

# Reconstruction Women's Fund



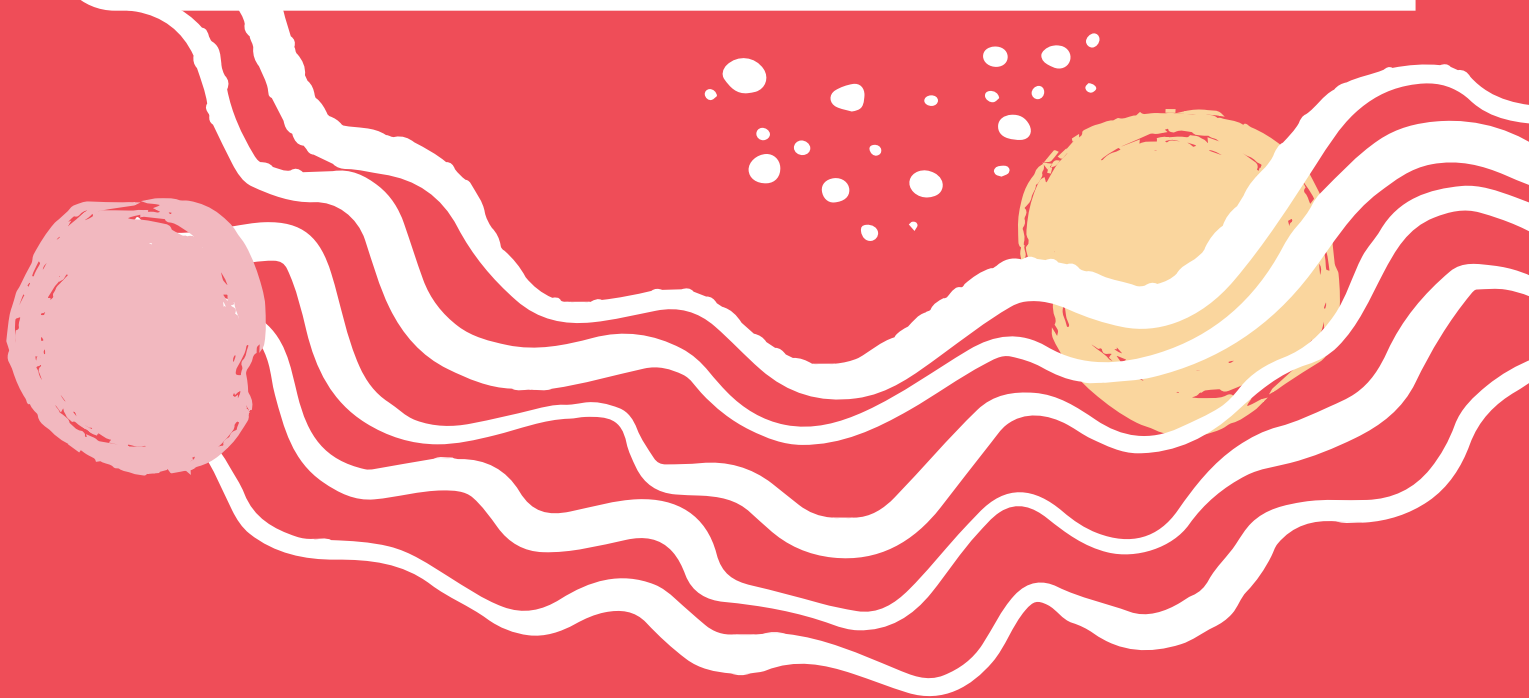
**Report on the work  
of supported groups  
2023**

# **2023 in action!**

*In between violence, cruelty and collective pain in 2023, there are numerous cracks where light managed to pass – through togetherness, resistance, resourcefulness and persistence of the feminist and other progressive movements. After 20 years of support, we are still frequently mesmerized by the unbreakable strength of the collectives we work with.*

*This reflection is devoted to them, our partners, with lots of gratefulness for the continuous exchange of knowledge and support, and a great appreciation of the joy, warmth and fighting spirit they maintain in their communities.*

*Their presence on the ground, in our lived realities, is irreplaceable, and you are about to see only fragments of overall achievements of the supported groups who work on building a more just, brighter world.*



# NUMBERS

**AS WE ARE FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLE OF SLOW, STRATEGIC GROWTH, THIS YEAR WE HAVE AWARDED SLIGHTLY MORE GRANTS AND MONEY THAN IN 2022:**

**GENERAL SUPPORT:  
16 GRANTS**

**AWARDED SUM  
28,447,503.74 RSD**

**SPECIAL FOCUS:  
48 GRANTS**

**AWARDED SUM  
19,843,884 RSD**

**RAPID RESPONSE  
GRANTS:  
14 GRANTS**

**AWARDED SUM  
1,853,100 RSD**

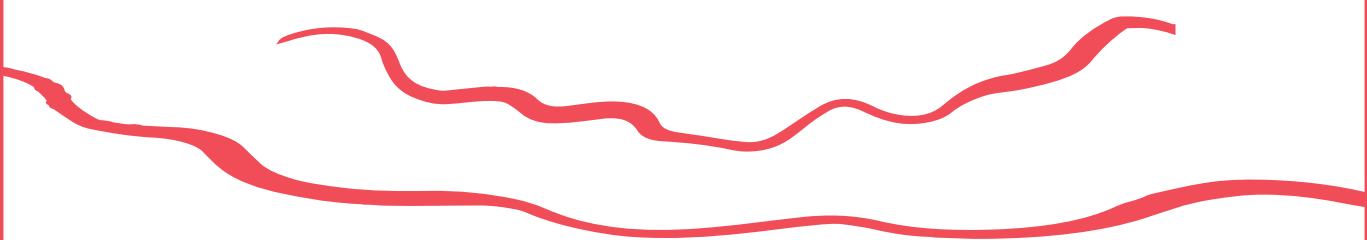
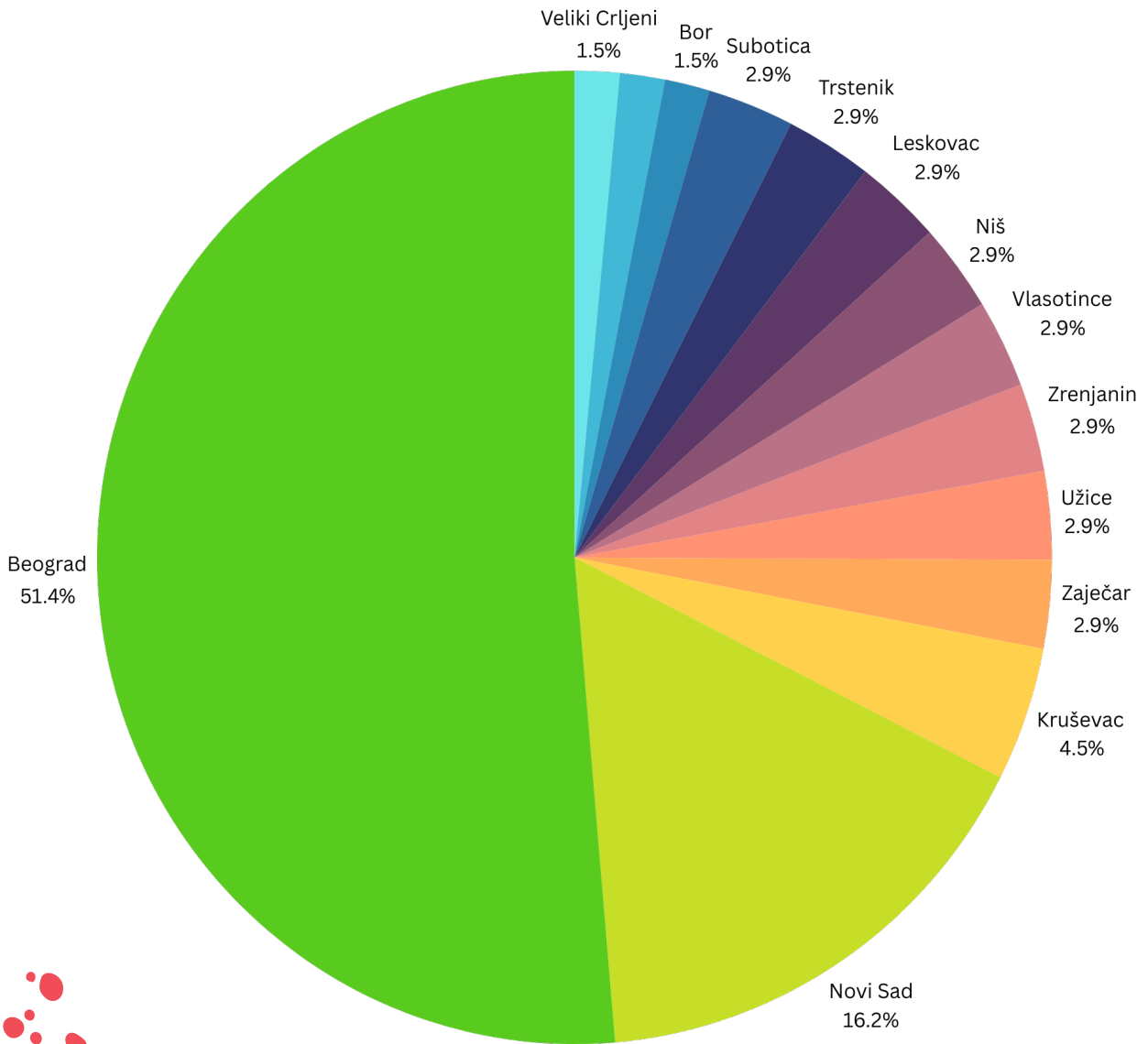
**ZARANA PAPIĆ  
STIPENDS:  
8 STIPENDS**

**AWARDED SUM  
422,802 RSD**

**OVERALL: 78 grants and 8 stipends**

**OVERALL AWARDED SUM: 50,568,289.74**

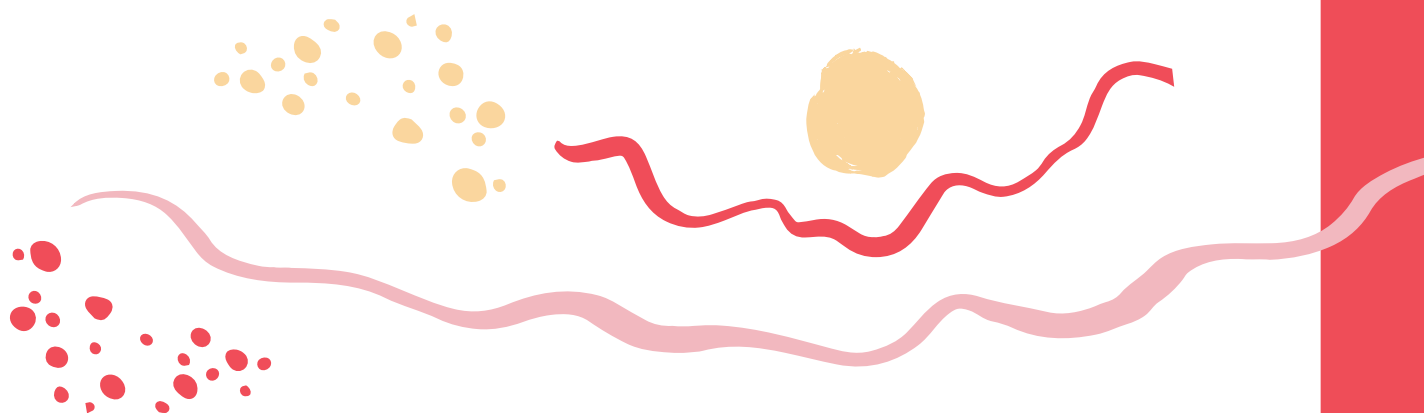
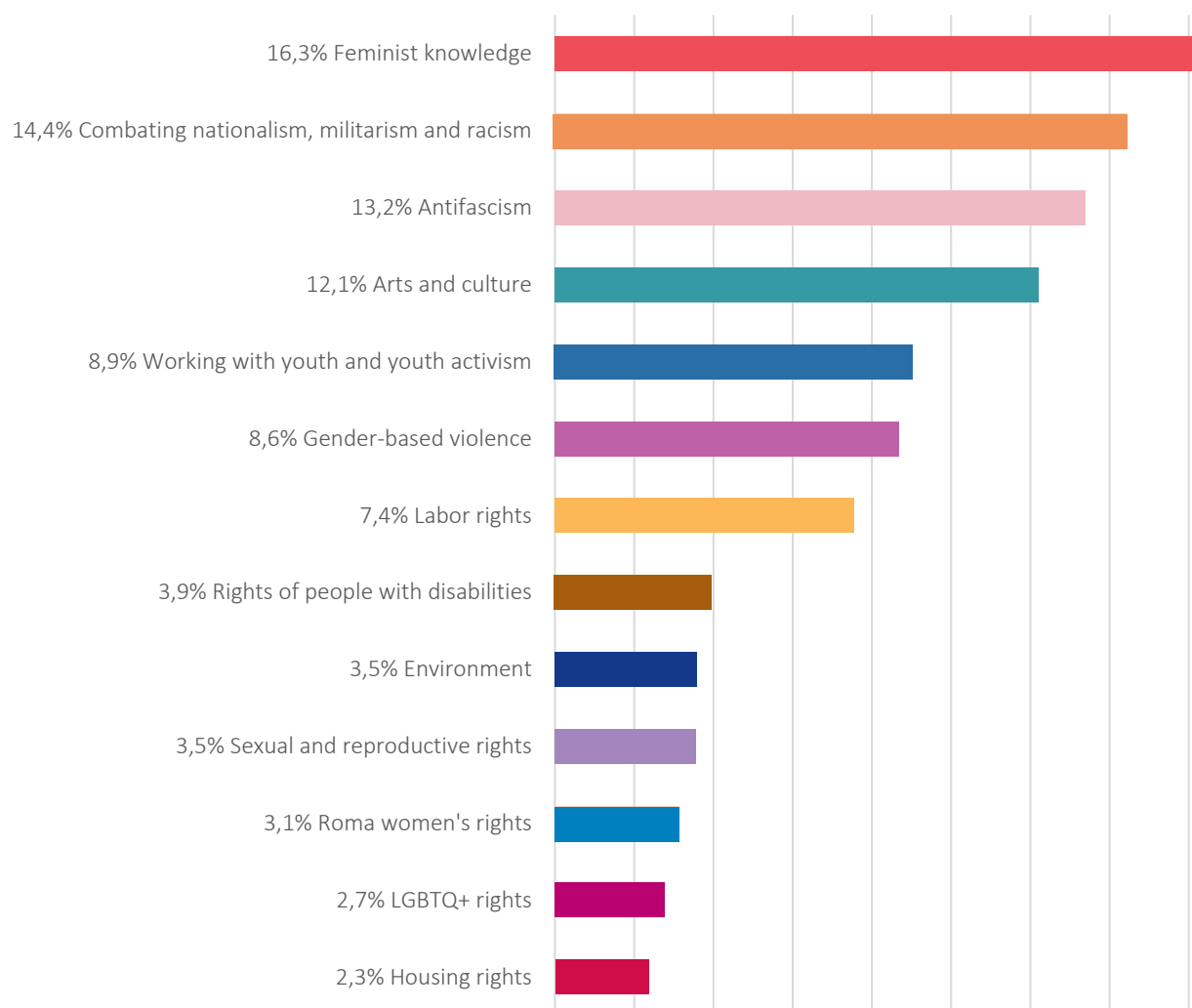
# WHERE HAS THE SUPPORT TRAVELED?



Although one of our core principles is supporting groups outside of the capital, decentralizing activism is a slow process, hence Belgrade remains the most supported place. With a lot of hope, we are making further steps towards decentralization, meeting activists across the country, and those who are in front of the door of activism we encourage and invite to enter, and we are trying to make this image more colourful. We encounter walls in the field – mainly in the form of women's fear to engage in activism due to restrictive socio-political atmosphere at local levels (sabotages by the local authorities, deprivation of working assets such as space, pressures, lack of readiness by the community to collaborate, fearing the local power-holders); but we are also encountering verve and readiness of women to fight for a more just society at all costs. In each small town where we have partners, we have witnessed an incredible feminist strength and will. Their analyses hit the bull's eye and their actions mobilize and inspire. Yet, looking at the bigger picture, they frequently feel tired and isolated. Hence, besides to searching for new allies, we are devoting 2024 to networking of women in smaller environments.



# WHAT DO THE STRUGGLES FOCUS ON??



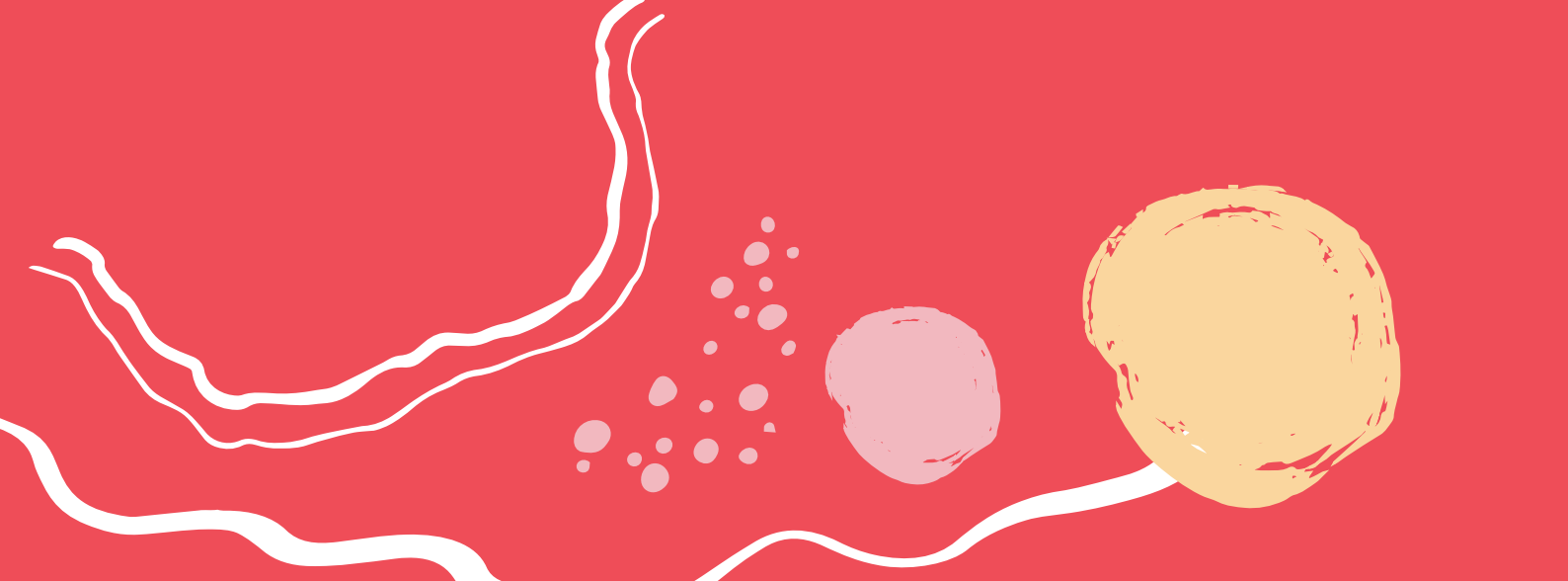
The subjects occupying the supported collectives spill into each other, intertwine, multiply in practice, or, briefly said, the trouble never comes alone – but neither do responses to those troubles: this year, traditionally, activists have demonstrated wide approaches to resolving burning issues. Almost every supported group has more parallel and intertwined political – theoretical and practical – lines of work in their activities. Sometimes they include all of the items from this list, as lived realities certainly do not allow narrowing down to one, two things. This graph is just an attempt to catch the dominant subjects which defined the action priorities of the supported groups.

To be honest, this “map” of priorities is just a cut-out of activist struggles, the result of needs and work of collectives with which we collaborate – and perhaps it would be shaped differently if it encompassed organizations with which we haven't worked with in 2023. However, even in its current shape, it serves us to document and reflect upon a certain part of the activist scenery, draw certain conclusions and think through how to improve further support to the movements.

In a misogynous, violent social atmosphere, **gender-based violence remains among dominant issues (8,6%)**, which is redundant to explain. The organizations with SOS support such as SOS Women's Centre (Novi Sad), SOS Centre for Women and Children Victims of Violence (Vlasotince) and ... Out of the Circle – Vojvodina (Novi Sad) have their phone lines always ringing. Besides women in need, the movement is also focused on learning, **producing, preserving and sharing feminist knowledge (16,3% of supported groups)**. This takes place through alternative programs, workshops, online courses, international encounters, networking, writing publications. There is a high



degree of awareness that only the movement can preserve feminist knowledge, attacked by the government, clerical structures and all sorts of right-wingers. Under various excuses, among the most attacked types of **knowledge in the past year is the knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights**. However, a small percentage of groups (**3,5%**) managed to deal with activities around it in a systemic, long-term way. One valuable exception is the publication by Centre for Social Advances (Novi Sad) – Sexual education in Serbia: Analysis and recommendations. Among unexpectedly underrepresented types of activities, which pushes us into deep thinking, are actions in the field of **LGBTQI+ rights (2,7% of supported groups)**, **rights of people with disabilities (3,9%)** and **Roma women's rights (3,1%)**. Although this implies working with multiply marginalized people and elements of both emergency and long-term strategic work, not too many applications went deeply into these fields. Minding the growth of anti-gender politics, their institutionalization and stronger public presence, we are aware that for the nearest future there is a need for more and more work with the most marginalized people, where gender intersects with other bases of oppression – not so we could meet some identity quotas but exactly to provide support to those collectives who unite people and recognize the common structural bases of the oppression despite diverse identities, and open space for collective



resistance. Among underrepresented subjects we also found **the environmental issues (3,5% of supported groups)**, although this makes a thematic and social space where we not only can but also have to work urgently, globally and locally. We have witnessed mass ecological protests and strength of people against polluters over the past years, but we are all still waiting for more feminist, anti-capitalist initiatives directed at environment and climate change – it is the struggle of our era which we must not let the conservatives lead. The future of feminism is tightly related to facing climate changes. **Only 2,3% of groups deal with housing issues**, but doing it well, carrying this small housing movement on their backs. Traditionally, what is very present is the devotedness **to antifascism, with 13,2% of groups highlighting this stance as dominant in their work. Similarly, 14,4% groups highlights the devotion to struggle against nationalism, militarism and racism**, which is not to neglect, but in the time of regional and global insecurity and conflicts, and while we still haven't resolved the past conflicts, these struggles are becoming more necessary and we believe they will expand one way or another. Dealing with **labor rights** remains present, with **7,4% of groups centering this issue**. An important part of the movements' work puts hopes in youth, hence **working with youth and youth activism are prominent in 8,9% of supported groups**. It encompasses summer schools, feminist courses, peer educations, as well as youth's direct actions in their communities. Finally, **arts and culture** with activist dimensions are among most present themes on the map of supported initiatives, **with 13,1% of supported groups doing it**, which stems from two roots – one is our vision of artistic field as the field of allies, while the other regards scarcer funding for arts and culture, starting from irregular and insufficient open calls by public entities. This directs more and more art collectives towards smaller foundations such as ours.

All in all, we are happy that this year we have once again supported very diverse programs, each important in its own way, while, at the same time, we are sometimes worried because of lack of interest by activists for certain issues. As one of our colleagues says, *Sometimes it seems we live in two parallel realities – one where everything is burning and collapsing, and the other, project reality, where we don't manage to respond to the first one*. Indeed, despite all the quality work by the supported groups, it seems that we need another layer of radicalism in dealing with the reality, regardless of projects, rooted in efforts to change the world directly and without a compromise.



## ***\*ATTENTION: BE CAREFUL WITH THE NUMBERS !!!***

Even though we analyse the collective impact of groups and estimate overall reach of programs in quantitative manner as well, we have to be careful with how we read our beloved and hated numbers. For instance, a workshop in Belgrade with 20 participants is not the same as the workshop with the same number of participants in Užice. Educational activities encounter different difficulties when they are, for instance, organized in the form of online program lasting for several months, and when they are organized through 90 workshops in schools in rural south. Long story short – numbers serve us for a kind of orientation and documentation but we do not rely upon them as key and exclusive indicators for estimating the impact of the supported groups.



## ***WHAT IS IN FRONT OF THE NUMBERS ???***

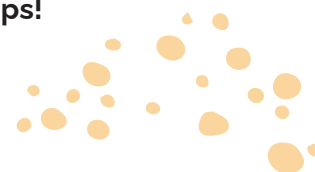
In front of any number are people and their needs, mainly systemically marginalized or suppressed. That's why the number of activities or reached people or percentage of created opportunities for women in communities are much more than a math value - it's all about encounters, transformative practices, politically aware actions, efforts, struggles, changed lives. It is about the relationships of the supported individuals and collectives which support them. It is about supporting women with disabilities, psychosocial counselling, legal support, supporting children and youth who survived sexual violence, supporting women whose labor rights are violated, supporting children with disabilities, supporting Roma women, it is all about practicing diverse social, economic and cultural rights. It is about fighting for a dignified life and work. When it comes to that, participants of supported programs and supported collectives speak much more valuable about it. We will deal with a few stats, as much as we have to, but we also promise sharing valuable snapshots of shared experiences.

# General support



Through [General support](#) program, ever since 2014, we are supporting partners with whom we work for many years successfully. The support lasts throughout the entire year, it is flexible, maximally adjustable to the collectives' needs. In the beginning, we were supporting **4 groups**, while **in 2023 this program supported 16 groups!**

This is their collective impact:



**15 out of 16 groups** clearly and unequivocally articulate their progressive political positions (and we believe the sixteenth group will also soon elevate their political articulation to a higher level!) For many years, the movement is in an external and internal danger of depolitization and getting emptied out of its essential feminist and antifascist political values. The list of causes of this danger is long, but hope surely lives. **100% of groups** supported through GP demonstrate continuous devotion against **nationalism, militarism and racism**, either through direct activities regarding these issues, either through overviews of these issues as relevant to understanding and shaping other activities (for example, groups combating gender-based violence are understanding it within the bigger picture of economic violence, violence in war etc). Besides political strengths, the supported group have the advantage of strong team capacities – knowledge, competency, and sufficient number of people: **75% of groups has completely adequate, while 19% almost completely adequate team capacities. 6%**, or one group, self-estimates that they do not have them. When it comes to adequate working conditions (access to spaces, access to technology, the existence of infrastructure), **62% of supported groups are standing great, 32% of groups has a partially stable position, while 6%**

**doesn't have adequate conditions.** The shortcoming mainly refer to the lack of spaces for activities of larger scope or outdated technology, and above all, the lack of access to public spaces and public infrastructure in general, due to bad or non-existent relationships with local authorities. In their reports, groups frequently express that they feel like they are doing the work of public social and other institutions, because the institutions are not meeting their own purpose, but they do it in extremely modest conditions: **56% of groups have satisfying financial assets, 25% of them partially satisfying assets, while 19% of them have insufficient funding.** It is also a matter of quality, stability and sustainability of those assets: **75% of supported groups do not have ways of diversifying their budgets** and they mainly rely upon private philanthropy. Minding the rapidly changing conditions among private donors, and withdrawal of donors from the region or feminist subjects, this comes as worrying. This picture also certainly reflects the lack of assets from open calls by public institutions and the fact that these assets more frequently end up in so-called GONGOs and phantom collectives, while groups seriously working on the ground receive minimal funding, if even that. The impact of these groups at the level of communities significantly surpasses the modest conditions in which they work:

**93% of groups in 2023 have reached new people in their communities and 93% of them has opened up new possibilities for women in communities.** They have done it through over **3930 activities**: this encompasses workshops, educational programs, psychosocial, legal and other support, solidarity visits, assisting in institutional processes, festivals, gatherings, consultations, networking, campaigns, street actions... Besides this, **around 1740 diverse activities took place online.** What "stuck" with us during the pandemic, those online activities, became a powerful tool in democratization and decentralization of participation of different women in different programs. In those activities, **around 10,800 people\*** directly participated (this includes **6900 women, 2900 young people, 2000 of which are girls**).  
\* Given the different nature of their activities, Free Zone Film Festival, also supported through GP, is evaluated separately. As a large film festival, it has reached around **35,000 people.**

The experiences of collectives speak much more than numbers and stats, hence...

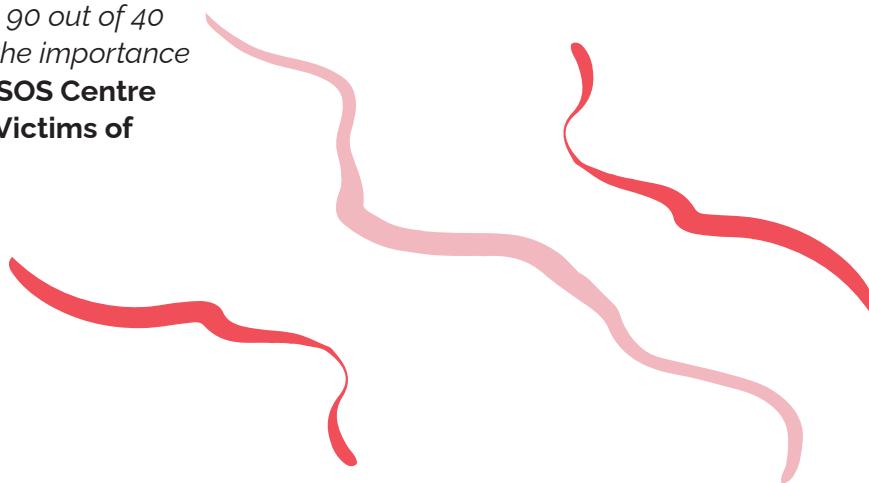
### **...We're celebrating achievements!**

*In this year, we decided to document the Methodology of the First National study of social problem of sexual abuse of children which Incest Trauma Centre – Belgrade conducted in 2015, minding that until today this unfortunately remained the only National study in the country, as well as that there is no similar study in the Region or in many other countries in this part of Europe and world, we decided to publish Methodology so everyone who are able to conduct a National study here and in other countries would have a valid resource available. – **Incest trauma centre, Belgrade***

*During the period of providing general support, we have managed to reach and overcome our goal, holding 90 out of 40 planned workshops about the importance and addressing the past. – **SOS Centre for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Vlasotince***

*We wrote the first Collective Care Manifesta in Serbia. The Manifesta is important both for us and the community, as it outlines the options of less exhaustive and more conscious working environment. In this manifesta, we defined how we work, how we take care of ourselves and how we relate to the environment. – **ROZA Association for Women's Labor Rights, Zrenjanin***

*In this year, we organized the 570,670.5 hours of personal assistance service for 17 persons with disabilities. – **Centre Living Upright, Novi Sad***



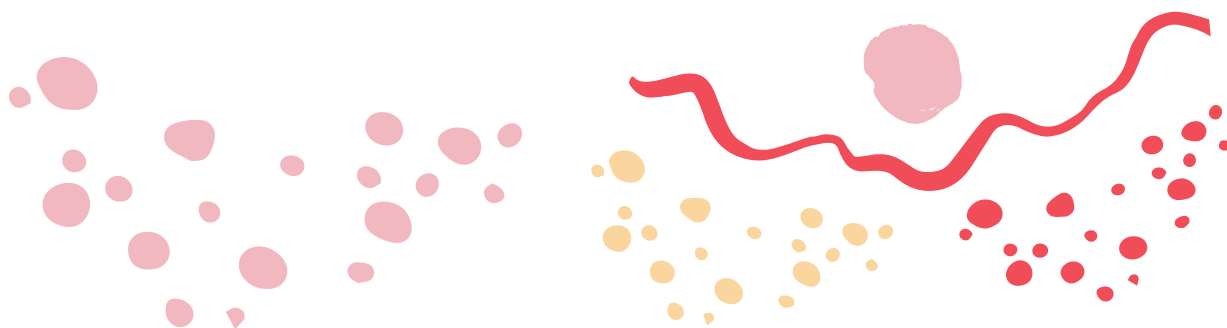
*The community approaches us with less fear and more openly support our persistent struggle, despite the inhumane treatment by the local authority, which continues against our attendees and us. Last year we planned to revive music workshops within the framework of support to early development, given the existence of prep group in the School of Music, however, we gave up and made a holistic program encompassing music, fine arts and drama workshops which we are conducting as of last fall in the Elementary school in Salaš village, attended by children from 10 surrounding villages. In the previous years, the director feared to collaborate with us, and even now it was uncertain as he had to inform the local authority. Before that, three of us had a meeting with 40 parents of the children who applied for the course, so the director also had to report on the interest of children and parents.* – **Children's Centre, Zaječar**

#### **..... And we remain conscious of the problems!**

*There is still a risk that in the future, at the city level, due to a political decision, the support to our organization as well as to other organizations of people with disabilities may be cut, as it is a decision of local environment and government, and, even the support exists for quite a while, it doesn't mean that at some, probably worse moment, won't be taken away, especially due to current government's trait to centralize everything.* – **Jefimija Breast Cancer Centre, Užice**

*One of the challenges when it comes to Feminist Studies are the gaps and lacks of basic knowledge on wider social context with some participants, regardless of their previous level of education. An example could be an insight from the lectures that before a deeper conversation about gender and its implications on social positions, as well as ways on how gender intertwines with other bases of oppression such as levels of education, places of residence, age, we still need to clarify what we are talking about when we are talking about neoliberal economic model.* – **Centre for Women's Studies, Belgrade**

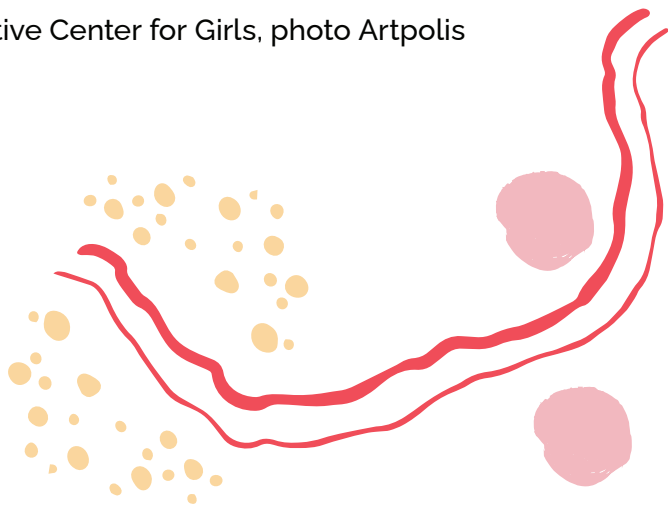
*One of great risks we have faced is the increased incidence of conflicts in Kosovo and growing tensions. All the incidents that took place mainly impacted the participants of Feminist Spring School, who needed an explanation of the political context between Serbia and Kosovo, but primarily our views as anti-war and peace activists in the given situation. The incident taking place in the Banjska village happened just several days before the planned second part of the School in Prizren and, unfortunately, it had an impact, and several participants decided not to come. With our partner from Kosovo, we create safety strategies, we estimate risks before each gathering, we are certain that we will continue doing it further, as the situation only occasionally seems less risky.* – **Alternative Centre for Girls, Kruševac**







Feminist Spring School - Alternative Center for Girls, photo Artpolis



# Special focus

**Special focus**, a small grants program, is designed for contextual interventions, experiments, critical actions; it is intended for making strong points in feminist activism. At the core of this program is the struggle against nationalism, militarism and racism through a feminist lens - but, as these troubles branch and frequently cause other pains, this program also supports most diverse collectives, formal and non-formal ones. What is the birdview of their collective impact?\*

\* some actions are still running, so the results in front of you make the minimum steps made through the SF support awarded in 2023!

The focus of activities was mainly on direct surroundings - **and number of people reached in 2023 was a bit over 15.000!** This means 15.000 actively engaged people who obtained new knowledge, expressed their concerns, received direct support in crises, fought their own marginalizations, self-organized for further actions and building a better world. If we add the online activities such as those conducted by media portal **Odjek** from Kruševac or Wiki articles by a group of authors from across Serbia gathered around the initiative Present(ed), it adds up to additional **139.000 readers** reached by numerous significant social subjects. People were reached in the most diverse ways, through at least **521 in-person activity (some were one-timers and some were continuous)**, as well as through over **770 online activities** (implying activities unrelated to social networks and other visibility activities). The groups were achieving this sometimes on their own, sometimes in **collaborations**. At least **95** of them took place in 2023. Groups supported through SF also start strong with a progressive political articulation - **65% of supported groups have clearly articulated positions, while 23% are mainly articulated**, with a need for a small push for more clarity in self-determination. It isn't unusual that the political self-articulation of groups supported through this program is slightly lower than in groups supported through General support - for many groups, this program is the door opener for the first activist steps, activists in some collectives collaborate for the first time and are only starting to build their collective political position. As long as there's learning and going forward, we're on a good path! **73% of supported groups is devoted to struggles against nationalism, militarism and racism**, while **27%** of them are partially devoted to these issues, most often **enticed by the action possibilities provided through Special focus**. Given that, through this program, we support primarily small groups, self-representing groups of marginalized people, in marginalized environments, with minimal budgets, their capacities come as modest. **57% of them has adequate team capacities, while 27%** of them reports partially satisfactory team capacities. Even this is impressive when we take a look at the circumstances in which they are acting: only **27% of groups estimates that they have fully adequate working conditions, and only 23% of them estimates sufficient funding** for their activities. **Diversified assets** are only available to **23% of the groups as well**. And despite the imperative of stick-and-rope, the supported group, besides reaching a significant number of people, **manage to open up new opportunities for women in communities (96% of groups), and reach new target groups (85%)**. Possibilities for advocacy, or **impact on legal and social norms**, mainly remains outside of working scope of the supported groups and when it comes to advocacy, **11% of supported groups** managed to make at least some steps in this field.





Final ceremony, Women's Studies and Research, branch in Subotica

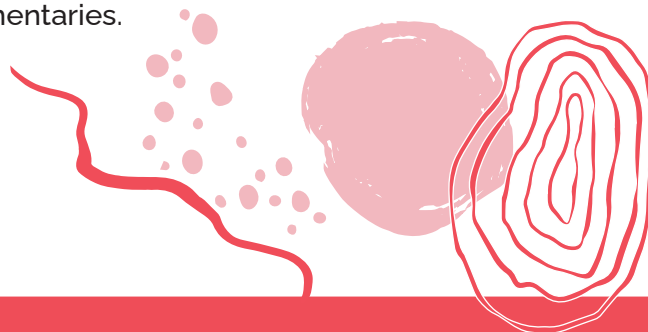


Present(ed), an initiative to write Wiki articles about feminists and peace activists



# What have SF-supported actions brought us this year?

- Another International Women's Day March was held thanks to a non-formal group of activists
- The presence of feminists and anti-war activities on local Wikipedia. If you are reading articles about [Veri Kurtić](#), [Dunji Blažević](#), [Veri Vebel Tatić](#)... Thank the Wiki wizards from the *Present(ed)* initiative!
- A publication called *Struggle for housing rights in Belgrade 1919 - 1921: The role of the Communist Party and women's organizations* by Ivana Andjelkovic and Ana Krstic was published.
- *Okular* from Cicevac held a feminist school for girls and young women from rural areas.
- Rural cultural centre from Markovac held a series of stage readings of plays centering demilitarization of daily lives.
- The east of Serbia additionally activated its potentials - comrades from *Nika* (Bor) held a series of workshops around mental health for their marginalized fellow citizens, while *Kucevo initiative* (Kucevo) held a feminist cultural program.
- Mental health of women, as well as connecting and overcoming oppressive elements, was a significant subject in Trstenik as well, during the workshops held by *Women's Association Teuta-tim*.
- Kruševac crew *Fakirs* from the South flew with an inclusive stage play *Wings* throughout Serbia.
- *Women for Peace* from Leskovac, inspired by our edition of the book *Becoming Cliterate*, started women's circles on the subject of women, feminism and sexuality.
- Comrades from Latin America, gathered around the collective *Latinos en Serbia*, started intensifying their mutual connections and connections with the local movement.
- Centre *Mome* from Pirot documented the lives and patriarchal heritage of women from Stara Planina through short documentaries.







Filming of a film about the patriarchal heritage of Staroplaninki, Center Mome, Pirot



Nika Bor

## ***In words of activists and program participants, these are the significant achievements:***

### **Rečima aktivistkinja i učesnica programa, ovo su značajna postignuća:**

- *I am more decisive about activism being my core need and mission. Women's Studies have confirmed it.*
- *I love exploring biographies of forgotten women, learning about other cultures, the educators carried out some sort of gentleness.*
- *The lectures have opened up my horizons which I haven't considered earlier.* - **Attendees of Women's Studies and Research in Subotica.**

*All of our interviewees were ready to share with us and with their fellow citizens about their uneasy experiences of surviving in the system all of them find unfair and more and more oppressive. Also, all of them, regardless of their age or current life circumstances, have demonstrated impressive strength and optimism to fight such system to enable themselves and their families a brighter and more just future.* - **Kiosk, Belgrade.**

*This project was a big challenge for all of us. This was our first research and we learned a lot about methodology and how to conduct activities. Our target group is every woman and girl. We particularly value working with youth, we consider that timely education and reaction to violence creates safe environment for each of us. The problem we encountered during the work are a direct consequence of patriarchy. Women were finding ways to become participants, while some weren't able to participate in the survey without the presence and permission by their husbands.* - **Successful women of Kostolac**

### **...And these are some problems experienced during the work:**

*Us who are still politically undesirable do not have our own space which we very much need. Our educational workshops would be of a higher quality in an adequate space. We realized we can unite people with same goals, regardless of differences in opinions and preferences.* - **Nika, Bor**

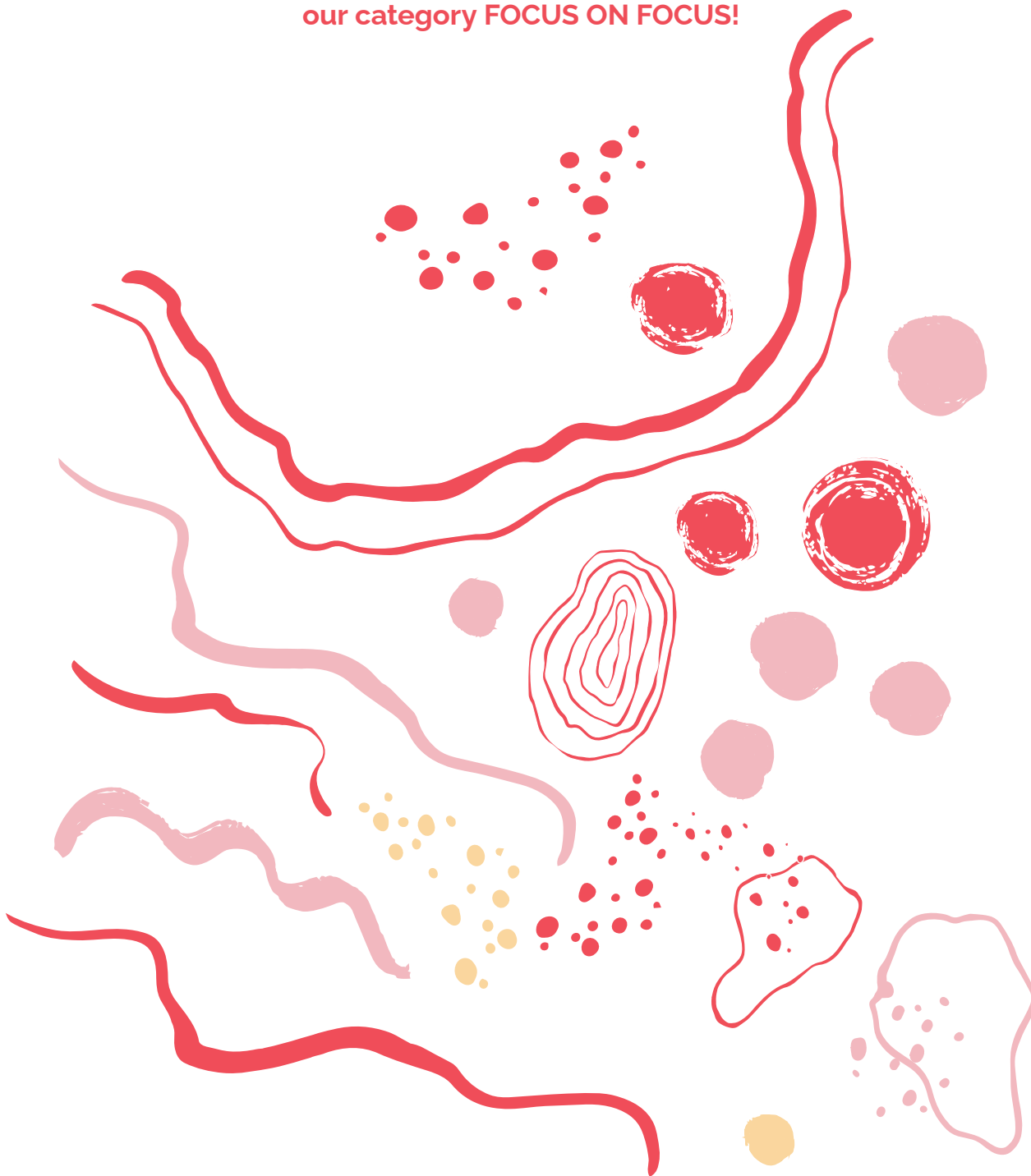
*The project devised all the project activities to be publicly presented through social media. Given that, as an association, we have sued a two-time convicted violence perpetrator, the suggestion of our legal representative is not to expose women to additional risks, as we cannot predict the*



actions of that violence perpetrator, because of women's and girls' safety, as well as our personal safety. - **Women for Peace, Leskovac**

We could not pull out efficient pressure on institutions in several cases, although earlier we were able to do it. We don't know the causes of it and the only thing we can say is that sometimes it comes as efficient, sometimes not, so we are not giving up on that. Another reason might be that the strength of pressure depends on the very cases, media public attention, as well as our persistence. - **Collective Action A Roof Above Head, Belgrade**

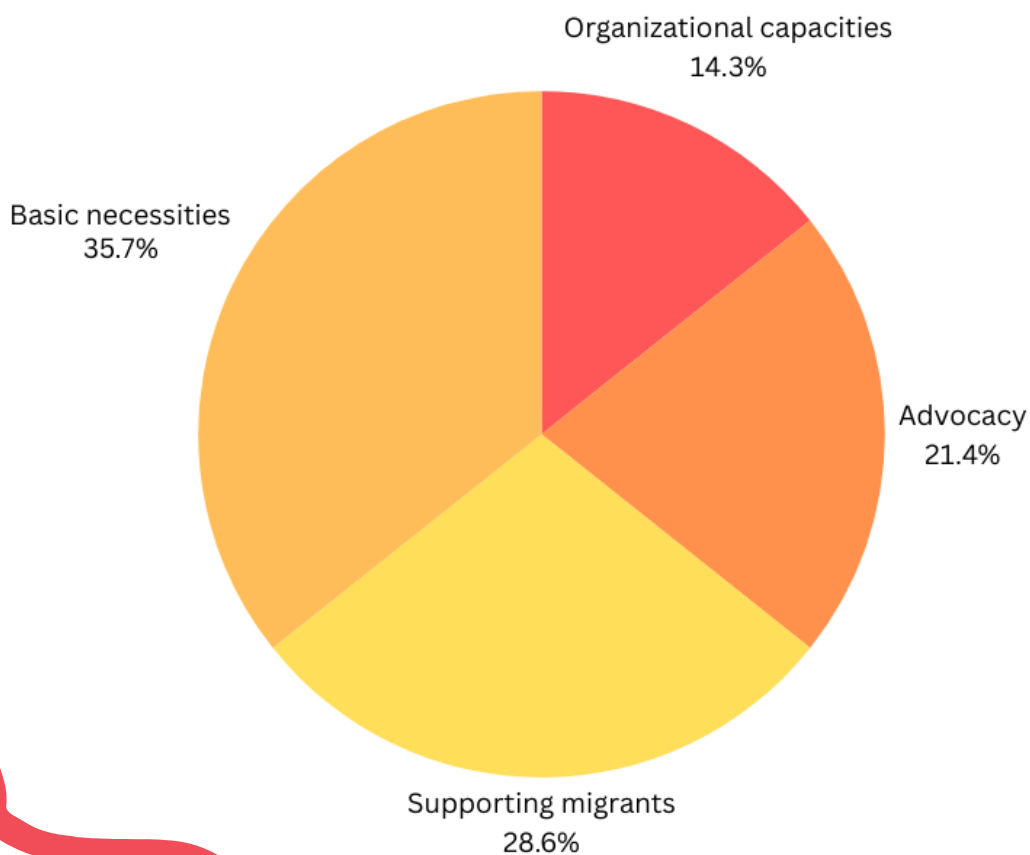
**...THERE'S MORE! Read about actions supported through Special focus in our category FOCUS ON FOCUS!**



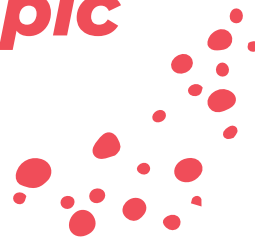


# Rapid response grants

In certain years, the needs for Rapid Response grants come in wavers, for instance . in 2020, there was a lot of emergency support surrounding the pandemic while in 2022, almost half of the support went to LGBTQ+ community and activities regarding Europride. This year, the awarded rapid support quite varied in themes and needs, with the common thread that it was all awarded when people are simply when there's a fuss. When there is no other type of money to bridge crisis periods, when there are expenses that can't be covered without this type of support, when there are sudden opportunities for advocacy, when there is an emergent need for establishing support in crises... This year, crises really grew branches in diverse directions, and we can roughly divide them into the following themes:

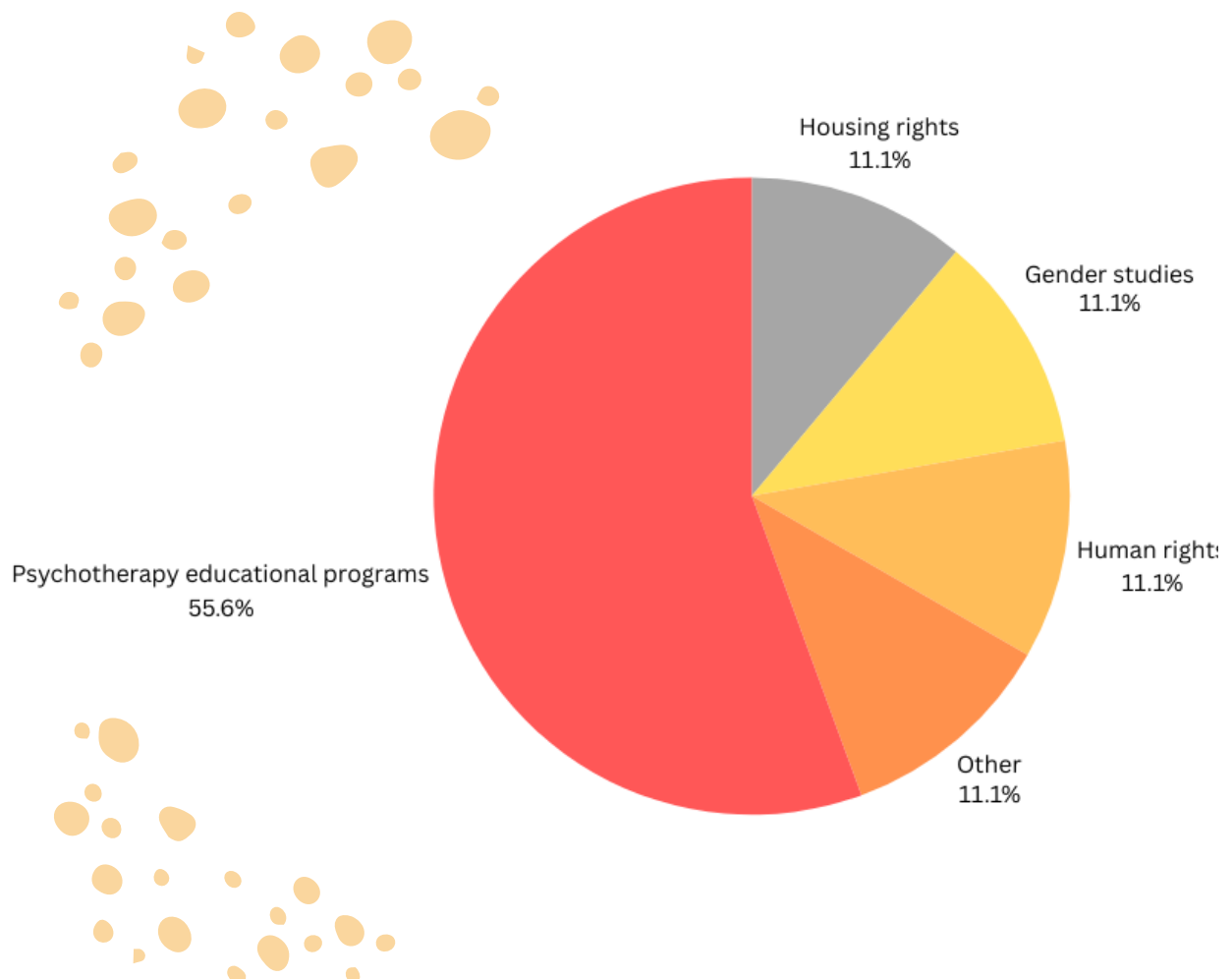


# Stipends Zarana Paptic

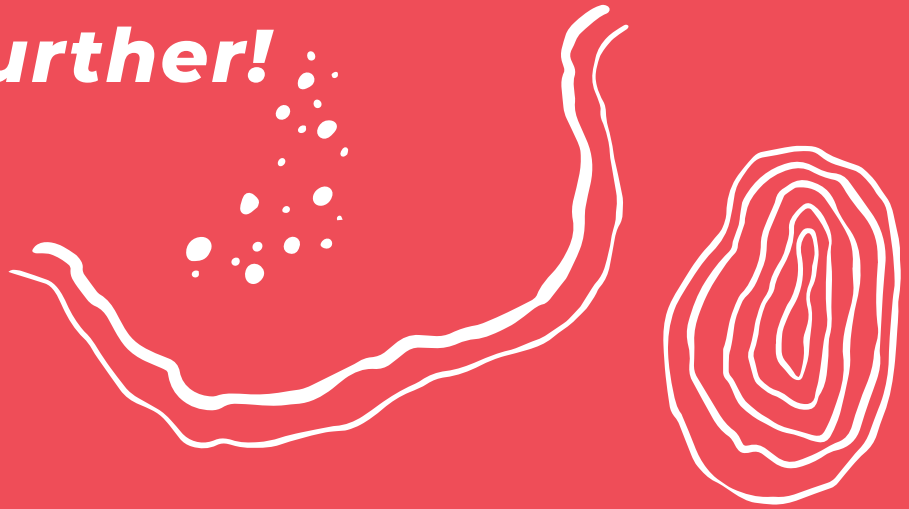


For many years, the focus of these stipends was on gender and peace educational programs, but at the same time, the support was also open for other types of programs strengthening feminist activism and widening circles of support. Minding how violent the year behind us is, and how traumatic the decades behind us are, how much vulnerabilities are now open, it is not a surprise that many stipendists' needs were directed at diverse psychotherapy programs. The program of stipends is still self-sustainable, covered from community fundraised assets, and besides its basic purpose, it serves to spark conversations on knowledge and education accessibility.

This is what the support looked like this year:



# Let's go further!



*Continuously, we are listening to the needs of the supported groups and individuals, locally, while we also examine the global picture of feminist and other movements. We adjust our support case-by-case, with an open intention for more detailed understanding of specificities of each environment. We also work on more active informing of activists we haven't worked with yet and encourage those who are not activists yet to join the struggles.*

*We ponder over projectitis - we are trying, together with groups, to articulate politics and work outside of project frameworks, minding continuities, crossovers, wider activities unburdened by rigid project imperatives. Although the bureaucracy limits us at some degree, in reflecting upon our own work in the wider context we do not accept limitations.*

*We're connecting. As small as the country and movements may seem, there's only so many hidden corners with powerful women fighters who will be even stronger once they are connected - an action in which we will gladly keep on supporting them.*

*We walk alongside the groups. Trying to elevate our support beyond finances and paperwork, we're trying to show up when we are needed, to talk and share both pains and joys.*

*We respect the groups' autonomy. Guided by trust in their knowledge of the ground, needs of their environment and skills to lead the struggles, we are happy to meet their priorities.*

*We rejoice! Each day there's a struggle, each day we receive good and bad news, and each of them move us.*

*We keep on running, thinking, sharing and working!*

Stay tuned!



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