



# RFSU FORUM

**26th -27th August 2025**

**Imagining Feminist Futures:  
Intersectional Feminist Solidarity in  
Times of Anti-Gender Politics**

**Briefing: key takeaways**

**September, 2025**





## Introduction

August 26-27 2025, RFSU and the Learning for Change (L4C) network organised a two day hybrid forum, “Imagining Feminist Futures: Intersectional Feminist Solidarity in Times of Anti-Gender Politics”. The forum brought together around 100 participants, including staff and activists from RFSU and its partner organisations, like-minded organisations and movements, researchers and policy makers. The aim was to harvest knowledge and contribute new ideas on how to strengthen intersectional feminist solidarity in a context where anti-gender politics, expressed through deepened and sustained attacks on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender, anti-racism and social justice, is on the rise in many places. In this briefing, we summarise key takeaways from the forum.

## Recap of the forum

The forum encompassed four online panels with around 20 presenters, and a concluding online and on-site workshop for a smaller group of participants. In the first three panels, scholars and representatives from RFSU’s partner organisations and like-minded organisations shared insights from research as well as their own practice on how intersectional feminist activism and solidarity can challenge anti-gender politics and disrupt patriarchal and colonial legacies. The fourth panel was devoted to the consequences of the recent drastic cuts in international development aid and increased political restrictions on receipt of funding in some contexts. Representatives from foundations and SRHR-organisations presented on alternative ways of mobilizing resources to sustain intersectional feminist and LGBTQI+ rights work in these challenging times. The concluding workshop offered a space to reflect on the insights from the forum and discuss possibilities of channeling these ideas into concrete actions, within the L4C network or in other spaces.

## Key takeaways

### 1) Intersectional feminist alliance building: a process in the making

Austerity politics, a rise in anti-gender politics and a backlash against feminism, sexual rights and other social justice struggles pose increasing challenges to feminist and SRHR activists in many contexts. At the same time, these developments have sparked a revitalisation of feminist movements. Activists located in the global south and young women have been key to the emergence of rejuvenated, intersectional feminist movements, which are broad-based, transinclusive, and bring together diverse groups of social justice activists. In Central America, activists have conceptualised the current context of anti-gender mobilizations as a Laboratorio de Retrocesos (a backlash laboratorio) that has spurred movements to put in place new strategies and tactics, develop new narratives, organise cross-border solidarity in



exile and working together around broader social justice causes. The current fourth wave of feminism in Brazil, where black feminist activists play a central role, and the anti-fascist feminist mobilizations in Argentina were two other examples highlighted during the forum. These movements illustrate how collaboration around a shared goal may be realized through practices that acknowledge intra-group power hierarchies and differences, respect self-determination and pursue solidarity. While the feminist mobilisations discussed in the forum have sought to illuminate and address colonial legacies and power differences within movements, several speakers noted that a lot of work remains before we can speak of truly decolonial or intersectional feminist movements. The Italian scholar Daniela Chironi described this as “intersectionality in the making”, and urged us to “put all our energy into carrying this work forward.”

## 2) Solidarity and collective care

Protection of SRHR activists, whose work of defending human rights often comes at a high cost, is a key aspect of intersectional feminist solidarity. In several panels, speakers emphasized that LGBTQI+ activists are often the first targets of repression, and that support and protection to LGBTQI+ movements is therefore important both as a goal in itself, and as a strategy for safeguarding human rights and democratic space more broadly.

Many speakers stressed the need for self-care and collective care, to enable sustainable activism, protection, safety and well-being. Collective care was conceptualised as a form of resistance and a way of building unity within movements. Transnational solidarity and provision of safe spaces to activists from neighbouring countries experiencing harsh repression were key strategies highlighted. Creating room for activists to heal and recover was another practice shared - one example being a healing festival for activists. The importance of community care was also emphasized, and we were reminded that such practices have always been in place, also in the absence of funding.

## 3) Building new narratives and amplifying voices

Several presenters drew attention to how both colonial legacies and local patriarchal values and power struggles fuel anti-gender mobilisations, and discussed ways of countering anti-gender narratives. Crafting messages that speak to local realities, and using the collective power of the feminist movement to amplify local voices and experiences was identified as important strategies, along with the monitoring of anti-gender rhetoric and using insights from such data. One speaker also shared examples of SRHR-movements and feminists successfully playing with, and building on, rather than directly countering anti-gender narratives.

Speakers from several contexts stressed the importance of using storytelling and engaging with young people, and of building alliances with progressive religious



movements and other “unusual allies”. Furthermore, examples were shared of how intersectional feminist solidarity is practiced through broad CSO coalitions, that engage in global and local policy advocacy, and where organisations that are not directly impacted by a certain policy or law may act as spokespersons when other voices are silenced.

#### 4) Sustainability in a context of shrinking funding

The closure of USAID along with historically progressive states retracting from their funding commitments has created immense difficulties for feminist and SRHR movements - whose access to funds was already outsized by funding to anti-gender groups. Furthermore, in some contexts, organisations and movements are increasingly unable to access foreign funding due to repressive laws. Parallel to this, a shift in priorities among philanthropic funders has been observed, with funds being directed away from e.g. gender justice. One speaker suggested that this new focus among some funders will require CSOs and movements to increasingly collaborate across different struggles, to address broader societal challenges - potentially opening possibilities for intersectional feminist coalitional work.

To best utilise resources in a context of shrinking availability of funding, several speakers emphasized the importance of participatory grantmaking, where the people affected decide on where the resources should go. Exploring ways of monetising existing resources (assets, service provision, social media platforms) was also suggested as a coping mechanism.

#### **Ways forward**

The urgency of engaging in transnational and cross-movement solidarity, and joining efforts, was strongly emphasised by participants in order to sustain the movement in the current turbulent times. As many speakers pointed out, the rise in anti-gender politics has sparked a reinvention in movement tactics and strategies for resisting, stimulating new intersectional feminist alliances and solidarity, that we may continue to build on.

One area where insights from the forum are currently being taken forward by RFSU, is in the strategic review of the partner platform Learning for Change. Here, a new work stream on Solidarity and Urgent Action is being introduced. RFSU along with the Learning for Change network have identified the following areas for further exploration:

- Strengthened efforts to develop collaborations across movements, with CSOs and movements working on other social justice issues.
- Continue to create spaces for building relationships among movements and CSOs - as a precondition for enabling and deepening intersectional feminist solidarity within and across borders.
- Sharing resources and practicing collective care in the absence of funding.