

Women's Voice and Leadership Indonesia (We Lead)



**Achievements
2019 – 2023**

Who We are



Women's Voice and Leadership Indonesia (WVL or We Lead) is a multi-year programme led by Hivos Southeast Asia (Yayasan Humanis dan Inovasi Sosial, or Yayasan Hivos, as from April 2021) and Just Associates (JASS) Southeast Asia, running from March 2019 until August 2023.

The goal of the programme is **improved enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and the advancement of gender equality in Indonesia**. In implementing the project, Yayasan Hivos and JASS Southeast Asia, provided grant management, feminist popular education and accompaniment towards 5 (five) national women's rights organizations (WROs) namely Rahima, Fahmina, Rumah KitaB, Perempuan Mahardhika, and FAMM Indonesia to strengthen their mandate in advancing women's and girls rights. At the grassroots level, the programme engaged with *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), local communities, women activists, gender and sexual minority groups, universities/campuses, and many others.

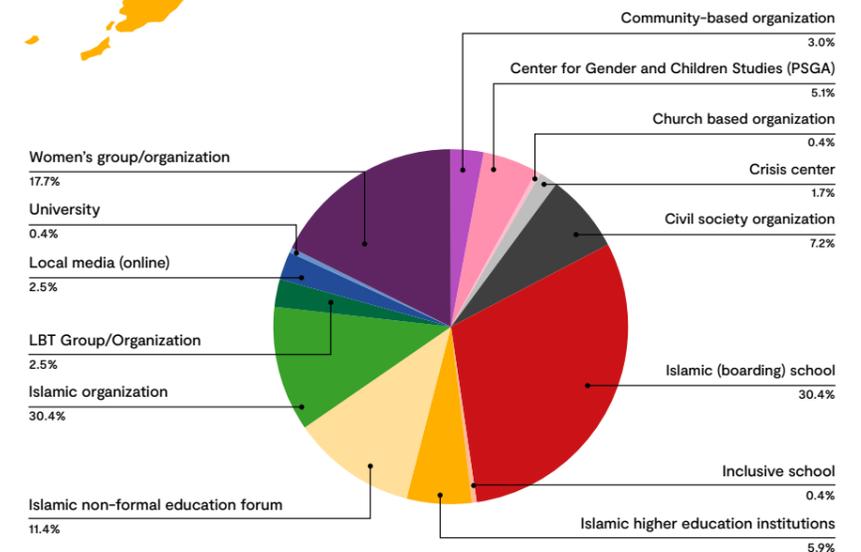
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local women's organizations/communities (LWOCs) in 96 cities/districts in 30 provinces in Indonesia were engaged through activities such as capacity building, political accompaniment, and public campaigns (offline and online).

9,859

Women and transwomen were strengthened through training, workshop, and advocacy activities organized by the We Lead consortium.

Type of local women's organizations and communities of the We Lead 2023



Despite a very challenging context of political polarization, rising religious extremism, increasing reality of the climate crisis and the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has exceeded the anticipated targets by profoundly impacting women's lives and

leadership in areas such as gender-based violence, sexuality, democracy and the shrinking space for women's freedom of expression, Islam and feminism, defense of land and territory in the face of extractivism.

What We face



Throughout the period, we have seen national and local expressions and tendencies of what we identify as a global rise in fundamentalism and authoritarianism, particularly in public narratives, but also in the ways people, particularly women, are being criminalized and attacked. In addition, Indonesia's vulnerability to climate change induced disasters presents an increasingly complex reality for local communities.

Throughout the period, the following tendencies and major events marked the We Lead programme implementation in significant ways:

1. Elections, polarization and the rise of conservative voices.

Presidential elections took place one month after programme implementation (April 2019) and in the run up to the next elections in 2024. In December 2020 the Indonesian government held a regional election throughout nine provinces. In the run up to elections, religious narratives draw on ideas of morality to co-opt the electorate and propose conservative agendas which conceal anti-rights perspectives. An increasing use of "identity politics" and social polarization during these periods, has continued to sow divisions among citizens based on identity, particularly around faith and ethnicity. Furthermore, the spread and growth of fundamentalist groups, has meant women's space for movement have become increasingly narrow and limited, and narratives on the domestication of

women gain domain. This situation has a negative impact on women and hinders the ongoing struggle for justice and gender equality. Some of the impacts include: (1) growing force and acceptance of the narrative of domestication of women across communities, (2) women's voices are ignored, (3) women become increasingly vulnerable to various forms of violence, (4) normalization of violence, (5) the increasingly limited number of women leaders, and (6) more regions produce regional law and regulations discriminatory against women.

2. Covid, social restrictions and extractivism.

In early March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in Indonesia, and became a game-changer for We Lead and its partners. To bring the rapid increase of

cases under control, national and some local governments imposed large-scale social restriction policies starting in April 2020. The restrictions influenced the implementation of the We Lead Program, resulting in a significant adjustment of the project delivery method (on-site to online), approaches (personal to digital), and priority issues (access to public health including access to vaccines and government aids for marginalized groups, addressing increased gender-based violence because of restrictions on mobilization, digital literacy, and an increase of poverty and unemployment).

In response to the Covid-19 situation, the Indonesian government hastened

the implementation of the Food Estate program, under which large hectares of forest land in North Sumatera, Central Kalimantan and Papua, including ancestral domains, were converted into monoculture tree plantations to address food shortage. Using Covid-19 as a pretext, the law served an underlying agenda designed to attract foreign investment in extractivist projects, and using the military force for its implementation. By doing so, the rights, welfare, livelihoods and identity of many local communities were placed under threat and indigenous people lost their lands due to unfair negotiations, affecting women in these communities disproportionately.

3. Policy advocacy towards gender equality: maintaining our gains and dealing with setbacks.

During the programme implementation period, and with significant contributions by We Lead partners, we witnessed key policy gains in areas of GBV, SRHR and Labour rights:

- In September 2019, an amendment to the 45-year old Marriage Law raised the legal age to marry (from 16 to 19 years), marking a major milestone in the fight against child marriage.
- After six years of policy influencing efforts, and a major gain for the Indonesian women's rights movement, the Indonesian Parliament finally ratified the Sexual Violence Criminal Act Draft Bill, allowing for approval of the Sexual Violence Law in April 2022.
- A number of guidelines and regulations were approved during the programme implementation period for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in higher education, particularly in Islamic Religious Universities.

None of these were easy gains, taking many years of influencing work, working to build cross-movement alliances, met with backlash and threats from conservative groups, and making many concessions on the way.

Simultaneously, a number of repressive laws also marked setbacks in women's rights. In February 2020, the controversial Omnibus Law on Job Creation was rushed through the legislative pipeline without proper public consultation and deliberation. The Omnibus Law on Job Creation amended 79 other pertinent laws for women workers, undermining women's rights that have been guaranteed by the previous Law, such as maternity leave and the right to specific facilities for pregnancy. The Law also lacks a clear provision on minimum wage and working hours, allowing for the exploitation of workers and evasion of employers' legal obligations towards workers. On environmental sustainability, the Law relaxes environmental safeguards which raises the risk of further forest and habitat loss.

Around the same time the Family Resilience Bill emerged and backed up by a religious fundamentalist group. The Bill aims to legally

protect the traditional definition of family, dictating several marital duties that would apply to all Indonesians. Articles in the Bill include regulating husbands' and wives' obligations in marriage, compelling LGBT community to report to the government, further discriminating and criminalizing on the basis of sexuality. After consolidated pressure from the civil society organizations, this bill was rejected by the parliament but may come back in the future.

In December 2022, the Draft Law on the **Criminal Code** was passed into law. The Criminal Code has the potential to criminalize and persecute women's life choices if they are considered "disturbing the norms or laws of the surrounding community". In addition, the Criminal Code also contains articles that criminalize anyone who protest against or challenge government policies. The Criminal Code has become the foundation for the birth of other regulations that are increasingly discriminatory and narrow the freedom of expression and privacy for women and other genders.

4. Climate change and climate induced disasters.

Indonesian women are exposed to and deeply impacted by the effects of the climate crisis. Climate induced disasters increase the vulnerability of women, especially those who live in rural regions. Working closely with communities vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events in Indonesia, we witnessed increasing crop failure across communities; and resulting food scarcity and poverty which can drive both sexual violence and child marriage.

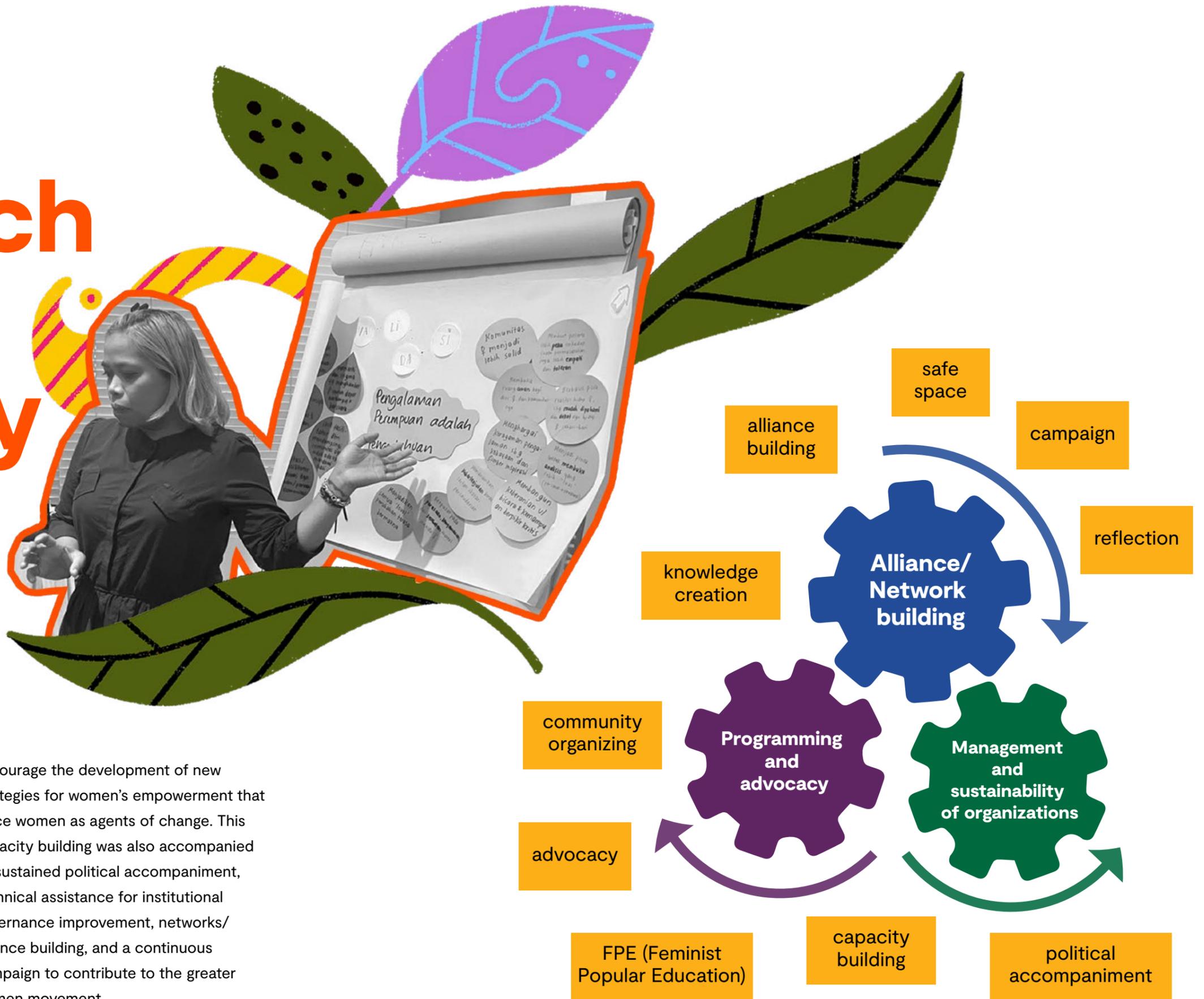
Major floodings in Jayapura, Papua, Central Java, East Java, and Bali affected many of the communities we work with, and an earthquake hit our communities in the Cianjur region, West Java, particularly affecting local women organization and partner in We Lead Rumah KitaB and its local partners (November 2022). The earthquake was considered as the deadliest to hit Indonesia since the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake, resulting in more than 300 deaths and 7,000 people injured and missing. More than 62,000 homes were damaged.



Our approach and strategy

We Lead envisions empowered women's organizations that effectively engage with and challenge conservative groups and narratives that justify repressing women's social, political and legal rights through supporting the growth of a committed feminist movement. The main strategy chosen was capacity building both for national and community organizations. Each WRO have a critical education module developed according to the collective/community they organize. **Feminist Popular Education (FPE)**, became the main approach and it is integrated in the learning and training process carried out by WROs. In line with the Canadian government's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), feminist approaches such as FPE

encourage the development of new strategies for women's empowerment that place women as agents of change. This capacity building was also accompanied by sustained political accompaniment, technical assistance for institutional governance improvement, networks/alliance building, and a continuous campaign to contribute to the greater women movement.



Impact and Results

Over the course of four years, and as evidenced by the results of Endline Study conducted by Hivos, Women's Voice and Leadership Indonesia (We Lead) has made significant contributions to an increased enjoyment of human rights by women and

girls and the **advancement of gender equality in Indonesia** (ultimate outcome). Despite an extremely challenging context, the Final Project Results and Operations Report provides evidence of concrete gains the programme has contributed to.

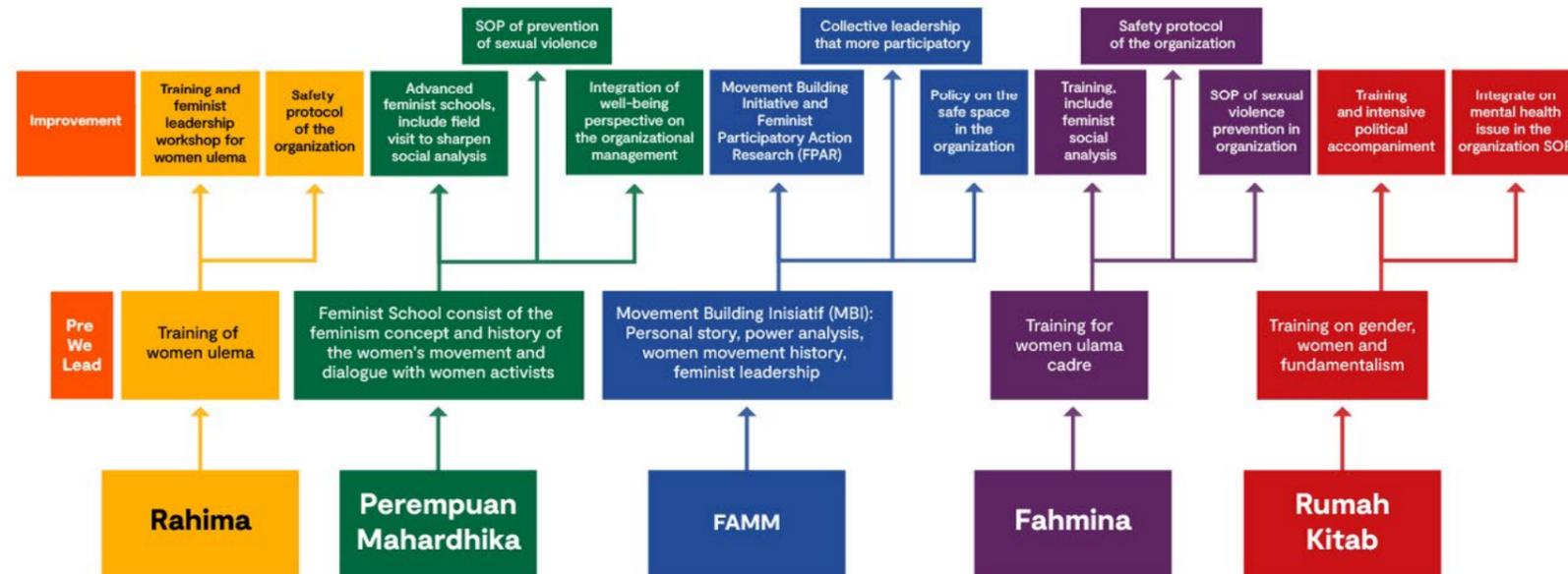


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Knowledge products have been produced, including guidelines, modules, leaflets, books, videos on feminism, women leadership, safe space, sexual violence, women empowerment, feminist education and crisis response.

Women's for organizing gender equality

Through We Lead, JASS and HIVOS, carried out a unique **accompaniment model** that strengthened and grew women's organizing as part of the Women's Rights Organizations and Local Women Organizations and Communities.



Political Accompaniment Journey

All 5 Women Rights Organizations have consistently applied the principle of feminism as the main foundation of organizational strategic direction and programme implementation; improved of organizational structure and management, including the exercise of collective leadership and decision making; expanded of their protocols for holistic welfare and security; and made progress towards greater formal recognition (FAMM).

More **alignment with feminist/women's movement and strengthened organizing capacities** and more responsive, sustainable, and strengthened networks and alliances, allowed for a greater capacity of both the 5 WROs and local organizations and communities to make a key contribution to the collective efforts that led up to positive policy changes. First, is the the ratification the Sexual Violence Law Number 12 April 2022 - after 6 years of discussion in Parliament. Second, the issue of Regent Regulation (PERBUP) Number 38 concerning the Prevention of Contract Marriages on 18 June 2021 to respond to the issue of marriage practice between male tourists and local young women that is limited by a certain time according to the agreement of the two parties. Third, the issued of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) Number 30 on 31 August 2021 about the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (PPKS) in higher education institutions. The 5 WROs and their LWO/Cs will continue to play strategic roles to ensure its full and comprehensive implementation, as well as actively engaging in increasing public awareness of these policies.

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Policy changes at the national and subnational levels that contributed and advocated for by the consortium members. The policy changes include improvements within the partner organizations related to sexual violence prevention, gender-responsive university, integration well-being and safe space within organization/communities, and accountability.

Women Ulema gained significant ability to convene discussions and advocacy and interpreting religious text to raise critical awareness on gender justice issues, and organizing communities (including pesantren, women's groups, organizations, etc.). They expanded their influence, through writing and by reaching out to communities, Koran studies groups (*pengajian*) and Islamic Boarding Schools (*pesantren*) where they worked, by doing unexpected actions such

as adopting the training module for use in the Koran studies group, building dialogues with policy makers in *pesantren* to create policies that provide greater space for women to show their capacity (referring to Ang Toah's ultimate outcomes story). Another important action was the strategic involvement of some Women Ulema in the preparation of the Women Ulema Congress (KUPI), especially in preparing KUPI's *Fatwa* (Islamic rulings).

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Women ulemas who have been strengthened. Half of them were intensively involved in The Second Indonesian Women Ulema Congress.



Intersections between



Gender Justice, Education and Religion

The power of women ulema's leadership brought about shifts in the patriarchal culture that have been dominating **Islamic Boarding School (pesantren)** to date. With a persuasive (non-confrontational) strategy, women ulemas were able to build communication, dialogue and even negotiations with men pesantren leaders who are mostly senior ulemas. This has been possible because of the strengthening of *Power Within* and *Power To* (drawing on [JASS' power framework](#)) among the female ulama.

During the programme implementation a series of legal gains were obtained in relation to prevention and handling of sexual violence in higher education. Recognising policies and regulations are not enough, and taking advantage of the legal umbrella for organizations seeking to **advance gender equality in Islamic Religious Universities** (PTKI), We Lead made key contributions towards building gender-responsive work mechanisms in PTKI. Through Feminist Popular Education and creation of safe spaces, support was provided to the PTRG Alliance - formed between a collective

of lecturers from 8 Islamic universities from various cities in Indonesia and set up to produce the indicators of Gender Responsive Universities that already exist. The Alliance compiled an operational document for gender responsive universities and was able to encourage their campuses to start implementing gender indicators in campus governance. They were even able to get the Ministry of Religious Affairs - which oversees Islamic universities across Indonesia - to adopt the indicators in the form of the PTRG Award and a policy that applies to all Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Over the 4 years, 34 campuses have begun to build gender-responsive work mechanisms including responding to the problem of sexual violence and campus responses to sexual violence are beginning to be seen by providing services for victims and fostering discussions about sexual violence on campus. Young women activists played a major contribution through their role as members of the task force for the prevention of sexual violence in the campuses.



Women's Political Roles at Community Level

Community groups at the grassroots, strengthened through the We lead program, improved relationships with their communities, many of whom now accept women as part of the customary village management who are actively involved in the decision-making process in their village.

Over the course of the programme, many LWOCs began to look for loopholes and forms to participate in village development planning, discussions which make decisions concerning their lives to be involved in the formulation of village policies and budgets. Developed skills combined with creativity and persistence resulted in acceptance from policy makers at the village level.

Women in the village of Oebelo Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, rose from adversity after they built a group to share the problems they faced at home, including the violence they experienced. Making banana chips was an activity that further strengthened their ability to appear more confident in conveying their aspirations to the village head. **Lou Bawe**, a group of indigenous women in West Kutai Regency - East Kalimantan. Their *Power Within* was built when they began to be able to look more broadly at the problems they faced. Now two young women members of Lou Bawe have become part of the customary village management and are

actively involved in the decision-making process in their village. **PHC**, a collective in Cianjur, West Java, formed a women's group out of concern for the many cases of contract marriage. PHC began to provide supports many victims. They even began to encourage the local government to establish a coordination forum for handling violence at the district level to bring access to services and coordination in case resolution closer. In Magelang - Central Java, members of the **Rumah Curhat** (safe space group), formed a support group to help neighbors who were experiencing problems or were victims of violence.

Narratives and public discourse on gender justice issues

Ongoing engagement with the media and social actors during the journey of the We Lead program, has significantly contributed to a provision of alternative narrative and public discourse on gender justice, and also the emergence of organic initiatives and collaborations that have grown in the community, as well as changes in national and local government policies and programs.

Ample amount of writings made by Women Ulema on Islam and gender, interpretation of the Koran through gender perspective, and other forms of writing both in online media and even writings in the form of books.

This illustrates how much they want to share their new knowledge and awareness to more women, so that they will be able to break free from the chains of religious dogma that are binding them.

1,005

publications in mainstream and alternative media at local and national levels on narratives and discourses on gender justice issues were disseminated.

45

Women and transwomen journalists were strengthened with gender lens to apply gender equality in media coverage. This resulted in 15 gender-sensitive articles published in national and local media.

2,815,571

Audiences have been reached through publication and campaigning activities (online and offline)

Massive and intensive media coverage and exposure on the issue of sexual violence created tremendous public support that encouraged both the government and the parliament to pass the Law on Crime on Sexual Violence in 2022. The publicity of the *Istighosah Kubro* (collective prayer) event on 14 December 2023 organized by grassroots women clerics together with women activists to increase the visibility of support from religious leaders to the government and

legislature to pass this policy. This virtual event was attended by more than 5,000 ulama and *santri*, as well as members of parliament, religious and community leaders. A few weeks after the publication of this activity appeared in various national and regional media, President Jokowi issued a statement encouraging the acceleration of the passing of the bill (January 4, 2022) and in just three months the DPR passed the Law on Crime on Sexual Violence (April 13, 2022).



The road traveled over the last 4 years has provided many insights, revealing the potential for exciting and ongoing future collaborations and many learning opportunities. Below is a glimpse into common learnings that have emerged so far.

1. **When women are equipped with power** analysis, tools, and resources, they are able to contribute to sustainable economic growth, which in turn will help us bring forth our dream of just futures.
2. The current dynamic and ever-changing context and socio-political situation, both nationally and in local areas, requires continuous reflection on strategy based on identified changes within **context based on power analysis**.
3. **Political Accompaniment is a key strategy to elevate capacities of WROs and LWOCs.** The best accompaniment relationships are those that are built on mutual trust, solidarity, care, transparency, and respect. In doing political accompaniment – be it from Yayasan Hivos and JASS to the five WROs as well as the five WROs to the LWOCs – organizations take on the role of a critical conscious partner in collectively problem solving and strategizing, as well as supporting partners to undertake initiatives without imposing on their autonomy.

4. **Safe space is the key to build women's movement in various issues and contexts.** This method is gradually developed and explored learning from previous experiences and practices whose work speaks to the principles of creating safe spaces.

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New safe spaces were built in the grass-root women organizations and communities.

Key learning

5. With diverse issues and unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, considering the multiple issues that can marginalize people is key to advance women's rights and equality. Applying an **intersectional and intergenerational** approach will

help a program in making use of different human rights instruments and approaches to respond to the multiple forms of discrimination that people face. Furthermore, understanding that intersectionality is a tool for supporting equality, means a shift away from 'one-size fits all' thinking.

6. Mapping, engaging, and sustaining **relationships** with key allies and networks can support and strengthen the women's movement. Moreover, the selection of rights and competent actors in their field can reinforce and validate the message we convey. And this requires strategies and takes significant work.
7. The pandemic has provided an arena for women ulema to be more savvy in **technology**. Using whatsapp, zoom, youtube, and other social media platforms has enabled them to reach out to wider audiences.
8. As a MEL tool, **Outcome Harvesting** has a great potential as a method for developing stories of change and a regular monitoring and evaluation methodology, if and when combined with feminist methodology.

Our learnings have provided rich insights that can be taken up in future initiatives in terms of how to apply feminist approaches towards social change for gender equality. More concretely, a number of recommendations have surfaced with regards to how to apply a feminist approach to:

1. Project implementation:

There are existing community-based economic empowerment in Indonesia that we can continue to strengthen and learn from. It is important for future programs to set a strategy in strengthening the documentation of the development of each community group that is being assisted to capture their journey of building movement.

2. Reporting: Develop applied processes and formats for feminist reporting that are simple and contextualized, and acknowledge qualitative outcomes.

3. Safety and support systems: The Rapid Response Mechanism enabled the needed work and support to WROs in times of crisis. We learned that there is a need to set up holistic safety and security mechanism(s) built within the project with more flexibility and agility to seize opportunities and unforeseen political crises impacting WROs in conducting accompaniment at the grassroots level. In relation to safe space, it is recommended that any future



Recommendations

programming ensures safe space(s) are embedded not only at the level of LWOCs but also WROs for critical reflection to improve strategy, approach and method so they can adapt it to their organizing strategies with their partners or women's collectives. Strengthen support systems can be developed for women activists and LBT community in all project areas within and outside women's movement in all project areas. This will enable a more inclusive and supportive community and movements.

4. Engagement: Engaging other relevant/strategic stakeholder(s) as members of Project Advisory Committee (PAC), i.e. the National Commissions of Violence Against Women, might be useful to provide more strategic directions for greater women's movement for enjoyment of women's rights.

5. Communications: There is a need for ongoing and practical capacity building on communications (soft skills and hard skills) for WROs and LWOCs in utilizing IT for awareness raising and promoting support towards the women's movement agenda.

We Lead

