



Supporting a global movement of abortion rights advocates

SAAF was established in 2006 as a multi-donor funding mechanism to support small local organizations working to increase access to safe abortion.

SAAF focuses on the needs of the most marginalized women and others seeking abortion, funding projects which provide abortion care within a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services, including post-abortion contraception.

SAAF encourages abortion services to be provided to the fullest extent of any national law and at the highest possible standards of care, and for legal and policy reforms to be implemented in countries where abortion is restricted. By visibly supporting projects using an international funding mechanism, SAAF works to destigmatize abortion—creating and supporting a global network of champions who are more empowered to work at regional and international as well as local levels.

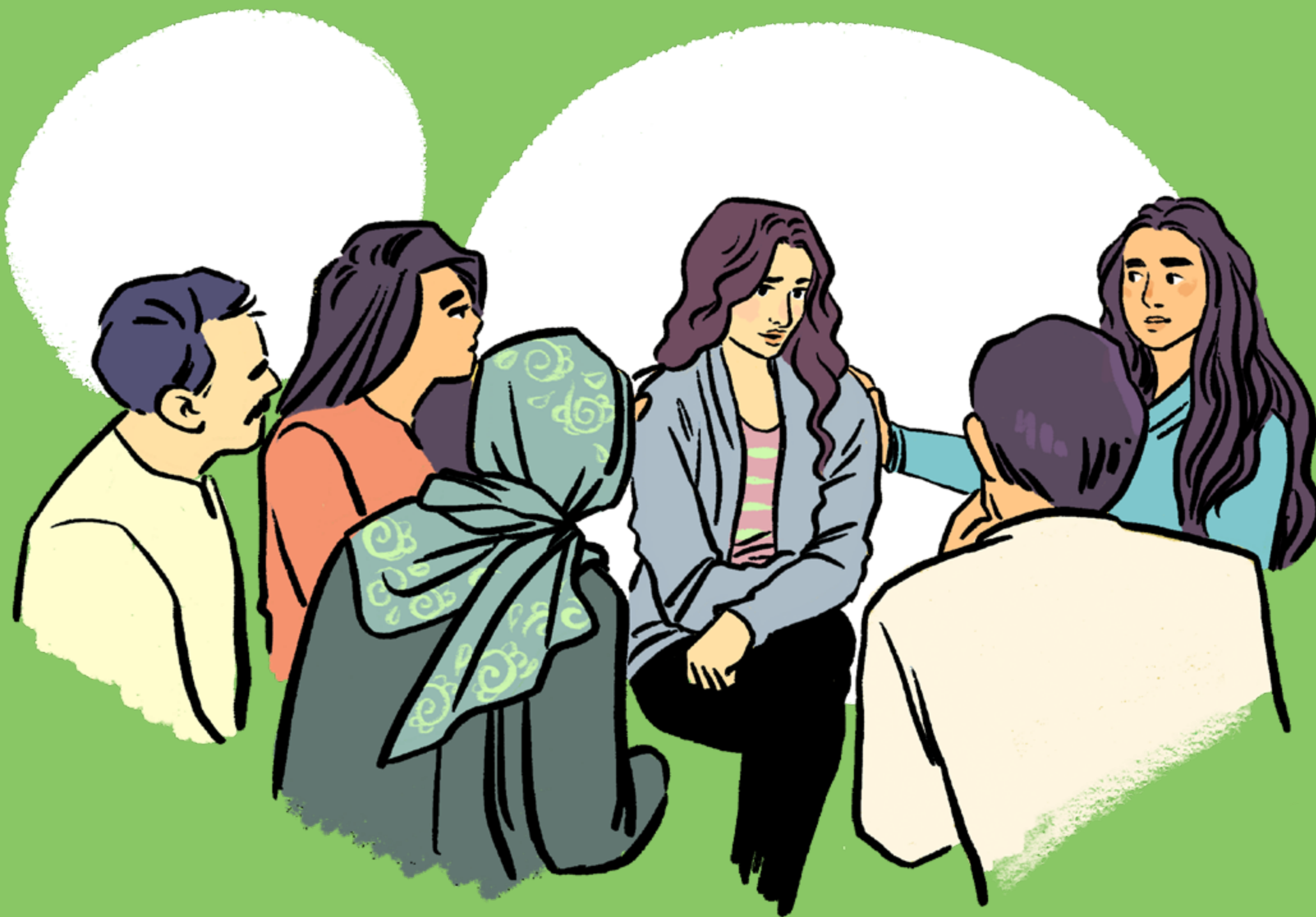
Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF)



In 2019 the Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF) was supported by the governments of the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, and by an anonymous donor. The Fund is managed by a small team of staff hosted within the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

This report was prepared by the SAAF staff team (Secretariat) and approved by the chair of the SAAF board in June 2020.

It is structured according to the four grant streams outlined in [SAAF's Theory of Change](#), sharing grantee partner and Secretariat activities and achievements for the period January–December 2019.



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A Message from the Chair of SAAF Board

In 2019 a number of countries made progressive steps towards removing arbitrary, and in some instances life-threatening legal restrictions to safe abortion care. In Europe, we saw Iceland, North Macedonia and Monaco lift some restrictions, and global news was made when abortion was finally legalized in Northern Ireland, where previously the maximum penalty for having an abortion was life in prison. In Mexico, Oaxaca became the second state in the country to decriminalize abortion and New South Wales joined the rest of the Australian states in decriminalizing abortion, and permitting access on request up to 22 weeks.

These changes could not have happened without the collaborative efforts of activists, women's rights organizations, and others unafraid to speak up in favour of reproductive rights. As a funder of abortion-focused projects around the world, SAAF takes pride in connecting global advocates and supporting their work to make change - whether it be to shape policy and law, to address abortion stigma, or to facilitate and improve the abortion services which are provided.



“On 24 October 2019, the Congress of Oaxaca decriminalized abortion up to 12 weeks of gestation. We are filled with hope that another area in the country has made this change, and we recognize the strength of local activists and legislators in pushing for a legal framework that benefits women. We are sure that this is the first of many areas where there will be positive changes. It will be law in all of Mexico!”

SAAF grantee partner, **Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud: Mexico**
(Host organization of the MARIA Fund)

In July 2019 we were delighted to host a global gathering of SAAF grantee partners. Forty-five organizations, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, came together to share ideas and resources, and make connections for their work moving forward. Working on a topic like abortion, which is highly stigmatized around the world, means that such an opportunity to meet and connect in person should not be underestimated.

We thank DFID for its continued commitment to supporting the work of these organizations by providing SAAF with another £2m of funding in 2019. We were able to launch a new round of funding in August, and received our largest ever number of applications – clearly there is a need and desire to do this work and we are pleased to be able to support some of it, with 28 new SAAF funded projects starting in 2020.

SAAF recognizes that the experienced and diverse, often youth-led, women-led, grassroots and activist organizations we fund know best how to tackle abortion stigma and lack of access in the communities they work in. Our role is to support this work financially, provide technical assistance where relevant, and crucially, enable national, regional and global connections which can empower real and lasting change.

Manuelle Hurwitz,
SAAF Chair



Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners working to change laws and policies

We know that where abortion is legally restricted it simply becomes dangerous, and women and others who have abortions are more likely to suffer serious complications and die from unsafe abortions.

A number of SAAF grantee partners work tirelessly to push for policy and law change in their country, in order to reduce maternal mortality and restore the universal right to health and liberty.



In 2019, six SAAF grantee partners made advances towards improved legislation, policy or guidelines favouring safe abortion rights and services.

Fifteen organizations worked as part of coalitions pushing for more progressive abortion laws and policies.

Driving Change. Making History.



CSJ NEWS/Malawi
Advocates in Malawi lobby for abortion law reform during a community activity

Trust For Indigenous Culture And Health (TICAH) and Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and Aids (KELIN)

In Kenya, a group of civil society organizations, including SAAF grantee partners **TICAH** and **KELIN**, fought successfully for the reinstatement of the Standards and Guidelines for the Reduction of Morbidity and Mortality due to Unsafe Abortions following a ruling by the High Court. The court found that by arbitrarily withdrawing the guidelines the Ministry of Health had violated the rights of Kenyan women and girls, by creating uncertainty around the legality of provision of safe abortion care.

Crucially, the ruling confirmed that abortion is legally permitted for survivors of sexual violence.

KELIN was part of the working group convened by petitioners FIDA Kenya and the Center for Reproductive Rights and contributed to the legal advice informing the petitioner's case.

Successful reinstatement of national guidelines which protect against unsafe abortion

Kenya



TICAH/Kenya
Colleagues from CRR celebrate the win in court

Health Development Initiative (HDI)

Funded by SAAF since 2017, **HDI** was instrumental in advocacy efforts which led to amendments to the 2012 penal code governing abortion. The requirement of a court order was removed and child defilement was added as an eligible condition for abortion in the revised 2018 penal code. HDI was part of the technical team that drafted a Ministerial Order determining the conditions to be satisfied by a medical doctor to perform abortion which was published in April 2019.

Through their SAAF funded project, HDI were able to build the capacity of female sex workers to exercise their rights, including to safe abortion. Female sex workers are now able to advocate for their rights and speak to the media confidently about their challenges.

HDI's work has also contributed to the pardoning of hundreds of women and girls who had been imprisoned for abortion related offences. The organization has published their research, including interviews with 38 of these women, to inform further advocacy.

Release of hundreds of women imprisoned for abortion

Rwanda



Yagazie Emezi: Getty Images/Rwanda
HDI youth advocates



“We are very pleased by the decision taken by the president, as it reflects the rights and freedoms of women and girls enshrined under the constitution of Rwanda. It is a positive step, taken to realise the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls in Rwanda.” —**Athanase Rukundo**, Director of Programmes at HDI

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD Argentina)

In Argentina, the work of abortion rights activists, including **CDD Argentina**, continues to progress towards positive and historically significant change. Campaigners made a global statement on the need for legal reform at the Cannes film festival, protesting Argentina's highly restrictive abortion law on the red carpet.



Before coming into office in December 2019, President Alberto Fernández promised to bring a bill to congress to legalise abortion and CDD Argentina believe it is just a matter of time until this can be implemented.

Keeping the legalisation of abortion on the political agenda

Argentina



CDD Argentina/France
Abortion rights activists at Cannes film festival

Associação São Tomense Para Promoção Familiar (ASPF)

In 2015, after prolonged advocacy efforts, a change was made to the penal code in São Tomé and Príncipe to allow abortion services to be performed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy on request, and for medical reasons and cases of rape, incest or fetal disability over 12 weeks. However, national guidelines and standards for implementation were not updated and new abortion technologies were not rolled out.

The absence of guidelines and a formal mechanism to obtain abortion services in the public health system meant that services continued to be unavailable. From mid-2018, **ASPF** organized a working group in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Santomense Association of Women Lawyers and other partners. They developed guidelines for the implementation of the abortion law that were shared for consultation with a broader group representing 50 government organizations, civil society, partners and donors. They were passed in 2019 and began to be implemented in the public and private sectors of the country, meaning that the country now has one of the most accessible abortion laws in Africa.

Passing guidelines on abortion which put the law into practice

São Tomé and Príncipe



ASPF/ São Tomé and Príncipe
ASPF staff and volunteers

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners increasing access to safe abortion

Many SAAF grantee partners provide or refer to contraception, abortion and post-abortion services in settings where they face barriers because of weak health systems, restrictive policy environments and entrenched abortion stigma.

These organizations are brave and determined in the face of such challenges, knowing that safe abortion saves lives and enables women to be free from forced childbirth. Many SAAF grantee partners are working in innovative and resourceful ways to serve their local communities and ensure no one is left behind when it comes to being able to exercise their reproductive rights.



In 2019, SAAF grantees partners facilitated the provision of 42,316 abortion care services and trained 249 providers in how to safely provide abortion care.

Reaching the most under-served



South Africa has one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world. However, access to quality care remains an issue, with many still forced into seeking unsafe options to terminate pregnancies.

Lack of trained providers is a huge barrier which **THF** have addressed through their SAAF funded project, in collaboration with the Western Cape Department of Health: Cape Winelands District. Since the start of their project in July 2018 they have trained 21 new providers of safe abortion and are working to strengthen the support they receive to avoid burnout and isolation.



THF has expanded the number of sites providing abortions from 12 to 31 and has now provided 3000 comprehensive abortion care services through the project, with 99.4% of all patients adopting a method of contraception following their appointment.



A mentoring scheme, with debriefing sessions for providers, has been praised by those taking part: *“It was a very good thing because we didn’t have that previously...we had to just sit in the clinic and cope...But now you come in contact with other people, you exchange experience, you learn and you grow. And you debrief...that helped me.”* —Abortion provider



THF/South Africa
A group of abortion providers trained by THF

Women Friendly Initiative (WFI)

WFI has exceeded targets for their project ensuring young people in Northern Nigeria have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services including menstrual regulation, post-abortion care and contraception.

WFI has trained 48 medical providers as well as 45 youth counsellors to ensure that messages about reproductive health are accurate and that young people know where to access safe care. So far they have reached over 10,000 women and girls through community outreach awareness raising sessions, over 2000 of whom were subsequently referred to services.

As a result of increased messaging, training and referrals, the project has ensured 3,701 people have been able to access sexual and reproductive health care.



Supporting young people to access reproductive health care

Nigeria



WFI/Nigeria
Counsellors trained by WFI

Tajik Family Planning Association (TFPA)

TFPA's work is unique in its focus on using SAAF funding to build sustainable abortion services for low income and marginalised populations in Tajikistan.

Their project has been developed in partnership with the American University of Central Asia and the Maternity and Childhood Department of Tajikistan's Ministry of Health and Social Protection. They are now offering free family planning and abortion services for vulnerable groups at TFPA's clinic using funds obtained from services provided to paying clients. The target population who benefit from TFPA's free services include women living in poverty, sex workers, people who use drugs, migrants and adolescents.



To date, the project has provided 5094 abortion services, the majority of which (74%) were provided free of charge.

—○ Creating sustainable services for marginalised groups

Tajikistan



TFPA/Tajikistan
TFPA young volunteers

Population Health and Development Group (PHD Group)

Even though the abortion law in Nepal was liberalized in 2002, it's estimated that over half of all abortions in the country are still performed outside of legal clinical settings. Access is especially limited for those in more rural areas. In the mountainous Gorkha district, **PHD Group** works to increase community knowledge of the right to safe, legal abortion care and to facilitate access for the most under-served women and girls in rural villages. FCHVs discuss reproductive health needs and have so far carried out just under 2000 pregnancy tests, referring to maternity or safe abortion services and providing post-abortion follow up support where required.

In 2019 they successfully facilitated the accreditation of 6 new health posts in remote areas. As well as training auxiliary nurse midwives to provide this abortion care, they trained 174 'Female Community Health Volunteers' (FCHVs) to go out into their communities to share information about free, available services, reaching thousands of women and girls, including mothers' groups.

Bringing abortion care to rural mountain villages

Nepal



PHD GROUP/Nepal

Health care providers in an accredited centre

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners changing harmful norms on abortion

Negative ideas about people who have abortions are pervasive in many different settings, even though abortion is extremely common – one in four pregnancies around the world ends in abortion.

SAAF grantee partners all work to challenge entrenched stigmatising attitudes about abortion, as well as sexuality and gender, to fight discrimination and denial of care.

Breaking the Silence



BWHC/Bangladesh
Values clarification workshop

Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre (Shirkat Gah)

Supported by SAAF since 2017, **Shirkat Gah** has now expanded its work to bring about sustained positive attitude and behaviour change towards post-abortion care and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues in seven districts in the Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. A multi-pronged approach to remove stigma and create an enabling environment by training service providers; developing local champions; sensitising stakeholders and ensuring a confidential referral pathway has proven to be successful in reducing the dangers associated with unsafe abortion.

Shirkat Gah's value clarification trainings for service providers not only updated professionals on best practices for safe post-abortion care but also examined societal taboos and stigma surrounding women's rights and access to post-abortion care services and contraception. As a result of these trainings there has been a shift in attitudes and approach; for example, there has been an increase in the number of providers willing to give post-abortion care services and information, where this had not previously been the case.

Empowering women to demand quality reproductive health services

Pakistan



Shirkat Gah/Pakistan
Awareness session with men on family planning

Through 254 community replication sessions, Shirkat Gah has reached thousands of women and girls with information on gender, SRH and community accountability, and is supporting young women to lodge successful complaints with hospitals when they are refused family planning counselling.



Si Jeunesse Savait (SJS)

Si Jeunesse Savait was part of the successful campaign to liberalise the abortion law in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018. Their 'Tolobel'ango' project seeks to increase public awareness of the legality of abortion since this change, with a harm-reduction focus on the safety and accessibility of misoprostol in communities where public services are prohibitively expensive or otherwise inaccessible.

Since starting their SAAF funded project in 2018 SJS has educated an impressive 34,382 people through outreach activities on safe abortion. They engage a broad range of stakeholders, gathering more than 80 trusted doctors, pharmacists, medical students, traditional practitioners and priests into their ‘SafetyNet’ referral network. The strength of their work to challenge accepted norms about abortion is evident in the involvement of Catholic priests, who are now themselves sharing harm-reduction information about post-abortion care and misoprostol with their congregations.

—○ Raising young people’s awareness of their right to safe abortion

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



SJS/DRC

SJS share information about reproductive rights in a youth club



“After participating in the community events, I was able to put into practice what I had learned and understand its relevance. My girlfriend is one of the concrete examples—she could have turned her life upside down because of an unwanted pregnancy, suffer great discrimination from her family, and at worst proceed to a clandestine abortion just to achieve her ends, but with this information received through the Tolobel’ango project, her health was spared, she was able to continue her academic career and live her life normally.” —Young man reached by SJS education sessions

Tusitukirewamu Group works in the slum areas of Kampala, and has a range of innovative ways of reaching community members with information about sexual and reproductive health. For example, to sensitise men on their role in preventing gender-based violence, and its links to unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion, they deliver outreach services in male dominated workplaces such as garages and metal and carpentry workshops. This sensitisation has led to over a thousand men supporting and often escorting their female partners to access reproductive health services. They hold public vigils for those whose lives have been lost to unsafe abortion, where community leaders and members of the public are encouraged to pledge their support for ending maternal mortality due to unsafe abortion. This information sharing has led to women obtaining safe services. Local workers in bars, restaurants and hairdressers are also trained and given aprons to wear to encourage conversations about access to contraception and post-abortion care, acting as trusted referral points for the community to find reliable reproductive health services.

○ Innovative outreach in the community

Uganda



Tusitukirewamu Group/Uganda
A market worker wears the Tusitukirewamu Group apron

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-Brazil (CDD Brazil)

CDD Brazil believes that to really change hearts and minds: “We need to not only talk about abortion. We need to sing about abortion.”

Their advocacy project includes a focus on using the arts to push for a change in social norms around abortion in Brazil, where legal abortion is extremely restricted and public opinion largely favours this prohibition. CDD Brazil invited feminist performers to record songs for an EP which is now available on Spotify, with around 60,000 plays so far.

The EP was launched at a free public music event in São Paulo, the ‘Festival for the Legalization of Abortion’, attended by approximately 450 people, drawing interest beyond the capacity of the venue.

- Using music to reach people with messages about safe abortion

Brazil



CDD Brazil/ Brazil
Festival for the Legalization of Abortion

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners undertaking research

Many SAAF grantee partners work in countries where reliable data and evidence on abortion is scarce, and we are pleased to be able to support the expansion of an evidence base which supports advocacy work and informs high quality service provision and other programming.



Across the most recent round of SAAF funding, seven grantee partners started new studies or research projects relating to abortion, and 2019 saw the completion of some of these pieces of research, detailed below.



Sharing the Evidence

Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA)

At the end of 2019 **PFPPA** finalized and launched their study into the accessibility and unmet needs of those seeking abortion related services in Palestine. The study exposes a conflict which is apparent in many strongly religious countries—abortion is seen as a sin, and something which should not take place—however, as PFPPA’s research makes clear, abortions are happening in Palestine.



Among 1003 women aged under 55 who were interviewed in the West Bank, the majority (57%) knew someone who had had an abortion and 12% of the women interviewed reported having had at least one abortion themselves. Although most respondents believed abortion was not morally acceptable, 76% thought that women should have access to safe abortion.

Tackling abortion stigma with evidence in the West Bank



Samar Hazboun/PFPPA/Palestine
Assessing service data



“I heard that many doctors do it in their private clinics and take a lot of money from the women but many others are afraid to do so because they fear risking their license”.
—Female focus group participant

The stigma and fear around abortion leads to prohibitively high costs for clinical abortion services, and many of the women interviewed reported resorting to unsafe methods, including lifting heavy objects or drinking detergent to try to end their pregnancies. In partnership with the Ministry of Health PFPPA presented the key findings of the research at an event for 130 stakeholders.

Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA)

On the Solomon Islands, abortion is only legally permitted to save the pregnant person's life, and reliable data on abortion services is not collected by the government. With funding support from SAAF, **SIPPA** conducted a unique research project entitled 'Understanding Unwanted Pregnancy and Safe Abortion in the Solomon Islands'.

SIPPA staff interviewed health workers and women who had accessed post-abortion care, as well as holding focus group discussions with men and women in rural villages. The report provides evidence of a concerning lack of access to sexual health information and contraceptives, coupled with high levels of violence against women, including reproductive coercion.

Participants in the focus groups were less aware of safer methods, and unable to access them. It includes a number of recommendations for information dissemination, service delivery and legislative reform which will now be followed up by SIPPA in their work.

Uncovering the dangerous realities of Solomon Islands' abortion law

Solomon Islands



SIPPA/Solomon Islands
SIPPA with partners advocating to stop violence against women

"I've come across teenagers who are pregnant and they don't want it, they come to me and ask me for pills to abort their pregnancy but I can't help them because it's illegal."

—Nurse interviewed by SIPPA

Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD)

GNAD know through their work and lived experience that mainstream information about sexual and reproductive health is often not made accessible to Deaf people.

GNAD conducted research to support their work with young Deaf people in Ghana, to ensure SRH programming takes into account their needs. Focus group discussions and in depth interviews were conducted in Ghanaian Sign Language and a number of barriers were exposed.

GNAD are already using the findings to push for better inclusion of young Deaf people’s needs, and for their involvement in planning and programming of SRH services and education. They have produced accessible materials for Deaf women and girls on a range of issues, including signed videos on safe abortion which are sent out to the Deaf community via text messages and social media.

Assessing the barriers young Deaf people face when accessing reproductive health care



More than 90% of those participating in the focus groups said cost was an issue when it came to accessing SRH services, particularly where there was an additional cost incurred for the services of a sign language interpreter.



“Some of us never went to school before and as such could not sign and write well. Therefore, it becomes a problem when we are inquiring for information and SRH services from health workers because of lack of sign language interpreters”
—Female focus group participant

Samsara

In Indonesia, Samsara collaborated with a research team to publish cutting edge research on their SAAF funded safe abortion hotline service. The research, published in the International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology is the first-ever randomized control trial of those who contacted a safe abortion hotline for information about self-managed abortion. The study found that:



“Levels of preparedness, confidence, and feelings of support were all extremely high among both control and intervention arms – indicative of the high-quality, evidence-based information, comprehensive, and supportive abortion counselling that safe olaborion hotline clients receive.”

Using hotline data to inform the global community about self-managed abortion

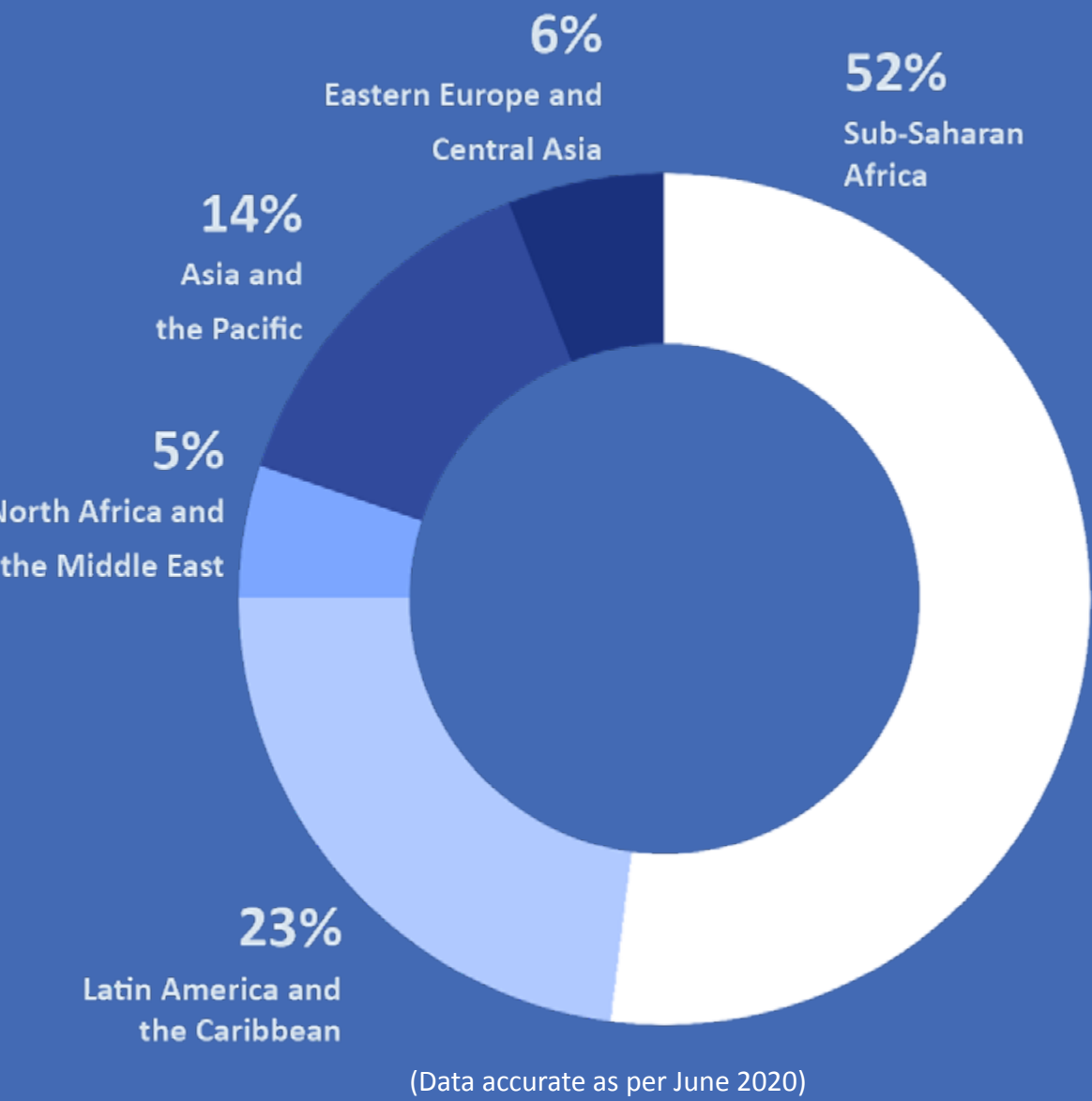
Indonesia



Samsara/Indonesia
Samsara hotline staff

Interviews with SAAF grantee partners from across the globe

Where we fund:



Meet the people making change happen



WFI/Nigeria
Healthcare providers trained by WFI

Phonsina and Diana, MAMA Network/Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH)

• Why do you work on safe abortion?

TICAH has run safe spaces for conversations on sex and sexuality since 2006. Every time we held our conversations, questions on abortion always came up but women in our groups only shared unsafe abortion stories, some of which had turned tragic.

We didn't know how to respond to this because even where safe services existed, they were out of reach for women like us. We started asking and trying to find solutions for ourselves.

After getting trained on misoprostol from Women on Waves we received our first grant from SAAF to train women on safe abortion methods.

• What was the biggest achievement of your SAAF funded project this year?

We did community researches with MAMA Network partners in five countries and presented the findings at the Women Deliver conference. We participated in radio shows collectively reaching approximately one million listeners with information on safe abortion and the Aunty Jane Hotline number.

• What do you get from being part of the SAAF community?

We used SAAF developed resources in trainings to inform and share knowledge about abortion. Attending the SAAF gathering allowed us to learn new advocacy strategies from other regions like South America and grow through shared knowledge.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Kenya



Liz Meléndez, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán (CMP Flora Tristán)

● Why do you work on safe abortion?

From a very young age, I was outraged by the many injustices I saw being committed against women.

In Peru, unsafe abortion puts women's lives at risk; however, the existing double standards and inequalities mean that the risk is actually borne by younger women and those living in poverty. Gender and class discrimination are condensed in this problem; there is nothing more unjust than this.

● What was the biggest achievement of your SAAF funded project this year?

I believe that one of the most important achievements is to have contributed to a greater number of activists from women's organizations and collectives becoming aware of the defence of legal and safe abortion and joining campaigns and actions promoted by our institution.

● What do you get from being part of the SAAF community?

SAAF's support has been critical, as it has provided the opportunity to connect with other safe abortion advocacy organizations, with whom we have been making contact to articulate efforts and promote joint action. For example, we are currently developing a virtual course on the right to decide and we are pleased to be collaborating with colleagues from ANIS in Brazil.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Peru



Yagya Karki, Population Health Development Group (PHD Group)

- **Why do you work on safe abortion?**

I was inspired to work on safe abortion because in Nepal women have appalling conditions in general and when it comes to reproductive health issues they suffer even more physically and emotionally. Despite a relatively liberal abortion law, many women and girls cannot utilize abortion services when they need to; especially those who are poor, illiterate, marginalised and living in remote areas.

- **What was the biggest achievement of your SAAF funded project this year?**

In 2019, PHD Group helped accredit six health facilities for safe abortion and thereby increased access to the service. Before 2019 there was one safe abortion facility for about 2,500 women while now this number has been reduced to 1,400.

- **What do you get from being part of the SAAF community?**

Being part of the SAAF community I get updated on abortion related issues globally which helps a lot to improve what we are doing in the country. For instance, abortion programme implementers in Nepal talk about 'repeat abortions' which is inherently stigma related. In a free and egalitarian society abortion must not be stigmatized in any form.

Asia and the Pacific: Nepal



● Why do you work on safe abortion?

I was 6 or 7 years old when one of my relatives had an abortion at the age of 15, I did not know back then what exactly it was, but I clearly remember the judgement she went through because of the fact she had a sexual partner. Being a child I did not understand what she did wrong, why she was treated like that both from the family and service providers...years passed and I am still on the same page. I guess that sense of unfairness motivated me to be a supporter of improving access to safe, friendly and stigma free abortion.

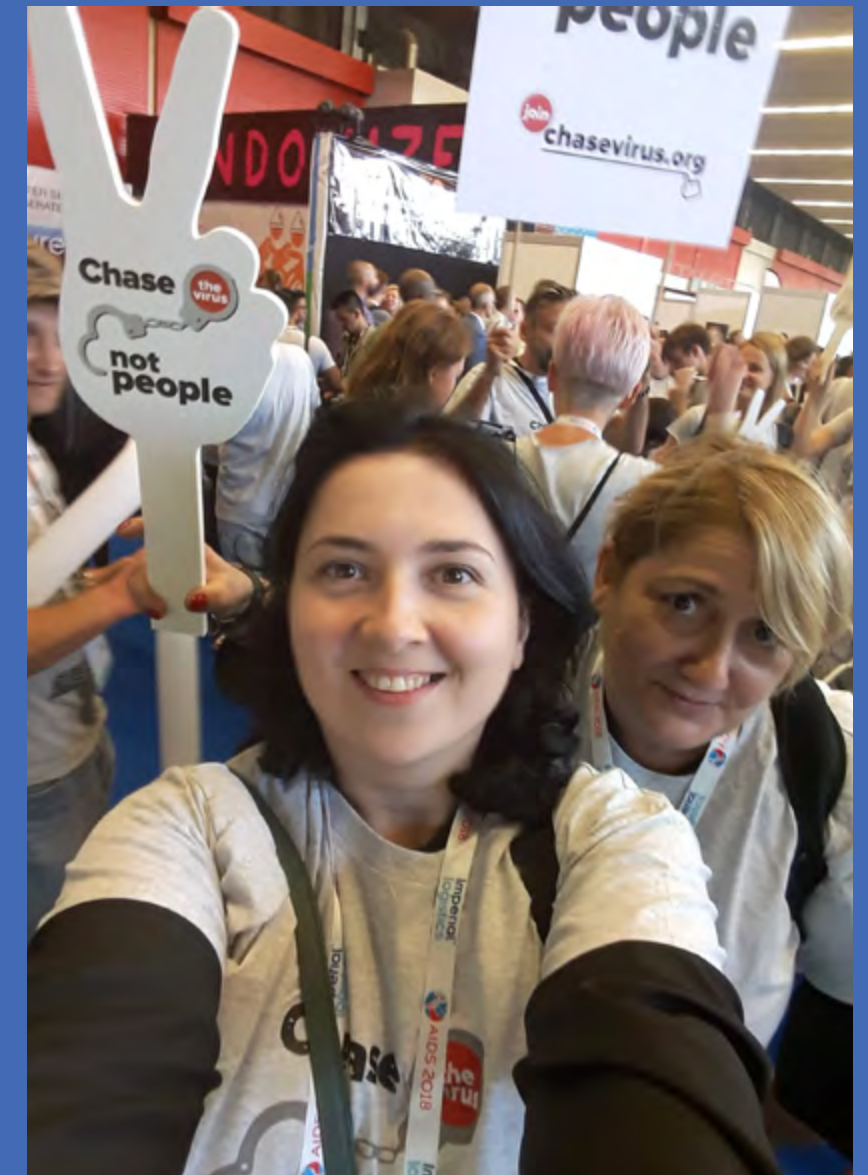
● What was the biggest achievement of your SAAF funded project this year?

In addition to increasing access to safe abortion services for HIV positive women, sex workers, and women who use drugs, the biggest achievement for 2019 was the training conducted in cooperation with RHTC (SAAF grantee partner in Moldova).

We trained peer educators and social workers on self-managed medical abortion - the idea itself was born at the SAAF partner meeting where we met. The activity will highly contribute to increasing access to safe abortion for the groups we work with.

● What do you get from being part of the SAAF community?

Since partnering with SAAF, the biggest paradigm shift to me personally, and within the organization, was a broader understanding of how and where medical abortion can be managed. Also, new topics have emerged, for example: trans people and abortion, people with mobility issues and intellectual disabilities, people with special needs and so on.



Zhiman Hussein, Nujeen for Family Democratizing Organization (NFDO)

- **Why do you work on safe abortion?**

While performing my duty in the hospital, I saw that there are a huge number of women dying due to unsafe abortion in our community and that is why I decided to work on women's rights, especially on sexual and reproductive health. Despite the fact that abortion is not legal in Iraq; I decided to defend this right, as it's a woman's right.

- **What was the biggest achievement of your SAAF funded project this year?**

The biggest achievement is that we still have permission to support care abortion for the female survivors of ISIS violence, despite it being legally restricted.

North Africa and the Middle East: Iraqi Kurdistan

In 2019 we have also done a lot of awareness raising work in the community – holding sessions on abortion related stigma and early marriage. We target community leaders to change their perspective on these controversial social issues.

- **What do you get from being part of the SAAF community?**

Through being a part of the SAAF community and attending the global meeting organized by SAAF I learned much new information about how to talk about abortion, changing behaviours, using new guidelines for abortion, and how to advocate on women's rights. Furthermore, the new SAAF community Workplace is very useful and keeps us in touch despite our distance from each other.



As the funder of a number of abortion-focused projects around the world, SAAF is focused on how best to support the organizations we fund to not only achieve their project goals but to make connections and grow as part of a global movement.

Grantee partners have informed Secretariat plans for capacity building, networking and partnering, and monitoring and evaluation support and we continue to work with all partners to ensure the assistance we provide is inclusive and effective.

SAAF Support to Grantees



Over 600 organizations and coalitions applied to SAAF’s call for funding in August, with concept notes sent from 82 different countries.

Eighty-five per cent of applicants had never applied for SAAF funding before and a third had an annual organizational budget of less than \$50,000 USD.

Following a structured review process by SAAF secretariat and external expert reviewers, the SAAF board approved 26 organizations to be invited to attend one of three proposal development workshops held in São Paulo, Nairobi and Kigali in October 2019.

The workshops were an opportunity for applicants to fine-tune their proposals with one-to-one support from the SAAF team, as well as shared learning with other participants.

New funding call and proposal development



SAAF/ Brazil

SAAF staff and grantee partners at the proposal development workshop in Sao Paulo



“The workshop helped us to be clear on our objectives and indicators. This has been very helpful for us as we do our six-monthly reports. Our work is mainly qualitative and there were challenges setting the indicators, but we were able to do so during the Nairobi workshop. We were also informed on the SAAF financial systems. Interacting with SAAF staff also helped building a relationship.” —Respondent to SAAF grantee partner survey

In 2019, the SAAF team visited 19 grantee partner organizations in 14 countries. These support visits are an important way for SAAF staff to gain greater insight into projects, and to provide support and recommendations to inform future implementation.

Security issues had previously prevented SAAF staff from visiting grantee partners in eastern DRC, but a visit was finally carried out in June and SAAF's Senior Programme Advisor was able to meet with CEIFD, SOSFEC and GFV; bringing together the three organizations to discuss their work.

Conversations focused on best practice in service delivery, including access to commodities, community mobilisation and inputting to the quality of care standards SAAF is developing.

SAAF visits to grantee partners



SAAF/ Guatemala
The COPIJ team



“SAAF is professional and very attentive in engagements, including visits. It remains focused on the essentials and does not play the role of an auditor but of an effective partner who provides guidance and suggestions.” —Respondent to SAAF grantee partner survey

Financial and logistical support to attend events

SAAF supported a number of grantee partners to attend training and conferences to develop their technical knowledge, increase opportunities to network with others working on abortion, and showcase their work to a wider audience. Nearly 90% of those who received funding reported that by attending the event they learned something new to implement immediately in their work.



SAAF has continued to support the Safe Access Hub platform developed in collaboration with MSI, IPPF, PSI and Ipas. The hub was publicly launched at the Women Deliver conference in June via a panel discussion entitled ‘SafeAccess to Abortion: A Cross-Sector Partnership to Eliminate Unsafe Abortion by 2030’. SAAF was represented on the panel by Dr Maria Vivas, the Deputy Director of Oriéntame Clinics and the ESAR Foundation in Colombia. Dr Vivas presented the Latin American perspective on emerging tactics and strategies used to address the rising anti-choice movement across the region.

Meetings and Conferences



SAAF/Turkey
Discussion at the SAAF Global Gathering

SAAF Global Gathering

2019 was also the year SAAF was able to hold a global gathering of grantee partners in Istanbul, with 45 organizations from all five regions represented. The key objectives for the meeting were to:

1. Form connections with other organizations working on the topic of safe abortion and feel an increased sense of community
2. Explore common issues within the field of abortion and learn more about effective tools and strategies which can be used in our own work
3. Learn more about SAAF resources and areas of work and have an opportunity to review and develop them

Over 90% of participants felt that all three objectives were met and in a subsequent survey, 78% of attendees have told us that they made changes to the way they work based on what they learned at the meeting.

We are delighted to know that 95% of attendees have stayed in contact with at least one other person they met at the gathering, showing that it was an important space for making global connections.



SAAF Global Gathering

The agenda was formulated in collaboration with grantee partners and sessions were held based on areas of shared interest and identified need. Topics discussed included regional trends in anti-abortion opposition, community engagement and social norm change, engaging religious leaders, reframing language on abortion and quality of care.

Time was provided for ‘open topic’ discussions to be led by participants with expertise or interest in a chosen area – topics selected included: working with young people, social media outreach, working with people with disabilities, cross subsidization of services, abortion hotlines, and provision of abortion in restrictive settings.

Care was taken to ensure that the meeting was as participatory and inclusive as possible, and activities were developed to ensure personal connections could be made and sustained following the meeting.



SAAF/Turkey

Diana from TICAH speaking about tackling opposition to abortion



“The connection with people working with similar approaches, facing the same problems or articulating in the same region was definitely very useful and inspiring. I have stayed actively in touch with at least three or four different people I didn't know before the meeting”

In a world which stigmatises abortion, producing good quality, attractive and non-stigmatizing messaging on abortion can be challenging.

With this in mind, SAAF created a toolkit of templates for leaflets and posters, along with a comprehensive range of illustrations which organizations were free to adapt and use in their own contexts. Illustrations, as well as templates, with suggested wording for more and less restrictive settings, were produced in English, French and Spanish, through ongoing consultation with grantee partners, including in-person feedback at the grantee gathering.

SAAF held webinars to explain how to use the templates and images, which are available to all grantee partners on the free online design platform 'Canva'.

A number of partners are already adapting the templates for use in their own country contexts, with 36 organizations reporting having put them to use so far.

Sharing resources for rights-based messaging on abortion



“Our communication officer used the communication templates shared on the website and we realised that information laid out in the template got more interactions and views.”

—Respondent to grantee partner survey

SAAF's Finance Advisors work closely with grantee partners to provide support with financial management where required.

Each grantee partner is required to submit an annual financial audit and recognizing that this may be the first time many smaller organizations have carried out such an audit, SAAF created guidelines which have been disseminated in all three languages. 61% of grantee partners responding to a recent survey reported using the audit guidelines to support them in the management of the audit process.

SAAF has also developed a list of minimum standards on financial management. During the due diligence process, each grantee partner's capacity is assessed against these standards in different areas from basic accounting processes and internal control procedures to anti-fraud policies. Following in-person and online support, some grantee partners have significantly improved their financial capacity and are now in a much better position to cope with larger grants and more ambitious projects.

Building financial management capacity



SAAF/ Kenya

SAAF Finance Adviser visits TICAH in Nairobi



“From scratch as an organization, SAAF visits have strengthened us as an organization. What we are is because of the lessons learnt from the visits.” —Respondent to SAAF grantee partner survey

SAAF online community

To ensure easier communication between grantee partners, in 2019 SAAF moved from using an email listserv platform to supporting grantee partners to join a private SAAF group on ‘Workplace’. This platform is similar to Facebook, therefore familiar for many, and can be accessed on a smartphone. It provides auto-translation for over 100 languages, easing communication across countries. At the time of writing, 148 individuals have joined the group and it has become a vibrant space for sharing photos, videos and written updates on project work, as well as a space for support and inspiration.



In a recent survey, 78% of grantee partners said they had used something they saw on the Workplace community to improve their own work and 87% feel the group helps them stay connected with other SAAF grantee partners.



Networking and partnering



SAAF/Turkey
Participants at the SAAF gathering sign up to Workplace.

“The SAAF Workplace has enabled us to showcase our work with other grantees all over the world. We are able to share timely updates as and when they take effect.”
—SAAF grantee partner report

Through connections made in person at the gathering, and via the online community, there has been an increase in cross-collaboration and resource sharing.

After seeing Anis' comprehensive guidance document setting out the evidence for decriminalization of abortion in [Brazil](#), CSJ News was inspired to create a similar resource for the Malawian context:



"We thank SAAF for inviting CSJ NEWS to the SAAF gathering held in Turkey in July 2019. Learning from advocates from Brazil, we have produced our own booklet. It has proved to be a very useful tool for advocacy."
—CSJ News project report

We have also seen fruitful collaboration between RPRV in Georgia and RHTC in Moldova after Rodica Comendant from RHTC provided training on medical abortion to RPRV's staff and partners:



"In talking to partners it was clear that they would be willing to engage in providing much needed information and support for self-management of abortion but wanted to feel more confident in doing so. One recommendation from the SAAF visit report was for Rodica to provide training to RPRV and partner organizations—RPRV found budget to do this and held the training... It was a huge success, so informative and practical. The team feels so much more confident now... lots of ideas generated for the future."
—RPRV project report

Grantee partner collaboration



International Safe Abortion Day on 28th September also provided an opportunity for grantee partners to come together.

After being introduced during a SAAF visit earlier in the year, CEIFD and GFV held a joint march through Baraka to commemorate the day.

Twenty-one grantee partners also engaged in SAAF's online campaign for the day, sharing photos of their staff and volunteers with "Abortion is Healthcare" tote bags received at the global gathering.



RHTC/Moldova
RHTC staff take part in SAAF's photo campaign

Developing Quality of Care Standards

Currently, there are no globally agreed minimum quality of care standards and indicators to systematically assess quality abortion and contraceptive service provision particularly within low resource settings, humanitarian contexts, and highly restrictive environments. In conjunction with IPPF's WISH (Women's Integrated Sexual Health) programme and a selection of grantee partners, SAAF has developed a set of minimum evidence-based quality standards, statements, measurements and indicators for abortion and contraceptive services.

A working group comprising of representatives from SAAF grantee partner organizations, IPPF Member Associations, the International Rescue Committee, World Health Organization and the Abortion Service Quality initiative has supported the review process. The next steps for 2020 include the development of a tool to measure quality indicators and the piloting of this tool within different countries and settings, in partnership with various organizations.



Yagazie Emezi/Getty Images/Rwanda
Discussing contraceptive choices at HDI

SAAF is governed by an independent multi-agency Board which consists of representatives from international NGOs, donor governments and individuals with relevant experience and technical expertise.

The Board provides strategic direction and oversight of the fund, sets policy and guidelines; considers and discusses the grant recommendations of the SAAF Technical Review Panel and the Secretariat, and approves applications eligible for SAAF funding. As the highest level decision-making body, the SAAF Board is accountable to the donors and other stakeholders.

The SAAF Board and Governance



SAAF/ UK

The SAAF board meeting in October 2019

SAAF Board Members

Alexandra Teixeira
Senior Technical Advisor
Technical Excellence Department, Ipas

Camilla Holst Salvesen
Senior Adviser
Global Health Section, Norwegian Agency
For Development Cooperation, (Norad)

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Youth Champion
Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP)

Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng
Lead Consultant/Founder
Nalane For Reproductive Justice

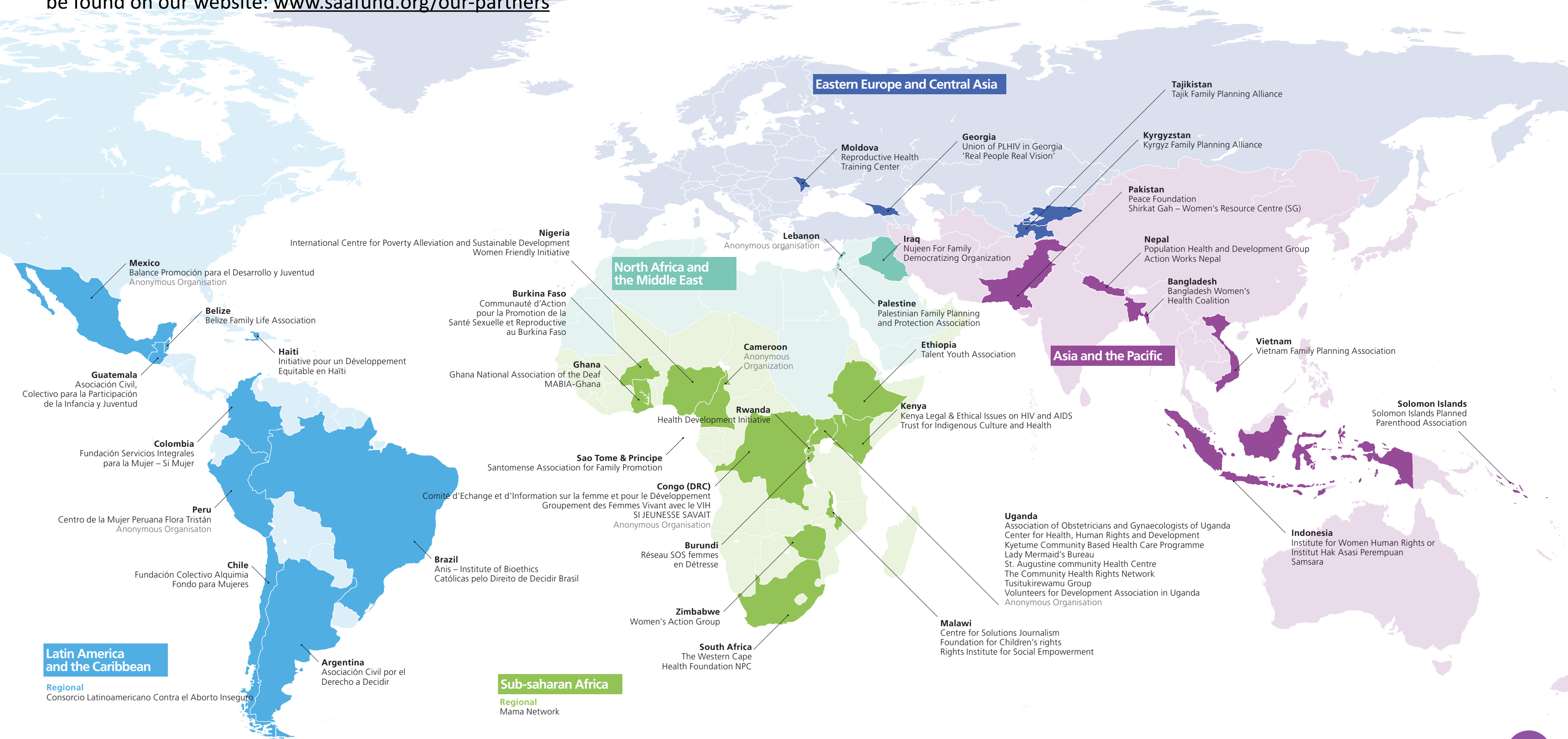


Kristine Chan/Inroads/Kenya
SAAF board member Génesis Luigi

“SAAF grantee partners are challenging systems of oppression by advancing the realization of abortion rights for everyone, no matter what and no matter where. As a SAAF board member, I've had the privilege to know the work of our partners from Mexico to Nepal and see how they are transforming their communities by listening, learning, and debating how to make the movement for abortion rights more critical, free from stigma, and anchored to a reproductive justice lens. As a donor, SAAF has a huge responsibility to also listen, learn, and accompany these processes of transformation towards a world where abortion rights are fully recognized as human rights.”

Further information about current SAAF grantee partners can be found on our website: www.saafund.org/our-partners

SAAF Grantee Partners 2019





SAAF/Peru

SAAF grantee partner rural health campaign in Cajamarca



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