

**Resourcing Connection and Care:**  
**An Urgent Call to Funders to Sustain**  
**and Strengthen Care-Centered**  
**Feminist Organizing**



# **“What is the point of the revolution if we can’t dance?”**

## **Background**

**The Collective Care Collaborative (CCC) was formed in 2022 by a group of five Global South and East-based women’s funds, including the Doria Feminist Fund, the Mongolian Women’s Fund, Tewa/Nepal, Women’s Fund Fiji, and the FRIDA Young Feminist Fund. These five funds came together to share insights and perspectives from their national, regional and global contexts, build capacity to incorporate care work as a central principle in their operations and programmatic work, and uplift the critical care work advanced by their grantee-partners.**

**In particular, the goals of this collective are to:**

- ◆ Deepen grantee partners’ resilience and sustainability through dedicated funding, capacity strengthening, and flexible funding that responds to collective care needs.**
- ◆ Advance grantee partners’ narrative-building around collective care, on their terms, in their languages**
- ◆ Strengthen the capacities and abilities of women’s funds to center care in all that they do, including operations, resource mobilization and programmatic efforts**

**To strengthen the collective’s understanding of how care is defined and operationalized across the network and in the feminist movements, the Collective Care Collaborative launched a feminist participatory research and strategy process in 2023 funded by Fenomenal Funds. It consisted of two phases: one was an internal assessment of the collective care strategies, policies and practices of the 5 women’s funds that are part of the CCC, and the second was a global survey that went to over 100 grantee partners of these funds to assess how they approach collective care in their relationships, organizations and programmatic outcomes. This research offered an opportunity for women’s funds to collectively document, reflect on, and assess how collective care is practiced in their funds and the communities they serve, what gaps exist, and how their individual and collective care work could be strengthened through funder advocacy.**

## Goals, audience and purpose of this toolkit

This Collective Care Collaborative's Advocacy toolkit is a resource for funders that builds on the visions, experience, and practices of the 5 women's funds and the communities and movements they serve. It is designed to help funders better understand how collective care is defined, what role it plays in grantmaking, accompaniment and organizational practices, and its centrality in supporting the "glue" and resilience of feminist movements. It also points to recommendations of what more funders can do to invest in community-driven care models that prioritize interdependence, well-being and sustainability within women's rights organizations, feminist movements and women's funds.

## How is Collective Care Defined?

"Co-creating collective care means building solidarity, resilience, and resistance against oppressive systems. It requires acknowledging and addressing the root causes of violence and working collaboratively to create alternative systems of care and support."

"Care that is accessible to all is inclusive, equitable, and community-driven. It involves caring for and supporting small groups and new organizations that might not fit the standard bureaucratic image to which some donors limit their funding."

"Grantee partners envision a future where collective care can not only be a tool for resilience, but a mechanism for rest, joy, and creativity".

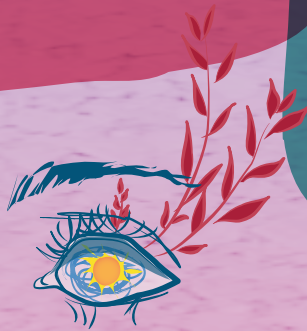
"Creating a resilient community and network of care that can protect, defend, and even serve to liberate people from oppression and political repression."



## Why is Collective Care Important?

"Wellness is not an additional responsibility or luxury. It's actually the work. It's about an organisation being so well that it has the energy to produce sustainable results for its constituency. It's about enabling all of us to break free of limits created by power dynamics, resentment, suspicion and brokenness." Hope Chigudu, Building an Organization with a Soul

"Resourcing collective care means prioritizing the voices and experiences of those most impacted by systemic injustices and ensuring that care practices are trauma-informed and culturally sensitive. To implement collective care without causing harm, we must engage in continuous dialogue, actively listen to community feedback, and remain flexible and responsive to changing needs."



- ◆ Collective care is an integral component of community life and feminist movement work that builds on ancestral practices, cultural norms and practices
- ◆ Collective care is an essential part of activism, healing and resilience
- ◆ Collective care is rarely funded and not an integral part of many philanthropic spaces and funding practices and processes
- ◆ While collective care is core and essential to the work of women's rights organizations, it is increasingly sidelined for more "urgent" issues and priorities
- ◆ Collective care must incorporate an intersectional analysis, as the needs and strategies are different across various communities
- ◆ Incorporating care and well-being practices is essential to movement building and strengthening
- ◆ Collective care is an essential component of a feminist response to crises
- ◆ There are limited opportunities for learning across collective care strategies and exhaustion and fatigue are common; this is especially true for grassroots feminist organizers who are responding to polycrisis and are more prone to attacks and burn-out
- ◆ This collective's research shows that when collective care is prioritized, the work improves as does overall health and wellbeing

## Core Collective Care Principles

“Changing ourselves is necessary to change the world”

“Collective care is necessary to support the “being” of the work, not just the doing”


There is a long and diverse history of collective care practiced by the women’s funds who are part of this collaboration and their partners. It is grounded in ancestral knowledge, community practices, and ways of being, and feminist praxis. Collective care differs from individualistic models of self-care and institutionalized care and emphasizes collective well-being, mutual aid, shared responsibility, interdependence, and community resilience. Integrating collective care as a core organizing principle is indispensable to advancing women’s rights, as it supports personal and collective work needed for transformation. It creates the conditions for deep personal and social transformation to occur and supports those most impacted by systemic oppression to reclaim and reconnect to themselves, each other, and to ancestral practices. It also supports the building of current and intergenerational leadership and movements necessary for long-term, sustainable and systemic change.

Documenting women’s and feminists’ approaches to collective care is part of political documentation and organizing. The landmark research supported by this collective demonstrates that care is critical to sustaining activism, addressing trauma and healing, building resilience, and ensuring long-term sustainability at the individual, organizational, and ecosystem levels. It has also surfaced key aspects of a collective care model.




# Key Components of a Collective Care Model



- ◆ Centering Feminist and intersectional Practices by incorporating power analysis and practice and identifying the needs and realities of different communities
- ◆ Grounding Ourselves in Care and Connection by putting into place practices that include our mind, body and spirit 
- ◆ Providing Emotional and Mental Health Support such as peer support groups, therapy, or healing circles. Mental health care should be part of the infrastructure of activism, not an afterthought.

Supporting Physical Care and resources for physical well-being, like providing food, shelter, and healthcare, as well as access to safe spaces where people can rest and recuperate.

- ◆ Recognizing Cultural and Spiritual Care and emphasizing the importance of integrating cultural and spiritual practices into care models, particularly in communities where these elements play a central role in healing and resilience. This might include rituals, ceremonies, or community gatherings that provide both physical and spiritual nourishment. 

- ◆ Advancing Economic Care and supporting collective financial resources, like emergency funds, shared funding for mutual aid, or stipends for caregivers. Economic support ensures that care work can be sustained and not dependent solely on unpaid labor.

- ◆ Uplifting Solidarity and Mutual Aid and encouraging funders to support grassroots organizations or collectives that focus on mutual aid, where community members exchange resources, skills, and support without relying on hierarchical systems.

- ◆ Centering and uplifting the importance of care as part of a Feminist Crisis Response



## How can women's funds and other funders deepen their commitment to collective care?

"... in some instances [grantee partners] might be better able [than funders] to practice collective care in very intimate ways, more robust, taking into account intersections of their identities in a way we struggle to as a fund"

Feminist funding principles and practices are grounded in a collective care vision and approach. They include prioritizing a continuum of support which includes: general support, trust-based, flexible and long-term funding; providing a range of non-financial resources that can support women's organizations and movements; centering the needs and priorities of those most impacted by intersecting and systemic discrimination and addressing trauma, harm and healing justice that is so often part of feminist struggles.

Funders have a role to play in supporting grantee partners to strengthen their own collective care strategy through financial resources, capacity strengthening, open discussion between funders and grantee partners about needs and challenges related to collective care, and flexibility of funding to respond to collective care.

Funders can:

- ◆ Support collective infrastructures and systems of care that allow for joint learning, building of local knowledge bases and shared practice
- ◆ Support ancestral and Indigenous knowledge healing practices
- ◆ Develop and implement structured practices and resources that allow for better self-care, professional support, and stress management
- ◆ Support efforts that enhance capacity strengthening, mutual accompaniment, and flexible funding that respond to collective care needs.
- ◆ Clearly define what is being resourced. Walk the talk and demonstrate one's commitment to collective care and influence the movement ecosystem through their own practices not through imposing agendas or priorities.

- ◆ Create opportunities for learning across grantee-partners, women's funds and private philanthropy
- ◆ Institute formal collective care policies share these with grantee-partners and make sure that they are funded
- ◆ Build trust-based, long-term relationships with grantee partners

## **What differences would funding the Collective Care Collaborative make?**

- ◆ Strengthen collective care practices, infrastructures and outcomes
- ◆ Support peer learning and strategizing
- ◆ Develop opportunities for cross-cultural learning, development of joint research and analysis on the intersections of care and other issues
- ◆ Strengthen the operational and programmatic responses of women;'s funds to center collective care
- ◆ Provide support for a continuum of funding approaches from crises, to core and long-term to deep support and accompaniment with grantee-partners
- ◆ Strengthen local, grassroots leaders, organizations and movements in the global south and east
- ◆ Strengthen the work of progressive causes against anti-rights movements

