WHAT HOLDS US TOGETHER?

Resourcing the Invisible Work of Feminist Networks, the First Responders of Permacrisis

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ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When a trans rights organisation is systematically doxxed and its staff threatened, who coordinates safe houses and can move them to safety without paperwork? When genocidal invasions sever telecommunications, who sources, funds, and distributes e-SIMs across borders so that journalists and medics can still bear witness? When floods wash away entire villages, who maps the needs of disabled folks, and evacuation routes, before any government hotline is operational?

In all these situations, it was a network.

Feminist networks are the essential first responders of our era of permacrisis. They are a hidden, living infrastructure, and the binding material of movement life. But despite their vital role in keeping people safe, connected, and politically present, these networks remain largely invisible to the systems that understand and resource our movements. Khuyut and this report are an attempt to map that invisibility, offering a blueprint for how we can begin to recognise, value, and resource this scaffolding.

Defining the network: A fluid architecture

In this report, the term "network" is not a formal organisational category, but a description of how we actually organise. Regardless of their form, these networks are broadly unified by three conditions:

1. they bridge the gap between organisations, coalitions, and individuals
2. they operate on a shared, often unwritten, set of political values
3. and they function as the primary coordination point for survival during moments of crisis.

The tech imperative: Reimagining our digital scaffolding

Technology is the central nervous system of feminist networks.

- **Pragmatism over idealised tech**: Networks frequently rely on mainstream tools for immediate coordination. They are deeply aware of surveillance risks, but they prioritise the tools that allow them to function quickly and more easily in the thick of crises. Feminist tech must be able to move beyond idealised tech solutions and support networks based on the tools they actually use, while providing realistic security training.
- **Addressing the 'stability' of mainstream tech:** The instability of open-source tools and their steep learning curves was noted by organisers as one of the main reasons why they often fell back to using mainstream tech, which can point us towards what feminist tech could work on.
- **The "tech apocalypse" reality and strategic distrust:** In regions like West Asia & North Africa and across Arabic-speaking countries (WANA), organisers describe a lived reality where drones, AI-driven targeting, and algorithmic propaganda have transformed daily life. For many of them, technology is not currently a hopeful horizon, but a weapon and an instrument of surveillance. Several organisers explicitly ask not to be pushed to "trust" technology when it was being used to target them.
- **Regional nuances:** Perceptions of technology vary significantly by region. In Latin America, networks exhibit a more forward-facing orientation, and are working with technology as a tool for digital care, experimentation, and play. Effective resourcing must align with the specific temporal and technological realities of each local context.
- **The return to analogue:** Networks are increasingly reclaiming infrastructures like community radio, which create local public spaces that remain free from the reach of large digital platforms or state surveillance.

Insights for resourcing the invisibilised work of networks

To support feminist networks, we must move towards acknowledging that the most vital work that happens in crisis conditions often happens in the informal and unstructured spaces between institutions.

1. **Recognise memory as infrastructure:** Archiving, oral histories, and intergenerational storytelling are essential to prevent movements from having to start from scratch with every new crisis or change, which several networks reported as having to do.
2. **Carework must be understood as a foundational structure:** Emotional labor, grief-holding, and crisis accompaniment are foundational to movements. Funding should actively include budgets for mental health, wellbeing stipends, and dedicated, paid time for rest,
3. **Fluidity is key to survival:** In crisis contexts, the line between "project work" and "survival needs" (food, rent, evacuation, medical care) disappears. Grants must allow for funds to move fluidly between these needs.
4. **Governance and conflict resolution as feminist practice:** Conflict resolution, accountability, and the co-creation of manifestos are essential political work. Funding must provide the time and space for networks to build these internal systems during quieter periods, so they are prepared when crises intensify.
5. **Respect the "right to disappear"**: Visibility is often a security risk. We must prioritise internal accountability to the community over public-facing reports, allowing networks to reduce visibility for their own safety without losing support.
6. **Normalising "sleep" cycles:** Networks might have periods of dormancy, which are a feature of how they function. Activity might spike around crises, and then go quieter in the in-between phases.
7. **Resourcing the informal:** The fastest, most effective responses often emerge from informal, hybrid coalitions. Funders must develop mechanisms to support these formations without forcing them into restrictive organisational shells.

8. **Inequitably shared risk:** Risk is not shared equally within a network. Resources are needed to support those at the margins, which are currently treated as "personal" costs rather than foundational movement expenses.

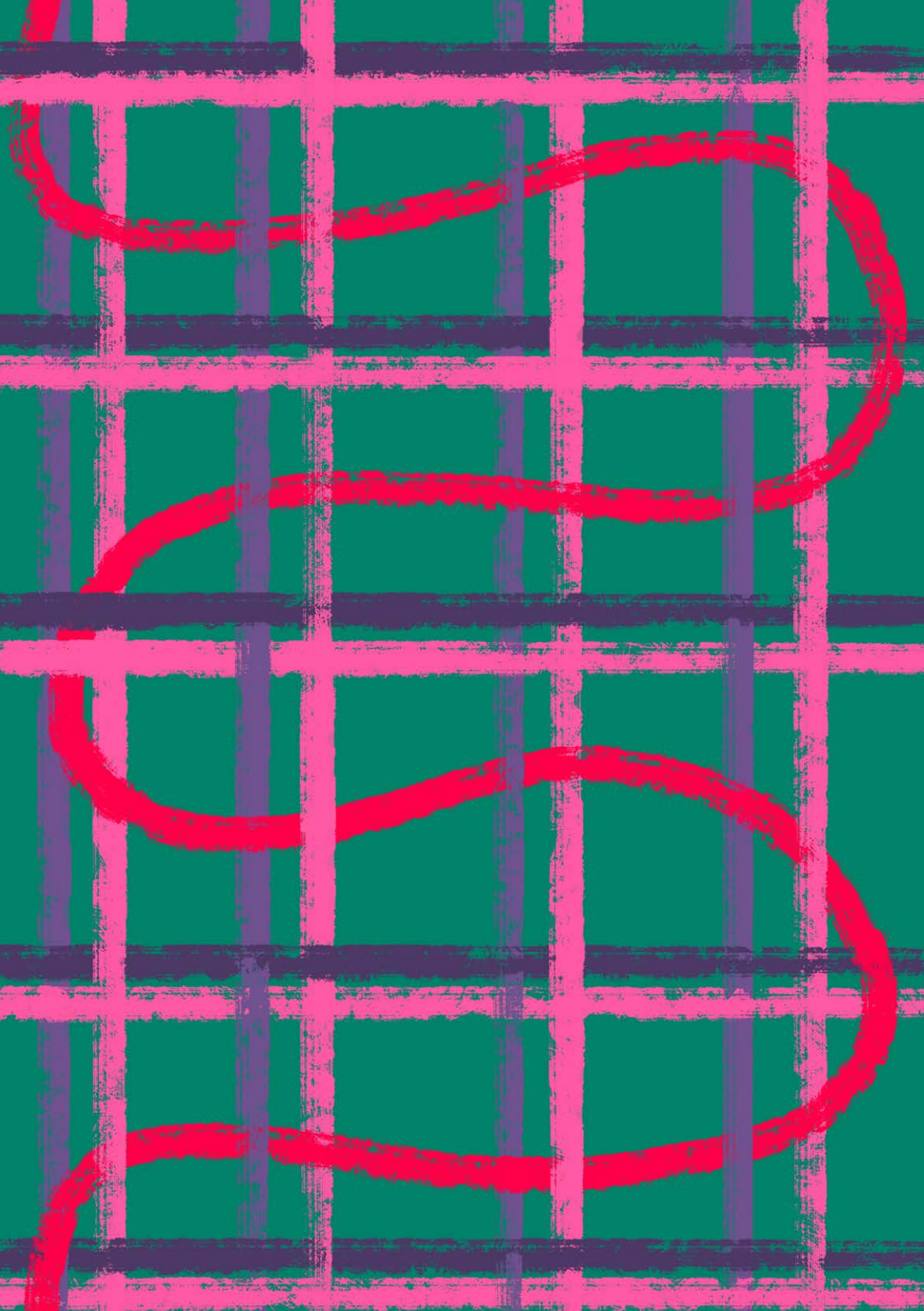
9. **The trap of the "suppressed" region:** In international spaces, organisers in the WANA region report being pigeonholed as coming from a "suppressed region," where they are expected to only discuss human rights violations or gender inequaity, thereby excluding them from broader conversations about global issues.

Regional conceptions of time

Networks in different regions perceive time very differently, which is a major factor in how they plan and evolve. Organisers in WANA operate simultaneously under two conceptions of time: the immediate urgency of survival, where tomorrow is uncertain; alongside a commitment to long-term, timeless projects like archiving. In Latin America, in contrast, these networks are more forward-facing and feel more able to strategise years into the future, despite political volatility. In East Africa & the Pacific, they fluctuate between phases — East Africa between immediate crisis and long-term political change; and the Pacific between intense spikes of activity such as disasters or coups, and periods of quiet maintenance.

Conclusion

Feminist networks are both the first responders in a crisis and the long-term guardians of movement history. They differ fundamentally from organisations and coalitions, around which our current support structure is largely built. Technology infrastructures are the invisible scaffolding that underpins much of the organising, memory-keeping, community holding and response. How feminist networks engage, refuse, adopt, adapt and build the technology layers they need in their work requires deeper understanding and support. We must rework our understanding of crisis work, and start treating networks as the core of lasting movements. The task ahead is then to catch up to the systems networks have already built, and to support them in that work long enough for more of us to stand on it.



1. INTRODUCTION

We are living through a time of overlapping, pluriform crises: genocides and coups, climate disasters and economic collapse, digital repression, and backlash against progressive ideas about gender and sexuality. Feminist networks all over the world do a great deal of the work of keeping people safe, connected, and politically present in these conditions, yet there is very little written about how they form, function, what sustains them, and what kinds of resourcing they really need.

This report grows out of in-depth conversations with organisers across East Africa, West Asia & North Africa and across Arabic-speaking countries, the Pacific, and Latin America, all of whom are part of loose but committed formations that respond to different kinds of crises.

1.1. Scope and limitations

This report is grounded in eight in-depth interviews with feminist organisers in Latin America, West Asia & North Africa and across Arabic-speaking countries (WANA), the Pacific, and East Africa. It does not aim to describe all feminist networks in these regions, but to surface patterns and questions that can guide feminist tech funding. The interviews were conducted over a very short period, at a time when many participants were juggling political upheavals, climate and health emergencies, care work, paid work, and their own safety. They include one network from Latin America, three from WANA, two from the Pacific, and two from East Africa.

The report offers a close reading of these conversations and treats them as starting points for reimagining how feminist tech funding relates to networks as well as the complex realities of feminist organising and |systems themselves.

2. WHAT DOES THIS REPORT MEAN BY 'NETWORK'?

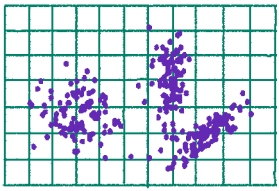
In this report, 'network' is a practical term, not a strict organisational category. The conversations show that feminist organising in crisis rarely sits only in one registered entity or one formal structure. They include:

- Registered organisations that also act as hubs for looser constellations (for example, long-standing women's organisations and NGOs)
- Long-term coalitions
- Helplines
- Informal alliances that form around an issue, campaign, or community (such as Palestine solidarity groups, women human rights defenders' coalitions, or climate youth formations)
- Digital and relational spaces like WhatsApp and Signal groups
- Friendship circles that become visible when something happens

They broadly can be grouped into three formations:



Hub-and-spokes network, where one or more organisation is a formal anchor.



Loose cluster networks; groups with no enduring centre. May spike around events and then go quiet.



Mesh / ecosystem networks, with multiple nodes connected to each other, sometimes with temporary hubs.

However, there are a few fundamental conditions they all meet. They all:

- Bring together more than one organisation and/or unaffiliated individuals
- Share some purpose, practice, or set of values over time, even if it is not written down
- Coordinate information, care, and/or resources between members and a wider community, especially in moments of crisis

In the next section, we will explore what holds these formations together, what tests them, and what could support them in adapting and growing over time.

2.1. Formed in the thick of crisis

As we noted earlier, the network spaces people describe rarely match the neat categories of organisations or even coalitions.

In the Pacific, women's networks that began in anti-nuclear organising and responses to sexual violence have grown into regional feminist infrastructures with deep roots in Fiji and across island states. There are a couple of older feminist organisations, as well as newer formations connecting gender, sexuality, and climate justice at a regional scale. These networks sit inside a landscape marked now by rising religious fundamentalism, intensified US evangelical influence, and backlash against human rights, which have created new fractures between governments, faith actors, and civil society.

In WANA, a feminist knowledge collective and several feminist tech formations link organisers across the region in conditions of genocide, occupation, authoritarianism, and economic collapse. A feminist knowledge collective works on feminist oral histories and archives in Lebanon and the

wider region, while a newer tech-focused network brings together feminist techies to address isolation, rethink what technology means when drones and AI are part of everyday life, and build cross-border structures in Arabic. A third WANA-based feminist network has focused on keeping people in Gaza and neighbouring countries connected, improvising infrastructure such as e-SIM distribution under bombardment.

In Uganda, a feminist digital rights organisation holds the formal side of things like registration, bank accounts, and a recognised name with the state, and works as a hub. In Tanzania, a women-led digital rights organisation plays a similar anchoring role in a context marked by internet shutdowns, blocked platforms, and gendered disinformation around elections.

In Latin America, the trans feminist network evolved from helpline, collective tech support, and digital care practices into a regional network rooted in trans and queer feminist organising. They describe themselves as part of a broader ecosystem that includes feminist helplines, abortion rights networks, and women human rights defenders' coalitions.

Around all these anchors, there is a wider constellation of people — journalists, young feminists, queer activists, climate organisers, lawyers, rural organisers, digital rights workers, faith-based advocates, and movement elders who move in and out of shared spaces. Some of them have institutional affiliations, others do not, but they are all recognised as part of the broader 'we' of the networks.

It is important to note that there are also formations that do not think of themselves as networks at all. For instance, we learnt of a Pacific Palestinian solidarity group that assembles when bombing intensifies, and then returns to silence. There are also Whatsapp/Signal groups in most regions that come together to coordinate protests, online campaigns, or legal responses, to move quickly when something happens.

2.2. Origins and imprints

As we saw in the previous section, most of these networks did not start from strategy documents. For instance, in WANA, the feminist knowledge collective traces its origins to a felt need for feminist histories and archives in Arabic, at a time when much documentation of women's lives and struggles in the region was either absent or framed from outside. The Tanzanian women's digital rights organisation traces part of its work back to a case of extreme cyberbullying that ended in a woman's suicide. In Latin America, the trans feminist network first came together after the assassination of a queer and progressive politician, which triggered a wave of panic and requests for digital security support from feminists across Brazil, overwhelming individual techies who were already stretched.

In WANA, the bombing and genocide in Gaza and in Lebanon became another turning point. Organisers describe how drones, AI-driven targeting, and online propaganda made it impossible to think of tech as just internet access and apps. They talked about a "tech apocalypse" feeling, in which technology appears as an instrument of violence and control, and about trying to broaden feminist tech conversations to include weapons, surveillance, and testing grounds in their region.

In the Pacific, current organising is shaped by histories of coups, colonialism, and religious influence. One interviewee described how a once-hated coup leader, known for orchestrating violence is now back as prime minister with support from younger voters who do not know that history. They point to how key events are not taught in schools, and how influencer culture, evangelical narratives, and social media disinformation have ballooned to fill the gap. This erasure of memory shapes both feminist organising as well as the backlash against it.

These political events are also directly in relationship with shrinking civic spaces, erratic funding, and long periods of uncertainty under capitalism. They shape how networks understand risk, and how far into the future they are willing or able to look.

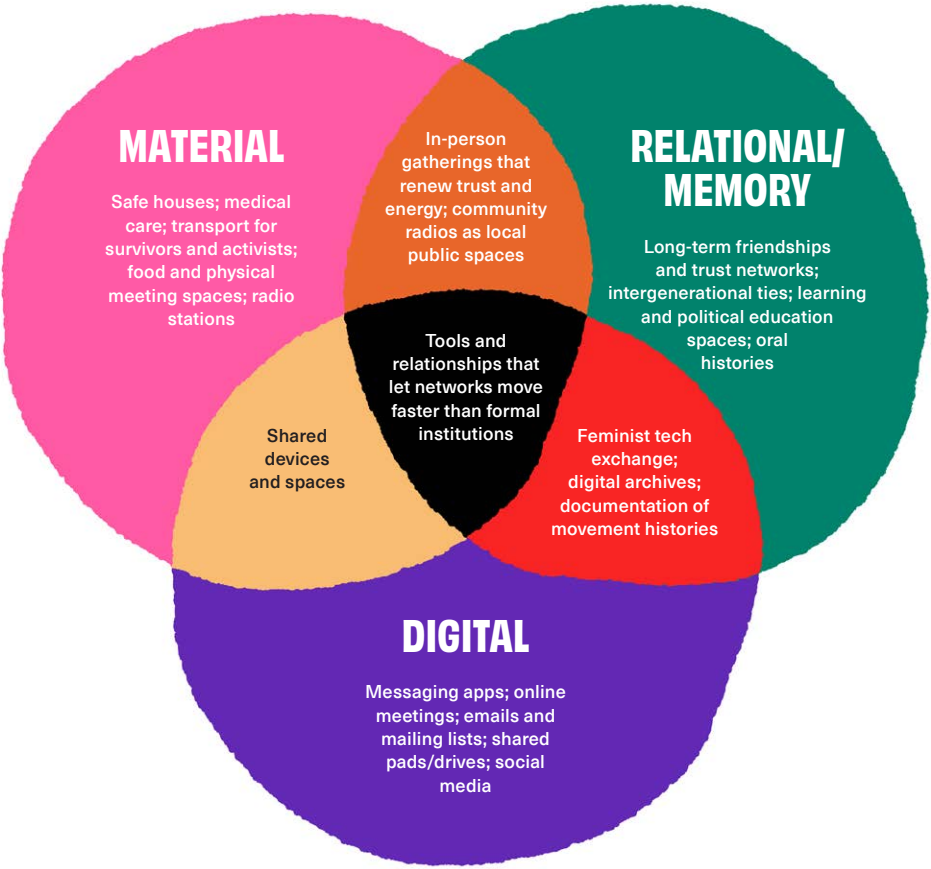
2.3. The moving parts of networks

When interviewees talked about who is 'in' a network, they did not start with a membership list, but rather about who is available in the moment, and what they are able to offer. Sometimes there are anchoring organisations that sign contracts, host conferences, front press statements, and appear in donor reports, though the real work lives in the looser constellations around them, who move through different intensities of involvement.

Some are immersed in a campaign for a period, then disappear when family needs, paid work, or burnout require it. Others stay at the edge, reading messages, occasionally stepping in with a connection or a piece of information.

Networks also often sleep. As noted earlier, activity may be minimal for long stretches in some networks, but people stay in light contact and keep some shared memory alive. In several regions, older feminist formations are also spoken about as "schools" or "spaces that shaped people's politics"; the coalitions may no longer be active, but their imprint lives in those who passed through them.

In short, the most important roles in networks might rarely show up in organisational charts. These roles carry a lot of weight and are strongly present in the interviews, even when they are not formally named.


MATERIAL
Safe houses; medical care; transport for survivors and activists; food and physical meeting spaces; radio stations
RELATIONAL/ MEMORY
Long-term friendships and trust networks; intergenerational ties; learning and political education spaces; oral histories
DIGITAL
Messaging apps; online meetings; emails and mailing lists; shared pads/drives; social media
In-person gatherings that renew trust and energy; community radios as local public spaces
Tools and relationships that let networks move faster than formal institutions
Shared devices and spaces
Feminist tech exchange; digital archives; documentation of movement histories

3. THE INFRASTRUCTURES OF NETWORKS

Our interviewees talked at length about the infrastructures that actually hold their work together, which are a mix of tools, places, relationships, and memories.

3.1. Digital

Feminist networks in most regions use a lot of mainstream digital tools for pragmatic reasons, even when they are aware of their limits and security threats. For instance, WhatsApp groups appeared in almost every interview, irrespective of region, often far more than Signal or other encrypted messaging platforms. The instability of some open-source tools, the steep learning curves, and the realities of needing Zoom or Gmail because encrypted alternatives can raise suspicion from states were noted by interviewees.

In the Pacific, messaging platforms connect feminist organisers across islands, as travel is expensive or often impossible. In other regions, there are different groups for feminist organisations, rural partners, and specific campaigns, along with mailing lists, social media, online meeting tools, and these channels are used to share legal updates, track arrests, and coordinate around protests and elections.

Online meetings, once occasional, have become embedded in the functioning of several networks, particularly post Covid-19. The Ugandan organisation talked about how rural partners gather people at an office and join a digital security training from one device, to stretch limited data. One WANA feminist tech network uses Zoom, CryptPad or CryptDrive, Signal groups, and mailing lists to coordinate across countries, and has subdivided into small working groups for the manifesto, internal structures, and coordination.

However, it is important to note that in WANA, distrust of technology currently runs deep. Organisers describe hearing drones daily in Lebanon, knowing their region is a testing ground for new weapons and surveillance tools, and seeing AI-driven systems used to target and kill people in Gaza. They said this makes it hard to imagine "feminist tech" as a hopeful horizon, even as they build a feminist tech network, and asked not to be pushed to trust technology.

People in all regions talked about gendered online violence, about trolling, hacking, doxing, platform manipulation, and targeted mis/disinformation against women politicians, journalists, and activists. There was a widespread recognition that platforms are not neutral, and that moderation choices, data practices, and state pressure shape what is possible.

3.2. Material realities

Shelter, transport and health infrastructure intersect deeply with digital work for all the feminist networks we spoke to.

In Uganda, renting rooms and providing transport and food is a constant struggle, and is often solved by staff covering costs themselves. In Tanzania, organisers talked about the need for safe houses for women human rights defenders who are abducted or threatened, so they can rest, receive medical care, talk to lawyers, and decide on next steps away from their homes. They also noted that women who are attacked because of political participation or online speech may need both medical examinations and secure temporary housing, but that funding for this is very scarce.

In the Pacific, interviewees pointed to a new drug crisis and a sharp rise in HIV infections, with practices like "bluetoothing" (sharing injected drugs between people) creating health emergencies that absorb both state and donor resources. These crises shape what feminist networks can focus on and what kinds of infrastructure they are able to resource.

In Latin America, members of the network stressed that in-person gatherings are also infrastructure. They insist on at least one in-person meeting a year, and said that being together physically is what renews their energy, trust, and joy enough to sustain hard digital care work the rest of the time. When funding allows, they also converge at larger events like hacker gatherings, using these as moments to strengthen ties and imagination across projects and countries.

Radios are another very important infrastructure that are used regularly across regions. In Uganda for instance, community radio shows talk about freedom of expression, gender-based violence, and access to information. They reach people who have no reliable internet and create local public spaces that are not under the direct control of large platforms or the government. This model has growing popularity — or is making a comeback — in several regions.

3.3. Relational and memory infrastructures

Relationships are the binding material of almost all feminist networks we spoke to. Organisers are able to reach out quickly to other feminists because they have already worked together in research, coalitions, and dialogues; and friendships formed over years of joint work often become the routes along which information and support move in the smoothest ways. For instance, in the Pacific, there are intergenerational ties inside small communities that carry memories of previous campaigns and crises, even when the staff of organisations cycle out.

Learning spaces also act as infrastructure. A WANA-based feminist collective talked about women sharing histories and analysis and co-creating knowledge in Arabic, through feminist tech exchanges and safety trainings, which gradually seed skills and trust in different networks. People then carry those skills and ways of thinking into future work, long after the specific programme has ended.

However, we also found that memory itself is fragile. Much of the knowledge that keeps networks running lives in people's heads, inboxes, and personal archives rather than in institutional collections or documents. In the Pacific, interviewees described younger activists who have no idea that only 20 years ago, feminists fought for maternity leave, marital rape laws, and recognition of domestic violence as a crime. Wartime disruptions and displacement in the WANA region mean months of work can vanish, and knowledge workers emphasised the need for more deliberate archiving and intergenerational work. Else, if key people burn out, leave, or are forced into exile, whole swathes of experience can disappear.

These three broad forms of infrastructures are what allow networks to move faster than formal institutions and to sustain themselves in quieter periods. They are also often the parts least likely to be named in funding proposals.

4. WHAT DO NETWORKS NEED DURING PERMACRISIS?

KEY INSIGHTS FOR DESIGNING FUNDING

4.1. Recognise care and emotional labour as core infrastructure

Across regions, people named grief-holding, care work, intergenerational mediation, and everyday emotional support as central infrastructure to their work. Organisers spoke about carrying fear and trauma (both their own and that of others'), having to be available 24x7 for calls and planning, accompanying folks through legal processes, and being 'on' during long crises. This is generally work with very little formal recognition or rest.

Almost all interviewees explicitly asked for this labour to be recognised and resourced. This can be in the form of paid time for care work, budgets for medical care and counselling, and funding designs that assume emotional labour is at the heart of the job.

4.2. Crisis is a condition, not an isolated event

People repeatedly described crises as a never-ending cycle, particularly so in recent years, with the worst of it beginning in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is generally at odds with traditional funding assumptions

of discrete events. This means that preparedness and regeneration now look different and need long-term support. There is a need for space and resources for planning reserves, and time to rest and rebuild between spikes, in addition to the rapid-response work that activates after something has already happened.

4.3. Loosely coordinated coalitions and hybrid formations are often first-responders, and this informality needs to be addressed

Across regions, many of the fastest responses during crises come from networks, rather than formal organisations or state actors. WhatsApp or Signal groups and informal constellations that have no registered status or full governance documents are the first to mount campaigns, coordinate e-SIM distribution, or convene emergency calls.

At the same time, networks are often hybrids of organisations and individuals — and funders understandably struggle to design for this complex mix. They include NGOs, helplines, and collectives interwoven with unaffiliated activists, journalists, lawyers, and techies, tied together through trust. Organisers noted that generally, while individuals move quickly and take some risks, organisations hold funds and negotiate with institutions.

It is clear that the role of informality needs to be addressed in designing feminist funding. Funding systems have their own constraints, and are largely able to recognise only organisations with full sets of policies, which means funding and global attention tend to flow through neat channels that reach the same organisations repeatedly. This could mean they miss or distort these network formations. This can also push people towards setting up thin shells of organisations just to be eligible, or towards keeping some of the most important work entirely outside funded space.

4.4. The need to disappear

Formal accountability language in funding tends to focus on audits, reports, complaint mechanisms and meeting notes. These interviews clearly show that there is a need to widen that frame.

One kind of accountability appears in decisions about visibility and retreat. Individual members of networks, or sometimes networks as a whole need to and can disappear in ways that formal organisations might have the privilege of not needing to. This is key to how networks function, and should be acknowledged as a feature, not a bug.

Risk and visibility are also closely linked. Donor requests for logos, public stories, and media presence can feel dangerous in many regions, and being visibly funded can also bring suspicion or retaliation. Many networks are currently in the position of having to choose between safety and compliance, or find ways to reduce their visibility without losing the interest of funders.

The interviews also suggest that accountability inside feminist networks has several axes: to those most at risk, to those most likely to be excluded, to organisers' own health, to collective political commitments under pressure, and to the ways in which power moves within the network. How networks deal with these questions is key for funders to understand. Funding that supports networks to explore their own ways of responding to these questions, on their own timelines, is likely to do more for their survival than any single external accountability mechanism.

4.5. Networks in immediate crisis are choosing between survival needs and infrastructure

In contexts of war, genocide, or economic collapse, organisers said that survival support and infrastructure cannot be separated. For some members, payment for work is literally a matter of feeding family or evacuating loved ones, and work on digital infrastructure or documentation is only possible if basic needs are met. Therefore, people asked for funding that can legitimately move between survival and structure, such as covering food, relocation, safe housing, and emergency health costs alongside salaries, tools, legal fees, and coordination, within the same grant.

4.6. Disinformation and radicalising content is severe, and urgently needs resourced responses, not just awareness

Disinformation and radicalising content, including gendered disinformation, were flagged as urgent across all contexts and regions. Feminist organisers, women politicians and journalists, and queer and trans communities, all face targeted online (and offline) attacks. Religious and nationalist narratives in all regions are working to undermine feminist agendas.

Groups want support for feminist responses, research on how disinformation and backlash operate in their contexts, and creative narrative strategies that can counter harmful content. They also emphasise that this work is emotionally heavy and must be tied back to the care infrastructure described in earlier sections.

4.7. Resource the scaffolding, not just the projects

Everyone interviewed could list the kind of work that regularly gets funded: trainings, research projects, advocacy campaigns, conferences, toolkits, which are all generally visible, reportable, and familiar to donors. But there are layers of work and cost which are not acknowledged. For instance, an Ugandan organiser described supporting a woman experiencing online gender-based violence through repeated calls and guidance, all using her own airtime while working from home. Members of the Latin American network describe years where most of their digital care work for movements and communities was effectively voluntary, fitted around paid jobs or short-term consultancies.

Transport also comes up often. Getting survivors to legal aid, getting activists to meetings, getting people home safely after protests are often covered from personal funds as project budgets do not allow for them. The same is true for food, printing, and rental of meeting spaces.

The Tanzanian interview notes that many funders do not see these expenses as their responsibility. These include legal fees for arrested or abducted women human rights defenders, medical examinations in the aftermath of violence, temporary shelter, psychological support, and secure planning spaces. Organisers are expected to improvise ways to fund these expenses.

The Latin American network also talked about needing money for fixed monthly stipends and wellbeing funds, so that trans organisers are not pushed into constant precarity while undertaking digital care work for others.

In the Pacific, interviewees describe a funding landscape where Australia, the EU and New Zealand have long been the major donors for gender equality and gender-based violence. However, of late, funding for violence prevention has been cut in half in some programmes and redirected towards climate and infrastructure work, forcing organisations either to adapt their framing or lose resources.

The emotional cost, though, is harder to quantify. Organisers are dealing with constant work, including on nights and weekends, and carry the stress and grief of others. Very few have access to structured mental health support, regular rest, or even explicit recognition that this is part of their job.

The Latin American network has turned the politics of pay into part of its core work — everyone's hour of work is paid the same rate, regardless of seniority. When they can, they include monthly wellbeing stipends so members can pay for therapy, healthcare, or rest, and say that being able to live and heal is part of digital care, not a personal luxury. This stance can and must shape how funders design budgets, not just how networks distribute what they receive.

Longer-term knowledge work needs different kinds of support. In WANA, the feminist knowledge collective stressed that archiving and history work cannot be squeezed into short grants aimed at immediate impact. They describe wanting donors who understand slow, reflective work as crucial, and added how rare that understanding is. In the Pacific, people talk about the importance of documenting stories and building analysis across generations, especially where numbers are small and the loss of one or two elders can mean the loss of a whole chapter of movement history.

What generally gets funded

- Trainings
- Research projects
- Advocacy campaigns
- Conferences
- Toolkits



What needs more resourcing



Care & emotional labour

- Time for grief-holding and trauma support
- Crisis accompaniment
- Budgets for medical care
- Wellbeing funds / stipends for therapy, healthcare, rest
- Structured mental health support and time off

Survival & safety

- Airtime, data, and time for ongoing support, such as repeated calls with survivors of GBV
- Food for gatherings and safe spaces
- Transport for survivors to legal aid and activists to meetings/home
- Safe houses and temporary shelter
- Medical examinations and healthcare after violence

Legal & risk

- Legal fees for arrested or abducted women human rights defenders
- Ability to reduce visibility or when needed, without losing funding
- Printing costs

Core organising work

- Fixed monthly stipends for core organisers, especially queer and trans organisers
- Making long periods of voluntary digital care work sustainable
- Payments that are literally about feeding families or evacuating loved ones

Technology access & safety

- Budgets for data and basic devices
- Shared devices
- Realistic digital-safety training
- Travel and visa support

Connective roles

- Coordination and facilitation across groups
- Fiscal hosting and cross-border money movement
- Mapping who is doing what
- Organising joint statements and emergency calls

Knowledge & memory

- Multi-year support for archiving and history work
- Recording oral histories and local archives
- Political education and intergenerational storytelling spaces

4.8. Networks often use 'mainstream' tech, while aware of risks

As noted earlier, when a crisis hits, most networks rely on mainstream tools such as WhatsApp, Viber, Gmail, Facebook, Zoom, and SMS, even when they are well aware of surveillance and security risks. Rather than only promoting ideal secure or feminist tech tools, interviewees want support grounded in the technologies people actually use, and budgets for data and basic devices, realistic digital-safety training on those platforms, and context-sensitive pathways for more secure tools where appropriate.

4.9. Labels can be misleading; core values and power must be assessed

All interviewees mentioned that they were less concerned about whether members publicly use 'feminist' language or identify as 'feminist', than about their shared values and purpose, around care, equality, inclusion, and resistance to oppression. In fact, many groups avoid the word 'feminist' for safety or strategic reasons, but work in ways that clearly align with feminist commitments.

In the Pacific, some older organisations are publicly identified as 'women's rights' groups' and have long histories of feminist practice, while newer groups explicitly use feminist language and centre queer and trans politics. In Uganda and Tanzania, the interviewees described its values in explicitly feminist ways of community care, inclusion, solidarity, and resistance to patriarchal backlash. At the same time, they often use 'women's rights' or 'gender equality' language in public space as the word 'feminist' is heard by many as foreign, "angry", or anti-men. Using it can close doors with officials, media, or community leaders they still need to engage. Association with international feminist funding can also carry political risks.

In WANA, the feminist knowledge collective and the feminist tech network speak openly as feminists, but also question the limits of that word. They also talk about how in international spaces, they are often framed as coming from a "suppressed region" and expected to speak only about freedom of expression and violation, when they also want to be in conversations about artificial intelligence, big data, representation and war.

This is critical to remember from a funding perspective, as even if names, branding, or other politics seem to align, it is important to ask questions that exemplify the core values and how power is shared in the network. The LATAM network explicitly treats value-alignment and political education as part of their infrastructure work, which could also be a model worth exploring in other regions as well.

4.10. Requests for cross-regional learning as a way to re-imagine the future

Particularly in settings of active and prolonged violence, organisers needed connections beyond their immediate geography to be able to imagine a future at all. Interviewees from WANA spoke about wanting to hear from communities elsewhere who have lived through long wars, occupation, dictatorship, or slow violence, and found ways to keep organising over generations.

There is interest in facilitated exchanges focused on practical tactics, emotional survival, and longer-range thinking. For example, learning from seasoned and experienced movement leaders, from Indigenous communities, or from other feminist movements that have weathered repeated authoritarian rule.

4.11. Governance and conflict-resolution are feminist work

Some networks are deliberately investing in governance, accountability, and conflict-resolution as feminist practice. For instance, one of the WANA groups formed small working groups to draft manifestos, membership criteria, and codes of conduct; the LATAM network is discussing how to deal with complex and often multi-generational issues such as co-optation, interpersonal harm, and trans-exclusionary positions, and experimenting with rotating coordination and participatory decision-making.

People stress that doing this work before crises, experimenting with facilitation and conflict transformation, is a key part of what allows them to hold the line when things get hard. All interviewees asked for time and resources to do this deliberately, rather than squeezing it between emergencies.

4.12. There are layers of unequal risk and access inside networks

Inside networks, not everyone faces the same risks or has the same access to tools. People in rural areas or under intense surveillance may have limited internet, no safe banking channels, and greater exposure to repression. So some members can be visible, travel, or communicate openly, while others can only participate through intermediaries, shared devices, community radios, or offline meetings. Funding and support that provides for these, such as for radio slots, safe intermediaries for money, shared devices, skillbuilding, or travel and visa funds can narrow these internal gaps and make networks more genuinely collective.

4.13. Connective roles are severely under-resourced

Several conversations highlighted connective roles that are often unpaid or overstretched, which included coordination, fiscal hosting, and other behind-the-scenes work. These are often the people who map who is doing what, move information and money across borders, organise joint statements, and help smaller groups access funds. Interviewees said that this "connective tissue" is indispensable, but hard to fund.

4.14. Archiving and intergenerational memory

Fear of losing movement histories emerged strongly in all regions. Older organisers in the Pacific, East Africa, and WANA describe struggles and legal gains that younger activists do not know happened, while also acknowledging that much of this information might have never been effectively documented. Networks requested resources for archiving and intergenerational work, including oral histories, local archives, shared repositories, and political education spaces where histories, tactics, and debates can be passed on. Without this memory, each crisis is experienced as completely new, and responses are seen to be slower and more fragile.

4.15. There is a need for more trend-resistant funding

Members of the Latin American network also point to funding "fashions" as a structural problem. For example, when themes like artificial intelligence become dominant, networks are pressured to rebrand their strategies to stay fundable, even if their commitments and communities lie elsewhere. This constant re-orientation drains time and energy from the slow work of governance, care, and building durable networks.

In summary, this section captures what outsiders can miss, and what people in networks dream of when they envision feminist funding. 'Outsiders' in this context means funders, researchers, and international organisations who engage from a distance.

5. REGIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF TIME, TECHNOLOGY, AND CRISIS

The insights above largely cut across regions, but there are two areas where there is sharp divergence in responses depending on where people are sitting — in their perceptions of time and technology.

In WANA, especially for the feminist knowledge and tech networks, many participants are operating from the centre of monumental crises that have lasted for years. Genocide, occupation, authoritarian rule, economic collapse, and displacement are part of their daily calculations. They describe feeling that it is almost impossible to plan long term in any conventional sense. One organiser talks about working with "two conceptions of time": on one hand, the sense that "tomorrow is not certain," and on the other, a commitment to projects like archiving that have no clear timeline and must be held anyway. In this setting, networks tend to focus on holding what they can, which often look like rapid-response work, archives, relationships, and smaller collectives.

At the same time, in LATAM, the interview has a more forward-facing tone. The network is not sheltered from violence or backlash, but it is able to articulate in detail what it wants to build. There is more room, physically and conceptually, to imagine the network in five or ten years, even though there is funding volatility and political uncertainty.

East African interviews sit somewhere between these poles. They talked both about immediate threats and about the next election and the larger project of gradually embedding feminist and digital justice principles into public life. They plan for the next crisis, but are also hopeful about how laws, culture, and infrastructure will respond to their plans.

In the Pacific, time feels punctuated and stretched at once. Due to geography and climate, there are spikes of intense activity around disasters or political upheavals, followed by quieter periods where the maintenance of relationships and everyday survival dominate. Travel is costly and difficult, numbers are small, and many people juggle paid work, care responsibilities, and sometimes migration. Networks may appear inactive from the outside even while they maintain ties that can be reactivated at a moment's notice.

Technology also carries different weights. In WANA, a very deep distrust of tech stems from lived experience of surveillance, targeted bombings, personal tech devices being turned into weapons, and the use of artificial intelligence in war. One organiser describes being unable, at least for now, to imagine technology as a route out, and asks not to be pushed to trust in tech when it is being used against them.

In East Africa, technology is treated as both necessary and dangerous. They rely heavily on online tools, while also reeling under a severe onslaught of targeted mis/disinformation.

Therefore, for feminist tech funding, it seems important then to avoid forcing a single frame onto all of these contexts. In some places, the most forward-looking move may be to strengthen low-exposure, locally controlled tools and analogue infrastructures, and not demanding long-term blueprints that people cannot honestly provide. In others, supporting experiments in digital organising and storytelling can match how movements already work. Time and technology here shape what kind of futures people feel able to speak about and which tools they are able to use.

	WANA	Latin America	East Africa	Pacific
 TIME ORIENTATION	Prolonged and severe crises make conventional long-term planning feel almost impossible; organisers work with "two conceptions of time" (immediate survival & commitment to timeless projects like archiving).	More forward-facing; able to imagine the network 5–10 years ahead, despite political volatility and backlash.	Sits between two poles: planning for next crisis and elections while also working to gradually embed feminist and digital justice principles into public life.	Time is punctuated and stretched; spikes around disasters or upheavals, followed by maintenance periods.
 TECHNOLOGY PERCEPTION	Deep distrust; technology experienced as weapons and surveillance (drones, AI-driven targeting, personal devices turned into tools of war). Can be hard to imagine tech as a hopeful space.	Tech is embedded in digital care and organising; not sheltered from violence, but there is more space to experiment with building what they want.	Tech is both necessary and dangerous; heavy use of online tools combined with severe targeted mis/disinformation.	Tech connects islands where travel is expensive or impossible; also shaped by small numbers, migration, and uneven access.
 PRIMARY CRISIS LANDSCAPE	Genocide, occupation, authoritarian rule, economic collapse, displacement, internet shutdowns.	Violence and backlash, plus funding volatility and political uncertainty.	Internet shutdowns, blocked platforms, gendered disinformation around elections.	Climate disasters, coups, religious fundamentalism, rising HIV and drug crises.

6. CONCLUSION: NETWORKS SIT AT THE HEART OF HOW MOVEMENTS SURVIVE CRISES

It is clear that feminist networks sit at the heart of how movements survive crises. They are often the first to respond, the ones who hold grief, move resources, improvise infrastructures on the fly, and keep people in relationship when formal systems fail. They are and must be recognised as political actors and co-designers of any serious feminist funding practice.

Feminist funders are also operating inside constraints. They face regulatory limitations, compliance demands, political scrutiny, and intense pressure to show measurable results, often in a very short period of time. Those pressures are real, yet they do not have to be a ceiling on what is possible. By treating networks as partners in design rather than as grantees to be managed, funders may be able to experiment with forms of accountability, documentation, and shared risk that honour their own obligations while still resourcing the work that feminist networks are doing.

Taken together, these conversations suggest a strong direction for how to fund feminist futures. The networks in these interviews clearly carry a great deal of imagination about what feminist funding could be, even when they speak from exhaustion or hopelessness. The task ahead then is to catch up to the systems they have built, and hold that work long enough for more people to stand on it.

Khuyut

What happens when people decide to trust and build with each other, with no contracts, no funding, and no end in sight?

The answer is in these pages.

This paper is built on conversations with feminist networks across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and West Asia; regions where crisis is a constant, not an interruption. It maps the invisible infrastructure these networks are: the labour, the technologies, and the relationships that sustain movements when no one is watching.

Networks are often the first to respond, and the last to be resourced. And they are almost never written about.

Khuyut — and this paper — is an attempt to change that.

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