

# INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN PRACTICE



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# INTRODUCTION

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What does it mean to take intersectional feminist perspectives seriously in work aimed at improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)? What are some of the ways in which SRHR organisations have worked meaningfully to strengthen intersectional perspectives internally and in external programmes? How does one approach such work and what could be a good starting point?

These questions have been posed in discussions between RFSU and our partners and allies since we first decided to adopt intersectional feminism as one of our prioritised perspectives in the international programme in 2015. Since then, RFSU has worked with internal training, adapted our partner assessment and reporting formats, embarked on an intersectional feminist pilot project with partner organisations in Latin America and offered introductory as well as in-depth training courses and coaching on intersectional feminist perspectives on SRHR to partners. Yet, the question of how integration of intersectional feminist perspectives is put into practice has kept coming back in conversations with partners as well as with colleagues at RFSU.

This question, we believe, does not have a straightforward answer. We see intersectional feminist work as always deeply embedded in the local context, as well as in the nature, mandate and capacity of each organisation. Hence, in our view, checklists or guidelines on implementing intersectional feminist work on SRHR are not fully meaningful. To contribute to developing knowledge around this question in other ways, we invited four RFSU partners interested in reflecting on and sharing



their experiences of trying to integrate an intersectional feminist approach in their work to collaborate with documenting it in the form of a case study. Our aspiration was that such a process would be meaningful not only to the participating organisations, but also to other organisations who are reflecting on what intersectional feminism means to their work. These experiences have been documented with the assistance of Daniela Marin Platero, feminist consultant, in collaboration with the organisations portrayed in each case study. RFSU is also contributing to this series on intersectional feminist perspectives in practice with a reflection on our own intra-organisational learning journey on anti-racist perspectives. We hope that reading the case studies will provide inspiration to other organisations interested in exploring similar work!

# ADOPTING INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

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A cross-reading of the different case studies in this booklet illuminates that intersectional feminist approaches are **grounded in the particularities of each organisation and the context in which they work**. The ways in which the approach has been adopted by each organisation is reflective of the feminisms that the organisation adheres to, its history, the movements it is part of, and the material reality in which it works. All these aspects are key to the development of one's intersectional perspectives and approaches. However, some key commonalities were identified in the case studies. These include:

- **The praxis of intersectionality in each organisation is not happening in a vacuum**, but is rather informed by, and developed in conversation with the larger feminist movement. Other frameworks such as feminist philanthropy, liberation theology, interculturality, feminist theology and queer feminism have provided a base from which intersectionality has been understood and grounded among RFSU partners. Exchanges with other organisations and groups have been specifically sought as part of the process through which an intersectional praxis has been developed.
- **Understanding and addressing power**: Reflecting about the ways in which power is implicitly and explicitly experienced at the individual level, but also understanding and looking at the ways in which power is embedded and manifests in structures, internal policies, systems and ways of working has also been an essential part of developing an intersectional praxis. Although power is experienced by each individual in unique ways, the ways in which this happens is not in isolation, but rather in connection to structural systems of power such as anti-Indigenous racism, cis-sexism, ableism and colour-blind racism. Thus, a desire to look at, engage with and shift power is at the core of these organisational approaches.
- The exercise of **looking within and self-recognition**, whether through the mapping of the identities and makeup of staff, the assessment of the identities and needs of service users or grantees, or engagement with other populations and their situated knowledge, has been a catalyst in these processes. Deepening the understanding of each organisation's identity, internally and in relation to others, has been essential for each organisation to be able to question itself.
- **Building internal knowledge about intersectionality** has been a key step in developing a particular intersectional approach and understanding. Organisations have developed specific curricula for staff, internal reflection spaces, position papers, protocols for grantees and even hired consultants to support this learning process. The collectivisation of these processes has been crucial to the adoption of a feminist intersectional approach.
- **Buy-in from and a continuous commitment** towards this work from leadership has been a critical element in the building and advancement of intersectional approaches across the different organisations. Learnings arising from an understanding of intersectionality have led to changes in policies, positions, and protocols. Without this buy-in, these changes would have likely not been possible.

- **Investing human and financial resources** to support progress towards an intersectional approach and praxis has been essential, as has acknowledging that specific changes deriving from these processes are gradual and require time to be tried out and transformed.
- **No one has all the answers:** Working towards an intersectional approach demands a continuous process of reflection and recalibration. On some occasions it implies inhabiting discomfort and facing resistance, which is an ongoing process of learning and unlearning. The journey towards intersectionality has opened spaces for change in each organisation, marking new directions from where to continue strengthening the work.

# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE ARGENTINA

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# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE ARGENTINA

Catholics for Choice Argentina (CFC-A) is an autonomous movement of Catholics committed to the defence of women's rights, especially those related to sexuality and reproduction, and to a life free of violence and discrimination. CFC-A works for equality in gender relations and for women's citizenship, counteracting religious fundamentalism from a theological and feminist perspective based on Liberation Theology<sup>1</sup> and Latin American Feminist Theology.<sup>2</sup> CFC-A is part of the CFC-A *Latin American and Caribbean Network*, made up of 12 countries<sup>3</sup> in the region that have been working autonomously since 1994 on the basis of a strategic analysis of their particular contexts and needs.

Throughout 30 years, CFC-A has worked to ensure that women and other people with capacity to get pregnant have the right to a life free of violence and can exercise their sexual and (non) reproductive health and rights without discrimination or violence. CFC-A's long-term goal is to ensure that the right to reproductive autonomy may be exercised by all women and pregnant people in Argentina, considering the cross-cutting intersectional issues that impact on the ability to exercise one's rights, such as age, social class, rurality and, particularly, ethnicity.

CFC-A's advocacy work has been an important point of reference within the feminist movement in Argentina and in the broader struggle for access to abortion. Some milestones that mark its contributions in this regard are:

- **The presentation of the LMR vs Argentina case before the UN Human Rights Committee<sup>4</sup>, denouncing the Argentine State for in 2006 having denied an abortion to a 19-year-old disabled girl who had been raped. 14 weeks pregnant, the girl had requested an abortion at the Guernica Hospital, which was denied despite it being allowed under article 86 of the Penal Code. The ruling was favourable, and the girl received financial compensation (2007).**
- **Presentation of an Amicus Curiae on the F.,A.L. ruling,<sup>5</sup> in which the Supreme Court denied A.G., a 15-year-old girl raped by her stepfather in Chubut in March 2010, access to an abortion. In 2016, CFC-A took on the technical defence of the young Tucumán girl who was imprisoned for having an abortion. She was released from prison after media pressure generated by the "Freedom for Belén" campaign.**
- **CFC-A's role in the National Campaign for the Right to Safe and Free Legal Abortion, created in 2005 and driven by more than 700 feminist organisations advocating for the necessary changes in the health and education system to achieve decriminalisation of abortion.**



# ACCESS TO ABORTION IN ARGENTINA

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The struggle for the voluntary termination of pregnancy in Argentina began with the adoption of the first Penal Code, which criminalised all cases of abortion without any exceptions. In 1903, a first exception was incorporated through a modification of the code, making attempted abortion no longer punishable. Subsequently, the second modification of the code in 1921 incorporated what became known as non-punishable abortions: abortions carried out with the aim of avoiding danger to the life or health of the woman, interruption of a pregnancy that is the result of rape or sexual assault committed against a mentally disabled or mentally ill person, outlined in paragraphs 1 and 2 respectively.

In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled in the F.,A.L. decision on abortion due to rape, resolving that those women who had been raped, whether “normal or insane” (according to the decision), can terminate a pregnancy without prior judicial authorisation or fear of suffering a subsequent criminal sanction, exempting the doctor who performs the intervention from punishment. The decision established that, in such cases, only an affidavit was necessary to record the crime of which the person wishing to terminate the pregnancy was a victim. This was a recognition of abortion as a legal medical practice in cases permitted by law, urging the national and provincial executive powers to issue medical protocols for the care and practice of such abortions, and establishing that such cases should not be punished. In 2015, the Protocol for the Comprehensive Care of Persons with the Right to the Legal Termination of Pregnancy (known as the ILE Protocol, for its acronym in Spanish) was issued, developed by the National Ministry of Health (MSAL, for its acronym in Spanish). This protocol follows the guidelines of the F.,A.L. ruling and adds considerations regarding the concept of health, incorporating physical, psychological and social aspects, and clarifying potential health hazards. Despite this progress, access to the practice remained very restricted.

In 2018, for the first time, a bill on the voluntary termination of pregnancy was introduced, promoted by the National Campaign for Safe and Free Legal Abortion, which was formed in 2005 and was a key player in advocating for the recognition of this right. The bill made it halfway through passage by the Chamber of Deputies.

Finally, in 2020, [Law 27.610](#) on access to voluntary termination of pregnancy was passed, going into effect on January 24, 2021. This law, in line with the commitments assumed by the Argentine State in terms of public health and human rights of women and people with gestational capacity, recognises a) the right to choose, request and have access to termination of a pregnancy, b) the right to request and receive post-abortion care and c) the right to prevent unintended pregnancies through access to information, comprehensive sexuality education and contraceptive methods. It established different time limits and grounds for the right to voluntary interruption up to and including the 14th week of gestation, and legal interruption outside this period in cases in which the life or health of the pregnant person is at risk or the pregnancy is the result of rape.

## CASE STUDY: CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC ADAPTATIONS

Since 2019, CFC-A, together with the indigenous women's organisation ARETEDE<sup>6</sup> and in coordination with the National Directorate of Sexual and Reproductive Health of the MSAL and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), signed the agreement "Intercultural Sociolinguistic Adaptation of MSAL Protocols and Materials Aimed at the Population on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Native Languages for Argentina." Within the framework of this agreement came about the project *Bodies and Freedom: Voices of Peasant and Indigenous Women* ([Cuerpos y libertades. Voces de mujeres campesinas e indígenas](#)).

The main objective of this agreement is to carry out a series of intercultural sociolinguistic adaptations to the Protocol for the Comprehensive Care of Victims of Sexual Assault of the Ministry of Health (MSAL) in its updated version and of the Protocol for the Comprehensive Care of Persons with the Right to Voluntary and Legal Termination of Pregnancy (2021). The project has currently expanded to collaborate with the Chorote, Wichí, Guaraní, Qom and Mapuche communities. The production and adaptation of materials with a sociolinguistic adaptation approach seeks to change the traditional translation scheme from one language to another towards meaningful interpretations for the communities. This is achieved through intercultural mediation aimed at the understanding and respectful introjection of issues relevant to their daily lives, for example, placing the issue of indigenous women's health and sexual rights within a larger context, such as the right to inhabit territory. In this sense, the final translated text shows a process of intertextuality, accommodating plural voices, ancestral knowledge, intercultural dialogues and mutual understandings.



These adaptations include legal tools that are useful for indigenous people in two ways: to claim their rights and promote the direct participation of indigenous women by making recommendations that have an impact on the improvement of these tools or introducing issues of relevance to indigenous people in public opinion or within the feminist movement. These issues include the defence of land and territory, the relationship between body, land and territory, forced displacement and dispossession of indigenous communities, migration, resource extraction, the defence of and access to water, etc.

The actions carried out as part of the project *Bodies and Freedoms: Voices of Peasant and Indigenous Women* included trainings, advocacy actions, conferences and the production or adaptation of materials on sexual and reproductive rights, abortion and gender-based violence in graphic and audio formats, in the native languages of the Wichí, Chorote, Guaraní, Qom and Mapuche peoples.

# CFC-A'S INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

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For CFC-A, carrying out this project has involved processes of reflection and dialogue that go beyond the products that have resulted from the initiative and offer clues about what intersectional work implies for the organisation. Recognising the power in the diversity of experiences in this project as well as the power that lies in the different questions that have arisen from the possibility of holding meetings in indigenous communities' territories has been key for the team that worked on this initiative. The project has reaffirmed that territorial and community expansion is progressive and requires solid and constant processes of dialogue and joint reflection that lead to rethinking notions of time, ways of working and frameworks.

## LESSONS LEARNT

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### Regarding the concept of time

Each territory has its own logic regarding work and time structures. Academic and project times are very different from the time it takes to build relationships of trust and mutual listening. Entering a community and opening a space for dialogue implies a continuous willingness to exchange throughout the time spent in the territory, rather than limiting exchanges to specific times or dynamics in which you only have a couple of minutes to put forward an idea and make a decision. Some very important exchanges in the framework of this project took place outside of the "official meeting work time," such as when preparing the collective meal or watering the plants. During the project, practices were reintegrated such as the dynamic of holding council and sitting in a circle around the fire for hours, a form of dialogue that has been present in many communities for as long as can be remembered.

### Situated knowledge<sup>7</sup>

As CFC-A began to work with the different communities, it was discovered that some of the approaches that the team was using in relation to an issue were not the same as those used within the communities, and, additionally, that some concepts could not be imported from one context to another. For example, when addressing the issue of early unions and child marriages in some communities, they realised that these concepts did not correspond with the ways in which the communities were defining these situations and that the conflicts that arose were not in line with the worldviews of many peoples or with the concerns that brought them together. Many of the concerns in the communities in relation to these unions were tied to the exchanges between one community and another, what was enabled or lost in this process of union or disunion, and the relationship of these unions with other phenomena such as migration and its effects on the community. Recognizing and integrating the particularities of each Indigenous community and the other issues/realities that were at play in each context allowed for concerns and demands around this topic to be expanded so that the specific context and concerns of each community were also integrated when understanding this issue and its effects in these communities.

**“For the Mapuche people-nation, health is a spiritual, community and territorial process. People get sick, but the territory also gets sick. Mapuche people have a physical, mental, emotional and ancestral body. Taking this into account, illness or disease is not experienced individually. Mapuche health and medicine is holistic, which is why a sick person is accompanied in a family and community way, for their recovery or complete equilibrium.”<sup>8</sup>**

**“We Mapuche women have individual rights and collective rights, so in order to address our health through public health services, linguistic rights and health rights from one’s own cultural matrix must be taken into account.”<sup>9</sup>**

For CFC-A, approaching these different worldviews and situated knowledges has implied expanding its viewpoint, rethinking some key concepts for its work, and even asking itself: How can a regulatory framework, a law, or use of the slogan “my body is mine” be thought of as an instance of empowerment within a collective body? How can an individual right be exercised in a collective body?

These reflections have impacted the ways in which the team continues to create meaning around concepts such as consent and territory. From a liberal feminist perspective, consent has been framed as an individual practice, so how can a framework of consent as an individual practice be intercepted with a vision of collectivity?

## About Positioning

Recognising the epistemic exploitation of indigenous communities by outsiders, including the extraction of knowledge by anthropologists, was key for CFC-A in reflecting on what it meant for a non-indigenous organisation to carry out this work in the territory. What are the possible dynamics of extraction that could occur and what are the active ways in which these dynamics can be mitigated? Answering this took internal reflections, negotiations with donors, internal training and developing new ways of working.

In recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to be consulted and to participate in the decision-making processes that affect them, CFC-A carried out a process of free, prior and informed consent in the communities where they wished to work with youth. Based on its intention and recognition of the structural violence to which indigenous youth have been exposed and the ways in which each community has its own ways of protecting this population, CFC-A used the [ILO Convention 169](#) and the principles of free, prior and informed consent as a basis for carrying out consultations with authorities and community leaders in Salta, Chaco and Catamarca prior to working in these territories.

This process not only involved direct engagement with local governance structures, following community-specific protocols such as negotiating with leaders, signing written records of meeting minutes, etc., but also making the content and proposed ways of working available to the communities for discussion.

## Inhabiting discomfort and being open to change

When reflecting on the implications of engaging in intersectional work, the CFC-A colleagues emphasise the need to inhabit discomfort, a discomfort with what is new and learned and constructed collectively, a discomfort that is experienced by recognising and questioning one's own privileges, the discomfort of silences and questions that have no single answer, the discomfort from which new ways of being and thinking are developed. Discomfort can be taken as a starting point and not a destination.

They also highlight the need to be open to new ways of thinking and doing things, new ways that are discovered by challenging assumptions and ways of working and thinking. Opening oneself up to the possibility of change results from entering into dialogue with other ways of feeling-thinking,<sup>10</sup> implying a two-way exchange.

## CONCLUSION

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The work that CFC-A has carried out as part of the project Bodies and Freedoms: Voices of Peasant and Indigenous Women, as well as the broader work that the organisation has developed with indigenous women and gender non-conforming persons, has been a key spark in the conceptualisation and praxis of its own intersectional approach. The reflections and learnings of the team members directly involved in these initiatives question the organisation and its political commitment to feminism, which, in addition to being intersectional, also seeks to be decolonial.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>This theological movement is inspired by the “preferential option for the poor,” which implies taking sides with the most disadvantaged people and working for their liberation. Liberation Theology criticises the capitalist system and denounces the social and economic inequalities that it generates. It also emphasises the importance of social justice and solidarity with the most vulnerable people.

<sup>2</sup>See Catholics for Choice-Mexico’s case study.

<sup>3</sup>Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru, and Spain as an associate member.

<sup>4</sup>See: [LMR v. Argentina \(UN Doc. CCPR/C/101/D/1608/2007\)](#)

<sup>5</sup>See decision [here](#) (Spanish only) Accessed 12th December 2023

<sup>6</sup>The indigenous women’s organisation ARETEDE of Tartagal (Salta) is a pioneering institution in the promotion of women’s rights and sexual dissidence among the indigenous peoples living in the department of San Martín. Since the end of 1990, this collective has been organising and undertaking actions aimed at strengthening the collective struggles of indigenous peoples, led by a group of women from the Guaraní, Wichi, Toba Qom and Chorote peoples.

<sup>7</sup>Refers to a critical epistemological (theory of knowledge) stance developed by [Donna Haraway](#), professor in feminist studies and the history of consciousness. Haraway suggests that in order to achieve feminist objectivity in research, it is imperative to acknowledge from which particular location one is writing and theorising, since all knowledge is situated, which means that knowledge is partial and influenced by the knowledge producers historical and socio-cultural context, lived experiences, the theoretical and other frameworks used etcetera.

<sup>8</sup><https://cuerposylibertades.catolicas.org.ar/coleccion/>

<sup>9</sup><https://cuerposylibertades.catolicas.org.ar/coleccion/>

<sup>10</sup>The term “Feeling-Thinking” (“Sentipensar” in Spanish) was coined by the Spanish academic Saturnino de la Torre in his classes on creativity in 1997. It is defined as “the process by which we put thinking and feeling to work together.”

# WOMEN'S FUND IN GEORGIA

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WOMEN'S FUND  
IN GEORGIA



# WOMEN'S FUND IN GEORGIA

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Women's Fund in Georgia (WFG) is a feminist grant-making organisation that supports local feminist and queer organisations, initiatives, groups and individual activists by financing them and providing technical support. Grounded in feminist philanthropy, WFG has been an important resource mobilisation tool for the local feminist movement. It has awarded around 1,000 grants nationwide and organised over 200 local and international fundraising events.

WFG's current grant programs are:<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Protection of Women's Labour Rights in Georgia**
- 2. Protection of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**
- 3. Community Grants**
- 4. Women's Rights and Environmental Justice**
- 5. Strategic Grants for Women and Trans Activist Groups - COVID-19**
- 6. Protection of Women's Rights and Women's Rights Activists**
- 7. Promoting the Development of Feminist Movements in Georgia**
- 8. Open Door Grants<sup>2</sup>**
- 9. Operational Grants/Core Support**
- 10. Feminist Landscape in Georgia<sup>3</sup>**

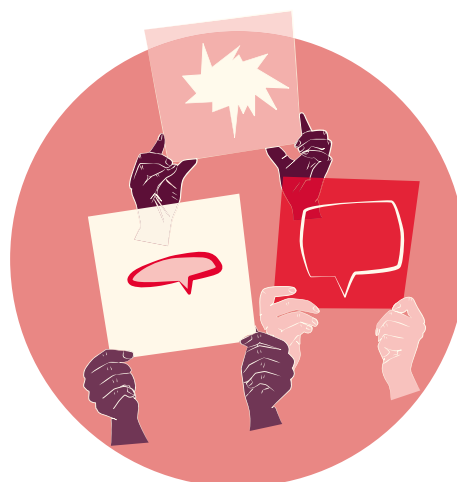
Since its inception in 2005, WFG's goal has been to redirect resources to the most marginalised communities: citizens of Georgia from various non-dominant ethnic and religious groups, LBT women, women living in rural areas, eco-migrants and others.

As a feminist fund, WFG is rooted in feminist philanthropy and its conscious effort to rebalance the unequal power relations inherent to philanthropy.

## SRHR ACCESS IN GEORGIA

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Availability and accessibility of quality SRHR services remain critical issues in Georgia. Key barriers to SRHR access identified by the Georgian Coalition for Reproductive Health and Rights include inadequate implementation of laws and policies, lack of integration of sexual and reproductive health services into primary health care and referral systems, lack of knowledge and awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights among health care providers, lack of awareness of and access to information on SRHR and lack of funding for SRHR services.<sup>4</sup>



Georgian women face a number of serious challenges in accessing quality and affordable contraceptive services. Since 2015, contraceptives have been removed from the list of essential medicines in the National Health Programme, increasing barriers to preventing unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). According to the HERA-XXI<sup>5</sup> assessment, women with low levels of contraceptive knowledge and lack of access to contraception use abortion as their primary method of family planning. However, safe abortion services are not readily available or financially affordable for all women.

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia has identified 655 medical facilities that have a licence to provide gynaecological services in the country. However, only 17% of these facilities provide abortion services and 95% of these medical facilities are secondary health care facilities. In general, secondary health care facilities are multi-profile clinics and operate in cities. Thus, only 5% of primary health care facilities provide abortion services, and family planning services are provided outside of these facilities. Women living in rural areas have to travel long distances, incurring additional transportation costs and time. In some cases, women are forced to take out loans to access timely abortion care.

## WFG'S UNDERSTANDING OF INTERSECTIONALITY

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Intersectionality is a core value embedded in WFG's resource allocation practices and the Operational Grants/Core Support. Since its inception in 2005, WFG's goal has been to redirect resources to the most marginalised communities: citizens of Georgia from various non-dominant ethnic and religious groups, LBT women, women living in rural areas, eco-migrants and others.

**"Only by using  
intersectional approaches  
can real changes  
be achieved."**

**WFG staff member**

As a feminist fund, WFG is rooted in feminist philanthropy and its conscious effort to rebalance the unequal power relations inherent to philanthropy and strive for a grant-making process that responds directly to the Georgian feminist movement's agendas, needs, and contexts. Traditional philanthropy is deeply embedded in charitable giving, often driven by goodwill and a desire to alleviate immediate needs, while feminist philanthropy is rooted in feminist principles and goes beyond traditional charitable giving by recognizing the structural inequalities that exist in society. It aims to achieve long-term systemic change that addresses the root causes of these inequalities. Feminist philanthropy acknowledges that lasting change requires challenging and transforming the very structures that perpetuate inequality.

Feminist philanthropy operates with a clear understanding of gender dynamics and seeks to challenge and change patriarchal structures, norms, and practices. It recognizes that gender inequality intersects with various other forms of discrimination, such as race, class, sexual orientation and ability. Unlike traditional philanthropy, which might often tackle issues in isolation, feminist philanthropy tends to fund initiatives that break down silos and adopt a more comprehensive lens. This means understanding that the challenges faced by individuals are complex and interwoven, and thus, solutions must be holistic and inclusive.

While traditional philanthropy has historically been characterised by top-down decision-making and donor-driven initiatives, feminist philanthropy is committed to democratising philanthropy. It values the voices, experiences and expertise of those directly affected by the issues it aims to address and places a strong emphasis on empowering marginalised groups, particularly women and gender-diverse individuals by recognizing their agency and expertise. It aims to empower communities and ensure that philanthropic efforts are responsive and impactful. Women's funds have been a key actor of feminist philanthropy.

Women's funds have played a crucial role in addressing the underfunding of the feminist movement. They have and continue to mobilise financial resources for feminist organisations and initiatives that are often overlooked by traditional funding sources. Women's funds not only provide financial support but also offer capacity-building and technical assistance to feminist organisations. They facilitate networking and collaboration among feminist organisations, activists, and donors. By bringing together different stakeholders, they create opportunities for knowledge sharing, resource pooling and collective action.



# TRUST-BASED FUNDING

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WFG considers itself part of the local feminist movement and as such, considers all its grantees as partners. The fund has deep trust in the groups that it supports and in the movement itself.

Priorities for the fund are determined in conversation with the feminist movement. Prior to the announcement of a call for grant proposals, WFG meets with movement representatives such as activists and experts to determine the thematic lines that the fund should prioritise and the ways in which the fund can respond to the local context. The fund has built out and adapted its programs and funding priorities based on the advice and feedback received by movement representatives.

Applications for each granting period are reviewed in collaboration with a rotating selection committee composed of local activists and experts working on the issues addressed by the funding call. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring the participation of members from the most marginalised communities.

When reviewing the applications, the selection committee looks at aspects such as how well the applicant has described and understood the manifold aspects of their target group, whether the applicant is a representative of this community, and how well they know the community and its needs. These aspects are used as a base to review each application. As the proposals are reviewed, special attention is placed on the challenges and concerns raised by the committee members as well as their reading of the context in which the initiative or project will be developed.

For example, when evaluating a project concerning ethnic Azerbaijani women living in rural areas, the committee paid attention to the applicant's description of the context and the connections made across issues and the context, i.e., the connections made between the lack of access to education, resources, poverty, employment, gender inequality and access to reproductive health services. Given that the project's regions are facing environmental problems, desertification and water scarcity, to what extent does the applicant understand the impact of this on reproductive health? How does the applicant see the responsibility of the local and central government on this matter? How critical are they towards the existing policy? Do they engage in any form of advocacy?

During the selection process, each member of the committee holds a vote that is equal to the vote that WFG as a whole has during this process. Thus, the selection process is truly led by the decisions of the selection committee members.

**"We trust  
our grantee partners,  
and we know that they  
know best the needs  
of their communities,  
and their realities  
and contexts."**

**WFG staff member**

# LESSONS LEARNT

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## Supporting Those Working at the Margins

WFG is committed to funding those that operate at the margins and would otherwise not meet the criteria of other funders, such as groups of people or organisations that are newly established and inexperienced in managing funds. The fund works to reach groups and populations that are structurally marginalised, traditionally underfunded, and sometimes not formally constituted.

In an effort to address lack of access to education, WFG has developed a simple application process that does not require specialised skills for its completion. In earlier years, the fund accepted hand-written applications and even assisted groups that required support in writing out their applications.

The fund is also committed to language justice and receives applications in Georgian (the official national language) as well as in the other four most spoken languages in Georgia (Armenian, Azerbaijani, English, Russian), making it possible for minority populations who are often living in remote communities to apply to the fund. This practice de-centres the Georgian language and recognizes the linguistic rights of other communities.

In 2021, through the Protection of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) program, a total of 11,628 euros was granted to the Union of Social Workers to support the project "Promoting Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Homeless Children". This project focused on increasing the awareness and sensitivity of specialists working with homeless children in Georgia (psychologists, social workers, educators, peer educators, special educators) in regard to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of this population.

The fund also supported an initiative focused on increasing the access to information on sexual and reproductive health and rights of blind and visually impaired girls and women living in Georgia. It granted a total of 8,404 euros to the organization Mariani for its implementation.

Both projects made important connections across the multiple identities of their target populations and centred their specific needs and rights within the larger SRHR framework.

## Operational Grants & Movement Building

In line with their trust-based funding model, WFG began issuing operational support grants in 2021. These flexible grants are designed to support the overall development and structure of the grantee partner organisation as opposed to a given project.

The first two organisations to receive this type of funding were Woman and Reality and Elderly Women's Council. Since 2021, a total of 16 organisations have received operational grants.

Another important contribution towards movement building has been supporting the strengthening of specific sectors of the Georgian feminist movement through resourcing. In 2021, the fund supported a project by The Roma Union focused on strengthening the Roma feminist movement in the region of Dedoplistskaro, Choti (former Leninovka) village.

## Building the Capacity of Grantee Partners

WFG offers its partners a range of capacity-building opportunities including specialised training, spaces for knowledge-sharing and direct funding for capacity development.

To build a common knowledge base among its grantee partners, the SRHR program conducts a three-day training with representatives of all newly funded initiatives. During this training, grantees are introduced to the essence of an intersectional approach and how different forms of oppression and discrimination intersect. Emphasis is placed on understanding the barriers that various marginalised groups may face in accessing reproductive services and realising their sexual and reproductive rights. While this practice is specific to the SRHR program, the fund hopes to expand it to other programs too.

Events that bring together activists and researchers from different backgrounds are organised to strengthen the analysis among staff and grantee partners around the fund's priority areas. Events like this weave together the labour rights of women with disabilities, the labour rights of women living in rural areas, the labour rights of ethnic minority women, the labour rights of LBT women, the labour rights of young people, and women involved in labour migration, etc. Making connections across issues such as the impact of gender equality in labour relations and reproductive justice is core to the fund's approach to resource allocation.

In 2021, WFG supported the project "Awareness of Refugee and Eco-Migrant Women About Rights and Decent Work in Imereti, Kutaisi." The project focused on informing refugee and eco-migrant women about labour rights, raising their awareness about gender equality and strengthening their skills.

## CONCLUSION

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As an actor of the Georgian feminist ecosystem, WFG works to challenge power differences embedded in philanthropy. By being in conversation with the local feminist movement, the fund continues to be responsive to the context and the movement's needs. An intersectional analysis is present throughout the organisation's resource-allocation and grant making processes, shaping the ways in which the fund conducts its work with partners and movements at large.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>[WFG's 2021 Annual Report](#), accessed 11 December 2023.

<sup>2</sup>This type of grant allows the applicant to define their own funding focus. The criteria for reviewing the projects under this program are that the project be a feminist initiative and that it be initiated by a women's/feminist group.

<sup>3</sup>The focus of the program was to bring together different under-privileged groups, support them financially and allow cross-topic collaboration to happen. The groups invited to apply under the program were: LGBTIQ+ persons, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities and religious minorities.

<sup>4</sup>[Women's SRHR in Georgia, HRC Universal Period Review, 2021](#). Accessed 11 December 2023.

<sup>5</sup>[Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Georgia](#), Coalition for Reproductive Health and Rights, 2020. Accessed 11 December 2023.



WOMEN'S FUND  
IN GEORGIA



# Q-INITIATIVE KENYA

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## Q-INITIATIVE

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Q-Initiative (Q-I) was founded in 2010 by students from Moi University who wanted to create a safe space for queer youth to convene and discuss issues that pertained to them. Since then, Q-I has been an organisation directed by the needs of those it serves: lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, trans people and gender non-conforming persons. Although Q-Initiative's work was initially centred on the Moi University campus, located in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu county, their work has expanded to sub-counties. The organisation currently has two offices (in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia) and sixteen staff members. With the expansion of its work, Q-I has also moved from being a membership-based organisation to being a community-based organisation since 2019.

Q-Initiative's mission is to provide a transparent, membership-driven, empowered and inclusive space for the LGBTQI+ community with the goal of improving their health, safety and wellbeing. Q-I's areas of work and interests include:

- **Creating safe spaces:** Creating safe spaces for lesbian, bisexual and queer women (LBQ), gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and intersex, trans and gender non-conforming persons (ITGNC) and youth to thrive through social networking.
- **Creating awareness:** Providing education (health, civic and sexuality education), creating awareness by holding awareness raising trainings for the public/interested parties on LGBTQI+ issues.
- **Community outreach:** Promoting positive health-seeking behaviour through quarterly health outreach meetings as well as regular community outreach through the promotion of sexual and reproductive health, HIV/STI prevention and management and provision of prevention commodities.
- **Sexual and reproductive health:** Upholding the human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights of lesbian, bisexual and queer women (LBQ), gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and intersex, trans and gender non-conforming persons (ITGNC), as well as their security.

## SRHR OF LGBTQI+ KENYANS

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LGBTQI+ Kenyans are often targets of sexual, physical, verbal and psychological harassment and violence. Stigma and discrimination is legitimized by existing criminalising laws and the lack of explicit non-discrimination provisions. Sections 162 a) & c) and 165 of the Penal Code of Kenya criminalise consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, resulting in the arbitrary arrest of individuals on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. LGBTQI+ Kenyans are unable to seek legal redress for human rights violations against them because the state has no system for documenting/recording human rights violations based on an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.



Trans people are often charged with impersonation and fraud under Section 382 of the Penal Code of Kenya.<sup>1</sup> Although legal transition is possible, trans people face lengthy and bureaucratic government processes to change their names and gender markers on their official documents. Furthermore, freedom of association, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights, is denied to LGBTQI+ led and serving organisations seeking to register as non-governmental organisations promoting the rights and freedoms of LGBTQI+ people.<sup>2</sup>

Though Kenya has ratified several agreements that address State obligations on SRHR, negative attitudes from healthcare providers hinder access to quality healthcare services. Additionally, health service providers often have little knowledge and understanding of the sexual and reproductive health needs of LGBTQI+ people. Inadequate information around availability and access to safe and legal abortion services prevents many women, girls and persons with gestational capacity from accessing lifesaving care. Unsafe abortion accounts for 13% of all maternal mortality and about seven women and girls die every day due to unsafe abortions.<sup>3</sup>

## Q-INITIATIVE'S UNDERSTANDING OF INTERSECTIONALITY

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In reflecting on their intersectional approach, Q-I staff identify three important factors that have shaped their work:

1. **Their location:** Eldoret is in a peri-urban area, a town surrounded mainly by farms and with a large population of students, farmers and civil servants. The city is home to one of the largest universities in Kenya. Due to its geographical location, the city is a transit town where people are constantly moving in and out. The population of Eldoret is cosmopolitan and diverse, with people from different ethnic communities, different ages, and a mix of urban and rural backgrounds.
2. **Populations served by the organisation:** Q-I works with lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transgender and gender non-conforming people. Each of these communities have specific needs and realities that they face, and that the organisation's work responds to.
3. **Holistic approach:** Although Q-I was initially founded as a safe space for queer youth to gather and discuss their issues, the organisation's work has expanded to include services ranging from counselling to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) service provision, to advocacy and SRHR awareness raising. Throughout its work, Q-I takes a holistic approach that integrates and makes connections between different factors and aspects of an individual's life cycle.

## CASE STUDY: Q-INITIATIVE'S NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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A core tenant of Q-I's intersectionality approach has been recognising that funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for individuals of diverse gender and sexual orientations has long been confined to the narrative surrounding HIV/AIDS and cisgender men. This has resulted in the pathologizing of these communities and the exclusion of lesbian, bisexual, queer and intersex, trans people and/or gender non-conforming (LBQ and ITGNC) persons from any discussion advocating for inclusion, access and provision of not only HIV/AIDS interventions, but also broader SRHR and related health services.

Throughout its history, Q-I's work has been in conversation with the needs of the communities that the organisation uplifts. In early 2018, Q-I identified SRHR as one of the key needs of its constituency and conducted a needs assessment. This needs assessment was funded by RFSU and was an important step in 1) defining the exact SRHR needs of its constituents, 2) identifying the advocacy gaps that currently exist and 3) identifying the barriers that prevent LBQ women and ITGNC people in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia from accessing effective SRHR services. In October 2018, researchers conducted three focus group discussions with the various groups and a total of 80 Q-I service users.

The needs assessment found that:

- Service users felt they didn't have enough information to make informed decisions about their specific sexual and reproductive health situation. LBQ women and ITGNC people in both Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia needed more information on SRHR, including information on transitioning, sex education, safe sex between women, between female and gender non-conforming people, and fertility options for same-sex couples.
- To achieve the highest attainable standard of health care, both the LBQ and ITGNC communities in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia recognized the need to address both their mental health and general well-being. The communities felt that support groups and psychosocial support would go a long way in ensuring that their mental health needs were addressed. There was a growing need for safe spaces where LBQ and ITGNC people could exist without judgement.
- Service gaps prevented these communities from accessing sexual and reproductive health care, with devastating consequences for their health. Many suffered from easily treatable conditions that, if left untreated, could lead to further and more complicated health conditions. Mental stress and other ailments caused by trauma and discrimination had led many to avoid health care, especially since health care providers were often the perpetrators of much of the pain they suffered.
- There was an urgent need to work with mainstream health care and service providers in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia. Work to inform and sensitize them about LBQ and ITGNC people and issues was identified as a factor that would increase use of SRHR services and provide safe spaces for communities to identify themselves and be honest when seeking services. The victimisation and homophobia faced by members was a major deterrent to accessing these services. They recognised that while some work had been done to raise awareness among men who have sex with men (MSM), much remained to be done for LBQ and ITGNC people.
- Strategies were also needed to hold health care providers accountable when they violated confidentiality and basic human rights, for example, by denying care to people in need.

These findings have deeply shaped the path Q-I has taken since 2019, reaffirming its holistic/whole person approach and helping to refine and tailor its interventions to the needs of its diverse service users.

The assessment also shed light on the diversity of Q-I's service users in terms of gender identity and expression, and some conflation and confusion around how these two distinct elements of gender interact and differ from each other. These findings were particularly relevant as more service users were self-identifying as gender non-conforming and trans people. This, and the gaps in the team's and the organisation's knowledge of trans people's experiences and needs, led to a capacity building and internal review process. As Q-I was currently the only organisation serving the trans community in Eldoret, this was of great significance.

## LESSONS LEARNT

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Based on Q-I's needs assessment, the organization identified several critical issues and lessons learnt:

### Trans People Competency

In recognition of the gaps identified, Q-I organized a training on gender identity and expression for its board and staff. The training led to reflection on key individual and organisational questions such as, "What does it mean to be a trans person?", "What does it look like to be a trans person and Kenyan?", "How do I address my biases about trans people?", "How do we as an organisation ensure that we are trans people competent in our knowledge, practices and services?"

Following the training, the team adopted new practices such as confirming pronouns and making them known to the team, as well as to donors and others outside the organisation. The organisation also reviewed its policies, paying particular attention to language and practices that implied binary thinking. During this process, they also reviewed their hiring practices, paying particular attention to how their commitment to anti-discrimination could be clearly articulated in their human resources, job adverts and applications. Kenyan law does not explicitly protect against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. They also instituted policies that addressed different processes, such as socially transitioning while being employed at the organisation.

In 2017, a program officer participated in a professional learning exchange program with an intersex, trans people and gender non-conforming organisation in Kenya called Jinsiangu, where they learned first-hand about the values, work culture, policies, approach and services offered by this organisation. Jinsiangu<sup>4</sup> is a Nairobi-based organisation that seeks to ensure that the lives and well-being of ITGNC people are improved through the creation of safe spaces, by engaging in advocacy and research, the provision of information, health services and psychosocial support and the promotion of opportunities for holistic empowerment. Given the alignment of work between the two organisations, this exchange was key to strengthening the capacity of the Q-I team and the organisation. In 2023, when Q-I wanted to begin providing mental health services to trans people, they replicated this experience and had another staff member participate in another workplace learning exchange at Jinsiangu.

Q-I is now a recognized organisation working with the trans community, sits on the National Transgender Advocacy Network<sup>5</sup> Advisory Board and has contributed to the development of the National Guidelines for Transgender Care. The trans community is represented throughout the organisation, from volunteers to staff to the board of directors.

## Funding for working with the trans community

Access to funding that specifically supports the work that the organisation does with and for the trans community has been essential and has gone hand in hand with the organisation's holistic approach to SRHR. Q-I first became a sub-recipient of the Global Fund in 2018. This funding enabled the expansion of Q-I's work to two additional counties and prompted its transformation into a community-based organisation in 2019. The funding from the Global Fund became an important part of the organisation's budget, though this funding's focus was around HIV prevention targeting gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men only. The needs assessment that was supported by RFSU and carried out that same year (2018) was critical in shaping the organisation's priorities and subsequent negotiations with other donors to adopt a more comprehensive approach to SRHR. Q-I recognises that the funding for HIV prevention and treatment programs continues to be significantly higher than the funding available for other SRHR work. Furthermore, they recognise that guidelines under which HIV funding can be accessed are very strict and often do not allow for a more comprehensive approach to the work, which limits the innovation of the work that can be carried out under these initiatives. Flexible funding with a more comprehensive SRHR focus has been key in sustaining Q-I's work with the trans community.

### Allot Funds to This Work

In addition, working from an intersectional perspective is also a move towards more inclusive work and thus requires resources to be invested in other costs such as interpretation, or in the modification of spaces to make them accessible for wheelchair users, for example. Having specific budget lines for these costs is necessary.

### Bring it Back to Your Context

When thinking about the advice that Q-I would offer other groups and organisations interested in doing intersectional work, they highlight the importance of figuring out what intersectionality looks like in each context and for each organisation:

**“Reflect on the context you work in, the resources available to you, and the ways in which you can utilize these resources. Look at the systems you have in place, ask yourself what is missing, who is missing. As you look at the issues that you work on, think of the ways in which the populations that you work with experience this.”**

Q-I staff member

For Q-I, understanding the composition of its service users, their specific needs and priorities, the limits and possibilities present in the region that they work in and the work that other allies are doing has been key in shaping their own intersectional approach.

## Start by Doing the internal work

They also encourage other organisations to begin on their intersectional journey by doing the inner/internal work of learning, relearning, doing and undoing:

**“Do a lot of reading, listen to others, be open to learning and realizing what you do not know. There’s a lot of work that needs to be done for you to get to these points. Sometimes, what I’ve noticed is that we are so focused on doing the work that we normally just don’t take time to find out what we need. Because if it takes time to learn, that may mean that services will not be provided.”**

Q-I staff member

## Document and Review

To strengthen an intersectional approach, Q-I emphasises the importance of documenting the reflections, questions and processes that organisations embark on. This facilitates the transfer of knowledge among different individuals and helps to ground the organisation in its own history, processes and reflections:

The Q-I team identifies buy-in from the organisational leadership as essential to the sustaining and deepening of an intersectional approach:

**“You also need organisational support. The leadership has to see the need for intersectionality and provide the support so that you’re not fighting alone.”**

Q-I staff member



**Constantly  
ask yourself:  
Are you making  
progress and  
making changes?"**

**Q-I staff member**

### **Continue Making Connections**

Intersectionality emphasises the interconnectedness of different forms of discrimination and aims to address the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals who belong to multiple marginalised groups, considering the complex and overlapping nature of oppression and privilege.

Q-I has recently started to engage more with initiatives connected to climate justice and continue to learn and reflect about the links between climate justice, reproductive justice and SRHR.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Intersectionality has been key in defining Q-I's strategic direction and organisational priorities. It has been at the core of the expansion of its work and its commitment to centre the needs of those that the organisation serves. The support and collaboration with other organisations serving trans people and gender non-conforming people has been key to the organisation's competency journey and has shaped its praxis and understanding of intersectionality.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>LGBTQ SRHR, Frequently asked questions, Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) 2019

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>[Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights at a Glance](#), Fact Sheet Kenya FEMNET 2022

<sup>4</sup> Jinsiangu (hyperlink <https://jinsiangu.org/> ), a Kenyan-based organization established in 2012

<sup>5</sup> The National Transgender Advocacy Network of Kenya (NTAN) (<https://trans-alliance.org/the-national-transgender-advocacy-network-of-kenya/> )

# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE MEXICO

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# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE-MEXICO

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Catholics for Choice Mexico (CFC-M) was founded on August 3, 1994, and since then it has been part of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Catholics for Choice.<sup>1</sup> CFC-M is a Catholic organisation that works from a progressive perspective based on feminist ethics, for the defence of the human rights of women and other groups facing discrimination. The organisation focuses particularly on sexual and reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortion, and its relationship with social justice, democracy and secularism.

Liberation theology<sup>2</sup> and its core principle of the “preferential option for the poor”, as well as Latin American Feminist Theology, has been foundational to the work of CFC-M.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on these frameworks, CFC-M’s mission, vision and agenda has primarily been informed by the intersection between on the intersection between class and gender from the position of Latin American and Caribbean peoples. Throughout its trajectory, CFC-M has promoted progressive Catholic narratives and arguments, providing an alternative voice to the conservative positions of the Catholic hierarchy and other anti-gender actors, with the aim of transforming attitudes and social and cultural practices that limit the full exercise of human rights. A key contribution in this regard has been promoting respect for the moral authority of women and people with capacity to get pregnant so that they can make decisions about their lives and their bodies freely and without blame.

CFC-M’s current lines of work are:

- 1. Abortion and desired pregnancy,**
- 2. Pleasurable sexuality that is separate from reproduction,**
- 3. Diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and gender expressions,**
- 4. Lives free from violence,**
- 5. Secularisms and religious pluralisms.**

# LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND LATIN AMERICAN FEMINIST THEOLOGY

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Liberation Theology is a socio-theological movement that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s. Its main objective is the liberation of the oppressed. The movement fights against social injustice and socio-economic inequalities and stands in solidarity with those most vulnerable and disadvantaged by the capitalist system, as it is committed to seeking the transformation of the economic and social structures that perpetuate poverty and oppression.

Latin American feminist theologians' contributions have offered a critical framework that anchors a gender analysis in faith. In this sense, the key contributions of Latin American feminist theologians include:

- **Liberation Theology:** Highlighting that impoverished people are also women facing various gender-based oppressions.
- **Gender perspective:** Making visible the gender inequalities present in the ecclesiastical structure, as well as questioning power relations and overcoming the traditional roles that are assigned to women within the institution and reproduced outside of it. They denounce that culture combined with religious essentialisms have negative effects on the female body, social mobility, women's active participation in public and private life, autonomy and sexuality.
- **Inter-religious dialogue:** They have promoted dialogue and collaboration between different religious traditions, seeking to build bridges and overcome prejudices and stereotypes.
- **Feminist spirituality:** They have developed a feminist spirituality that seeks to integrate the experience and voice of women in the life of the church, as well as in theological reflection and pastoral practice.
- **Active participation by women:** They have fought for the full and equitable participation of women in the life of the church, including women's ordination as priests and the promotion of women's leadership at all levels of the institution.

## ACCESS TO ABORTION IN MEXICO

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Sexual and reproductive rights are taken into consideration in the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States and in legal provisions such as the General Health Law. However, this has not guaranteed equal access and rights for all people, since socio-cultural and structural conditions such as the impoverishment of certain populations, lack of infrastructure and lack of knowledge are closely related to the ways in which sexual and reproductive rights are exercised. These conditions determine the use of and access to sexual and reproductive health services by different populations, leading to differentiated and unequal practices. For example, the population rates with the highest number of unwanted children correspond to women with less schooling (26.1%), adolescents (22.9%) and indigenous women (19.9%).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, people residing in rural areas are less likely to have access to services due to the lack of medicine and supplies in health facilities in these areas.



In April of 2007, Mexico City was the first entity in the republic to approve the decriminalisation of abortion. The work of the feminist and broader women's movement in defence of women's human rights to make decisions over their bodies and sexuality has since then led to the decriminalisation of abortion in twelve<sup>5</sup> of Mexico's thirty-two states. In the other states, abortion is permitted under certain legal circumstances.

On September 7 2023, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation issued a ruling of unconstitutionality<sup>6</sup> against the regulations that criminalise abortion at the federal level, since preventing an abortion violates the dignity and autonomy for women and people with gestational capacity who decide to terminate their pregnancies. The Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN) decriminalised abortion in federal health institutions. This unanimous decision obligates federal public health institutions, such as the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), the Institute of Security and Social Services for State Workers (ISSSTE) or Pemex to offer the service free of charge. In addition, the court's ruling states that in no case may medical personnel be criminalised for providing this health service. Despite this, lack of knowledge of the legislation, lack of availability of abortion services, conscientious objection by health personnel<sup>7</sup> and/or negative views of women who have abortions by Mexican health care providers continue to be additional barriers to the exercise of the right to abortion by Mexican people.

## CFC-M'S INTERSECTIONALITY APPROACH

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Reflecting on the intersectional work within CFC-M, the team agrees that the class consciousness intrinsic to Liberation Theology and the Latin American feminist theology have been key in the development of the organisation's intersectional framework. The recent incorporation of an intersectional approach has depended on two key processes: the transformations within the Mexican feminist movement and the renewal of the CFC-M team, with particular emphasis on the transition to a co-directional model for CFC-M starting in September of 2020.

The intercultural approach that preceded the intersectional approach within the organisation has been key to the work that CFC-M has developed with indigenous populations, Afro-Mexicans and in grassroots settings in Mexico.

Within the organisation, the intersectional approach has not only been used as a framework for analysis in conversation with the feminist movement, but also as an institutional political commitment contemplated from within and manifested in the makeup of the team, in the identity processes and life experiences of the people who make up the team, as well as in institutional practices and in the work that the organisation carries out with other organisations and allied movements in Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean.

## CASE STUDY: ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC

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At the beginning of 2022, CFC-M conducted an internal survey that was used to recognise the different ways in which the staff identified themselves based on different identity categories such as: gender, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, disability or functional diversity, neurodivergence, care work and trajectory within the organisation. This survey has been a catalyst for recognising and making visible the diversity of the team and the different conditions that compose and traverse it. Through the survey, among other things, it was identified at that time that:

- **71% of the team identified themselves as brown-skinned,<sup>8</sup>**
- **57% of the team were living with neurodivergence,**
- **2 members of the team were part of an indigenous community or people,**
- **1 person identified as Black, Afro-descendant or Afro-Mexican.**

This information has fostered a process of reflection on the identities that make up the team and those that are absent, as well as the implications this has for the internal and external work of the organisation.

## BUILDING A COMMON BASE

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Following up on the survey done with the staff, CFC-M, with the support of RFSU, developed a training process for the team focused on reflecting on the conceptual and experiential approach to intersectionality. This process sought to approach intersectionality from common places, starting from accessible and close conversations about what the categories mean and the implications they have within the team and in their work. The topics covered in the training were: i) intersectionality; ii) diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions; iii) neurodivergences, iv) race and class, v) age(ism): generational groups or stages, and vi) sexual dissidence. These topics were chosen in response to the findings of the staff survey conducted in 2022.

This process was accompanied by a personalised coaching process provided by RFSU through the different phases of the training: the selection and definition of the theoretical-conceptual framework, the elaboration of methodologies, and the implementation of trainings starting in November of 2022. Care was taken to ensure that the facilitators had broad and diverse knowledge and the sensitivity to ensure the active participation of the team members, drawing on their experiences and knowledge in the training.

The training process that has taken place so far – and continues – has allowed the team to deeply reflect on who each of the team members are and the position from which they express themselves. It has also led them to further explore what they understand intersectionality to mean. How, for what purpose and with whom do they want to apply it in their work?

## LESSONS LEARNT

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### Equality Policy

In its institutional commitment to diversify the team and thus strengthen the perspectives from which its work and actions are built, CFC-M has developed an Equality Policy and has adopted new practices in recruitment processes. In its job adverts, CFC-M proactively states that particular value will be given to profiles of people facing intersecting forms of discrimination. Likewise, for its hiring processes, CFC-M promotes and particularly values applications from: women and trans people, non-binary people, people from the LGBTQ+ community, young people, anti-racist activists or people of colour, people with disabilities and any other person affected by systemic discrimination.

Similarly, in the published job adverts, some requirements have been removed that could prevent certain people from applying, such as knowing English or having an academic degree. CFC-M has identified additional measures and reasonable adjustments that can be made to promote equity and diversity, such as implementing policies that favour flexibility at work, offering training, awareness and learning spaces, using inclusive language in documents and materials, increasingly generating inclusive communication strategies and adapting structures and facilities for the accessibility of people with disabilities to the degree possible.

These changes have made it possible to reconstitute the team with diverse people who have added other realities to the conversations and enriched project implementation and design.



CFC-M recognises that these changes are part of a broad process and must go hand in hand with continuing to create conditions for these profiles to be more easily integrated into the organisation. In order to do so, CFC-M has established an action plan to incorporate intersectional feminist and human rights approaches within the organisation. The three areas included in this plan are: i) staff development and organisational culture, ii) organisational participation and governance and iii) accessibility.

### **Working in Alliances**

In parallel to the internal reflection on the composition of the team, CFC-M has also undergone a process of recognising the individualities and specificities of the actors and populations with whom it works. This has led CFC-M to recognise the different positions from which other organisations, whether feminist or non-feminist, speak, and to ask themselves as an organisation: How do we name ourselves? From what positions do we live the experiences and feminisms, or the work for the rights of women in all their diversity? These reflections have led to a need to take a much more direct, open and proactive political stance to face specific issues and discourses, such as those promoted by “trans-exclusionary feminism”, which directly violate and infringe upon trans people. These efforts also involve recognising and learning from the leadership of those who directly experience and face different oppressions, as well as identifying and not creating dynamics that perpetuate the attitudes and practices that the organisation wants to combat.

### **Accessibility**

Working in alliance with women with disabilities and recognising their specific needs has shaped the team’s considerations regarding organising spaces for joint work and reflection, requiring special attention to be paid to conditions that contribute to the accessibility of the space and facilitate communication, such as the use of sign language. Similarly, the communications team is actively working towards inclusive and accessible communication by integrating descriptive texts, adding explanatory or descriptive audio, using subtitles, producing content in native languages and continuously analysing CFC-M’s audiences and their specific characteristics and needs. The communication team is currently carrying out a general diagnostic and needs assessment for greater accessibility in communications, based on an analysis of the organisation’s website.

## Embracing Disagreement and Questioning Certainties

Reflecting on the implications of engaging in intersectional work, CFC-M colleagues highlight the importance of not being afraid of disagreement and the opportunity to question certainties:

**“When teams become more diverse, when you incorporate more perspectives that are more diverse and intersectional, there is more room for disagreement and more room for conflict. Conflict means the possibility to disagree, to build from different visions and different places”.**

CFC-Mexico staff member

Approaching the practice of intersectionality sometimes shifts personal or shared assumptions:

**“There are moments when we have to be uncomfortable, because it also involves questioning our certainties, what we have learned, what we have said, what we have done, so it is also a process that can be very uncomfortable, but that is where change comes from, isn't it? ”**

CFC-Mexico  
staff member

They underline the importance of having clarity regarding the values that sustain collective work:

**“... the substantial points, the fundamental and central values that I know are pillars in our visions and in our principles.”**

**CFC-Mexico  
staff member**

CFC-M recognises that the steps that have been taken are initial, as this is about in-depth processes of analysis and reflection, of political definitions that also must be translated into concrete and visible actions in the different institutional spheres, beyond discourse or meeting quotas:

**“This commitment has led us to broaden our views and to listen more, but also to make mistakes and learn from our errors. ”**

**CFC-Mexico  
staff member**

## **Challenges**

An important challenge that the team identifies in relation to the institutional commitment to intersectionality is the rigidity that accompanies many grants, as well as compliance with administrative requirements, especially fiscal ones. For example, requiring contractors to provide invoices registered with the tax authorities or other income is a barrier to the intention of prioritising hiring more diverse suppliers and those from marginalised communities who often can't meet these requirements. Similarly, the limits some funding sources place on indirect costs mean that internal strengthening processes are not justifiable or only a very small portion of the related costs. The lack of awareness of some donors on this issue is also reflected in the established required formats and indicators.

# CONCLUSION

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For CFC-M it is important to continue strengthening work for human rights and sexual and reproductive autonomy from an inclusive and intersectional perspective that acknowledges diversity. CFC-M recognises that this is an ongoing effort and one of continuous learning. The intersectional approach has been used not only as a framework of analysis, but also as an institutional political commitment from which significant changes have been incorporated that have and continue to transform the team, the work in alliance with other movements and populations, and the daily operations of the organisation. In the face of increasing religious fundamentalisms, CFC-M's work continues to be relevant to make the existence of alternative voices from the Catholic parish visible; voices in favour of women's human rights, diversity and plurality; voices to strengthen the secularity of the state for the effective exercise of rights and freedoms, particularly sexual rights and reproductive rights, among others.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Catholics for Choice (La Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir) is an articulation of sister organisations made up of Catholics committed to the search for social justice and changes in cultural and religious patterns in society. This network carries out joint actions to achieve a greater impact and influence in the region. The network is present in Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Paraguay, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, with Spain as an associate country.

<sup>2</sup>This theological movement is inspired by a “preferential option for the poor”, which implies taking sides with the most disadvantaged people and working for their liberation. Liberation Theology criticizes the capitalist system and denounces the social and economic inequalities it generates. It also emphasizes the importance of social justice and solidarity with the most vulnerable.

<sup>3</sup>[Latin America Feminist Theology](#), Aquino, P.,; Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 89-107 (19 pages)

<sup>4</sup>Statistics taken from CONAPO (2018), Situación de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos: Resumen ejecutivo. Mexican Republic, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Mexico City in 2007, Oaxaca in 2019, Hidalgo, Veracruz, Baja California and Colima in 2021, Sinaloa, Guerrero, Baja California Sur and Quintana Roo in 2022 and Aguascalientes, in 2023 and Coahuila.

<sup>6</sup>Murillo, Eduardo. “SCJN otorga amparo contra sanciones de cárcel por aborto”. La Jornada [online], 6 September 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2023/09/06/politica/celebra-gire-fallo-que-despenaliza-aborto-a-nivel-federal/>. Accessed on 10 October 2023.

<sup>7</sup>Refusal to perform a professional action because of personal, moral or religious beliefs.

<sup>8</sup>Racism in Mexico is experienced as treatment by one person toward others based on the perception of and value placed on skin tone, as this is commonly linked to other variables related to the socio-economic status of the person, such as their schooling, type of employment, income level and social mobility.

# RFSU SWEDEN

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The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) was founded in 1933 and is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation without any political party, trade union or religious affiliation. RFSU's work is based on the vision of "a world in which everyone is free to make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality."<sup>1</sup> RFSU has a positive view of sexuality, and the pleasurable dimension of sexuality is central to RFSU's work, which is something that distinguishes RFSU from many other organisations. RFSU also identifies itself as an organisation that works from intersectional feminist and anti-racist perspectives of sexuality and reproduction as key strategies to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. As stated in RFSU's steering document, *The Sextant*, "these perspectives are used to call on and counteract the hierarchies of power that limit marginalised groups' access to SRHR."

This case study aims to document learnings and reflections from RFSU's Anti-Racist Learning Journey during 2022-2023. The study is part of RFSU's contribution to co-creating spaces and mechanisms together with partners and allies in which to reflect on strategies and challenges linked to putting intersectional feminist perspectives into practice.<sup>2</sup>

## RACE AND RACISM IN SWEDEN

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Sweden has a fraught history when it comes to issues of race and anti-racism. On the one hand, Sweden was an active supporter of anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa and elsewhere from the 1960s onwards. It has also taken strong anti-racist stances in international fora and actively sought to present itself as a nation untainted by histories of racism and colonialism, referred to as Swedish or Nordic exceptionalism.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Sweden established the first state-funded institute for race biology in the early 20th century and implemented a large-scale sterilisation programme that was in place between 1934-1976. This programme drew on race science and resulted in among the highest number of forced and coerced sterilisations per capita in the world.

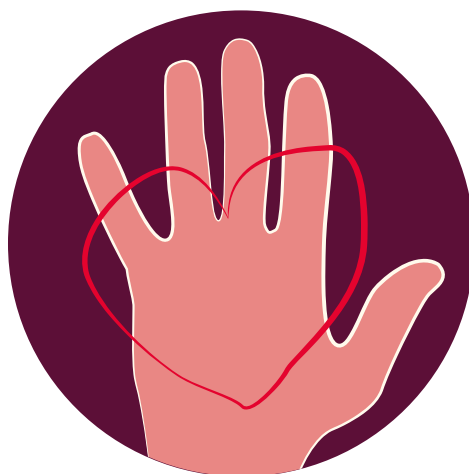
To distance itself from the association with race biology, the Swedish government sought to break away from the unscientific use of the notion of race in a biological sense by arguing that the term should no longer be used. During the 1990s, there were strong demands to eliminate the word "race" from all Swedish laws and regulations, with the conclusion that the concept of "ethnicity" was interchangeable with the concept of "race". This made it extremely difficult to conduct any kind of research in Sweden, which operationalised the concept of race.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, over the past decade Sweden has received strong criticism from the UN committee on racial discrimination for its failure to combat racist hate speech and address structural racism by the police and other governmental bodies, failure to acknowledge the historical racism against the indigenous Sápmi, as well as failure to produce equality data as a tool to address racism and non-discrimination. In other words, there is a considerable gap between how Sweden has sought to present itself as a "colour-blind" nation, and the reality of racism as a major problem in Sweden. This history of negligence in making visible and countering racism is furthermore reflected within Swedish civil society, where many large civil society organisations, including RFSU, have long failed to seriously address issues of racism, representation and inclusion in both their internal and external work.<sup>5</sup>

## RFSU'S INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST AND ANTI-RACIST PERSPECTIVES

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Feminism(s) have been foundational to RFSU's identity and history. A close reading of the various steering documents indicates that RFSU is inspired by and combines insights from queer and intersectional feminist activism and theory as well as liberal feminism.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, RFSU adopted a new Programme of Ideas in which it committed to implementing feminist and intersectional perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Today, RFSU has evolved this previous thinking to acknowledge intersectional feminist and anti-racist perspectives as key guiding organisational strategies for the next 10 years.<sup>8</sup> While feminist thinking has a solid root within RFSU since its foundation, anti-racist perspectives have not been part of RFSU's identity as an organisation. RFSU's anti-racist work emerged first due to some critical reflections regarding the lack of diversity of voices and experiences within the organisation, limiting the ability to respond to the critical needs of some communities in Sweden.



RFSU Gothenburg was one of the first branches leading anti-racism work with the program *Sexualundervisning på lättare svenska*,<sup>9</sup> focusing on anti-racism training for volunteers providing SRHR training at schools and for migrants, including unaccompanied youth.<sup>10</sup> This work was strengthened by working with other anti-racist networks and developing anti-racist HIV prevention work and manuals from 2014 onwards.<sup>11</sup> Much of this work evolved later on into the RFSU-Göteborg Anti-Racist Strategy 2021-2025.<sup>12</sup> Today, the work on anti-racism has developed in response to increasing polarisation and radical right-wing forces mobilising in Sweden as part of a general trend in Europe, and also to femo-nationalism,<sup>13</sup> a political discourse that instrumentalises ideas of gender equality, feminism and sexual and reproductive rights for nationalistic (white supremacy) purposes.



## RFSU'S ANTI-RACIST LEARNING JOURNEY

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In 2022, RFSU launched an Anti-Racist Learning Journey, targeting all employees and elected representatives of the organisation, with the aim of changing behaviours, culture and operations. The development of RFSU's new organisational strategy, The Sextant, served as a platform for reflection towards a world where "everyone, regardless of power and resources, is free to decide about their body and sexuality". One of the organisational goals in the new strategy states that "RFSU fosters an inclusive culture, in which more people with different perspectives and experience have both the interest and opportunity to get involved and contribute to RFSU's vision." This was a recognition of the importance of the inclusion of more voices and perspectives, in order to be an organisation relevant to more people.<sup>14</sup>

210 people in total have completed an introductory course on anti-racism, which consists of four half-day sessions. The course is compulsory for all new employees and newly elected representatives.<sup>15</sup> The aim is to raise the collective level of knowledge on racism, anti-racism and anti-racist work. The anti-racist training draws on previous experiences within RFSU, such as the anti-racism work developed in the early 2000s in RFSU Göteborg and elsewhere, working with sexuality education for refugees and migrants, with anti-racism in HIV prevention, etc. Based on this experience, RFSU developed its own training material and modules. The training was fully facilitated by RFSU staff and volunteers, which created stronger ownership and continued to strengthen the anti-racist knowledge and competence within the organisation. In addition, a "crisis plan" was in place in case staff needed support after the training sessions.<sup>16</sup> RFSU's anti-racist work was also strengthened with other strategic actions, e.g., making anti-racist work one of the three management priorities for all departments during 2023-2024<sup>17</sup> and, more recently, the recruitment of one person leading the anti-racist work, working at the Secretariat. Still, RFSU's anti-racist work is in an initial stage:

**"I would like to say that we are still in the very beginning of the journey. This is a long-term process, and we have many miles to go until our organisation represents full diversity and we are relevant for all."**

**RFSU staff member**

## LESSONS LEARNT

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Through interviews with seven staff members and a desk-top review of RFSU's material and policies,<sup>18</sup> several critical issues and lessons learnt from the Anti-Racist Learning Journey were identified. We refer here to some of the challenges and to some positive outcomes.

### **RFSU's Local Branches Pushing the Anti-Racist Work**

The Anti-Racist Learning Journey has challenged staff and raised awareness of structural racism. The training interrogated RFSU staff values and ideas, encouraging staff to move out of one's own comfort zone when it comes to structural racism, colonial legacies and racism in the SRHR sector.

Some local branches had already identified that the availability of SRHR and HIV prevention work was found to be limited for non-white people and people having migrated to Sweden. In addition, RFSU faced challenges in engaging with some of those communities, due to the fact that RFSU is highly overrepresented by white Swedish-born people among active members, employees and elected representatives.<sup>19</sup> This represented a challenge for some branches in bringing a variety of needed perspectives to engage with communities and stakeholders in Sweden. To some extent, RFSU's anti-racist work may be understood as emerging through a bottom-up approach, as RFSU's branches have been the ones pushing the anti-racist agenda:

**"It was quite long ago that we started to integrate anti-racism in our sex education work. I think the first meeting I went to that raised these issues was in 2006; it was a training with volunteers on how to do sex education in SFI (Swedish for Immigrants). This has happened also in other local branches (newly arrived migrants & sex ed). This has been the place where we have learnt more about the work with anti-racism. That is where it started because the need was so clear."**

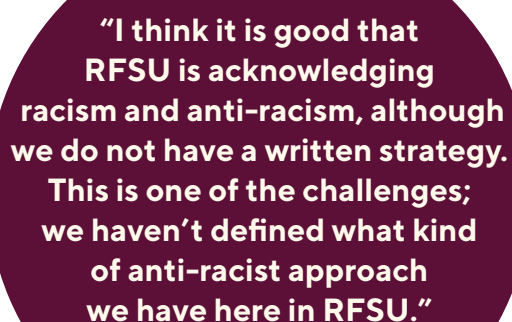
**RFSU staff member**

In the same way, during the consultation for the Sextant, one of the key issues for further discussion was RFSU as a membership movement, strengthening the idea of Elise Ottesen-Jensen, RFSU's founder, of how to collectively, with different strategies, contribute to change. For RFSU to remain a relevant organisation, it was concluded that it needs to work in a way that is experienced as relevant by more people, regardless of their access to power and resources in society.

## Interpretation Gaps: RFSU's Anti-Racist Position

The interviews pointed to some interpretation gaps with regards to how the anti-racist focus is described in the Sextant. The leadership is committed to integrating anti-racist work across RFSU, but the interviewees noted that some colleagues understand the anti-racist work to be limited to working primarily with the health sector. This is because the priority goal within the Sextant that most explicitly commits to addressing the impact of racism is related to health care, i.e., "Improved access to qualitative and equal sexual and reproductive health care for all people, notwithstanding their power and resources, with particular focus on people subjected to racism."<sup>20</sup>

This interpretation gap points to another weakness identified by several interviewees, which is that the organisation has yet to develop a policy guiding RFSU's position on anti-racism:



**"I think it is good that RFSU is acknowledging racism and anti-racism, although we do not have a written strategy. This is one of the challenges; we haven't defined what kind of anti-racist approach we have here in RFSU."**

**RFSU staff member**

Furthermore, it was suggested that the organisation should investigate its own history as part of the narrative on anti-racist perspectives, including how it has navigated debates linked to SRHR since its foundation in 1933, including questions around eugenics, population control and structural racism as a barrier to accessing SRHR.

## A Swedish Perspective?

Some colleagues experienced that the anti-racist training focused too much on a Swedish perspective of anti-racism, the idea of Sweden as a *colour-blind nation*, and the strong belief of anti-racism as foundational to Swedish values. So-called “Swedishness,” has been a challenge for decades to many Swedes to have honest discussions around race and racism.<sup>21</sup>

The *Swedishness* embedded in the training causes two main reflections: On the one hand, the Swedish self-image includes strong democracy and human rights values:

**“This goes along with a Swedish self-image: we are good, we are not racist. It is hard to acknowledge that you are unintentionally part of a racist structure. When you realise that, then it is easier; you overcome it and you can see it.”**

RFSU staff member

On the other hand, some staff were feeling excluded as non-Swedes and/or non-white persons:

**“The *läranderes*<sup>22</sup>... (I was not included). It was all about how white people should not be racist. I was reminded of my black skin, and I felt like an outsider again. It is also a part of defining what kind of anti-racism you want. It is not like you can think that all black people are anti-racists. It is not only about representation.”**

RFSU staff member

## Long-Term Commitment, Not Only a Temporary Project

Some colleagues acknowledged that the anti-racist training was initially undertaken in the form of a project. It was pointed out that this format created a sense of the work being temporary, something the organisation does during a period of time instead of something that is part of the everyday work of all staff members and that should lead to new ways of working:

**“This tendency is so common among Swedish NGOs: you work in project form and talk about the other the whole time and it is always temporary, never anything permanent. I wanted to abolish läranderesan and change it for something that is not in a project form, so I was happy we took an approach to recruit a strategist.”<sup>23</sup>**

RFSU staff member

## Recognition of RFSU’s Own Progress

There is a recognition that the whole organisation has embarked on a collective journey thanks to the anti-racist training. Before the training was launched, several departments and branches were advancing anti-racism work independently. Of course, the levels of knowledge and personal engagement with the topic were in different stages:

**“A challenge has been the very different starting points [of the people who participated in the training], but we managed to do something that could be adapted to all. This is the main achievement.”**

RFSU staff member

Another important advance was an increased awareness in the organisation on anti-racist work as more people began to speak about it more openly:

**“My colleagues are more interested in these things. Most of us now work with anti-racism, but it doesn’t come as easily as, e.g., LGBTIQ rights or feminism.”**

RFSU staff member

Equally important is to recognise steps and processes embedded already in our own ways of working that support us to bring anti-racist perspectives into practice:

**“We listen to partner organisations and their analyses. I think a lot of things are happening in practice, but we would need to write it down. I think there are good practices operating de facto.”**

RFSU staff member

## CONCLUSION

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RFSU's Strategic Framework states that integrating intersectional feminist and anti-racist perspectives is a prerequisite for realising the organisation's vision and goals. The Sextant asserts that RFSU should use these perspectives "to call on and counteract the hierarchies of power that limit marginalised groups' access to SRHR". This provides an excellent opportunity for the years ahead to advance RFSU's work. RFSU has shown itself to be humble and recognised that the organisation is at an early stage to advance anti-racism perspectives in its work.

**"We have just taken the very first steps. As we see it, this has to continue for a long time. What I can say is that it has been endorsed also within the senior management and pushed from the national board and the senior management team and also the managers of local branches."**

**RFSU staff member**

It is important to continue building off the earlier learnings of RFSU's anti-racism work, the failures and progress and to continue working as the organisation has done in the past. This includes working with experts in the field and anti-racist organisations and allies to strongly come together and share learnings, challenges, difficult questions and to practise solidarity in the anti-racist work.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>RFSU's Sextant 2021.

<sup>2</sup>This case study reflects the analysis done by the authors based on joint reflections, as well as a small number of interviews with staff members across different RFSU departments and branches, and a desktop review and analysis of RFSU's anti-racist material and strategic documents.

<sup>3</sup>A concept used to critique the self-image in Sweden and the Nordics from a post-colonial and intersectional feminist perspective. For more reading on the subject, see e.g., Habel, Y., 2012. Challenging Swedish Exceptionalism? Teaching While Black: Ylva Habel. In Education in the Black Diaspora (pp. 110-133). Routledge.

<sup>4</sup>Hubinette T. & Lundström, C. "The emergence and development of the world's first colour-blind nation", Chapter 2, 2023 in Race in Sweden. Routledge.

<sup>5</sup>A research overview exploring participation of persons born outside of Sweden in Swedish civil society notes that foreign-born residents are less likely to be members of traditional popular movements with a large membership, and less likely to be elected as representatives and/or leaders compared to persons born in Sweden, L. Kings (2013) Föreningsliv med förhinder - utlandsfödda i civilsamhället. FORES Studie 2013:1 Migration.

<sup>6</sup>RFSU Position Paper: Intersectional Feminist Perspectives, 2023.

<sup>7</sup>RFSU's Programme of Ideas, 2015

<sup>8</sup>RFSU's Sextant, 2022.

<sup>9</sup>[Sexual Education Easy Swedish](#).

<sup>10</sup>This includes how to do sexuality education in simple Swedish.

<sup>11</sup>[RFSU's Anti-racist HIV prevention manual](#). The networks involved are RFSU Gothenburg, RFSL Gothenburg, Positiva Gruppen Väst, the SRHR team in the City of Gothenburg and Närhälsan Knowledge Center for Sexual Health

<sup>12</sup>RFSU Gothenburg Anti-Racist Strategy, adopted by the RFSU Gothenburg Board on 17 December 2020.

<sup>13</sup>The term Femonationalism was coined by sociologist Sara Farris in 2012. See more: [What is "femonationalism"?](#), Open Democracy 2023 and Farris, S.R. (2017). In the name of women's rights: the rise of femonationalism. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>14</sup>The Sextant Proposition.

<sup>15</sup>This number refers to employees during 2022 and new employees in 2023, including board members locally and nationally. The training was compulsory for everyone during 2022 and new employees and elected representatives are taking the training during 2023.

<sup>16</sup>For instance, the organisation ensured that people reporting issues of racism could have direct access to psychological assistance in case the training triggered minority stress or revived bad memories.

<sup>17</sup>The 3 main priorities during 2023-2024 for the management team follow-up are: 1) resource mobilisation, 2) growing membership, engagement and mobilisation, and 3) anti-racist work.



<sup>18</sup>Anti-Racist Training Journey (Phase I); RFSU Gothenburg Anti-Racist Strategy; RFSU's Sextant Proposition; RFSU Gothenburg Anti-Racist Strategy Training material on anti-racism and HIV; RFSU's management working plans among others. Interviews were conducted in June 2023 with staff from different departments and RFSU branches.

<sup>19</sup>RFSU Gothenburg's anti-racist strategy, adopted by RFSU Gothenburg Board in December 2020.

<sup>20</sup>This is one of the eight priority goals in the RFSU steering document the Sextant. One other priority goal also refers explicitly to racism: "Norms about the body, sexuality and relationships create enhanced and equal conditions for desire, pleasure and reciprocity and are not characterized by racism or other power structures."

<sup>21</sup>For further reading on the idea of Sweden as a colour-blind nation, see: Hübnette, T & C. Lundström, Race in Sweden, 2023.

<sup>22</sup>Läranderesa is the Swedish word for Anti-Racist Learning Journey.

<sup>23</sup>Please note the name of this position is "Anti-Racist Lead".

**RFSU is a pioneering Swedish organisation working with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). RFSU is a non-profit organisation with no party-political, trade union, or religious affiliation. Through knowledge, mobilisation and policy advocacy, RFSU contributes to a world in which everyone is free to enjoy, and make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality.**

**In Sweden, RFSU works both at the national and local level, with multiple local branches across the country. RFSU also operates a clinic in Stockholm. In addition, the organisation owns a company called RFSU Limited, which sells condoms and other products related to intimate care, body care, and well-being. The surplus generated by the company is reinvested in RFSU's work in Sweden and around the world.**

**Internationally, RFSU advocates for sexual and reproductive rights at the European Union and the United Nations. RFSU supports partner organisations working with SRHR in various regions of the world. RFSU is a member and one of the co-founders of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).**

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