

WOMENSTRONG
INTERNATIONAL

Strategic Plan

2023-26



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Cover photo: Middle school students in Madagascar during their comprehensive sexuality education course with Projet Jeune Leader. Credit: Marc Negane for Projet Jeune Leader, 2022.

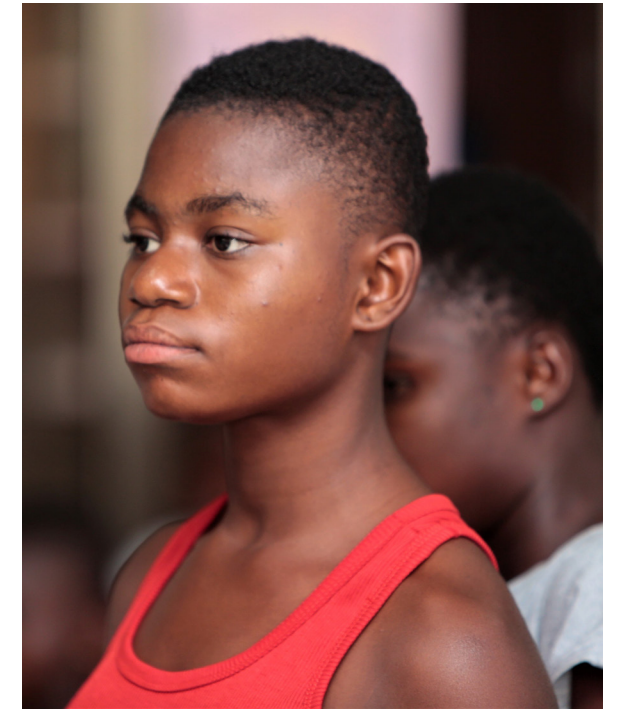
Photos on facing page: Top photo - A participant in a Women's Health to Wealth Girls' Club, in Kumasi, Ghana. Credit: WomenStrong International, 2015. Bottom photo - Market women in Kumasi, Ghana, in a meeting organized by Women's Health to Wealth with public officials. Credit: WomenStrong International, 2016.

I. Introduction: What Is WomenStrong International?

Our Mission:

WomenStrong International advances progress toward gender equity by partnering with grassroots women-led organizations in urban and peri-urban areas who are dedicated to improving the lives of the girls and women they serve. Through trust-based funding, capacity strengthening, and working together in our Learning Lab, we move power and money into the hands of local women-led organizations that know best what their communities need.

We support our partners in determining their own priorities and implementing gender-responsive initiatives tailored to their on-the-ground realities and needs. Partners are addressing some of the most critical needs of women and girls: keeping girls in school, accessing lifesaving reproductive health care, preventing gender-based violence, and creating pathways to economic security. Partners come together in our Learning Lab to share findings, gain insights, and test innovative solutions. We work directly with partners to strengthen their systems and programs, leverage additional investments, and heighten their visibility.



Our Vision:

WomenStrong International envisions a just and inclusive world where all women and girls are free to prosper and to live their lives in dignity and peace.

Our Aspiration:

The proven success of WomenStrong's work with partners has contributed to transforming the lives of women, girls, and their communities.

II. The Case for WomenStrong

Why WomenStrong?

WomenStrong International is a US-based private operating foundation dedicated to the belief that local, women-led organizations are experts in what is needed for women and girls to thrive in their communities.

WomenStrong was born out of this belief. Our founder came to this deep understanding after more than a decade working in 11 sub-Saharan cities in eight countries, where she witnessed the rich world fail to deliver on its promise to help eradicate extreme poverty, and saw public officials at all levels fail to deliver for the poorest of the urban poor. Yet, local women leaders always knew what their communities needed in order to thrive – they simply lacked the technical and financial resources to put their solutions into practice.

WomenStrong launched in 2014 to leverage those resources for dynamic, women-led organizations in cities across the globe. We began in partnership with two of the most effective women-led organizations from our founder's previous work, in Kisumu, Kenya and Kumasi, Ghana. For proof of concept, we extended our reach to include organizations based in Madurai, India; Borgne, Haiti; and southeast Washington, DC.

As WomenStrong has grown, we've seen continuously how much our partners have in common and how eager they are to learn from each other. WomenStrong is unusual in prioritizing the widespread sharing of partners' solutions, knowledge, and experience well beyond each partner's local settings. We do so across geographies, so that our partners' most effective strategies can be adapted and implemented in other communities across the globe.

Where Is WomenStrong Now?

Today, WomenStrong's grantee partners include 19 local women-led non-profits in largely urban settings in 17 countries from Asia to Africa to the Americas. Our partners work in critical areas long demonstrated to be essential to women's empowerment: advancing girls' education and empowerment, women's health, economic security and opportunity, and preventing violence against women and girls.

WomenStrong's partners receive unrestricted financial support; capacity strengthening as requested, to help them become more effective and resilient; and the opportunity to participate in a Learning Lab, where they can build a community, share their experiences with their peers, and showcase their solutions on a global stage.

In combination, our Capacity Strengthening Program and Learning Lab provide partners with knowledge and tools, strengthen their technical and organizational capacity, encourage peer-to-peer exchange, and promote a collective agenda that is building a community of practice spanning

the globe. We do all of this while respecting the diversity of our partners' backgrounds and perspectives and ensuring that our work is inclusive and promotes equity among partners. Out of this community, WomenStrong seeks to raise our partners' visibility, so that their learnings can be heard by peer non-profits, international non-governmental organizations, and bi- and multilateral agencies, and so their solutions can be implemented wherever they might improve the lives of women and girls.

WomenStrong today is a learning organization. We help our partners measure and evaluate their progress in strengthening their capacity, so that they can continue to learn and grow to better serve their communities. At the same time, we measure WomenStrong's own effectiveness, to understand how we can most efficiently and sustainably help local women-led organizations grow stronger.

With learning at our core, and with our single-minded focus on strengthening women-led organizations worldwide, WomenStrong positions itself within the women's rights landscape and the wider philanthropic community as a replicable model for gender-transformative development that merits sustained investment.



New mothers and their babies attend a postpartum class given by WomenStrong partner Roots of Health in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines. Credit: Roots of Health 2022.

III. Our Strategic Plan: Where Is WomenStrong Headed?

This plan explains WomenStrong’s theory of change, our objectives, strategies, and programs for implementing our mission so as to realize our vision. Over these three years, WomenStrong seeks to grow sustainably while continuing to contribute to the resilience and amplify the voices of community-based, women-led organizations as they strive to realize the rights and meet the needs of the girls and women with whom they work. We believe that demonstrating the effectiveness of our approach will help ensure that WomenStrong has the resources to support our partners and operations for years to come.

IV. WomenStrong’s Theory of Change

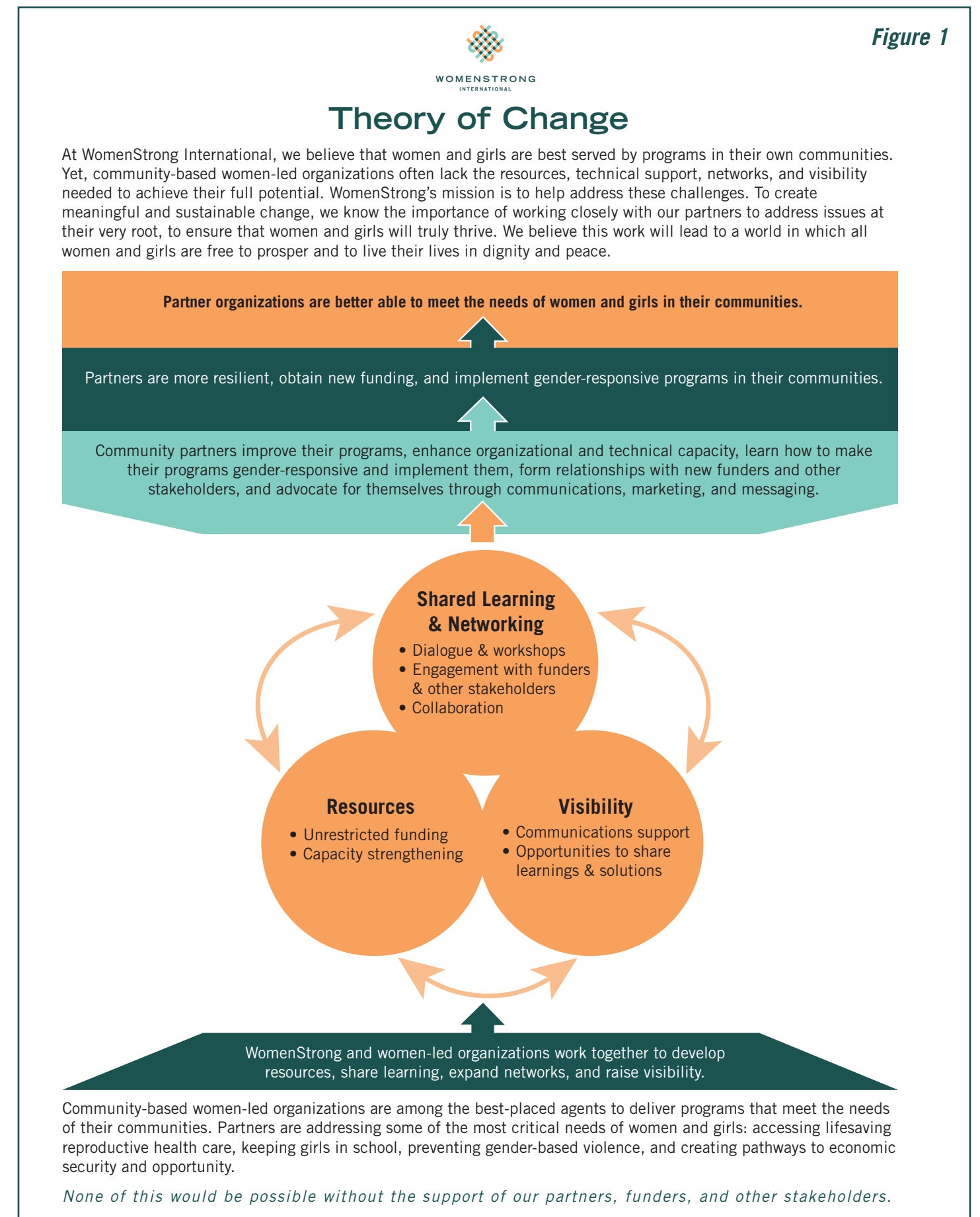
WomenStrong’s updated Theory of Change (see Figure 1) reflects our:

- appreciation of the deep expertise of local women-led organizations in serving the women and girls in their communities;
- awareness that these organizations’ effectiveness can be hindered by their lack of technical and financial resources and of linkages with like-minded organizations, government and non-governmental institutions, and funders;
- commitment to supporting these organizations with the resources they believe they most need in order to improve their effectiveness, efficiency, and organizational strength and resilience; and
- our understanding of and ongoing learning about how best to do so.



Girls and boys develop positive, healthy relationships through the guidance of Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC). Credit: GADC 2019.

Figure 1

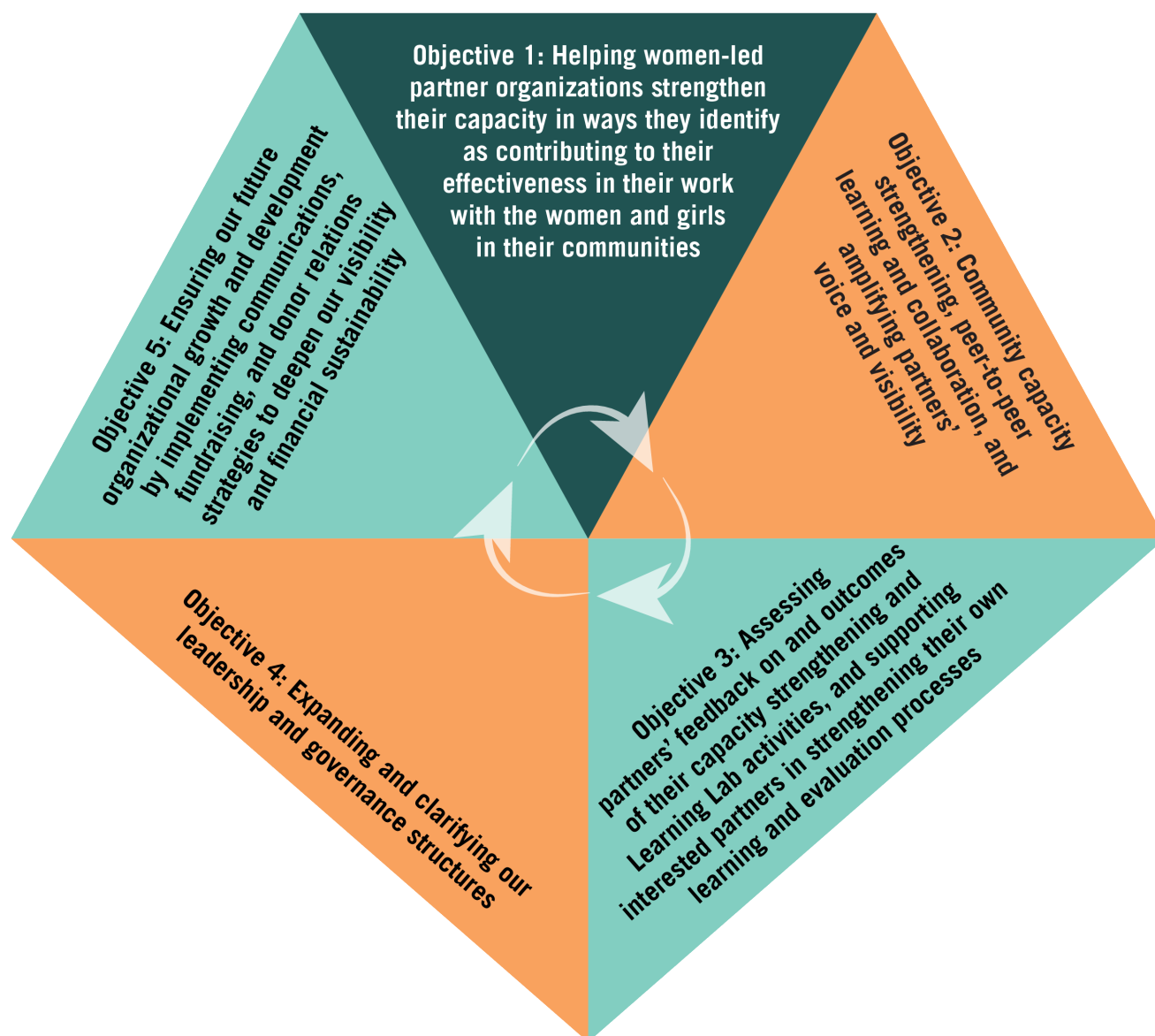


V. Objectives, Strategies, and Modes of Implementation

In this plan, WomenStrong International has put forward a set of five objectives that guide our current work and path as a non-profit organization. We are advancing these objectives concurrently with two overarching aims: first, to ensure WomenStrong’s increasing effectiveness in strengthening local women-led organizations in their work with women and girls; and second, to ensure that WomenStrong is supported and joined in this effort by others in the fields of women’s rights, international development and philanthropy, and in the broader conversation regarding the centrality of gender equity to human development.

Although numbered for convenience, these objectives are deeply intertwined in purpose and function; a graphic representation of their essential interdependence is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2



WomenStrong Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Helping women-led partner organizations strengthen their capacity in ways they identify as contributing to their effectiveness in their work with the women and girls in their communities
- **Objective 2:** Community capacity strengthening, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, and amplifying partners' voice and visibility
- **Objective 3:** Assessing partners' feedback on and outcomes of their capacity strengthening and Learning Lab activities, and supporting interested partners in strengthening their own learning and evaluation processes
- **Objective 4:** Expanding and clarifying our leadership and governance structures
- **Objective 5:** Ensuring our future organizational growth and development by implementing communications, fundraising, and donor relations strategies to deepen our visibility and financial sustainability

The first three of these objectives work in tandem to achieve the first overarching aim: ensuring WomenStrong’s increasing effectiveness in strengthening our grantee partners across the globe, as they continue to work with women and girls in their communities. The first objective centers on the tailored support WomenStrong provides partners, in addition to their unrestricted grants, through organizational capacity strengthening and technical assistance. The second engages partners in a strong and supportive community of practice through our Learning Lab, where partners have the opportunity to share knowledge, experience, and learning, both intimately, amongst themselves, and more broadly, across the wider development, philanthropy, gender equality, and women’s rights landscapes. Our third objective engages in thoughtful measurement, learning, and evaluation to spotlight strategies and practices that have been more and less effective in strengthening our partners, so that we can become more successful and efficient in doing so.

Together, these first three objectives reinforce two core commitments on the part of WomenStrong’s leadership and staff: first, our commitment to our mission of strengthening wise, dynamic local women-led organizations; and second, our commitment to the centrality of learning to WomenStrong’s very identity and functioning as an organization.

Objectives 4 and 5 work together to build out the robust, wise leadership, and governance of the organization, as well as the profile, presence, and fundraising capacity so essential to ensuring WomenStrong’s success and future sustainability.

All five objectives are elucidated in greater detail on the following pages.

Objective 1: Helping women-led organizations strengthen their capacity in ways they identify as contributing to their effectiveness

Strategy: WomenStrong's Capacity Strengthening Program

WomenStrong takes a highly collaborative approach to organizational strengthening and technical support from the beginning of the partnership process. Our partners identify their own capacity and organizational strengthening needs, and WomenStrong and each partner then co-create an individual capacity strengthening action plan, including agreed upon milestones for measuring progress against each priority.

Implementing a given action plan may entail engaging an external consultant located in the partner's region, a partner's participating in an existing workshop or training program, or receiving technical assistance from WomenStrong staff or through another delivery mechanism closely aligned with the expressed need.¹ WomenStrong supports the partner throughout, remaining in regular contact and adjusting plans and milestones as necessary, should the partner's priorities shift or other factors affect implementation of the plan.

By the end of their individual grant periods, we anticipate that the majority of WomenStrong partners will have seen improvement in one or more of the capacity strengthening areas they have been working on, as part of their action plan.

At the same time, key thematic areas identified by multiple partners are leveraged to inform activities undertaken within our Learning Lab, each of which is structured to address partners' interests and needs.²

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1. Examples of the kinds of support requested include capacity strengthening in learning and evaluation, fundraising and communications, advocacy and organizing skills, staff development, retention, and self-care, and in technical areas relating to the focus of partners' work.
 2. For more on how this will unfold, see under the following Objective, "Community capacity strengthening, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration," etc.

Objective 2: Community capacity strengthening, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, and amplifying partners' voice and visibility

Strategy: The WomenStrong Learning Lab

WomenStrong's Learning Lab connects and convenes a space for partners to gather, learn from each other, and share knowledge on gender-sensitive and -transformative programming. Our Learning Lab is inclusive and promotes equity among partners and across partner staff, including through our Language Justice program, which enables more staff from our partners to participate in Lab activities and to share their diverse perspectives, which are often deeply rooted in their communities.

The pillars of the Learning Lab are to:

- Foster peer-to-peer learning and collaboration to share partners' lessons learned, promote partner-led advocacy efforts, and provide access to resources;
- Strengthen the capacity of women-led organizations to enhance program effectiveness and sustainability within gender-intentional programming;
- Build a community of women-led organizations with a collective agenda and, in solidarity, promote women's and girls' empowerment to address gender inequities; and
- Amplify the voice and visibility of women-led organizations at the local and global level, by advocating for increased investments in local solutions.

The strategies and activities involved in building each of these pillars are described below.

Pillar 1: To foster peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, the Learning Lab enables the sharing of innovative solutions and best practices. Targeted activities within each Lab area are designed to nurture connections among partners, provide them with knowledge and tools, and encourage peer exchange – with the goal of strengthening their organizational capacity. Learning Lab partners convene virtually by region, asynchronously across geographies, and in person, as they build a community dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls. Partners have an opportunity to collaborate on a learning product or an advocacy activity to disseminate their lessons learned and recommendations. The Learning Lab also uses as an online portal or hub and is a vital tool for community building. There, partner exchange happens, resources are shared, and relationships are developed with each other and with WomenStrong staff.

Pillar 2: For community capacity strengthening to improve program effectiveness and sustainability, the Learning Lab team identifies synergies across regional cohorts to strengthen partners' organizational capacity. Key thematic areas identified by multiple partners in the course of their individual capacity conversations will help guide the focus of Learning Lab activities.

The Learning Lab will launch a new in-house resource center of evidence-based tools and materials that will inform gender-transformative programming and practices across the Learning Lab and that partners can apply within their own communities, with support as needed from WomenStrong staff or outside experts. Included and regularly updated in the Learning Lab resource center will be packages with guidance on best practices and innovations on gender-sensitive and -transformative approaches in the areas of girls' education and empowerment, women's health, economic security and opportunity, and preventing violence against women and girls. WomenStrong will incorporate and integrate into our resource center learnings that address some of the needs expressed by partners during their capacity strengthening conversations, as well as learnings from the wider development, women's rights, and philanthropic sectors, to ensure that partners receive the most relevant and up-to-date information possible, according to their region.

Pillar 3: To build a community of women-led organizations in solidarity with a collective agenda, the Learning Lab team identifies common interests and synergies capable of feeding into a collective agenda developed by our partners.



Susan Blaustein speaks at a Women Deliver 2023 session co-sponsored by WomenStrong International, Girls First Fund, and American Jewish World Service, July 2023. Credit: WomenStrong International 2023.

Women-led organizations play a critical leadership role in promoting human rights, highlighting gender inequalities, and advancing collective action. The Learning Lab fosters solidarity by building relationships among women-led organizations and leveraging the power ensuing from that solidarity to advance their agenda. Each regional cohort will develop a collective regional agenda that will provide guidance for a common strategy aimed at addressing evidence gaps or advocating for an issue area affecting women and girls. These agendas can be developed based on key themes garnered from partners, common questions, and/or through conversation with partners in the course of a meeting or call.

Pillar 4: To help amplify partners' voice and visibility, WomenStrong seeks out opportunities for partners to share their work broadly, so as to encourage adaptation and replication of and increased investment in their solutions. We do so in the following ways:

Within the Learning Lab, partners are encouraged to share their solutions and lessons learned with their peers and in print or on a local, regional, or global stage – whether individually, in collaboration, or together with WomenStrong staff, as opportunities arise. WomenStrong supports our partners, as needed, sometimes by organizing these occasions and regularly by offering technical assistance in preparing for them.

Partners desiring support in presenting their work or advocating for women's and girls' rights can obtain that technical assistance through our Capacity Strengthening Program.

WomenStrong staff, a training or workshop, or an external consultant can provide this support, depending on the needed expertise and familiarity with the specific context.

WomenStrong actively looks for forums and venues where we can organize speaking opportunities for our partners. Recent examples include facilitating multiple webinars at global conferences and convening in-person gatherings with potential donors.

In the coming three years, in response to partners' requests, WomenStrong will seek to support partners in collaborating on Learning Lab activities, including on publications and other Learning Lab products, in public forums, and during Learning Lab retreats.

Through all these activities, the Learning Lab enables its diverse community of partners to share knowledge, resources, and tools in ways that will enhance their individual and collective capacities and amplify the shared impact of their work. WomenStrong anticipates that partners' heightened visibility and the opportunity to present their groundbreaking findings to new audiences will result in increased support for their work, interest in replicating their specific programs, and faith in the wisdom of local solutions.

Objective 3: Assessing partners' feedback on and outcomes of their capacity strengthening and Learning Lab activities, and supporting interested partners in strengthening their own learning and evaluation processes

Strategy: WomenStrong continually tests the effectiveness of our own model, and our expert Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation Team (also known as our "Knowledge and Learning Team") helps our partners do the same, with regard to their own.

Modes of Implementation

For WomenStrong to learn, grow, and improve our effectiveness:

We will use our revised Theory of Change to begin to assess the likelihood that our activities are contributing to our desired long-term outcomes: that partner organizations are more resilient, that they are able to obtain new funding, and that they are implementing contextually relevant and gender responsive programs in their communities.

Toward this end, in the near-term, our Measurement, Learning and Evaluation Team aims to assess how WomenStrong is perceived by our partners, how well we are supporting them in meeting their goals, and to what extent our activities may be contributing to improvements in their potential to support gender-sensitive and -transformative change in the lives of the women and girls in their communities.



A Mothers' Club participant in Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa (H.O.P.E.), a founding WomenStrong partner in northern Haiti. Credit: WomenStrong International, 2015.

To inform this assessment, we seek regular feedback from our partners on how useful the Capacity Strengthening and Learning Lab programs are for them. We will continue to do so in numerous ways, to ensure frank and timely feedback, including through formal external evaluations; surveys at the conclusion of specific activities; informal conversations with grantee partner staff; and an anonymous feedback mechanism through which partners can express feedback they might not otherwise openly offer a funder.

Upon receipt, analysis, and discussion of this invaluable information, the relevant WomenStrong staff, with support from the Knowledge and Learning Team, will continue to determine whether a specific program, activity, or staffing requires adjustment or shift in programming,

what precisely the change should be, who else might need to be informed and involved, and a timeline for implementing the change.

Over the next three years, WomenStrong will continue to build a track record to demonstrate our contribution to improving the outcomes of our partner organizations. Specifically, we seek to understand whether and how the particular information WomenStrong has shared is leading to individual partners' improved technical and organizational capacity and how this might benefit their ability to achieve their objectives, including designing effective gender-responsive and -transformative programming. We also wish to understand the extent to which partners' participation in the Learning Lab – as listeners, advisors, leaders, and/or presenters – has contributed to their greater effectiveness in their work with women and girls, and if so, in what ways. Through a combination of surveys, external evaluations, an anonymous feedback mechanism, and informal discussions, we hope to understand which kinds of support and interventions have been more and less helpful to our partners, and why.

This understanding will enable WomenStrong to share our findings with other development and philanthropic partners working on the same thematic issues in the gender and women's rights landscape, with whom we forge to build partnerships and forge alliances that can advance the field.



WomenStrong International staff and partners collaborating during a Measuring, Evaluation, and Learning workshop in Amsterdam. Credit: WomenStrong International 2022.

For our grantee partners to learn, grow, and improve their individual effectiveness:

Our Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation Team also provides technical guidance to partners on measurement, learning, and evaluation of their programming both on an individual basis, if prioritized as a need by specific partners within the framework of WomenStrong’s Capacity Strengthening Program, and also on a community capacity strengthening basis, within the context of the Learning Lab, in the event that numerous partners are interested in a measurement, learning, or evaluation challenge or methodology that might most efficiently be addressed through a topical interest group. Through these activities, the Knowledge and Learning Team works with interested partners to ensure that they have systems and tools in place to support their internal learning and information needs, emphasizing involving their key community stakeholders, rather than building systems that respond only to donor requirements for individual projects.

Objective 4: Expanding and clarifying our leadership and governance structures to ensure organizational longevity and to ensure that our leadership includes representation from the communities we serve

Strategy: WomenStrong is restructuring our leadership and governance functions in order to implement our 2023-36 Strategic Plan thoughtfully, efficiently, and successfully.

To do so, WomenStrong will develop and establish a robust and cohesive governance structure that balances inclusivity and shared power with clearly defined roles and decision-making processes. Remaining true to our principles of equity, open debate, and contributions from

all staff, WomenStrong will clarify the mechanisms through which decisions are made and oversight is administered, to ensure that the organization runs smoothly, makes steady progress toward our objectives, and remains accountable to our stakeholders.

Modes of Implementation

Over the next three years, WomenStrong will:

- Clarify our internal governance and decision-making function;
- Broaden our Board membership and Board Committee structure;
- Create a Strategic Advisory Council; and
- Develop a clear succession plan.

Each of these processes is described in the following paragraphs.

1. Clarifying our internal governance and decision-making functions (2023):

WomenStrong staff fill a number of basic functions that constitute the day-to-day operations of our organization: Executive Direction, Internal Support or Operations, Grant Administration, Program Teams (Capacity Strengthening, the Learning Lab), Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation, and Communications. The roles, responsibilities, and stakeholders to whom each function is accountable are described below.

WomenStrong’s Executive Direction will have dual responsibilities: it will be in charge of leading the organization internally and will support fundraising, institutional development, and external engagement with donors and peers. Both sets of responsibilities will be undertaken in collaboration with the Board and our new Strategic Advisory Council (see under #3, below).

The first set of functions involves approving and overseeing major programmatic decisions made by staff teams, as well as supervising the management of those teams. The latter includes strategic decision-making in conjunction with the Board, overseeing funding flows and fundraising, and ensuring that fundraising is effective and utilizes the right tools and people and that WomenStrong’s visibility and networks continue to grow. Both sets of responsibilities will ensure that key decisions taken are in line with the organization’s overarching strategic direction and advance WomenStrong toward achieving our mission, aspiration, and ultimate vision. The Executive Direction will be accountable to WomenStrong International and our partners, the Board and Strategic Advisory Council, guiding principles and norms in the gender equality and philanthropic sectors, peers, funders, and the wider public.

WomenStrong’s Internal Support or “Operations” function serves all teams in executing their duties. Activities include managing WomenStrong’s finances, administration and IT systems; overseeing recruitment, compensation and employee benefits, training, professional

development, and workplace safety; supporting the Executive Direction in administering Board meetings and activities and in establishing the new Strategic Advisory Council; and overseeing tax and legal tasks. The operations role is accountable to WomenStrong International and its funders, to the principles and norms of non-profit governance, and to all relevant tax and legal authorities.

WomenStrong's Grants Administration: When WomenStrong is recruiting new grantees, Grants Administration, in collaboration with other teams, will advertise and administer a Request for Proposals and coordinate both the vetting and selection of new grantees and the disbursement of and reporting on grant expenditures. Grants Administration is also responsible for keeping apprised of recent thinking and trends in trust-based and feminist philanthropy and sharing those learnings with the WomenStrong team. The Grants Administration function is accountable to WomenStrong, its partners, donors and Board, and to the best practices, principles, and norms of feminist grantmaking.

Program Teams, with support as needed from the Operations function, oversee WomenStrong's day-to-day operations and core activities, including managing team resources for organizational capacity strengthening and technical support, the Learning Lab, and policy influence and advocacy, to ensure the smooth implementation of WomenStrong's Strategic Plan and Theory of Change at the operational level.

Our Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) Team interacts with partners a) to help them measure their progress on their capacity strengthening action plans and b) to support those that have prioritized strengthening their own monitoring and evaluation strategies and skills. The MLE Team is in regular communication with the Program Teams, to share partners' feedback on programs and activities and to coordinate outreach to partners.

Our Program Teams and Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation Team are accountable to each other, to our grantee partners, to WomenStrong as a whole, and to the guiding principles and norms of feminist capacity strengthening, community strengthening, and MLE.

Our Communications Team supports partners that have prioritized strengthening their communications capabilities. It also provides support to WomenStrong's Executive Direction, Board, and to WomenStrong itself, by producing a newsletter, publications, events, fundraising materials, and engaging on social media. The Communications team is accountable to WomenStrong's Executive Direction and Board, to the partners it supports, and to guiding principles and norms across the sector.

2. Broadening our Board membership and Board Committee structure (2023-25):

With support from the Board, current funders and friends of WomenStrong, external consultants,

and our partners, WomenStrong is currently building out our network of supporters and like-minded organizations, with the aim of broadening our visibility, ensuring our sustainability, and sharing our message of trust-based funding within the world of women's rights philanthropy.

To achieve this goal, we are actively seeking new Board members and developing new Board committees to assume some of the leadership opportunities and responsibilities currently undertaken by the WomenStrong management team. As the Board expands, an Executive Committee, Governance Committee, Development Committee, and Marketing & Communications Committee will be formed to help guide and support WomenStrong leadership and to contribute to WomenStrong's growth, development, and voice on the global stage.

Our grantee partners, which participate actively in determining the Learning Lab agenda and leading Learning Lab sessions or activities, will also be encouraged to serve on Board Committees, should they wish to do so. Beyond the WomenStrong community, other qualified and talented individuals may be invited to serve on Board committees, to share their expertise and experience without necessitating their serving on the Board.

3. Creating a Strategic Advisory Council (2024-25):

As the Board grows to include a wider and more diverse membership, WomenStrong will also be seeking candidates who are able and interested in serving on a global Strategic Advisory Council, with representation from human rights and development practitioners and gender specialists (including WomenStrong grantee partners), as well as academics, individual philanthropists and philanthropic foundations, and fundraising and marketing experts. The Strategic Advisory Council will serve as a sounding board for ideas, offer its own good counsel, suggest possible avenues and angles for advocacy and policymaking in their respective regions and areas of expertise, and help connect WomenStrong to a broader network of peer organizations and larger non-governmental organizations, local and national policymakers, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and corporate and philanthropic funders.

WomenStrong leadership, in consultation with the current Board, will define the criteria for future admission to the Board and Strategic Advisory Council, reflecting the roles, responsibilities, networks, and recognition attached to each body. The Board and Strategic Advisory Council will operate under defined mandates and specific terms of reference, holding meetings and discussions with staff and partners, and promoting partner achievements and activities across their networks.

By the end of 2025, WomenStrong's Board and Strategic Advisory Council will be in charge of both the organization's governance and of increasing its visibility. Board members will support fundraising, share helpful contacts, and amplify awareness of WomenStrong across the wider public, introducing WomenStrong staff and partners to foundations, funding institutions,

and to high-net-worth individuals. The Strategic Advisory Council will provide guidance and oversight for WomenStrong's operations, political and sector-related direction, and institutional positioning. Both will be involved in high-level strategic decision-making in conjunction with the Executive Direction, and both will be accountable to WomenStrong, to good governance principles and norms, and to donors, peers, and the wider public.

4. Developing a clear succession plan (2024-26):

Over the course of these three years, the expanded WomenStrong Board, together with WomenStrong leadership and with input from staff, will design and undertake a succession plan that will ensure a smooth, adequate, and meaningful transition to leadership committed to WomenStrong's principles and to advancing our mission. The mechanisms and timeline for the process will be determined by the Board and Executive Direction, keeping in mind the need for an ample transition and onboarding period for the new leadership. WomenStrong's future leadership and governance structure will be positioned to represent ably the organization going forward; further the interests of WomenStrong partners, staff, and other stakeholders; and contribute significantly to ensuring the organization's sustainability.

Objective 5: Ensuring our future organizational growth and development by implementing communications, fundraising, and donor relations strategies to deepen our visibility and financial sustainability

Strategy: WomenStrong will share with stakeholders across the women's and human rights, development, and philanthropic communities the vital importance of trust-based grantmaking and community capacity strengthening to human development and women's empowerment.

Our demonstrated successes in strengthening our partners' effectiveness argue for replicating WomenStrong's approach widely, so that many more local women-led non-profits can benefit from similarly valuable organizational and technical strengthening, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, and heightened visibility in ways that, in turn, will benefit many more girls and women and communities across the globe.

Also in furtherance of Objective 5, we will forge partnerships and alliances with a wide array of stakeholders to help WomenStrong build and secure a robust, diverse, predictable funding base and an even wider audience. To do so, WomenStrong will hire expert fundraising and donor relations staff who, together with WomenStrong leadership and staff, will articulate WomenStrong's mission and value to peer organizations in the women's rights, development, and philanthropic sectors, prospective partners, and the wider public, enabling WomenStrong to leverage networks and contacts, ensure accountability to peer organizations and the wider public, and solidify our success in increasing our visibility and funding. The fundraising and

donor relations team will lead and support members of the WomenStrong Board and staff in reaching out to institutional funders and foundations, philanthropic advisors, and high net worth individuals with deep interest in gender equality and women's rights.

Through social media, the WomenStrong website, and our quarterly newsletter, blog, publications, podcasts, videos, and other multimedia presentations, our communications team will continue to amplify WomenStrong's success stories and those of our grantee partners. At the same time, WomenStrong staff and partners will continue to seek opportunities to speak out on regional, national, and international platforms about our model, our work, and evidence of the success of our value proposition: that the combination of trust-based giving, capacity strengthening, and community building will enable local women-led organizations to be more effective in improving the lives of women and girls.

VI. Toward a Safe and Vibrant Future for Women and Girls Worldwide

As we look ahead to our 10th anniversary in 2024, WomenStrong is doubling down on our strategy of supporting local women-led organizations with trust-based funding, capacity strengthening, community building, and broader dissemination of their learnings and solutions. We will generate meaningful evidence using a robust framework for measurement, learning, and evaluation, and we will implement communications, fundraising, and donor relations strategies that will help us reach new audiences and support our financial sustainability and organizational growth. We look forward to sharing what we learn with the broader development and philanthropic sectors and to conveying to these audiences the importance of shifting power to local organizations – in particular, to those led by local women, who are among the best positioned to understand and respond to the needs of their communities.

To accomplish our five objectives within the current three-year period, and with our forthcoming 10th anniversary in mind, WomenStrong is taking the following action steps:

- Developing a comprehensive campaign for the 2023-2026 period
- Launching a vibrant, sustainable individual giving program while selectively pursuing grant opportunities
- Aligning our fundraising and communications strategies and engaging in new visibility opportunities
- Creating a 10-year progress report and/or video
- Continuing to support, connect, and share the solutions of local women-led organizations across the globe.



We look forward to growing and deepening our community of like-minded donors, practitioners, and partners, as we continue to support, strengthen, and learn from the wise women-led organizations all over the world with whom we have the honor of partnering.

*Photo: Adolescent girls celebrate new empowerment skills during coaching by The Girls' Legacy.
Credit: The Girls' Legacy 2022.*

Please join us in our work to support local women-led organizations in improving the lives of women and girls worldwide.

Email: info@womenstrong.org

Website: <https://www.womenstrong.org/>



Global Map of Current Learning Lab Partners

Our Global Network | 19 partners, 17 countries, 4 areas of learning

 Current
 Alumni



Learning Lab Principles on Partner Engagement

Key principles integrated within our partnership include our commitment to:

- **Acknowledge and address the power dynamic.** WomenStrong acknowledges that there is an inherent power imbalance between us and the partners. We strive to be aware of how this presents itself in all aspects of our work, to actively cede power to our partners, and to foster relationships where partners can speak freely and honestly with the WomenStrong staff.
- **Address equity.** WomenStrong strives to uphold a lens of equity within all partner interactions, including in the language(s) spoken. We acknowledge the very real effects in everyday interactions of racism, sexism, ableism, classism, homophobia, and the intersection of these and other systems, and we seek to provide a safe and brave space where partners can engage to their fullest potential.
- **Establish mutual respect and trust.**
- **Value context and culture.** We are here to learn from each other. WomenStrong values and centers ideas and solutions from the communities in which partners work. We are committed to carefully challenging ourselves and each other. We also understand that every language holds equal value. We will operate in English, Spanish, and French, whenever possible.
- **Amplify partners' voice and visibility.** Throughout a partner's time with the Learning Lab, the WomenStrong team will seek to amplify and disseminate partners' local solutions to policymakers, development practitioners, and the wider community. Our team will ensure that partners' voices, preferences, expertise, and styles are valued and respected.
- **Be community-led.** Learning Lab activities are responsive and tailored to their needs. There is no "one size fits all" for capacity-strengthening and knowledge-sharing. If partners would like to lead and/or organize an activity in a way that fits their needs, our team will support their work. WomenStrong takes partner feedback seriously, and we strive to develop the Learning Lab based on partners' recommendations (gathered via the Working Group, the anonymous feedback survey, etc.).
- **Partners set the pace.** Learning Lab activities are optional for partners. We trust that, whenever possible, partners will fully engage with the Lab activities they find valuable for their work.
- **Value partner leadership.** We strive to have partners lead and for partners to be the final decision-makers on partner-led activities (e.g., for Learning Lab calls and external (public) webinars), with WomenStrong supporting and making suggestions as appropriate. Partners will be encouraged to lead Learning Lab activities, such as calls, webinars, and peer mentoring.
- **Foster learning, not accountability.** We encourage partners to focus their efforts on answering questions that are valuable to them, not to WomenStrong. When anyone facilitates capacity strengthening, we encourage partners to learn from each other.
- **Embrace imperfection.** It's ok to make mistakes! There is tremendous learning in mistakes, failure, and rethinking what works and what does not. Experimentation and learning are what we are all about!
- **Cultivate and sustain authentic relationships.** WomenStrong respects the boundaries of a professional funder-grantee relationship while working toward realizing gender justice for all, everywhere.

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