



EVERY  
WOMAN  
TREATY

# Annual Report 2023

United to end violence against  
women and girls





# About Every Woman Treaty

## Who we are:

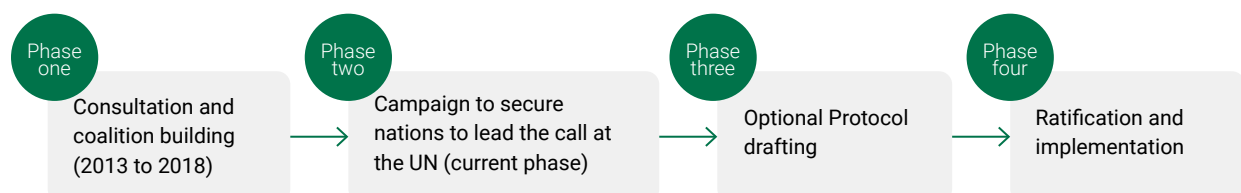
Every Woman Treaty is a global coalition of more than 3,700 women's rights activists and organizations in 147 countries advancing a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW) to end violence against women and girls. The new Optional Protocol would constitute a binding global treaty. Our efforts build on the extraordinary work of the women's rights advocates before us who initiated the call for a stronger framework more than 30 years ago.

## What we do:

We catalyze leadership — from grassroots activists to heads of State — for the development of a global treaty that will make the world safer for women and girls. Our signature program, the **Indrani 1000 Voices Fellowship**, builds the capacity of advocates to call for the treaty and other policy changes on women's safety. Our **Emerging Leaders Council** (activists under 35) works on treaty advocacy and local and regional policy to build a safer, more just future.

## Theory of change:

Our campaign is rooted in the belief that if you put grassroots activists in the halls of power, they can change the world.







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# United to end violence against women and girls

Dear Global Community,

I'm thrilled to share that women's rights activists and nations are uniting to create a safer world for women and girls!

At the beginning of 2023 when we released our second report, Safer Now, on the horrific reality that violence against women and girls is on the rise, we wondered how we could expedite the path to a global binding instrument. The answer came through our diplomatic work.

States and other stakeholders expressed strong interest in pursuing a treaty through a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW) specific to ending violence against women and girls. The Coalition agreed and the year culminated in four nations and three Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls calling for a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Let me repeat this development: UN Member States and UN mandate holders are now calling for a global treaty to end violence against women and girls in collaboration with civil society!

In the face of rising violence and backlash on women's rights, Every Woman Treaty, our diplomatic partners, and women's rights activists around the world have come together to end violence against women and girls through binding global policy, an instrument that stands to usher in a new era for women and girls, everywhere.

Onward!

Lisa Shannon  
Cofounder & CEO



## Diplomacy

# Advancing State Leadership

Every Woman Treaty consults with United Nations Member States, UN entities, International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs), Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and regional bodies for inclusive and transparent dialogue on the creation of a treaty at the global level to end violence against women and girls.

In 2023, **seven key achievements** have significantly moved the treaty forward:

## 1. Activists Furthered Dialogue with Nepal - February

Cofounder Meera Khanna and fellowship graduates Srijana Lohani and Upasana Rana, along with CEO Lisa Shannon and Dr. Shashi Adhikari, President of Women NGOs Federation, had multiple positive conversations with the Prime Minister and the Joint Secretary on the need for a treaty.

*Activists celebrate after a successful meeting with the Prime Minister of Nepal: Upasana Sana, Srijana Lohani, Meera Khanna, and Dr. Shashi Adhikari.*



## **2. Antigua and Barbuda joined the Core Group - March**

Following the publication of an op-ed by Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador to the U.S., Every Woman Treaty and the Core Group invited the nation to join the State-led initiative for a treaty to end violence against women and girls. Antigua and Barbuda accepted, becoming the fourth champion nation.

## **3. Explored Optional Protocol to CEDAW & Initiated Dialogue with CEDAW Committee - Human Rights Council, Geneva, June**

1. Positive response to the idea of a new Optional Protocol based on General Recommendations No. 35 of CEDAW
2. Positive response to the scorecard monitoring mechanism
3. Positive consultations with UN entities

## **4. Every Woman Treaty Coalition Officially Supported a New Optional Protocol to CEDAW - August**

During our roundtable discussions and private dialogue with 143 nations, CEDAW Committee members, the current and former UN Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls, and civil society actors, two strong trends emerged:

1. Widespread distress concerning gaps in the current global framework on violence against women and girls;
2. A strong interest in filling these gaps through a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women specific to ending violence against women and girls.

Since Every Woman Treaty launched its public campaign in 2019, we have been advocating for a stand-alone treaty. However, a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW has been an option since our first Working Group was formed to study the international framework on ending violence against women and girls. As a result of state and other stakeholders' preference, Every Woman Treaty presented the option to the Coalition in a survey and series of calls, outlining its benefits:

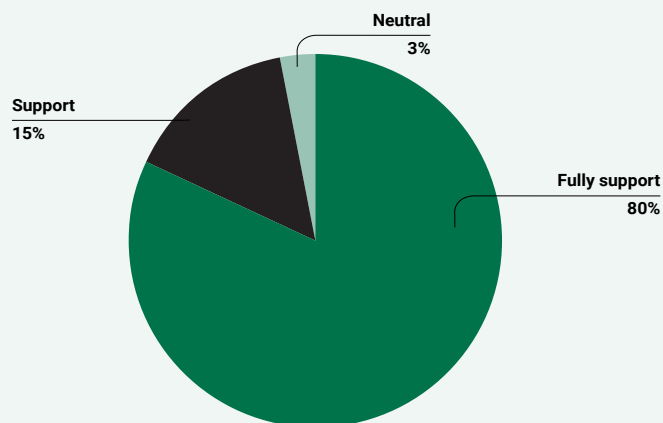
- An Optional Protocol is a treaty. Once ratified, it is a binding instrument that stands on its own.

- CEDAW is widely accepted as “the women’s bill of rights” and one of the most ratified human rights treaties in the world (189 nations). As such, its acceptability will be a catalyst for the ratification of a new Optional Protocol.
- A new Optional Protocol holds a unique opportunity to consolidate the global feminist movement around a singular goal of a safer world for women and girls.
- Innovations are possible through a dedicated sub-committee to serve as a monitoring body, with metrics-based reporting as a key component of tracking implementation.
- As there is wide interest, we believe now is the time to come together, to stand in solidarity to end violence against women and girls.



Feedback from the Coalition on the calls and via an online survey **resulted in a unanimous agreement among participating members to put the full weight of the coalition behind the creation, adoption, and implementation of a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW dedicated to ending violence against women and girls.**

**Percentage of Coalition Support for a New Optional Protocol to CEDAW**



#### *Comments in support of a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW:*

*I fully support the Optional Protocol as it provides the most direct and expedient path to a binding [treaty].*

*An OP aligns us with the UN, UN Women, and other leaders on women’s rights and ending violence against women and girls.*

*The Optional Protocol, with strong language about government accountability for effective intervention in violence against women and girls, will be a step towards women’s safety, dignity, and equality.*

## 5. Expanded Outreach, Deepened Relationships - United Nations General Assembly, New York/ Geneva, September to December

With the momentum of a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW, Every Woman Treaty redoubled its outreach efforts with nations, UN entities, civil society organizations and INGOs. During the UN General Assembly in New York City in September, Every Woman Treaty Chief of the Global Diplomatic Campaign Patricia Elias met with 39 nations and 19 UN agencies and INGOs.

In Geneva, Every Woman Treaty participated in CEDAW sessions and organized a high-level technical consultation with CEDAW Committee members and the current and former Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, co-hosted with the Core Group. The Geneva Mission enabled the Chief of Global Diplomatic Campaign to engage with 18 of the 23 CEDAW committee members and the two secretaries of the committee. Moreover, Every Woman consolidated its positive working relationships with two Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences Ms. Reem Alsalem, the current mandate holder, and Dr. Dubravka Šimonović, a former UN Special Rapporteur.

During the Geneva mission, Every Woman Treaty CEO Lisa Shannon and Chief of the Global Diplomatic Campaign Patricia Elias met with several international and civil society organizations and more than 16 national representatives.



### Total # of Contacts, June - Dec 2023

CSO	111
INGOs	5
Nation	197
UN Entities	195
Fundraising	508



## 6. 4 Nations Issued Joint Statement for a New OP-CEDAW - December

With the momentum of a new OP-CEDAW, our outreach culminated with the Core Group — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica\*, Sierra Leone, and Antigua and Barbuda — issuing a joint statement in December on the urgent need for a binding framework on violence against women and girls to the CEDAW during our cohosted webinar that coincided with 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.



“Conflict, climate change, and public health emergencies exacerbate violence, but they do not cause it. Violence against women and girls is entrenched in global norms, in every nation. **We therefore issue our urgent appeal to UN Member States to join the call for the creation, adoption, and implementation of a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) dedicated to eradicating violence against women and girls.**”

## 7. 3 Special Rapporteurs Issued Joint Statement for New OP-CEDAW - December

Following the call by the Core Group, the current and two former United Nations Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls released a joint statement in support of a new OP-CEDAW. The Special Rapporteurs noted the strength of the CEDAW framework in their statement:

\* As of July 2025, Costa Rica is no longer part of the Core Group.



“To ensure that minimum global standards on women’s rights are not further compromised, but are upheld and strengthened, it would be essential for this global treaty to be attached to CEDAW as an optional protocol, whereby it would provide an explicit legally binding roadmap on the measures needed to combat and prevent violence against women.”

The joint statements reinforced the consensus that ending violence against women and girls requires collective action and global participation. Both concluded by calling on other UN Member States to join the effort.



**EVERY  
WOMAN  
TREATY**

### A resounding success!

The Need for an Optional Protocol to CEDAW to end violence against women and girls



*On 7 December, during our online webinar for the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, 4 nations and 3 Special Rapporteurs released joint statements in support of a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW.*

## Coalition

# Elevating Grassroots Leadership

## Advocacy

Our advocacy initiatives work to bolster the case for a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW on ending violence against women and girls among civil society and the population at large. The stronger the call for a new instrument from advocates and citizens, the more compelled nations are to support it.

## Launched the *Safer Now* Report - February

(prior to focus on a new optional protocol to CEDAW)

Following the horrific increase in violence against women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic, Every Woman Treaty investigated the state of violence against women and girls globally. Our report *Safer Now* detailed those findings, showing how global crises such as climate change, armed conflict, health pandemics, and the abusive use of technology are driving a rise in violence against women and girls across the world and the urgent need to address the violence through a global treaty.

In-person events for the *Safer Now* release were held in **Cameroon, Egypt, Liberia, and Nepal**, and a global media campaign earned **34 worldwide media hits** on the report's release.



Outreach in conjunction with the *Safer Now* release **led to dialogue with officials from 24 countries. Seventeen activists from 13 nations** participated in the conversations. (See “Every Woman Advocates in the Halls of Power,” page 16)



## Young Activists Form Emerging Leaders Council - June

On June 20, Every Woman Treaty launched the **Emerging Leaders Council (ELC)**, an advocacy and leadership group composed of frontline activists, students, and professionals under 35. **64 introductory sessions** led to **198 activists** joining the ELC from **33 nations**.



“We refuse to inherit a world where violence against women and girls persists,” the group wrote in its announcement. “With our unique voice, and our energy and creativity, we can bring nations to the table to deliver a future that is safer and better for every woman and girl in every nation, for our generation and generations to come.”

In its first six months, the group:

- Hosted its first global conference, The Future We Want, culminating in a call for the treaty;
- Started a mentorship program that pairs young activists with senior activists for a year of learning and growth;
- Initiated a sign-on letter to Canadian officials to be sent in 2024, collecting 1,138 signatures.



**African leaders should support framework to end violence against women, girls**



## Diplomacy Committee Conducts Optional Protocol Outreach - September to December

Members of the Diplomacy Committee introduced the need for a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW to ministers and civil society organizations worldwide.

- Farwa Zafar (Pakistan) appeared on Radio Pakistan and met with the Sustainable Development Pakistan Institute (SDPI).
- Ferdous Ara (Bangladesh) raised the issue of a new OP-CEDAW at HelpAge board meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.
- Betty Sharon (Kenya) spoke to cabinet ministers for health and gender.
- Puja Kapai (India/Hong Kong) began work to hold an event in Hong Kong with the Canadian Consulate.

## Grew the Movement

**228 activists were recruited to the coalition in 39 nations!**

Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, East Timor, Egypt, Fiji, Gambia, Holland, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Maldives, Moldova, Namibia, Nigeria, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## Media: Steered the Global Conversation

Every Woman Treaty activists called on world leaders to prioritize women's safety in op-ed and interviews around the world. Every Woman Treaty earned **69 media hits and placed 17 op-eds throughout the year.**

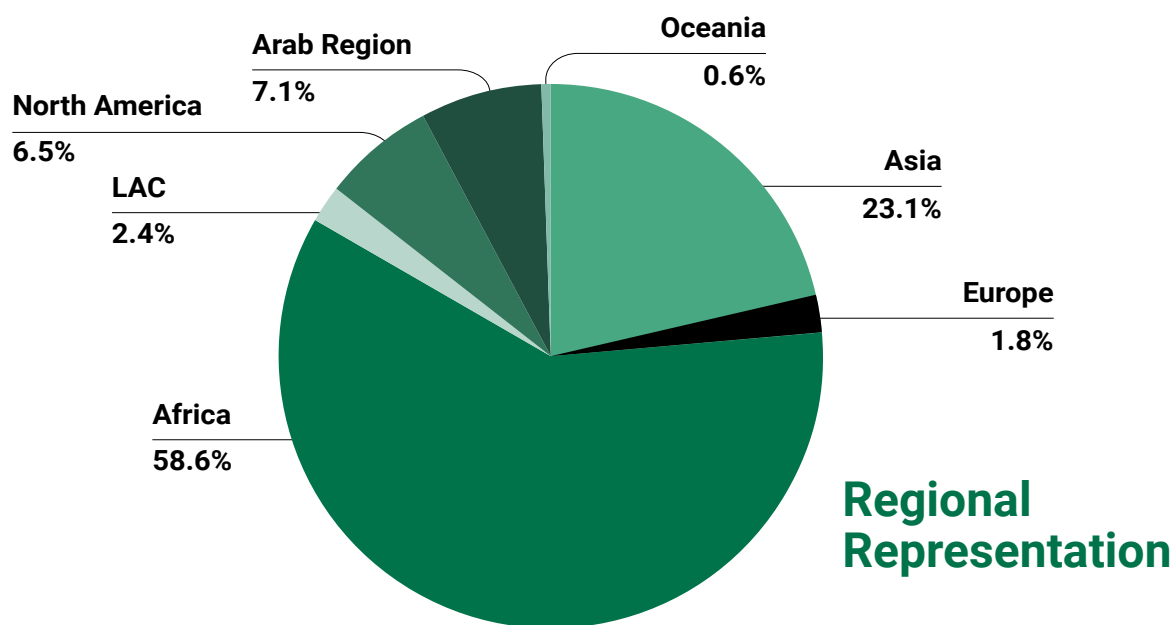
## Leadership

# The Indrani 1000 Voices Fellowship

## Our Biggest Year to Date!

The Indrani 1000 Voices Fellowship — a peer-to-peer online training program in diplomacy, media, and advocacy — grew to **10 cohorts and 170 graduates in 37 countries**, our highest number of yearly graduates to date.

The fellows represented seven geographic regions. The largest contingent was from Africa, followed by Asia, the Arab Region, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and Oceania.



**99%** of graduates felt confident in their ability to speak to the media, policymakers, and diplomats about ending violence against women and girls.

**99%** of graduates felt confident in being a global voice to end violence against women and girls.

**99%** of graduates reported that their learning expectations had been met.



## What fellows say about the program



“With the knowledge the fellowship has built confidence to support the cause and spread the word on the urgency of the single treaty.” – ***Dhyana Paramita, Indonesia***

“Thank you so much for the opportunity to rediscover myself in this beautiful way. It has been an amazing journey with you and I would love to continue this to ensure we have a global treaty that specifically addresses VAWG. All the speakers were great and to the world’s best facilitator, Zainab, you have no idea how I learned a lot from you. You are a huge inspiration.”  
– ***Salome Kadi Tetteh, Ghana***



“It was an amazing fellowship. The information was very rich and useful. The colleagues are very experienced. The guests gave us so much valuable information and instructions.” – ***Jihead Mohammed Babreak, Yemen***

“The learning process was interactive rather than one-sided. I especially loved the opportunities to practice in the breakout rooms with fellows.” – ***Dr. Menka Rai, India***



“This was so eye-opening and deeply educational.”  
– ***Michelle Trudel, USA***

## Leadership

# Every Woman Advocates in the Halls of Power

Meet the 21 activists from six regions of the world who furthered the call for a treaty with nations around the world. (Listed alphabetically by country)

Ferdous Ara Begum, Bangladesh

Gladys Mbuyah, Cameroon

Ramatu, Cameroon

Christy Jordan Fenton, Canada

Marysela Zamora, Costa Rica

Naomi Nasra, Egypt

Pille Tsopp-Pagan, Estonia

Medea Khmelidze, Georgia

Anu Dhull, India

Leila Nazgul Seitbek, Kyrgyzstan

Svetlana Dzardanova, Kyrgyzstan /Turkmenistan

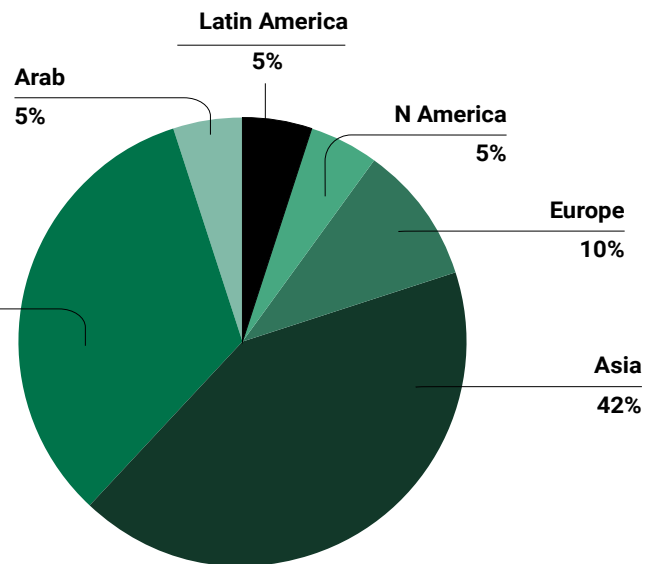
Sek Sekou Bagayoko, Mali

Dr. Shashi Adhikary, Nepal

Lily Thapa, Nepal

Srijana Lohani, Nepal

Upasana Rana, Nepal



Charity Yavala, Nigeria

Dr. Uzodinma, Nigeria

Eleanor Nwadinobi, Nigeria

Farwa Zafar, Pakistan

Miatta Paula Thomas, Sierra Leone

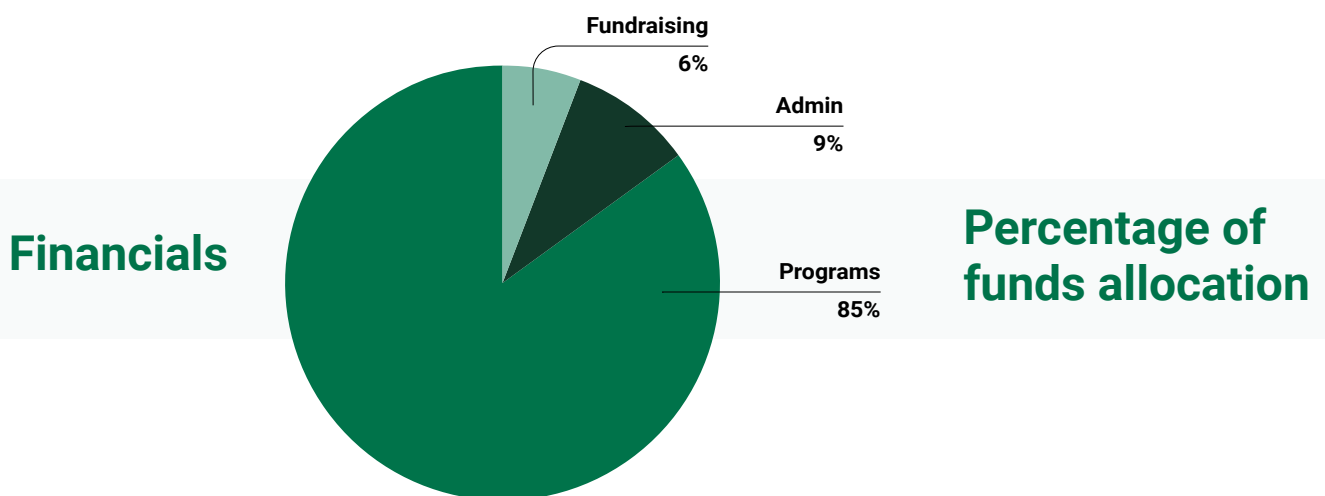


## Board of Directors 2023

Rosalyn Chen, Board Chair  
Leslie Decker  
Patricia Jackson  
Anna Lind-Guzik

Eleanor Nwadinobi  
Rasha Qamheyeh  
Francisco Rivera

Kylie Schuyler  
Andrew Shakman  
Aisha Simon





# Thank You Donors and State Leaders!

## Our Donors

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of individuals and organizations committed to gender equality, human rights, and ending violence against women and girls.

We are so grateful for your support.

### Foundations

Baker McKenzie  
Chavez Family Foundation  
Hodge & Schuyler Family Foundation  
Foundation for Systemic Change  
Girls Rights Project  
Shakti Global Fund  
So Hum Foundation  
Turner Family Fund  
Vanguard Charitable

### Individuals

Richard Barker	Andrew Shakman
Leslie Brunker	Aisha Simon
Leslie Decker	Amit & Tammy Singh
Indrani Goradia	
Patricia Jackson	
Allen Jubitz	
Stacey Keare	
Anna Lind-Guzik	
Jaclyn Pampel	

## State Leaders

We're grateful to the following nations and their Permanent Missions to the United Nations for leading the State initiative for a new OP-CEDAW:

Democratic Republic of the Congo | Costa Rica\* | Sierra Leone | Antigua and Barbuda

\*As of July 2025, Costa Rica is no longer part of the Core Group.



## **Every Woman Treaty**

is a 501(c)(3) organization

EIN/tax ID: 47-3272024

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