



Blueprints for Resilience

An Outcome Evaluation of WomenStrong International's Programmatic Model

2025

This independent evaluation was commissioned by WomenStrong International and conducted by Abbie Cohen, Christiane Yelibi, Darnesha Tabor, Ena Taguiam, Malaika Cheney-Coker, and Sophía Dávila of Ignited Word LLC.

Executive Summary

WomenStrong International supports 19 women-led organizations¹—referred to as “partners”—worldwide to help address the most pressing needs of women and girls. Through flexible funding, capacity strengthening,² collaborative learning, and community building, WomenStrong supports these local leaders in driving meaningful, lasting change in their communities.

To understand the impact of this approach, WomenStrong commissioned an independent outcome evaluation to explore two central questions: How are organizations building strength and resilience given WomenStrong’s support, and in what ways have partners changed over the past three years as WomenStrong revised its programmatic model?

All partners were invited to participate in the evaluation. A total of thirty-eight staff representing seventeen out of 19 partner organizations responded to an outcome harvesting exercise. An additional critical moments exercise was completed with six WomenStrong partners.

The four main findings are as follows: (1) partners are demonstrating resilience in multiple ways, even in the face of crisis-level threats; (2) partner organizations are largely healthy, with strong organizational culture and leadership; (3) partners are innovating, testing new approaches and initiatives tailored to their local context; and (4) WomenStrong’s holistic, multidimensional, tailored support is a critical driver of partners’ health, resilience, and sustainability.

1. Partners Are Demonstrating Resilience in Multiple Ways, Even in the Face of Crisis-Level Threats

Partners are actively strengthening their resilience through practical, forward-looking strategies — including diversifying their funding sources, formalizing fundraising strategies, embracing long-term strategic planning, deepening engagement in networks, and investing in both specialized roles and continuous organizational learning.

- Fourteen out of 17 (82%) of the partner organizations participating in the outcome harvesting exercise reported that, over the past three years, their organization has actively pursued and maintained multiple revenue sources.
- Some partner organizations (6 out of 17, or 35%) have taken steps to structure their fundraising processes by establishing and maintaining dedicated (partnership) development teams.
- The overwhelming majority of partners (16 out of 17, or 94%) describe their organizations as having a strong direction, based on factors such as a clearly defined mission, vision, and strategic plan.
- Partners are forming and sustaining meaningful relationships across peer organizations, communities, and within the women’s rights movement that enhance their resilience and expand access to both practical and emotional support.
- Partners are strengthening their internal capacity by building more specialized teams, clarifying roles, streamlining workflows, and developing stronger structures that support long-term sustainability.
- Eleven organizations (65%) described organizational learning as central to their resilience. Partners are embedding systems for reflection, feedback, and data use —enabling them to stay aligned with their missions, monitor progress, and adapt in real time.

¹ In early 2025, WomenStrong funded an additional six grantee partners in the area of climate and environmental justice, bringing their total number of current grantees to 25. These six new grantees were not included in the outcome evaluation.

² The term “capacity strengthening” was used throughout the research instruments and, therefore, this report, but WomenStrong has since shifted to calling this work “organizational strengthening.”

2. Partner Organizations Are Largely Healthy

Partner organizations are demonstrating strong evidence of positive organizational health across multiple domains. These include resilience, strong inclusive organizational cultures, effective internal and external communications, and empathetic, participatory leadership.

- The overwhelming majority (35 out of 38, or 92% of respondents to the outcome harvesting exercise) view their organization's culture as healthy.
- All 17 out of 17, or 100% of partners reported investing significant time and resources in cultivating organizational cultures that prioritize staff wellbeing and foster both individual and organization-wide learning.
- Partners are using both internal and external communications as strategic tools to drive growth, enhance visibility, strengthen partnerships, and build internal cohesion. Externally, they've established strong digital presences, diversified media engagement, and used conferences to boost visibility and expand networks. Internal communications efforts include regular meetings and other feedback mechanisms.
- All partners report strong leadership with flatter, more democratic structures. Fourteen out of 17 (82%) of partners described their organization's leadership as participatory, team-based, and/or power-sharing.

3. Partners Are Testing New Models and Initiatives

Four out of six partner organizations participating in a "critical moments" exercise indicated that they are testing new models and/or legal operating structures. In some cases, these maneuvers allow partners to withstand onerous local labor or NGO laws and broaden the spheres within which they can operate.

- Several partners are pursuing innovative organizational strategies to strengthen their impact and sustainability. Two partners noted that they are exploring social entrepreneurship models; another partner forged unexpected alliances with private sector institutions, including banks and cooperatives; and one organization transitioned into a network structure as its active legal entity.

4. Multidimensional, Tailored Support Is Key to Partners' Health and Resilience

Recognizing that no two organizations have the same needs, capacities, or strategic priorities, WomenStrong's model empowers partners to identify the resources that will be most meaningful for their growth and resilience.

- When asked about WomenStrong's support, 97% of partners said that it was either "vital" or "very helpful" in helping them achieve both internal and external change.
- Unrestricted funding was pointed to as the most critical piece of WomenStrong's support by 14 out of 17 or over 80% of partners.
- Analysis of the 18 most significant moments across partner organizations reveals that WomenStrong's impact stems from offering a blend of unrestricted funding, technical support, and strategic connections.
- Funding targeted specifically at core functions, or capacity strengthening, has provided an additional resource that has helped organizations to pivot and respond robustly to crises.
- WomenStrong's investments don't stop at the health of partners' organizations—there are clear ripple effects into programmatic work and broader systems-level influence

We conclude that, with empathetic, flexible, and skilled support from grantmakers—as well as a growing network of partners and public- and private-sector allies—women-led organizations advancing gender equality can become models of resilience and architects of change. Propelled by their own sense of direction and dedication to their mission, partner organizations are laying the blueprints for resilience as they adopt new tactics for survival, test bold ideas, and offer lessons in how lasting change begins from within.

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Introduction

Women-led organizations fighting for the rights of women and girls need a special kind of mettle. While the long arc of the struggle for gender equality presents its own test of endurance, there have also been a number of recent crises at local, national, and international levels. These include: the aftermath of the COVID pandemic; tightening civil society spaces; and, most recently, a dramatic reduction of global development assistance—crises, which in combination, can present existential threats for such organizations (Alcega, 2025; CIVICUS, 2025). In fact, this May, UN Women published a report which found that 90% of the 411 women-led organizations surveyed are “being pushed to breaking point” by budget cuts (UN Women, 2025).

In recognition of the perils of the operating environment and in line with its long-term objectives, WomenStrong is exploring questions of the health and resilience of its partners—recipients of its grantmaking. In the fall of 2024, WomenStrong International contracted Ignited Word to conduct an outcome evaluation to explore how partner organizations changed over the past three years, a period coinciding with the rollout of WomenStrong’s revised programmatic model of unrestricted funding plus tailored capacity strengthening¹ support.

The evaluation is guided by two overarching questions—how organizations are building strength and resilience given WomenStrong’s support, and in what ways partners have changed over the past few years. In other words, in a context where funds are hard to come by and shocks are all but inevitable, how has WomenStrong’s support helped such organizations navigate threats and keep pursuing their missions?

WomenStrong supports 19 women-led organizations² worldwide in their efforts to address many of girls’ and women’s most critical needs: for education, reproductive health, violence prevention, and economic empowerment. They assist their partners through flexible funding, capacity strengthening, and collaborative learning and community building through their Learning Lab. WomenStrong has provided some version of this package of support to partners since 2019, with grant cycles spanning 23 months on average and cumulative support spanning \$100,000–\$300,000 in grants across all organizations. In addition, 17 organizations received a total of \$20,000–\$50,000 in capacity strengthening grants. WomenStrong’s support hinges on the overarching concepts and causal pathways expressed in its theory of change (see Figure 2):

- **Trust-based, unrestricted funding**, enabling partners to determine how best to allocate funds.
- **Peer learning opportunities**, through which partners can connect with other grassroots organizations via the Learning Lab and other collaborative sessions.
- **Facilitating networking**, by connecting partners with external experts and other potential funders.
- **Visibility-focused support**, strengthening partners’ communications systems and uplifting their work to the broader development sector.
- **Tailored capacity strengthening**, including in non-financial and technical areas such as strategy development and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

When You Invest in Core Organizational Functions...

There’s an assumption in WomenStrong’s model that investments in core organizational functions like capacity strengthening and building internal systems—investments usually avoided by other donors in favor of directly funding programs—are vital to help organizations build strength and resilience for the

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² In early 2025, WomenStrong funded an additional six grantee partners in the area of climate and environmental justice, bringing their total number of current grantees to 25. These six new grantees were not included in the outcome evaluation.

long term. This logic is expressed in WomenStrong's theory of change (see Figure 2). The need for strengthening such internal capacities is also extensively evidenced in the field of organizational development, including in the sources reviewed for the organizational health framework (see Methodology). In the social sector, and more specifically for women's rights organizations, the need for such capacities is evidenced in a literature review conducted for WomenStrong by Ignited Word (Cohen, et al., 2024).

Yet, funding for organizational strengthening needs is very hard to come by (Hewlett Foundation, 2022, as cited in Cohen, et al., 2024). Perhaps even more rare is support from a funder which combines unrestricted funding with hands-on capacity strengthening. This is true despite the fact that our literature review uncovered some evidence that the combination is more effective for many organizations (Boesso et al., 2023; Ebarb, 2019; Loomis et al., 2019; Wakefield & Zimmerman, 2020).

...In What Ways Do Organizations Build Their Strength and Resilience?

At the same time, the above-mentioned evidence is limited for multi-dimensional support of the kind demonstrated in WomenStrong's model. In the organization's theory of change, this combined approach is captured metaphorically as water and gardening inputs for use by gardeners (the partner organizations) who cultivate a pollinators' garden that yields produce directly while also supporting pollinators that ostensibly carry "impact" farther afield. Contextualizing the evaluation within the metaphor requires looking at what happens under the soil, the seedbed of growth, as a representation of the changes that happen *within* the partner organizations. Meanwhile, external pressures represent the hidden threats working behind the scenes—broader environmental factors that can undermine even the most diligent gardeners.

To explore the research questions through a rigorous analytical lens, we reviewed several organizational health frameworks and developed our own basic framework for organizational capacity (see Methodology). As primary data collection methods, we used outcome harvesting, a qualitative method well suited to capturing a wide range of behavior-based changes, and also adapted critical moments methodology (CMM) as a data collection tool. CMM is a learning and reflection exercise inviting participants to plot their most consequential moments on a timeline (see Methodology).

Figure 1. WomenStrong's Partners

WomenStrong's Partners

Economic Security and Opportunity Cohort

- Action for Development (Uganda)
- Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity
- Mujeres Transformando (El Salvador)
- Society for Labour and Development (India)

Girls Education and Empowerment Cohort

- GENET (Malawi)
- The Girls' Legacy (Zimbabwe)
- Girl Up Initiative Uganda
- Sahar (Afghanistan)
- Women's Justice Initiative (Guatemala)
- Visionaria Peru

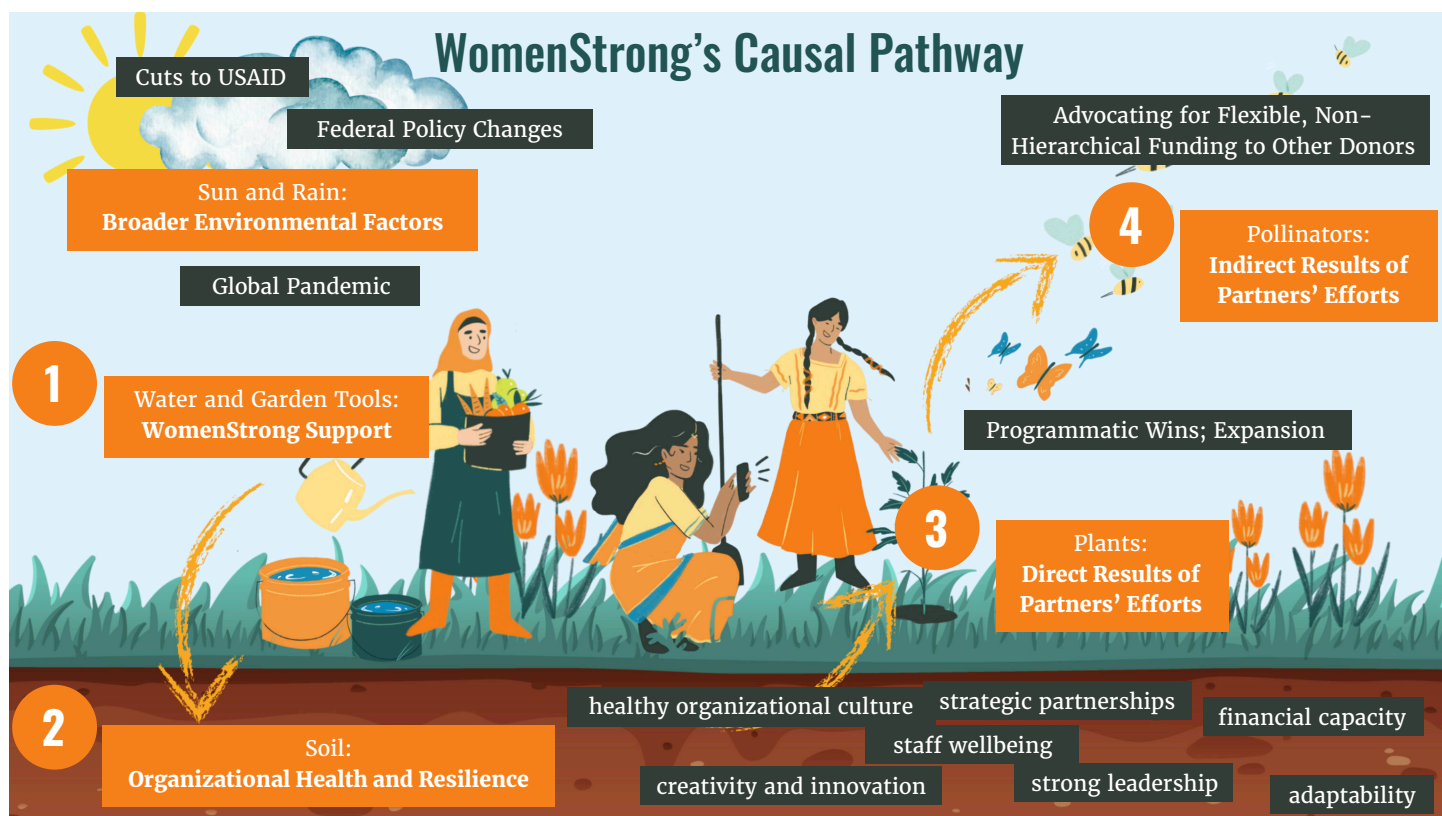
Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls Cohort

- Gender and Development Cambodia
- The Action Foundation (Kenya)
- Rwanda Women's Network (Rwanda)
- Centro Mujeres (Mexico)

Women's Health Cohort

- Copper Rose Zambia
- Mali Health
- Mujeres Aliadas (Mexico)
- Projet Jeune Leader (Madagascar)
- Roots of Health (Philippines)

Figure 2: WomenStrong's Causal Pathway:



Findings

Change has taken root across multiple dimensions of WomenStrong's partners. They are strengthening their resilience by diversifying funding, planning for the long term, investing in organizational learning, and participating in networks of support (See Appendix: Outcome Descriptions). Partners are also showing clear signs that they have cultivated healthy organizations: they are nurturing inclusive cultures, prioritizing staff wellbeing, strengthening communications, and embracing participatory leadership.

Partners' growth doesn't stop at internal shifts—they are also testing new operational and business models and influencing donor practices. This growth is made possible, at least in part, by WomenStrong's multi-faceted model, which combines flexible funding with tailored capacity strengthening support.

#1 "Flexible Funding Gives Us that Ownership, Empowerment, that We Can Do This": Partners are Demonstrating Resilience in Multiple Ways, Even in the Face of Crisis-Level Threats³

Over the evaluation period from 2022 to 2025 and in an era marked by serious threats, including onerous laws affecting civil society organizations and reductions in global development funding,⁴ WomenStrong's partners are strengthening their internal systems, adapting in real time, and continuing to serve their communities with creativity and care (See Appendix: Outcome Descriptions).

³ Figure 3 illustrates how WomenStrong and their partners define resilience, which includes adaptability, innovation and creativity, being a learning organization, strategic partnerships, strong leadership, financial sustainability, and prioritizing staff wellbeing.

⁴ For example, in the critical moments exercise, two (out of six) organizations reported having to dramatically restructure due to insufficient resources and prohibitive local laws.

Participants of varying seniority levels expressed a general consensus through the outcome harvesting data that to be resilient requires a broad range of traits. Partners identified these traits as: adapting to changing conditions; exercising creativity; being a learning organization; nurturing strategic partnerships; showing strong leadership; maintaining financial sustainability; and prioritizing staff wellbeing (See Figure 3).

Partners are building their own resilience⁵ in practical ways by diversifying funding sources and formalizing fundraising strategies; embracing long-term strategic planning; engaging in networks; and investing in both specialized roles and in organizational learning.

“Harness Funding... That Allows Us To Grow”: Diversifying Funding and Adding Structure to Fundraising

Diversifying funding sources is frequently cited by partners as key to organizational resilience, and indeed, partner organizations are actively seeking and maintaining multiple revenue sources including grants, self-generated income, crowdfunding, and individual donations. In fact, 14 out of 17 (82%) reported that over the past three years their organization has actively sought and maintained multiple revenue sources. This strategic diversification of funds is heavily attributed to the actions of organizational leaders, with 12 out of 17 (71%) organizations mentioning the critical role of executive directors, management teams, and boards in limiting dependency on a single income source.

WomenStrong significantly contributes to partners’ funding diversification through financial and technical support and also by brokering connections for partners with other key contacts or networks. In outcome harvesting, (see Methodology), one partner cited using a premium fundraising platform provided by WomenStrong that helped them find “funding opportunities and connect with a few new funders who are interested in non-restricted funding.” Another partner pointed to the direct application support they received from a WomenStrong staff member that resulted in a successful grant.

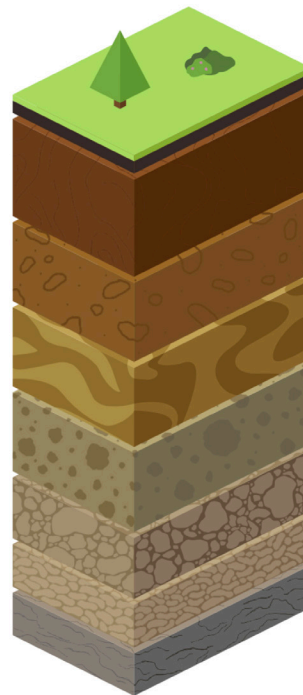
Critical moments methodology underscored WomenStrong’s contributions to partners’ diversification of funds. Half of the six participating organizations provided examples of WomenStrong’s role in helping them secure additional funding. For instance, one organization outlined multiple instances of WomenStrong’s introductions to other donors that resulted in acquiring additional funds. Another organization emphasized just how crucial their membership to a funding network is—a connection which was also facilitated by WomenStrong.

There’s also early evidence that unrestricted funding from WomenStrong indirectly yields more external funding for partners. One organization described in the critical moments exercise how WomenStrong’s

Figure 3. What Resilience Grows In

What Resilience Grows In

What participating partner organizations identify as necessary in order to be resilient



Adaptability

(15 out of 17 organizations or 88%)

Innovation and Creativity

(11 out of 17 organizations or 65%)

Being a Learning Organization

(11 out of 17 organizations or 65%)

Strategic Partnerships

(11 out of 17 organizations or 65%)

Strategic Leadership

(9 out of 17 organizations or 53%)

Financial Sustainability

(8 out of 17 organizations or 47%)

Prioritizing Staff Wellbeing

(8 out of 17 organizations or 47%)

⁵ This section focuses primarily on the self-identified ways in which partners are building resilience, rather than on all the traits partners identify as necessary to achieve resilience.

flexible funding allowed them to expand their leadership team to include a head of programming; a head of human resources (HR); and an assistant to the executive director, who, soon after joining the organization, successfully submitted a proposal in mid-2023 which garnered \$300,000. Just this year, the donor renewed their engagement with the organization for an additional \$5 million over the next five years.

Some partner organizations (six out of 17, or 35%) are also bringing more structure to their fundraising processes by establishing and maintaining dedicated (partnership) development teams. This includes active strategies such as formalizing internal fundraising roles and creating written resource mobilization strategies. These efforts are often championed by executive leadership but increasingly involve cross-organizational participation. One partner explained how their management team “developed feminist fundraising strategies and built strong relationships with donors who align with [their] mission, and program teams.” The partner added that the management team “used feminist storytelling and impact-driven reporting to strengthen donor confidence and long-term support.” These internal shifts support more intentional and coordinated resource mobilization efforts, even when success securing unrestricted funds is still nascent.

“Our Strategy is Our North Star”: Partners are Embracing Strategic, Values-Based Long-Term Planning

The overwhelming majority of partners (16 out of 17, or 94%) described their organizations as having a strong direction. When describing the factors that contribute to their sense of direction, 10 out of 17 (nearly 60%) of partners pointed to having a clearly defined mission, vision, and strategic plan. One partner explains that:

Our strategy is our North Star... a document that is easy to read and everyone has access to. It's not something that gets dusted off only when applying for grants—we live through and breathe through it.

Indeed, partners are embracing long-term planning, looking ahead five years or more to align strategic priorities with sustainable growth. Along with operational and programmatic planning, organizations are shifting from reactive to proactive fundraising and pursuing longer-term funding that spans multiple years and aligns with their mission and vision.

Some partners (seven out of 17, or 41%) also attributed their strong direction to a focus on gender sensitivity, with one partner maintaining:

We ensure that all programs and strategies align with [our organization's] commitment to gender justice, equality, and social inclusion. We follow a well-defined strategic plan, integrating gender-sensitive and mission-driven programs that address systemic inequalities.

WomenStrong supports partners in defining and pursuing their strategic direction in a variety of ways, including through facilitating peer-learning spaces, being thought partners as they weigh critical courses of action, and sourcing specialized consultants.

In the critical moments exercise, three out of six (50%) participants highlighted periods in the past three years when WomenStrong played a critical role in helping them develop or refine their strategy. For example, one group credited WomenStrong with connecting them to a consultant who helped shape their strategic plan. Another shared that they now engage in regular communication with WomenStrong to navigate next steps and adapt to external pressures. The third recalled receiving timely support in identifying and refining their strategic priorities. Each of these moments were identified by organizations as among the most significant turning points in their recent history.

“We Have to Work Together Instead of Working in Silos”: Partners are Participating in Networks that Promote Learning, Offer Solidarity and Support

WSI’s⁶ Learning Lab activities have also been a safe space where we have been able to share our work but at the same time also learn from other partners and learn from their community led interventions.

—Partner organization

Partners are forming and sustaining meaningful relationships—across peer organizations, communities, and within the women’s right movement—that enhance their resilience and expand access to both practical and emotional support. Through WomenStrong’s Learning Lab—a dedicated space facilitated by WomenStrong for partners to learn from each other’s expertise and experience—WomenStrong retreats, and peer exchanges, partners regularly connect across geographies and subject matter areas. They exchange ideas, test strategies, and reflect together, thus deepening their organizations’ learning and adaptability. One partner described the Learning Lab as “a safe space...to share our work but at the same time learn from other partners and learn from their community-led interventions.” Another explained that “collaborating with other organizations has helped us adapt quickly and expand our reach when our own capacity was limited.” Indeed, 11 out of 17—more than half of partners —cited partnerships and networks as essential to weathering challenges, gaining visibility, and staying rooted in shared values.

Along with the practical and technical support, partners also emphasized the emotional dimension of WomenStrong’s peer-learning network, calling it a source of solidarity, encouragement, and affirmation. One partner described the model as “rooted in horizontality, coherence, and sisterhood.”

WomenStrong also facilitates collaborations with other donors, specialized consultants, and external learning networks that lead to major milestones for partners, like getting new funding or advancing internal or programmatic goals. In fact, out of the 18 critical (most significant) moments since 2022 that participants identified, four of them (22%) were direct results of a WomenStrong facilitated connection (See Table 2).

“We Have More Specialized Functions”: Partners are Creating Specialized Personnel Roles

Partners are also building more specialized teams and creating clearer roles, streamlined workflows, and stronger structures that support long-term sustainability. This is particularly evident in the organizations’ communications and human resources (HR) functions. Eight out of 17 (47%) reported adding specialized HR roles in the past three years, and seven out of 17 partners (41%) emphasized the value of being able to hire dedicated communications personnel. One partner pointed to the funds from WomenStrong as a reason for hiring a new communications officer:

With financial support from WomenStrong, [the organization] was able to draw out a communications strategy to guide on internal and external communication processes and has worked on revamping the organisation website, including hiring of a communications officer to fully operate the social communications aspect of the organisation.

“Those Ideas We Got [By] Learning From Other Organizations”: Partners are Building Learning-Rich Organizations

WomenStrong helped us realize the value of becoming more learning-centered. Without it, a non-restricted funding approach will be less effective.

—Partner organization

⁶ WomenStrong International is often referred to as “WSI” or “WS.”

WomenStrong partners are embedding systems for reflection, feedback, and data use to stay mission-aligned, track progress, and adapt in real time. Eleven organizations (65%) described learning as central to their resilience. As one respondent noted, “We are constantly learning and adapting our programming to different contexts and participant needs.”

WomenStrong helps partners to foster such a culture of learning through retreats, the Learning Lab, and their flexible, trust-based approach. The Learning Lab is a key aspect of the capacity building strategy, described by one participant as “very engaging, worthwhile, and fun,” while another emphasized how it serves as “a safe space where we have been able to share our work but at the same time also learn from other partners.”

Another partner noted of the Learning Lab that it “doesn’t only contribute new knowledge, but more importantly, shared knowledge and understanding among the participants within a team.” In other words, the Learning Lab has helped partners recognize the value of organizational learning.

Underpinning these initiatives is the flexible, trust-based funding model, which one partner described as “unique and very simple, yet very impactful as it provides for flexibility.” This approach enables organizations to identify and prioritize their own learning objectives without focusing on restrictive funding requirements. Together, trust-based funding and a heavy focus on learning create an ecosystem where partners feel supported to experiment, reflect, and grow, with one organization directly attributing their ability to “improve certain practices, in particular the integration of more inclusive and effective approaches” to the “knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking” facilitated by WomenStrong.

This appreciation for shared learning instilled in the Learning Lab is echoed in how partners view monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Partners see MEL not as a donor-driven requirement, but as a tool for internal learning and strategic decision-making. Seven out of 17 (41%) explicitly mentioned using data to inform decisions or improve programs. One partner shared that MEL frameworks “help us evaluate success and ensure participant feedback shapes program design.” Five organizations described using indicators and participant feedback to guide decisions. One explained, “Decision-making is based on key indicators,” while another cited “regular assessments, community feedback, and performance tracking” as critical to staying on course.

Table 1. Summary of Outcome Descriptions

A product of the outcome harvesting methodology, outcome descriptions answer the questions of who is changing and in what way, while also providing insight into how a project or intervention may have contributed to the change.

Outcome Descriptions
Fostering a Strong and Inclusive Organizational Culture Partners are creating environments where staff feel cared for, heard, respected, and supported in their individual and collective growth and wellbeing.
Building on Strategic Communication Approaches Organizations are strengthening how they tell their stories, engage key audiences, and advocate for change—while also deepening internal communication to foster connection, transparency, and collaboration across teams.
Building Organizational Resilience and Adaptability Partners are strengthening their ability to withstand disruptions and sustain long-term impact by diversifying funding, structuring fundraising, planning strategically, building strong networks, adapting internal structures, and using data and reflection to learn and grow.
Exercising Strategic, Empathetic, and Feminist-Based Leadership Organizational leaders are centering empathy, collaboration, and feminist values in decision-making and team growth.
Demonstrating the Value of Trust-Based Funding to Other Donors Partners are championing the power of flexible, trust-driven support by sharing their experiences with other donors.

#2 “We Have Taken Staff Wellbeing Very Seriously”: Partner Organizations are Largely Healthy

If there was one thing I learned about our partnership with WomenStrong it’s to ask how you are and how your team is. WomenStrong is very aware of just how heavy working in (this) community is.

—Partner organization

WomenStrong’s partner organizations are also exhibiting strong evidence of positive organizational health across the multiple domains identified in the organizational change matrix. For one, the overwhelming majority (35 out of 38, or 92% of respondents to the outcome harvesting tool) viewed their organization’s culture as healthy (See Appendix: Outcome Descriptions).⁷ In addition to the areas of increased resilience identified previously, partners are also cultivating strong, inclusive organizational cultures, strengthening their communications, and focusing on empathetic and participatory leadership.

“All of Us Imbibe a Sense of Empathy”: Partners are Building Strong, Inclusive Organizational Cultures

While the volume and complexity of our work are high and we push for excellence in what we do, all of us imbibe a sense of empathy toward each other.

—Partner organization

⁷ When asked “How well is your organization demonstrating a strong organizational culture?” 92% or 35 out of 38 individual respondents replied with “Well” (17) or “Very Well” (18).

Across all WomenStrong partner organizations, there is a clear shift toward building cultures rooted in empathy, shared leadership, and staff wellbeing—actions that are seen not as perks, but as core strategies for lasting impact due to their positive effects on staff morale, productivity and learning.

Seventeen out of 17—a full 100% of participating partner organizations—reported that their organization has been dedicating significant time and resources to building a culture that prioritizes staff wellbeing while also supporting individual and organizational learning.

All organizations also reported prioritizing psychological safety, with 12 out of 17 (71%) naming executive leadership as central to this commitment by dedicating resources to things like “staff days out,” wellness training, drafting formal safeguarding policies, and promoting a work–life balance. Organizations are embedding care into daily operations—offering staff therapy, gym memberships, and wellness stipends—thanks in large part to WomenStrong’s flexible funding. Eight out of 17 or nearly half (47%) mentioned that they used WomenStrong’s financial support in part for dedicated wellbeing initiatives. One partner noted:

WomenStrong’s support has been invaluable in addressing burnout. Through their Partner Support fund, we’ve covered staff training, coaching, and therapy. This grant cycle, we’ve allocated \$500 per team member (\$2,000 total) for self-care activities like therapy sessions, gym memberships, or a bike.

Beyond its financial contributions, WomenStrong helps partners in strengthening their organizational cultures through offering a space for partners to exchange learning relative to organizational culture. Partners are drawing insights from one another in the Learning Lab and other events. As one partner noted: “Some of our staff begin to feel anxious during periods where they have multiple deadlines at once. I have spoken with other WS (WomenStrong) partners to see how they support staff in these situations and have received useful tips.” As another partner reflected, “I have benefitted from the sessions organised by WSI on different [wellness] mechanisms and these I have shared with my colleagues.”

From technical training to peer mentorship and leadership development, partner organizations are supporting their staff’s personal and professional growth in service of both staff wellbeing and organizational sustainability. One partner noted that they “...prioritize internal professional growth as often as possible, and are designing internal courses and discussions.”

In fact, when asked how their organization promotes a healthy organizational culture, eight out of 17 or nearly half (47%) of partners explicitly mentioned professional development and individual

Figure 4. It Takes a “Brilliant Team” to Reach 15 Years

It Takes a “Brilliant Team” to Reach 15 Years

One partner cited as one of its most critical moments its 15th anniversary, which it celebrated with a gala that brought together program participants from over the years. The event was a powerful reminder of the impact the organization has had. “*Seeing where the boys and girls are now, how their lives have been transformed—it’s incredible,*” said one participant. *The critical moments exercise provided an opportunity for teams to reflect on what it took to reach that milestone, with one participant noting, “There’s no way we would’ve reached 15 years without our brilliant team.”*

Additionally, a participant credited WomenStrong’s emphasis on staff wellbeing as being crucial for building such an effective team: “*WomenStrong gave me a heightened sense of how I’m doing as a leader—making sure my colleagues are healthy, mentally and physically... They pushed us to think about how we imagine the mental wellbeing of our team members.*”

— Anecdote from the Critical Moments Exercise

learning opportunities. Similarly, when asked what mechanisms help promote staff wellbeing, nine out of 17 (53%) uplifted individual learning opportunities along with professional growth opportunities, suggesting that professional development is seen not just as a strategy for skill building but also as a key contributor to staff morale and retention. Ten out of 17 (59%) referenced the importance of WomenStrong's Learning Lab and training opportunities in supporting staff engagement.

“Our Dream Is to [Be] a Household Name”: Partners are Building on Strategic Communications Approaches

For WomenStrong partner organizations, their internal and external communications operations are powerful drivers of growth, visibility, partnerships, and internal cohesion. As one partner noted: “[The media team is] crucial not only in doing content creation for our social behavior change campaigns, not only in amplifying our brand to our audiences as organizations do, but also in supporting growth both internally and externally.”

“To Raise More Funds, We Need a Good Communication System”: Partners are Elevating External Communications to Drive Growth

Partner organizations recognize the importance of a strong digital presence for connecting with potential partners and donors, with 100% reporting that, over the past three years, their organization has used communications as a critical driver of growth. One partner explicitly stated that, “...we’ve understood that in order for us to raise more funds, we need to have a good communication system.” The same partner went on to discuss their diversification of the media they use, explaining:

...different platforms have got different benefits. For example, we started a LinkedIn newsletter last year and were able to get 9000 subscribers in one year to that newsletter... inevitably, our organisational income was able to grow because of the increased communication.

Indeed, as a whole, partners' communications teams are diversifying the types of media they use to engage outside audiences, incorporating videos, articles, images, and even hand-written letters. Thirteen out of 17 organizations (76%) pointed to the importance of digital platforms like social media, websites, and other online tools in engaging with donors.

Conferences are also a tool that partners are using to increase their own visibility, connect with different audiences, and find additional funding. For instance, one respondent explained that their organization's executive director actively participates in “events and conferences which then result in access to funding.” Another person explained that conferences have improved their visibility:

Ensuring that we have sessions at conferences also improved our visibility, and it's funny because it improved our visibility to local players. When people saw us at international conferences, they were able to set up meetings back home to say ‘hey let's have a chat I think you would be a good fit for XYZ’. So it improved our credibility...

Six out of 17 (35%) explicitly pointed to the critical role of WomenStrong in helping their organization strengthen their overall approach to external communications, explaining that WomenStrong's strategic and technical guidance, along with their support in amplifying messages, enable partners to grow their online presence and forge and strengthen relationships. When asked who was responsible for positioning communications as a critical driver of growth, one partner wrote: “WomenStrong International—they have offered us training and learning opportunities in communications, we have also worked together with other partners on Learning Lab products, and these resources improved our communications approaches which amplify our work.”

Figure 5. Connecting Harvested Outcomes to the Organizational Health Framework

Connecting Harvested Outcomes to Organizational Health Framework



“Everyone is Encouraged to Speak Up”: Partners are Strengthening Internal Communications

Internal communications is also a priority among partner organizations. Thirty-five percent (six out of 17) discussed strengthening internal communication channels by establishing regular meetings and other feedback and communication mechanisms such as Slack and Facebook groups. Strong internal communication and healthy organizational culture reinforce one another. As one partner noted, “teams are also encouraged to share both good and sad moments, and this has enabled teams to connect deeply with one another.” Another added, “Directors and managers have allowed a flat structure [where the] team is able to raise and discuss things.” This focus on deep connections within the organization can be attributed to WomenStrong’s support. As one partner cited, “Support from WomenStrong has allowed us to improve certain practices, in particular, the integration of more inclusive and effective approaches in the management of our programs.”

“Leadership is Everyone”: Exercising Strategic, Empathetic, and Participatory Leadership

All partners reported demonstrating strong leadership—yet many are redefining what that means. Rather than top-down control, they are building flatter, more democratic structures. Fourteen out of 17 (82%) of partners described their organization’s leadership as participatory and team-based and/or power-sharing, with many emphasizing collaboration, joint problem-solving, and staff-wide ownership of organizational direction. Out of the partners that emphasized their participatory model, 11 out of 14 of them (79%) credited WomenStrong’s non-hierarchical ethos as inspiration. One respondent wrote: “...one thing I love about this organization is [that] leadership is not just one individual, leadership is everyone.” Another partner noted that their “resilience is guided by feminist leadership principles, which emphasize adaptability, collaboration, and a commitment to equity.”

Nearly all partners (16 out of 17 or 94%) referenced the active role of executive leaders, such as executive directors, board members, or senior managers, in shaping strategy and culture. Respondents credited these leaders with guiding organizations through transitions, crises, and periods of rapid change. Furthermore, 10 out of 17, or nearly 60% of partners, highlighted empathy as a leadership quality that is present in their organizations, describing leaders as caring, motivational, and committed to staff wellbeing. Several partners also emphasized how leadership teams maintained support during funding shortfalls or staff reductions, offering stress management services and maintaining open communication.

Sharing power looks different across organizations. One partner explained that they’ve let program managers and other staff members attend conferences instead of only offering such an opportunity to the executive director. Other partners explained that sharing power means making sure all staff feel heard, regardless of their position. Partners traced their inspiration for participatory approaches to leadership to WomenStrong’s own practices and capacity-strengthening opportunities like the Learning Lab, ED (executive director) Circles, and WomenStrong’s own values-aligned approach to partnership.

#3 “Try it One Way, and If It Doesn’t Work, Try Another”: Partners are Testing New Models and Initiatives

With guidance and support from WomenStrong, four out of six partner organizations participating in the critical moments exercise indicated that they are testing new models and/or legal operating structures. In some cases, these maneuvers allow partners to withstand onerous local labor or NGO laws and broaden the spheres within which they can operate. For example, two partners noted that they are exploring social entrepreneurship models. One began by rethinking its reliance on grants and moving toward social entrepreneurship, thanks to internal discussions facilitated by WomenStrong that encouraged self-sustainability and resourcefulness. The organization mapped the skills of its members and developed income-generating services for local girls, aligning these new business ventures with its core mission. As a partner noted: “As an organization, what can we do—we talked about social entrepreneurship. We started to think outside the box—what services can we provide that can give us some money while doing our mandate.”

Another partner was able to reduce the burden of compliance to local laws by forging unexpected alliances with private sector institutions, including banks and cooperatives. WomenStrong played a critical role by encouraging exploration beyond traditional funding channels and fostering collaboration across sectors. As one partner noted: “[NGOs] were gonna be operating in a more restricted space so it opened people’s eyes to the need to work in ways that wouldn’t fall under red tape, so instead working with a business, church, research institutions. It reminded us of the power of consortiums and networks in spreading risk and mobilizing resources.

Similarly, another partner struggled under labor laws that were particularly harsh on small non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to the extent that they were even required to establish a labor

union. The organization also had to undergo a labor audit and financial penalties that ultimately drained its available funds. In response, the organization transitioned into a network structure as its active legal entity, a model which it reports is not common within its region of operation, but that has allowed it to not only to continue its work but to establish new and promising partnerships.

The finding that partners are working creatively and innovatively not only to test new business models and legal operating entities but also new initiatives was further emphasized in the sensemaking session when presenting preliminary findings to partners. One partner wrote in the virtual room chat that, “unrestricted funding promoted creativity.” When asked to elaborate, they noted that:

There’s this idea that when funds are unrestricted, they will be spent on salaries only...[but] over the years we’ve prioritized certain activities, piloting new projects and trying out different concepts, which then...the restricted funders have run with. So for example, [with] one of our unrestricted funds, we piloted a feedback mechanism platform where people could share feedback about their experience in a health facility. Because we had unrestricted funding to pilot it, then when we got a restricted funder, they were able to scale it.

#4 “I Wish All of Our Funders Were More Like Them”: WomenStrong’s Multidimensional, Tailored Support is Key to Partners’ Health and Resilience

Mutual partnership and long-term and flexible funding are the best formulas for supporting local [women’s rights organizations]
—Partner organization

Recognizing that no two organizations have the same needs, capacities, or strategic priorities, WomenStrong’s model supports partners’ agency while being adaptable. Instead of offering a fixed package of support, WomenStrong invites partners to identify the resources, capacity-strengthening opportunities, and connections that will be most meaningful for their growth and resilience.

One organization described WomenStrong’s support as “unique and essential” and that it enables them to “be more stable and impactful.” Another organization said: “[WomenStrong] offers personalized support to partners who need specific attention, which has strengthened our ability to deliver effectively and consistently.”

Indeed, when asked about WomenStrong’s support, 97% of partners said that it was either “vital” or “very helpful” to helping them achieve both internal and external change. WomenStrong’s support is intentionally focused on strengthening partners’ organizational core—building the resilience, autonomy, and sustainability of partners, which allows them not only to weather challenges, but also to evolve and grow. Indeed, nine out of 18, or half of the top critical moments identified by partners, were directly attributable to WomenStrong (See Table 2).⁸ Some of the key causes of critical moments outside of WomenStrong’s direct or indirect involvement were strategic connections, including those made at conferences and other events, along with intentional internal reflections.

Analysis of the 18 most critical (significant) moments across partner organizations reveals that WomenStrong’s impact stems from offering a blend of unrestricted funding, technical support, and strategic connections. Partners credited flexible funding with making tangible outcomes like new hires, opening new centers, and successfully implementing programs possible. For example, one organization shared that flexible funding from WomenStrong enabled them to hire a head of programs, who played a key role in expanding the organization and launching initiatives to diversify its funding sources. This support was further enhanced by tailored technical assistance, which helped build the organization’s capacity. In other words, funds targeted at core organizational needs are most powerful when paired with support like intentional reflection, learning, and strategy—elements that WomenStrong helps

⁸ While the direct and indirect benefits of WomenStrong’s support are undoubtedly profound, it is important to note that all organizations exist within an ecosystem, and thus, it is desirable that a range of causes are identified for critical moments in the life of an organization.

cultivate through partner-led Learning Lab sessions, peer exchanges, and responsive advising. As one partner noted:

I think one of the greatest elements that we received within the organization was being in the [WomenStrong] Learning Labs. We managed to create an environment within our own organizations where members of staff were able to engage through sharing the different experiences that they face when they get into the communities. Most of our work is community-based, so sometimes we want them to be able to come back and sort of give feedback in terms of how the work is affecting them.

Table 2. Summary of Findings from the Critical Moments Methodology

WomenStrong Support Type	# of Critical Moments DIRECTLY Attributed to WomenStrong	Type of Critical Moments DIRECTLY Attributed to Support
Unrestricted funding	3 out of 18 (17%)	New hires of specialized roles; Opening new girls’ center; Programmatic success
Connecting partners to other stakeholders (other donors, funding networks, specialized consultants)	4 out of 18 (22%)	New funding; Invitation to submit a proposal; Member of funding network/connected to resources; Developing a strategic plan
Technical support (e.g., thinking through issues, identifying priority areas)	2 out of 18 (11%)	Modifying organizational structure/focus areas
Total	9 out of 18 (50%)	

In addition, there is some evidence from the critical moments exercise that funding targeted specifically at core functions—capacity strengthening—has provided an additional resource that has helped organizations to pivot and respond robustly to crises. One organization noted that though the U.S. government’s recent funding cuts to global development have created a crisis of revenue for the organization, WomenStrong provides \$10,000 grants for organizational strengthening, which, in addition to WomenStrong’s encouragement to the organization to participate in international events, has helped them find new potential new donors.

Any criticisms of WomenStrong’s approach revolved around participation in program activities. One participant noted through the outcome harvesting exercise that, “it felt at times that there was [sic] a lot of expectations around participation in the Learning Lab, which was challenging for our team members to manage with their field activities.” However, the same participant added that, “over the years, WSI has found a nice balance and has been more strategic about their activities and capacity strengthening.” A senior leader from a partner organization noted during the evaluation’s sensemaking session that while she personally benefits from WomenStrong’s virtual sessions, “other team members are not interested enough in the calls to participate,” due to the language barrier even when translation was made available. The leader suggested that more be done by WomenStrong to achieve its “language justice” intentions.

“Above All to Be an Agent of Change at the Level of Our Society”: WomenStrong’s Support Has Clear Ripple Effects

Importantly, WomenStrong’s investments don’t stop at the health of partners’ organizations—there are clear ripple effects into programmatic work and broader systems-level influence. Said one partner: “Support from WomenStrong has allowed us to improve certain practices, in particular, the integration of more inclusive and effective approaches in the management of our programs.”

Respondents even attributed critical moments not directly linked to a specific intervention—like an organization’s 15-year anniversary or securing funding from other donors—to WomenStrong’s layered support ecosystem. One partner explained how WomenStrong connected their organization with a new funder who then provided additional money for the group to expand its programmatic focus to include economic empowerment, indicating that when partners are given room to lead and grow, the benefits extend beyond internal operations.

“An Investment in Autonomy, Sustainability, and Long-Term Movement Building”: Partners Demonstrate the Value of Unrestricted, Non-Hierarchical Models to Other Funders

Due to WomenStrong’s model, partners are both recipients and champions of flexible and trust-based support. Unrestricted funding is pointed to as the most critical piece of WomenStrong’s support by 14 out of 17 or over 80% of partners.

According to partners, flexible financial support plays a critical role in enabling organizational resilience, innovation, and sustainability—especially in the wake of funding withdrawals from other donors or political instability. One partner explained, “WomenStrong... is the only organization that provides [us with] unrestricted funding to help with sustainability efforts.”

WomenStrong’s role as an early adopter and consistent provider of unrestricted funding helps partners build confidence, develop internal systems, and gain the strategic footing necessary to speak credibly to other donors about the value of this support: One partner noted: “Communication with WSI partners has also dismantled the traditional hierarchical relationship that a funder and grantee partner has; they have helped us to identify ways we can build more equal and respectable donor-funder relationships across different programmes.”

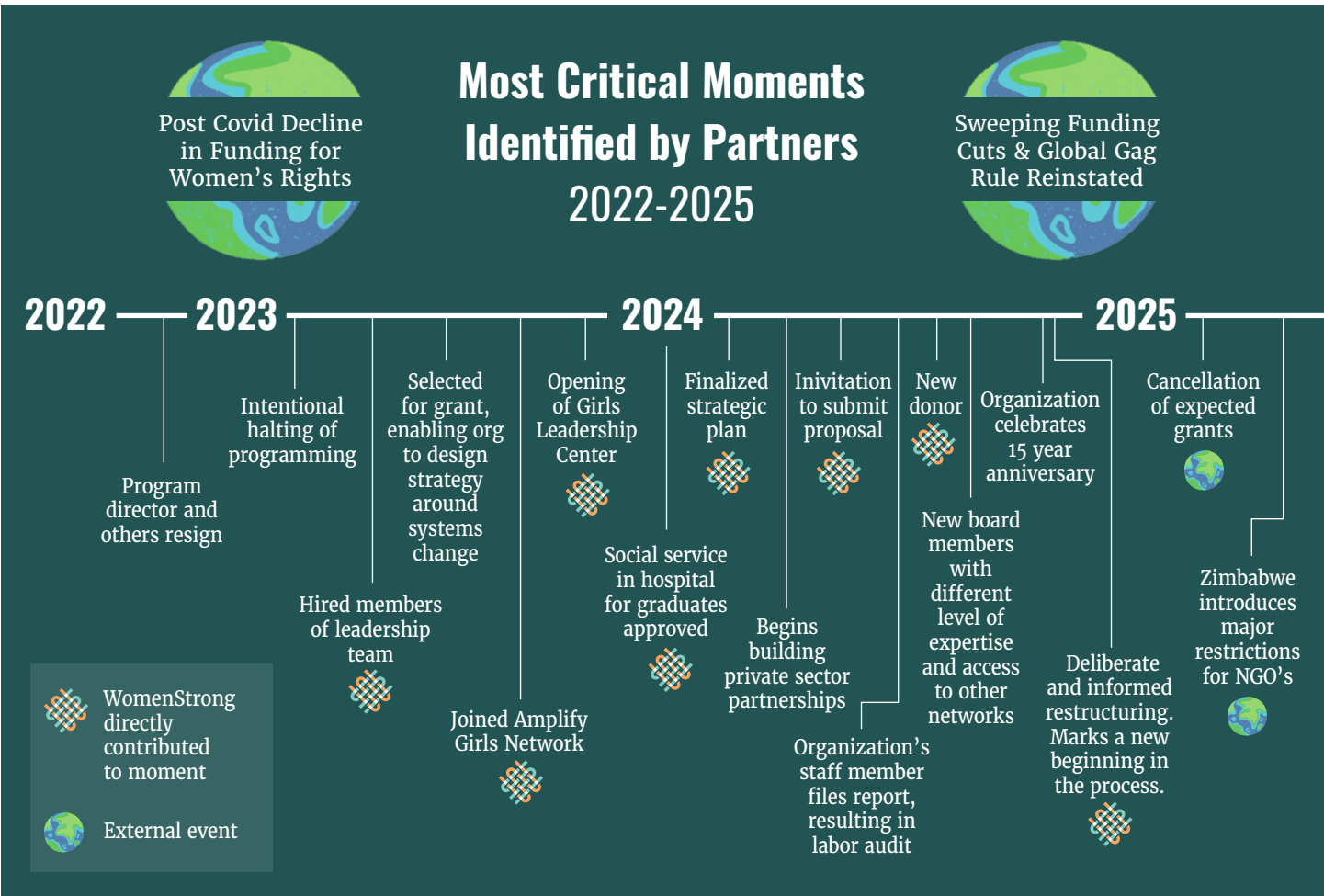
Figure 7. From Shaky Ground to Reaching New Heights

From Shaky Ground to Reaching New Heights

After hard times following COVID when the organization was “trying to resuscitate themselves,” being courted by WomenStrong as a partner proved to be a turning point for one organization. In 2023 and 2024, the organization marked significant milestones—reviving their first girls’ conference in five years and hosting their largest ever in October 2024 with 450 girls, while also securing new donor commitments and launching a comprehensive fundraising strategy. These achievements were made possible in large part due to the sustained support of WomenStrong, whose unrestricted funding enabled the organization to institutionalize their operations, develop critical safeguarding and inclusion policies, and build internal capacity. In addition, by connecting the organization to new donors and amplifying their visibility through forums and capacity-strengthening initiatives, WomenStrong helped position the organization for long-term sustainability. As one leader put it, “All of our donors today are through WomenStrong... I tell my staff that WomenStrong is our mother.”

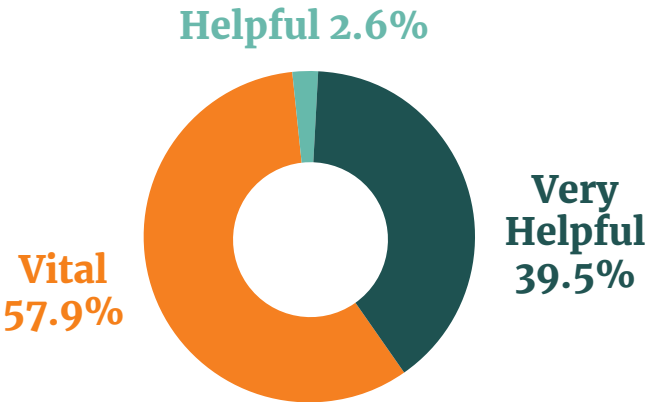
— Anecdote from the Critical Moments Exercise

Figure 8. Most Critical Moments Identified by Partners



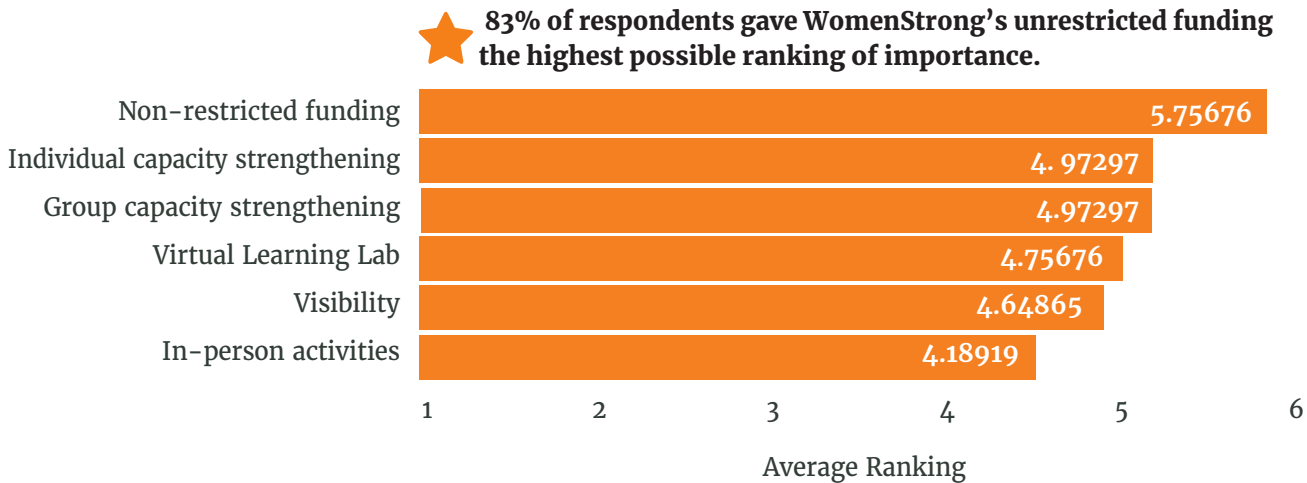
Indeed, many organizations actively demonstrate the value of unrestricted financial support and non-hierarchical donor-grantee relationships in their own fundraising practices, with seven out of 17, or over a third of partners, explicitly stating that they advocate for or model this approach to other funders. As one organization noted, “To further promote flexible funding, the team has emphasized strong financial stewardship and transparent reporting, demonstrating impact in ways that encourage donor trust and investment beyond project-based funding.”

58% of partners reported that WomenStrong’s support has been **vital** in helping their organization achieve internal and external change



Additionally, communications support from WomenStrong provides partners with the capacity and visibility needed to amplify their own stories and, in turn, to advocate for broader adoption of power-conscious funding practices. As one partner noted: “With the help of WSI as one of our feminist donors, we often present and allow other donors to see the importance of nonrestricted funds to feminist organizations... it’s an investment in autonomy, sustainability, and long-term movement building.”

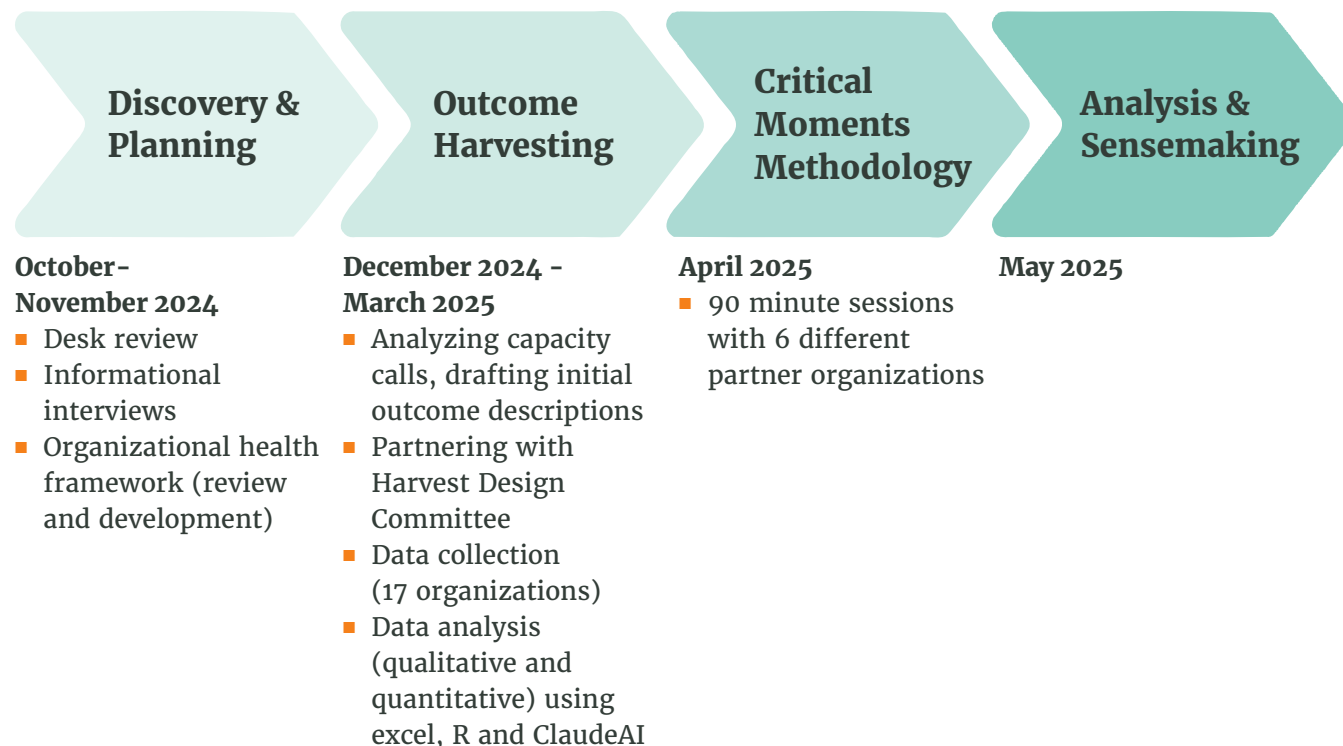
Unrestricted funding pointed to as the most important aspect of WomenStrong’s Support



Methodology

The evaluation consisted of four broad phases: (1) discovery and planning, (2) outcome harvesting, (3) Critical Moments Methodology, and (4) analysis and sensemaking.

Figure 11. Outcome Evaluation Timeline



Discovery and Planning

I. Desk Review and Informative Interviews

The evaluation team began with a desk review of relevant materials provided by WomenStrong, building on an already established familiarity with WomenStrong’s work from a previous engagement. To complement the desk review, the team also conducted one-hour, semi-structured informational interviews with three WomenStrong representatives representing varying levels of seniority and engagement with partners. From these conversations, the team conducted additional informational interviews with two representatives from WomenStrong partner organizations who were selected to reflect the diversity of geographic locations and programmatic focus areas of WomenStrong partners. Insights gathered from this stage informed the evaluation questions.

II. Organizational Health Frameworks

To ground the outcome evaluation, the evaluation team broadly reviewed existing organizational health frameworks. The following frameworks were selected for analysis: IDRC/Universalia Organizational Assessment Framework, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) Framework, Equity-Centered Leadership Framework, McKinsey’s Organizational Health Index, Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative Framework, Lencioni’s 5 Dysfunctions, Gallup Q12 Survey, and the Denison Model.

Common features from these frameworks were extracted and also critically examined through the lens of nonprofit organizational development. As most of these frameworks were developed for the private sector, some aspects that are less suitable for the social sector were de-emphasized. Ultimately, the evaluation team developed a basic framework for organizational strength and resilience that can be used

to elucidate what building “organizational health” entails. The framework incorporates the following aspects of organizational health: leadership, culture, direction, and resilience. These dimensions were then used to construct outcome areas for the outcome harvest data collection tool, as well as to refine the codebook used in its analysis.

Outcome Harvesting

I. Drafting Initial Outcome Descriptions

WomenStrong conducted capacity calls with partners in the fall of 2024 to check in on their progress and identify any emerging needs. With the permission from partners, the evaluation team thematically analyzed 18 of these calls and used the findings to shape the initial outcome descriptions. The evaluation team first read through the transcripts and familiarized themselves with the content. Next, using the tailored organizational health framework from the discovery phase along with insights on emerging patterns, the team developed a thematic codebook. The data was then de-identified and assessed using Claude AI⁹ by uploading the codebook to the AI’s knowledge repository and prompting it with tailored instructions.

The team also issued a call for secondary data, inviting WomenStrong partners to submit materials reflecting changes within their respective organization. A total of seven partners responded, sharing a diverse range of documents including communication materials, policy updates, and staff professional development programs which were reviewed by members of the evaluation team. Finally, the team triangulated themes generated from the AI-supported analysis with insights from the secondary data. Through collaborative analysis, the evaluation team was able to surface a set of preliminary outcome descriptions.

II. Consulting the Harvest Design Committee

A small group of three representatives from partner organizations and two representatives from WomenStrong accepted an invitation to form a harvest design committee. The committee enabled a consultative process in the design of the outcome harvesting methodology. Members played a key role in advising the process, starting with reviewing outlined “harvesting questions” that guided data collection and then helping to define clear and specific outcome descriptions that felt reflective of their work. The committee also helped the evaluation team optimize and finalize the outcome harvesting tool.

III. Data Collection

The first round of primary data collection was conducted using AidaForm, a platform that allows users to respond to questions in a variety of ways, including through written, video, and audio responses. The tool was created in English, Spanish, and French and comprised extended response, short answer, and likert scale questions. Questions examined the changes staff have seen in their organizations. The number of questions varied across respondents, as skip logic allowed individuals to focus on only the questions that were applicable to them based on previous responses. The maximum number of questions was 11. Partners were asked to have two staff members of varying seniority levels to answer the questions; they were also encouraged to have their partners (outside of WomenStrong) fill out the form, in part to substantiate

Figure 12. Integrated Organizational Health Framework



⁹ Claude AI is a generative AI chatbot and a family of large language models (LLM) used in natural language processing (NLP). Claude AI is used for a variety of tasks including question-answering and research and code snippet generation and review. All data was de-identified before being analyzed by AI tools.

the findings. A total of 38 responses were gathered across 17 organizations,¹⁰ representing four of WomenStrong's programmatic focus areas: three from the Violence Against Women cohort, four from the Women's Health cohort, four from the Economic Security and Opportunity cohort, and six from the Girls' Education and Empowerment cohort. There was one response from an outside partner-of-a-partner.

IV. Analyzing Data and Revising Outcome Descriptions

Data collected from AidaForm was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative analysis of the outcome harvest went through several iterations to ensure that the data was accurately and robustly reflected in the outcome descriptions. The evaluation team initially used the codebook developed from the capacity calls analyses, along with tailored prompts in Claude AI, to explore organizational responses to key questions about observed changes within the organization. However, after reviewing the preliminary results and finding them lacking in depth, the team revised the codebook to better reflect insights emerging from the outcome harvesting data collection process. This included going through all 38 responses and looking at emerging codes. This updated codebook was then tested against the collected data, and prompts were adjusted to make Claude AI's analysis more transparent. In the final iteration, the prompts were refined to ask Claude AI for counts of organizations referencing each theme, along with all relevant text segments. This process allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis, ultimately strengthening the outcome descriptions. The quantitative analysis was completed using Microsoft Excel. While the qualitative data added depth to the outcome descriptions, the quantitative data helped substantiate the findings from the analysis. Given the general consistency of the data across partner organizations and the opportunity to further triangulate results with the data from the critical moments exercise, it was not deemed necessary to collect further outcome harvesting data to substantiate the findings.

The findings were then triangulated and linked back to the organizational health framework developed for this evaluation (see Figure 5). The evaluation team analyzed the outcome descriptions thematically, using the framework's four key aspects of organizational capacity as a guiding structure.

Critical Moments Methodology (CMM)

The evaluation team invited nine partner organizations to participate in 90-minute online sessions designed to help them construct a timeline of key events or critical moments within their organizations. A total of six organizations participated, most of which had at least two representatives of varying seniority levels. These sessions were conducted with the visual aid of an interactive platform called MURAL. Each session focused on three steps: (1) identifying critical moments that occurred between 2022 and the present (e.g., new partnerships formed, awards won, securing funding, etc.); (2) asking participants to explain why these moments were significant; and (3) exploring the factors that led to or influenced these moments. The evaluation team then analyzed the data and developed a timeline based on emerging patterns across the top three identified moments of each partner organization. This timeline was contextualized within broader global socio-political developments.

Analysis, Sensemaking and Dissemination

With both the organizational health framework and WomenStrong's theory of change as a guide, the results of outcome harvesting and critical moments were triangulated within a meta-analysis of findings (See Figure 5) in response to the research questions. To help ensure that the evaluation benefits both WomenStrong and its partners, the evaluation team conducted a sensemaking session, so that partners and valueholders could interpret findings, refine insights, and contribute additional perspectives—some of which have been included in this report.

¹⁰ The team encountered technical issues with the data collection tool, AidaForm, that ultimately affected how qualitative data from one organization was saved. To address the issue of the missing data and to offer the organization a chance to voice their opinion, the evaluation team allocated time during the critical moments methodology call with that organization to gather responses to the affected questions.

Recommendations

The data collected from partners revealed that many are operating within conditions of hardship and existential insecurity. Thus, any solution-seeking should start with the understanding that fundamental course corrections and/or innovations are needed, if such organizations are to successfully continue their missions of advancing the rights of and providing services for women and girls. Our recommendations are for the ecosystem of funders, philanthropic support organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations to use the findings to collectively:

- **Advocate for, or adopt similar models of trust-based funding, including unrestricted funding that is accompanied by additional tailored nonfinancial support.** If funders cannot provide such support themselves, funders should consider what kinds of non-financial support they can facilitate for partners. Over and over again, the data revealed how WomenStrong's efforts to broker partners' connections with the right individuals, networks, or hands-on support such as helping them apply for proposals, etc., went a long way towards ensuring their resilience. The trust implicit in both giving funds without strings attached, and in WomenStrong's model of encouraging partners to set their own goals for organizational strengthening, demonstrates how trust-based funding builds resilience.
- **Advocate for, or provide not only unrestricted funds, but also restricted funds** that help organizations make core investments that strengthen their resilience, including through strong organizational cultures, effective learning practices, and diversified revenue sources.
- **Publicize and open up further discussion on the emerging models of surviving and thriving being pioneered** by WomenStrong's partners. Most organizations in the development sector are in a similar position and extensive sharing of emerging practice is needed.
- **Continue to explore or invest in operating models such as social entrepreneurship and networks that distribute risk and diversify revenue sources** while opening the door to important new alliances.
- **Differentiate between building resilience and building or strengthening capacity.** The findings suggest that the concept of capacity building, which conjures up notions of training or incremental internal systems improvements, is not adequate to describe the levels of aggressive adaptation, pivoting, or innovation that resilience calls for in such perilous times. As demonstrated in the findings, resilience is multifaceted and requires comprehensive, customized support that is not donor-prescribed, but rather, allows the organization to chart its own course and define its needs.

Conclusion

Our conclusion is an optimistic one – that with empathetic, flexible, and skilled support from grantmakers, as well as a growing network of partners, and public- and private-sector allies, women-led organizations advancing gender equality can become models of resilience and architects of change. Propelled by their own sense of direction and dedication to their mission, partner organizations are laying the blueprints for resilience as they adopt new tactics for survival, test bold ideas, and offer lessons in how lasting change begins from within.

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Appendix

Evaluation Questions

Over the past 3 years and since WomenStrong's transition to a new programmatic model:

- 1. In what dimensions (e.g., strategy, leadership, infrastructure, culture, skills, etc.) have partner organizations changed?**
 - a. What are the primary factors causing such changes?
 - b. What are the primary factors hindering such changes?
 - c. How have these changes affected organizations' ability to meet needs in areas of direct implementation?
 - d. How have these changes affected organizations' ability to spread and seed change elsewhere (beyond direct implementation)?
- 2. How has WomenStrong's support influenced the strength and resilience of partner organizations and their ability to meet their objectives?**
 - a. How do partners define resilience and strength?
 - b. What do partners feel they need in order to be strong and resilient?
 - c. What specific organizational objectives have partners been able to meet with WomenStrong's support?
 - i. What specific aspects of WomenStrong's support have most influenced these achievements?

Harvest Questions

The Harvest Questions

1. *What* behaviors and actions of key valueholders, e.g. organizational leaders and staff, and partners, have led to changes in your organization?
 - a. For each of these valueholder groups, why did these behavioral changes occur and over what period of time?
 - b. For each of these valueholder groups, how did these behavioral changes lead to changes in your organization?
2. *What* behaviors and actions of WomenStrong have supported or hindered the strength and resilience of partner organizations and their ability to meet their objectives?
 - a. When and how did these behaviors help or hinder partners' strength, resilience and ability to meet their objectives?
 - b. What specific changes (e.g., actions, behaviors, skills, knowledge, systems) have you observed as a result of partnering with or participating in the WSI program?
 - c. What activities, resources, or approaches from the program were most influential in creating these changes?

Outcome Descriptions

Outcome descriptions answer the questions of who is changing and in what way, while also providing insight into how a project or intervention may have contributed to the change.

1. Fostering a Strong and Inclusive Organizational Culture by:

1.1 Promoting staff wellbeing and psychological safety

While the volume and complexity of our work are high and we push for excellence in what we do, all of us imbibe a sense of empathy toward each other.

—Partner organization

Partner organizations dedicate significant time and resources to building empathy-centric cultures that prioritize staff wellbeing, including mental and emotional health and work-life balance. WomenStrong's unrestricted funding, as it provides freedom to allocate funds as organizations see fit, is cited by partners as being a major enabling factor for such a culture, with roughly half of partners (47% or 8/17) reporting they use WomenStrong's support to fund specific wellbeing initiatives. One partner explains, "We have allocated a budget for well-being... to actually put our money where our mouth is." Another organization shared, "WomenStrong's support has been invaluable in addressing burnout," noting how unrestricted funds allowed for therapy, and personal wellness activities such as gym memberships and biking.

One hundred percent of partner organizations (17 out of 17) reported that their organization has been dedicating significant time and resources to building a culture that prioritizes staff wellbeing while also supporting individual and organizational learning. Organization's HR teams, culture committees and leadership, including executive directors and board-level actors, are key in building the culture—71% (12 out of 17) of organizations uplift the importance of executive commitment in initiating, championing, and sustaining meaningful wellbeing efforts. Through safeguarding mechanisms, and intentional initiatives aimed at promoting wellbeing, organizations are creating inclusive and accessible spaces for reflection, collaboration, and learning.

1.2 Advancing individual learning, leadership development and professional growth

[WomenStrong International] have greatly supported our learning journeys.

—Partner organization

Partners are increasingly utilizing technical training sessions, leadership development programs, and mentorship models to promote both strong management and peer learning. Professional development is no longer seen solely as a means of skill acquisition—it's recognized as a vital part of holistic staff wellbeing. More than half of partners (59% or 10 out of 17) referenced the importance of WomenStrong's Learning Lab and training opportunities in supporting staff sustainability. These spaces have allowed leaders and staff to reflect, learn from one another, and explore new strategies to care for themselves and their teams. As one participant noted, "I have spoken with other WomenStrong partners to see how they support staff... and have received useful tips." Another described the Lab as "one of the greatest assets to our organization."

1.3 Participatory decision making and sharing power

Partner organizations, leadership teams in particular, are sharing power and intentionally making space for internal participatory decision-making, with 100% of partner organizations reporting that their organization is demonstrating strong leadership. This dedication to sharing power manifests in leadership teams' open communication and transparency to their team members. Nearly half (47% or eight out of 17) of participating organizations provided examples of their leadership team's transparency

about the organization's overall direction. Over half of participating partners (59% or 10 out of 17) point to an organizational model that is more democratic than hierarchical. Inspired at least in part by WomenStrong's non-hierarchical and trust-based partnership model, many partners (65% or 11 out of 17) report a commitment to fostering inclusive, supportive cultures in their own organizations. One partner described their organization's culture as such: "...leadership is not just one individual, leadership is everyone. As a staff member, I feel my input is valuable, I feel empowered to mak[e] decisions". Staff are increasingly engaged in shaping decisions, which strengthens collective ownership and reinforces a culture of equity and shared leadership.

2. Building on Strategic Communications Approaches by:

2.1 Positioning external communications as a critical driver of growth

They have strengthen[ed] the staff with training, which has boosted staff confidence and broadened their capacities.

—Partner organization

One hundred percent of partner organizations report that their organization has been using communications as a critical driver of growth over the past three years. Partners recognize the importance of a strong digital presence for connecting with potential partners and donors. Communications teams are diversifying the types of media they use to engage outside audiences, incorporating videos, articles, images, and even handwritten letters. Seventy-six percent (13 out of 17) point to the importance of digital platforms such as social media, websites, and other online engagement tools in engaging with donors. Thirty-five percent (6 out of 17) explicitly point to the critical role of WomenStrong in helping their organization strengthen their overall approach to external communications, explaining that WomenStrong's strategic and technical guidance, along with their support in amplifying messages, enables partners to grow their online presence, forge and strengthen relationships, ultimately expanding their reach.

2.2 Optimizing internal processes and operations

The first thing that improves communication is frequent meetings with teams... And then having those meetings allows people to know what's happening in real time, ask questions, and just be up to speed on who's doing what.

—Partner organization

Internal communications is also a priority among partner organizations. Thirty-five percent (6 out of 17) discussed strengthening internal communication channels by establishing regular meetings and other feedback mechanisms. Providing channels for team members to communicate creates space not only for information to flow freely, but also for diverse perspectives to be shared. The impact extends beyond efficiency – enhanced communication nurtures a culture of empathy and deeper team connections. As one partner noted, "teams are also encouraged to share both good and sad moments, and this has enabled teams to connect deeply with one another." One organization attributed this directly to WomenStrong's support, saying that, "Support from WomenStrong has allowed us to improve certain practices, in particular the integration of more inclusive and effective approaches in the management of our programs."

3. Building Organizational Resilience and Adaptability by:

3.1 Diversifying funding sources

Partner organizations are actively seeking and maintaining multiple revenue sources including grants, self-generated income, crowdfunding, and individual donations. Eighty-two percent of partners (14 out of 17) reported that over the past three years, their organization has been actively seeking and maintaining multiple revenue sources and/or gaining access to more unrestricted/flexible funds. At least a quarter (25%) of organizations are focusing on income-generating activities such as fee-for-service models and social enterprises that reduce the dependency on external funders. The strategic diversification of funds is heavily attributed to the actions of leaders at these organizations, with 71% of organizations' mentioning the critical role of executive directors, boards, and management teams in limiting dependency on a single-income source. Diversifying funding sources is frequently cited by partners as a key to organizational resilience.

WomenStrong has contributed to these shifts through financial and technical support and also by connecting partners with additional networks (see Outcome 6). One partner cited using a premium fundraising platform provided by WomenStrong to access new opportunities, while another pointed to the direct application support they received from a WomenStrong staff member that resulted in a successful grant. WomenStrong's modeling of flexible funding has also helped partners strengthen their case for unrestricted support with other donors. These contributions suggest that WomenStrong has played both an enabling and legitimizing role in partners' efforts to structure their fundraising in more sustainable, strategic ways.

3.2 Adding structure to fundraising approaches

Partner organizations are shifting toward more formalized fundraising processes by establishing a specific team with clear roles and responsibilities to lead business development. Organizations are also prioritizing strategic relationship building with funders. They are measuring success not just in terms of funds secured, but in whether they have developed longer-term, higher-quality funding relationships.

Partner organizations bring structure to their fundraising processes by establishing and maintaining dedicated partnerships or development teams (35% or 6 out of 17) and creating written resource mobilization strategies. These efforts are often championed by executive leadership but also increasingly involve cross-organizational participation. Some organizations have developed performance metrics (e.g., targets for outreach or application volume), and others have clarified responsibilities across fundraising, communications, and finance teams. These internal shifts support more intentional and coordinated resource mobilization efforts, even when success securing unrestricted funds is still emerging.

3.3 Embracing strategic, long-term planning

Organizations are embracing long-term planning, looking ahead five years or more, to align strategic priorities with sustainable growth, which they associate with organizational resilience.

One partner explains that “Our strategy is our North Star... a document that is easy to read and everyone has access to. It's not something that gets dusted off only when applying for grants—we live through and breathe through it.” Another shared that their organization has a “10-year strategic plan... and I feel confident that we know and understand what we want to achieve. We aren't totally sure how to do it all, but we do know the direction we want to go in.”

Along with operational and programmatic planning, organizations are in pursuit of longer-term funding that spans multiple years. With this shift from reactive to proactive fundraising, organizations are able to focus more on achieving their mission.

3.4 Building relationships and networks that strengthen resilience, solidarity, learning, and access to support

WSI's Learning Lab activities have also been a safe space where we have been able to share our work but at the same time also learn from other partners and learn from their community led interventions.

—Partner organization

WomenStrong partners are forming and sustaining meaningful relationships—across peer organizations, communities, and movements—that enhance their resilience and expand access to both practical and emotional support. More than half of partners (10 out of 17) cited partnerships and networks as essential to weathering challenges, gaining visibility, and staying rooted in shared values.

These relationships are not just helpful—they're catalytic. Through WomenStrong's Learning Lab, retreats, and peer exchanges, partners regularly connect across geographies and contexts to exchange ideas, test strategies, and reflect together. One partner described the Learning Lab as “a space not only to share our work, but to learn from community-led interventions across other organizations.”

In many cases, these connections deepen organizational learning and adaptability. As one organization noted, “Collaborating with other organizations has helped us adapt quickly and expand our reach when our own capacity was limited.” Others emphasized the emotional dimension of this network, calling it a source of solidarity, encouragement, and affirmation. One partner described WSI's model as “a leadership style rooted in horizontality, coherence, and sisterhood.”

While some partnerships help unlock funding or technical support, the data suggests that their greatest value lies in the sense of mutual care and momentum they generate. By fostering trust-based, non-hierarchical connections among partners, WomenStrong is helping build a durable ecosystem where learning, support, and resilience are shared across organizations—not shouldered alone.

3.5 Modifying organizational structures and systems

Resilience is really about...structures—what structures have you put in place to keep you standing when things are not good?

—Partner organization

Organizations are formalizing processes and policies to build a strong foundation for sustainable growth and adaptability. This includes:

3.5.1 Specialization of roles in the organization

WomenStrong's financial and technical support enables organizations to expand their teams and add specialized roles. From dividing and conquering tasks to creating specialized teams for certain assignments, organizations are bringing more clarity and division of labor into their internal structures. This streamlines workflows and helps ensure that roles are clearly defined. This is particularly evident in the organizations' communications and HR functions. Forty-one percent (7 out of 17) highlighted the importance of being able to hire dedicated communications personnel, while 47% (8 out of 17) reported adding specialized HR roles with specific responsibilities. One partner explicitly points to the funds from WomenStrong as a driver of hiring a new communications officer: “With financial support from WomenStrong, [the organization] was able to draw out a communications strategy to guide on internal and external communication processes and has worked on revamping the organisation website, including hiring of communications officer to fully operate the social communications aspect of the organisation.” Another organization mentioned how WomenStrong's guidance has helped them in the creation and recruitment of specialized roles within their organization.

3.5.2 Developing systems to promote adaptability

...[W]e have an internal slogan to say, “flexibility is my best ability.” ... Being flexible allows you to be resilient so that you can pass through the different hoops that the sector may throw at us at any given time.
—Partner organization

Partners view adaptability as a critical piece of organizational resilience, with 88% (15 out of 17) highlighting the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in sustaining operations during disruptions such as global pandemics or widespread funding cuts. To promote adaptability, partners’ HR teams are formalizing and optimizing internal processes. Ninety-four percent of partner organizations (16 out of 17) reported that over the past three years, their organization has been formalizing HR processes and policies to build a strong foundation for sustainable growth and adaptability. These updates have enabled new employees to understand and replicate internal processes, including enhancing onboarding processes, offering employee–employee mentorship, and even succession planning.

Though these efforts are cross-cutting—appearing in funding diversification strategies and personnel processes—WomenStrong and internal HR and management teams are consistently identified as key drivers of these changes, with 59% of organizations (10 out of 17) attributing these changes to their organization’s management team.

WomenStrong’s Learning Lab and other capacity building support are consistently cited as crucial in strengthening organizations, with 59% of organizations (10 out of 17) citing capacity building as key aspects of WomenStrong support received. One partner explained: “WomenStrong has been very vital in supporting capacity building initiatives for the organisation for it to become stronger and have viable systems.”

3.6 Building learning-rich organizations that use data and reflection to stay aligned and adaptive

WomenStrong helped us realize the value of becoming more learning-centered. Without it, a non-restricted funding approach will be less effective.
—Partner organization

WomenStrong partners are embedding systems of reflection, feedback, and data use that help them stay focused on mission, measure progress, and adapt in real time. Eleven organizations suggested that being a learning organization made them more resilient. For example, when asked to explain how their organization demonstrates resilience, one respondent wrote “we are constantly learning and adapting our programming and work to different contexts and the needs of participants.”

Organizations increasingly see monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) not as a donor-driven obligation, but as a tool for internal learning and strategic decision-making, with 41% of organizations (7 out of 17) explicitly talking about using data to inform decisions or program improvements. One organization noted that these M&E frameworks “helps us to evaluate our programmatic success, and helps us to gather feedback from program participants to ensure that their input is included in the evolution of programmatic design.”

WomenStrong’s role in promoting learning is seen in its encouragement of reflection and capacity building opportunities. Through partner retreats, the Learning Lab, and a broader culture of trust and flexibility, WomenStrong has helped partners see learning not as a reporting requirement, but as a practice of alignment and growth. One partner put it succinctly: “WomenStrong helped us realize the value of becoming more learning-centered. Without it, a non-restricted funding approach will be less effective.”

Five organizations explicitly describe using indicators to inform decisions and relying on participant feedback to improve programs. One partner explained, “Decision-making is based on key indicators,” while another emphasized how “regular assessments, feedback from community members, and performance tracking help ensure we are on course.” These reflections show that data isn’t being collected for its own sake—it’s helping drive values-aligned decision-making and real-time course correction.

4. Exercising Strategic, Empathetic, and Participatory Leadership

We are grateful for the style of leadership, management, and support that WSI provides to its partners, which is a model of horizontality, coherence, and sisterhood.
—Partner organization

Partners consistently demonstrate leadership that is grounded in feminist values: centering empathy, shared power, and strategic responsiveness. Through capacity strengthening opportunities like the Learning Lab and ED (executive director) Circles and its own values-aligned approach to partnership, WomenStrong inspires and supports leaders to lead with care and strategic direction.

Leadership is not confined to titles or hierarchy; instead, it is seen as a collective, organization-wide responsibility. Team-based and participatory leadership were uplifted by 82% of organizations (14 out of 17), many of which emphasize collaboration, joint problem-solving, and staff-wide ownership of organizational direction. One respondent wrote “...one thing I love about this organization is (leadership is not just one individual, leadership is everyone.”

Nearly all partners (94% or 16 out of 17) reference the active role of executive leaders, such as executive directors, board members, or senior managers, in shaping strategy and culture. These leaders are often credited with guiding organizations through transitions, crises, and periods of rapid change. “Our leadership motivates and coaches,” one partner shared, highlighting the balance between decisiveness and compassion.

Empathy as a leadership quality was highlighted by nearly 60% of partners (10 out of 17), where leaders are described as caring, motivational, and committed to staff wellbeing. Several partners emphasized how leadership teams maintained support during funding shortfalls or staff reductions, offering stress management support and maintaining open communication throughout.

Strategic leadership was referenced by nine organizations, particularly in the context of navigating uncertainty, planning for sustainability, and adapting operations in real time. One partner described how their leadership team responded to a major donor exit by “diversifying revenue streams, securing new partnerships, and streamlining operations.”

While slightly fewer in number, four organizations explicitly identified feminist leadership as central to their identity and effectiveness. These organizations described their leadership approach as one that embodies equity, collaboration, and inclusiveness—often inspired by WomenStrong’s own practices. As one shared, their “resilience is guided by feminist leadership principles, which emphasize adaptability, collaboration, and a commitment to equity.”

5. Demonstrating the Value of Unrestricted Financial Support and Non-Hierarchical Donor-Grantee Models to Other Funders

I came to know [about] nonrestricted fund[ing] because of WSI and how feminist leadership work[s] more into visibility.
—Partner organization

WomenStrong partners are not only recipients of flexible and trust-based support—they are also champions of it. Many organizations actively demonstrate the value of unrestricted financial support and non-hierarchical donor-grantee relationships in their own fundraising practices, with over a third of partners (7 out of 17) explicitly stating that they advocate for or model this approach to other funders. WomenStrong’s role as an early adopter and consistent provider of unrestricted funding helped partners build confidence, develop internal systems, and gain the strategic footing necessary to speak credibly to other donors about the value of this support. As one organization put it, “With the help of WSI as one of our feminist donors, we often present and allow other donors to see the importance of nonrestricted funds to feminist organizations... it’s an investment in autonomy, sustainability, and long-term movement building.”

Unrestricted funding is pointed to as the most critical piece of WomenStrong’s support by over 80% of partners. Specifically, 82% (14 out of 17) detail the critical role unrestricted or flexible financial support plays in enabling organizational resilience, innovation, and sustainability—especially in the wake of donor funding withdrawals or political instability. One partner explains, “WomenStrong... is the only organization that provides [us with] unrestricted funding to help with sustainability efforts.” Others share that WomenStrong’s model enables them to build stronger reserve systems, reframe their fundraising strategies, or explore revenue-generating opportunities such as social enterprises.

In addition to financial flexibility, WomenStrong’s trust-based, non-hierarchical model is widely recognized by partners as a defining strength of the relationship—and one they seek to emulate. Six organizations describe how WomenStrong’s equitable partnership approach helped shift their own expectations and engagement with other funders. One partner explains that WomenStrong “dismantled the traditional hierarchical relationship that a funder and grantee partner has,” and helped their team “identify ways we can build more equal and respectable donor-funder relationships across different programs.” This is an approach partners are trying to replicate, with one partner explaining, “Communication with WSI partners has also dismantled the traditional hierarchical relationship that a Funder and Grantee partner has; they have helped us to identify ways we can build a more equal and respectable donor-funder relationships across different Programmes.”

With WomenStrong’s communications support, partners have the capacity and visibility needed to amplify their own stories and, in turn, to advocate for broader adoption of power-conscious funding practices. Several organizations reported that the training, storytelling support, and peer learning offered by WomenStrong enabled them to better articulate the value of their work and the funding models that make it possible. WomenStrong takes an outsized role not only in shifting internal practices, but in helping to shape the external philanthropic landscape. Through flexible support, trusted relationships, and capacity strengthening, WomenStrong is equipping its partners to lead by example—modeling and advocating for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable approach to funding.

As one organization noted, “To further promote flexible funding, the team has emphasized strong financial stewardship and transparent reporting, demonstrating impact in ways that encourage donor trust and investment beyond project-based funding.”

Organizational Health Data Collection Questions

Current Outcome Description	Questions for Data Collection Tool
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Part I (Internal Reference Only) – Building on Outcome Descriptions

Fostering An Organizational Culture that Promotes Staff Wellbeing, Learning, Inclusivity Partner organizations dedicate significant time and resources to building cultures that prioritize staff wellbeing, including mental and emotional health, while also supporting individual and organizational learning. Through workshops, internal group sessions, and tailored professional development opportunities, they are creating inclusive and accessible spaces for reflection, collaboration, and learning.	Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1–5: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree/Don’t Know 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree - Over the past three years, the organization has been dedicating significant time and resources to building a culture that prioritizes staff wellbeing, while also supporting individual and organizational learning. <i>Skip Logic – only appears if respondent selects agree, or strongly agree.</i> [OPEN ENDED] WHO did WHAT to build a culture that prioritizes staff wellbeing? (Please identify any individuals or groups that played a significant role, as well as the actions they took).
Building on Strategic Communications Approaches Organizations are using communication as a critical driver of growth. Internally, they focus on fostering clear communication channels and a shared organizational voice to align teams and enhance collaboration. Externally, they recognize recognizing the importance of a strong digital presence for connecting with donors. They are sharing cohesive narratives through multiple communication channels – both internal and external – to amplify their mission, strengthen relationships, and expand their reach.	Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1–5: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree/Don’t Know 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree - Over the past three years, the organization has been using communication as a critical driver of growth, creating clear communication channels that have helped the team better understand our work and recognizing the importance of a strong digital presence for connecting with donors. <i>Skip Logic – only appears if respondent selects agree, or strongly agree.</i> [OPEN ENDED] WHO did WHAT to strengthen the organization’s communication strategy? (Please identify any individuals or groups that played a significant role, as well as the actions they took.)

Modifying Organizational Structures and HR Systems

Organizations are formalizing HR processes and policies to build a strong foundation for sustainable growth and adaptability.

■ Clearly Defining Roles

From dividing and conquering tasks to creating specialized teams for certain assignments, organizations are bringing more clarity and division of labor into their internal structures. This streamlines workflows and helps ensure that roles are clearly defined.

■ Developing Systems to Promote Adaptability

Organizations are standardizing procedures so that even during organizational transitions, new staff members are able to understand and replicate internal processes.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1–5: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree/Don't Know 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

3. Over the past three years, the organization has been formalizing HR processes and policies to build a strong foundation for sustainable growth and adaptability.

c. *Skip Logic – only appears if respondent selects agree, or strongly agree.* [OPEN ENDED] WHO did WHAT to formalize the organization's HR processes? (Please identify any individuals or groups that played a significant role, as well as the actions they took).

Building Financial Resilience and Sustainability

■ Diversifying Funding Sources

Partner organizations are actively seeking and maintaining multiple revenue sources, including grants, self-generated income, crowdfunding, and individual donations. The strategic diversification limits dependency on a single income source.

■ Gaining Access to More Unrestricted Funds

Partners recognize that building financial resilience and ensuring long-term sustainability are more achievable with access to flexible funding. Some partners are obtaining unrestricted funding opportunities from organizations outside of WomenStrong.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1–5: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree/Don't Know 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

4. Over the past three years, the organization has been actively seeking and maintaining multiple revenue sources and/or gaining access to more unrestricted/flexible funds.

d. *Skip Logic – only appears if respondent selects agree, or strongly agree.* [OPEN ENDED] WHO did WHAT to diversify revenue sources or gain access to unrestricted/flexible funds? (Please identify any individuals or groups that played a significant role, as well as the actions they took).

■ **Adding Structure to Fundraising Approaches**

Some partner organizations are shifting toward more formalized fundraising processes by establishing a specific team with clear roles and responsibilities to lead business development.

Organizations are also prioritizing strategic relationship-building with funders. They are measuring success not just in terms of funds secured, but in whether they have developed longer-term, higher-quality funding relationships.

■ **Embracing Strategic, Long-Term Planning**

Organizations are embracing long-term planning, looking ahead five years or more, to align strategic priorities with sustainable growth. Along with operational and programmatic planning, this includes the pursuit of longer-term funding that spans multiple years. With this shift from reactive to proactive fundraising, organizations are able to focus more on achieving their mission.

Part II (Internal Reference Only) – Building on the Organizational Strength and Resilience Framework

5. Overall, how well is the organization demonstrating strong leadership (e.g., executive leadership that is equity conscious, accountable)?

Rate on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1= Poor and 5 = Excellent

Checkbox to select NA/Don't Know

Please explain [OPEN ENDED]

6. Overall, how well is the organization demonstrating a healthy organizational culture (e.g., through high staff engagement and retention, trust and teamwork, effective systems and processes)?

Rate on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1= Poor and 5 = Excellent

Checkbox to select NA/Don't Know

Please explain [OPEN ENDED]

	7. Overall, how well is the organization demonstrating strong direction (e.g., through a clear mission/ vision, strategy, effective monitoring and evaluation, mission-aligned and gender-sensitive programs)? Rate on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1= Poor and 5 = Excellent Option: Checkbox to select NA/Don't Know Please explain [OPEN ENDED]
	8. Overall, how well is the organization demonstrating resilience (e.g. through creativity and innovation, adaptability, adequate staffing, partnerships). Rate on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1= Poor and 5 = Excellent Option: Checkbox to select NA/Don't Know Please explain [OPEN ENDED]
	9. Do you have anything to add regarding WomenStrong's role in helping the organization achieve internal and/or external changes? [OPEN ENDED]
	Many thanks for your feedback!....



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or reach out to us, at info@womenstrong.org.