FEMINIST ALLYSHIP

PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES

crea

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What makes alliances equitable, democratic, and therefore **feminist**?

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UNDERSTANDING ALLYSHIP

Alliances are plentiful in the social justice world, but often contain unequal power and voice among their members. Feminist allyship must be understood as striving towards equal voice, representation and power for all – a different quality of roles and relationships between all the allies.

Feminist alliances are relationships between feminist individuals, organizations and movements, or with other social justice organizations and movements that actively support feminist change agendas

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening alliances amongst feminist rights-based movements has gained great urgency in today's context, given the worldwide backlash against human rights, gender equality, LGBTQI rights, reproductive and sexual rights, and the progressive social justice agenda more generally. Yet such alliances are neither as extensive or strong as they should / could be, at either the global, regional or local levels. One reason is that many alliances are highly instrumentalist – i.e., where one dominant (and usually well-resourced) organization mobilises others around a specific cause or issue, to lend greater credibility or a movement-like appearance. Such formations are often ridden with internal power dynamics based on resources, access to policy spaces, location, and other factors, subordinating the priorities and interests of many members.

This raises questions about what makes alliances equitable, democratic, and therefore more sustainable? These questions assume greater importance in the context of feminist organizing, where it is unclear how to build and sustain alliances in a manner that reflects feminist principles. Many North-South feminist alliances have in fact splintered over the perceived domination of Northern voices, priorities and perspectives. Even in the South, however, whether regionally or nationally, there are often internal power dynamics – again due to resources, or access and influence, or urban-rural locations - that are an unacknowledged reality in supposedly Southern alliances. These asymmetries in turn affect their ability to function in an equitable, inclusive and intersectional way, or to practice internally the values and politics they so strongly advocate in the larger world.

Feminist allyship is about the specific principle and practices that inform our way of being an ally that is uniquely feminist, so that we are practicing a feminist way of being allies.

One root cause is our lack of understanding of what constitutes feminist allyship: what is a feminist way of allying with other organizations and movements, or what does it mean to be a good feminist ally? Matters are further complicated by the way terms like “partner” and “partnerships,” are used interchangeably with “ally,” “network”, “alliance”, and so forth.

Given CREA’s track record of creating resources that “clear the conceptual cloud”[1], and of building Southern perspectives on critical issues, we decided to explore the uncharted territory of feminist allyship, and develop some principles to guide its practice. This was done by embarking on an in-depth case study of the oldest of CREA’s alliances – viz., with sex workers organizations and movements in India, South Asia, and around the world. We believed that analysing the experience and insights of the multiple actors within this alliance could lead to a useful first articulation of the principles and of practices that are at the heart of feminist allyship.

[1] See, for instance, “Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation” http://www.creaworld.org/publications/feminist-leadership-social-transformation-clearing-conceptual-cloud-2011-0 , “All About Power” https://reconference.creaworld.org/all-about-power/ , “All About Movements” https://creaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/All-About-Movements_Web.pdf, etc.

THE CASE STUDY

There is little understanding of what is feminist allyship, or the principles that should guide its practice. Building theory from practice is the best way to fill this gap. CREA therefore undertook an in-depth case study of its own nearly 20 year relationship with sex workers organizations and movements in South Asia and worldwide.

Feminist Allyship Case Study Participants

We launched the case study of the longstanding allyship of CREA and sex workers in late 2021, by drawing up a list of sex worker organizations and networks, as well as individual and organizational allies of sex workers, with whom CREA had worked. A set of questions were drawn up to help us understand what had attracted different members to the alliance, what had sustained the relationship over time, and what challenges were faced over time[2]. A small research team of CREA staff was formed to conduct interviews to gather data.

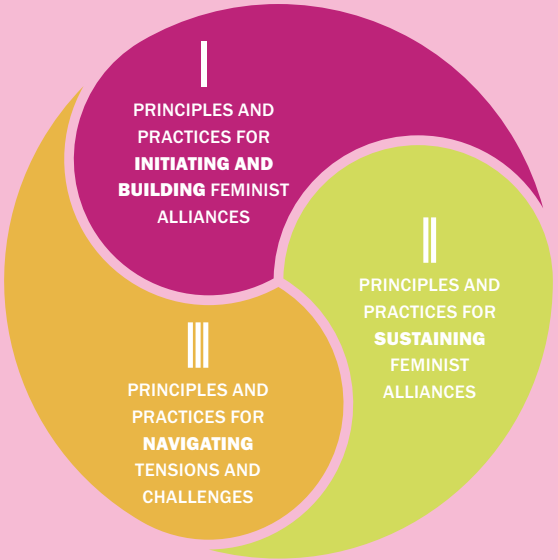
Key informants within each group were identified, and interviews conducted over the course of late 2021 and early 2022. A total of nineteen out of twenty potential informants were interviewed, representing seven global, regional and national sex workers networks / organizations, allies in both donor and advocacy organizations, as well as CREA team members who launched and anchored this work. The data from the interviews was analysed and a detailed report of the case study findings was drafted in 2023. The principles and practices of feminist allyship presented below were distilled from this detailed analysis. The full case study report, with the interview questions and list of case study participants, can be downloaded from the CREA website.

[2] The questions addressed to sex workers' representatives, CREA team members, and external allies are available in Appendix (ii) of the full case study report.

The principles & practices of feminist allyship emerging from the case study:

We attempt here to summarise what our case study revealed as the core principles of feminist allyship, and how we can translate each principle into concrete practices. We are conscious that these principles have emerged in the context of allyship between an NGO-type organization (CREA) and largely grassroots movements and movement-based networks. We therefore do not claim that these principles are equally valid for all alliances or alliance-seeking entities, or that they are complete or all-encompassing. They do, however, provide a useful starting point for framing the core principles and practices of feminist allyship more broadly. In that sense, this is a work in progress – indeed a first iteration and we invite others to build upon it and contribute to strengthening it. Moreover, we are proud to assert that this is a Southern framework, built from the experiences of predominantly South-based organizations, movements, and individuals.

In drawing out the feminist allyship principles and practices emerging from our case study, we found it useful to categorise them into three distinct categories, viz.,



Below we lay out the key principles in each category, and adjacent to each principle, some critical practices required to operationalize it in feminist allyship interactions – with the caution that these principles and practices are not presented here sequentially, but as the critical dimensions for building equitable, inclusive, and democratic feminist alliances.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR INITIATING AND BUILDING FEMINIST ALLIANCES

PRINCIPLE

1

Build a shared long-term vision and change agenda that all allies can embrace

PRACTICE

Create processes and invest time in building a long-term shared vision and agenda for change, rather than a short-term transactional relationship around some immediate opportunity or challenge. Feminist allyship cannot be built with an approach that radiates the attitude of "Okay, this is what we want to do – will you join us?"

Rather, we have to create a level playing field and an inclusive process that takes into account and values the different strengths and capacities, examining both difference and similarities fearlessly, and addressing issues of language, terminology, location, and lived experiences that diverse allies bring to the table. Only then will the agenda that emerges be truly shared. Small joint actions can be taken up during this process, to consolidate the relationship and test the capacity to work together. This ensures the relationship will not fall apart when external forces expose unexamined differences.

Nor can this be viewed as a one-off process - it requires periodic review and realignment as the joint initiatives/actions grow and advance. In the CREA-Sex Worker case study, this process occurred organically, through multiple engagements in both CREA and sex workers led spaces and events, as well as through intentional conversations.

> *'**Solidarity is not the same as support.** To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be ... given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment.'* - **Bell Hooks**

2

Stand together and for each other in visible ways, wherever possible

Feminist allyship means demonstrating solidarity in concrete ways... it means being willing to take a public stand in support of each other, especially in times of crisis. In our case study, sex workers identified this as an important principle and practice, since few feminist organizations, had been willing to openly support the rights of sex workers. CREA's visible stand against the criminalization of sex work and that sex work is work, CREA's focus on the recognition of violence against sex worker as an integral part of gender based violence, was a major factor in building and sustaining their allyship with CREA.

This principle is equally relevant in multiple contexts: as for example, the demand of women of colour for white women to take public stands against racism and neocolonialism, or of Palestinian women asking Jewish feminists to condemn the Israeli government's oppressive policies.

We must acknowledge, however, that there are exceptional situations in which a public stand is dangerous, or even strategically unwise. The important thing here is for each member of the alliance to know that others are in solidarity with them, and will demonstrate this openly as much as possible.

> *"There are many women's organisations and movements, but CREA has been the first organisation to recognize sex workers as women.... **CREA has openly identified with, embraced and talked about the challenges and problems of sex workers as women**."* - AINSW

PRINCIPLE

3

Build trust, transparency and mutual accountability

PRACTICE

Trust building: The above processes all contribute to building trust, but **the ways in which trust is built in feminist alliances includes elements not always present in other alliances.** For example, transparency about money and funding for the shared agenda, demonstrating equal value for the knowledge, lived experience, movement strength and mobilization capacity of community-based partners, and avoiding implicit hierarchies based on money power or other differences are critical practices of feminist allies.

Practicing transparency is vital to both the initial and longer-term alliance building process, and means transparency about each ally's agenda and purpose in seeking the alliance, the resources they bring to the table (both financial and other), and keeping each other in the loop on an ongoing basis about any or all work on the shared issues. In the CREA-sex worker allyship case study, for instance, most sex workers representatives spoke of CREA's openness about its financial resources as well as its access to local and international advocacy and feminist networking spaces, as factors that contributed to their trust in the relationship.

These measures are in fact the **practice of mutual accountability** in feminist allyship, which is valued by all members of the alliance.

> *"**CREA** has been a solid partner from the outset and **has been consistent in their allyship**; an organisation which could be trusted and felt safe with."*
> - SWIFA

PRINCIPLE

4

Enhance individual and collective access, visibility and voice in key spaces & policy processes

PRACTICE

Feminist allyship requires the enhancement of access, visibility, and voice for all its members, in important debates, advocacy processes, and feminist spaces, from local to global levels. This is particularly critical for those allies who have historically been excluded from certain spaces, or spoken for by others. In our case study, for instance, sex workers identified this as a vital resource that CREA brought to the allyship. Rather than speaking for them, CREA actively opened up access to policy forums where, for example, protocols on trafficking or legislations impacting sex work were being discussed, and supported sex workers to speak for themselves in these debates, rather than speaking for them. Similarly, CREA ensured that sex workers and their allies were on the faculty of CREA institutes on sexuality, gender and rights, demonstrating respect for the capacity, knowledge and perspectives of the sex workers.

> *"CREA's feminist allyship has paved the way and **enabled sex workers** movements and sex workers, **to raise their voices and demand their rights** in new places."* - **AINSW**

II

PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINING FEMINIST ALLIANCES OVER THE LONGER-TERM

PRINCIPLE

5

Recognise, embrace and leverage differences

PRACTICE

Ongoing alignment by acknowledging differences and learning to leverage these strategically is an important practice in sustaining feminist allyship. This means openly recognising differences in terms of both identity as well socio-economic position and location – i.e., gender identity and sexual expression, religion, race, class, caste, ethnicity, occupation, location (rural / urban; small town / big city; North / South, etc.), and ability, among others. Recognising the differential privilege and access to less visible resources of the different allies is also vital. These are often called "intangible" resources, such as contacts and influence, financial resources, educational background, facility in global language like English, but also include the hugely valuable resources that movement-based allies bring to the alliance, such as the power of numbers, ground-level knowledge, lived experience, strategic thinking, and their own distinct analysis.

Feminist allyship grows stronger when differences are not just acknowledged, but embraced and leveraged. In the CREA-sex workers allyship case study, we saw that over time, the allies strategically used – rather than blurred - their different strengths and capacities to advocate the sex workers rights in both national and transnational spaces, and leveraged these in the CREA institutes on gender, sexuality and rights.

> *I know that our combination changes things; it's very radical, it's very amplified ..., and we see how **coming** [into spaces] **with each other makes us even stronger**..... We also know CREA's strengths and we value each other's strengths as we come into that collaboration.* - **UHAI-East Africa**

PRINCIPLE

6

Build each other's knowledge, capacity, and leadership

PRACTICE

Constructing clear processes of mutual capacity building, learning and expanding leadership can be a major contributor to building collective strength and sustaining alliances. Indeed, building each other's knowledge, analysis and skills (for both advocacy and activism) is vital for sustaining feminist alliances, but even more critical is conscious processes of ground-level leadership building to continually expand the leadership base of each alliance member and of the alliance overall.

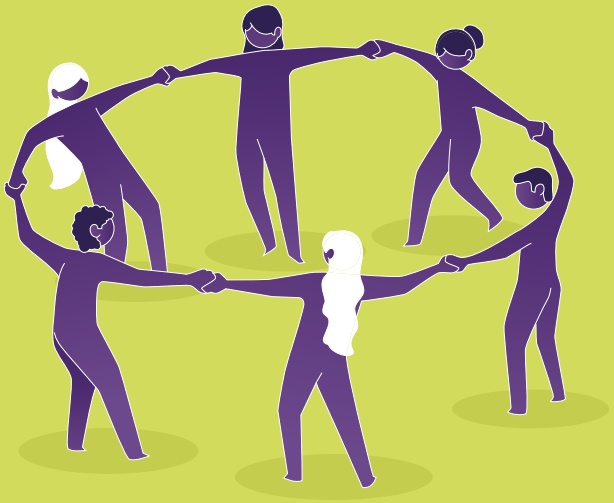
The CREA-sex workers allyship case study clearly showed that in both South Asia and East Africa, access to each other's events and training institutes were viewed as mutual capacity and leadership building and learning processes for both CREA and the sex workers organizations.

> *"The process of Kenyan sex workers **gathering their own evidence and writing a paper for the CEDAW**, and CREA only facilitating it.... It is important to always remember that the people who know, have the cases, live that experience, are the sex workers' themselves."* - **former CREA staff**

PRINCIPLE

7

Deepen an intersectional approach and embrace new perspectives



PRACTICE

Strengthening an intersectional approach and embracing new perspectives is an important element of ongoing learning and capacity building. Feminist allyship demands that each partner's understanding of the intersectional nature of the issue/s they are working on is deepened and strengthened, and new perspectives embraced. This is also a form of ongoing learning and mutual capacity building that should not be neglected in the priorities for collective action.

In our case study, CREA's intersectional approach was seen to have been deepened and complicated through the partnership with sex workers movements, by bringing in the experience of trans sex workers, as well as in grasping the struggles of sex workers living in poor communities for basic needs like water, schooling for their children, and access to medical services and reproductive health care.

This also means introspection on the alliance's own possible exclusions – are all those impacted by these issues present and heard? Does the allyship unintentionally exclude anyone?

> *"Who isn't in the room?* ***How can the allyship be expanded, more inclusive?*** *And whose issues even within the sex work community (e.g. trans sex workers), are not heard or voiced?"* - **UHAI-East Africa**

8

Ongoing and Sustained Communication

Ongoing and sustained communication is the lifeblood of feminist allyship, even when there is no action agenda to discuss. Consistent communication enables transparency, mutual accountability, consolidating trust, and moving the relationship beyond instrumental goals. This is especially vital as the allyship advances over time, as and when the alliance members confront new challenges, or leverage new opportunities. The potential then is for new power dynamics to arise within the allyship, as some members gain access to new resources, spaces or information that is not available to others.

This was pointed out repeatedly in our case study as a major factor in the sense of trust and openness that was created, with CREA setting the example, and sex worker representatives and other allies following suit.

Consistent communication also reinforces a non-instrumental approach, This was highlighted in our case study - that CREA and the sex workers would periodically reach out and meet, at least virtually, just to touch base, exchange news and developments, share setbacks, and simply be there for each other. This was particularly vital to the sex workers groups during the Covid pandemic, when they lost their livelihoods and felt totally isolated.

> *"We have gotten to a place where there's mutual respect for each other's struggles as feminists and recognition of the fact that the struggles come from very different contexts.... **how you see and experience oppression comes from a very... unique place based on your social identity**, [and] the nature of your work.."* - **Former CREA staff**

PRINCIPLE

9

Build resilience through flexibility, responsiveness to new challenges

PRACTICE

The resilience of feminist alliances depends on flexibility, responsiveness to new challenges, and mutual support in critical times. Given today's rapidly changing socio-political contexts, pre-determined strategies, actions or events may have to be postponed, rethought, or otherwise shifted due to external circumstances. In our case study, we saw that the COVID pandemic was an unforeseen situation that disrupted the plans of all the alliance partners. Crises have also hit feminist alliances due to the worldwide backlash against feminism and gender equality, state repression and violence against movement leaders, wars and civil conflicts, and climate disasters.

Supporting each during such challenging times is critical to the long-term resilience of alliances. In our case study, sex workers identified CREA's support during the Covid pandemic, in the form of funds from its own core resources and sustained outreach for morale-boosting, as something that had greatly sustained them. There are, of course, contexts in which the costs of such solidarity could be very high – political targeting of the supporting organization or its leadership, for example. The point is to make an effort to find some way of expressing support that is visible / tangible to the other ally.

PRINCIPLE

10

Expand linkages

PRACTICE

Feminist allyship requires the conscious and strategic building of intersectional linkages with other feminist and social justice actors and movements, especially as external social and political challenges intensify. Alliances need to reach out beyond their own particular issue boundaries, to connect with others engaged in similar struggles – e.g., organizations of marginalized women in other locations, women with disabilities, climate justice and economic justice movements, progressive youth and LBTQI organizations, as also with a range of supportive donors. In our case study, CREA has tried to connect sex workers organizations with new donors (Mama Cash, Red Umbrella Fund, OSEIA, UAF-Africa, etc.) as well as with wider feminist, queer, and disability movements in the respective regions.

These linkages are not always easy to build or fruitful - it can be challenging to create shared visions and change agendas with diverse partners - but the effort is important. All movements struggling for social justice in an unfair world have to find ways to connect and support each other at critical times.

> ***CREA... has always tried to bring the sex workers voices into*** *[major international feminist]* ***spaces like AWID****. They also helped organise discussions with human rights scholars, ... where I critiqued the human rights framework to show it is not sex work friendly. [Access to these spaces] was important because of the pushback from [some] feminists against sex work and to challenge the whole trafficking narrative.* - **SANGRAM**

11

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

Feminist allies must pay attention to the politics of representation, and conduct transparent discussions about strategic opportunities and who will represent and speak on the issues.

Feminist allyship strives to ensure that **the allies most affected by an issue, or who negotiate the issue in their daily lives, speak for themselves in key forums**, underscoring the sex workers' well-known principle of **"nothing about us without us"**. It also challenges the privilege or dominance of some members of an alliance who may be more comfortable operating in certain spaces like international forums or policy processes.

Feminist allyship demands that role boundaries between and among the various members be explicitly negotiated at the alliance-building stage, and then **periodically revisited** as the allyship advances. In the CREA-Sex Workers allyship case study, both CREA and sex workers representatives spoke about how it has been important to recognise when and where CREA should speak and where sex workers should speak for themselves, or where CREA is taking more space than it should, and ceding space to sex workers. Reading this correctly can be tricky, and lead to tensions that need to be periodically dealt with as they arise.

> *"**There's a mantra in sex worker movements** and I think it's a global mantra - **'For Us, By Us'**. I think sex workers were probably the first feminists! ... there is a way in which we [CREA] learned so much from their community, and by moving away from this idea of [telling them] what to do, when to do it, and how - we have stood to gain so much."* - **Former CREA staff**

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Former CREA staff

Similarly, **learning to listen and take direction from the alliance members most directly affected by an injustice, rather than giving direction to, is a valuable practice** in maintaining role clarity and boundaries in feminist alliances where there is a diversity of class, privilege and location between the allies. Sex workers representatives cited this as one of the factors that has sustained their allyship with CREA – that CREA has always been ready to listen, learn from and be guided by their insights in many contexts. **This practice also helps democratize equations between partners**, and helps address the "experts / professionals vs grassroots / lay people" power dynamic.[3]

Maintaining boundaries around who speaks, and whose voice is amplified in which contexts, increases the alliance's credibility and legitimacy to speak on the issues in different platforms: In our case study, "supporting from the back" has greatly enhanced, for instance, CREA's credibility and legitimacy to speak on sex work issues in broader human rights, feminist and social justice forums. CREA is not speaking FOR sex workers here, but leveraging these spaces to shift the discourse on sex work.

[3] This is how and why CREA has distanced itself, for instance, from the stance of many international and feminist organizations that address sex work: viz., the rescuer, or saviour, speaking for the "victims", and teaching them what their goals should be and how to achieve them.

PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGES AND TENSIONS

It is inevitable that allyship comes with its own share of friction and tensions, especially when relationships are being built between actors with widely varying locations, experiences, perspectives, pre-formed biases and capabilities. Feminist allyship requires the courage to surface, confront, and deal with these openly and honestly. If they are ignored or swept aside as mere irritants, they will result in more problematic conflicts and ruptures that will be even harder to resolve. Our final set of allyship principles therefore present constructive ways of dealing with these challenges.

PRINCIPLE

12

Transparent mechanisms for dealing with internal power dynamics, tensions, and conflicts

PRACTICE

The power differences between different actors are a critical challenge that has to be continually confronted in feminist allyship. Initial asymmetries usually exist due to differing financial resources, access to policy spaces, language and voice, and disparities in intangible resources such as one's networks, contacts, or experience in how to operate in influential spaces. For example, in the case of CREA-sex workers movements relationship, there were differences such as ability to speak English, skill to navigate certain kinds of spaces (such as international forums), and how CREA vs sex workers / trans sex workers were perceived and treated by government officials or elected representatives.

It is vital that these differences are openly acknowledged, and ongoing mechanisms developed to address them, in order to maintain a healthy environment within the alliance. This is because even if initial differences are tackled, new kinds of power dynamics and asymmetries will emerge over time that must be tackled from time to time. These periodic pressure points can be the result of political and ideological differences, or due to competition for resources and representational spaces when the alliance becomes more visible and effective in its collective work, and some of its members attract more funding.

> *"...there is nothing good that doesn't [come with] challenges. But [this] is making us strong and this is the reason Kenyan sex workers organizations have a very strong partnership with CREA... because* ***we trust each other, we have tried to understand each other, we learnt our likes and dislikes, and that made the partnership stronger.****"* - KESWA

"Because you are going with an agenda ,and you are going with money, and you're not a sex worker. those are three types of potential tensions.... And I think owning it [is the best way]: 'Yes, we are not sex workers! Yes, we've come with money! And yes, we've come with an agenda.' [This is how some] of the challenges and tensions have been overcome.... through being very, open, [being] ... transparent, [putting] everything on the table..."

Former CREA staff

Feminist allyship practice also means levelling the playing field between its diverse members - for example, by building each other's capacities to operate confidently in unfamiliar spaces, backstopping support as each partner gains equal access and representation in these, skills to articulate the agenda appropriately in different settings, and sharing financial resources.

Tensions and differences between some members of the alliance, and their rippling impact on others, are an inevitable and possibly inherent problem within allyship. These tensions arise for various reasons – political and ideological differences, strategic disagreements, personality clashes between key leaders, etc. In the CREA-Sex Workers case, a serious and ultimately irreconcilable ideological and strategic conflict between two large sex workers networks came to a head, and one of the networks exited the alliance as a result.

While conflict resolution mechanisms cannot guarantee that all differences will always be resolved, making the effort is what signifies feminist allyship, not the result. The existence of such processes enhances the democratic and feminist character of the allyship, and counters the destructive impact of back-biting and hidden conflict that inevitably arise when such constructive processes do not exist.

PRINCIPLE

13

Avoid the donor syndrome

PRACTICE

Feminist allyship must ensure that access to funding does not become a source of greater voice or influence within the alliance. Due to their socio-political location, history, and legal structure, some alliance members may need to channel resources to other members, which can result in a kind of donor-grantee power dynamic that vitiates the relationship and subordinates those receiving the funds. Capacity building will have to be done to avert this, and these issues will have to be addressed in initial alliance-building process discussed under Principles 1 and 3.

This donor power dynamic can also be averted by assiduously following the practices described under Principles 6 and 7 – viz., visibly valuing non-financial resources (knowledge, experience, grassroots base, ground-level perspectives) as equal to the power of money, if not even greater in value. Our case study showed that CREA had to very consciously address this issue, since one of the resources they brought to the allyship with sex workers was resources, and they had to intentionally steer clear of playing the donor role. It is also a practice that has to be continually reinforced with new staff or members entering the alliance relationship.

> *There is also a power dynamic rooted in access to resources: Feminist organizations still have more resources than sex workers organizations / movements - so ....* ***is there a way in which we control the agenda? Or is the agenda being set by ...those who provide the resources?*** *Luckily sex workers are very good at letting us know that they are not beholden to us for anything!* - **Independent ally**

PRINCIPLE

14

Avoid exclusivity and build relationships beyond individuals

PRACTICE

Feminist allyship requires an awareness of the history of prior relationships and networks that individual allies may be part of, or alliances that were formed earlier to advance a similar agenda. These existing or newly emerging ties must be respected rather than seen as competition. In the CREA case study the example was cited of CREA entering the arena of sex workers alliances without much awareness of already existing networks and relationships, and having to navigate these without disrupting them. Competing or demanding exclusivity from allies – what we may term the "you belong to OUR alliance!" syndrome – is a challenge that must be overcome for the health and resilience not only of feminist alliances, but of all progressive social justice activism.

It is also essential to broaden the base of interaction, rapport and trust-building beyond individuals, especially those who may have been the initiators / interface in the relationship in the early stages of the alliance. When these individuals leave an alliance member organization for other pursuits, the allyship relationships can be negatively impacted, until the bonds of trust are rebuilt with new people. This syndrome was highlighted by some voices in the CREA-Sex Workers allyship case study, since key individuals from the CREA or sex workers organization side moved out, and relationships had to be rebuilt from both sides.

> *"...it's important for the ones we are connected with to stay.* ***We are able to talk, debate and even fight openly with the people we have built strong bonds with****. But with new people it becomes difficult and we go quiet without putting forth our opinions."* - **AINSW**

Perhaps the final wisdom in dealing with the challenges and tensions inherent in allyship is to accept that even with the best feminist practices, not all allyship challenges can be overcome. It is important to realise that even with the best of intentions, convergent ideologies and common goals, relationships sometimes just don't work. This could be due to individual, idiosyncratic and unpredictable reasons, or because of social, economic and cultural differences, or because manipulative and powerful external forces or compulsions overwhelm our cohesion. Accepting failures, relationship ruptures and losses is an inevitable part of the reality of allyship. What is important for feminist allyship, is to have created sincere mechanisms and processes for confronting these factors, and accepting that they will not always succeed.

The most important of all the feminist allyship principles is, therefore, to **learn from our experiences**, both failures and successes. Only then can we build even stronger feminist alliances for realising our feminist visions!

SRILATHA BATLIWALA

Srilatha Batliwala is an India-based feminist activist-scholar and trainer whose life's work has bridged the worlds of theory and practice, and focused on capacity building of activists and organizations to advance feminist movement building and feminist leadership. She is currently **Senior Advisor, Knowledge Building with CREA** (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action), an international organization that works at the intersection of gender, sexuality and human rights (www.creaworld.org); and **Senior Associate, Gender at Work**, a global network of gender experts supporting organizations to build cultures of equality and inclusion (www.genderatwork.org).

Up to the mid-90s, Srilatha was involved in grassroots women's empowerment and movement building work in India that mobilized and empowered tens of thousands of the most socio-economically marginalized rural and urban women. Thereafter, she worked internationally including as Civil Society Program Officer at the Ford Foundation, New York, Research Fellow at Harvard University's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, and as Scholar Associate in AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development).

She has written extensively on women's empowerment, and feminist approaches to power, movements, monitoring and evaluation, mentoring, and leadership. Her most recent publications are "Transformative Feminist Leadership – What it is and Why it Matters" (UNU IIGH Think Piece Series https://www.genderhealthhub.org/articles/the-power-of-feminist-leadership-think-piece/ ; "Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures" (with Tejinder Singh Bhogal and Lavanya Mehra - https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-mentoring-guide-for-feminist-futures/); the primers "All About Power" and "All About Movements" (https://creaworld.org/resource/all-about-power/) (https://creaworld.org/resource/all-about-movements/). A collection of her key writings can be found in "Engaging with Empowerment – An Intellectual and Experiential Journey" (Women Unlimited, 2014, and eBook version 2015). Much of her published work can be found on both Academica.edu and Researchgate.net

Srilatha is located in Bangalore, India, and is an active feminist grandmother to her four teenaged grandchildren!

CREA

CREA is a feminist international human rights organization based in the Global South and led by women from the Global South. CREA's work draws upon the inherent value of a rights-based approach to sexuality and gender equality.

CREA promotes, protects, and advances human rights and the sexual rights of all people by building leadership capacities of activists and allies; strengthening organizations and social movements; creating and increasing access to new information, knowledge, and resources; and enabling supportive social and policy environments.

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Mapping differences to build feminist allyship: An exercise

1. Form groups of 4-5 people, with at least one representative of different members of your alliance

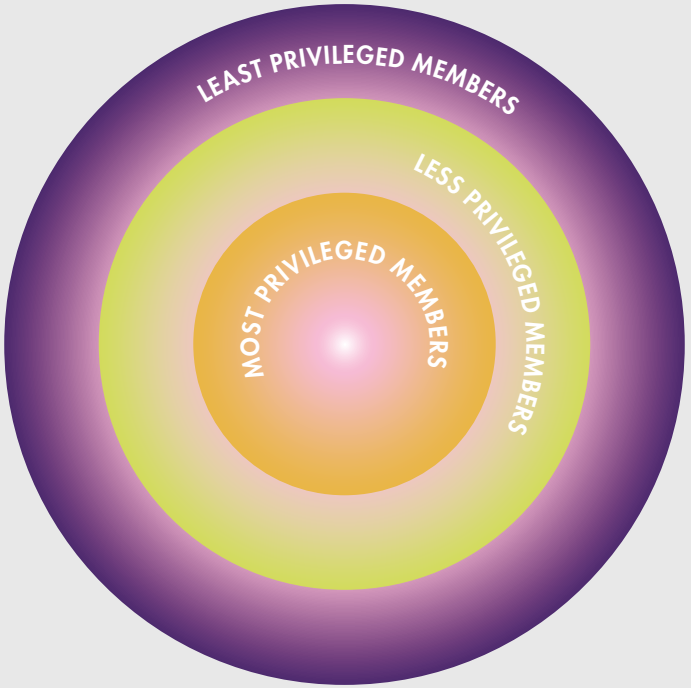
2. Use the diagram on the opposite page to map out the following:

    a. Which members of the alliance are the most privileged in terms of (i) financial resources, (ii) contacts and access to influential spaces, (iii) the language skills and experience to operate in influential spaces, and (iv) decision-making power within the alliance?

    b. Which members of the alliance are less privileged in terms of these criteria?

    c. And which members are least privileged in terms of these criteria?

3. Which of the feminist allyship principles and practices can be used to create a more equitable environment within your alliance?



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