



Resist and persist

Annual Report 2018

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The Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF)

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

SAAF focuses on the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable women and girls, funding projects which provide abortion services 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 de-stigmatize abortion – creating and supporting a global network of champions who are more empowered to work at regional and international as well as local levels.

This report was prepared by the SAAF Secretariat and the chair of the SAAF board in July 2019. It is structured according to the four grant streams outlined in SAAF's Theory of Change¹, sharing grantee partner and Secretariat activities and achievements for the period January – December 2018.

Front cover: Anis
March for Women's Lives during the public hearings
on decriminalisation of abortion in Brazil



VODA
Peer educator with referral card

Contents

CUANDO DOGMAS RELIGIOSOS
SE METEN EN LA POLÍTICA PÚBLICA
NOS AFECTA A TODOS:

CREYENTES Y
NO CREYENTES

#EstadoLaicoYa

A message from the chair of the SAAF board	5
Driving change and making history	6
Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners working to change laws and policies	
Reaching the most underserved	10
Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners increasing access to safe abortion through innovative approaches	
Medical abortion	11
Working with young people	13
Providing services in humanitarian settings	15
Reaching the underserved	16
Breaking the silence	17
Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners changing harmful norms on abortion	
Sharing the evidence	21
Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners undertaking research	
Meet the people making change happen	23
Interviews with SAAF Grantee Partners	
SAAF support to grantees	26
The SAAF board and governance	30
SAAF Grantee Partners 2018	31
Endnotes	32



CDD Brazil
Seminar for activists working on sexual and reproductive rights

A message from the chair of the SAAF board



This report highlights the achievements of the Safe Abortion Action Fund for 2018. Now in its 13th year, SAAF was established partly in response to the re-imposition of the 'Global Gag Rule' by President George W Bush. With initial funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), quickly followed by additional pledges from other donors, SAAF has developed itself as a unique funding mechanism unequivocally and unapologetically focusing on increasing access to safe legal abortion across the world, and especially for women and girls living in the most restrictive environments. At a time when the Global Gag Rule has not only been re-enacted but expanded by President Trump, where conservative and populist forces are pushing back on women's sexual and reproductive rights, yet also a time where the international community is preparing to celebrate 25 years of ICPD², SAAF's continued mission is of even greater relevance.

This report shares some highlights from the work of SAAF grantee partners around the world – covering advocacy and social change, provision of services and pioneering research. I am proud to see the performance achieved last year

reflecting the increased reach and impact of our grantees. These locally-based, often small organizations are delivering a range of projects that are often at the heart of innovation and respond to the specific needs of the people they serve.

Beyond channeling dedicated funding, the small yet effective SAAF Secretariat has built strong systems and processes to support grantees through the full project management cycle, ensuring quality and accountability. The Secretariat also provides a platform for connecting grantees – at national, regional and global level – allowing for alliance building and networking but also for learning and scaling up of successful strategies.

With new and renewed support from its generous donors and partners and a new funding round coming soon, I look forward to the implementation of further projects advancing the right to safe abortion as an integral part of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Manuelle Hurwitz,
SAAF Chair

"The Global Gag Rule is making health services less accessible, especially for already marginalized and underserved populations... Denying information about safe abortion to people who need it can be deadly."

The IWHC's 'Crisis in Care' report³



KELIN
Demonstration in favour of abortion rights in Kenya

Driving change and making history

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners working to change laws and policies

Activists and advocates for the right to safe abortion have shown that persistence really can lead to positive change. According to the Guttmacher Institute, since the year 2000, 27 countries have expanded the legal grounds for abortion. In May 2018, the world looked on as the majority of citizens in **Ireland** voted 'yes' to legal abortion in a historical referendum.

More recently we have also seen a successful outcome for those campaigning for abortion rights in **South Korea**, where the court ruled that the law which criminalizes abortion must be lifted by 2020.



CDD Argentina
Public demonstration for abortion rights – “pañuelazo”

Chile also moved from having one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world to allowing abortion under three legal grounds – with medical coverage becoming available in January 2018. SAAF grantee partner **Fundación Colectivo Alquimia Fondo Para Mujeres (Fondo Alquimia)** has been responding to the increased opposition the country has seen since this legal change was introduced. There have been serious problems with the implementation of the new law – including the government’s permissiveness around personal and institutional refusal to provide services. Fondo Alquimia monitors the implementation of the law with partner organisations in seven territories. They work to strengthen knowledge on the strategies of the opposition, and share methodologies to reinforce the security and sustainability of activist movements with partners across Chile.

In **Argentina**, after many years of progressive abortion bills being brought forward and rejected, in 2018 a bill on safe abortion was finally approved by the lower house of congress. It was defeated by the Senate by just seven votes, and polls showed a shift in public attitudes towards abortion, with the majority of the public in favour of legislation to expand access. SAAF has been funding the advocacy work of **Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir/Catholics for the Right to Decide Argentina (CDD-Argentina)** since 2014. The organization played a key role in forming a strategic alliance of organizations to work for improving access to safe and legal abortion. Their work was central to the public hearings and media debates which shaped understanding of the issue. The ‘green wave’ of activism which has spread not just across Argentina, but throughout the Latin American region, has seen an unprecedented rise in public support for abortion rights. Within a majority Catholic population, CDD-Argentina occupies an important space in the movement, engaging people of faith and linking them with youth networks and feminist lawyers to become part of the national movement.

In **Brazil**, the ‘green wave’ has also had a positive impact on the public’s understanding of abortion, and a push towards a more progressive law. In 2017 SAAF grantee partner **Anis – Institute of Bioethics (Anis)** proposed the ‘ADPF 442’ legal case to the Supreme Court to decriminalize abortion up to 12 weeks. Their advocacy strategies successfully led to the calling of a public hearing on the case in August 2018. Anis’ team supported 25 experts to submit testimonies and provided comprehensive arguments in favour of decriminalization.⁵ They also established a partnership with the University of Brasilia to launch a sexual and reproductive rights law clinic and to train students and lawyers to build legal support for NGOs to engage in strategic litigation. The Supreme Court hearing brought by Anis provided a landmark moment for reproductive rights in Brazil, with a wide reach for arguments in favour of abortion rights – the hearing was televised and in just six months Anis’ work was featured in 1622 media pieces, including global news outlets like The Guardian and The New York Times. Anis was fundamental in ensuring communication materials reached a wide and varied audience, with solidarity for the movement being shared using the hashtag #NemPresaNemMorta – “Neither in Prison, Nor Dead”.

“All the deaths and the problems that occur as a result of illegal abortions are the state’s responsibility. I am very happy that today we can discuss the issue with the people who have the power to make a change.”

Rebecca Mendes, who was supported by Anis to bring her request for a legal abortion to the Brazilian Supreme Court⁶



Anis
Activists wearing ‘Nem Presa, Nem Morta’ t-shirts to travel to festival



KELIN
Protest against misleading anti-abortion billboards in Kenya

The tireless advocacy work of another SAAF grantee partner in **Kenya** also made global news in 2018.⁶ **The Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH)** was part of a coalition of organisations fighting back after the Ministry of Health banned Marie Stopes from providing abortion services in the country. Along with fellow SAAF grantee partner **Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN)**, they

were successful in ensuring women's legal right to access abortion services was returned to them. Both organisations have also been instrumental in a lengthy advocacy effort for the reinstatement of the country's guidelines on safe abortion, building to a huge victory in 2019 where access was returned and a woman whose daughter died from unsafe abortion was awarded damages by the State.⁷ In the lead up to this landmark ruling

both TICAH and KELIN were undertaking vibrant awareness raising campaigns through traditional and social media, local community events, and engagement of decision makers and stakeholders.

In **Sao Tomé and Príncipe**, the **Associação Saotomeense para a Promoção Familiar (ASPF)** has worked closely with the government to develop national medical guidelines that will

enable the provision of safe abortion services in all public health facilities in the country. As there were no existing guidelines, ASPF has been working from scratch, holding meetings with the Ministry of Health to provide technical assistance. This advocacy work is strengthened by gaining community support and understanding of the importance of safe abortion – door to door awareness campaigns reached over 10,000 people.

Reaching the most underserved

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners increasing access to safe abortion through innovative approaches

Many SAAF grantee partners provide/refer to contraception and abortion services and post-abortion care in settings where they face barriers because of weak health systems, restrictive policy environments and entrenched abortion stigma. These organisations 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 with dignity and freedom.



Medical abortion

Étienne-Émile Baulieu, the 'inventor' of Mifepristone, declared it the "the moral property of women."⁹ The world has seen a shift towards greater use of medical abortion, in both medical and community settings. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognized that "individuals may self-manage their mifepristone and/or misoprostol medication without direct supervision of a health-care provider" and that this can be "empowering... leading to a more optimal use of health-care resources".¹⁰

A number of SAAF grantee partners are providing information about safe access to medical abortion through hotlines and confidential 'chat' on social media and messaging platforms. SAAF has supported **Samsara** in **Indonesia** since 2013. The organisation runs local hotlines to ensure women from rural areas are reached, and promotes accurate information about medical abortion through online outreach such as the popular 'Ask Inna' website.¹¹ Samsara's safe abortion hotline was the subject of a pioneering study into the safety of second trimester medical abortion outside a clinic setting, published in the British Medical Journal.¹²



As an established provider of high quality hotlines, in 2018 Samsara hosted a 'Global Hotline Meeting' and shared its expertise with attendees representing 26 hotlines from around the world. One attendee was **The Community Health Rights Network (COHERINET)** in **Uganda**, which thanks to

SAAF funding, was able to launch Uganda's first safe abortion hotline in 2018. 'Aunt Kaki' is a toll-free hotline offering reproductive health information in five different local languages.¹³ In the first three months of its launch (from October to December 2018) the Aunt Kaki hotline received 325 calls.



COHERINET
Global launch of the Aunt Kaki hotline



KFPA
Training on medical abortion for Village Health Committees

Although abortion is available within the public health system in **Kyrgyzstan**, the methods used are mostly not recognised as modern safe methods according to the WHO and medical abortion is not widely available. Continued SAAF funding has supported the **Kyrgyz Family Planning Alliance**

(KFPA) to register, import and distribute Medabon within the country. In 2018, KFPA successfully registered Medabon and started the process of identifying pharmaceutical companies that were willing to engage in the import of the medication.

Working with young people

Younger people are often the most negatively affected by barriers to safe abortion services. They can face additional hurdles thanks to age-related stigma, reduced autonomy relating to consent laws, and fewer resources to pay for services and transport. Many SAAF grantee partners work to reduce these barriers and ensure

that young people have accurate information about their reproductive health and rights, as well as access to services when they need them.

In **Guatemala**, the **Asociación Civil Colectivo Para la Participación de la Infancia y Juventud (COPIJ)**, has

empowered young people to monitor the quality of health services provided to them. The young volunteers of the Colectivo visit health centres to verify how the youth-friendly spaces are functioning and to assess the capacity of the staff to provide appropriate care to young people. Some of the adolescents visited in groups identifying

themselves as Colectivo volunteers, taking a monitoring tool and interviewing staff. Others made individual visits as ‘mystery clients’ to gain a real sense of how a young person might be treated. The results of this monitoring were presented back to health centres as constructive feedback to improve services.



COPIJ
Youth volunteers

Si Jeunesse Savait (SJS) is a feminist, youth-led organisation, based in Kinshasa, in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**. SJS works to support young people to realize their sexual and reproductive rights, including providing harm reduction information on safe abortion. Even though the abortion law in the DRC has been relaxed, due to years of abortion being illegal and lack of knowledge about abortion rights and access, unsafe abortion remains an issue. SJS carries out a number of awareness raising activities to improve young people's access to safe abortion, as well as their knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. In 2018 young community mobilisers aged between 17 and 23 were trained to share information and reached over 12,000 others through football teams, choirs and other local groups. These young people were able to refer to safe services and handed out wristbands with hotline numbers on as well as a list of trusted local providers. To ensure intergenerational support for SRH over 100 parents with adolescent children were also engaged and trained in order to increase their understanding of young people's health needs and rights.



Providing services in humanitarian settings

It is estimated that globally, 60% of preventable maternal deaths take place in settings of conflict, fragility, displacement and natural disasters.¹⁴ Access to safe abortion in such settings can be threatened for a number of reasons including legal barriers, restrictive funding and abortion stigma amongst programmers and providers. SAAF grantee partners are working to ensure that those in the most vulnerable circumstances, so often underserved with SRH care, are able to access their reproductive rights with dignity.

In **Iraqi Kurdistan**, **Nujeen for Family Democratizing Organisation (NFDO)** is working closely with local authorities to provide safe abortion and other reproductive health services to rape survivors and those living in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. They have obtained a special permission from the Directorate of Health to carry out safe abortion services in these settings, as abortion services are usually not available in Iraqi public health facilities. They work in close coordination with the Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital to provide specialist doctors and midwives, and also in coordination with pharmacies and drug stores to provide free treatment.



NFDO
Awareness raising session



CENPAD
Capacity-strengthening session for peer educators in Dalori IDP camp

Women and girls living in IDP camps in North-East **Nigeria** face a high risk of rape and sexual assault. Due to lack of access to contraception and safe abortion, this leads to disproportionately high rates of unsafe abortion and consequent injury and death. The **International Centre for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development (CENPAD)** has been providing reproductive health information and support in two such camps thanks to SAAF funding. A harm

reduction approach is employed to ensure that women who need it have information about and access to menstrual regulation through medication (MRM), and post-abortion care. In just six months of project implementation (April – September 2018) peer educators reached 11,324 people through awareness raising in the camps – 2382 of these were given access to MRM, and 867 received post abortion care.

Reaching the underserved

Many SAAF grantee partners specialize in working with specific groups which are often underserved by mainstream services. Their organisations are led by those with expertise and local knowledge meaning they can work to ensure no one is left behind and that the intersecting stigmas which can affect access to abortion are addressed and challenged.

In **Haiti**, **Initiative pour un Développement Equitable en Haïti (IDEH)** is working with groups of people living with disabilities to improve the quality of reproductive health services. In 2017 IDEH conducted research on Gender and Disability in Haiti which revealed that women with disabilities face double discrimination; in relation to their gender and in relation to their disability. In their SAAF funded project they have trained service providers and created a referral network for women with disabilities who are survivors of violence.

In **Georgia**, **Real People Real Voices (RPRV)** also fights intersecting stigmas and was set up to provide support for people living with HIV, to strengthen their capacities and advocate for their rights. RPRV found that people in some of the most marginalized

communities (such as those living with HIV and or TB, sex workers, drug users and young people) were facing additional barriers when it came to accessing reproductive health care. Their SAAF funded project thus aims to tackle abortion related stigma, as it intersects with other stigmas, by training those living with HIV/TB on SRHR issues in order to increase understanding of rights in the communities they live in. A list of trusted providers is now regularly updated and made

available to the people in the project's target groups so that they are able to access reliable and non-judgmental care.

SAAF has funded **Lady Mermaid's Bureau (LMB)** in **Uganda** since 2014 and is proud to support an organization which fights for the rights of sex workers, including the right to safe abortion and non-judgmental reproductive health care.¹⁵ LMB works closely with local communities to train up sex

workers as peer educators to share accurate information and rights-based resources, but also to improve providers' attitudes towards sex workers seeking healthcare. They have identified a number of supportive clinics, provided resources and training, and make these approved sites known to sex workers in the community. As a result, the numbers of people accessing safe abortion services and post abortion contraception have steadily increased.



"They used to mock and laugh when they suspect you to be a sex worker, I don't hear many girls complaining now"

Community member interviewed by LMB

LMB
Staff member distributes information in the community

Breaking the silence

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 stigmatizing attitudes about abortion, as well as sexuality and gender, to fight discrimination and denial of care, in some of the toughest contexts around the world.



PFPPA
Iman Jado, programme director

Flora Tristán – Centro de la Mujer

Peruana in **Peru** has a multi-pronged approach to changing hearts and minds on abortion rights. They lead the public campaign “Decidir Nos Hace Libres” (to be able to decide makes us free), as a key space for discussing the problem of forced pregnancies. Through Facebook and Twitter, the campaign has engaged 11,000 people. They have strengthened outreach to young audiences, sharing updated information on SRHR and promoting debate on decriminalization of abortion not only at the national level, but across Latin America. Offline, Flora Tristán is also working to expand the pool of activists in Lima and Cuzco. They have conducted a three month course called “Feminist Studies for the Right to Decide”. It strengthened the knowledge and leadership of 80 young activists representing multiple collectives and organizations linked to the defense of human rights.



Flora Tristán
Public action for International Women's Day

SAAF has been funding **Volunteers for Development Association (VODA)** in **Uganda** since 2013. VODA works with a cross-section of society to challenge the myths and harmful attitudes that lead women to have to seek unsafe abortions. Their project has engaged medical officers, police, teachers and young people, and crucially, has made great inroads with religious leaders who carry a lot of weight in the community. VODA began conversations with religious leaders about the problem of unsafe abortion and is now being invited by a number of churches to host regular 'prayer days'. Reaching around 60—70 people with each prayer day, real stories of those affected by unsafe abortion are read to the congregation to start an open discussion, where referrals can be provided.

"I am a Christian. After problems with my marriage, the only option I had was to seek safe services. Until it happened to me, I was always very angry to those that did it. I now believe women have strong reasons and must not be blamed for seeking an abortion."

Woman reached by VODA's project

Fundación Si Mujer in Cali, Colombia mobilises, trains and supports adolescents and young people, with a focus on young women from marginalised communities, to act as SRHR activists in their families, neighbourhoods, schools and universities. The young people sensitise, raise awareness

and educate on abortion and other SRHR issues, as well as identifying and referring abortion cases to Si Mujer's clinic or other health providers. The project has trained 76 young people who reached 1141 of their peers in 2018. From those trained, Si Mujer has identified 18 young people who

are committed to actively defending and promoting SRHR and the right to legal abortion and are now being trained to take on the role of community leader. These young people have engaged in national and regional advocacy spaces including the launch of the UN Women study on Healthy

Cities in Cali, a national UNFPA retreat on SRHR, and were invited by Corporación Amigos de la UNESCO to help organise a retreat for afro-descendant young people at which the young leaders advocated for the inclusion of a discussion on SRHR including abortion.



Si Mujer
Youth leaders attend a talk on SRHR

Sharing the evidence

Spotlight on SAAF grantee partners undertaking research

Talk early,
Talk often,
Talk together,
Prevent teenage

Family Planning is your Life,

Family Planning is your

Part of SAAF's work is to increase the evidence available on safe abortion, and ensure learning and results are shared to improve programming and advocacy efforts across the world. As well as those SAAF grantee partners

working on targeted and innovative research projects, many others are also collecting useful evidence at local levels on prevalence of abortion stigma in their communities.



HDI
Information booth at ICFP conference

Coordinated by **TICAH** in **Kenya**, **MAMA Network (Mobilising Activists Around Medical Abortion)** is a network of grassroots and feminist groups based in Sub-Saharan Africa working to share evidence-based and stigma-free information about self-managed medical abortion directly with women at the community level. With support from SAAF, MAMA Network launched their website¹⁶ on 28th September 2018 and are embarking on a research project to expand the evidence base on safe self-use of medical abortion in Sub-Saharan Africa. The network will assess existing hotlines in the region and is building the capacity of its members to ensure standardized and systematic data collection, analysis, and dissemination within the network, as well as regionally and globally. By doing so, the aim is that members will be able to compare impact between countries and contexts, identify best practices, modify and improve their approaches, and strengthen the evidence for shared strategies to increase access to safe abortion through community activism. Other SAAF grantee partners are members of the network and are contributing to the research, including **COHERINET** in Uganda and an **Anonymous Organisation** in DRC, who have both undertaken community interviews to identify how women in their communities engage with information on medical abortion.

In **Palestine**, where abortion is heavily restricted by the law, data on the incidence of abortion is lacking and/or unreliable. Currently, the Ministry of Health does not collect any data on abortion-related services or mortality/morbidity as a result of unsafe abortion. However, a SAAF funded study by the **Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA)** found that 49% of women interviewed had a female relative or friend confide in them about a personal experience of abortion.¹⁷ In order to address the lack of reliable data and ensure the realities of women's experiences are captured PFPPA has designed a cross-sectional study to identify the current rates of unsafe abortion, access to abortion-related services and the resulting unmet need for safe abortion services in the West Bank of Palestine. This study has been conducted and planned in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and will provide data on the prevalence of women and girls that have had an abortion (either unsafe or safe), as well as identifying the level of availability of abortion-related services in the West Bank. The study findings will be used to develop an evidence-based abortion strategy for the national abortion coalition, to support advocacy efforts at the community, governate and national level.



A SAAF Programme Advisor was able to visit PFPPA in 2018 to collect stories and case studies about their work. Further interviews and photographs of staff, service users and young volunteers can be found online at: www.saafund.org/pfppa

Meet the people making change happen

Interviews with SAAF Grantee Partners



Samsara
Panel at Global Hotlines Meeting



Edinah Masiyiwa
Director of Women's
Action Group (WAG),
Zimbabwe

Why do you work on safe abortion?

As a leader in a women's rights organisation I feel I have a duty to do this work which many consider taboo. If we have to reduce the high maternal mortality in Zimbabwe we must have people working on abortion. I have chosen to be one of those people.

What positive change do you hope to see happen in your country with abortion access and rights?

I would like to see all those who are eligible to access safe abortions under the current law getting the services without any barriers. I would like to see a review of the current law on abortion. This law should broaden the conditions where abortion is allowed and use the WHO definition for health.



Rodica Comendant
Director of Reproductive
Health Training Center
(RHTC), Moldova

Why do you work on safe abortion?

Back when I was doing my medical training in the then Soviet Union, abortion was the only way to regulate fertility, no contraception was available. Abortions were performed using only the less safe D+C (dilation and curetage) method, without proper counselling or care and I would see long lines of women waiting for abortions looking sad and

humiliated. After visiting a Planned Parenthood clinic in the U.S I saw what a good quality abortion service could look like. I decided it would be the mission of my professional life to make sure women in Moldova were not discriminated against when seeking abortion but were treated the same as women accessing any other service.



Juventus Duorinaah
Director – Ghana National
Association of the Deaf
(GNAD)

What was the biggest achievement from your SAAF funded project in 2018?

In 2018, my team and I successfully reached a significant number of deaf women and girls with non-stigmatizing messages on safe abortion and SRH through capacity building and awareness raising on safe abortion. This has increased the knowledge of deaf women and girls in Ghana about the dangers associated with unsafe abortion. Through our special video services, we have been able to reach about 5000 deaf women and girls.

What positive change do you hope to see happen in your country with abortion access and rights?

I envisage a society where every women, whether disabled or not, is adequately and accurately informed and educated about the danger associated with unsafe abortion practices and where women who have unwanted pregnancies have the right to make an informed decision.



Oriana López Uribe Executive Director –
AC Balance, Mexico

Daniela Tejas Miguez Co-Coordinator: MARIA Fund

Sofía Garduño Huerta Co-Coordinator: MARIA Fund

Why do you work on safe abortion?

Every day we are in contact with hundreds of women and people who need abortions and we can see firsthand that access to safe abortion can trigger positive social, emotional and political processes for society. We work for safe abortion because if women and people cannot control our reproduction, we cannot have equality.

What was the biggest achievement from your SAAF funded project in 2018?

Our greatest achievement in 2018 is to have supported 1327 women to access safe abortion. To be able to provide direct support for access to safe abortion is to see in reality what freedom, health and autonomy look like. In addition, we are very excited to have trained doulas and community ambassadors, which allows us to reach more people with compassionate support.



Sharif Mostafa Helal
Executive Director of
Bangladesh Women's
Health Coalition (BWHC),
Bangladesh

What was the biggest achievement from your SAAF funded project in 2018?

BWHC works with excluded groups like ethnic minorities and tea garden workers, and in 2018 was able to establish three Health Centres for women and young girls in these communities. Many follow traditional methods of ending pregnancies which are of course, unsafe and very risky practices. Establishing health centres inside such communities, changing their pattern of health seeking behaviour and providing safe abortion services are really huge achievements for us!

What positive change do you hope to see happen in your country with abortion access and rights?

At the moment, in Bangladesh, as people do not have sufficient access and rights for safe abortion, they still terminate their pregnancies through unsafe and traditional methods. We hope every unwanted pregnancy can be terminated safely in a health centre by a trained service provider without any cultural, religious and social barriers.

SAAF support to grantees

The SAAF Theory of Change highlights four key inputs from the funding mechanism to deliver its outcomes: grant management, capacity building, networking and collaboration, and monitoring and evaluation.

Since the beginning of 2018, the SAAF Secretariat has been articulating its work and the support it provides to the grantees across these four inputs. The expertise on grant management has been developed over the years and SAAF now has robust systems in place. In the current round of funding, the emphasis is therefore on capacity building, networking and partnering and monitoring and evaluation support.

Strengthening civil society organisations is a key aspect of SAAF's work. Capacity development is an integral part of the

current round to enable grantees to develop project management skills to effectively manage the SAAF grant. Developing local expertise is crucial in order to ensure continuity and sustainability of achievements beyond the project cycle. The SAAF Secretariat has developed a capacity building plan based on lessons learned from previous rounds of funding and external evaluations; needs identified by grantee partners and financial management information from due diligence and financial health checklists.





CDD Brazil
Workshop on sexual identity and religion

Technical assistance visits

In 2018, 16 grantee partners were visited in 12 countries. Thanks to increased staff capacity the number of projects visited has doubled from 2017. 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.

In October a member of the SAAF team visited **NFDO in Iraq**, in order to better understand the reality of this sensitive project, working with female Yazidi refugees. This was a unique opportunity for SAAF to visit a project in a humanitarian setting, to learn more not just about this project but inform how we might better support others working in such settings.

In the same month a programmatic visit was also made to **Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD-Brazil) in Brazil**. As a new grantee partner this was an opportunity to finalise their proposal, but also to better understand the potential challenges for implementation of their project in the current political climate in Brazil, following the election of a new President with known opposition to progressive SRHR and human rights causes.

Training and conferences

SAAF was able to provide additional funds to support grantee partner organisations to attend relevant meetings to develop their technical knowledge, increase opportunities to network with others working on abortion, and showcase their work to a wider audience.

- Five grantee partners whose work is focused on abortion stigma attended the Inroads Global Gathering in Zagreb in March
- One grantee partner attended the Abortion and Reproductive Justice Conference in Makhanda, South Africa in July
- Twelve grantee partners had been invited to the international forum “Developing an advocacy agenda for abortion in the 21st century and making change happen” organised by the International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion in Lisbon in September. SAAF financially supported three participants to attend.
- Three grantee partners working with hotlines were supported to attend the Global Hotlines meeting organised by Samsara, Ibis Reproductive Health and Women Help Women in Bali in July.

In November SAAF supported a meeting organised by grantee partner **Reproductive Health Training Centre (RHTC) in Moldova**.¹⁸

65 participants representing 11 countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region discussed abortion and contraception provision in the region and strategies for expanding access to medical abortion. SAAF Programme Adviser Shreena Patel presented on the importance of networking and partnerships in SAAF for bringing together organisations working on advancing women’s right to safe abortion and contraception.

Project development support

In 2018, 23 grantee partner organisations attended three proposal development workshops and two received proposal development support during in-country visits. This was a chance to familiarise organisations with SAAF and provide tailored support with proposal development and budget-setting. These workshops were also a great opportunity for all participants to network and learn about each other's contexts and proposed projects. This was particularly beneficial for organisations implementing activities in the same country, to identify potential collaboration and try to avoid duplication of efforts.

As an example, grantee partners from Nepal realised during the workshop that their planned activities were overlapping, while grantees from Malawi noticed that they were planning similar activities at the national level. Since then they have all amended their original plans to make the best use of the funding.

The workshops were very well evaluated – 96% of attendees left feeling that they understood SAAF grantee obligations,

and 100% felt well equipped to finalize their project proposals. In addition to the workshops, SAAF hosted three webinars (in English, French and Spanish) on reporting requirements in advance of the first Round 4 reports.

Building financial management capacity

The annual audit report is a contractual requirement that SAAF grantee partners must submit to the Secretariat up to four months after the end of each financial year. To assist organisations to effectively manage the commission of audits the Secretariat developed SAAF External Audit Guidelines (shared in September 2018). 17 grantees partners reported having used the general guidance to negotiate with the audit firms, 11 reported having used some of the templates provided, showing the importance of the initiative.

Increasing knowledge of abortion and contraception service provision for programme managers

The SAAF Secretariat had planned to develop a library of online resources to



support program managers and trainers of service providers, but was then made aware of a “Knowledge Hub” project instigated by MSI, IPPF, PSI and Ipas. These organisations were developing a ‘one stop shop’ for online resources detailing best practices on abortion provision and programming. The scope of the work was very much in line with our plans so we became actively involved in the process and joined as co-chair with MSI. SAAF grantee partners provided

feedback and suggestions throughout the development stage.

The primary role of SAAF now that the website has been launched (in 2019) will be to provide best-practice case studies, help promote the hub with our partners both at events and online, and to sense-check content for how useful each piece would be for frontline programmers. The ‘Safe Access Hub’ can be viewed online here:

www.safeaccesshub.org



"This is a great initiative! I am looking forward to learning a great deal about my fellow grantees and the work they do. This will be a great way to encourage cross-learning."

SAAF grantee partner responding to the new grantee partner interviews

IHAP
Staff photo from SAAF visit

Networking and partnering

Every month, information was shared on SAAF's private 'Virtual Community' – a group of current and previous grantee partners. Members of the group share updates from their own countries and the SAAF Secretariat sends regular updates including information about:

1. Funding opportunities: When surveyed, 12 SAAF grantee partners reported having 16 funding applications accepted. SAAF posts opportunities but also provides support through provision of tailored reference letters to other donors.
2. Other relevant networks and listservs: 46 grantee partners have reported joining other abortion related networks thanks to referrals from SAAF.
3. Consultations: SAAF shares relevant regional and global consultations from organisations like WHO to ensure that the voices of local organisations working on safe abortion are included.
4. Technical guidance and resources: 65% of SAAF grantee partners report having used the technical materials which are shared in the Virtual Community or by email from the SAAF Secretariat.
5. Quarterly video updates on SAAF's work: these updates now also include a spotlight on the work of a SAAF grantee partner organisation, to encourage shared understanding of other projects. 94% of grantees said they found the updates useful and 90% of those prefer the new video format.
6. Grantee partner interviews: SAAF started sharing '60 seconds with' interviews from November 2018 and they have proven a successful way to connect members virtually.

The SAAF board and governance

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 shall be accountable to the donors and other stakeholders.

In 2018 four Board members reached the end of their term and needed to be replaced. Following a gap analysis, the Board organised an open call for new members that attracted 66 applications.

More information about SAAF's board is available on our website:

www.saafund.org/saafboard

Manuelle Hurwitz

Director, Programmes Division – IPPF

Alexandra Teixeira

Associate Director, Accessibility – Ipas

Manisha Mehta

Program Officer – Wellspring Advisors

Felogene Anumo

Coordinator – Association Of Women's Rights In Development (AWID)

Camilla Holst Salvesen

Senior Adviser – Global Health Section
Norwegian Agency For Development
Cooperation, (NORAD)

Génesis Luigi

Consultant – IPPF Western Hemisphere Region

Pushpa Joshi

Youth Champion
Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP)

Kelly Blanchard

President – IBIS Reproductive Health

Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng

Lead Consultant / Founder
Nalane For Reproductive Justice



What are you most hopeful for in the future of abortion rights and access?
"Ending the global backlash on abortion rights! From Kenya to Brazil to the United States, 2018 painted a grim picture of systematic rollback on abortion rights through criminalization, de-legitimization, and creation of repressive environments for abortion rights and access. But make no mistake, as anti-choice actors get more emboldened in their actions, so does powerful global resistance and feminist revival to demand and safeguard the right to safe and legal abortion as a fundamental right."

Felogene Anumo

SAAF Grantee Partners 2018

Latin America and the Caribbean

Regional

- Consorcio Latinoamericano Contra el Aborto Inseguro (CLACAI)

Mexico

- Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud
- Anonymous Organisation

Belize

- Belize Family Life Association

Haiti

- Initiative pour un Développement Equitable en Haïti

Guatemala

- Asociación Civil, Colectivo para la Participación de la Infancia y Juventud

Colombia

- Fundación Servicios Integrales para la Mujer – Si Mujer

Peru

- Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán
- Anonymous Organisation

Brazil

- Anis – Institute of Bioethics
- Católicas pelo Direito de Decidir Brasil

Chile

- Fundación Colectivo Alquimia Fondo para Mujeres

Argentina

- Asociación Civil por el Derecho a Decidir

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Moldova

- Reproductive Health Training Center

Georgia

- Union of PLHIV in Georgia 'Real People Real Vision'

Iraq

- Nujeen For Family Democratizing Organization

Kyrgyzstan

- Kyrgyz Family Planning Alliance

Tajikistan

- Tajik Family Planning Alliance

Pakistan

- Peace Foundation
- Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre (SG)

Nepal

- Action Works Nepal
- Anonymous Organisation

Bangladesh

- Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition

Vietnam

- Vietnam Family Planning Association

Asia and the Pacific

Indonesia

- Institute for Women Human Rights or Institut Hak Asasi Perempuan
- Samsara

Solomon Islands

- Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association

North Africa and the Middle East

Palestine

- Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association

Ethiopia

- Talent Youth Association

Kenya

- Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues on HIV and AIDS
- Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health

Uganda

- Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Uganda
- Center for Health, Human Rights and Development
- Kyetume Community Based Health Care Programme
- Lady Mermaid's Bureau
- St. Augustine community Health Centre
- The Community Health Rights Network
- Tusitukirewamu Group
- Volunteers for Development Association in Uganda
- Anonymous Organisation

Burundi

- Réseau SOS femmes en Détresse

Malawi

- Centre for Solutions Journalism
- Foundation for Children's rights
- Rights Institute for Social Empowerment

Sub-Saharan Africa

Regional

- Mama Network

Lebanon

- Anonymous Organisation

Cameroon

- Anonymous Organisation

Nigeria

- International Centre for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development
- Women Friendly Initiative

Burkina Faso

- Communauté d'Action pour la Promotion de la Santé Sexuelle et Reproductive au Burkina Faso

Ghana

- Ghana National Association of the Deaf
- MABIA-Ghana

Sao Tome & Principe

- Santomense Association for Family Promotion

Congo (DRC)

- Comité d'Echange et d'Information sur la femme et pour le Développement
- Groupement des Femmes Vivant avec le VIH
- Si Jeunesse Savait
- Anonymous Organisation

Rwanda

- Health Development Initiative

Zimbabwe

- Women's Action Group

South Africa

- The Western Cape Health Foundation NPC

Information about all current SAAF grantee partners can be found on our website:

www.saafund.org/our-partners

Endnotes

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saafund



@SAAFund



www.saafund.org



info@saafund.org



SAAF
Safe Abortion Action Fund

IPPF, 4 Newhams Row
London SE1 3UZ
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7939 8322

