

DORIA FEMINIST FUND ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Deep Roots, Bold Vision: Powering Movement-Led Change Across the MENA






A Letter to our DFF Community


Dear partners, co-activists and friends,

It is no secret that the past few years haven't been a walk in the park for our MENA region, particularly for feminist activist communities, but despite it all, we are still here. That is what feminist resistance with deep roots and a bold vision is about. Together, we continue to keep the hope burning and the work going, at a time when our people and countries need us the most.

This doesn't, however, deny our difficult reality. From protracted and escalating conflicts, to shrinking funding for gender justice, rising anti-rights and authoritarian powers, deepening inequalities, corruption and impunity, and climate emergencies; the crises we are surviving are compounded, complex and exhausting. Historically marginalized communities such as women, girls and gender diverse folks across our region are at particular risk of alienation, violence and oppression. Authoritarian movements, backed by influential political, religious and business actors, are mounting continuous attacks on basic human rights and gender justice activism. Civic space is shrinking, digital violence and censorship are rising, LGBTQI+ people are villainized and criminalized, and advocacy spaces are being hogged by right-wing actors determined to silence and exclude feminist voices. Feminist organizations, often the first responders to violence, are chronically underfunded, overstretched and subjected to threats, attacks and surveillance, despite their proven record of resilience and efficient decision-making, prevention, crisis response and community organizing. Furthermore, climate-related insecurity compounds these risks, as environmental stressors intensify the risk of inequality and gender-based violence.

This is not to demotivate ourselves, quite the opposite. This is to firmly state that the time for us is now. Our feminist leadership is essential. Many of us feel that we are living through transitional times that will define our future in the region and globally. Major questions are being asked, fundamental conversations are being held, and the stakes are extremely high.






This is the right moment for us to be at the table, on the ground, and everywhere possible to make our voices heard and our dreams realized. At a time when it feels hard to even breathe, we must hold onto one another, and continue to imagine and build the world we want to see. The positive thing about challenge is that it also brings opportunity.

Since our founding, DFF's strategic goal as a feminist funder is to serve feminist movements in our region, the Middle East and North Africa. We work to strengthen the ecosystem of feminist leaders, initiatives, and movements by leveraging funds and other resources, providing opportunities for capacity building and sharing, addressing root causes of gender injustice, responding to crises, and engaging in funder advocacy.

We continue to centre trust, growth, collective care, safety and security in our community connections, as in our institutional policies and practices. In 2026, DFF is regionally rooted, feminist-led, committed to intersectional activism and locally-informed feminist practice. This is our vision, and we are determined to bring it to life with you, our community, our deep roots. Let's walk together.

In solidarity,
DFF Team



“2025 taught us that movement solidarity is what sustains our future. Through radical trust, we are shifting the narrative from vulnerability to absolute agency, bridging global resources to finally match the brilliance of regional expertise. We are not here to 'de-risk' funding; we are here to redefine it; because the real risk is failing those at the very frontlines of the fight for a gender-just MENA region.”

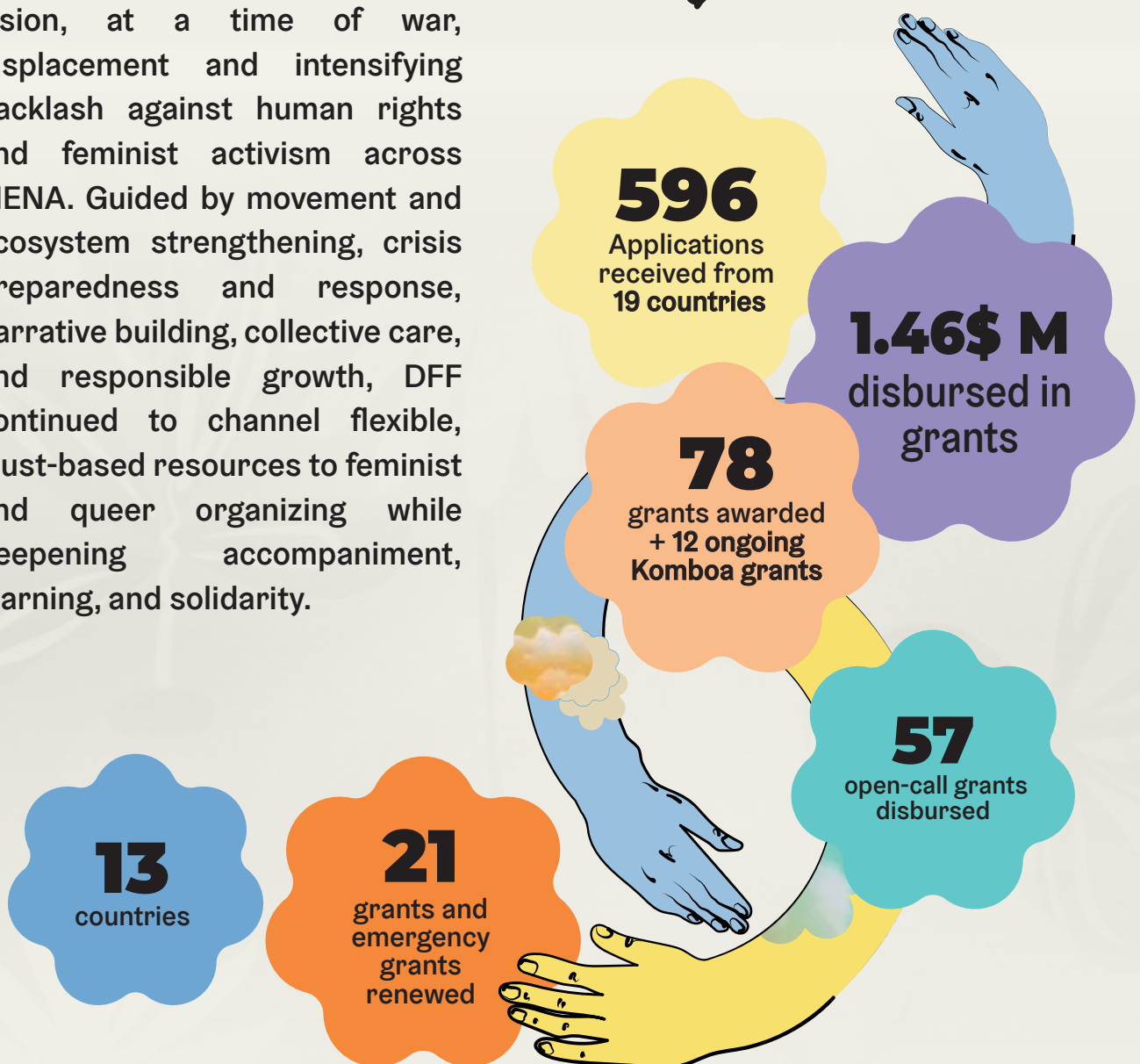
Zeina Abdel Khalik - Executive Director



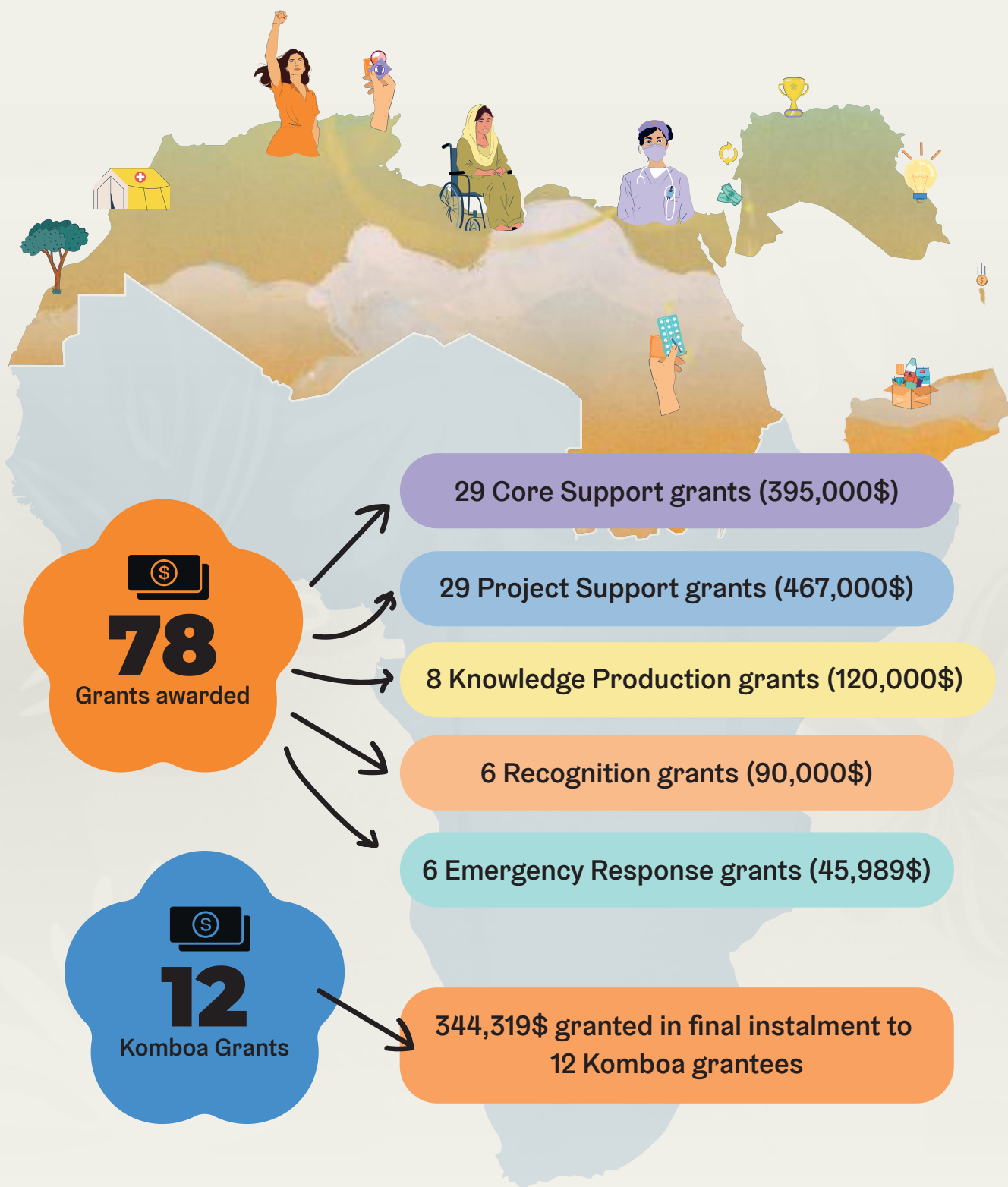
We Put ZAHA in Action

In 2025, DFF operationalized ZAHA, our 2025-2030 strategic vision, at a time of war, displacement and intensifying backlash against human rights and feminist activism across MENA. Guided by movement and ecosystem strengthening, crisis preparedness and response, narrative building, collective care, and responsible growth, DFF continued to channel flexible, trust-based resources to feminist and queer organizing while deepening accompaniment, learning, and solidarity.

We Took Our Grantmaking to a New Level

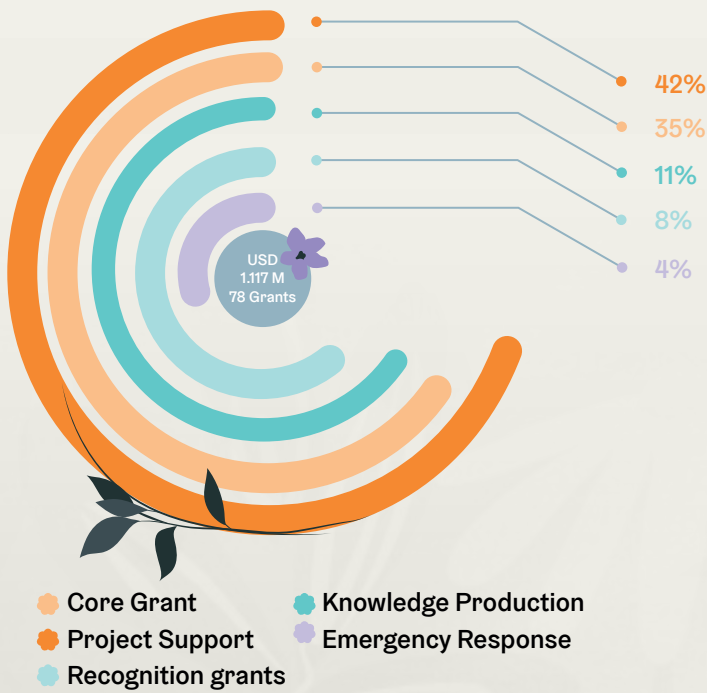


Here's how the grants were distributed by type:



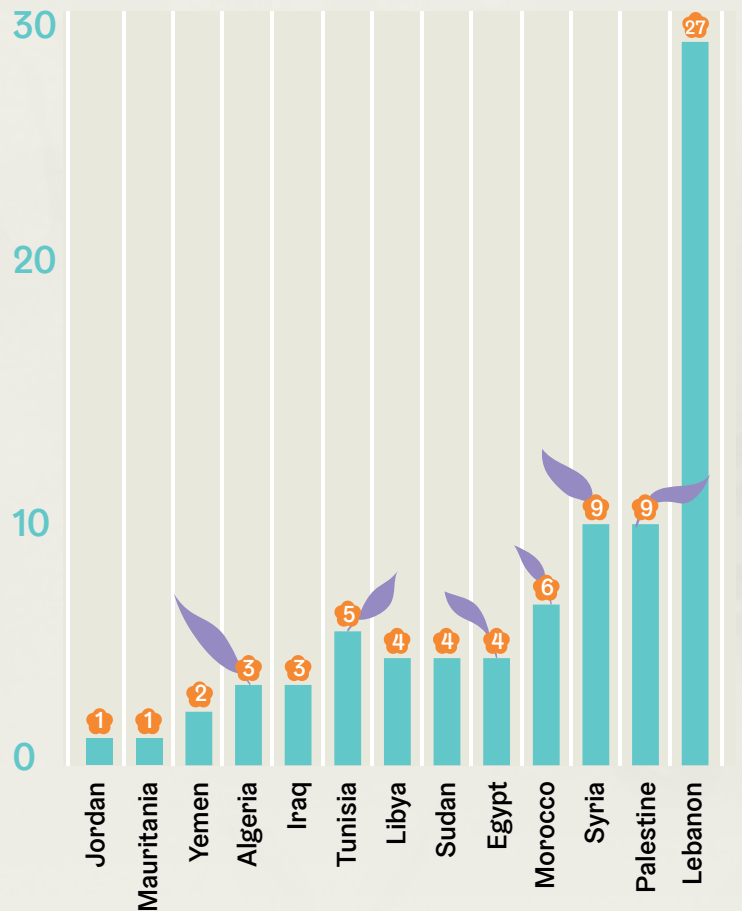
Meet our 2025 Grantee Partner Community

Cycle 5 Allocations per Grant Type



In the 2025 call for proposals, DFF funded 57 grantee partners from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and Mauritania.

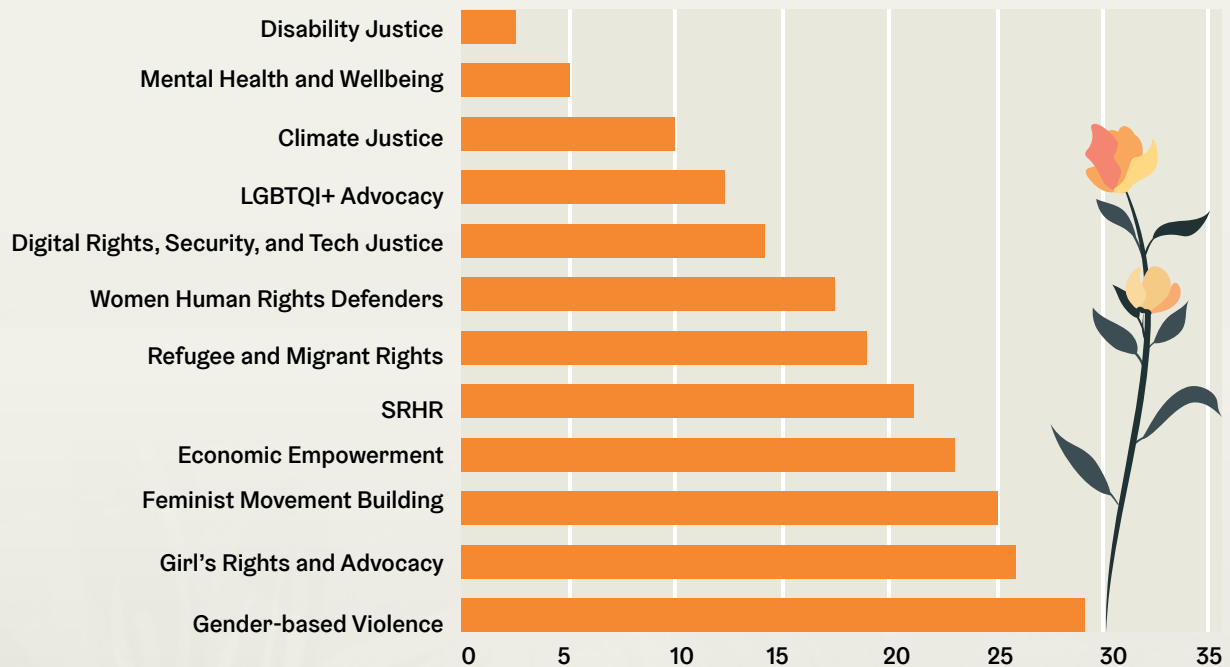
Distribution by Country



Cycle 5 Open Call for Proposals

In 2025, DFF received 596 applications in the annual call for proposals, from 19 countries across the MENA region. 2025 marked a significant expansion of DFF's applicant pool, due to strengthened outreach efforts to under-resourced communities and issue areas such as feminist activists in Mauritania, Sudan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, as well as under-represented issue areas such as disability justice, climate justice, and indigenous rights.

Grantee Partner Thematic Areas



This variety in grant distribution across countries and themes reflect DFF's responsiveness and adaptability to changing contexts and partner priorities. Below are a few stories that demonstrate how DFF's flexible support created concrete impact across different contexts.

STORIES WE LOVE

Makani | Lebanon

Makani trained 120 Syrian and Palestinian refugee women in 2025. Trainings focused on women's rights, citizenship and peace-building, helping participants build confidence and prepare either to return to Syria with a rights-based vision or to continue organizing in Lebanon.

Why it matters: the project linked feminist political education to psychosocial support and amplified refugee women's agency in a highly precarious context.





Wyam Youth Foundation | Yemen

Wyam Youth Foundation established the first Yemeni women's alliance comprising women with hearing impairments. The alliance focuses on equipping the women with political knowledge and leadership skills through combining training, research, policy work, and dialogue with decision-makers to advance the political participation of women with disabilities.

Why it matters: the project expanded inclusivity as part of feminist movement-building and marked a qualitative leap in the Yemeni women's movement.



Midanik | Sudan

With DFF's support, Midanik is now formally registered in Sudan and Uganda! This provided Midanik's team with more confidence, visibility and recognition to sustain their work.

Why it matters: in a context where feminist organizing is under severe pressure, flexible funding helped Midanik strengthen both its organizational survival and public legitimacy.



“Our work and partnership with DFF made it possible for queer-led and trans-led initiatives to exist and have our voices heard within the feminist movement in the SWANA region.”

Queer Light Collective, Iraq

DFF's Impact in Our Partners' Words

"DFF made us believe that existing, having our voices heard is possible."

"The fund came at a time of global backlash... it helped us sustain our operations when we were considering closing down."

"Before receiving the grant, our activities were quite humble and of lesser reach. After receiving the grant, we managed to increase our outreach to women."

"We created a space for them to speak up and feel supported."

"In the 2025 evaluations, partners linked DFF support to them developing a bolder voice, increased legitimacy, safer practice and stronger solidarity. Several partners identified trust-based funding and accompaniment as crucial tools that allowed their work to expand reach and establish public legitimacy in hostile environments."

"Accompaniment means safety, we were being granted and trusted... there is a feminist shoulder to lean on."

KOMBOA Consortium: Expanding Solidarity and Advocacy in North Africa

DFF continued to implement KOMBOA as its North Africa collaborative grantmaking track, disbursing USD 344,319 in long-term flexible funding, adding to the short term USD 214,989 grants included above as recognition, core, projects and emergency, combined with sustained feminist accompaniment and movement support. The Komboa project supports feminist movements and communities across Africa to resist and strengthen their resilience against anti-rights backlash through resourcing, solidarity, and collective learning. Beyond grantmaking, DFF invested in strengthening partners' institutional and political capacities through accompaniment on project management, financial and narrative reporting, feminist advocacy, documentation, peer learning, and in-person engagement. By early 2026, 27 feminist groups across Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia had successfully fulfilled their projects!

KOMBOA's impact has been both concrete and transformative.

At the community level, partners expanded access to safe learning environments in creative ways, such as establishing library spaces in shelters for girls in collaboration with public authorities. On a more structural level, DFF partners in Morocco drafted an advocacy memorandum calling for the legal recognition of sexual bribery, and developed practical guides that address the violation in universities. They also launched advocacy campaigns and trainings that reached more than 45,000 people, increasing public awareness of gender-based violence and the need for institutional accountability.

The project also significantly strengthened feminist leadership among younger generations. For instance, 43 micro-grants were disbursed to support local feminist organizing by adolescent girls in Morocco. In addition, a national leadership training in Morocco convened 110 participants from 32 sites, building their capacities in advocacy, public speaking, fundraising, and project management.

Narrative power and cultural production emerged as a defining pillar of KOMBOA in 2025. DFF partners produced three new seasons of feminist podcasts (15 episodes) addressing sexual violence and legal accountability. They also created feminist theatre productions that document women's lived experiences of violence, and generated research on hate speech in digital spaces. Additional groundbreaking outputs include: a manuscript examining the legal status of "Khuntha" in the MENA region; a theatre script starring a North African transwoman, and a landmark publication that documents over twenty years of queer organizing in Algeria. To further amplify grassroots voices, DFF collaborated with three feminist journalists from Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia to produce articles, interviews, and political storytelling that elevate and promote feminist narratives.

"DFF's accompaniment has been far more than a funding relationship. It has been a genuine partnership in feminist movement-building."

Dar Al Maghreb - Morocco

Recognizing that sustainable movements require ongoing collective care, the KOMBOA Consortium invested in monthly online healing spaces that brought together activists across SWANA. These spaces featured meditation, art therapy, storytelling, and collective reflection, alongside two immersive multi-day retreats focused on rest, learning, and cross-cultural exchange. The cherry on top was the Marrakech KOMBOA Convening which brought together grantee partners in-person to indulge in collective reflection, trust-building and strategic exchange.

"With the support of the DFF, Roots Lab Africa has made significant progress in strengthening queer and gender-diverse communities across Morocco through capacity-building, visibility, and community-led empowerment. The grant enabled us to implement a series of impactful activities that advance bodily autonomy, gender justice, and intersectional advocacy."

Roots Lab Africa - Regional

Climate Justice: Stronger Feminist Knowledge and Resourcing

In 2025, DFF launched a participatory research process to explore how climate change intersects with ongoing crises in Lebanon and Syria, thus reshaping women's lives, labour, health and mobility. The research centered the voices of feminist frontliners who are responding to climate challenges, while navigating significant structural obstacles and resource constraints.

In addition, due to targeted outreach, DFF received over 25 applications from Lebanon and Syria tackling emergent climate/gender justice themes, out of which 9 received DFF grants.

STORIES WE LOVE

Karzeh | Lebanon

“We completed a full seasonal cycle of workshops rooted in feminist ecology, collective care, and ancestral food practices. Following the initial gatherings and spring workshops, we organized three additional workshops that marked the transition into late summer and autumn food preservation practices. We held a burghul workshop where women collectively cooked, dried, milled, and prepared wheat, alongside bread-making and storytelling around childhood, labour, and survival. This workshop highlighted wheat as both nourishment and memory, and centered women's embodied knowledge of food systems shaped by necessity, care, and resilience.”



Syria Youth Initiative | Syria

“In 2025, the team focused on integrating climate justice, women’s empowerment, and community participation through the reforestation project in Afrin. Activities included trainings and the planting of 3,192 diverse seedlings with follow-up irrigation and maintenance to ensure sustainable growth.”

Transformative Pathways | Syria


“Before this training, I thought climate change was something far from us. Now I understand how it affects our land and our work, and I feel that I can do something about it, even if it starts with a small step.”

Emergency and Crisis: Ready to Respond

The growing instability in MENA means that renewal grants and emergency response grants are at the core of DFF’s strategic priorities. Hence, feminist preparedness and frontline response is on the top of our list.

In 2025, DFF allocated emergency response funding to grantee partners facing unexpected circumstances. One example is our partners in Tunisia who were forced to significantly scale down or even temporarily suspend their work due to mounting political pressure and state surveillance. In another instance, a grantee partner was suddenly notified by their fiscal partner that their activities will be permanently frozen. This climate of repression creates mounting pressure on our resilient partners, yet they continue to find ways to organize, document violations and sustain solidarity.





In response to the devastating humanitarian crisis in Sudan due to the protracted armed conflict, DFF launched a feminist humanitarian response funding call, supported by First Response Fund. The aim was to reach under-resourced feminist humanitarian aid actors across the country, particularly those located in remote areas, displacement camps such as al-Afad and conflict-affected regions like al-Jazeera. Our mapping also included marginalized communities such as informal sector workers and people living with HIV. Following a participatory selection process, DFF granted 21 feminist humanitarian organizations across 9 states, prioritizing women-led organizations with strong community rootedness and a proven record of impactful aid delivery. The 21 grantee partners launched their projects in early 2026.

BEYOND GRANTS: ACCOMPANIMENT, CARE AND COLLABORATION

DFF's grantmaking in 2025 was complemented by a new accompaniment system designed to meet the individual needs of our grantee partners. Collaborations and partnerships were also high up on DFF's list for 2025.

Here's some more on this:

A Fresh System for Accompaniment

- ❁ DFF implemented a focal point system, whereby each grantee partner is assigned a single contact from the DFF team to support reporting and strategic planning where needed.
 - ❁ Financial management support for our grantee partners covered budgeting, expenditure documentation, procurement, and individualized feedback from DFF's finance team.
 - ❁ MEL workshops and one-on-one support helped partners build frameworks, collect evidence, and align activities with their organizational visions.
 - ❁ Additional capacity - strengthening workshops covered digital security, psychosocial support, strategic visioning and resource mobilization.
 - ❁ DFF established a fiscal sponsor network within its grantee partner community, whereby established and registered partners act as fiscal sponsors for informal and unregistered groups.
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Collaborations and Partnerships


- Through the KOMBOA collaborative grantmaking model in North Africa, DFF paired flexible funding with accompaniment. Capacity sharing sessions were organized around project management, financial and narrative reporting, documentation and feminist advocacy. DFF also commissioned feminist journalists from Tunisia and Morocco to document grantee work, and conducted a field visit to Marrakech to deepen exchange with Moroccan partners.
- The Fund Her Now collaborative, of which DFF is a member, secured funding for 2026 and ensured the sustainability of its core activities. As a result, the collaborative will actively engage in strategic outreach to private and corporate sectors, aiming to diversify and expand funding sources. In addition, it will strengthen networking and partnership-building efforts with potential donors, particularly within spaces identified in a mapping exercise conducted by the collaborative.
- DFF supported grantee partners to participate in external feminist learning and movement-building spaces:
 - Two grantee partners participated in SGRI Arabic 2025, a regional residential course hosted by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship (AUB) in partnership with CREA in Cyprus.
 - Two other grantee partners attended the CREA 2025 Conference in Kathmandu, where they engaged in rich discussions on feminist leadership, care-centered approaches and collective organizing.
 - Other grantee partners attended the Pan-African ILGA in Johannesburg, South Africa, where they connected with queer movements across the African continent, exchanged resistance strategies, strengthened advocacy approaches and built cross-regional solidarity. Their participation also elevated North African queer perspectives within continental conversations on rights, justice and movement-building.



Connecting, Creating and Collaborating: DFF Convenings

Throughout 2025, DFF organized two grantee partners convenings to solidify grantmaking with collective care, strategic learning and movement-building:

 In February 2025, Lebanon-based grantee partners gathered in Beirut to share post-war reflections and benefit from psychosocial support sessions.

 In November 2025, the regional convening “Connect. Collaborate. Create” brought together more than 40 partners from across SWANA for capacity sharing, partner-led presentations, creative trust-building and collaboration.

Throughout these convenings, grantee partners reflected on concrete ways to practice solidarity, especially with co-activists facing escalating violence and repression in Sudan and Tunisia. They came up with practical recommendations, shared hands-on skills and moments of heartfelt connection and care.

There were also strong calls for more cross-regional learning and exchange, as well as mentorship opportunities to amplify grassroots voices that often remain unheard by donors and broader audiences.



2025: A Year of Growth and Learning

In 2025, DFF continued to strengthen not only what it funds, but how it learns, governs and grows. The 2025 Impact Evaluation points to a stronger understanding among grantee partners of feminist and inclusive MEL, and better practical use of M&E tools. This enhances the overall financial accountability and transparency across the DFF community. In parallel, DFF continued to actively develop its internal systems to support accountability and long-term sustainability, while reflecting on competing priorities for the upcoming 2026 grantmaking cycle.

DFF's learning and growth opportunities can be grouped into two categories:

A Stronger Institution

🌸 DFF held three online Board meetings and one in-person convening in 2025. The Board approved a Reserve Fund Policy and an Investment Policy, and initiated its reserve fund as a buffer against crisis and funding volatility.

🌸 DFF completed its 2024 Canadian financial audit with a clean status and continued to strengthen financial controls, traceability and organizational systems.

A Strategic Advocate for MENA Feminists

DFF solidified its role as a strategic disruptor and bridge-maker within the global philanthropic ecosystem, advocating for a fundamental shift in how donors fund feminist movements in the MENA region.



To that end, we actively participated in key international platforms to influence donor agendas and amplify regional voices:

- The CSW 69 (Beijing 30+) in New York in March;
- The African Philanthropy Conference in Cairo in July, where DFF gave the keynote speech titled “Feminist and Gender-Responsive Financing for Inclusive Development”;
- The Financing for Feminist Futures Conference in Madrid in October;
- The 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in Gambia, where DFF contributed to regional discussions on justice, rights and movement-building across Africa.
- In November, DFF participated in the Feminist Republic in Mombasa, and the Pan-Africa ILGA Conference in Johannesburg to advocate for better funding of LGBTQI+ movements in the MENA region.

In these spaces, DFF championed a narrative of radical trust and regional agency, challenging traditional “top-down” aid models and urging donors to move beyond compliance, toward long-term flexible solidarity. By centering the experiences and voices of frontline activists, we continue to cultivate a landscape where feminist resistance can move beyond survival to thrive and flourish.



2026 and Beyond: The Journey Ahead

Building on 2025 learnings, DFF will continue to:

- Mobilize financial, political, and technical resources from a wide range of funders to support feminist movements in the MENA region;
- Engage in long-term advocacy and education to build an ecosystem of donors with a strong understanding of the realities and needs of feminist movements in MENA;
- Refine its accompaniment program so that it remains partner-centered, proportionate, and useful in high-constraint contexts;
- Create convening spaces and opportunities for collective reflection, knowledge and skill sharing, networking and well-being;
- Strengthen sustainability through clearer renewal and transition pathways, optional evidence packaging and donor mapping where safe;
- Fostering more opportunities for intentional collaboration and peer support among grantee partners.

DFF is deeply grateful to its grantee partners, activist advisors, team members, and institutional and collaborative partners for making our 2025 journey possible and impactful.

In 2026 and beyond, DFF will continue to be a strong and reliable shoulder for its community to lean on.

www.doriafeministfund.org

