count me IN!

2021-2025
PROGRAMME BASELINE
Summary of Findings

COUNT ME IN! PROGRAMME 2021-2025

Count Me In! is a global consortium which seeks to achieve a gender equal and just world, where all women, girls, and non-binary, gender nonconforming, trans and intersex people enjoy their rights fully and live to their full potential.[1]

Through three strategies – Money, Movements and Making Change – CMI! aims to contribute to resourced, resilient, coordinated movements, which in turn contribute to:

> Strong and autonomous movements

> Spaces for feminist demands sustained and increased

> Political actors, societal actors and donors aware, willing and equipped to support women's rights

> Political actors, societal actors and donors support laws, policies and strategies promoting women's and girls' rights
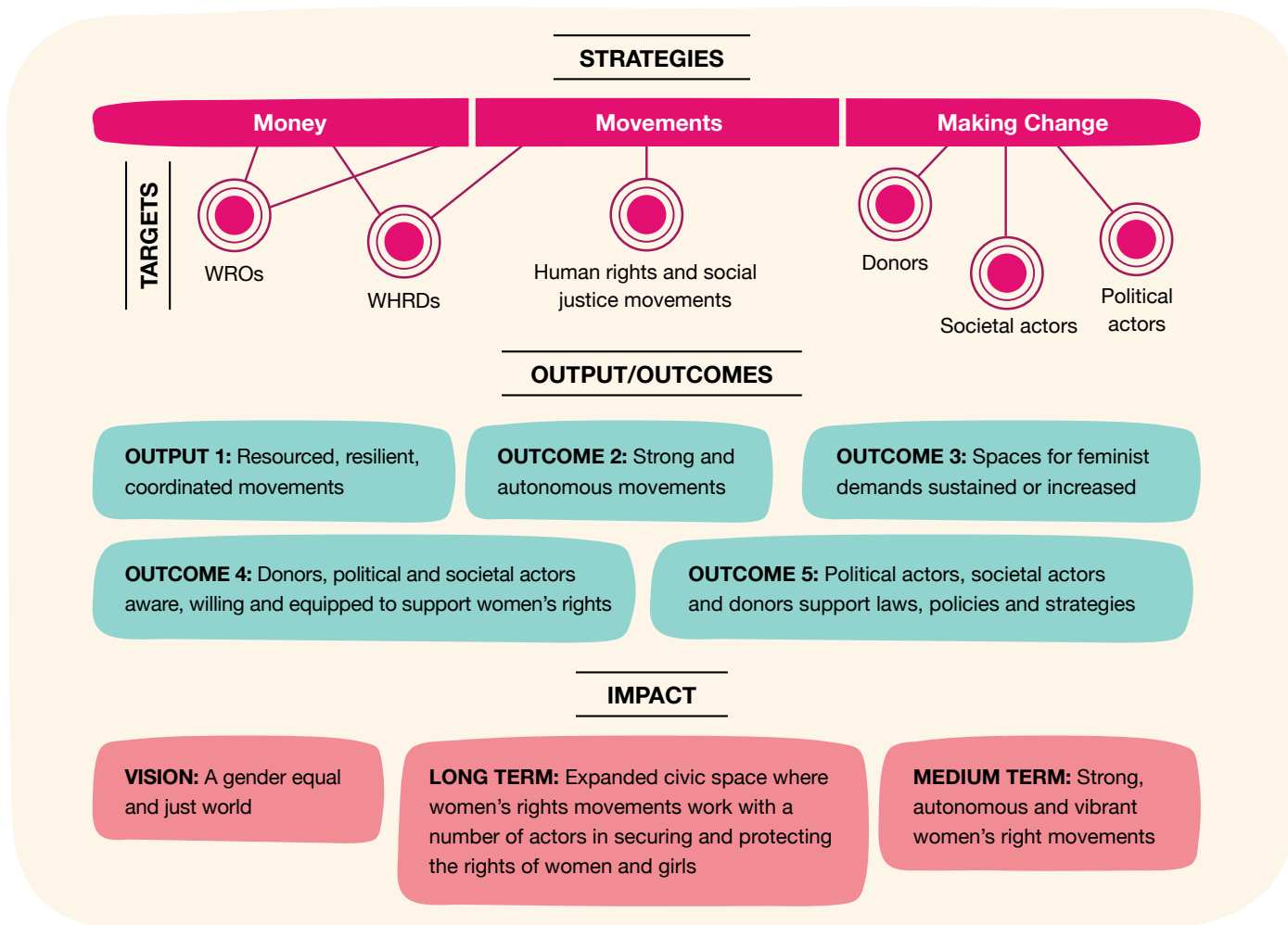
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1 The CMI! consortium consists of AWID, CREA, JASS, Mama Cash, UAF, UAF-Africa and two strategic partners, Red Umbrella Fund and WO=MEN. To date CMI! has supported over 1000 initiatives of feminist movements, groups and organisations in over 26 countries. The 2021-2025 programme builds on CMI!'s first five-year programme (2016-2020). CMI! is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

BASELINE METHODOLOGY

In 2021, CMI! commissioned a baseline study for the 2021-2025 programme, building on the experiences and lessons learned from the first CMI! programme.[2] A key objective of the study was to document the political realities in which CMI! partners work by examining the contexts, constraints, and opportunities that WHRDs and their movements face with regards to CMI!'s intended results. This document provides a summary of the key findings. The study was grounded in feminist methodology and principles.[3] In addition to the review of existing CMI! documents, data was collected through seven context dialogues with 116 WROs and WHRDs (from Asia, East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, North Africa and Latin America), as well 12 interviews with WHRDs and 3 donors, 9 survey responses each from donors and WROs, and a review of secondary resources.

Diagram: Breakdown of CMI! Strategies, Targets, Output/Outcomes and Impact

STRATEGIES

| Money | Movements | Making Change |

TARGETS

WROs — WHRDs — Human rights and social justice movements — Donors — Societal actors — Political actors

OUTPUT/OUTCOMES

OUTPUT 1: Resourced, resilient, coordinated movements

OUTCOME 2: Strong and autonomous movements

OUTCOME 3: Spaces for feminist demands sustained or increased

OUTCOME 4: Donors, political and societal actors aware, willing and equipped to support women's rights

OUTCOME 5: Political actors, societal actors and donors support laws, policies and strategies

IMPACT

VISION: A gender equal and just world

LONG TERM: Expanded civic space where women's rights movements work with a number of actors in securing and protecting the rights of women and girls

MEDIUM TERM: Strong, autonomous and vibrant women's right movements

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WHERE WE ARE NOW, WHERE WE ARE HEADED:
Baseline Findings and CMI! Intended Results

CMI! is building on significant results achieved by the first programme. Since 2016, the consortium and partners have worked to strengthen capacities and launch strategies to advance change and respond to a world that is shifting in both predictable and unexpected ways. In the context dialogues, participants shared concrete examples of the multiple and diverse ways in which they are advancing their social justice agendas. Examples included individual and collective empowerment, community organising, and network building to sustain and support women leaders and their families, amplify their voices for justice, and serve as a safety net against violence. Participants described building coalitions with different social movements, documenting human rights violation cases and using regional and international human rights courts to seek accountability from governments when cases are not followed through at the national level. Organisations and movements are also actively monitoring harmful legislative proposals, and using alternative and progressive mass media communication to expose cases as well as organise and resist violation of human rights. Other strategies include "infiltrating" public spaces by becoming feminist political leaders, and mainstreaming the feminist discourse, as well as creation of think tanks or working groups on specific topics.

CMI! and partners are tackling some of the most pressing problems of our time, from violence against women and discrimination against the sex worker and LGBTI communities, to defending land, water, and the environment. This work is happening in hostile contexts and is illustrative of the power of movements to respond with creative strategies and offer alternative solutions that support entire communities.[4] CMI! is dedicated to supporting them to grow in both strength and number. Below is a summary of the key findings of the baseline study, with a focus on needs and gaps to be addressed in order to achieve CMI!'s five intended results.

> CMI! and partners are tackling some of the most pressing problems of our time...

> 1. WHRDs and WROs are resourced, resilient and coordinated (output)

In order for feminist movements to create and sustain change, and hold decision makers to account for the recognition and protection of the human rights of all women and girls, they must be resourced, resilient and coordinate. To establish the extent to which this is the case, baseline participants were specifically asked about gaps and needs in relation to four areas:

FUNDING

Baseline findings: Participants shared their experiences and affirmed the challenging context of funding for women's rights agendas. Feminist movements, especially in the Global South, continue to operate on shoestring budgets, yet these very movements are holding the line against the rise of authoritarianism around the globe, mobilising social movements in seriously declining civic spaces and advancing a shared vision and agenda for a more just and equal world. Meanwhile, significant funding is being directed to service of ultraconservative, fundamentalist, and patriarchal agendas. Participants highlighted the unjust distribution of resources and the lack of support to structurally excluded groups. In addition, the devastating impacts of COVID-19 are still emerging, with the progress achieved by WROs and WHRDs at risk of being wiped out.

CAPACITIES FOR LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

Baseline findings: The opportunities and challenges for advancing women's rights agendas are impacted by a world where rising inequality and vulnerability co-exist with growing anti-rights discourses and policy agendas. Baseline study participants stressed the importance of facilitating and supporting stronger individual and collective capacities for groups to assert their rights and access resources to advance their rights agendas.[5] Some of the capacity needs highlighted included technical expertise and skills to work on certain topics, e.g. law, economy and public health; leadership development; capacities for intersectional feminist analysis and narratives; and communication.

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5 Summary of Context Dialogues, CMI! Baseline Study, 2021

ALLIANCES

Baseline findings: Baseline participants spoke about divisions within and across movements whereby structurally excluded groups (for example, LBTI communities, sex workers, women with disabilities, Indigenous and migrant women) are excluded from mainstream women's rights spaces. They also spoke of a lack of support when particular groups are targeted or harassed and the dominance of cis-male leadership in broader civil society alliances.

HOLISTIC SECURITY

Baseline findings: Holistic security and care is an important aspect of support to partners, especially considering the extremely challenging contexts in which they work, and the fact that many partners are still navigating COVID-19 and its impacts. WHRDs and WROs are under constant pressure to keep going, despite fatigue. There is a need to look at the systemic nature of care and security.

2. Strong and autonomous movements (outcome)

Baseline findings: The baseline study identified additional needs for strengthening the vibrancy of movements, beyond those mentioned above. These included: organising strategies and tactics that are effective within shrinking and shifting spaces; ensuring diversity and solidarity across groups with various identities and agendas in the context of uncertain and restrictive environments; managing uncertainty and risk, especially safety and security risks; and learning, both to reflect on achievements and to strengthen practice by discussing contentious issues, unpacking meaning and building collective power.

WHRDs and WROs are under constant pressure to keep going, despite fatigue.

3. Space for feminist demands and influence is sustained and increased (outcome)

Baseline findings: Shrinking civic and democratic space was the trend that generated the most engagement during the baseline study, affirming the need for work to expand spaces of feminist organising and mobilising. Participants highlighted that contraction of civic space is directly related to mobilisation of anti-gender, anti-equality organisations, which are increasingly acting to limit rights, manipulate social norms to support conservative agendas, criminalise dissent and legitimise repression through laws and policies. Given the nature of their activism, CMI! members and partners are particularly at risk. Structurally excluded groups contend with multiple, overlapping challenges to sustain their work. Baseline participants shared examples of harassment, violence (including sexual violence and social media and internet-based violence), persecution, incarceration and murder. Moreover, multilateral spaces are also threatened, both from the shift of some states to unilateralism and the lack of accountability by governments on international human right mechanisms.

4. Political actors, societal actors and donors are aware, willing and equipped to support the rights of women and girls (outcome)

The baseline study explored the extent to which CMI!'s three priority lobbying and advocacy targets are: *aware*, (politically) *willing* and *equipped* to support the rights of women and girls:

DONORS

Baseline findings: Despite progress, relatively little funding is available to feminist movements, particularly those in the Global South, while massive funding is being driven toward actors working against the human rights of women and LGBTQI people in the service of ultraconservative, fundamentalist, and patriarchal agendas.[6] Several governmental and intergovernmental actors have declared gender equality a policy priority and some states have adopted a "feminist foreign policy," pledging to increase support for gender equality, and women and girls.[7] But WROs are aware of the need for continued advocacy to hold those donor institutions accountable. Moreover, there is a need to expand resourcing to structurally excluded groups.

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6 Between 2013 and 2017, the "anti-gender" movement received over $3.7 billion USD in funding – more than triple the funding for LGBTIQ groups globally in those years. AWID (2021)

7 AWID (2021). Where is the Money for Feminist Organising.

POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL ACTORS

Baseline findings: There is significant backlash and opposition to the human rights of women and girls, particularly in institutional and policy frameworks for gender equality, certain policy fields (e.g. education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and preventing and combating violence against women), and the working environment/operating space for women's human rights organisations.[8] In some instances, backlash and opposition comes in the forms of rhetoric and discourse, connected to intensified campaigning against so-called "gender ideology". WHRDs and organisations are increasingly under attack. Reprisals against women and LGBTQI defenders include use of legislation to criminalize their work, threats, harassment, defamation campaigns, travel bans, restrictions on funding, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and even murder.[9]

5. Political actors, societal actors and donors support laws, policies and strategies to promote the rights of women and girls (outcome)

Baseline findings: The baseline study's global context is, firstly, one characterised by an increase in populist and authoritarian tendencies, ultra-nationalist agendas, a rise in the prominence of fundamentalisms and opposition, especially to sexual and reproductive rights and justice, and increased state control of both offline and online spaces. Secondly, "untamed corporate power"[10] and corporate impunity threaten the work of WROs and WHRDs in extractivist contexts. Thirdly, the precarity of the informal economy as well as the criminalisation of certain types of informal work affect the most structurally excluded of women and girls. Alongside these trends is the shrinking of civil society spaces and resources which can be seen from the increase in regulations and laws that restrict the creation of non-governmental organisations and their access to funding, as well as the personal threats and violence experienced by WROs and WHRDs.[11]

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8 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL_STU(2018)604955_EN.pdf

9 Ibid

10 AWID (2021). Rights At Risk. Time for Action. Observatory on the Universality of Rights.

11 Final Warning: Death Threats and Killings of Human Rights Defenders. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, May Lawlor. Human Rights Council. Forty-sixth session, 22 February- 19 March 2021. Available: https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/46/35
Last accessed Oct 29th 2021.

MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS

Key conclusions and recommendations for CMI! based on the baseline findings:

Support for movements

Resourcing WROs and movements remains critical to advance CMI!'s vision. This strategy should be strengthened where possible. Priority should be given to **addressing the challenges WROs and movements experience in building and sustaining alliances,** such as marginalisation of particular agendas of structurally excluded groups, lack of inclusivity in feminist spaces, isolation and lack of solidarity. **Support for internal movement strengthening work,** including care, support and reflection spaces, is needed, as well as support to strengthen organising tactics (online and offline), coalition building, and learning and risk mitigation. **Holistic security and care should remain a priority.** Particular emphasis should be placed on supporting organisational mechanisms (infrastructure) such as policies, processes and strategies for holistic security and care work at the individual and collective level.

Learning and evidence-building

It is important for CMI! to track and reflect on the relative effectiveness of **strategies for creating and defending spaces,** and for **increasing the awareness and willingness of political and societal actors** to recognise and protect the rights of women and girls. CMI! could use empirical data to make the case for support of these strategies. CMI! should also consider opportunities to share findings related to the **lack of funding to structurally excluded groups and also to involve these groups in advocacy** at the national and regional levels.

Leveraging power

CMI! should explore its particular value added **in terms of creating and defending spaces,** as this is the trend that came out most consistently at regional and global level. The consortium can leverage its diversity by bringing together **diverse perspectives to debates on sustainable resourcing,** acting as a connector between WROs and different types of donors. In addition to work that is driven by partners, CMI! as a collective should **support and amplify the lobbying and advocacy efforts of partners.** CMI! should **prioritise profiling the work of partners** to donors and other actors. Baseline participants urged CMI! to work on **corporate accountability, given the gender-specific impacts of corporate human rights abuses.** CMI! could consider this as a possible area where it can add value to support the organising of partners at the local, national and even regional level.

For the full baseline report click here

To find out more about the Count Me In! programme and the work of its member and partner organisations, go to:

cmiconsortium.org