

Led by



How can we ground ourselves in care and **dance our revolution?**



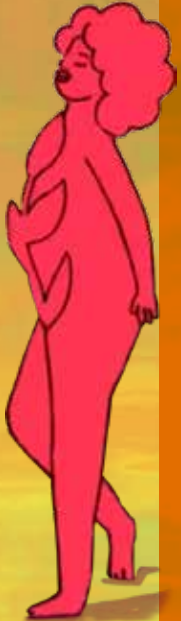
Almost thirty years ago, the **Urgent Action Fund** was born to explore a new and exciting idea with activists from across the world: Rapid Response Grantmaking for women human rights activists in urgent situations. This means money in a crisis.

To stay safe, to respond to a threat. Or to seize an opportunity to change the political context.

That model allowed us to see what activists managed daily: high levels of chronic stress, exposure to trauma, and enormous workloads. At that time they can talk for

hours about fundamentalisms, funding crunches, ending war and violence against women. But discussing their hopes, fears, and concerns was almost impossible.

We started a voyage that gave rise to many questions, two of which in particular became seeds that took root in our minds, spirits, and hearts: What does “sustainable activism” mean? What do activists do to sustain themselves? activism” mean? What do activists do to sustain themselves?



In 2007, Jane Barry y Jelena Đorđević wrote **“What’s the Point of Revolution if We Can’t Dance?”** which offered an in-depth overview of the situation of human rights defenders and how they confronted the risks human rights activists were exposed to in their work.

Ten years later, Tatiana Cordero (RIP), Executive Director of Urgent Action Fund -Latin America and the Caribbean (UAF-LAC, born in 2009), proposed carrying out a new investigation, this time global and from the South, guided by the question: *What has happened with the care and protection of women, trans* and non-binary activists in the world in these years?*

For three consecutive years, in 2017, 2018, and 2019, we shared gatherings, thoughts, and feelings that materialized into the research: **How can we ground ourselves in care and dance our revolution?**

This research was created with a network of accompaniment and support that was formed with the Advisory Group and the Urgent Action Sister Funds, which allowed us to deepen the reflections around care and protection, recognizing in this path the diverse perspectives and multiple ways of inhabiting care and protection and acting on it as activists or practitioners.

Each chapter is full of voices, experiences, and reflections of **118 women and non-binary feminist human rights defenders and activists from 63 different countries.**



1 HONORING THE PATH

In this investigation we have proposed to explore what is new and what persists, the common and the diverse, based on the experiences of activists and those that accompany them. That's why we created a participative methodology based on active listening throughout the process.

We live in a specific time and space, in conditions that make our actions possible. These conditions are stable, but at the same time they change. Situating ourselves in the world means also situating ourselves in movement, in a changing context in which activism persists, like a perpetual and continuous impulse, toward a more just society.

The same risk can be experienced differently depending on our identities and the specific conditions in which we live. Situating risks and threats means recognizing that the same condition can represent a risk factor (increasing the possibility that I may be harmed) or protection (reducing that possibility), depending on the context.

Collective construction of knowledge helps us to honor and create memory, to find new meanings, and to mobilize change in our present and future, as persons, activists, feminist funds, and donors. Our intentions through this research are: To help activists, their organizations, movements, and donors to incorporate practices and reflections regarding holistic care and protection. To strengthen networks of solidarity among activists through the collectivization and visualization of experiences so that their movements can become increasingly sustainable.

SITUATING RISK

Being an activist always involves risk. Being a woman, trans*, or non-binary activist means transgressing the gender roles established by patriarchal society, and for that reason, attacks against them have a sexist backstory.



3 GETTING TO KNOW THE ACTIVISTS

Activists are much more than their demographic data. Activists are their experiences, memories, and subjectivities, told in their voices.

The activists who participated in this investigation are women, trans*, and non-binary persons engaged in the defense of the human rights of women, the LGBTIQ+ population, and territory.

Some of them mentioned their profession, trade, or area of work: journalism, art, social work, psychology, anthropology, sociology, astrology, reiki, psychotherapy.

We invited you to know them and connect with their stories in this chapter.



4 CONVERSING

We reaffirmed how important it is to converse. **We need time to speak, listen to each other, learn together,** and make sense of what we've lived and experienced. Words help, and sometimes heal, and conversing requires willingness, time, and calm.

When we talk about the importance of conversing, we are referring to honest, deeply felt conversations that try to answer by feeling the questions: How are you? How do you feel right now about your daily activism when it's about your body, mind, emotions, voice, and spirit? Everyone we interviewed answered, and we listened closely. Then we went over the conversations carefully, looking for the implications, how things were named, what they mean in the day-to-day, and what activism means.

5 SHARING THE PRACTICES

We take care of each other even if we are not present. In this process, we shared the care and protection practices that give us security, well-being, and pleasure.

We learned that although care is collective, we have strategies that respond to bodily experiences, contexts, identities, and particular experiences.

We do not have a formula or a recipe, but sharing our experiences roots us in collective care that keeps us standing up to dance our revolution.



TRANSFORMING FUNDING TOGETHER

From a care perspective, it is vital to consider the interdependence between funding and movements for the protection and defense of human rights.

Conversations about care and protection engage the socioeconomic conditions from which we resist and sustain our activism. **Financing represents an exercise of power that conditions the existence of organizations and movements.**

In this process, we were dedicated to understanding the current role of donors and making the needs and interests of movements explicit, and to open conversations around care and protection through co-responsibility.

Together we can transform the power relations that run through financing, but to do so we need to recognize that each of us faces different inequalities.



Our roots are constantly changing, always interacting with the environment, nourishing and feeding, and crossing with other roots. That's why for us, grounding means unceasing movement and change.

There are many conversations still open, and above all an open call to create and celebrate existing actions, processes, and reflections. To revindicate daily practices, to daily question our actions at the personal, collective, and community level, to destabilize power and transform oppression. We must recognize that violence continues to happen as long as activism exposes the interests that sustain the world order. For this reason, it is urgent we gain a shared responsibility and awareness about the interdependence of life itself with life around us.

GROUNDING FUTURE ACTIVISMS

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PROSPECTS, TRAJECTORIES AND PRACTICES IN THE CONSORTIUM OF URGENT ACTION FUNDS

Learning and transformation around care and protection is an ongoing, never-ending process. In this chapter, we share some reflections on the histories, reflections, approaches, programmatic strategies, and internal actions of the Urgent Action Sister Funds, updated to early 2021. To place prime importance on the viewpoints and actions of the activists we interviewed, we decided to

present our work and approaches in a separate section, and also present each Sister Fund separately, which also serves to illustrate our diversity as a Consortium.



Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activists (UAF-FA) - 1997

Promote holistic care within our institution and in activist spaces. Understand that self-care is an important political tool in our ability to fight for justice.

The practice of well-being, both individually and collectively, is a central tenet of feminist movements.





Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-Africa) 2001

Recognizes that protection and wellness are interconnected: Protection improves not only when feminist activists can continue doing their jobs safely (physically, emotionally, culturally, and digitally) but also when the collective security and mutual care that is necessary among activists, their lives, and their work over the long term, to achieve change.



Urgent Action Fund Latin America and the Caribbean (UAF-LAC) - 2009

Care, even care for oneself (self-care) is always relational. And it is understood in relation to people, nature, and life in all its manifestations. Although it is a personal decision and an act of mindfulness, it assumes conditions and possibilities of time, relationships, support networks, and resources that involve other beings.



Urgent Action Fund for Asia and Pacific (UAF-A&P) - 2017

The context of every activist is different, and we are aware that they are the ones who are best situated to decide on the appropriate measures for guaranteeing their own safety. Depending on the needs that activists express, provide the appropriate grant and connect them with networks and advice from others on the ground who can offer them assistance and support.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEXTS FROM THE CONSORTIUM OF URGENT ACTION FUNDS

In this section, each Fund details the contexts, challenges, and opportunities for movements in the regions where they work, sustained by the common axis of well-being, sustainability, and care for the defenders of human rights, the rights of women, and all the struggles that stem from this work.

Although they respond to different social, cultural, economic, and even environmental contexts, the Urgent Action Sister Funds of various regions face very similar obstacles, which seriously affect feminist activists and women's movements.

We are referring to the expansion of the far right, which has caused setbacks in terms of rights and laws; the dispossession and exploitation of territories, making use of the criminalization of indigenous.

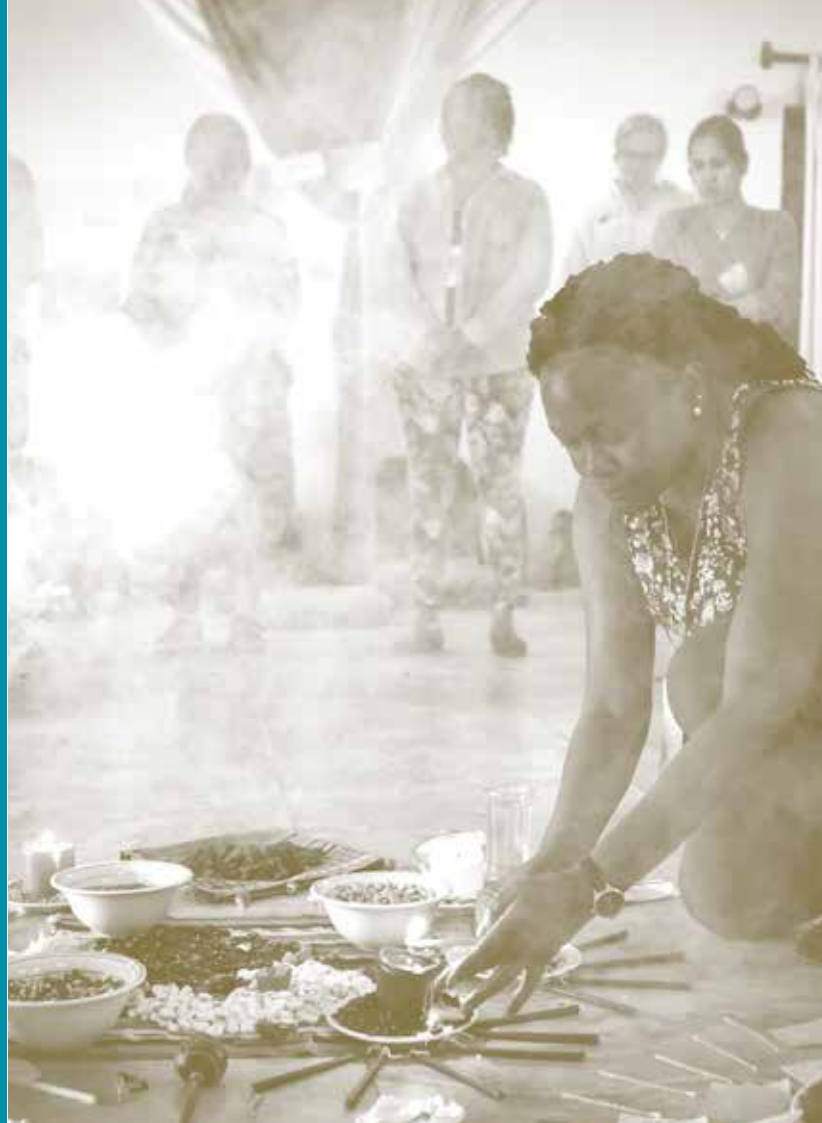


We hope this collection of stories and experiences serves as an inspiration to you and the processes you are involved in, to continue together building a care-centered world.

And for you, what does it mean to ground yourself in care?

If you are a donor or work in the philanthropic sector, find the document: ***“From activists to donors: Five key points about centering care.”***

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