

OUR VOICES
OUR FUTURES

OVOF NEWSLETTER

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Our Voices Our Futures Bi-Annual

In February, the OVOF team organized their first bi-annual in 2024 in New Delhi India. The three day Bi-annual was set to concretise the joint activities that had been identified in 2023, identifying how OVOF would show up in these spaces. These joint activities, included participation in CSW 68, the ILGA World Conference, the UN Human Rights Council 56 session, and AWID 2024. These collaborative efforts would necessitate OVOF's presence and involvement. A virtual policy dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) also took place at this bi-annual. The meeting included OVOF Executive Directors and MFA representatives Karen Burbach and Rosa Stienstra. They discussed the difficult situations in Lebanon and Sudan, emphasizing the significance of activism in OVOF's work. OVOF highlighted the need for co-funding, flexible budgets, and self-care for activists and organizations. In response, the MFA commended OVOF's grassroots efforts, dedication to movement building, and resilience in the face of conflict in Sudan and Lebanon.



Artivism in Action

Our Voices Our Futures hosted the inaugural ARTivism in Action creative workshop during the 68th Commission on the Status of Women at the Blue Gallery in New York. Utilizing mediums like painting, photography, and performance art, activists are sharing their stories of exploitation, trauma, and resilience. By personalizing the diverse challenges faced by women, these artists challenged societal norms and stereotypes, highlighting the real-life experiences of those in the industry.

The MFA visited the artivism space, engaging with OVOF consortium partners and activists from various countries to explore how different forms of art can empower, connect, and drive change.

[Watch: Artivism in Action](#)



Sex Workers Demand Representation and Respect at UN Human Rights Council

A powerful delegation of 20 sex workers from around the world, participated at the 56th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva to challenge the Special Rapporteur's report on Prostitution and Violence Against Women and Girls. The delegation's presence was a testament to the importance of amplifying their voices in international policy spaces. The report presented by Special Rapporteur Reem Alsalem was harmful and failed to recognise sex work as consensual. The report further advocated for policies that criminalise sex work, which exacerbates violence against sex workers and limits their access to healthcare and social services. The experiences and submissions from sex workers and their allies, who have consistently highlighted the devastating consequences of such policies, were completely disregarded. Whilst in Geneva, the sex worker delegation engaged in strategic meetings with government representatives, UN officials, and other stakeholders. They shared their concerns and experiences including the impact of foreign agent laws on health services provided by non-governmental organisations. There is a call by sex workers and their allies for policymakers to adopt approaches that protect the rights, safety, and dignity of sex workers. Their stance against the report was further demonstrated by a protest outside the United Nations.

[#sexworkiswork #decrim](#)



Report to the Special Rapporteur on Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity

The report, submitted by OVOF Consortium responded to the Special Rapporteur's call for input for the report on Artificial Intelligence and international solidarity. OVOF focus was specifically on the contributions and challenges faced by structurally silenced Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs). The findings of the report included limited participation of structurally silenced people, particularly those from marginalised communities, are often excluded from crucial conversations on issues that directly affect them and the violence, online harassment, and intimidation from anti-gender groups and governments. The report concluded with recommendations for strengthening international solidarity and AI. Please read the [report here](#)

The Marginalisation of Women and Shrinking Civic Space for LGBTI, and Sex Worker Human Rights Defenders in Advocacy, Law and Policy Development.

Responding to the call from the [UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders](#), OVOF submitted a comprehensive report titled "The Marginalisation of Women and Shrinking Civic Space for LGBTI, and Sex Worker Human Rights Defenders in Advocacy, Law and Policy Development." [The report](#) underscores how OVOF's work aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality. It provides a critical look at the challenges faced by Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) around the world, highlighting gaps in implementation of human rights protections across different regions. Fundamental freedoms under threat: The right to free speech, peaceful assembly, and bodily autonomy. This stifles progressive voices at international, regional, and national levels. Women, transgender, and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) human rights defenders face violence and online harassment from anti-gender groups and governments. Movements advocating for gender equality and LGBTI rights, particularly in developing countries, are chronically underfunded. Conversely, anti-gender movements opposing these rights appear well-resourced. As a result, women, LGBTI individuals, and sex worker human rights defenders are often excluded from crucial conversations that directly impact their lives. This hinders the development of inclusive and effective policies. Despite marginalisation, structurally silenced women and people are finding their voices and connecting with other movements. However, the shrinking civic space globally further hampers their ability to be heard. Restrictive laws and increased surveillance make it difficult for activists to operate freely, both online and offline. The report concludes by urging for a reversal of these negative trends. We need to ensure that all voices, particularly those of marginalised groups, are heard in shaping policies and creating a more just world. Please read our report [here](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS

IM-Defensoras Partners with OVOF to Launch Feminist Holistic Protection School

IM-Defensoras is proud to announce its partnership with the OVOF consortium to launch the FHP (Feminist Holistic Protection) School, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at fostering a South-South partnership between OVOF consortium partners and country partners. The program will take place from September 1-8, 2024, in Oaxaca de Juarez, Mexico.

The FHP School is designed as an exchange and capacity-building program that will bring together participants from OVOF focus countries, along with 5 Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs). The program will prioritise diversity and inclusivity, ensuring representation from different ethnicities, generations, and types of activism, including trans people, non-binary people, people with disabilities, and more. The objectives of the FHP School are centred around three pillars: Learning, Sharing, and Building Solidarity and Resilience. The program aims to create a space for collective learning, sharing, and horizontal dialogue among WHRDs from the Global South. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about the FHP approach, its political construction, methods, and tools in-depth, as well as share their own experiences and knowledge with fellow defenders.

OVOF's participation @AWID International Forum

The AWID International Forum is a unique gathering that brings together feminist, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ organisations from around the world to connect, heal, and thrive. In 2024, the forum will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, and will be a crucial space for global solidarity and collective action. The Our Voices Our Futures Consortium (OVOF) recognizes the importance of artistic expression and freedom of expression in the face of increasing restrictions on these fundamental rights. To address this issue, OVOF plans to make a strong presence at AWID 2024, leveraging its expertise in legal advocacy, policy engagement, digital rights, and public awareness. By participating in AWID 2024, OVOF aims to amplify the voices of its country-level partners and feminist organisations in the Global South, enhancing their capacities and networks. This initiative will enable them to advocate together as feminist activists, share experiences, and build stronger connections with global movements. Ultimately, OVOF's presence at AWID 2024 seeks to strengthen the global feminist movement by providing a platform for collective action and visibility.

2024 ILGA World Conference: The 2024 ILGA World Conference, themed "Kwa Umoja We Rise," offers an unparalleled platform for Our Voices Our Futures (OVOF) to contribute to the global discourse on LGBTIQ+ rights. As the conference returns to Africa after a quarter-century, it underscores the burgeoning recognition of LGBTIQ+ issues in the region. A focal point for OVOF, this context aligns perfectly with its mission to empower and amplify voices from the Global East and South. OVOF intends to participate at the ILGA World conference that is scheduled for November 11 to November 15, 2024 at Cape Town in South Africa. With a direct impact on three African nations, the conference presents a unique opportunity for OVOF to engage deeply with the challenges and opportunities facing LGBTIQ+ communities in the Global East and South. By leveraging the conference's global reach and focus, OVOF can significantly advance its mission of creating a more just and equitable world for LGBTIQ+ and structurally silenced women.

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