



Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development

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CONCEPT NOTE

Breaking Out of Marginalisation (BOOM)
Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

Feminist Food Sovereignty: Women transforming and rebuilding food systems

A. Background

Across Asia and the Pacific, the prevailing neoliberal economic framework has violently re-shaped local food systems from subsistence-based, centred in sustainability, health and safety to 'modern' and agribusiness that emphasises volume and profit. Land, water, seeds, and other productive resources are increasingly treated as commodities rather than collective resources essential to sustainable rural development and food sovereignty.

The increasing industrialisation and tightening corporate control of food and agriculture have eroded traditional farming practices, undermined indigenous knowledge systems, and weakened community control over food production. At the same time, global development agendas, especially towards climate change responses promote technocratic and market-based false solutions such as "climate-smart" agriculture, genetically modified crops, biofuels, and blue carbon projects that often fail to address structural inequalities and may reinforce existing power imbalances.¹

Current trade regimes and export-oriented agricultural policies prioritise corporate profits over local food production, creating conditions where communities lose control over land and livelihoods while becoming dependent on imported food. These dynamics illustrate how food systems are shaped by broader political and economic power struggles in which food insecurity and hunger can be used as tools of control. Rural and Indigenous women are disproportionately affected, leading them to wage righteous protests and resistance to assert their rights. However, the imperialist rush for productive resources particularly in the Global South is increasingly intertwined with rising militarisation in rural communities. Large-scale land acquisitions for agribusiness, extractive industries, and climate-related projects are often enforced through military or police activities, leading to displacement, intimidation, enforced disappearances and even killings of peoples resisting land grabs.

These injustices gravely affect marginalised populations especially rural, indigenous, and grassroots women who play central roles in food production, seed management, natural resource governance, and household food security thereby deepening existing gender, class, and ethnic inequalities within agrifood systems. Gendered divisions of labour, unequal access to land and productive resources, limited participation in decision making, and structural discrimination restrict women's capacity to exercise control over food systems and benefit from economic development. Women's labour and knowledge remain undervalued despite their critical contributions to sustaining local food economies and ecological systems.

Global food security trends further illustrate the urgency of addressing structural inequalities within food systems. In 2023, approximately 733 million people faced hunger worldwide, while

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2024) *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2024–2033*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/agricultural-outlook/>



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billions lacked access to affordable healthy diets, with developing regions experiencing overlapping economic, climate, and political shocks that intensify vulnerabilities.² In Asia and the Pacific, the situation remains particularly urgent: although undernourishment declined from 7.0 per cent in 2023 to 6.4 per cent in 2024, the region still accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the world's hungry people, with almost 80 per cent of them living in Southern Asia.³

Despite these structural constraints, women across the region are not merely surviving the crises imposed by imperialist globalisation and corporate capture of food systems, they are actively rebuilding the world through feminist food sovereignty. Feminist food sovereignty places emphasis on and recognises feminist leadership in the struggle against colonial and corporate control over food systems that extract huge profits from privatising the commons, violating women's human rights and destroying the environment. Rural, Indigenous, and grassroots women are fighting back against neoliberal policies, resource grabbing, and geopolitical power struggles and are reclaiming land, food systems, knowledge, and community governance. Feminist food sovereignty also means women are advancing diverse alternatives including agroecological farming systems, community-led seed conservation, collective land and water governance, the revival of Indigenous food practices, alternative economic models, and strategic legal actions to defend rights over natural resources. These initiatives go beyond coping with crisis; they represent organised resistance and transformative action that challenge corporate power, defend community autonomy, and build equitable, sustainable, and people-led food systems.

From 2023 to 2025, APWLD together with six FPAR partners from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines embarked on a Feminist Food Sovereignty FPAR journey to look closer at the corporate control over food and agriculture and document rural women and communities' strategies to reclaim food sovereignty. Their stories showed the impacts of globalisation, land and resource grabbing, environmental degradation, weak legal protection, and women's exclusion from land ownership, governance, and access to resources to the women food producers and their communities. More importantly, the findings also demonstrated how the women and their communities pushed back against these barriers and succeeded to transform not only the local food systems, but also the skills and understanding of the rural women themselves.

The previous FPAR cycle also generated [reflections](#), such as the need for intergenerational knowledge transfer, centering women's role as agricultural custodians while challenging patriarchal norms and power dynamics in alternative food systems. Food sovereignty is a complex political struggle interspersed with various structural obstacles. The struggle is not only about challenging the unequal gendered relations and ensuring the recognition of women's role in food systems. Feminist food sovereignty also envisions a strong collective movement that defends local food systems from corporate and state capture, and ensures women's leadership in rebuilding our future.

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2024) *The State of Food and Agriculture 2024: Value-driven transformation of agrifood systems*. Rome: FAO. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/publications/sofa/2024/en>

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Food Programme, & World Health Organization. (2025). *Asia and the Pacific regional overview of food security and nutrition 2025: Accelerating actions for agrifood systems transformation for food security and better nutrition*. FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd7666en>



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B. Rationale

This Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) cycle builds on APWLD's previous work on food sovereignty, which examined the impacts of corporate control, trade liberalisation, resource grabbing, and development policies on women and communities across Asia and the Pacific. Earlier FPAR initiatives generated critical evidence on the structural drivers of food insecurity, documented violations of women's rights in food systems, and strengthened grassroots women's leadership in challenging unjust policies and practices. These processes contributed to greater awareness of the political economy of food systems and supported local advocacy efforts aimed at advancing Development Justice and feminist food sovereignty. Building on these experiences, this new cycle seeks to deepen and expand the focus of the research by examining not only the impacts of dominant food regimes but also the transformative alternatives developed by women and communities.

There remains an urgent need to generate grounded and community-driven evidence on the structural drivers that continue to undermine food sovereignty and to strengthen women-led alternatives that promote equitable and sustainable food systems. Although women across the region are actively developing transformative practices, their knowledge, experiences, and strategies need to be amplified, recognised, or integrated into policy processes. Dominant policy frameworks continue to prioritise industrial agriculture, corporate investment, and export oriented production, often marginalising community based approaches and indigenous knowledge systems.

FPAR provides a critical framework for addressing these gaps by enabling women and communities to generate knowledge from their lived experiences, analyse structural inequalities, and take collective action to transform unjust systems. Through FPAR, partners are not passive subjects of research but active agents who define research priorities, conduct analysis, and develop strategies for change.

This FPAR cycle will also examine how structural forces, including trade and agricultural liberalisation, corporate concentration, climate false solutions, and global development agendas, shape local food systems and influence women's capacity to implement transformative alternatives. By situating local initiatives within broader political and economic structures, the research seeks to strengthen evidence based advocacy for structural change.

The FPAR therefore integrates three interconnected priorities: generating rigorous community-led research, strengthening women-led transformative practices, and advancing sustained advocacy for systemic transformation in food systems.

Thematic Framework: Women-led Alternatives Transforming Food Systems

The FPAR will be organised around an overarching theme of women-led alternatives that challenge, dismantle and transform the current neoliberal, industrial food systems. To ensure conceptual clarity while allowing contextual diversity across communities, the research will be structured through thematic streams that reflect key areas of feminist food sovereignty practice and struggle. These streams are designed to capture the diverse ways in which grassroots women are transforming food systems while situating their initiatives within broader political, economic, and ecological structures.



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Agroecology will serve as a broad transformative framework within this FPAR cycle. Agroecology is not only a set of ecological farming practices but also a social and political approach to food systems that integrates biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge, collective resource governance, and community-led food production. It challenges industrial and corporate-controlled agriculture while strengthening local autonomy, ecological sustainability, and social justice. Within this framework, the FPAR will explore several interconnected thematic streams and sub-focus areas that reflect women-led alternatives across food systems.

Stream 1: Community-led Sustainable Food Systems

This stream focuses on transformative approaches to food systems that centres ecological sustainability, community autonomy, and women's leadership in food production.

Sub-focus areas may include:

- Ecological farming practices and agroecological transitions
- Community-based farming systems and collective production models
- Soil, biodiversity, and ecosystem restoration practices
- Women's leadership in agroecological knowledge, training, and farmer-to-farmer learning

The research will examine how agroecological practices reduce dependency on external inputs, challenge corporate agriculture, and strengthen community-controlled food systems.

Stream 2: Seed Sovereignty and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

This stream frames seed sovereignty as a women's human rights issue, recognising women's central roles as seed keepers, knowledge holders, farmers, and custodians of biodiversity. As corporate control, seed privatisation, genetically modified seeds, and restrictive seed policies continue to threaten these rights, there is an urgent need to protect and revitalise community-controlled seed systems, traditional ecological knowledge, and Indigenous food practices that sustain diverse and resilient food systems.

Sub-focus areas may include:

- Community seed banks and traditional seed conservation practices
- Women's roles as seed keepers, biodiversity custodians, and knowledge holders
- Seed exchange networks and farmer-led breeding initiatives
- Indigenous food practices, knowledge systems, and cultural food traditions
- Intergenerational knowledge transmission and biodiversity protection
- Resistance to corporate seed regimes, seed privatisation, genetically modified seeds, and restrictive seed laws or policies

The research will explore how women and communities protect and revive seed diversity, resist corporate control over seeds, and strengthen sustainable food production grounded in Indigenous and community knowledge. It may also examine how trade liberalisation, market-oriented agricultural policies, and state policies affect farmers' access to seeds, local markets, and community-controlled food systems.



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Stream 3: Land, Water, and Territorial Rights

Control over land, water, and territories is fundamental to food sovereignty and agroecological food systems. This stream examines women's struggles against resource dispossession, land and water grabbing, displacement, and the erosion of collective resource governance. It will also explore how the loss of land, territories, and natural resources affects women's productive and reproductive roles, including their farming, fishing, food gathering, livelihood activities, household food provisioning, unpaid care work, and responsibilities for sustaining families and communities.

Sub-focus areas may include:

- Resistance to land grabbing, forced displacement and corporate land acquisitions
- Community governance of land, water, forests, and coastal resources
- Women's leadership in defending territorial rights, commons and collective resource governance
- Collective management of natural resources for food production, livelihoods, and community survival
- Impacts of resource dispossession and displacement on women's productive work, unpaid care work, and community responsibilities

The research will examine how struggles over land, water, and territories shape community food systems, ecological sustainability, women's rights, and the redistribution of care and labour within communities.

Stream 4: Access to Food Justice and Systemic Transformation

This stream focuses on women-led legal, policy, and justice-oriented strategies that challenge unjust laws, corporate control, trade regimes, and structural inequalities shaping food systems. While community-led resistance is recognised as a cross-cutting element across all thematic streams, this stream will specifically examine how women and communities use legal struggles, policy advocacy, collective organising, and alternative governance approaches to advance food sovereignty, access to justice, and systemic transformation.

Sub-focus areas may include:

- Legal struggles and policy advocacy for food sovereignty and food justice
- Advocacy to challenge corporate control, trade liberalisation, land and resource grabbing, and unjust development policies
- Grassroots mobilisation and organising to influence laws, policies, and accountability mechanisms
- Community-led governance, cooperatives, community markets, and alternative food economy models

The research will examine how women-led movements challenge dominant legal, policy, and economic frameworks while advancing alternatives that strengthen community control, food justice, and feminist food sovereignty.

Selected partners can focus on one or more streams that are relevant to their research communities. The FPAR will prioritise initiatives that strengthen Indigenous knowledge,



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collective governance, ecological sustainability, and feminist transformation. By connecting community-based practices with broader political and economic structures, this FPAR cycle aims to generate rigorous evidence that strengthens feminist movements, informs policy advocacy, and advances systemic transformation in food systems.

C. Objectives

Overall Objective

To strengthen feminist food sovereignty movements in Asia and the Pacific by supporting grassroots women to document, analyse, and advance women-led alternatives that reclaim community control over food systems, natural resources, and knowledge while challenging corporate control and structural inequalities in food and agriculture.

Specific Objectives

- Develop the capacity of grassroots women to document and critically analyse women-led alternatives transforming food systems including agroecology, seed sovereignty, Indigenous food practices, and collective resource governance and examine how these initiatives operate in practice and what makes them feminist or transformative;
- Generate feminist analysis on the structural barriers undermining food sovereignty, including trade agreements, agricultural liberalisation, corporate concentration, and global development policies, and assess how these forces shape local food systems and constrain women-led alternatives;
- Strengthen grassroots women's leadership, collective organising, and knowledge production in advancing feminist food sovereignty and challenging patriarchal power relations in food systems;
- Develop advocacy strategies and feminist movement-building initiatives to promote women-led alternatives and advance systemic transformation of food systems at the national, regional, and international levels.

D. Strengthening Grassroots Feminist Movements through Feminist Participatory Action Research

APWLD recognises the power of grassroots feminist movements as central to advancing women's human rights and achieving [Development Justice](#) across Asia and the Pacific. APWLD's approach is grounded in the belief that women, particularly those at the grassroots level, are best positioned to identify the challenges affecting their lives and to articulate transformative solutions. Development Justice promotes people's rights, dignity, wellbeing, and solidarity while addressing structural inequalities in wealth, power, and resources between countries, social classes, and genders. To challenge dominant development models and reclaim women's human rights, APWLD emphasises the importance of building strong and autonomous feminist movements that enable women to exercise real power over their lives and engage meaningfully in social, political, and economic decision making. This includes strengthening women's capacity to document the impacts of ecological crises, limited access to land and resources, and barriers to decent work and social services, while mobilising collectively to demand accountability from states and corporations and to confront systemic barriers to justice, equality, and a sustainable environment.



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Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) [principles](#) serve as a key strategy for movement building and structural transformation within this framework. Rooted in grassroots collective struggles, FPAR is conducted by and for women, positioning them as knowledge producers, decision makers, and agents of change rather than subjects of research. Through FPAR, women generate evidence based on lived experiences, analyse laws, policies, social norms, and power structures that shape their realities, and take collective action to challenge gendered inequalities and human rights violations. The methodology supports women in understanding and confronting the intersecting forces of patriarchy, globalisation, fundamentalisms, and militarism, while strengthening political consciousness, solidarity, and collective advocacy. By amplifying women's voices, promoting community ownership, and fostering non hierarchical and participatory processes, FPAR strengthens local feminist organising and contributes to broader social movements pursuing systemic change.

Guided by principles of structural transformation, intersectional analysis, community ownership, and collective action, FPAR aims to shift power relations and challenge oppressive systems that perpetuate inequality. It prioritises democratic learning processes, capacity strengthening, free prior informed consent, and the safety and wellbeing of participants. The ultimate purpose of FPAR is to achieve structural change by transforming systems and institutions that sustain gendered and socio economic injustice. By centering women's leadership, valuing local knowledge, and supporting movement building, FPAR enables communities to define development pathways that uphold human rights, social justice, and sustainable futures.

E. Food Sovereignty FPAR Partners Selection

This Feminist Food Sovereignty FPAR will support six national and/or grassroots women-led organisations across Asia and the Pacific working to advance women-led alternatives that transform food systems and strengthen food sovereignty, as outlined in the focus of this FPAR. The initiative seeks to support organisations engaged in areas such as seed sovereignty, agroecology, protection of indigenous food systems, defence of land and resource rights, and feminist legal and policy advocacy challenging corporate control and structural inequalities in food systems. English will be the main working language for communication and participation throughout the FPAR process, including during training and in writing the reports.

All sub-regions across Asia and the Pacific are invited and encouraged to apply. In selecting partners, APWLD will consider sub-regional balance and diversity, while also encouraging applications from Central Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific.

Each selected partner will implement the FPAR over a period of 16 months and will identify two women, a mentor and a young woman researcher (below 35 years of age), who will work together to lead the FPAR process. At least one of the women must come from the community or constituency where the organisation has ongoing work on food sovereignty, including grassroots women, rural women, Indigenous women, small-scale food producers, peasants, fisherfolk, or women actively engaged in advancing women-led food sovereignty alternatives. Both the mentor and young woman researcher must demonstrate strong commitment to community organising, collective action, and feminist movement building to advance food sovereignty and structural transformation of food systems. APWLD will provide the selected



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organisations with a sub-grant of 14,000 USD to support the employment of a young woman researcher and to cover direct research and implementation costs.

APWLD will also support the young women researchers and mentors from the six FPAR partner organisations in participating in capacity-building workshops and providing advocacy or networking opportunities. The programme will develop tailored capacity-building training to address the issues mentioned above with a rights-based approach in their area of research. Through face-to-face training, they will share the frameworks within their communities, learn practical research skills, and by the end of 2027, will have developed and begun implementing a community-based feminist participatory action research which will be followed by targeted capacity-building activities, the development of knowledge-sharing and learning materials, and the preparation of advocacy initiatives to amplify community findings and advance feminist food sovereignty at national, regional, and international levels.

F. Our Food Sovereignty FPAR Journey

Activity	Description
<p>A. 1st Regional Feminist Participatory Action Research Training: Methodology and Political Frameworks</p>	<p>The first regional training will build partners' political and analytical grounding in feminist food sovereignty, development justice, and structural inequalities shaping food systems across Asia and the Pacific. The training will examine how neoliberal economic policies, trade liberalisation, corporate concentration, agricultural modernisation, and climate governance regimes restructure food systems, intensify resource dispossession, and undermine women's rights, livelihoods, and ecological sustainability.</p> <p>Partners will strengthen their understanding of feminist participatory action research as a methodology for movement building, collective analysis, and structural transformation. The training will centre grassroots women's knowledge and experiences, and strengthen their capacity to challenge dominant development models and advance women-led alternatives in food systems.</p> <p>The training will also prioritise the leadership of young women researchers and support intergenerational learning processes that strengthen feminist movements for food sovereignty.</p> <p>Expected Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partners will develop a strong understanding of feminist food sovereignty, development justice, and structural drivers shaping food systems. ● Partners will strengthen political analysis of corporate power, trade regimes, and resource governance.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will gain capacity in feminist participatory action research methodologies and participatory tools. • Partner organisations develop initial plans for community based FPAR processes. • Partners will strengthen skills in Theory of Change, Power Mapping, and Critical Pathway approaches to advance structural transformation.
<p>B. Pre-Research Consultation with the Communities</p>	<p>B. Pre-FPAR Community Consultation</p> <p>Activity Description</p> <p>Following the first regional training, young women researchers and mentors will conduct community consultations to ensure that the FPAR process is grounded in collective ownership, participation, and leadership of grassroots women. These consultations will create spaces for communities to analyse how structural inequalities shape their food systems, livelihoods, and access to resources.</p> <p>Women-led spaces will be prioritised to enable critical reflection on gendered power relations, unpaid care work, control over productive resources, and decision making structures within households and communities.</p> <p>Objectives of Community Consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community ownership and collective leadership of the FPAR process. • Form community research teams and strengthen grassroots participation. • Identify priority issues related to food sovereignty, resource control, and women’s human rights. • Define community-led objectives, research questions, and strategies for collective action. • Develop initial pathways for challenging structural inequalities and advancing women led alternatives. <p>Based on the consultations, teams will develop their draft FPAR design for review prior to the second regional training.</p>
<p>C. 2nd Regional Training on FPAR Frameworks and Community Action</p>	<p>The second regional training will provide space for partner organisations to present their FPAR designs and community action strategies. Through collective learning and technical guidance, partners will refine their approaches and strengthen feminist analysis of power relations within food systems.</p> <p>The training will deepen partners’ capacity in documentation, participatory analysis, and community based monitoring, with</p>



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	<p>emphasis on identifying structural barriers to food sovereignty and strengthening women’s collective agency in transforming food systems. Partners will also strengthen strategies to defend rights over land, water, seeds, and biodiversity.</p> <p>Expected Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partners strengthen feminist analysis of structural inequalities shaping food systems. ● Partners enhance skills in participatory documentation and analysis. ● Partners refine strategies to support community efforts to claim and defend rights over productive resources.
<p>Research and Documentation</p>	<p>Partner organisations will implement community-based FPAR processes focusing on women-led alternatives that challenge dominant food regimes, strengthen ecological sustainability, and advance feminist food sovereignty. The process will involve participatory documentation, collective analysis, and community action aimed at transforming unjust structures and practices. Based on the data and information collected, the team will make an interim report and submit it to APWLD for review.</p>
<p>D. 3rd Regional Training on Collective Action, Advocacy, and Movement Building</p>	<p>The third regional training will provide a space for collective reflection, knowledge exchange, and consolidation of learning from the FPAR process. Partners will share experiences, analyse findings, and assess the effectiveness of women-led alternatives in transforming food systems.</p> <p>The training will focus on strengthening collective action, policy advocacy, and movement building strategies to challenge unjust policies, corporate capture, and structural inequalities. Partners will develop strategies to influence local, national, and regional policy processes and strengthen solidarity across movements working on food sovereignty, resource justice, and women’s rights.</p> <p>Expected Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partners will strengthen skills in collective analysis and political advocacy. ● Partners will refine strategies for structural transformation and policy engagement. ● Partners will develop concrete plans to advance women’s leadership in transforming food systems. ● Partners will strengthen regional solidarity and movement building processes.



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<p>E. Reporting</p>	<p>Partner organisations will document their processes, findings, and outcomes, and submit interim and final reports according to agreed guidelines. Guidelines for the final FPAR research report will be discussed and finalised at the training. The final FPAR narrative and financial report, along with the required documentations, must be submitted in English to the APWLD secretariat as per the expected timeline.</p>
<p>F. Reflection Meeting: From Personal Transformation to Structural Change</p>	<p>The reflection meeting will provide space for young women researchers and mentors to share their experiences and assess the transformative impact of the FPAR process. Partners will reflect on changes at personal, organisational, community, and structural levels, including shifts in power relations, women's leadership, and community control over food systems.</p> <p>The meeting will document lessons learned, identify challenges, and develop future directions for strengthening feminist movements, advancing food sovereignty, and sustaining community led alternatives.</p> <p>Expected Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will reflect on transformative impacts of the FPAR process. • Partners will document progress in advancing women led alternatives and collective action. • Partners will identify lessons and strategies for sustaining feminist movements and structural change.

G. Timeline and processes

Processes	
Call for applications	June 2026
Selection process	By end of July 2026
Communication to selected organisations	August 2026
1st Regional Training	Last week of August 2026
Official announcement of the selected partners in APWLD social media	By 2nd week of September 2026
Pre-research community consultation	September- November 2026
Submission of draft research design	1st week of December 2027
2nd Regional Training	2nd week of January 2027



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Submission of final research design	2nd week of February 2027
Data collection, research and analysis in the communities	March- August 2027
Submission of interim financial report	End of March 2027
Submission of interim activity report	June 2027
Submission of draft FPAR story	2nd week of August 2027
3rd Regional Training	September 2027
Validation of initial findings and collection of additional data	September 2027 –October 2027
Submission of Final FPAR Story	15 November 2027
Submission of final financial report for the whole sub-grant period covering	Early December 2027
Approval of the Final FPAR report and financial reports	December 2027
Submission of advocacy proposal and budget	January 2028
Advocacy phase	February - July 2028
Submission of advocacy narrative and financial reports	Early September 2028
4th Regional meeting (Reflection meeting)	September/October 2028