

SUPPORT UNIT FOR GENDER EQUALITY



Amplify–Invest–Reach (A–I–R) Partnership Evaluation

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September 2025

Preferred citation: Amplify–Invest–Reach (A–I–R) Partnership Evaluation

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This publication is based on the AIR Evaluation Report and has been reviewed by DFAT.

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the author’s alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

SURGE is supported by the Australian Government and implemented by DT Global.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Amplify–Invest–Reach (AIR) partnership (AUD\$14.6 million, 2021-2025) is a pilot initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). AIR supports four Women's Funds ('the Funds') to increase resources to women's rights organisations (WROs) and other actors working to advance human rights in Asia and the Pacific:

1. Women's Fund Asia
2. Urgent Action Fund Asia Pacific
3. Pacific Feminist Fund
4. Women's Fund Fiji

The AIR pilot provides both core funding for the Women's Funds and 'specified' funding which is passed on to others (on-granted). Grantees who receive AIR funding through the Women's Funds are WROs and other actors working to advance gender equality and human rights.

The AIR pilot has three End of Program Outcomes (EOPO):

EOPO1: Amplify: Increased visibility of and support for feminist movements in and from Asia and Pacific, ensuring that women, girls, and persons with diverse SOGIESC are at the forefront of social change.

EOPO 2: Invest: Strengthened Women's Funds grow and sustain the feminist aid architecture to address marginalisation and exclusion and achieve gender equality in Asia and Pacific regions.

EOPO 3: Reach: Women's, girls', and persons with diverse SOGIESC rights' organisations and human rights defenders in Asia and Pacific regions are effectively leading the social change agenda at multiple levels.

The AIR pilot is managed by DFAT's Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch (GEB), with Suva Post partly funding and managing Women's Fund Fiji (WFF). A partnership approach underpins program management, which is a unique arrangement for DFAT.

The evaluation

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to inform future phases of the program. It covered the period January 2021 to August 2024. The evaluation used document reviews, interviews with grantee partners, Women's Funds, DFAT and other donors, and in-depth case studies of two grantee organisations (Asia and Pacific-based). Limitations included that the evaluation did not cover all countries reached by the AIR pilot and confidentiality restrictions due to the need to protect the identity of grantee partners and other groups and individuals.

Women's Funds

Women's Funds are public foundations that mobilise funding for gender equality and human rights initiatives driven by WROs, individuals and other groups. They focus on groups and organisations unable to access funding from major donors.

Through the AIR pilot, DFAT partnered with four Women's Funds:

1. **Women's Fund Asia (WFA):** Established in 2004, WFA provides grants and technical and networking support across multiple languages in 22 countries in Asia.
2. **Urgent Action Fund Asia & Pacific (UAF):** Established in 2018, UAF provides rapid response and care grants focused on crisis contexts in Asia and the Pacific.
3. **Women's Fund Fiji (WFF):** Originally part of the DFAT-funded *Pacific Women Lead* program, WFF became an independent national Fund in 2021, focused on marginalised communities in Fiji.

4. **Pacific Feminist Fund (PFF):** PFF was established in 2022 with assistance from the AIR partnership. It is the only Pacific regional fund, prioritising locations where other funding is limited.

Findings

The evaluation found that the AIR pilot has been very effective. It has strong relevance for Australian government priorities – foreign affairs, security, development, and humanitarian assistance – and has successfully enabled the Funds to mobilise additional donor support. However, the pilot’s effectiveness was limited by an overly ambitious design that lacked adequate resourcing for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), limiting opportunities for communication and learning. Importantly, the evaluation found there is significant unmet need and recommended AIR be continued and significantly scaled up. The pilot generated valuable learning to inform future phases of AIR.

Relevance

The AIR pilot aligns closely with Australia’s international priorities: gender equality, disability equity, humanitarian action, climate change and locally led development. It is a significant initiative under priority 5 of *Australia’s International Gender Equality Strategy* (2025): ‘Support locally led approaches to women’s leadership’. It has enabled Australia to progress its commitment to increase resources to WROs, particularly in the Pacific. It has successfully reached underfunded, emerging groups and individuals working to address shared local and Australian priorities through flexible and context-appropriate support.

Effectiveness and impact

The AIR pilot significantly expanded DFAT’s reach to WROs and human rights actors working in complex and challenging environments, through direct grants and funding for networking and coalition building. In 2023, AIR funded 156 grants with a total value of AUD\$3.137 million across 25 countries. Of the total grants, 55 per cent went to WROs, 41 per cent to people or organisations representing people with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), 4 per cent to people or organisations representing people with disability and 3 per cent to other organisations.

The AIR partnership enabled the Funds to mobilise additional donor support. This is despite DFAT funding being approximately 20 per cent of the four Funds’ overall budgets. The total value of grants disbursed by the four Funds grew from US\$13.93 million for 620 grants in 2022, to US\$16.36 million for 793 grants in 2023. This increase is significant given that globally, funding for WROs and gender equality decreased in the same period.

Despite increased funding, demand for grants has outweighed available resourcing, with each Fund reporting significant unmet need. For example, in 2023 WFF funded 22 per cent of grant applications, WFA funded 24 per cent and UAF funded 62 per cent.

The mix of core and grant funding has enabled the Funds to strengthen their operations and visibility. Core funding enabled the Funds to improve the accessibility of their grant systems. As a result of DFAT’s influence, the Funds have improved access to grants for people with disability and organisations of people with disability (OPDs). Additionally, the WFA grant application process is now available in 15 languages. Regional Funds further expanded their advisor networks which identify groups excluded from donor funding.

A major achievement of the AIR pilot was the establishment of PFF, the first Pacific regional Women’s Fund. Through the partnership, the established Funds (WFA, UAF, WFF) worked together to support the development of (‘incubate’) PFF. For example, UAF acted as PFF’s fiscal sponsor and WFA provided an institutional strengthening grant. WFF, WFA and UAF each shared policies, processes and procedures with PFF and facilitated access to high-profile events to increase PFF’s visibility. For example, WFF and UAF nominated PFF to be a keynote speaker for Global Philanthropy Project’s 2023 Asia Pacific Donor Conference.

Efficiency and risk management

The AIR pilot has demonstrated that it is possible for DFAT to support small and emerging local organisations. It has shown that supporting these types of organisations can be done efficiently, and that it is possible to manage the risks associated with that support.

GEB and the Funds **highly value the AIR partnership principles and ways of working** that underpin operations and are fundamental to its success. They agree that the program has been effective and efficient. However, the AIR partnership model is not well understood by DFAT.

As a result of DFAT's risk policies, requirements, and close risk monitoring, the Funds **have strengthened their approaches to risk management and due diligence**. Each Fund has systems to comply with legal requirements across their varied operating contexts. Recognising the risks inherent in small grant programs, all Funds have independent systems for grantee selection to manage fraud and corruption risks.

The Funds are aware of the risks faced by grantee partners who work in restricted civil society spaces. In response, they used **core funding from the AIR pilot to ensure their granting strategies do not increase risk or burden for grantees**, including receiving grant applications in local languages, minimising reporting requirements, and maintaining grantee confidentiality.

Locally led development and amplification of voices

The Funds **respond to the priorities set by grantees themselves, enabling community-led change**. Using core funding, the Funds have facilitated coalition building between grantee partners for more substantial change. AIR grants have been used to elevate local voices to regional and international forums, such as the 2023 ASEAN Civil Society Conference, the 2024 Asia Pacific Feminist Forum and the 2024 Association for Women in Development Forum. Collectively, the Funds and DFAT have profiled the program at regional and international forums.

AIR pilot challenges

The original AIR design was **overly ambitious for a pilot program**, with EOPOs describing changes could not be achieved in a single phase. The AIR pilot lacked a workplan to operationalise the program logic, beyond core and grant funding components.

Program **resources for MEL were below the DFAT standards**, limiting opportunities for learning. Through the AIR pilot, DFAT has developed experience which is highly relevant to other priority areas, but inadequate MEL meant that the partnership lacked the resources to track, consolidate and communicate these lessons.

Recommendations

1: Long-term commitment

The AIR pilot demonstrated that working with Women's Funds is a highly effective way to support locally led approaches to gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion. However, more time is needed for the full value of the contribution of the Funds and their grantees to emerge, including how it complements other DFAT investments. It is therefore recommended that **DFAT continue the AIR partnership for at least two additional 4-year phases** (additional 8-years at a minimum).

2: Increased funding

It is recommended that **DFAT increase funding to the program** under future phases. This should include additional core and grant funding for AIR partner Funds to respond to growing unmet need. Increased budget for program management is needed to enhance program effectiveness beyond grant components, including a fully costed activity workplan and budget for coordination. Based on standard benchmarks, at least 5 per cent of the budget should be allocated for MEL, and an additional 5 per cent for learning and communication.

3: Program redesign

Future phases of the program require an **updated program design** to address gaps and position AIR to deliver on its objectives. DFAT and the Funds should redesign the AIR program together, including revised theory of change and program logic, and a costed activity work plan. The updated design should include a robust MEL approach which includes impact assessment and learning.

DFAT and the Funds should use the updated design to document AIR risk management innovations. These should be formally endorsed as part of the new design and shared within DFAT as a model for locally led program risk management.

4: Program management

Under the next phases of the program, it is recommended that DFAT and the Funds consider standing up a **program support unit** which would be accountable to DFAT and the Funds. The support unit would lead partner coordination, MEL, communications and logistics – enabling DFAT and the Funds to focus on strategic activities to maximise AIR’s impact.

Additionally, DFAT and the Funds should define the critical elements of the partnership model and reflect them in management arrangements. Critical elements could include shared decision-making, a direct relationship and respect for individual partner objectives). This will be particularly important if other DFAT areas co-fund AIR partner Funds under future phases, extending DFAT’s relationship with the Funds beyond GEB.

5: AIR program lessons

AIR provides considerable opportunity for collaboration with, and learning for, other DFAT programs. It is recommended that DFAT **develop a communication strategy**, which outlines the relevance and value of the program and the opportunities for collaboration between the Funds and other relevant areas of DFAT.

1 Introduction

The Amplify–Invest–Reach (AIR) Partnership (2021-2025) is a pilot initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The program supports four Women’s Funds (‘the Funds’) to increase resources to Women’s Rights Organisations (WROs) and other actors working to advance human rights in Asia and the Pacific:

1. Women’s Fund Asia
2. Urgent Action Fund Asia Pacific
3. the Pacific Feminist Fund
4. Women’s Fund Fiji

The original investment budget was AUD\$10 million, which was expanded to AUD\$14.6 million throughout implementation.

The AIR pilot provides both core funding for the Women’s Funds and ‘specified’ funding which is passed on to others (on-granted). Grantees who receive AIR funding through the Women’s Funds are WROs and other actors working to advance gender equality and human rights.

In 2024, DFAT commissioned an evaluation of the AIR partnership. This report summarises findings and recommendations of the evaluation to inform future phases of the program.

1.1 Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to support DFAT’s accountability and decision making. It is also intended to support accountability of the Women’s Funds to their constituencies. The evaluation assessed the AIR pilot’s relevance, effectiveness and impact, efficiency and coherence, and lessons learned. Key evaluation questions focused on:

1. How the AIR pilot expanded accessibility of resources for WROs, human rights actors and their movements,
2. How the AIR pilot elevated messages from the partnership and amplified the voices, ideas, and priorities of women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ persons from Asia and the Pacific,
3. How the AIR pilot strengthened the partner Women’s Funds, the extent to which this assisted them to influence the wider aid architecture, and challenges faced in doing so,
4. The extent to which the AIR partnership has been managed and governed as designed, and how this has added value to the AIR partnership and each partner,
5. Benefits of the AIR partnership, beyond core funding,
6. How well the AIR partnership and its individual AIR partners are managing risk, and
7. Lessons learned.

The evaluation approach drew from a critical epistemology¹ and realist evaluation methodology,² focusing on understanding what has changed and why.

The evaluation covered the period of January 2021 – August 2024 and was guided by a plan and series of evaluation questions. Extensive data collection included document review (Annex A), interviews with a purposeful sample of 37 Fund grantees, and case study research into two grantee organisations (one in each Asia and the Pacific). Interviews were also conducted with almost 20 staff from DFAT areas and other bilateral donors. The Women’s Funds contributed individually and collectively – through interviews, sharing

1 Everitt, A (1996). Wehipeihana, N. & McKegg, K. (2018), Kabeer, N (2019)

2 [Realist Evaluation](#)

documentation and reviewing findings – to explain their work in detail and in context. They also participated with DFAT in a workshop where initial findings were presented and explored.

There were some limitations to the evaluation. Not all grantees that received funding through the Funds were included in the sample, so the team used other sources to check and support the data (triangulation). Although the evaluation team included people from Asia and the Pacific, they did not have experience in every country where AIR partner Women's Funds operate. To better understand each country's situation, the evaluators sought additional information and advice while reviewing and analysing the findings.

Because many grantees operate in sensitive and restrictive contexts grantee specific information and examples have been deidentified or presented in general terms throughout this report.

2 The AIR Partnership

The AIR pilot supports four Women's Funds through a partnership approach. The program commenced in December 2021 and is due to end in December 2025. The AIR design had one Objective and three End of Program Outcomes (EOPO).

Objective: A sustainable and effective partnership between DFAT and Women's Funds that promotes and delivers human rights outcomes for women, girls and persons with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) in Asia and the Pacific, contributing to sustainable, long-term change for gender equality.

EOPO1: Amplify: Increased visibility of and support for feminist movements in and from Asia and Pacific, ensuring that women, girls, and persons with diverse SOGIESC are at the forefront of social change.

EOPO 2: Invest: Strengthened Women's Funds grow and sustain the feminist aid architecture to address marginalisation and exclusion and achieve gender equality in Asia and Pacific regions.

EOPO 3: Reach: Women's, girls', and persons with diverse SOGIESC rights' organisations and human rights defenders in Asia and Pacific regions are effectively leading the social change agenda at multiple levels.

The AIR Theory of Change (TOC) describes the investment as *experimental*, with an emphasis on learning. The AIR Investment Design Document (IDD) outlines five core strategies to direct program implementation including linking and learning, collaboration and collective action, knowledge creation and sharing, leadership and influence, and grant making.

A partnership approach was selected at design stage, with DFAT's Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch (GEB) managing the investment and engaging as a partner. This is supported by a partnership agreement with principles including shared decision making, regular communication, and respect for the objectives and limitations of each partner.

2.1 Women's Funds

Women's Funds are public foundations that mobilise funding for gender equality and human rights initiatives driven by WROs and other actors working to advance gender equality and human rights. They aim to increase resources to the women's movement for gender equality, focusing on groups and organisations unable to access funding from major donors. By acting as intermediaries, they close the gap between large donors and smaller WROs and human rights actors.³

Significant for understanding the AIR pilot, Women's Funds do not directly manage programs. Results are achieved by their grantee partners who lead their own strategies to address their own priorities. The Women's Funds contribute to results through quality grant making and by supporting grantees with organisational strengthening and advocacy.

3 Global Fund for Women, 2024.

Through the AIR pilot, DFAT has supported four Women’s Funds. See Annex B for a detailed description of each Fund.

1. **Women’s Fund Asia (WFA):** Established in 2004, WFA provides grants and technical and networking support across multiple languages in 22 countries in Asia.
2. **Urgent Action Fund Asia & Pacific (UAF):** Established in 2018, UAF provides rapid response and care grants focused on crisis contexts in Asia and the Pacific.
3. **Women’s Fund Fiji (WFF):** Originally part of the DFAT-funded *Pacific Women Lead* program, WFF became an independent national Fund in 2021, focused on marginalised communities in Fiji.
4. **Pacific Feminist Fund (PFF):** PFF was established in 2022 with assistance from the AIR partnership. It is the only Pacific regional fund, prioritising locations where other funding is limited.

2.2 Program management

While the AIR pilot is managed by GEB, Suva Post partly funds WFF (see Table 1), and the Pacific Funds (WFF, PFF and the Pacific focused work of UAF) are closely engaged with and contribute to shared objectives under DFAT’s *Pacific Women Lead* (PWL) program. The Board for PWL oversees the Pacific Funds, and PWL’s MEL draws on their leadership. WFA does not have the same formal link to DFAT programs in Asia.

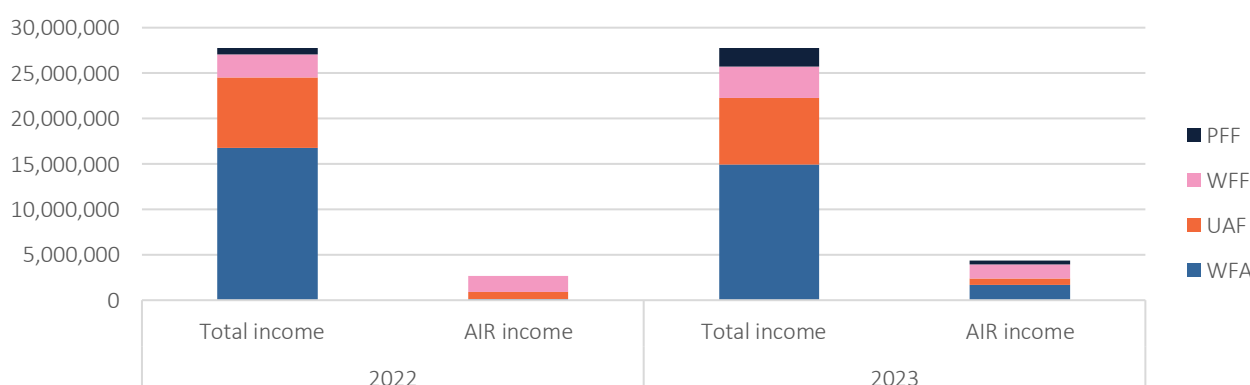
Table 1 DFAT Funding to Women’s Funds

Women’ Fund	Funding	Timeframe
Women’s Fund Asia	\$5,214,685.00	2021–2025
Women’s Fund Fiji	\$4,841,659.75	2019–2024
Urgent Action Fund – Asia and the Pacific	\$5,486,500.00	2021–2025
Pacific Feminist Fund	\$1,674,849.00	2023–2026

Note: PFF was not funded by AIR in 2022. As an emerging Fund it has had a lower capacity to utilise funding in this first phase of the Partnership.

The AIR pilot funding complements the Women’s Funds’ diverse income sources (see Figure 1), which include Official Development Assistance (ODA) from institutional donors, philanthropic organisations and other sources. For example, WFA reported that in 2023-24 their donors included: The Netherlands’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prospera International Network of Women’s Funds, Mama Cash, The Ford Foundation, Equality Fund and Fondation Chanel.

Figure 1 Women’s Funds total income compared to income from AIR, 2022 and 2023



Note: PFF was not funded by AIR in 2022. UAF figures are approximate, based on public reporting

The AIR program design included dedicated resources for coordination, convening and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). 2.3 per cent of the investment value has been utilised for MEL (not including MEL costs

invested by the Funds), well below the DFAT recommendation of 4–7 per cent for standard programs and 11–14 per cent for experimental/pilot investments.⁴

3 Evaluation Findings

The evaluation findings relate to the overall AIR pilot, the partnership and the work of the Women’s Funds.

Overall, the evaluation found that the AIR pilot has been very effective. It has strong relevance for Australian government priorities – foreign affairs, security, development, and humanitarian assistance – and has successfully enabled the Funds to mobilise additional donor support. However, the pilot’s effectiveness was limited by an overly ambitious design that lacked resourcing for MEL, limiting opportunities for communication and learning.

Importantly, the evaluation found there is **significant unmet need**. The pilot generated valuable learning to inform future phases of the program.

3.1 Relevance

Key findings

The AIR pilot is highly relevant to Australian Government policy priorities of gender equality, disability equity, social inclusion and locally led development. It fills a gap in DFAT’s gender equality programming by channelling funds to local WROs and human rights actors. The AIR pilot has increased Australian Government funding to WROs, in line with international commitments⁵ and Australia’s International Development Policy priorities and performance targets.⁶

AIR grant making is aligned with Australian Government priorities set out in Australia’s International Development Policy (2023), Humanitarian Policy (2024) and International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (2024). AIR is a significant initiative under priority 5 of Australia’s International Gender Equality Strategy (2025): ‘Support locally led approaches to women’s leadership’.

More than 50 per cent of the grants disbursed by the AIR Women’s Funds addressed gender equality themes prioritised by Australia such as gender-based violence (GBV), access to services and challenging discriminatory social norms. For example, one grantee organisation works with women, and their families, from marginalised and migrant communities, responding to domestic violence. Assistance from the Funds had enabled this group to provide basic services for women and children and counter discrimination.

The program increased financing for groups and organisations led by women, people with disability and people from diverse SOGIESC. In 2023, AIR funding was disbursed through 156 grants across 25 countries. 55 per cent of these were grants to WROs, 41 per cent to people or organisations representing people with diverse SOGIESC, and 4 per cent to people with disability or OPDs.

The program fills a gap in DFAT’s gender equality programming by **enabling DFAT funding to reach groups often excluded from traditional donor funding. These groups are often** small and work to address complex issues, meaning that they often cannot comply with DFAT’s due diligence requirements, are not networked with major implementing partners, and do not align with major programming objectives. For example, 60 per cent of WFA grantees have an annual budget of less than US\$25,000, and in 2023, 22 per cent had WFA as their only source of external funding, and 26 per cent had WFA as their first funder.

⁴ DFAT [Design and monitoring, evaluation and learning standards](#)

⁵ Australian assessment of its support for WRO is consistent with the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System purpose code ‘The women’s rights organisations and movements, and government institutions’ code (15170) (re-named in 2019 from ‘women’s equality organisations and institutions’).

⁶ Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT, Australia’s International Development Performance and Delivery Framework, pg. 13.

In line with Australian policy and DFAT guidance,⁷ AIR Women's Funds have flexible grant categories to enable grantees to address their own development priorities in complex and diverse contexts. For example, one grantee explained that,

Core of our work is on building women's leadership around critical issues of tribal women, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, elected women representatives, sex workers, trans women. We work in three of the most remote districts in the tribal belt ... There is very little support from the government system.
Grantee representative

The AIR pilot improved the Funds' responsiveness to disability equity, with the Funds reporting increasing funding for OPDs. Ten per cent of the grantee respondents included people with disability and/or OPDs. For example, a group representing ethnic minority women with disability reported that they used funding from the Women's Funds to expand their network and develop strategies to address discrimination and access services. Another group of women with disabilities used funding to support students with disability. Grantees representing SOGIESC diverse people report using resources from the Funds for protection, advocacy, and to provide shelter and basic services.

Climate change adaptation and action was a priority for several grantees. For example, in the Pacific, AIR funding has enabled rural women to identify the impacts of climate change on local economic development, looking to adjust activities to manage these impacts. It has also financed disaster risk reduction training so that remote communities are more prepared and women are included in the preparation.

The program contributed to effective and inclusive locally led development. Program reporting indicates that the core and grant support from the AIR pilot has broadened Australia's support for diverse locally led development across both the Pacific and Asia regions. It has increased Australian funding to organisations across the North Pacific and to people living in remote and rural areas.

3.2 Effectiveness and impact

Key Findings

The AIR pilot has been highly effective. It has demonstrated that DFAT is able to work with Women's Funds to increase support to WROs and human rights actors to advance gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion.

The partnership approach has been effective for DFAT and the Women's Funds to work together. The AIR partnership contributed to the Funds' success in mobilising additional resources, during a time of declining donor investment in gender equality.

While grantee partners are demonstrating results, it has not been easy to capture or communicate the value of these results.

3.2.1 How has the AIR pilot expanded accessibility and resources to WROs, human rights actors and their movements in Asia and the Pacific?

The AIR pilot channelled more resources for gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion to Asia and the Pacific. In 2023, through the program, A\$3.137 million was disbursed through 156 grants by the Funds.⁸

Core funding from the AIR pilot has enabled the Funds to mobilise additional funding, bucking international trends.⁹ Total distribution across the four Funds for 2023 was US\$16.36 million across 793 grants, up from

7 DFAT commitment to working at the intersection of issues in the Australia's International Development Policy (see pg. 33). Emerging DFAT guidance now reflects this understanding about the complexity of change situations. See Outcomes at the Nexus: A handbook for delivering inclusive program outcomes that address the intersection of gender equality and climate change.

8 AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023.

9 Internationally the volume of assistance for gender equality has decreased (in 2022 only 1 per cent of ODA was directed towards women's equality) and the amount of ODA directed through women's rights organisations is also decreasing (OECD, 2024).

US\$13.93 million for 620 grants in 2023. The Funds worked collectively to mobilise additional funds. For example:

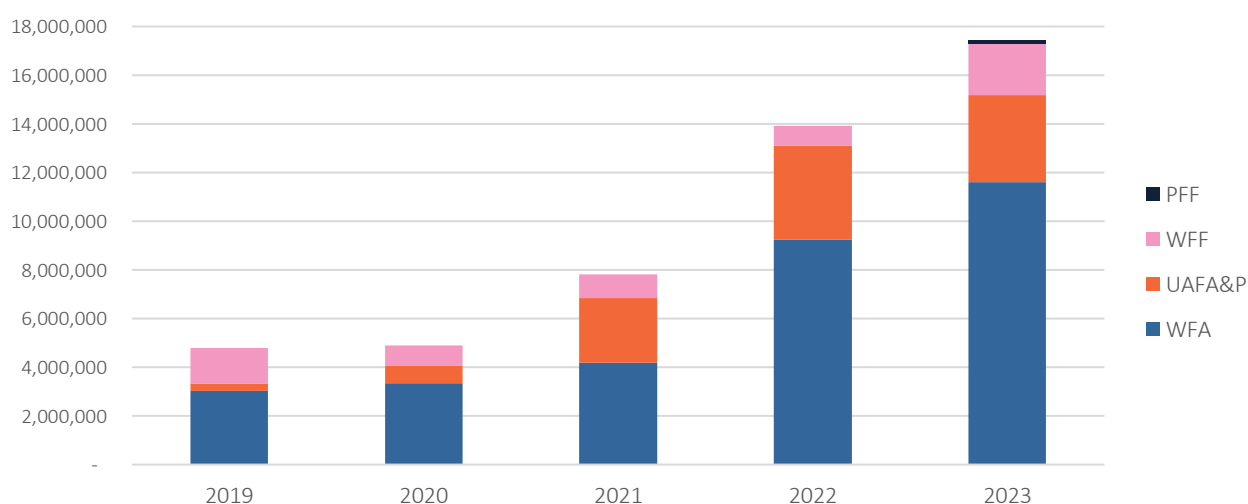
- UAF, WFA and the Prospera network enabled PFF to secure USD\$150,000 core funding from Fenomenal Funds,
- PFF, UAF and WFA began collaborating with the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) to activate Australian philanthropy to support feminist movements,
- UAF introduced PFF and WFA to a Partners Global funding opportunity, and
- WFA introduced PFF to Fondation Chanel, which now supports the fund.

The Funds promote the **AIR partnership as a model for good practice engagement between Women’s Funds and donors**. For example, at the global Women Deliver conference in Rwanda in 2023, WFA highlighted the partnership as a good example of multi-stakeholder collaborations.

DFAT has introduced the Funds to private and government donors. For example, DFAT introduced the Funds to the German Embassy, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, and French development agency. As a result, PFF has begun negotiations with the French development agency for funding for the Pacific. This leveraging of additional resources for AIR Women’s Funds is an impressive achievement given the global downward trend of funding for women’s and human rights actors.

In addition, the Women’s Funds referred grantees to each other to ensure appropriate support was provided to meet grantees’ specific needs.

Figure 2 Growth in Women’s Funds grant making 2019–2023



Source: AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023

Despite increased funding, demand for grants continues to outweigh available resourcing. Each of the Funds reports significant unmet need. For example, in 2023 WFF funded just 22 per cent of applications, WFA funded 24 per cent, and UAF funded 62 per cent. Grantees reported that while funding is highly valued it is often insufficient to meet ongoing need. Grantees also desire support with organisational systems, connecting with other groups, and with advocacy.

The Women’s Funds recognise that they are unable to fully meet the needs of their grantee partners. They prioritise the most immediate and significant needs and are regularly adapting their resourcing strategies based on ongoing learning and feedback from grantee partners. Given the downward trends in international ODA funding, the Women’s Funds are also exploring strategies to mobilise other resources, including through impact investing and supporting grantees to access or generate resources directly.

Using AIR core funding, the Funds improved their grant making accessibility which has led to a greater diversity of grantees receiving Australian funds. Further, all Funds now have strategies to reach disability rights

activists and OPDs. For example, WFA's Grants Advisory Committee includes women with disabilities and WFA facilitates the participation of people with disability, providing sign language interpreters and live transcriptions. WFA grant applications are available in 15 languages, and they accept applications in any language.

PFF, UAF and WFF have worked to improve the **inclusivity, effectiveness and relevance of their grants** in the Pacific. PFF works with advisors (called 'movement validation advisors') in 14 Pacific countries to identify groups excluded from funding opportunities. UAF works with 161 advisors across 23 countries to identify emerging risks and crises which might impact grantees. This supports UAF to rapidly grant funds as crises unfold. WFF provides demand-driven capacity development and learning alongside financial support, particularly for rural and remote grantees.

These efforts are working. Grantees consistently described the Funds processes as flexible and accessible.

It's a very flexible funding mechanism. WFA appears to trust the people who apply for funding. The process is very simple ... This makes it possible for me to spend time on the details of my work, like covering all kinds of disabilities.
Grantee respondent

There is a lot of flexibility in the funding. They do not tell us what we must or must not do.
Grantee respondent

Pacific grantee organisations reported that financial and other capacity building support provided in appropriate and respectful ways built trust between them and the Women's Funds. They explained that the Women's Funds' respectful and culturally appropriate way of interacting influenced how they worked with their own communities and other stakeholders, such as national governments.

3.2.2 How has the AIR pilot amplified the voices, ideas, and priorities of women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ persons from the Asia and Pacific regions?

Women's Funds resource the priorities identified by their grantee partners, recognising that strategies for change are most effective when driven by those with lived experience. This is a good practice approach to gender equality,¹⁰ and aligned with Australia's commitments to locally led development. Grantees consistently verified that their grants responded to their own priorities and strategies for change.

Funds use AIR core funding to build connections between grantees, amplifying their voice and supporting coalition and movement building. Effective and sustained change for gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion requires both motivated individuals *and* coalitions and cooperation between them.¹¹ Grantees report that the Funds helped them expand their networks in their country or region. For example, WFF brings all partners together at least once a year to connect, explore common needs, and learn from each other. WFA funds grantees to connect across geographic areas and around shared concerns. The Women's Funds provide travel grants for WROs and human rights actors to connect to international networks. These forums provide unique and valuable opportunities for grantees to build solidarity and strengthen capacity. The Women's Funds also resource meeting spaces and reasonable accommodations for people with disability, to enable in-person connections.

Connection between grantees extends ideas and action, amplifying attention to the priorities of those groups. Grantees reported taking learning from these events back to their work. They consistently reported that opportunities to connect have been critical, including through formal engagement with Government or other institutions. For example,

¹⁰ Evaluation of the Dutch funded program, *Leading from the South*, which comprised support for Women's Funds found that the work was highly effective in part because of the focus on supporting the priorities and issues identified by grantee partners. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2021))

¹¹ Developmental Leadership Program (2023) 'Understanding Developmental Leadership.' Briefing Note summarising core research findings from 2019–23.

If this support was not available, we would not have had a stronger voice for advocacy. It's helped us with increased visibility ... more representation in spaces.

Grantee respondent

With the grant, we organised a series of discussions across the country with LBQ women, focusing on what they want from those who are advocating for their rights. This had not been done before. The LBGTQI+ movement had been more dominated by gay men, and women tended to be hidden... we aimed to create safe spaces for support, expression, and fellowship for queer women.

Grantee representative

Grantees see these opportunities to collaborate and amplify their priorities in regional and international forums as significant for their gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion work. Several grantees requested more opportunities to connect with others, representation in national or international forums, and support to further expand their influence and reach. However, it is difficult to demonstrate the impact of movement building within the timeframe of the AIR pilot.

3.2.3 Have DFAT and Women's Funds elevated messages from the AIR pilot to support change?

Through the program, the Funds have increased their advocacy for WROs and other activists, with a particular focus on advocating for resourcing for these groups. Collectively, the Funds and DFAT have presented on the program and Women's Funds more generally at regional and international forums. For example, at Women Deliver Oceania (2024), PFF and UAF hosted two events in Melbourne convening Australian philanthropists, with participation by Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality. WFA are very active in international donor forums to promote good practice in donorship.¹² The AIR pilot has expanded this advocacy work, for example presenting at the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) in 2023. The Funds also resource their grantee partners to contribute to policy and strategy development relevant to their priority area. For example, grantees focusing on diverse SOGIESC groups received financial support to participate in Pacific regional discussions around labour mobility and climate change.

Some of the Funds also directly represent grantees, though they prioritise creating opportunities for grantees to represent themselves.¹³ For example, WFF have represented their grantee partners with the Government of Fiji, and PFF and UAF draw on grantees' experiences to advocate for Pacific governments to uphold their commitments to gender equality and human rights.

Feedback from grantees indicated different perspectives about the Women's Funds representing them. Some highly appreciate the Women's Funds undertaking advocacy on their behalf, while others considered this to be outside the responsibility of the Funds. This likely points to an area for further clarification within the program and between the Funds.

3.2.4 How has the partnership enabled internal strengthening of Women's Funds, and to what extent has this assisted them to influence the wider aid architecture?

A significant achievement of the AIR pilot was enabling the establishment of PFF – the Pacific's first regional Women's Fund. Building on initial support from New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the AIR pilot, the established Funds (WFA, UAP, WFF) worked together to support the development of ('incubate') PFF. UAF was PFF's fiscal sponsor and WFA provided an institutional strengthening grant¹⁴ to PFF. AIR core funding enabled PFF to establish systems and processes that reflect its Pacific-led approach, including due diligence and other requirements. In 2022, WFF, WFA and UAF each shared their policies, processes and procedures for PFF to draw on, and have assisted PFF to improve its grant making and MEL systems. They also

12 In 2023–24 WFA were engaged in the following networks, Advisory Board member of the Resilience Fund for Women in Global Value Chains Steering Committee of Human Rights Funders Network, Steering Committee of Fenomenal Funds, Steering Committee of Feminist Alchemy: A Learning and Advocacy Partnership, Co-chair of the Steering Group of the Alliance for Feminist Movements, Regional Reference Group for AWID Forum 2024. They presented at the following conferences: the global conference (June 2023) and the South Asia Summit (December 2023). organised by the Asia Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN); July 2023 Women Deliver; November 2023 Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference 2023; March 2024 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 68

13 WFA, operating in a highly diverse region where experiences and priorities of grantees vary, choose to never publicly represent the priorities of any specific grantee.

14 As part of the WFA program with the Dutch Government funded 'Leading from the South'

facilitated PFF's access to high-profile events to increase PFF's visibility. For example, in 2022, WFF and UAF nominated PFF to be a keynote speaker for Global Philanthropy Projects 2023 Asia Pacific Donor Conference.

AIR core funding enabled the Funds to meet donor accountability and management requirements. For example, WFA used AIR core funding to include fiscal sponsorship in its model (managing grants on behalf of emerging organisations). Through regular partnership discussions about risk involving DFAT and the Women's Funds, all the Funds report strengthening their approaches to risk management and due diligence (see 3.3.2 for additional detail). PFF and WFF reported that learning opportunities facilitated through the AIR partnership have been important for their organisational development. For example, through a Learning Exchange, PFF worked with WFA staff to develop systems for grant management, MEL, and finance.

AIR collaboration between the Funds has ensured the best possible service provided to grantee partners. Information sharing about specific contexts, particularly emergency situations, enables the Funds to respond efficiently and effectively. For example, during the Vanuatu earthquake in 2024, UAF drew on local knowledge of the other Funds to identify where crisis support should be directed.

WFA, UAF and PFF all value having a national Fund (WFF) in the partnership. While the regional funds are further removed from the operational realities of their grantees, as a national Fund, WFF brings direct and local experience from remote communities to the AIR partnership.

3.2.5 To what extent has Partnership management and governance been implemented as designed? How has the partnership model added value for the Partnership and for each partner?

All AIR partners reported that the AIR partnership has been effective and efficient. The formal partnership principles and ways of working underpin the day-to-day AIR partnership operation, and the principled and informed working relationship is highly valued by all partners. DFAT and the Women's Funds agree that the Partnership has evolved over time, establishing trust and sharing learning.¹⁵ Partners share a common understanding about the program and its approach and are confident in their ability to represent the AIR partnership.

The Women's Funds value the AIR partnership because it has created a direct working relationship with DFAT. They report the value of working with GEB – a DFAT area that understands their work. For DFAT, the Partnership has enabled a close relationship with the Women's Funds and a deep understanding of the diversity and complexity of their work. However, the AIR partnership model is a unique approach to investment management for DFAT and is not highly visible beyond GEB. This may present challenges in future phases of the partnership that may seek to crowd-in co-investment from other DFAT areas.

The original investment design and its outcomes were overly ambitious for a pilot. The Theory of Change provides a clear rationale for the program but gives limited attention to feasibility and operationalisation. The EOPOs are broad and outline changes that could not be achieved in one phase. The investment design document did not include governance or coordination arrangements to account for the fact that the Women's Funds do not direct or control the activities of their grantees – as would be more typical in a program modality – affecting the AIR pilot's ability to demonstrate outcomes and impact.

The program has focused on just one of the five program strategies articulated in the original investment design – grant making. The investment design did not outline how the other strategies would be operationalised, or allocation responsibility and resources beyond grant making. MEL resourcing were insufficient for learning and communication (see section 3.2.7). The Women's Funds and DFAT have identified strategies to further amplify the priorities of partners, influence donors, and expand cooperation with new DFAT sectors, which will require resourcing.

3.2.6 Does the AIR partnership have benefits beyond core funding to women's rights organisations?

The program has demonstrated the value of cooperation between Women's Funds and other DFAT programs. The Pacific focused Women's Funds coordinate with DFAT's regional Pacific Women Lead (PWL) program. Their contribution to PWL is evidenced in a (forthcoming) PWL evaluation, in which Pacific

15 AIR Annual Report 2023.

respondents reported that the AIR pilot is extending the thinking and dialogue about Pacific ownership in PWL, and encouraging PWL partners to explore and critically assess Pacific-led solutions to challenges. In this way the AIR pilot is assisting PWL to develop further as a Pacific led program.

While the AIR pilot is less connected to DFAT's programs in Asia, there is alignment between the work of the Women's Funds and other DFAT programming (such as INKLUSI in Indonesia). As such, increased regular engagement between AIR and DFAT's Asia bilateral and regional programs could be valuable.

DFAT respondents identified opportunities for programming with the AIR Women's Funds in areas of DFAT beyond GEB. These DFAT staff recognise the value of the Women's Funds as conduits to WROs, and their expertise in locally led and evidenced based development. GEB has connected the Funds to the Humanitarian and Partnerships Division and the Climate and Sustainability Division. There are opportunities to strengthen engagement of these areas in future phases of the program.

3.2.7 What challenges were encountered by the Funds in influencing the wider aid architecture?

A significant challenge for the AIR pilot has been assessing and communicating its impact. Other donors report similar challenges assessing the impact of Women's Funds.¹⁶ While there are aspects of the AIR pilot which can be aggregated and summarised, the impact of the program will likely be evident over a longer timeframe.¹⁷ This is not unusual, especially for investment focused on gender equality.

The present MEL system has not been resourced adequately, especially given the complexity of the AIR partnership. The current allocation of MEL resourcing is insufficient to track, report on, and share the impacts of grantees' work or AIR's investment in movement building. The program MEL systems require significant development.

While AIR partners have been active in international and regional forums, these have been primarily focused on WRO resourcing and gender equality. This has **limited the AIR pilot's influence over the wider aid architecture**. The locally led practice of the AIR Women's Funds could provide learning for sectors including humanitarian assistance, climate change and inclusive economic development. However, AIR partners are currently not closely connected to relevant stakeholders in these areas. This is an area for strengthening in future phases of the AIR partnership.

3.3 Efficiency and coherence

Key Findings

The AIR pilot provided DFAT with an efficient way to channel funding to WROs and human rights actors. The Funds have found the program to be an efficient and effective way to collaborate with a bilateral donor. There has been good attention to risk management.

3.3.1 Is the partnership approach's administrative burden on both the Funds and DFAT proportionate to results achieved?

The program's working arrangements have been an efficient way for DFAT to channel funds to WROs and human rights actors across diverse locations. It has provided an effective structure for DFAT to manage a mixture of core and specified (grant) funding and enabled close DFAT oversight and risk management throughout an experimental program. Through the program, the Women's Funds have enabled DFAT to operationalise emerging Australian government priorities. In particular, DFAT was able to engage two of the Women's Funds (WFA and PFF) to efficiently commence DFAT's first dedicated LGBTQIA+ Equality Collaboration program in 2024.

16 See for example, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2021; Global Affairs Canada, 2024, Formative Evaluation of the Partnership for Gender Equality.

17 For example, a similar program supported by the Canadian Government. *The Equality Fund* identified that the first five years of the program would be focused on *design and build*, rather than achieving, measurable outcomes. (Formative Evaluation of the Partnership for Gender Equality, Global Affairs, Canada 2024)

The Funds report that the meeting schedule (quarterly check-ins and one annual meeting) is an efficient way to engage with DFAT. However, there is some accountability and reporting duplication. In particular, the multiple layers of DFAT program management for the Pacific components of the AIR pilot creates duplication of effort. WFF is accountable to both GEB and Suva Post – it is subject to direct monitoring by Suva Post in addition to contributing to program MEL. As WFF, PFF and UAF's Pacific work have contributed to PWL, they have been accountable to the PWL Board and included in PWL MEL. These arrangements have been useful for cross learning and cooperation but also create additional layers of management.

3.3.2 How well are individual partners and the partnership managing risk?

The AIR pilot demonstrates that it is possible for DFAT to fund small local organisations and manage associated risks. Program experience suggests that the ability to manage the risks related to funding small local organisations relies on experienced intermediary organisations – like the AIR Women's Funds – who can adjust their risk management approaches as required.

Risk management is built into Funds' grant-making systems. The Funds are aware that small grants programs are at risk of fraud, especially in operating contexts where there are social or cultural connections between Women's Funds' employees and grantees. To mitigate this risk, all Funds have independent systems for grantee selection, including independent grant committees and/or local independent advisors.

The AIR program has comprehensive risk management systems which comply with DFAT's safeguards, child protection, prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) and fraud prevention policies. The program risk matrix is updated by DFAT every quarter in consultation with the Women's Funds. In line with DFAT requirements, the Funds inform DFAT of any new potential or realised risks and provide information that enables the delegate to make informed decisions about the management of those risks.

DFAT respondents identified that effective management of this pilot program requires trusting relationships and regular frank dialogue. This has enabled GEB to develop an in-depth understanding of the Women's Funds' varied, context specific and complex work. This understanding enables DFAT to align program reporting to DFAT requirements and ensure responsible management of Australian government resources. For the Funds, regular discussion with GEB has enabled them to clarify use of ODA funding and risk management requirements. For example, UAF reported that regular dialogue with DFAT facilitated its work in crises and strengthened its risk management approach.

The Women's Funds each have systems to comply with context-specific legal and compliance requirements, with each Fund having an independent Governance Board. Risks posed by the political environments in which Women's Funds operate include closure of bank accounts, shutdown of internet and cancellation of travel. To mitigate these risks, the Funds ensure compliance with regulatory requirements in the countries where they are registered. Applications for funding are reviewed considering national laws (which frequently change). WFA, for example, has context specific contracting processes that ensure compliance with local legislation where they operate. Risk assessments are undertaken prior to visiting countries where grantees are operating.

The Women's Funds recognise that risk management is primarily held by their grantee partners, who work in challenging and high-risk environments. These grantee partners show how important it is to conduct **continual situational analysis to identify and manage risk**. Women's Funds respond to this analysis by adapting support to grantees as needed, providing immediate crisis support, longer term care or capacity development based on the grantee and context. For example, UAF, PFF and WFA's networks of advisors monitor changes in contexts, forecast risk, advise on likely implications for grantees partners, and identify emerging needs that they may be called to respond to. Grantee partners consistently identify that this approach by AIR Women's Funds contributes to the stability and strength of their organisations, enabling them to lead their own development.

The Women's Funds used AIR pilot core funding to **ensure their granting strategies do not add further risk**. For example, the Funds enable grantees to adjust their activities in response to new risks or other changes in context. Initial grants to new emerging organisations are usually short-term and focused, to enable grantees to demonstrate financial and risk management capability. Significantly, the Women's Funds report that grantees' most frequent request for training is on due diligence and financial compliance. To manage safety and security risks faced by grantees, the Funds have established processes for secure data management.

The Funds also recognise the inherent risks associated with small, voluntary, informal and emerging grantees. They have developed additional grants to address these risks. For example, recognising that sustained work for gender equality requires supporting the people doing the work, WFA encourages partners to allocate a small percentage of their budgets for unexpected events such as sudden loss of staff. UAF makes funding available for care, stability and safety. These proactive strategies help to mitigate the risk of work failing, delays or organisations collapsing.

3.3.3 What program and partnership risks have been identified and how have they been managed?

The global pushback against gender equality and downturn in ODA funding¹⁸ present major challenges for the Funds and grantees. ODA for gender equality, diversity and inclusion is being targeted for cuts. The Funds and their grantees are being impacted by these global trends, which risks limiting what they can do and where. A risk identified by the Funds is that – because of ODA cuts – more grants will go to basic services, with less investment in the advocacy and movement building activities that are critical for making and sustaining change.

Donors consulted for this evaluation felt that ongoing investment in WROs and movements is critical in the context of global pushback. Given that the AIR pilot fills a gap in DFAT's gender equality programming, **not engaging with Women's Funds would limit DFAT's enabling support to WROs and movements**. The work of Women's Funds and their grantees complements efforts by national governments, development partners and other institutions. Without funding WROs, DFAT risks undermining other investments in gender equality that are primarily delivered by more traditional implementing partners.

Given challenges defining and communicating the program's results, **there is some risk that the program will be undervalued within DFAT**. While partnership arrangements like AIR's are uncommon within DFAT, the model has proved effective. This direct relationship between DFAT and the Funds should be maintained.

3.4 Lessons learned

3.4.1 What have partners learnt about power dynamics through this partnership?

The Women's Funds have established insights into power in development processes. The AIR pilot has demonstrated that DFAT is able to work in a power-informed way while meeting Australian government requirements. There is regular discussion about the differences in power between a donor and recipient organisations, and what is required to maintain effective working relationships despite this difference. This dynamic may be affected if the Women's Funds enter funding arrangements with DFAT areas who may be less aware of the AIR partnership principals. Formalising these partnership principals should be considered for future phases of the program.

Grantee respondents identified that the Women's Funds reduce power differences. Grantees were comfortable providing feedback about the Women's Funds during the evaluation and were confident that their views would be respected. Nevertheless, grantees do not directly participate in AIR partnership meetings or the annual dialogues with DFAT. The Women's Funds suggested that some opportunity to engage with grantees directly would contribute to learning by DFAT and the Funds.

3.4.2 What lessons have DFAT and the Women's Funds learned that could have broader relevance for DFAT and other donors?

The AIR pilot has generated learning in a range of areas. For example:

- **Resource mobilisation:** Several of the Funds are either already researching this area or intend to do so. The program could facilitate cross learning from these inquiries.

18 See [Aid at the crossroads: Trends in official development assistance | UN Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#)

- **Movement building:** While there is strong international evidence on the role of movement building in advancing gender equality, there is less Pacific evidence. The program could support long-term action research about the value of connecting work and the outcomes from the resultant coalitions.
- **Local advisors:** There are lessons to be learned from the AIR advisor networks and their role in movement building.
- **Working in complex contexts:** Respondents identified the value of capturing lessons about grantee change strategies in complex environments and suggested these would be relevant to other areas in DFAT, such as climate change and resilience.
- **Locally-led development:** Program experience in risk management and granting to support locally-led change is wide ranging and would inform DFAT programming, especially in the Pacific.
- **Working with national governments:** WFF's experience cooperating with a national Government offers lessons in cooperation between government and civil society.

While DFAT has developed experience through the AIR pilot which is highly relevant to a range of priority areas, the partnership's ability to track, consolidate and communicate these lessons was hindered by inadequate resourcing for MEL and communications, as outlined earlier in this report.

4 Recommendations

Recommendations for Phase 2 of the AIR partnership

1: Long-Term Commitment

The AIR pilot has demonstrated that working with Women's Funds is a highly effective way to support locally led approaches to gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion. However, more time is needed for the full value of the contribution of the Funds and their grantees to emerge, including how it compliments other DFAT investments. It is therefore recommended that **DFAT continue the AIR partnership for at least two additional 4-year phases** (additional 8-years at a minimum).

2: Increased Funding

While the amount of funding for future phases of the program is a DFAT policy decision, there is a compelling argument for increased funding to meet need and deepen program effectiveness. Additional resources are required for program management, in particular monitoring and evaluation, activity implementation and coordination.

It is recommended that **DFAT increase funding to the AIR program** under future phases. This should include additional core and grant funding for AIR Women's Funds to respond to growing unmet need and enable the Funds to leverage additional resources to advocate for gender and socially inclusive development. Increased budget for program management is needed to enhance program effectiveness beyond grant components, including a fully costed activity workplan and budget for coordination. Based on standard benchmarks, at least 5 per cent of the budget should be allocated for MEL, and an additional 5 per cent for learning and communication.

3: Program Redesign

Future phases of the AIR program require an **updated program design** to address gaps and position the program to deliver on its objectives. The program should be redesigned in cooperation with the Funds, including a revised theory of change, program logic, and a costed activity work plan. The updated design should include a robust MEL approach which includes impact assessment and learning.

DFAT and the Funds should use the updated design to document the program's risk management innovations. These should be formally endorsed as part of the new design and shared within DFAT as a model for locally led program risk management.

4: Program management

Under the next phases of the AIR program, it is recommended that DFAT and the Funds consider standing up a **program support unit** which would be accountable to DFAT and the Funds. The support unit would lead partner coordination, MEL, communications and logistics – enabling DFAT and the Funds to focus on strategic activities to maximise program impact.

Additionally, DFAT and the Funds should identify the minimum requirements for an effective working partnership and reflect them in management arrangements. Critical elements could include, shared decision-making, a direct relationship and respect for individual partner objectives. These should be reflected in the management arrangements for future phases of the AIR program.

5: AIR lessons

The program provides considerable opportunity for collaboration with, and learning for, other DFAT programs. It is recommended that DFAT **develop a communication strategy**, which outlines the relevance and value of the program and the opportunities for collaboration between the Funds and other relevant DFAT areas.

Annex A: Information Sources

Documents Reviewed

1. AIR Partnership Investment Design Document
2. AIR Annual Partnership Report 2022
3. AIR Annual partnership Report 2023
4. DFAT Design -Monitoring-Evaluation standards
5. IMR report for AIR Partnership 2023
6. IMR report for AIR Partnership 2024
7. Meeting Notes (DFAT) with AIR Bangkok 16-19 February
8. Meeting (DFAT AIR) Notes Online February 2024
9. Pacific Women Lead Mid Term Review Draft 3
10. PFF Annual Report 23–24
11. PFF Theory of change and approach to learning
12. PFF Grant making strategy
13. PFF Grants Manual
14. [UAF Annual Learning Report 2022](#)
15. [UAF Annual Learning Report 2023](#)
16. UAF 2023 Financial report
17. [Women’s Fund Fiji Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#)
18. [WFA Annual Report 2023-24](#)
19. [WFA Annual Report 2022 –23](#)
20. [WFF Annual Report 2023](#)
21. [WFF Annual Report 2022](#)
22. WFF MEAL Plan 2022–2024 FINAL
23. WFF Six-Monthly Report, June-July 2022, Second Submission
24. WFF Six-Monthly Report, December 2022 FINAL
25. WFF Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy 2022–2024
26. WFF Resource Mobilisation Finance Strategy 2022–2024, ENDORSED 30 June 2022
27. WFF Risk and Safeguard Screening Tool
28. WFF Risk Management Policy 2022–2024
29. WFF HR and Admin Policy and Procedures
30. WFF Financial Management Policies and Procedures, 2021
31. WFF Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy 2022–2024
32. WFF Grant Manual
33. Due Diligence Report Women’s Fund Fiji, FINAL

Annex B: AIR partner Women's Funds

Women's Fund Asia (WFA)

WFA started as the South Asia Women's Fund in 2004 and transitioned to an Asian regional fund in 2016–2017. It is the largest of the four Funds. In 2023 WFA received 11 per cent of its total income from AIR, and 32 per cent of its grant making budget.¹⁹

WFA works in 22 countries and territories, towards a just, gender-equal and democratic region where human rights are protected. It provides fiscal, technical, and networking support to WRO and other minority groups. WFA actively supports partner priorities, with a strong emphasis on flexibility and addressing grantees' challenges. WFA makes grants accessible across language and other barriers, such as disability. WFA provides capacity strengthening support to grantees to better understand and comply with local legal frameworks and safety requirements.

WFA has demonstrated long-term results in supporting grantees to influence policy, ensuring more visibility for marginalised communities.²⁰ WFA grants cover feminist movement building; activities addressing climate crises; participation in regional and global convenings and advocacy spaces; and leadership and learning for particularly marginalised groups of women.

In 2023 DFAT funds disbursed through 42 grants across 12 countries. These grants addressed several themes: Autonomy, Decisions and Sexual Rights (43 per cent); Strengthening Feminist Voices (21 per cent); Movement and Labour (17 per cent); Access to Justice (14 per cent); and Environmental Justice (5 per cent). In 2023, WFA established the LBTIQ+ Special Fund with additional DFAT funding. 21 grants were made through this Fund in 2023-24.

Urgent Action Fund – Asia and Pacific (UAF)

UAF was established in 2018. In 2023 16 per cent of its grants went to women and human rights actors in the Pacific.²¹ UAF provides grants to women and human rights actors to support their security, safety, care and well-being, including economic stability, health and access to legal assistance. Thematic areas supported by the Fund include: strengthening grassroots feminist leadership and movements; access to justice; promoting the right to sexuality, decision-making and bodily autonomy; economic justice and labour rights; environmental Justice; and crisis response and recovery.

In 2022 UAF received 9 per cent of its total income from AIR.²² In 2023 DFAT funding was disbursed to women and human rights actors (44 per cent), sex workers and LBTQ+ representatives (27 per cent), and organisations of people with disability (1 per cent). In 2023 UAF received an additional grant from DFAT for support to LGBTQIA+ groups in the Pacific.²³

UAF work is underpinned by ongoing analysis, including through its network of 161 advisors in 23 countries.²⁴ This enables UAF to provide crisis support that is relevant, locally led and risk informed.

Women's Fund Fiji (WFF)

WFF is the only national Fund in AIR. WFF originated from DFAT's *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program, transitioning into a local independent entity in 2021. It provides direct funding and capacity development to women's groups, organisations and networks in Fiji, especially marginalised groups and those in remote rural communities. WFF grants fund activities to enhance gender equality, movement-building, and crisis management, response and recovery.

19 AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023

20 Taskforce for Women's Rights and Gender equality (TFVG) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2021) End Evaluation of The Policy Framework Leading From The South 2017–2020.

21 UAF – DFAT AIR Annual Report 2023

22 AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023

23 Urgent Action Fund Annual Learning Report 2023.

24 See for example, [The Pulse of an Archipelago. Resourcing Feminist Movements in... | by Urgent Action Fund, Asia & Pacific | Medium](#)

Australia's contribution to WFF is both through the Fiji bilateral program (\$3 million) and AIR (\$1.8 million). This represented approximately 56 per cent of the WFF budget in 2023.²⁵ In 2023 WFF disbursed grants across areas including ending violence against women and girls (41 per cent), women's coalitions for change (20 per cent), women in leadership and decision making (27 per cent), women's economic empowerment (10 per cent) and climate justice and humanitarian action (2 per cent). In addition to grants, WFF provide capacity building initiatives, including training, collaboration and monitoring and evaluation support for grantee partners.

Pacific Feminist Fund (PFF)

PFF was launched in 2023 to advance a Pacific vision of human rights and gender equality. It focuses on unique challenges in the Pacific and locations where there have been gaps in funding support. PFF was developed following a scoping study by UAF and WFF, which identified that less than 1 per cent of development assistance reaches WRO in the Pacific.²⁶

PFF AIR funding commenced in 2023, when it received 19 per cent of its total income from DFAT.²⁷ PFF grants respond to needs identified by its grantee partners. It offers two types of grants: 1) Tausiga grants for activities such as institutional strengthening, networking and advocacy; and 2) Fotuki grants which focus strengthening the resilience of diverse WROs and human rights actors advancing human rights and gender equality in a time of climate crisis. PFF has a strong and intentional focus on learning, tracking and documenting the evidence about what works, where and why.

In July 2023, PFF received additional DFAT funding for grants to two Pacific LGBTQIA+ groups.

²⁵ AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023

²⁶ [Where is the money for women and girls in the Pacific | UAF](#)

²⁷ AIR Partnership Annual Report, 2023

Annex C: References

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