

ON THE GROUND	ON THE GROUND	RECONFERENCE	RECONFERENCE	IMPACT
Thank You!	The Power of People	When Hope Flared	Lessons & Sessions	Happy 10th, SELF!
Three of our big consortia, running over five years, in many countries, with multiple partners, was made possible by Dutch government giving. 2	We held two major convenings in our continuing series of CREA Global Dialogues, in the runup to the biggest convening of them all. 3	It was a dire year for all those trying to make a difference in the world. RECONFERENCE 2025 helped us dare to dream boldly again. 4	There were a lot of them at this conference-with-a-difference. A small selection of learnings from a wide range of teach-ins and other sessions. 7	It's been a full decade of working with young girls and women through our flagship SELF Academy. A look at some impact to celebrate. 8



crea

reTHINK

ANNUAL REPORT 2025–2026

www.creaworld.org



A big year!

Geetanjali Misra, executive director – Global, and Anuradha Chatterji, executive director – India, on an eventful twelve months

There’s a number hidden on the last page of this ‘news-paper’ that’s small but not in the least insignificant. The two innocuous digits – ‘38’ – hold many stories that describe how the past year went for us.

We had expected it to be a busy year. Three major consortiums – in two of which CREA was a lead – were to end by December 2025. Programs on the ground were to be wrapped up, end-term evaluations were to be conducted, reports had to be written, some program staff tenures would end. We had plans to hold two new Institutes, one a regional expansion of an existing Institute and the other an expansion of an area of enquiry we were interested in. Two more of CREA’s signature Global Dialogues, bringing together scholars and feminists of all stripes, would be held in different parts of the world. Trainings and our annual Institutes would be held per usual, consultations and meetings would continue to be on the agenda. And all of these – 37 in-person events – would culminate in the biggest of them all, our 38th event, RECONFERENCE 2025.

These stories are told in detail in the pages that follow, but appropriately enough in our 25th anniversary year, there were so many more.

One of the biggest was the work

through a new consortium that we kicked off in July 2025. The three-partner consortium, of which CREA is lead, focuses on prevention of gender-based violence along with multiple local partners in the state of Rajasthan. This work will continue into 2028.

Another significant piece came from our Gender and WASH program, which was supported by the Gates Foundation. The program has come to a close, but all the work that went into it in previous years as well as work by partners in the field across India are now available as a co-created public resource in the form of a virtual Centre of Excellence for Inclusive WASH.

We were happy to receive a first-time grant from the SBI Foundation, a big and credible donor that is supporting our work focused on the health of sex workers.

We began building out a new website in 2024 and the result of a quite intensive exercise – collating 25 years of our work – was seen by the third quarter. Our logo was updated, with a similar but sharper, more contemporary typeface.

Last year, we took another step in the direction of formalising our relationship with an old love – publications and art-for-change. We produced two very different books: One combined memoir with feminist learnings, authored

by a veteran CREA associate; the other a photobook that drew on our two-decade-long allyship with South Asia’s sex worker movement. Together, they mark the beginning of a new area of work – more interventions in the world of art and publications. At the core of our work lies one guiding principle: change minds so as to change behaviours. And art always did have a through line to minds and hearts.

A final piece of wonderful news: in April 2025, CREA brought on board a dynamic new director of programs and innovation, who will help usher in newly ambitious interventions in our attempt to build a more just world for all.



Gifts that *Keep on Giving*

Generosity travels deep into minds and hearts and communities to effect big change

We gave a special shoutout to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands last year, and we repeat it more fervently this year. It’s the final one for the moment: December 2025 saw three of our consortia draw to a close, all made possible by the exceptional generosity of the Dutch MoFA.

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Agence Française de Développement	ILGA World
American Jewish World Service	International Planned Parenthood Federation
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice	Mama Cash
Ford Foundation, New York	John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Foundation for a Just Society	Medicus Mundi Gipuzkoa
Gates Foundation	Nebula Fund
Global Fund for Women	SBI Foundation
Global Giving	Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
Global Labor Justice - International Labor Rights Forum	YR Gaitonde Medical, Educational & Research Foundation

INDIA PROGRAMS

GBV PREVENTION CONSORTIUM

We kicked off a new consortium to build an ecosystem of organizations, initiatives and leaders working to address gender-based violence in Rajasthan. CREA is the Consortium Secretariat and is partnering with The YP Foundation, Purpose and the Population Foundation of India.

SELF ACADEMY

This was the 10th year of CREA's flagship Academy, which builds leadership of young women from rural Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Held in Delhi (1–10 June, 2025), it engaged 32 young women, focusing on gender, power, consent and storytelling.

MERI PANCHAYAT, MERI SHAKTI

This project was advanced across 45 Panchayats in Bundelkhand, Vaishali and East Singhbhum. The focus remained on integrating issues of gender-based violence into local governance.



DSRI HINDI

The first ever in-person Disability, Sexuality and Rights Institute (Hindi) was held with 26 participants in New Delhi (14–18 October, 2025). This edition also marked CREA's first collaboration with Rising Flame and achieved 50% representation from the disability community.

DISABILITY AND SEXUALITY GLOSSARY

We developed a glossary in Hindi with over 100 definitions on disability, gender, sexuality and rights, directly addressing the lack of a rights-based Hindi vocabulary, especially in work with women and girls with disabilities.

ROSHNI PROGRAM

Through residential workshops, ongoing mentoring and partnerships with resource organizations, 11 youth leaders in Bihar developed leadership skills and implemented local social action initiatives addressing education, gender-based violence, health, sanitation and inclusion.

FILM EVENINGS

Along with The Rani Fund, PVR Nest and Sakshi, we co-hosted the India premiere of *Sorry, Baby* on 7 August, 2025 in New Delhi. The screening was followed by two panel discussions, creating a strong public platform at the intersection of cinema, rights and feminist advocacy. CREA also partnered with PVR NEST to host a screening of *Guthlee Ladoo* and a discussion on the intersections of gender, caste and WASH.



Dank je wel!

The big work made possible by the Dutch government

Starting 2021, CREA embarked on no less than four large projects – multi-country, multi-partner, multi-program consortiums – three of which were supported by the generosity of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). All three formally ended in December 2025.

OUR VOICES, OUR FUTURES

CREA led the Our Voices, Our Futures (OVOF) consortium, which also comprised the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), UHAI – The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative, and WO–MEN, the Dutch Gender Platform. IM-Defensoras was a strategic partner. OVOF worked to amplify the voices and increase the visibility of structurally silenced women in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan, and Uganda.

The year's highlights included a Feminist Tech Exchange 2025 organised by APC; titled 'Bring it On!', the dynamic, five-day gathering helped strengthen feminist tech capacities. Through the Feminist Tech Deep-dive series, OVOF built the capacity of activists and practitioners globally on digital rights. CREA's partners in South Asia worked with LGBTQI+ artists to tell

their stories, document evidence on indigenous women, and support women-led news media production. CREA's Emerging Leaders Initiative concluded with another cohort of 10 young feminists (*see above*) and the Storytelling Initiative concluded in mid-2025. Finally, RECONFERENCE 2025 was held, against considerable odds, in Kathmandu in December 2025! (*Details on pages 4-7*)

WOMEN GAINING GROUND

CREA also led Women Gaining Ground (WGG), a Global South consortium including Akili Dada and International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP). The consortium worked in five countries in South Asia and East Africa through 16 partner organizations, to change norms, attitudes, laws and policies around the connected issues of gender-based violence and the lack of women's political empowerment. Since its inception in 2021, the consortium has initiated capacity-building sessions with young women and girls, and women with disabilities; outreach and advocacy with state and non-state duty bearers; working with women to increase their participation in local governance;

and learning sessions on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

COUNT ME IN!

We were a part of the Count Me In! consortium (CMI!), along with Mama Cash, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Just Associates (JASS) and Urgent Action Fund, representing Africa, the US and Latin America. In 2025, CMI! focused on strengthening feminist movement infrastructure, knowledge production, and partner capacity. Key work included advancing resource mobilization support through training for partners. CREA supported the anti-GBV advocacy and movement-building efforts of LBT, sex workers and other structurally excluded women, with local, national and regional organizations and collectives in South Asia, East Africa, Southwest Asia and North Africa. CREA also co-led CMI!'s working group to challenge anti-gender mobilization and participated in the feminist economic realities and donor-influencing working groups.

Everyone's Issue

CREA's Nisha Rani on the launch of the virtual Centre for Inclusive WASH

Over years of wide-ranging work, CREA noticed something important: Sanitation talks often left out those most affected, such as women, transgender people and people with disabilities. Instead of listening to their needs, the sector focused on technical fixes like building toilets. But sanitation is also a social and political issue about dignity and rights. CREA believed the change had to start with different kinds of knowledge – that which is made with those most affected and shaped by an intersectional view so that sanitation is treated as a human rights issue and not just infrastructure.

This belief took shape in the virtual Centre for Inclusive WASH, launched in November 2025 with support from the Gates Foundation. Around 50 practitioners, academics, and activists gathered in Delhi for the launch of centreforinclusivewash.org, united by a shared



conviction: that sanitation practice needed a common space where evidence, lived experience and cross-sector dialogue could meet.

Believing that knowledge should not belong to just one organization, CREA set up the Centre as a shared space, where partner organizations could bring their research, tools and lived experience. Different organizations see things differently and different communities hold different experiences – all of those voices deserve more than a token mention. CREA wanted them as equal

partners, shaping and owning the knowledge together. This is why 14 partners, including UNICEF, WaterAid, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and the Aga Khan Development Network came together to shape the Centre. Knowledge briefs on disability-inclusive sanitation, trans inclusion and menstrual justice; a training curriculum for practitioners; and 12 case studies built on the lived testimonies of women, trans persons and persons with disabilities are all a testament to the power of collective knowledge.



THE POWER OF

Two CREA Global Dialogues offered activists, academics and researchers a shared safe space to think deeply and thrash out some important issues of our times

The pages that follow offer a glimpse of what is arguably feminism's most ambitious convening, which CREA organized just before bidding farewell to 2025. In the runup to that, CREA also convened two major Global Dialogues.

These events are a space for social movement activists to dialogue with one another around common goals, strategies and alliance building. As critical spaces to think and act, the 14 Global Dialogues that CREA has organized since 2004 have woven together decades of conversations by feminists. They have challenged the ability of women's movements to become more inclusive of lesbian, trans people, women with disabilities and sex workers. They have clarified points of confusion, such as how policy frameworks can understand gender-based violence as both a health and human rights issue. They also provide visibility for strategies from those who work at the grassroots. The impact of the Global Dialogues stretches beyond the boundaries of time and space where each conversation is held.

In 2025, CREA convened not one but two Global Dialogues. The first, titled 'Feminist Faultlines: Charting

the Shifts and Struggles', was held from 14 to 16 May, 2025 in Tbilisi, Georgia. There, 28 participants came together to discuss shared concerns about the cracks in the feminist movement at a volatile moment in history.

Feminists are divided along many lines, including on the significance of biological sex and gender. There are clashes over carcerality, on whether we reflexively call in the cops or seek reparation and systemic justice. Those focused on trafficking and punishment are at odds with those who invoke a human-rights-based approach. There are rifts between those who see consent as the cornerstone of feminist demands for bodily autonomy, and those who say that individual consent cannot be easily pried out of unequal systems. The Global Dialogue illuminated these differences, while providing space for reflection and bridge-building.

Later, in November, 30 researchers, activists, advocates and funders working to end gender-based violence (GBV) across online and offline spaces convened in Nairobi, Kenya. This Global Dialogue, titled 'Connected Struggles: Rethinking Feminist Engagements with

Gender-based Violence in a Tech-shaped World', took as its starting point the recognition that technology has fundamentally reshaped the context in which gender-based violence occurs. For three days, participants exchanged experiences and learnings and developed a stronger understanding of how to approach this work effectively in a rapidly changing landscape, especially in the Global South.

Tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) has been around for more than a decade now, and is increasingly maturing. The number of actors and institutions involved are expanding, as are the number of issues that are recognised as constituting TFGBV. What has remained absent is sustained and in-depth engagement and collaboration between feminists working on TFGBV and those working on GBV offline. Both fields are fully developed issues and areas of work, with their own demands, specificities and challenges. But there are also important overlaps, and the lack of recognition of these has consequences. Thrashing through these issues was the main task at hand at CREA's 14th Global Dialogue.

Inputs from Anja Kovacs

Alternative Intelligence

CREA has always kept pace with tech, and all its challenges and possibilities. Chiara Passuello on the clarity she found at its newest Institute

Late in October 2025, I found myself in Hong Kong, attending CREA's newest Institute. Titled somewhat mysteriously 'Possible AIs: Institute for Speculative Technologies', the Institute was held in collaboration with the Digital Narratives Studio and led by Prof. Nishant Shah.

The week was intense. Dense with ideas, readings and conversations that didn't stop when sessions

ended but kept going through meals and evenings together. Thoughts running on loop. Sometimes, the sheer volume of what we were trying to process felt overwhelming. But the moment that stopped me in my tracks came early: a session on eugenics. Not as a historical footnote, but as the actual intellectual foundation of modern data science and AI. I remember thinking: How

did I not know this? How is this not the starting point of every conversation about technology? I realized that while the technology we were discussing may be "new", the layering of issues, problems and implications behind it were very old. It felt like finally seeing something that had been in plain sight all along.

Equally striking was what the Institute refused to do: it didn't let us stop at critique. We built a shared lexicon of harm, yes, but we also drafted mini-manifestos,



"prototyped" alternatives, and argued about what AI could look like if it were built around different values. More than 20 people from 12

countries came at these issues from different places and contexts. We didn't leave with answers; we left with energy and better questions.

GLOBAL PROGRAMS

SGRI GLOBAL

In June 2025, in Zagreb, Croatia, we hosted the 14th edition of our flagship Sexuality, Gender, and Rights Institute (SGRI) Global, an intensive, immersive, residential program that focuses on the intersections of sexuality, gender, and human rights. This round had 19 participants from 19 countries.

SGRI ARABIC

The inaugural edition of the Sexuality, Gender, and Rights Institute (SGRI) Arabic was held between October 21 and 26, 2025, at the American University of Beirut Mediterraneo in Paphos, Cyprus. Co-organized by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship and CREA, it adapted global frameworks to the SWANA/MENA context.

FLMBARI

Over eight transformative days, the Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institute (FLMBaRI) was held in Sri Lanka from February 15 to 22, 2025. The Institute focused on building feminist strategies, leadership, and collective power for human rights activists.

DSROI EAST AFRICA

The third edition of the Disability, Sexuality, and Rights Online Institute East Africa was conducted between 9 and 30 May, 2025. The three-week-long course provides a study of theory and practice at the intersection of disability, gender and sexuality with a focus on perspectives from within East Africa. Led by activists, community organizers and academics with disabilities, the course is offered through an accessible online learning platform.

PHOTO DAYS

CREA supported *Twin Sisters with Cameras*, a photography exhibition celebrating the pioneering work of sisters Debalina Mazumder (1919–2012) and Manobina Roy (1919–2001). The exhibition was mounted at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, from October 9 to 26, 2025.

HOPE



IN CONVERSATION WITH

Azadeh Akhlaghi



The acclaimed Iranian artist discussed her most recent work, *Witnessing a Nation Under the Ravages of Time*, with scholar Sabeena Gadihoke. She spoke of excavating a violent buried past and painstakingly reconstructing each life and death in key historical moments, to bear witness to her country's truths.

Akhlaghi first shot to fame for *By an Eye-witness*, a series of reconstructed photographs of deaths in Iran over the previous century, which she produced between 2009 and 2012. The work showed at Reconference 2019. At CREA's 2025 edition, these as well as a panel from the new work, 'Mother of Tabriz', were on display.

Akhlaghi's conceptual photography bears ethical witness to unseen events that have smouldered in her nation's memory. Her large-scale tableaus recreate moments of rupture in Iran's past, from the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. By reconstructing the 'disappearances' of revolutionaries and challengers, her work remembers what history has dismembered.

By *an Eye-witness* recreated the 'mysterious deaths' of 17 prominent historical figures — mostly poets, activists, politicians, journalists and filmmakers, in the period between 1906 and 1979 and [during] the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war. She makes these deaths come alive in

terrible, unsettling detail. These key events shaped Iran's fate, unseen by the world. They are a 'visual void' in collective memory. Akhlaghi's images stage these moments of trauma. They are scenes of violence, but suffused with human vulnerability, with dust, blood, frightened onlookers. Working in a tradition more akin to art and cinema, Akhlaghi constructs her own large-scale works, relying on staging, lighting and theatre techniques.

Akhlaghi worked with the acclaimed filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami between 2005 and 2008. In 2009 she moved to staged photography. She says, "The most important lesson that I learnt from Abbas Kiarostami was that you can never capture the truth because you can never know what really happened. As soon as you turn on the camera there is no truth anymore."

These hyper-realistic images are not aiming to present the exact truth. They are reconstructions based on imperfect testimonies and flawed memories. Akhlaghi inserts herself as the figure behind the camera, to point to the artifice. And yet, the photographs are 'true lies', because the murders are all too real, of people who fought for Iran's freedom, whose death marked a turn in its fate. This is photography of remembrance and resistance.

IN A TIME



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: A participant enjoys art, sunshine and camaraderie in the Curated Space; an artist from the Aravani Art Society creates art in situ; panellists at the opening plenary; and members of the audience cheer

The place was the same, but the times so different. When CREA held the first edition of the global convening, in 2019, hundreds of activists, scholars, artists, filmmakers and other people with consciences in working order had gathered to rethink their work. This time, we met with the resolve to rethink, rework and reclaim our spaces, strategies and narratives in a convulsing world. In the bracing winter air of Kathmandu, RECONFERENCE was held from December 8 to 10, 2025. Over 550 activists, artists and allies from across 60 countries flocked together. This conference wasn't the usual drill of panels, respectful listening and networking; RECONFERENCE was playful and buoyant, even as it dove straight into the challenges of our dark times. 'They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds' summed up its defiant spirit.

Apart from rousing plenary addresses, ideas were explored

through teach-ins and lightning talks. Resistance was expressed in a variety of forms, from Balochi embroidery to Mexican cabaret, from standup comedy to mystical poetry. Every night was movie night, with films bringing stories and struggles from around the world. There was music, dancing, audio glitches and good humor.

RECONFERENCE 2025 explored themes from ableism to caste, gender-based violence and carcerality. Sexuality, pleasure and freedom have been core to CREA's work over two decades, but it has remained alert to the urgent issues of our times, recently bringing feminist politics to the digital world, for instance. There were sessions on AI, data and bodies, and the way power is physically redistributed by technology. As a participant said later, these sessions clarified the "often-invisible connections between technology, control, resistance, and care, and created space to imagine more just futures".

The agenda ranged over a wide territory: from contentions over sex and gender, to issues of migration and precarity, and visions of radical collective care. On the last day, participants gathered in different strategy circles, to pool their wisdom for the challenges they face.

Stories change hearts, bend the narratives of power, make movements. And RECONFERENCE relied on storytelling, emotion and art as vital feminist practice. The physical heart of the event was a sprawling lawn of artworks curated around each theme — an interactive card game and vivid murals spoke of sexual rights, several exhibits displayed the stark truths of conflict and displacement. This "mix of art, activism and practice — and linking feminist movements to the broader human rights and political context" made RECONFERENCE memorable, observed another participant.

We couldn't have found a better place to renew our bonds and energize our resistance. Nepal has



OF HATE

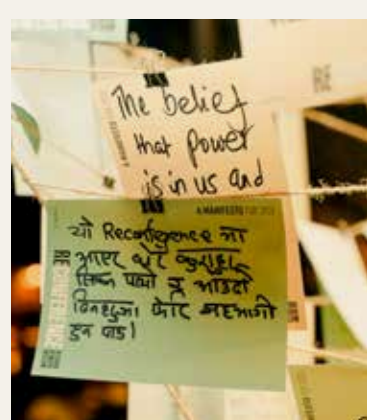
Our much-loved RECONFERENCE returned to life in December 2025 in Kathmandu, Nepal. Glimpses from three energizing days that were a shot in the arm for feminists from around the world



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Nepali women drummers open the proceedings with a rousing performance; participants at the Love photobooth; Sonia Wong in performance; likewise Rishika Kaushik; Arundhati Roy, Shohini Ghosh and others applaud enthusiastically; Mexican Goddesses on stage; and participants pose in the outdoor Curated Space

always been a hub of solidarity. It has hospitably allowed Pakistanis and Indians, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans to meet across the hostile walls of their own nations. Mere months before our summit, young people in Nepal expressed their hunger for change through an irrepressible protest. In CREA's 25th year, it was only fitting to return to this place that's been so special in our journey. Kathmandu is where we organized our first global convening, titled Count Me In!, in 2011; this is where we held the hugely successful Reconference in 2019;

and in May 2024, Kathmandu is where we held renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit. In bleak times, RECONFERENCE injected a spirit of goodwill and community. Veteran activists mingled with fresh young faces in the corridors, halls and hallways, a Georgian activist swapped notes with an Indian one over lunch, stories of frontline resistance in Latin America found echoes in South Asia, new acquaintances were made as Nepali activists passed around their famous lopchu candy. Everyone felt less alone.



Before they left, attendees wrote their own 'manifestos' for 2026: plans, vows or hopes for the future

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Arundhati Roy



In a much-awaited session, the celebrated writer conversed with scholar and friend Shohini Ghosh. Arundhati Roy, who has always written of power and powerlessness, love and lovelessness, through four decades of scalding non-fiction and two novels, brought that attention to her own author — the late Mary Roy. She has described her memoir *Mother Mary Comes to Me* as "reportage of the heart". The story of Mary and Arundhati is not just "the very respectful relationship of two nuclear powers"; it is also about the struggles between love and domination, generosity and meanness, that run through hearts and societies.

Societies that devalue care and vulnerability have always held up mother-love as the one impossible, sustaining ideal. But mothers live in that same cruel world, and often bring all its ambivalence and anger into their mothering. Arundhati Roy's memoir attends to that complexity, without trying to resolve it.

Mother Mary Comes to Me also gives us an inside-out view of her own politics and writing. It's obvious that Arundhati Roy's distance from phoney norms, her instinctive "under-view" of the world, her undomesticated spirit and dark humor could only have sprung from the childhood and the mighty mother she had.

Through three decades, her essays have called out her country's swagger, and its callous, extractive visions of progress — about nuclear bombs, dams, and repression. She has outlined the global architecture of tyranny, America's its surveillance empire, genocide in Gaza. She has brought stories of survival, dignity and comradeship of those who resist.

Writing and activism, the political and the private, thinking and feeling, systems and psyches, are not separate things, she has always pointed out. Roy never blunts the truth about injustice. Not for her, the numbing third-person language of 'experts'. She tells the big stories and their minute effects. She implicates us, pulls us in, she says the unsayable. About the left-wing insurgency in central India that looks nothing like Gandhi's peaceful resistance, she has asked: "Can the hungry go on a hunger strike? Non-violence is a piece of theatre. You need an audience. What can you do when you have no audience?"

Roy is loved and admired by people around the world; in India, the condescension of elites has turned to demonization. But she knows that in "other places — let's call them places off the highway", in villages under attack, on besieged campuses, her words are translated and read.

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Joe Sacco



The much-feted political cartoonist spoke with CREA Executive Director Geetanjali Misra. Excerpts:

On power: I've never liked the expression 'giving voice to the voiceless'. Because they have a voice, but it's more like 'lending an ear'... Basically, I don't have much sympathy for the powerful, let's say that.

On women in stories: Women are often the centre of stories, but they are not often the protagonist of stories. They are often instrumentalised.... Suddenly that person becomes a symbol of virtue, a temple or a mosque. And then the story is created around that. It becomes "our women were violated". In the US, in the periods of lynching, a lot of the lynchings had to do with white women allegedly being harassed or raped by Black men. It seems to be some part of our lizard brain.

On his book *Palestine*: 'Objective' journalism had given me a skew on what was going on. I realized you can select the facts, and you can edit the facts, just to present one narrative. And I realized there was another narrative that I didn't know and I wanted to find out what that narrative was... In some ways, *Palestine* was a form of penance.

On democracy: At its best there is a spirit that is about actually including people, wanting voices, wanting participation. In the US, it's just, show

up every four years, vote for one of two parties that generally represent the exact same interests and then we'll call you again in four years. Over time we have lost the sense of what democracy really is – it's a lot of work – but it's participation. And it's thinking we have a stake.

On joy and resilience: I was always interested in what the people I was talking to were interested in. In Bosnia, the town Gorazde had been under siege for three and a half years. Of course their survival mattered to them but what also mattered to them was: What was going on with the National Basketball Association, what was Michael Jordan doing... They wanted to be part of the world. There are a couple of chapters [in *Safe Area Gorazde*] about these young girls. What they wanted, because they could see that I could travel to Sarajevo and back, was: Can you get us jeans? What was kind of beautiful was that it wasn't any jeans, they had to be 501s, original, they had to be made in America. When people realized I was going back and forth, they would say, oh, can you find my wife? She's at this address, I haven't seen her in three and a half years. Here's a note for her. Tell her I still look good. This was beautiful.

On what's next: I'm working on a book on Gaza. I can't say I wanted to return to the topic. But it's an obligation.



How a resistance slogan became a prompt for some artists and the foundation of the visual identity of RECONFERENCE

Folks on social media knew this line. Folks not on social media needed to know this line. And by the time everyone left this conference, they were intimately acquainted with the worlds of possibilities it invokes.

Many origin stories have done the rounds. One is that the line is a Mexican proverb, another that it was coined by the Zapatista movement, yet another that it was created at US protest events the 1960s. Turns out that

all of these are apocryphal and that the line is in fact a paraphrase of a couplet from a poem.

In 1978, a Greek poet named Dinos Christianopoulos wrote: 'what didn't you do to bury me / but you forgot that I was a seed'. The 'Poet of Thessaloniki' was ostracized, it is said, for being gay. His riposte was to write bitter poetry, influenced by T.S. Eliot and Constantine P. Cavafy. And gain posthumous fame (he died in 2020) for a couplet that has entered the canon of resistance literature.

Meanwhile, as plans for RECONFERENCE were being discussed early in 2025, a tiny team wrestled with ideas for the visual identity of the conference. CREA's Executive Director Geetanjali Misra and the Communications Lead at the time, Nayantara Patel, brainstormed with Sherna Dastur, an independent designer, filmmaker and long-time associate of the organization. CREA may be known for its cutting-edge politics, arresting campaigns and influential knowledge resources, but barely known is Dastur's crucial

role in creating this body of work.

Here finally was our chance to correct this grave oversight. As we debated a seeming impossibility – of creating a conference that didn't submit to the despair flooding the world of movements – Dastur suggested that we work with this line.

Hope flared. Not merely for a relative triviality that is a conference's visual identity, but also for all those who had spent long years fighting for a more just world or those setting out to build such a world with fire in their bellies and stars in their

eyes. Defeat is not an option, we suddenly heard.

We then invited illustrators to give us their visual response to the line. We chose 22 artworks by 12 artists, all the works you see above. These are the artists, from Kenya, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka: Aaliya Luthra, Alia Sinha, Alina Chhantel, Ayeshe' Sadr, Danushri Welikala, Lakheni, Manasvini Supraja, Nzilani Simu, Priyanka Kumar, Richene Singh, Shubha Joshi and Siddhesh Gautam.

RELEARN

Excerpts from expert voices at teach-ins on caste and desire, data and our bodies, and the problem of the sexualised migrant



CHRISTINA DHANUJA
UPPER-CASTE IDEALS: HOW CASTE DETERMINES DESIRE

Savarna feminism, which is the equivalent of any dominant majoritarian feminism across the globe, has been designed if not intentionally but by default to only challenge patriarchy, not caste. It enables savarna women, which includes feminists and non-feminists – and women who vocally say they are not feminist – to exercise liberal politics, practise sexual freedom, exhibit desirable aesthetics, access global literacy and economic success, all while keeping that caste power and privilege completely intact. This is why the savarna archetype will always, regardless of the aesthetics, regardless of that archetype, be considered aspirational and attractive by the South Asian psyche – it has been trained by the *Manusmriti* and other literature and other people and popular culture to see savarna by default as superior, Brahmins as those of highest value and the rest of us will have to follow.

All of these aesthetics are determined by high-value savarna upper-caste women. We are observers at this moment in time, where caste is being leveraged and downplayed simultaneously to create an entirely new but evolving identity – the globalized modern Indian woman who is savarna (but cultured enough to keep her caste subtle), is international, and is learned. In sharp contrast to this are Dalit women, who are almost always cast within stereotypes. They are victims, they are unruly, or they are promiscuous. And there's several other stereotypes, but they're always within stereotypes. This is one way to curb their sexuality and their sexual expressions. And to say that they must always aspire to be the savarna archetype. And even while they are aspiring to be that archetype, they will be put down and judged and told that you're being promiscuous. Because what a lovely way to slot them into neat categories rather than as human beings.

It is with this knowledge, context and information that we need to re-evaluate our understanding of body politics, inter-caste love which is almost always celebrated as the better way to love, sex positivity, body politics and legitimacy. What we need is a Dalit feminist framework that completely uproots the entire infrastructure around which ideas of desire are being built.



ANJA KOVACS
MY BODY, MY DATA: BRINGING THE BODY BACK TO DIGITAL GOVERNANCE DEBATES

Mostly, when people speak about bodies and data, it's about things like menstrual apps. But there is a fundamental shift happening: with datification, the conceptualisation of our bodies is fundamentally changing. We need to start looking at our bodies differently than we did 20 years ago. Because as a consequence of this, forms of embodiment, the ways that our bodies can be in this world, that are available to us as people, is also changing.

At the heart of the problem is really how we speak about data. It matters how we speak about data because the metaphors that we use in our lives matter. Metaphors always have baggage. Every metaphor comes with certain assumptions. And so if we are using those metaphors, we are basically building those assumptions into our discourses, into our laws, into our solutions. So the metaphors also have consequences that are embedded in our thinking...

So when it comes to data, at present our metaphors are highly disembodied. There are many metaphors being used but one really prominent one is this idea of data as a resource, or data as oil. Something that is out there, that's up for grabs. Data as oil – it's like you can mine it, you can extract it. You can't really control it, you can at most try and harness its force. Then you have to mine it, you have to exploit it. And of course the only ones who can do that are the ones who are those who are the experts or have the capital to do that because you need to be able to do that at scale. It naturalises and depersonalises the whole process of data gathering because of this metaphor.

The realities are often different. People's agency, people's creativity are very central to all of the data sets being created. ...A lot of us have had this experience that you have to be online, you have to use the digital space to do something. It's really that moment where we can feel how we are forced to create it by a system that then claims that it is supposedly naturally there.

So the thing is that in these metaphors that we currently use, people are nowhere to be found. Whether you talk about data as oil, or as resource or an asset, this whole idea that people's agency, creativity comes in just disappears.



SEALING CHENG
MIGRATION, PRECARIY, SEXUALITY

Migration is a dangerous pursuit for most people, especially when you're non-normative, non-heterosexual and you come from the Global South, you come with certain labels that mark you as a threat to the nation. And the border control is there to prevent you from coming because this is a manifestation of sovereignty.

Sexuality, in the broad sense, not just sex work per se but also erotic labour, emotional labour, intimate relationships, are part of our resources as human beings. This is particularly for people who are politically, economically and socially disenfranchised. What do you have left that you can mobilise to fight for a good life? You, as the person. Your body, your sexuality, your charm, as a person.

When I try to talk about migrants as being between a rock and a hard place, I would like to say something about neoliberalism. The precarity that we talk about, it is not inherent to being a migrant, but the precarity has been exacerbated by the neoliberal processes. The neoliberal state is constantly claiming that they are under threat – from outside forces. These people of a different religion, these people of different ethnicities, terrorism... And they're under threat from the 'losers' – the poor people, the homeless people, criminals, terrorists, traffickers. And therefore the neoliberal state needs stronger police, stronger army and other law enforcement, bigger prisons. Sexuality, in this process, becomes a resource against all these exclusionary institutions.

I want to raise a question here. As we see the expansion of anti-trafficking measures, we see how sex work is the main target of these punitive mechanisms. It makes you wonder, because neoliberalism, isn't it about the individual taking care of oneself? Isn't it about the individual using his or her resources, in order to advance their lives? My argument is that the sex worker is the ultimate neoliberal subject. You rarely have the sex worker going to the state and saying "I want my welfare payment because I'm not getting enough." They are the most enterprising. So, how come sex workers are the main target of these anti-trafficking measures? Sex work marks the sexual limits of neoliberalism.

REREAD

Two books were launched at the event

FEMINIST FABLES: This collection of stories by Srilatha Batliwala emerged out of a lifetime of feminist activism and thought. A CREA Senior Advisor, Batliwala has worked at India's rural grassroots and among urban poor, collectivizing women and learning from them. These fables distil those insights.

LIQUID BORDERS. DISSIDENT BODIES: This photobook emerged from Anita Khemka's staged portraiture made at CREA's renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit (Kathmandu, May 2024). Khemka went on to make more photographs of sex workers of the region, resulting in this beautiful volume.

THE YEAR
IN NUMBERS

TRAINING SESSIONS

89

PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED
THE SESSIONS

2,050

CREA INSTITUTES HELD

12

PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED
THE INSTITUTES

330

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS
CREATED

9

SUBGRANTS

58

IN-PERSON EVENTS
ORGANISED

38

PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED
THE EVENTS

2,057

ONLINE EVENTS
ORGANISED BY CREA

4

PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED
ONLINE EVENTS

88

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

STATE-AND COMMUNITY-
CENTRED ACTIVITIES:

71+

PEOPLE REACHED

14,000+

SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPRESSIONS
AND VIEWS

2,226,473

Young Minds



Strong Voices

The SELF Academy marked its 10th anniversary last year. A CREA flagship Institute in India, the Storytelling, Expression, Leadership and Freedom Academy conducted in Hindi for girls and young women is now bubbling with stories of change for its over 350 alumni.

One of the most significant shifts has been the transformation of how these young participants understood leadership — not as authority or visibility alone, but as collective responsibility, voice and care rooted in lived experience.

A young woman from eastern Uttar Pradesh entered the Academy with a strong desire to “do something” for girls in her village, but without clarity on how her experiences of restriction, silence and fear could translate into leadership. Through the Academy, she began to articulate how everyday control over mobility, education and bodily autonomy were not individual failures but expressions of gendered power. This reframing marked a critical shift: she moved from self-blame to structural analysis.

SELF gave her the confidence to name violence beyond the physical — including emotional control, digital surveillance, and restrictions on friendships and education. By the

end of the Academy, she connected consent, trust and respect not only to intimate relationships but also to community decision-making and leadership. This conceptual clarity enabled her to reposition herself not merely as a beneficiary of training, but as a knowledge-holder within her collective.

Following the Academy, she initiated conversations with other young women in her community using storytelling, sharing her own narrative of learning about bodily autonomy and consent. Rather than delivering information, she created spaces where other girls could speak about fear, aspiration and resistance. This shift — from speaking for others to speaking with them — reflects a feminist model of leadership rooted in listening, empathy and collective reflection.

Her engagement encouraged her local collective to rethink who speaks in meetings and whose experiences are centred. Younger girls who were previously silent began participating more actively. By sharing stories through informal community spaces and digital platforms, she contributed to amplifying perspectives often excluded from mainstream narratives. Her story — rooted in caste, geography and gender — became part of a

The deep change wrought by ten years of our flagship SELF Academy

wider conversation on girls’ rights and autonomy.

A parallel, equally significant change was the transformation of SELF Leaders from hesitant facilitators into confident feminists capable of holding difficult conversations in public spaces. Several SELF Leaders said that they initially felt nervous about speaking openly, particularly in front of elders and men, and were unsure how their voices would be received. By the end of the sessions, these same young women were confidently mobilising community meetings, narrating stories, responding to resistance and guiding collective reflection. Their leadership was no longer performative or symbolic; it was grounded in critical thinking and political clarity.

This shift was mirrored in the communities too. In multiple villages, mothers who had previously accepted early marriage and withdrawal from education as normal began to publicly question these practices. One woman, after reflecting on her own decision to marry her elder daughter early, committed to educating her younger daughters

and ensuring their marriages would happen only with their consent.

Among adolescent girls, the change was even more pronounced. Girls who initially sat quietly began articulating clear aspirations — of becoming doctors, teachers, athletes, or singers — and explicitly declared that they would not agree to early marriage. In school spaces, girls asked critical questions about why discrimination persists within families and why sons’ education is prioritised. Several girls shared their intention to speak with their parents about continuing education, demonstrating early but meaningful shifts in agency, confidence, and negotiation skills.

Partner organisations supporting these campaigns also demonstrated growth. By centering storytelling written and facilitated by young women from the same social contexts, partners adopted more inclusive and accessible approaches to community engagement. The biggest change therefore was not only in attitudes, but in who was speaking, who was being heard and who felt empowered to imagine a different future.

RECLAIM

How one woman's life changed through the Roshni program

Through the Roshni program, CREA strengthened grassroots feminist leadership in Bihar. Sustained mentorship supported a small cohort of young women to understand and apply Constitutional values in practice — and effect change in their own lives and others’.

Here’s Kumari Bharti’s story. By giving tuition, Bharti (centre) put herself and her siblings through school, then surviving severe



domestic violence after marriage. A disabled woman, she had long believed she could not move forward. When she applied to Roshni, she was first rejected, but she wrote in again asking for a second chance.

When given it, she reframed her Social Action Project, which focused on domestic and gender-based violence. Gradually and consistently, women in her community began speaking up, sharing

their experiences, and organising interventions. Not only has the domestic violence in her own household largely ceased, Kumari has reclaimed her ability to speak, to stand, and to lead.

GOVERNANCE *and* FINANCE



CREA'S BOARD

CREA India and CREA Global are two separate entities that share a common vision and mission.

Our Boards serve CREA in its journey towards achieving its vision and mission. They facilitate our programs and ensure compliance and sustainability.

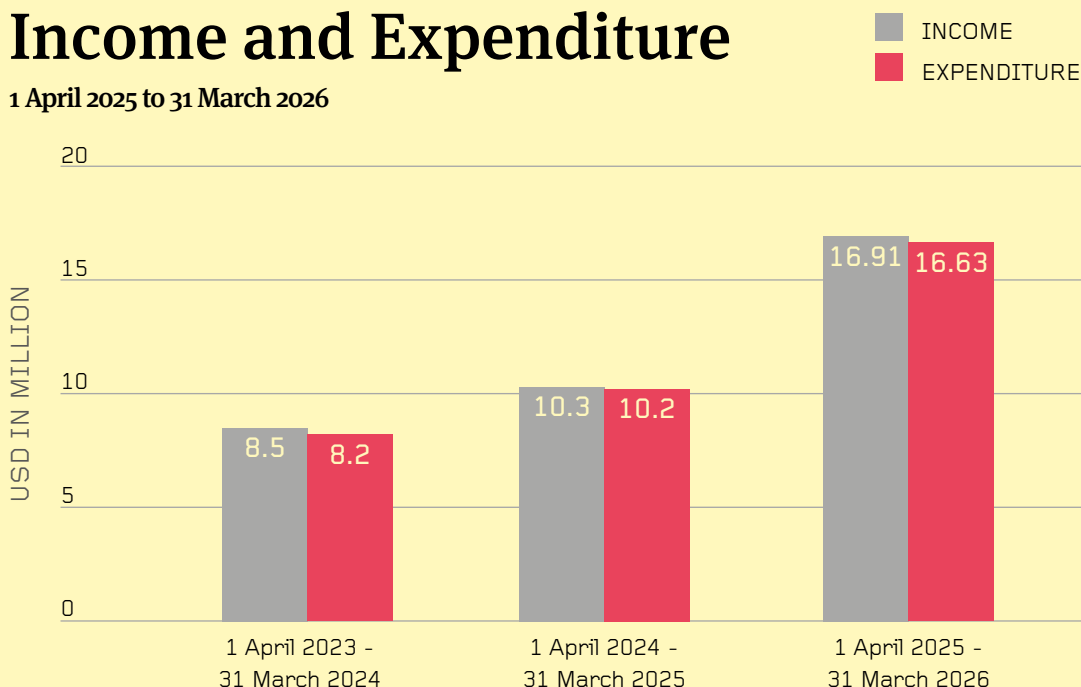
CREA India's Board members met in person in India on 23 February, 2026.

CREA Global's Board held the meeting virtually in New York on 17 March, 2026. We thank all our Board members for their commitment and cooperation.

This is a summary of our activities. To know more about our programs, sign up for our mailing list at www.creaworld.org. Also, do write in to commsteam@creaworld.org to tell us what you think of this Annual Report.

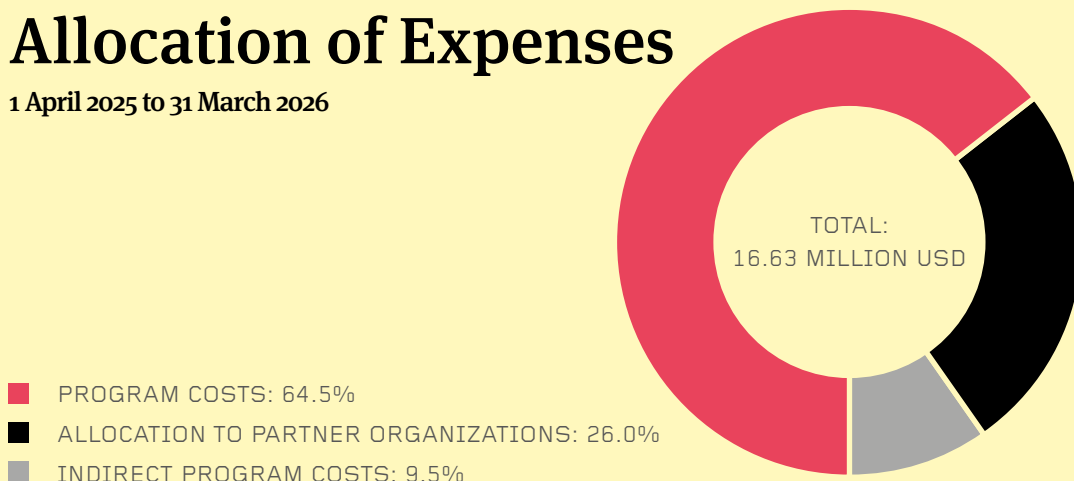
Income and Expenditure

1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026



Allocation of Expenses

1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026



DONOR COMPLIANCE

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, donors conducted due diligence of CREA for both renewals and new grants. After this process, a few grants have been approved.