



**Reconstruction
Women's Fund**

2020.
Annual
Report



2020 in Review

It has been a difficult year for all of us. The pandemic caught us unprepared and messed up our lives. Almost every one of us has lost someone close and important, and at different moments we felt disbelief, fear, exhaustion. Unfortunately, human rights violations have become bare, more visible and more aggressive. The most vulnerable have become even more vulnerable, the endangered even more endangered, left only to the solidarity of citizens. Through the programs and actions of the Fund, we have tried to respond firmly and decisively by supporting

feminist responses to the violence against women. Together with our partner organizations, we have continued to resist overly institutionalized nationalistic, militaristic and racist public policies. Our focus was on preservation of women's and grassroots organizations as well as the safety and security of activists.

The Fund has gone through successful generational transformation and consolidation of the foundations we are so proud of. We received reinforcement – Đurđa Trajković is the new Fund Coordinator, Galina Maksimović became the new Program and Community Coordinator. Ana Imširović is still our strong support as Operations Manager. Marija Jakoviljević left the Fund, but her spirit and support are still part of Reconstruction. We continue to expand our network of associates, new donors and partners.



We hope that 2021 will mark the end of 2020 and that it will be an easier year for all of us!

What have we done in 2020?

During 2020 most of our time was dedicated to the preservation of the basic activities of women's groups, including the safety and security of activists around Serbia.

- We have gained new partners and strengthened relations with existing groups.
- We have organized an online (fun) fundraising campaign. Cakana is happy and content!
- We have increased digital visibility and presence through publishing responses to pandemic crisis including carefully selected texts of the series *The Epistemology Sources: Critical Life*.
- We participated in three research projects on local philanthropy in which we shared our experiences and practices and learned from our associates from the initiative SixFunders, Global Fund for Community Foundations and Kaleidoscope.
- We published the article, "Cautionary Tale about False Binaries" in *Alliance* magazine.
- We hosted associates from international network of women's funds *Prospera*.
- We have consciously decreased the number of online meetings and encouraged communication over the telephone.

How did we work on ourselves?

- We have successfully gone through changes in the working team and through generational change, brought fresh spirit and novelties to our work.
- We have started the process of evaluation of the General Support program.
- We have developed our own Theory of Change through a year-round collaborative process with other women's funds and with support of the international network of women's funds *Prospera*.
- We have started crossing over to an online platform for monitoring support and partners.
- We have built capacities through participation in various forms of education (improved data records, gone through training in developing financial resilience, participated in webinars on communication, MEL – monitoring, evaluation and learning).
- Together with local and international ally organizations we participated in the exchange of information and strategies in the context of response to crisis.
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We continue fearless and more determined in 2021.

Year in numbers

NUMBER OF AWARDED GRANTS:

64

GRANTS

19

LOCATIONS

NUMBER OF AWARDED STIPENDS:

7

NUMBER OF ZOOM MEETINGS:

8



Support overview

Support provided during 2020 was quite similar to our flexible mechanisms of support from previous years — we provided support through our permanent programs, enabling groups to completely independently design their own activities based on real needs, respecting their knowledge and autonomy in contextual interventions.

This is our support in numbers:

**GENERAL SUPPORT
13 GRANTS**

**AWARDED FUNDS:
17.065.315,47 RSD**

**SPECIAL FOCUS
30 GRANTS**

**AWARDED FUNDS:
7.883.612 RSD**

**SPECIAL
COVID-19 SUPPORT:
5 GRANTS**

**AWARDED SUM:
3.245.164 RSD**

**STIPENDS
„ŽARANA PAPIĆ“
7 STIPENDS**

**AWARDED FUNDS:
608.890 RSD**

**URGENT GRANTS
16 GRANTS**

**AWARDED FUNDS:
1.641.194 RSD**

We have supported groups in 19 locations:

Aleksinac, Beograd, Čičevac, Kostolac, Kraljevo, Leskovac, Markovac, Mošorin, Niš, Novi Bečej, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad, Požega, Prijepolje, Subotica, Tutin, Užice, Vlasotince, Zrenjanin

62% of support was awarded to groups outside of Belgrade.

We have supported:

- **institutional expenses of groups;**
- **various types of responses to COVID-19 crisis:** from direct field support to people neglected by system to documenting pluralism of experiences during emergency state;
- **specialized services and support:** legal and psychological support to women in the situations of violence, women with disabilities, Roma women, LGBTIQ people, women with the experience of sexual violence, service of personal assistance for persons with disabilities;
- **production, sharing and preserving knowledge:** informal education, educational and practical workshops, public guidance, research, publications, literary reviews;
- **media content:** articles, TV reports, podcasts, social media campaigns;
- **art-activist endeavors:** exhibitions, theater performance workshops, film workshops, documentary productions, development of informal cultural centers;
- **networking and building common strategies:** women's meetings, capacity-building activities, festivals;
- **work of independent activist spaces; burn-out prevention and activities on security measures**

How did we do it?

North to south, we have supported both experienced and informal groups, those providing direct assistance in the field and those completely moving to digital work, those focused on responses to pandemic but also those persistent to improve responses to old crisis we are fighting for years and decades.

Groups were finding new ways to adapt their work to new circumstances. Masks, gloves and disinfectants aside, what did it look like?

Numerous groups have studied and adopted digital tools in their daily work routine. In some groups, spreading progressive and feminist thinking and support has very successfully survived through online platforms, where a number of activities, initially planned as live events, have been relocated. The issue of digital security has become even more important than before.

Digital work has required not only to work responsibly — so that online communication does not become too burdensome, but also inclusive — to ensure access to online activities for everyone, for example, it was necessary to provide technical conditions to those who did not have them or to provide translation into sign language during online events to those who needed them.

Groups that many vulnerable and marginalized women rely on have intensified their presence, increased the number of available SOS telephones and online channels, coordinated emergency calls, carefully organized meetings and adapted in time.

Certain groups used the isolation period to improve their infrastructure, and more intensively document their processes and institutional histories, as well as share knowledge with others.

Many groups have worked diligently to ensure that women's voices and perspectives are present during the pandemic, despite systemic neglect. They reached those margins that are not reached even by those who are legally obliged to be there, provided them with the necessary support, but also gave them space to be heard.

On the other hand, it was important to support the essential work of groups, those already won freedoms and rights, strong ties and good practices. What did it look like?

The groups mostly remained committed to their already determined paths and missions and managed to carry out activities in one way or another — the same applies for organizations providing

SOS support or for art groups. There were delays, adjustments, complete transformations, but no giving up. The fight against nationalism, militarism, racism, violence against women, and discrimination has remained the foundation of the groups we supported. Furthermore, the pandemic has exposed these systemic problems and greatly intensified the work of groups.

It was not possible to replace all field activities with digital alternatives. Larger meetings took place during moments with rare epidemiologically safer conditions. The experience with long-term crises, networking, exchange of knowledge and information, practiced activist tactics — everything that has been built in the fight over the years, has now contributed to the resilience to the challenges of 2020.



How did the groups see their last year work?

Here are their own words.

What are the biggest successes?

"We have contributed to the inclusion of gender perspective and issues relevant to women with disabilities in The Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Persons with Disabilities, adopted on March 14th 2020, by sending propositions to the members of the Working Group for Drafting Strategy and actively participating in public debates."

Out of the Circle, Novi Sad

"Establishing the Reading Room [in Markovac village] with the book fund based on the principles of gender justice, against xenophobia, nationalism, racism and colonialism, draws attention of both readers and authors to the importance of these struggles. A significant part of project activities was dedicated to the youngest population, and related to that, the work with parents was particularly important, and their sensitization to these topics. The project gathered the group of young women from the local community, all with university education (mostly in social sciences and humanities), who are empowered by this project, mutually connected and motivated to work on further development of the Reading Room."

Hop.La!, Beograd/Markovac

"Although we thought we were far from *politics* (...) it turned out that everything has a lot more to do with politics than we could have imagined, on many levels. It is obvious that the essence of the conflict, apart from the fact that this association is headed by one woman, is a different system of values between us *alternative* and cosmopolitan oriented and them — traditional and nationalist. (...) When we realized that their fight is *serious* only on social networks, we became stronger."

the Club of Fine Arts, Mošorin



And what were the challenges?

"Despite the extremely high response of the public and the gradual improvement of the efficiency of the organization and the increase in the volume of procurement and distribution, the number of those in need of basic assistance far exceeds our capacities and only more explicitly emphasizes the necessity of systemic solutions for integrated support to those who are excluded and live in inadequate conditions."

A Roof Over Head, Belgrade/Novi Sad/Subotica

"The specific risk the Association has faced during the previous period was of a financial nature, as due to the pandemic, many donors have withdrawn funds or decreased financial investment for projects in culture."

Free Zone, Belgrade

"Regarding the preparation [of the Women's Friendship Festival], it was quite stressful because of the situation we were working in. We were not sure if it would be possible to gather women at all, if a gathering would be allowed, if we would be able to logistically meet the needs of the participants, provide accommodation, food, transportation, etc.... We constantly assessed we were insecure, we had to balance. Opinions within the group, regarding the choice of venues, accommodation, restaurants and the like were divided. We were faced with challenges related to COVID-19, but also worries resulting from the attacks at last year's festival."

Impuls, Tutin



Diversity of support

For years, we have been trying to act not only as donors in relation to supported groups, but also as true allies, ready to provide other types of support. Financial stability of activists and groups is a priority, but we consider non-financial support to be equally important for coordinated, long-term, planned joint action.

How do we do it?

Connecting groups with other donors. Identifying the opportunities for groups to cooperate with other donors, we have referred groups to donors and vice versa, wrote letters of recommendation, shared calls for additional funding. Through these processes in 2020, we have supported several groups to raise about **\$ 15,000** for their work.

Connecting different groups. The movement and network of cooperation are growing through new contacts, and we are happy to be part of these processes by referring activists and groups to each other. In 2020, we connected 8 groups that had not cooperated before, as well as numerous individuals.

Connecting on international level. We see the work of the local women's movement as the treasury of knowledge and experience, but we also believe that

international context enriches the work of feminists in Serbia. We are especially proud that in 2020 we managed to include **eight young activists** from different cities in the **AWID project Beijing Unfettered.**

Sharing information. Following current events, opportunities for learning and training, at the local and international level, in 2020 we gladly shared various relevant opportunities for capacity building, strong political articulation and participation and networking.

Communication, listening, understanding. We are aware that, in the period between the application and the report, different situations require different roles from us that are not "the typical donor". We approach those situations primarily in a safe and confidential atmosphere, ready to listen to what activists want to share with us regarding projects or something entirely different and to be their adequate support as much as we can. We responsibly accept the trust that the groups show us and we build future joint struggles on that.



Highlights:

In the general confusion around strengthening conservative policies and more frequent attacks by the right wing, we supported **a comprehensive survey of mapping actors and organizations on the right.** We wanted to avoid unnecessary abstractions and to ensure the availability of information and understand the work of the right. A survey conducted by two activists is available upon request.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and pseudo-scientific arguments against transgender people and transgender activism, we supported the **project of an informal group within the Center for Cultural Decontamination, that will bring together 27 authors dedicated to the history and politics of transgender activism.** Transphobia in the feminist movement must be stopped! RWF strongly supports transgender policies and struggles and considers anti-trans policies unacceptable and contrary to feminist struggles.

There is never enough of the visibility and spreading of the policies and principles of feminism, especially today when feminism itself does not want to be understood or when the movement and its political

strength and power are diluted. By supporting the **RomaFem project in Vojvodina**, the RWF has contributed to a stronger networking of Roma activists in the struggle against multiple marginalization and forms of violence to which Roma women are exposed. The group brings together women from different ethnic groups with whom it works to promote feminism, solidarity, diversity and initiate activism within the 2nd series of the first **Roma Feminist School in Novi Bečej.** The school will be open primarily to women from the first Multiethnic Feminist Network led by Roma women in Vojvodina, but also to all women in their diversity who want to join the activism and fight against male violence against women.

The migrant crisis is still with us and it seems that no one has the will to deal with it. And while women activists supporting migrants are banished, the informal group **Women on the Road** fearlessly recognizes the many barriers that migrant children face in the school environment, from isolation and non-acceptance to difficulties in participating fully in school curriculum. Through this project, the group is working on publishing a **children's book, "Lamp's adventure", which**

will be available in Serbian, Persian, Arabic, Kurdish, Pashtu and French.

The book is designed to promote mutual care, acceptance of diversity and togetherness among children, their parents/guardians, pedagogues, psychologists, teachers and others. The books will be one of the important contributions in the fight against racism, one that allegedly does not exist in Serbia.

The beginning of 2021 was marked by a shock related to the case of actress Milena Radulović. Earlier, in the fall of 2020, in a sea of sensationalist news and approaches, we supported the initiative of a group of actresses to open the issue of sexual violence in the acting profession. The project **The Most Difficult Role of the ApsArt Group is a documentary theater play dealing**

with the processes related to sexual violence: recognizing, reacting to and opposing such acts, precisely in the context of acting circles. We have also supported the project **Ženergija Hub, a digital and physical platform for networking and educating girls age 16 to 30.** The goal of the project is to train 8 girls to produce a podcast form **through educational workshops on investigative journalism, radio format editing, public speaking and digital promotion.** Both initiatives insist that retraditionalization and political repression in society lead to increased violence against women, erasure of women's voices, or insensitive reporting. By supporting these projects, RWF wants to contribute to the creation, preservation and expansion of space for free creative and political expression of women.



Osećala sam u početku strah.
Osećala sam neizvesnost.

Visibility

We have regularly reported on our calls and activities via website, Facebook and Instagram, shared news that made us happy, worried or motivated, shared reading and learning materials, emphasized the work of groups we work with, and marked important dates.

We highlight the following campaigns:

What can I do at home?

At the beginning of the emergency state, having in mind how much more we would all be at home, we immersed ourselves in the RWF archive of texts and shared with the community recommendations for reading, through a short campaign on social media "What can I do at home".

Stipends „Žarana Papić“

In the fall, we got in touch with five former stipendists with the idea of motivating future generations of scholarship holders with their experiences. The result is a mini video campaign on social networks and more than a handful of inspiration for acquiring, sharing and storing knowledge!

Article „False Binaries – A Cautionary Tale“

Our article in Alliance Magazine, in which we reviewed the relationship between the global pandemic and old crises, as well as navigation strategies through complexly accumulated crises, contributed to higher visibility on an international level.

Local Philanthropy

The program of local feminist philanthropy, which encourages individuals to get involved in supporting the women's movement, in previous years was mainly held through public events, numerous guests and guests, with a lot of joyfulness and craziness! Although 2020 did not go our way in that sense, the program was still active thanks to our individual donors.

Quarantine Cakana

Towards the end of the year, Cakana, our famous donor box, analyzed the situation and realized that everyone was working from home, so why not her. Although Cakana is a party-type box, she has easily adapted to online work and she even organized a pre-holiday fundraising campaign for the Emergency Grants program. She has opened her e-mail, conquered social networks, inspired people to show solidarity and helped the rest of the RWF team while they were busy with December's work. The Association of Roma Women "Nada" from Aleksinac assisted Cakana in this action by donating badges with Cakana's face, that were shared with individual donors.



Last year you were

Reading

Michel Feher

**The Worth of Nations:
Population Management
in the Age of Appreciation**

"Here, you have a three-dimensional policy of lending, assetization. One that nurtures employability and solvency, when it can, another that gets rid of the discredited, when it has to, and a third that grows and develops, and that turns the various attributes of nativism into capital."

**Yanis Varoufakis
Interview**

"So the myth of the radical center which dominated both in Europe and the United States until Barack Obama, the myth that there's not so much the government can do. And now we live in a world which is globalized, it's all under the spell of economic forces beyond our control. What we need to do is cajole and channel them and stroke them and be nice to them and be realistic and not try to behave as if the state can do that. That went overnight, suddenly."

Roberto Saviano

Jump into the abyss of the web

It took centuries to fight for the language of public journalism not to end in insults, violence, sarcasm, prejudice, and all that collapsed on social networks in a second... nothing new here, every day we hear what social networks allow and how they are built on that. This change of language is a deformation of communication that happens at the speed of light."

Zeynep Gambetti

**Exploratory Notes on
the Origins of New Fascism**

"Temporally speaking, the utter speed of mobilization taking place under totalitarian conditions hinders developing foresight and requires a constant catching up, such that no independent or oppositional stance can be developed, neither in public nor in any privately secured space. Not only the masses, but also party militants, are ceaselessly trying to decipher and act according to the will of the leadership."

Wendy Brown

In the ruins of neoliberalism

"Liberalism has been transformed by neoliberalism and increasingly identified, on the one hand, with the market and, on the other hand, with freedom or the unbridled right of traditional moral to rule the social and public spheres."

**Special report – What is close
to us in the Middle East?**

Questioning the relations between Europe and Middle East. Test by Edward Said, Amira Haas, Jasbir Puar.

"Orient. The Mysterious East. A place of fantasy, imagination, longing. This Orient was created by the West, its artists, thinkers, dreamers and adventurers. It is a fantasy expression of a reality that Europeans either wanted to possess or feared."

Last year you have Learned

Focus on Focus

Center for Applied History **Suppressed memories, Public lessons program on histories in the nineties**

The goal of the CAH permanent program "Suppressed memories" is to instigate dialogue in public space about social processes and events from the nineties that shape our present today, as well as to reflect on the functions of memory and forgetting in the context of values on which society in Serbia is built today.

"Only by understanding this interaction of "history from above" and "history from below", it is possible to truly understand the social space as a complex sphere which is not only a space of personal existence, but also a space of responsibility and political choices we make (although never completely free and thoroughly thought through)."

RWF response to the COVID-19 Crisis

During the state of the emergency, RWF was guided by the principles of good communication and needs in the field. The direct consequences of the COVID-19 crisis have additionally put at risk and deepened the marginalization of the already marginalized, but the manifestations of these consequences varied contextually, which is why our responses and support varied from case to case. Through the Emergency Grants Program we supported LiceUlice, BeFem, Joint Action A roof over a Head, Association of Roma Women "Nada", Roma center for women and children Daje, Women in Black, Out of the circle Niš, Social center October...

"Solidarity, security and good communication about the needs in the field remain our main principles in further work and dealing with the crisis, with special emphasis on the most urgent needs".

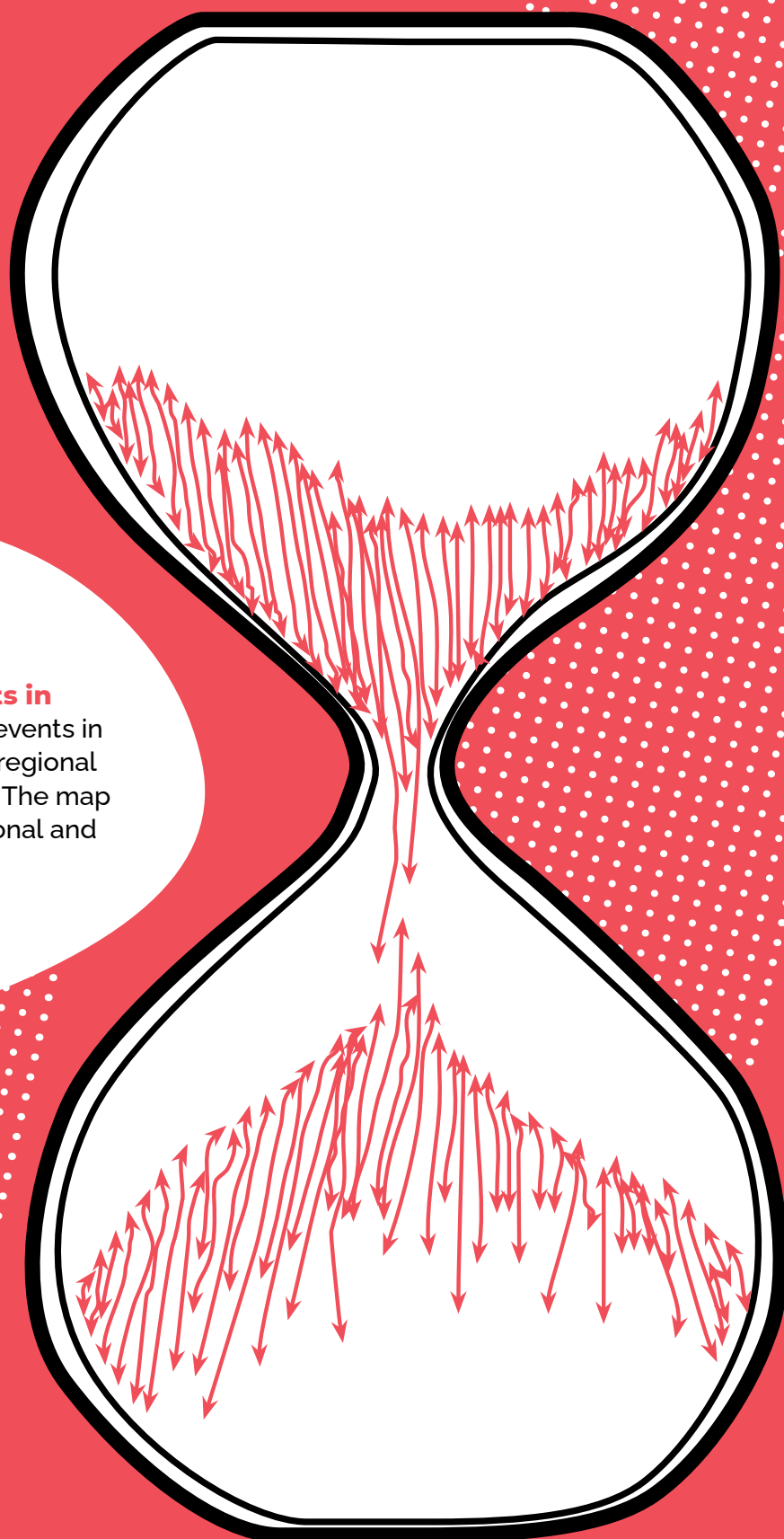
Knocking on EU's door: an Exploration of EU Funding for Gender Equality

We took part in a publication that examines how much money is available at the European Union level for gender equality, who benefits from it and how women's funds may have a larger share in the future. The key results of the study are worrying: despite high commitment, financial support for gender equality through EU public policies is fragmented. Specific data on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting at the European Union level are missing. The finances of the European Union mostly go to large consortia and experienced actors. Women's organizations receive almost nothing from these finances.

Last year you were

Watching

RZWF created an online **8th of March Map of Events in Serbia in 2020**. It presents events in 12 towns in Serbia, including regional events organized by women. The map was distributed to local, regional and international networks.





Internationalism

Internationalism has been inscribed in our politics since its inception. In addition to supporting projects and groups that are in line with this value and contribute to its promotion, internationalism is also reflected in our choice of networks in which we participate through international exchange. Although internationalism has moved into the virtual world in 2020, we have participated in various international gatherings that bring together organizations, foundations, individuals involved in the struggle for women's human rights and social justice.

We have exchanged experiences and challenges during pandemic with our traditional partners — a network of international women's funds, Prospera, and a network of local foundations for peace and social justice, Foundation for Peace. We were lucky to host our associates for Prospera during their visit last February, when we discussed further support and plans for the Fund.

We are still part of two initiatives in the Prospera network: *Knocking on the EU door* where we have had notable success in advocating for changes in the way EU funds are accessed. With the initiative *On the Right Track*, we focused more on

responding to anti-gender policies and supported initiatives that address this phenomenon and problem.

We have expanded our cooperation to new networks. We are invited to participate in working meetings with similar foundations within the SixFunders network, which deals with innovation, knowledge exchange and support in the field of philanthropy. Although our topic was related to the pandemic, we have also learned how to consolidate the narratives we want to disseminate in international philanthropic circles by collaborating with the Ariadne Network. Our new donor, the Global Fund for Community Foundations, provided us with support at the right time and ensured a platform to share experiences during the pandemic including support to local groups. Membership in international networks is politically important to us, because we transcend national boundaries and spread knowledge about our context but we also learn from other sister foundations about the challenges in the field.



Novelties in RWF

During the past year, RWF has completely changed old and consolidated new working team. The new Coordinator, Đurđa Trajković, joins the team from the academic sphere. Galina Maksimović became Community Coordinator and her knowledge from the artistic sphere contributes to higher visibility and support to the independent scene. Ana Imširović, Operations Manager, brings in her long-term activist experience. Generational u-turn that we faced in 2020 presented a challenge for all of us. The members of the Steering Committee taught us about the Fund's history and principles of work and we brought in the fresh spirit in work and relations. In short time, we have succeeded to build trust and confidence with all our partners as well as to expand activities and include new associates. We are especially proud that these changes went smoothly and without the risk for the groups we cooperate with.

- **In the next year we plan to continue developing goals set in our last Strategic plan: further development of programs and strengthening work capacities.**

- **Dedication to development of local philanthropy and expanding actions to the diaspora**

- **Participation in new thinking and designing of the concept of crisis and emergency responses including feminist emergency responses**

- **Higher presence in the virtual world, but without unnecessary Zoom-ing**
- **Refreshing data archives and instigating the process of creation of the Fund's archive.**



***We keep on running, sharing,
thinking and acting together.***

We have high hopes that in 2021
we will manage to get together with
groups, share knowledge and have
some coffee without physical distance!



**Reconstruction
Women's Fund**

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