increase the openness and vibrancy of civic space requires

developing new discourses and strategies to resist and challenge anti-feminist and anti-rights mobilizations. Finally, recognizing that technology is not only a tool but also a site of activism, the conceptualization of civic space extends to online spaces, requiring new strategies to defend digital rights.

In order to achieve all the outcomes laid out in the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, the strategy also includes a new objective focused on organizational capacity, and focused on enhancing the culture, processes, and systems needed to manifest CREA's inclusive feminist values.

Over the next five years, CREA will focus its efforts on supporting partners in East Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia to participate in feminist organizing, to build cross-movement alliances, and to advocate locally, nationally, and globally. It will continue to strengthen feminist leadership and movements, advance sexual and reproductive rights, promote rights-based approaches to GBV, and support

partner organizations and movements to defend and expand civic space and foster collective resilience — a direct and deepened response to the current context, in which the need to resist and challenge anti-feminist and anti-rights mobilizations is urgent.

To do so, CREA has rearticulated its strategies, and will deliver on this plan via the 6Cs.

Capacitate: CREA strives to equip our partners and constituencies of structurally excluded people with the knowledge, understanding, resources and skills to demand their rights, engage in advocacy, and strengthen individual and collective resilience. We convene cohorts of individuals and organizations who have the capacity to bring a sexuality, gender, and rights perspective to their work. And we strengthen movements by fostering an intersectional approach focused on building collective efforts to defend civic space and influence decision-makers.

Communicate: CREA believes in and utilizes processes that move from critical thinking to critical practice. We craft messages to shift discourses, build knowledge, introduce new concepts and language, challenge prevailing social norms, and strengthen movement-building approaches. We communicate directly and also amplify the advocacy messages of partners, especially structurally excluded groups, in order to expand our reach and influence key decision-makers.

Complicate: CREA practices politics of deep inclusion. We identify matters that have been neglected or that provoke tension, and challenge ourselves and our partners to engage in difficult but meaningful discussions. We create opportunities for our partners to rethink, reimagine, and reboot feminist politics and strategies in ways that fully embrace diversity and inspire action.

Connect: CREA connects communities and organizations and links advocates and activists across local, regional, and global levels. We aim to shift power by connecting those who are often structurally excluded to decision-making processes and opportunities to advocate for their rights. We support our partners and constituencies to develop new relationships, to collaborate, to build solidarity, and to work together to defend and expand civic space — online, in the public sphere, and in policy-making processes.

Create: CREA develops knowledge resources that link cutting-edge theory with the experiences and perspectives of our partners and constituents. These resources create new frameworks, tools, and language that challenge restrictive social norms, provoke new thinking, build scholarship, and mobilize cross-movement action. We use varied forms of expression — art, music, performance — and make resources on sexuality, gender, human rights, and movement-building accessible to grassroots activists and communities through translation and adaptation to diverse contexts.

Convene: CREA collaborates with multiple social movements on cross-cutting issues of gender, sexuality, and rights. We bring together diverse movements and organizations to build common understanding, allyship, and a commitment to shared action. Working from an intersectional perspective allows CREA to bridge fault lines between social movements, foster courageous conversations, and build cross-movement linkages.

CREA uses the term **structurally excluded** to draw attention to the ways in which societal architecture prevents certain people from enjoying the full spectrum of rights and from meaningfully and effectively participating in their communities and decision-making spaces.

Our work focuses on preventing individual harms, dismantling the structures that construct and sustain those harms, and creating pathways to justice for persons excluded because of their real or perceived genders, sexualities, identities, or chosen forms of labor.

At present, CREA works with structurally excluded women and girls, persons of diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics, persons with disabilities, and sex workers. CREA will continue to practice and advocate for broader inclusion and solidarity.

Vision

CREA envisions a more just and peaceful world, where everyone realizes their autonomy, dignity and equality.

Mission

CREA builds feminist leadership, strengthens movements, challenges unjust power structures, expands sexual and reproductive freedoms, and advances the human rights of structurally excluded people.

Values

Critical feminist practice

Practice inclusive and intersectional feminism — centering gender, sexuality, accessibility and rights and amplifying the voices and visibility of those structurally excluded.

Diversity & cross-movement collaboration

Promote cross-movement knowledge, solidarity, and collaboration.

Multigenerational approaches

Practice multigenerational mentorship and learning within the framework of movement-building.

Innovation and creativity

Ignite ideas, knowledge, and alliances — translating creative and critical thinking into action.

Sharing and shifting power

Work through partnerships — redistributing resources, knowledge and power, and opening spaces and expanding possibilities for activists to build collective power.

Objectives

Objective 1: Feminist leadership and movements are strong, intersectional, inclusive, and amplify the voices of structurally excluded people.

Objective 2: Sexual and reproductive health and rights are advanced so that all people exercise bodily autonomy, consent and control over their choices and decisions.

Objective 3: Responses to gender-based violence expand and promote well-being, security and rights.

Objective 4: Feminist, human rights and allied movements defend and expand civic space and foster collective resilience.

Objective 5: CREA manifests its values to be an intersectional, inclusive, accessible, diverse, innovative, collaborative and multigenerational feminist organization that strives to operate at high levels of excellence, effectiveness and accountability.



crea

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