

Reconnecting



Deepenings

IMAGE ON COVER:

Pink cover with a grey and beige illustration of an upside down tree. On the top left on the upper edge of the illustration is text: “CREA Annual Report 2021-22”. Split on the left and right edge of the illustration is the title of the annual report, “Deepening” and “Reconnecting”.

The illustration is split in two parts horizontally. The first half has roots emerging upward. Each root end has a hand. Some of these hands are embellished with figures like an eye, a dot, and arrows. On one of the roots a caterpillar is merrily creeping upwards. A snail lounges on the separation horizon where all the roots emerge. The background is rendered with small waves and dots.

The second half of the illustration shows an inverted tree. Its leaves, also upside down, grow out the tree and cover most of the frame. On the bark, a human-like face blends in with the bark texture. In the background, there are flying fishes with wings and clouds, both upright in contrast to the tree.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear activists, allies, friends, and supporters,

For CREA, 2021 was a year for deepening our foundations, partnerships, and work. We have long been committed to rethinking, but as we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also committed to rebuilding. As we moved in and out of stay-at-home orders and were carried through the months by waves of uncertainty, we put into place new strategies and systems.

The realities of the ongoing pandemic, worsening authoritarianism, and closing civic spaces have only bolstered our resolve to challenge the deeply embedded power structures that reproduce inequality. In 2021, CREA has strived to explore the complex intersections of our movements, to look at media as an important influencer toward transforming prevalent norms, to turn over our platforms to community-based activists, and to question power structures around funding in order to propose affirmative alternatives led by the global South.

In another year of working virtually, CREA looked deeper at its own structures. We established a People

and Culture team to reconnect, rejuvenate, and grow in ways that foster engagement, retention, and organizational resilience. We also piloted new internal reporting processes that guide strategies, programs and partnerships within CREA.

In the past year, CREA launched a new strategic plan, led two large consortia, planned a Center of Excellence for Gender and WASH, and established the first CREA fellowship. We have deepened our work and the ideas which have guided CREA for more than two decades, and used the strength and knowledge derived from them to lead us into new spaces and emerging areas where feminist movements can co-create sustainable change.

Geetanjali Misra
May 2022

Letter from the Board

In tune with CREA's journey of deepening and reconnecting, we reflected on organizational resilience and adaptability. The first year under the new strategic plan saw a reinvigoration of our core work, while deepening partnerships and supporting resilience. Amidst persistent uncertainty, we understood that resilient movements and organizations are not only important but also vital.

Understanding resilience started at home: we dissected internal processes and structures to construct systems that reflect our core values and feminist beliefs. The People and Culture unit was established under CREA's new strategic plan as a conscience-keeper of our organizational values and culture. We streamlined reporting processes by implementing quarterly reports to foster better cross-team communication and documentation of impact stories and data.

Advancing collective resilience has also led to the launch of three consortia in their full capacity, two of which CREA leads. All three consortia are funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Further expanding our networks and scope of work, we secured

renewal grants from our supporting and committed donors and also onboarded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a new donor. CREA continues to evolve internally, shifting its focus to deepening relationships and supporting constituents, partner organizations, and activists. This year has been a journey of questioning core structures, reconnecting with roots, and deepening work. We thank all of CREA's staff, resource persons, partners, donors, collaborators, and friends for being a part of this journey, at any point in time and in any capacity, and daring to dream the same dream as us.

Strength and Solidarity!

Shilpa Phadke and Kanchan Pamnani
Co-chairs



Deepening

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IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Pink illustration on a grey background. A multitude of hands emerge and flail, arms replaced by almost twisted-rope like braids illustrating the roots of a tree. The hands, each stylized with patterns such as an eye or an arrow, spreads across a black inky vastness embellished with squiggly lines and dots. A caterpillar runs across one root-arm.

Deepening for CREA means rooting our work closer to the world we wish to see and aligning more strongly with the structural changes our work aims to bring about by exploring more deeply, reflecting more profoundly, collaborating more tightly, and getting closer to the core of our mission.

Deepening for CREA is an acknowledgment that only by having solid, deep roots that are interconnected and interdependent with those of the movements, groups, organizations, networks and people with whom we work, we can be resilient and have the power to achieve a more just and peaceful world.

In the first year of our new five-year strategy, CREA dived deep into the core of our mission: building feminist leadership, strengthening movements, challenging unjust power structures, expanding sexual and reproductive freedoms, and advancing the human rights of structurally excluded people.¹

¹ 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.

We have brought focus to new areas of work while deepening existing ones, including by beginning activities as part of three consortia funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Our Voices Our Futures (OVOF) and Women Gaining Ground (WGG), where CREA is the lead partner, and Count Me In! (CMI!) , where CREA is a member.

The OVOF consortium comprises CREA, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), UHAI-EASHRI – East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative, and WO=MEN, along with strategic partner IM-Defensoras. OVOF works towards amplifying the voices and increasing the visibility of structurally silenced women to enable them to take their rightful place in civic spaces and participate freely across the online space, physical public space, and legal and policy space.



WGG comprises CREA, Akili Dada and International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific). WGG builds the capacity and transformative leadership of young women and girls, and women with disabilities, through cross-movement alliances to change norms, attitudes, laws, and policies around the interconnected issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the lack of women's political empowerment. WGG aims to equip women and girls with the necessary tools and skills to be architects of a society free from violence, and lead political and social transformation to redefine, prevent, and eliminate SGBV.

CMI! comprises Mama Cash, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), JASS, and the sister funds Urgent Action Fund and Urgent Action Fund Africa. The sex workers-led Red Umbrella Fund and WO=MEN are strategic partners of the consortium. In January 2022, the CMI! consortium began work as CMI 2.0,



Promoting Gender-inclusive Sanitation in Tamil Nadu training and orientation, organized by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), and facilitated by CREA. Source: IIHS.

ABOVE: Two photos: (1) A group of Indian people stand diagonally inside a hotel room wearing masks and holding papers, facing a speaker dressed in blue. (2) A group of Indian people sit around a table mid-discussion. The person closest to the left bottom of the frame writes on a piece of chart paper.

building on the experience and work started as CMI. The consortium supports feminist groups and movements to grow in strength and numbers – to speak up, speak out and take action in their communities, in the media, in politics, and in every space where decisions affecting them are made. The initiative features grants, capacity building and training, as well as lobbying and advocacy.

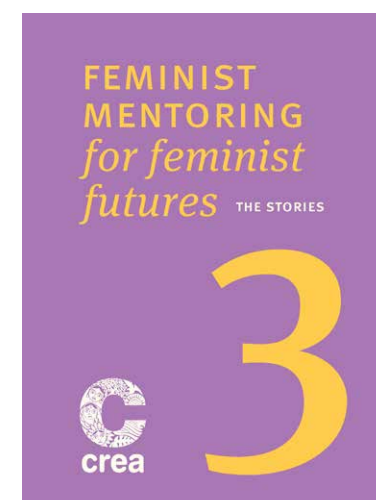
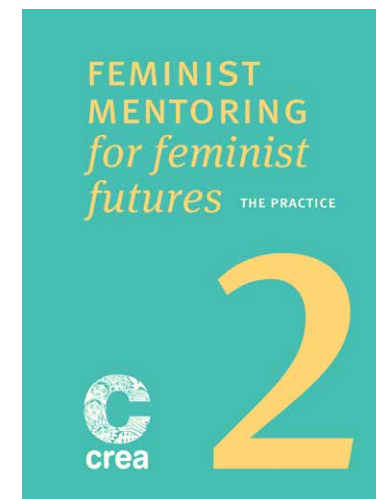
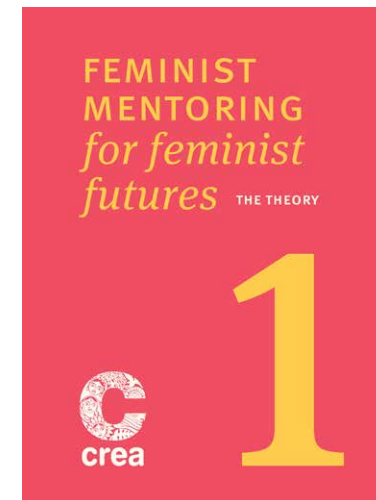
CREA delved deeper into its expertise on gender and sexuality to venture into the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector for the first time. We began working toward establishing CREA as a Center of Excellence that meaningfully integrates a gender and sexuality lens into the WASH ecosystem in India, and provides support to organizations working in the sector. We undertook a gendered analysis of the sanitation sector to understand the barriers, bottlenecks and opportunities for gender inclusivity in the sector, aiming to bring a gender, sexuality and rights perspective to the urban sanitation ecosystem.

We critically explored and unpacked the learnings and knowledge that emerged from the South Asia Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring (SAYWLM) initiative, which resulted in a publication titled *Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures*², authored by Tejinder Singh Bhogal and CREA's Senior Advisor Srilatha Batliwala, with the support of the Global Fund for Women.

“From the outset, we realized that we needed to create our own theory and practice on feminist mentoring. This meant, in effect, changing and rethinking our traditional way of looking at a mentoring relationship.”

– Tejinder Singh Bhogal, co-author of *Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures*

² All three parts of CREA's "Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures" are available on CREA's website: <https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-mentoring-guide-for-feminist-futures/>.



In July 2021, CREA launched the three-part publication "Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures" – The Theory, The Practice, and The Stories.

Covers and back cover illustrations of all three parts of the "Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures" guide. Each cover has the title and a number (1, 2, or 3) followed by the titles and their subject: The Theory, The Practice, and The Stories respectively. Illustrations: (1) Two people, half made up books face each other. (2) group of persons in protest. (3) group around a bonfire.



Audiograms featuring the authors of the publication and Mentors of the SAYWLM program, with their thoughts on feminist mentoring.

Screenshots of four audiograms featuring Srilatha Batliwala (co-author), and Farah Ghuznavi, Sadhana Shrestha, and Ramyata Limbu (Mentors, SAYWLM initiative). Each audiogram is titled “Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures” and has an illustrated background.

We purposefully disseminated the publication widely, with the aim to reach movements and activists across the world. Mentors from the SAYWLM program and other partners joined in to support CREA in disseminating the publication.

Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures is a product of one of CREA’s earliest strategies of building and strengthening feminist leadership. We consider feminist leadership to be integral in bringing social change, and our Institutes – deep interrogative learning spaces – is one such way we operationalize this. Activists, practitioners, and movement-builders among others attend our Institutes to discuss and challenge the way we practice power and dismantle existing frameworks of leadership. Feminist leadership isn’t simply about women playing leadership roles, but about reflecting and practising feminist values and transformative power in action.

However, our leadership Institutes gradually revealed that building feminist leadership

is not always easy in practice. Institute participants struggled to apply the concepts they had learned in their work contexts, or due to personal struggles within organizations, families, and relationships. Feminist leadership required sustained support over a long period of time, namely, feminist mentoring.

Together with Global Fund for Women, CREA designed and launched a feminist mentoring program: the SAYWLM initiative. Feminist mentoring considers the need to change the self; understands flaws within society and advocates for change; and recognizes discrimination, exclusion, and stigma. Rather than asking individuals to fit into existing systems, feminist mentoring equips individuals to challenge normalized structures.

During the design of the program, we realized the lack of written resources and documented experiences on feminist mentoring.



Launch poster for CREA’s first fellowship, CREAte.

Pink poster with the CREA logo on the top left which is expanded with calligraphic text to form: CREAte Fellowships. Text below: on disability, gender and sexual diversity, and intersex rights. Applications open until 16 February 2022.

Embodying the idea of collective knowledge building from practice, CREA developed the three-part guide, Feminist Mentoring For Feminist Futures, to support activists, mentoring- practitioners, feminist leaders, and movement builders. We used our experiences and learnings to detail our theory, practice as well as stories as told by the Mentors and Mentees of the SAYWLM initiative. This publication is a result of ongoing identified need for improvement in order to get closer to our vision of feminist leaders and feminist leadership.

The guide is written and shared in order to enable others embarking on a feminist mentoring journey to build on our framework and link theory into practice.

In January 2022, we launched our first fellowship, CREAte, to support the production of knowledge, art, and storytelling to generate deeper understanding and connections between sexual and gender diversity, intersex rights, disability work and movements, particularly from a global South perspective. The fellowship aims to go deeper in the way in which we support cross-movement building. The knowledge and experiences that emerge from the fellowships will deepen, reshape, and reboot CREA’s future work.

Deepening for CREA also meant looking carefully into the mirror, and critically analyzing whether internally, as an organization, we reflect the changes we wish to bring about in the world.

We have deepened in **reconnecting** with past work, **collaborating** with existing and new partners, **influencing** and **amplifying** change, and adapting and **overcoming** challenges. We look at these with a deepening lens – the thread connecting our diverse and interconnected areas of work across the last fiscal year.

Reconnecting

IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Purple illustration on a grey background of an upturned image of half a tree with a plethora of leaves erupting outward from its branches and trunk. The leaves expand to the left, towards upright flying fish with wings and clouds.

Embracing new work in 2021, we reconnected with our ongoing programs and revisited our politics in order to find resilience against a changing world. CREA deepened its understanding of “marginalization” to reframe its politics, strategy, and work around the concept of “structural exclusion”. Marginalization does not take place in a vacuum, and this shift in CREA’s understanding of it aims to draw attention to the societal architectures that prevent some people from accessing their rights or meaningfully participating in their communities and decision-making spaces.

We reaffirmed our commitment to amplify the voices of structurally excluded women and girls, persons of diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics, persons with disabilities, and sex workers.

As part of WGG, we went deeper into our experience in feminist leadership, movement building, advocacy, and working with structurally excluded groups to inform and guide the new WGG consortium. In turn, the combined expertise of three organizations – CREA, Akili Dada, and IWRAW-AP – has brought further



MPMS partner Izad facilitated a session on power and patriarchy with a collective of women in Vaishali, Bihar.

Indian women sitting in a circle on a yellow mat. The banner on the wall behind indicates it is a Panchayat (village council) meeting.

nuances to our present work. The integration of our India-based feminist leadership program for elected women representatives (EWRs), Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti (My Governance, My Power), into the WGG consortium, is an example in which we built upon our existing work. This initiated conversations on disability among EWRs – bringing in a deeper intersectional lens to CREA’s ongoing capacity-building centered on gender, sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In East Africa, CREA’s team, along with consortium partner Akili Dada, brought together partners in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda to one space to launch the consortium – leveraging CREA’s past work and expertise to take forward new work.



Capacity building training on feminist leadership, human rights, and SGBV by CREA and Femme Forte Uganda, convened under the WGG program.



Four photos: (1) A group of Ugandan people smile and face the camera. (2) Four Ugandan people are mid-activity, two with hands raised. (3) and (4) Different Ugandan people speak during the training in each photo.

As part of our WGG work, we took part in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. Between 25 November and 10 December, 2021, the consortium ran a campaign under the theme Your Protection Doesn't Protect Me, that deepened our work on challenging criminalization, and demanded rights-based solutions instead of protectionist approaches. The campaign was held online and through offline events with local partners.

CREA continued to work with its partner organizations in rural spaces of in the states of Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh to implement the It's My Body (IMB) program which uses sport as a medium to advance SRHR of young women and girls. Together with our partners, we held a sports camp, a leadership camp, and curriculum sessions, guided by trainers, to build their capacity on gender, sexuality, and bodily autonomy, and to inform young women and girls of their rights,

while at the same time building their self-confidence, and cultivating leadership capacities to advocate for those rights.

We also saw the impact of CREA's community-based capacity building and training, initiated several years ago. Since its inception in 2009, the IMB program has proven how young women and girls step up as rights bearers and advocates for their rights. Young women and girls in the various states of India have created sustainable support systems by working together with older cohorts guiding younger ones in respective locations. Guided by community-based trainers, as and when needed, the cohorts worked together particularly to take on initiatives that allow young women to use their curriculum learnings to bring attention to and articulate their challenges and collectively amplify their voices.



Young women and girls participate in sports camps and community events where they advocate for their rights as part of the It's My Body program.



Three photos: (1) Group of young Indian women in sports gear stand facing two trainers. (2) Group of Indian women and girls with a police officer, with fists raised. (3) Panel of Indian people with two persons standing, pointing at a chart.

As part of an action project of the IMB program, young women in the villages of Ichak Kala and Bara, in Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand, raised the issue of a dysfunctional public toilet with government officials at the block level. They highlighted how lack of access to public toilets impedes their mobility, particularly during menstruation, and emphasized that this is part of their SRHR. These officials were non-responsive to their demands made via letters and in-person visits. Undeterred, the young women raised awareness through local media channels and newspapers, escalating the attention directed at this issue, at both the block and district levels. Subsequently, the group visited a government official at the district level and shared their concerns. The official accepted their request and the Ichak village now has a functional public toilet.

CREA took forward its collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia, a central university in India, for the community radio station, Radio Jamia. The new collaboration was launched to carve out a space to feature discussions on gender and sexuality issues on Radio Jamia. This year, we worked with the university faculty to rethink our strategies to better reach our intended audience, and we started conversations around the politics of language.

For CREA, reconnecting meant reconsidering methods and processes used in our work. We strengthened the Disability, Sexuality, and Rights Online Institute (DSROI) by developing a new online platform that is fully accessible and more user friendly, with new functions including discussion forums and didactic spaces for engaging with module contents. We further nuanced our vision for the Institute's learning objectives to embed perspectives and experiences of persons with disabilities from the global South.



Collaborating

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IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Blue illustration on a grey background of an intersection between land and earth. Tendrils of roots are depicted like braids ending in hands reaching out towards the sea. The sea is made up of exaggerated swirling strokes with various hands emerging out of the waves. There is a small cactus and a winged fish at the bottom right corner.

CREA rests on the combined knowledge and experiences of the communities we work with. Together with partner organizations at local, national, and global levels, we have accessed spaces and locations that are otherwise beyond our sole capacity. Collaborations have sharpened our politics, bringing in a deeper understanding of country contexts which are continuously in flux.

We continued to facilitate the Nairobi Principles working group that brings together experts from the feminist movement, disability movement, and organizations supporting SRHR to deepen understanding and increase collaboration around disability rights and abortion rights, elevating the priorities of persons with disabilities in SRHR. The group is a result of dialogues that started in 2018, with diverse voices, particularly from the global South, to deepen understanding and increase collaboration around prenatal testing, abortion and disability rights, as well as to elevate the priorities of persons with disabilities within SRHR. In order to raise awareness, the group published outcomes of these dialogues in a three-part publication titled Nairobi Principles on Abortion,

Prenatal Testing and Disability³. The publication has sparked cross-movement conversations and deeper introspections into feminist spaces as the working group continues to build and develop these principles.

This year, the working group created a space for reflection and deeper dialogue. With abortion restrictions and anti-gender policies gaining traction, it was even more crucial that the ableism and disability stigma that can be perpetuated in prenatal testing and disability-selective abortion practice are further addressed and more deeply discussed. With the aim of furthering mutual understanding, we held in-depth discussions around cross-movement building and what is needed to bring movements together around these intersections in a way that is not confrontational, and which can elevate both disability justice and feminist arguments. The group has expanded to deepen its reach to structurally excluded persons with disabilities.

³ The Nairobi Principles on Abortion, Prenatal Testing and Disability (<https://nairobiprinciples.creaworld.org/>).

The Nairobi Principles working group's aim is to ensure that movements are not speaking to each other in two different languages, but that the conversation is nuanced in a way that supports learning and reflection. By convening diverse actors operating at fault lines between movements, the Nairobi Principles working group has further interrogated and expanded the understanding and positions on disability, prenatal testing and abortion, which are neglected yet highly contentious feminist issues. The working group has also sought to elevate the SRHR priorities of persons with disabilities, which are often overlooked or unknown in both the SRHR and the disability movements, and to find a unique space to address issues such as forced or coerced sterilization and abortions of persons with disabilities.

“When reproductive rights and disability rights do work together, abortion rights legislation is more inclusive and rights-based. In Ireland, having a feminist disability organization was critical to the debate and to mobilizing the feminist movement around disability and abortion rights.”

– Maria Ní Fhlatharta, Disabled Women Ireland, Nairobi Principles working group

This year, CREA's new work and consortia expanded and strengthened partnerships. It was a year of preparing for work to move forward, including scoping and supporting partner strengths, and acquiring new ideas and insights. In January 2022, the CMI!

consortium began work as CMI! 2.0 with a new grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on working with national partners. CMI! 2.0 encouraged partners to co-design and co-build the foundations for a collectively-owned process and program implementation. CREA and partners engaged in collaborative work around challenging the criminalization of gender, sexuality, identity and sex work, addressing GBV, building alliances with feminist and women's rights groups, improving the well-being and resilience of Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ), sex workers and trans communities, and strengthening partners' capacities. Through CMI! 2.0, we reconnected with CREA's long-term partners to explore innovative opportunities for multi-country and multi-movement work.

As part of the inception phase of CMI! 2.0, we began partner-mapping and assessing the needs of our communities to expand our network of partners, regionally and thematically. Moving forward, CMI! 2.0 will include countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and will begin more work with feminist trans rights groups, which is critical as the negative impact of anti-trans narratives continues to intensify.

Through CMI! 2.0 national partnerships, CREA has provided technical, strategic and programmatic support to partner organizations, especially the All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW), to strengthen their advocacy approaches and interventions. In 2021, AINSW played a key role in challenging a proposed new anti-trafficking legislation in India that is both undemocratic in its process and harmful to sex workers. Due to persistent efforts by activists and organizations in the sex workers' rights movement, this bill has lapsed.

CREA's advocacy work also deepened in East Africa. We highlighted the human rights situation in Uganda by engaging in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)



Launch event for the UPR Shadow Report by CREA, LBQ Loose Network, and Sexual Rights Initiative.



(1) A group of Ugandan people flank and point at a banner that says “LBQ UPR Report, July 2021”. (2) A Ugandan person speaks into a microphone. (3) A Ugandan person with cropped hair takes a picture on their mobile phone. (4) A Ugandan person with short hair and dressed in pink writes on a white banner which says “Funded by CREA World”.

process of the United Nations (UN). CREA worked with the Uganda LBQ Loose Network and Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) to draft and submit a civil society report under the UPR mechanism, which called for the decriminalization of same-sex consensual relations and emphasized the need to protect all human rights of LBQ women in Uganda.

The LBQ Loose Network was also instrumental throughout this process, bringing together 50 LBQ

women from across Uganda, including women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and sex workers, for a Rethink Evening on Criminalization of Dissent. The Rethink Evening was a space for the LBQ Loose Network to share with the community information about the work around the UPR advocacy process and the report that was developed for that purpose, which facilitated engagement and movement building.

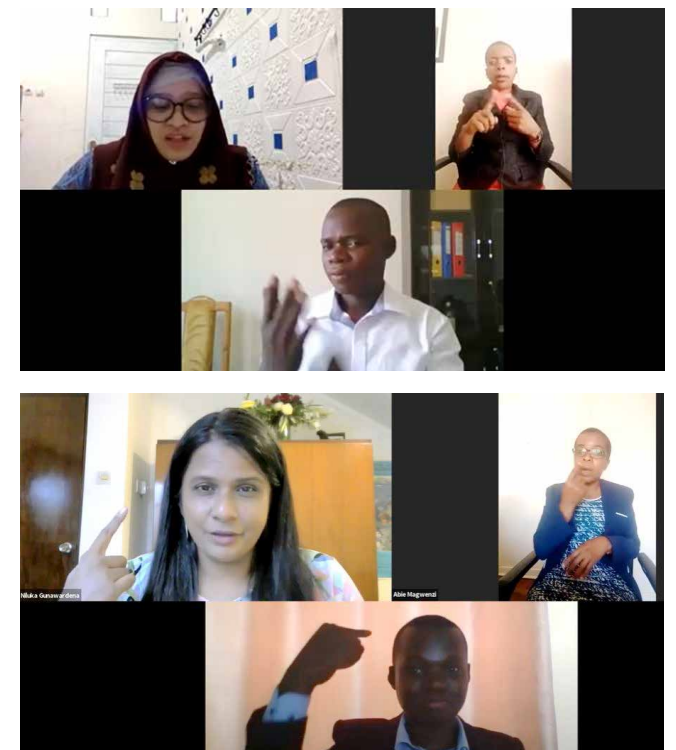


Influencing

IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Turquoise illustration on a grey background with stylised swirling ocean currents with embellished hands peeking out from within the current folds. The hands are illustrated with tattoos and eyes. Winged fish fly over the waves.

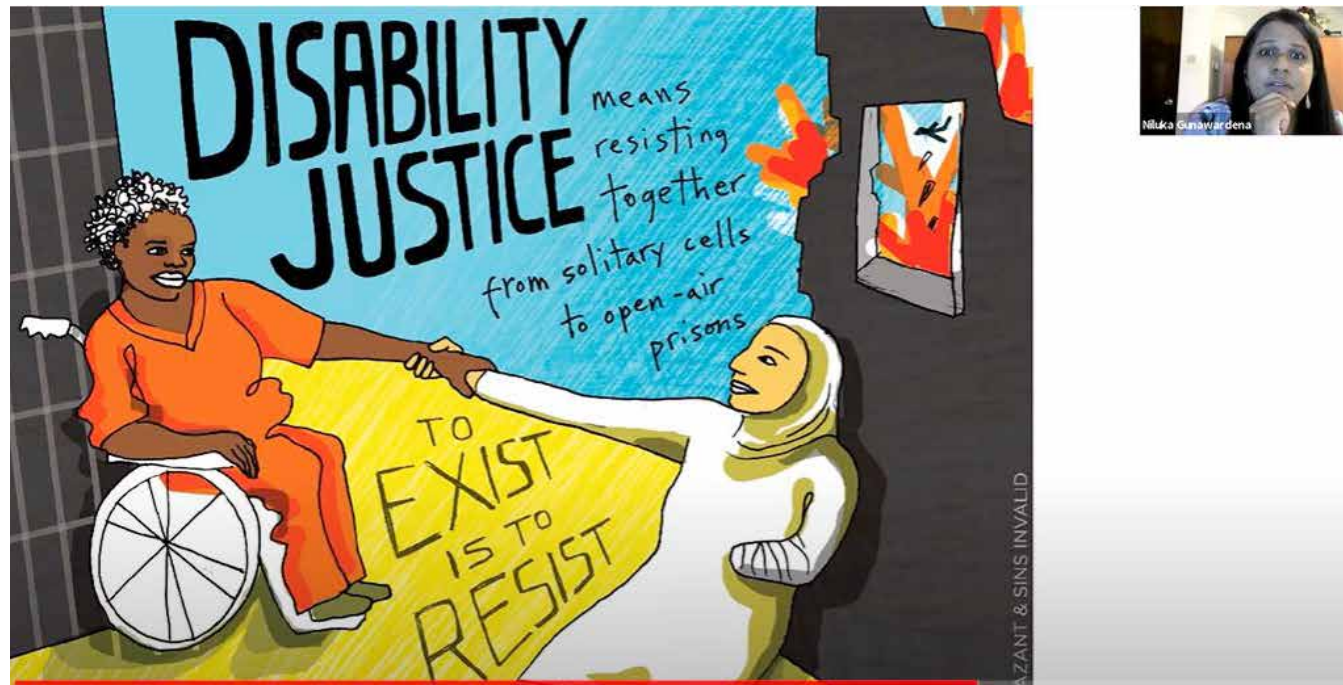
Working cross-collaboratively has always been at the heart of our work. From the knowledge resources we create to the intersectional dialogues we partake in, our conversations always stem from a wide variety of political and philosophical debates. These dialogues are often spearheaded by our constituencies, partner organizations, and communities in the global South. These conversations have been vital in formulating CREA's core values and ideologies, and principles that drive our influence across intersectional feminist and human rights fault lines and movements.

Our Institutes continue to be spaces where we facilitate these dialogues. The Disability, Sexuality and Rights Online Institute furthered discussions about cross-movement solidarity by bringing in new and diverse faculty. For the first time, we dedicated a full module to the intersections between intersex and disability rights, and concluded the Institute by exploring opportunities for cross-movement work. For instance, a DSROI alumna and Deaf activist in Zimbabwe returned this year as co-faculty to lead a live lecture on Deaf culture and representation, delivered in Zimbabwean Sign Language.



DSROI 2021 sessions led by faculty members Dwi Ariyani (above) and Niluka Gunawardena (below).

Two screenshots of a Zoom meeting with three panels. (1) One person in a hijab speaks while two others interpret simultaneously in sign language. (2) One South Asian person with long dark hair speaks along with two sign language interpreters on screen.



Faculty member Niluka Gunawardena presenting on disability justice at DSR01. Presented image by Sins Invalid and Micah Bazant.

Zoom meeting with shared screen. The screen shows an image of a cell with two disabled people reaching out and holding hands, with text: "Disability Justice means resisting together from solitary cells to open-air prisons. To exist is to resist." A South Asian speaker with long dark hair is visible on the top right.

The majority of DSR01 participants reported a deeper understanding of key concepts such as disability, disability justice, gender, and sexuality intersections as well as increased exposure to feminist disability activists and academics in the global South. Around 70 percent of participants recorded an overwhelming confidence to put this knowledge into practice.

"I really felt more strong and visible. It was more clear for me that I CAN work on what I stand for, to claim our rights. I think it has reminded me of the power of being in community and having spaces that are built by and for us from the sowing of seeds, rather than as an afterthought"

– DSR01 participant

"I feel safer and stronger because I know now that no matter what happens there is a space where I belong without preconditions to my humanity."

– DSR01 participant

The Disability and Sexuality team continued conversations around digital inclusivity and accessibility, not just within CREA, but also externally. We formed the inaugural Accessibility working group within the Women's Rights Caucus (WRC), a global coalition of more than 200 feminist organizations, networks and collectives that advocates for gender equality at the UN. The accessibility guidelines developed by this working group were distributed this year – all WRC meetings now maintain some standards for accessibility, including language interpretation and closed captions.



The first OVOF consortium bi-annual meeting.

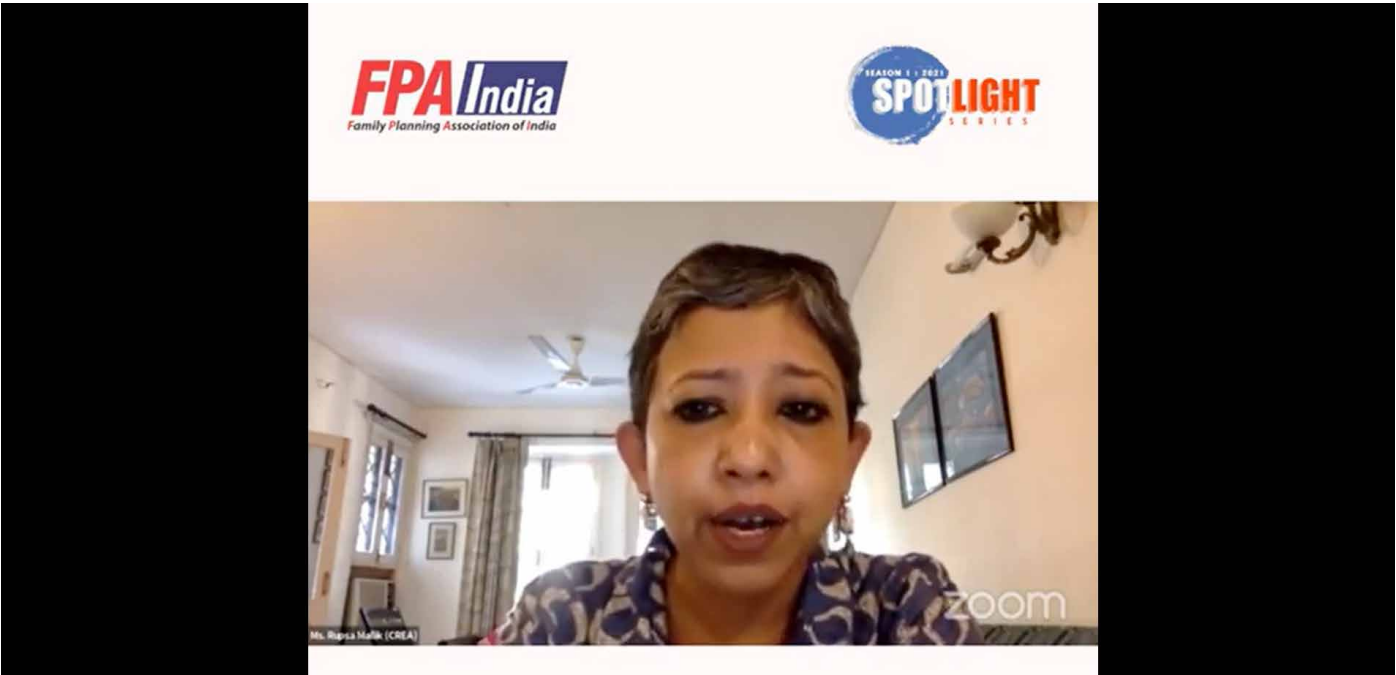
Zoom screenshot of 21 screens and 18 people smiling

Our work strives to be collective of an ever-growing network of feminist organizations, activists, and scholars who continue to influence our ideals, our politics, and the impact of our work. As part of the work of the OVOF consortium, CREA and APC organized an online Feminist Tech Deep-dive on misinformation/disinformation. We hosted participants with diverse expertise, from various regions and movements. Many of our participants self-reported a shift in their knowledge and understanding of misinformation and disinformation before and after the deep-dive. The most profound shift was observed in terms of how participants shed traditional thinking around how to "counter" misinformation/disinformation, and moved instead towards favoring creative solutions which also affirmed and articulated their vision for the world.

Thanks to the work undertaken with our consortium partners, we have embarked on different transnational advocacy efforts in both traditional and

innovative ways and advocacy spaces. The OVOF consortium made a submission to the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) highlighting the need to defend civic spaces across the physical, online, legal, and policy advocacy domains. The submission noted the importance of fast-evolving technology and the expanding online space for girls and young women in activism. It also called for normative frameworks that center on the autonomy and rights of girls, young women, and young people, further emphasizing their right to bodily autonomy and integrity, while rejecting protectionist, punitive, and prohibitionist approaches.

In India, CREA delved deeper into advocating for safe abortion rights by intensively engaging in the process of influencing amendments to the national abortion law in India [the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP), 1971]. We worked with a broad-based coalition of stakeholders to agree on the language and



Former CREA Program Director Rupsa Mallik speaks about the new amendment to the MTP Act. Source: Love Matters India.

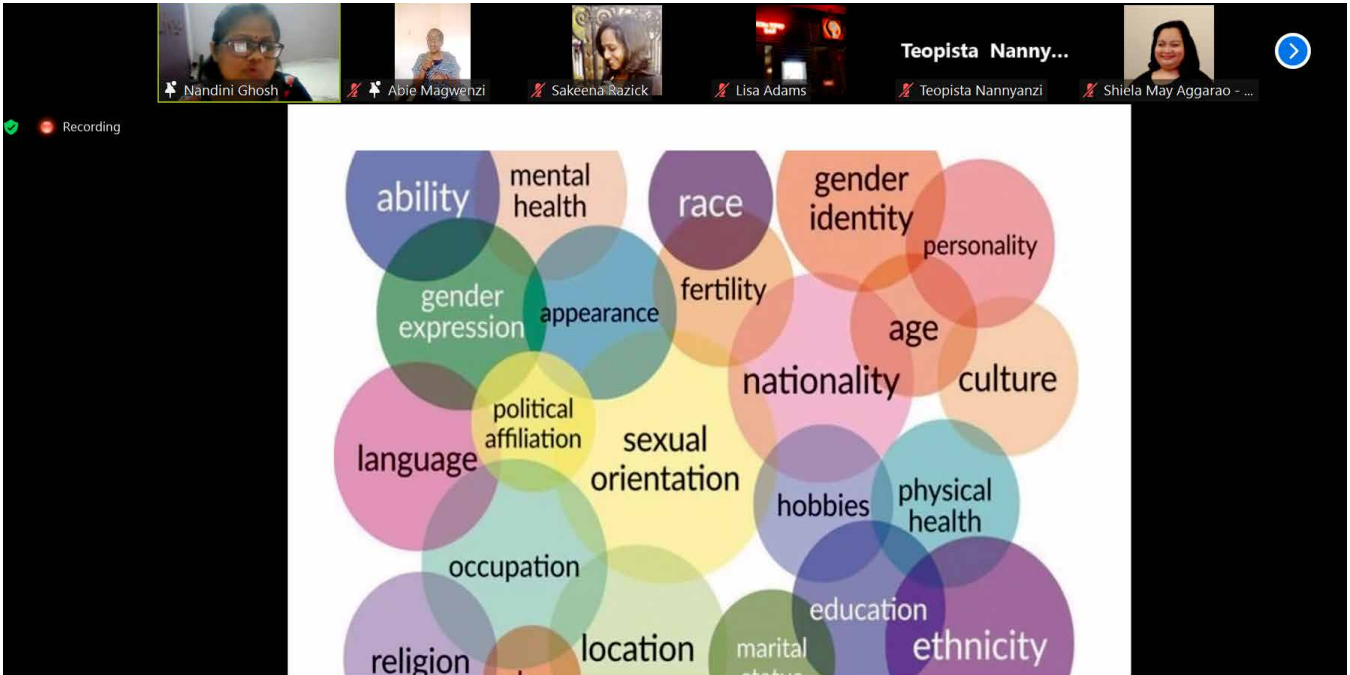
Indian person with short black-gray hair speaking online. Above the screen are FPA India & Spotlight series logos.

recommendations for the amendments, to include issues related to LBQ and trans people, sex workers, and women with disabilities, and to influence policy-makers. In July 2020, representatives from civil society organizations published an intersectional analysis of the proposed amendments to the MTP Act in the Journal of Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters to influence policymakers. The recommendations were disseminated to all Members of Parliament, the Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India and numerous other stakeholders, including the media. The amended legislation did not really address all the recommendations made, but CREA continues to advocate on the MTP Act through its advocacy work.

CREA has always aimed to support its partners to engage in self-organized advocacy. The Trans Rights Now Collective, an India-based partner of the CMI! consortium, challenged a bill introducing reservation for transgender persons under one caste category, Other Backward Classes (OBC), only. Grace Banu, founder of

the Trans Rights Now Collective, approached policy-makers, who met Grace and extended their solidarity to change the blanket category and demanded horizontal reservation for all trans people, cutting across all caste categories, in educational institutes and governmental workforce.

CREA, with its partners in the Gender 360 group, was able to create a conversation about human rights and criminal law, and to challenge, interrogate, and expand existing frameworks for prosecuting gender-based violence in the context of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute. Our submission attempts to complicate the Office of the Prosecutor’s understanding of sexual and gender-based crimes challenges normative ideas about gender and sexuality, shows how normative ideas are already embedded in legal documents such as the Rome Statute,



DSROI 2021 faculty member Nandini Ghosh leads a session on disability and gender.

Zoom meeting with a shared screen shows a slide with a diagram illustrating multiple intersections of a person’s identity through many intersecting circles. On the top is a horizontal panel with the speaker and other participants.

and shows their exclusionary and harmful impact. It challenges the criminalization paradigm as a singular response to violence, harm and human rights violations.

We proposed a holistic, human rights-based approach to the Office of the Prosecutor, appealing to them to take a broader perspective to their work towards justice and reducing and preventing harm. We believe our submission was unique in that we propose a non-carceral and human rights-based approach to the International Criminal Court, to address harm and violence.

We also believe that there is little to no existing public material which challenges the criminalization of sex work and intersecting issues, such as migration, at the International Criminal Court-level, such as through the

prosecution of crimes such as “sexual slavery” and “forced prostitution”. We were able to share our submission with global sex workers’ rights partners, such as those at the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP). According to the NSWP, there does not seem be any such analytical work already in existence at the International Criminal Court-level, challenging the criminalization and penalization of sex workers and others through the consistent conflation of “sexual slavery”, “trafficking” and “sexual exploitation” with those who are migrants and those who choose sex work.

Amplifying

IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Light green illustration on a grey background. Branches with leaves emerge from the right and spread across. At the top are intricately designed roots, with a hand on each root's end. Each hand holds a leaf. A snail creeps towards the right of the page from where the roots emerge. On the left is a fish and a cloud.

In 2021, CREA continued to amplify the voices of its constituencies within decision-making spaces at the local, national, and global levels. We carried out online advocacy through partners and networks to influence policies on sex workers' rights, trans rights, decriminalization of abortion, and transforming decision-making spaces into becoming more feminist, inclusive and accessible for structurally excluded groups and people.

As part of this work, we have joined other civil society leaders in the Action Coalition (AC) on Feminist Movements and Leadership (FM&L) of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF). We advocated for the inclusion of “sex workers” explicitly in the final draft of the blueprint text of the AC, and were able to successfully include perspectives of structurally excluded people in the blueprint. Recognizing that State actors and right-wing forces can deploy seemingly well-meaning but broad terminology such as “hate-speech” and “sexist behaviors” to justify violence, censorship and crackdowns, we successfully advocated for the removal of these terms from the blueprint, bringing our approach to challenging criminalization to this collaboration with global actors and movements.

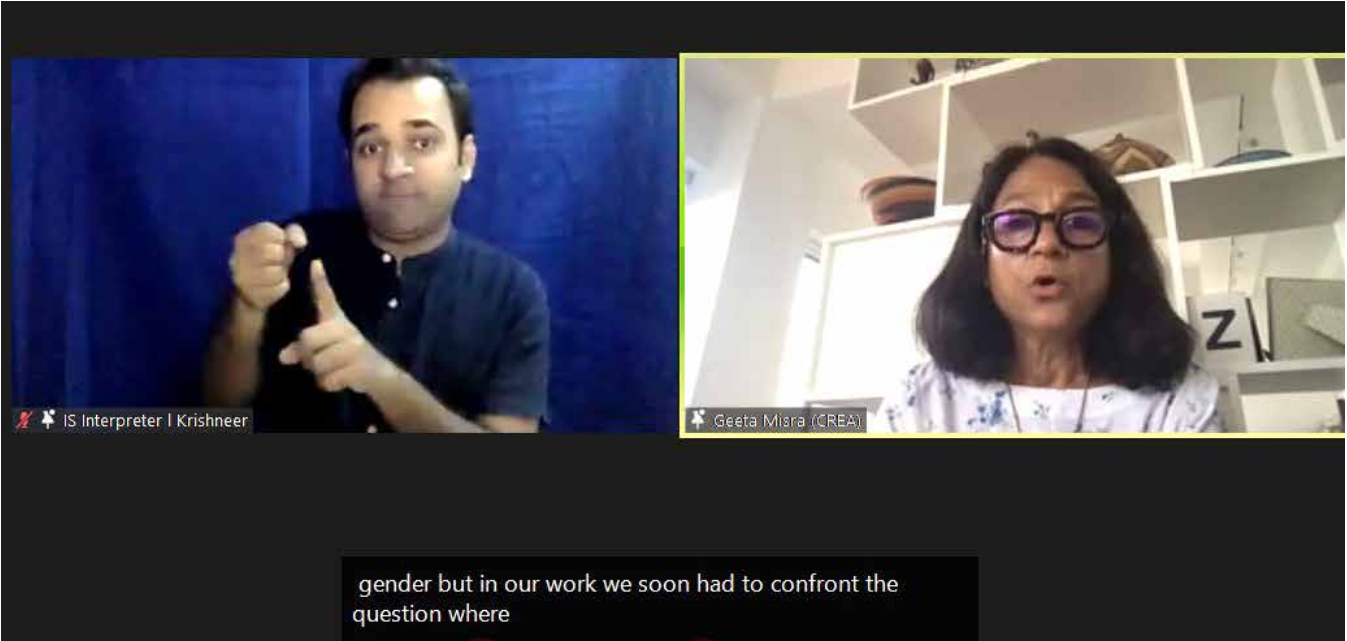


CREA Executive Director Geetanjali Misra at GEF - Paris.

Program Manager, Subha Wijesiriwardena speaks at CSW66 webinar, representing AC on Feminist Movements and Leadership. Source: Adolescent Girls Investment Plan.

Two Zoom screenshots: (1) Indian person with short dark hair speaking on screen. (2) Shared screen of a presentation with a Sri Lankan speaker with short dark hair to the right.

Building and strengthening cross-movement solidarity has been key to CREA's approach to movement-building. The OVOF consortium — with the coordination and leadership of strategic partner IM-Defensoras — along with other feminist and women's rights groups, disseminated a Demands



CREA ED Geetanjali Misra speaking at #HRC47 Side Event on Feminist and LGBTI Movements.

Zoom meeting with an Indian person speaking to the right and a sign language interpreter to the left.

Statement⁴ from WHRDs after its launch at the GEF in Mexico. OVOF was also involved in presenting a session on WHRDs during RightsCon, a conference which brings together stakeholders working on digital rights and technology. In addition to activists and civil society, conference attendees include policymakers from internet governance bodies, governments, and private companies. The session was a space for feminist and women’s rights organizations to learn and interrogate their technological practices, while encouraging participants to explore RightsCon and its larger conversation outside of the session.

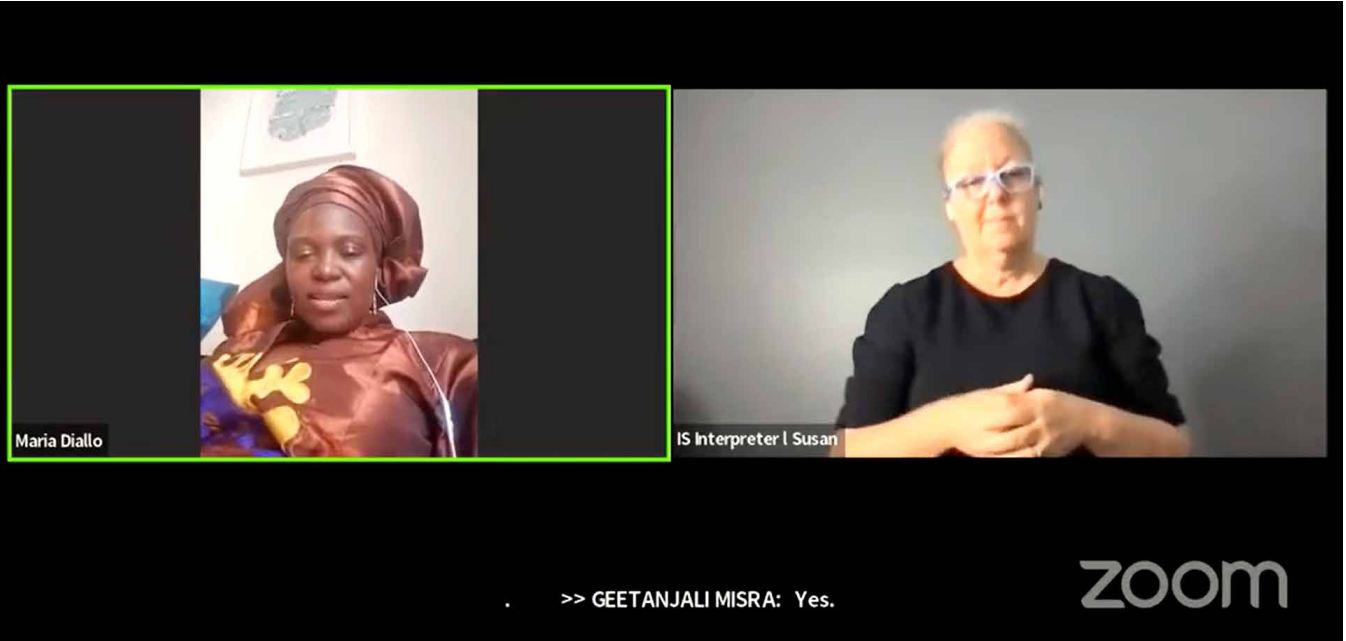
OVOF partners in Bangladesh used art and culture to set up a breakthrough queer art exhibition occupying a mainstream gallery in Dhaka. This was a remarkable step in a country where non-heteronormative identities and sexualities are criminalized and highly

stigmatized, with little way of protest. Any attempt by the queer community to canvas for their rights endangers their lives. OVOF – through its country partner BRAC, and in association with local partner Oboyob Diversity Circle – collaborated with the queer community to occupy physical public space through art-based advocacy. A participant at the exhibition said,

“Queer artists never get any such platform where we all can work together to create our collective narrative about the LGBTIQ+ people living in Bangladesh. This initiative has taught us how we should use our artwork as advocacy tools for our rights, and how important it is to work together with the community”.

CREA continued to be a part of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), leading and participating in multiple events. CREA is the co-lead for the

⁴ Indispensable measures to ensure the holistic protection and leadership of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), disseminated by the Our Voices Our Futures (OVOF) consortium and others: <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/indispensable-measures-ensure-holistic-protection-and-leadership-whrds>.



Mariama Diallo, Secretary General of UDTs speaks at CMI! CSW66 Side Event.

Zoom meeting with an African person speaking alongside a sign language interpreter.

CMI! 2.o’s sex workers’ rights advocacy group, which partnered with the Dutch government and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects for CMI! 2.o’s third consecutive formal side-event on sex workers’ rights. The 2022 panel focused on sex workers’ labor rights, and included the participation of several trade unions that have worked closely with sex workers. Mariama Diallo, Secretary General of the Democratic Union of Senegalese Workers (UDTS) in Senegal, noted in her presentation that she had attended the 2019 panel, through which she had connected with then CSW’s panel speaker Lala Maty Sow from And Soppeku, a sex workers’ rights group based in Senegal. This connection between the then panelist speaker and current speaker Diallo has since led to a strategic alliance and strengthened trade union UDTs’s support for sex workers’ rights.

“We are [also] focusing on capacity building of sex workers in lobby and human rights advocacy techniques.

We are developing lobby or advocacy arguments for the fulfillment of sex workers’ rights and for the eradication of the violence they suffer as sex workers.”

– Mariama Diallo, Secretary General, UDTs

CREA believes that efforts to amplify cannot exist in silos, and must be continuous, consistent and intersectional. We led a campaign on International Safe Abortion Day, 2021, with a focus on disability. We held a tweet chat that engaged with multiple SRHR organizations and disability rights activists to highlight the need to bring in the rights of persons with disabilities into conversation around abortion and overall SRHR. CREA also handed its platforms to other activists and influencers this year during its campaign against GBV, centered on challenging criminalization and protective policies.



CREA's campaign during 16 days of activism against GBV organized with partners.

Four photos: (1) Crowd of Indian people with pink headbands stand in line. (2) Group of Indian people stand around a Hindi “Your Protection doesn’t Protect Me” banner. (3) Group of Indian people raise fists behind a banner. (4) Indian people are seated at a table where one stands and speaks.



CREA continued its public education efforts through campaigns and collaborated with several global South-based activists and organizations, particularly those led by girls and women with disabilities and/or who work with persons with disabilities. We ran a campaign during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence under the theme Your Protection Doesn’t Protect Me together with our community based partners. In Jharkhand, the campaign reached more than 11,000 people and was also profiled in Feminism in India⁵.

Online, CREA’s digital campaign reached many more people, where, for the first time, we gave full editorial control to our partners, who told their stories in their own words.

5 CREA's campaign during the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”, profiled in Feminism In India: <https://hindi.feminisminindia.com/2021/12/02/domestic-violence-is-a-major-problem-in-world/>.



CREA's campaign posters for “Your Protection Doesn’t Protect Me” and covers for “All About Power” and “All About Movements” and translations.

Two rows of images: Above: Social media posters titled “Your Protection Doesn’t Protect Me” in Hindi, English & Bengali. Below: Six covers of two CREA publications titled All About Power and All About Movements in English, Hindi & Bengali.

Amplifying for CREA transcended expected spaces. Primers All About Power (2019) and All About Movements (2021) by Senior Advisor Srilatha Batliwala, which are intended for activists and movement-builders, reached newer audiences. They are now required readings in the masters’ programs at both the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), University of London and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex.⁶

“On IDS’s MA course in Power, Participation and Social Change we use Srilatha Batliwala’s ‘All About Power’ as one of two essential readings about power. Unlike most of the well-established academic power literature that focuses on dominating, coercive,

6 All About Power and All About Movements are available in Hindi, Nepali, and Bengali at creaworld.org/resources.

power over, ‘All About Power’ gives students an understanding of this complex, contested phenomenon that starts from social power – something they can all relate to and feel inspired by. It theorizes in the best possible way, by building a system of explanatory ideas out of aspects of the experience and practice of our students, in their intersectional identities as citizens and activists. Highly accessible in both format and pedagogical approach, and rooted in activism in the global South, it is a refreshing contrast with most literature on power.”

– Rosie McGee, Co-leader, Power and Popular Politics research cluster, IDS, University of Sussex.

Overcoming

IMAGE ON FACING PAGE: Yellow ochre illustration on a grey background with several houses and buildings stacked upon each other. Through the houses and buildings emerge hands with patterns drawn on them. Above the houses, in the sky are clouds and lines denoting the wind. A bird with hands as wings flies across the sky.

Another year of challenging power structures and redefining spaces and systems called for continued resilience. We adapted to and grew through the difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We leaned on our partners for support and worked together to resist the closing of civic spaces and political resistance.

Following the second wave of COVID-19 in India, young women and girls struggled to access SRHR services. CREA responded to the specific SRH needs of 12 - 15 year olds by holding sessions on menstruation and menstrual health. This was possible especially because of the on-the-ground presence of our community-based partners. We held sessions on how to make sustainable sanitary pads to overcome difficulties in mobility and access during lockdowns – a practice that has continued even after the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. A session was also organized for young women trainers to work on community well-being because they were receiving many distress calls about anxiety and stress due to the uncertainties related to COVID-19.



Young women and girls part of the It's My Body program participating in sessions and activities.

Two photos: (1) Group of Indian young persons taking notes in a circle. (2) An Indian person sticking a note on a chart.



Capacity building training on movement building and agenda setting by CREA and Femme Forte Uganda.



(1) A group of Ugandan people seated across a round table looking at a person speaking in front of a projected screen. (2) A Ugandan person stands and speaks. To the left is another person in a mask, seated in front of a laptop. (3) A Ugandan person wearing spectacles stands against a mural.

Effects of a second year of the pandemic, combined with pushback by States on the rights of structurally excluded persons – both in law and in practice – saw the need to dedicate energy to the security and well-being of feminist and human rights defenders.

CREA provided ten small grants in the fiscal year 2020-2021, and another ten in 2021-2022, to partner organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet specific challenges in their communities in relation to the pandemic as well as to seize urgent advocacy opportunities.

This year called for effectively navigating to the changing environments, both in-person and online. We continued to conduct our Sexual and Gender Rights Institute (SGRI) – Hindi, once again online. The

challenges brought on by technology, a wider digital divide, along with security risks, forced us to reflect on digital spaces. In response to requests by community-based trainers and young women leaders in India, we initiated a gender and technology workshop that explored digital rights and safety. We also continued to use technology and media to share stories, as told by young women and girls of reclaiming physical and digital spaces, and their freedom.

CREA has always rejected binaries of all kinds, and so we let go of our idea of “getting back to normal”. The barriers and new hierarchies created by the pandemic have worsened inequalities and driven CREA to further complicate its areas of work.

We identified gaps in our own language and interpretation, and expanded inclusion of accessibility in our spaces and communities, centering access as not only a technical and logistical issue, but as a wider



Screen captures from short videos of stories and art by young women and girls from CREA's previous Sports, Expression, Leadership, and Freedom Academy.



Four screenshots from CREA's animated SELF videos that show young girls engaged in various activities. (1) A girl smiles and types into her laptop. (2) Girl rides a motorbike while a group of people stand on the side. (3) Girls float free against clouds. (4) A girl floats on a paper rocket against the sky holding a football.

concept of embracing diversity through collective action. For example, we strived to improve accessibility in our external-facing communications as well as in our convened events. We looked inwards and established a People and Culture team to unpack and transform our own power structures.

The year 2021 - 22 called not only for the **deepening** of, and **reconnecting** with, our work, but also the desire and practice of **overcoming**, in order to work toward a feminist future and a just and equal world where everyone realizes their autonomy, dignity and equality.



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