We would like to thank Women’s Fund Asia for supporting the publication of the annual report.

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Acknowledgement

The achievements of South Asia Women Foundation India (SAWF-IN) would not be possible without its grantee partners, advisors, staff, board of directors, donors and supporters.

Special thanks to Priya Paul, Suneeta Dhar, Tulika Srivastava, our advisors and Board of Directors; Gagan Sethi our friend, supporter and guide.

SAWF-IN gratefully acknowledges the generous support of all the staff of Women’s Fund Asia, who have been providing all the administrative, financial and technical support and incubating us for the last two years.
Message from the Board

The South Asia Women Foundation India (SAWF-IN) is a women’s fund in India and an affiliate-partner of the Women’s Fund Asia (WFA), based in Colombo. Its mission is aligned and it hopes to play a crucial role in the coming years to expanding indigenous and other resources in India to promote women’s rights in the field.

As a small fund, it has provided legal fellowship support to women lawyers to take forward cases of women survivors in six states of India. As a partner of WFA, SAWF-IN joins a world-wide network of international women’s funds, and is grateful to WFA for their ongoing support.

SAWF-IN is building its capacities to advocate for shifts in philanthropy with donors, corporations and foundations in India and hopes to convene round tables and meetings to support women’s grassroots organising and outreach efforts in the community. The organisation was formally launched, amongst potential donors and women’s rights supporters in Delhi, India on August 2017 and re-launched at the Prospera Biennial Meeting at Colombo, Sri Lanka in October 2017, amongst international allies and funding partners.

We are pleased to share that SAWF-IN will benefit from the expertise and tools of the international women’s funding movement and use those lessons in the Indian context.

We thank all our donors, partners, staff and board members for their contribution to the years of work.
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About Us

South Asia Women Foundation India (SAWF-IN) created to strengthen indigenous feminist philanthropy as well as voices and leadership of and for women and trans* people in claiming their rights.

In the face of shrinking resources— which particularly impact women’s organisations, there has been significant concern about the absence of national donor that undertakes resource mobilisation as well as grant making processes that are based on or reflective of feminist ideologies and principles. At diverse feminist gatherings, Women’s Fund Asia (WFA) meetings and dialogues, the need for feminist donor and resource mobilisation was articulated many times.

With the opportunity of the 2% Corporate Social Responsibility investment law and increasing number of entrepreneurs and HNIs in the country, India displayed both potential and ‘need’ for a national fund to support social justice work, feminist voices and strengthen local capacities to ensure in-depth outreach and impact the politics of the discourse.

Thus SAWF-IN was formalised and registered on August 2015, as a Section 25 Company under the Companies Act of 2013, with capacity to both raise resources from indigenous sources; as well as make grants based on feminist principles was a logical step of strengthening the resource architecture, particularly at the national level.
Our Vision

We envision a world where all women live free of fear and experiences of violence and discrimination, irrespective of class, caste, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation and disability, where women freely can access and claim their rights.

A world where access to quality education, healthcare, livelihood, safe mobility, right to make informed choices are guaranteed; wherein women and girls can participate fully in all political and economic decision making processes in the society; where women and girls are encouraged to exhibit their economic skills and decisions and where gender and sexual non conforming individuals are not discriminated against on the basis of their identity.
Our Team

Founders & Board of Directors
Our Board of Directors comprises of eminent entrepreneurs and feminist scholars, who guide and oversight the company.

Priya Paul
A renowned entrepreneur, Padma Shri awardee and the Chairperson of Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels.

Suneeta Dhar
An eminent feminist, trainer and facilitator of change processes for many women’s rights groups.

Tulika Srivastava
Feminist, International Human Rights lawyer and Executive Director for Women's Fund Asia(WFA).

Gagan Sethi
A renowned development practitioner, organisational development expert and a gender trainer.

Supporters
WFA has been mammoth supporter of SAWF-IN in its institutionalisation years, providing the required technical assistance towards grant making and management.

Anisha Chugh, Director of Programme, served as Executive Director, SAWF-IN for the interim period, to ensure all processes are met. Presently WFA continues to provide SAWF-IN the required incubation support, as part of their strengthening feminist philanthropies strategy.
Grant Making

SAWF-IN is committed to expand resources and nurture indigenous philanthropy to support and enable work for the realisation of women’s and trans* rights. Through the leadership of women and women’s groups, SAWF-IN provides

- Direct funds through small and flexible grants
- Networking opportunities to groups of feminist activists globally and contributing to strengthening women’s rights movements
- Capacity building support to the grantees
- Resource mobilisation from both traditional and non-traditional donors like young philanthropist and entrepreneurs, and corporate donors

Presently Women’s Fund Asia is supporting SAWF-IN for grants management.
Our Programmes

Presently South Asia Women Foundation India (SAWF-IN) is working under the women’s safety, rights and violence thematic area, and partners with Women’s Fund Asia (WFA) Legal Fellowship Programme.

Decades of activism, research and lived experiences highlighted the severe challenges faced by women survivors of violence in accessing justice mechanisms at all levels, especially in the primary courts.

There are two components within this thematic that SAWF-IN supports in India. The first strategy is the investment in the Legal Fellows Programme, under which SAWF-IN supports woman lawyers at the district level with financial and technical resources, in partnership and guidance of WFA.

The second focuses on supporting women’s groups providing legal aid support and legal awareness training to women in their communities. The legal fellows programme enables women lawyers to take on pro bono cases for women survivors on the ground who often do not have the financial resources to hire lawyers.
Legal Fellowship Programme

The Legal Fellowship Programme (LFP), under the women’s safety, rights and violence theme, invests in building a cohort of feminist women lawyers in the primary courts of India, by supporting women litigants to access justice and improve transparency and accountability within legal systems with policy advice.

The Programme establishes a platform for national action and legal activism, and aims to advance women’s rights, while building a regional cohort of feminist lawyers. Overall, the programme aims to recognise the severe challenges faced by women survivors of violence in accessing justice mechanisms at all levels, especially in the primary courts, and builds a cohort of feminist women lawyers as first responders at the primary courts.

SAWF-IN has supported women lawyers working in a range of extremely challenging contexts. From Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh to Agartala, Tripura to Phulwari in Bihar, the fellows provide legal services to some of India’s most marginalised communities.

In particular, the Programme has prioritises access to justice supporting women from Dalit and adivasi communities.
As an affiliate member of Women’s Fund Asia, legal fellows from SAWF-IN got opportunity to participate in many networking and capacity building events, with other legal fellows from other countries.

A regional meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 30th November 2017 to 2nd December 2017, was organised, where fellows from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan participated. A session on ‘Normative Standards of Human Rights’ was conducted, which introduced the legal fellows to the concept of human rights norms in international law and how these can be used for devising case strategies at the primary court level. The legal fellows meeting provided a space for all the legal fellows to meet and discuss the condition of women’s rights litigation in their own countries, and to share cross-learning and good practices.

It also gave SAWF-IN a unique opportunity to discuss the normative framework of human rights and illustrate how to strategise women’s human rights cases in lower courts.
LFP Outreach

2017-18

6 legal fellows

91 women litigants supported

88 pro bono cases
Cases supported by Legal Fellows: 2017-18

- Child custody: 26%
- Sexual violence: 24%
- Dowry: 9%
- Maintenance: 18%
- Divorce: 18%
- Caste based discrimination: 18%
- Domestic violence: 2%
Glimpses of 2017-18
Our Grantees

Binita Hazarika

Binita is from Assam, India where she has been practising as a lawyer in both the district and High courts since 2010. She is committed to working on women’s human rights and labour rights, including entitlement to maternity leave and equal wage structure; on cases of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. Her expertise lies in supporting pro bono cases on the intersection of gender and citizenship rights in the region.

Through her advocacy and allied litigation work, Binita has been able to support nineteen women of which five women from Assam, realised their citizenship rights, and became recipients of governmental welfare schemes.

“Through my work, I support women from my region to understand the law on citizenship rights and use it effectively to receive access to governmental welfare schemes.”
Our Grantees

Savita Ali

Savita worked as a human rights activist for several years, before she began litigating at Patna Sessions Court. She is also one of five women lawyers who work on women’s rights.

Apart from domestic violence cases, Savita also litigates on the lack of implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and against issues of Dalit violence (sexual harassment, domestic violence, accusations of witchcraft and property rights). Very recently, she has also researched on prison reforms and gender and filed a Public Interest Litigation on the same.

“The number of women lawyers in Patna is staggeringly low, especially working on issues of discrimination. Through the fellowship, I’ve understood how laws can be used to reduce discrimination. This perspective has made me a better lawyer.”
Our Grantees

Sasimansi Singh

Sasimansi’s dream is to be able to become the voice for Dalit and adivasi women in Odisha. While growing up in Kandhamal district, she was witness to the riots, violence and violations that plagued the women in the region.

Sasimansi's work focuses on examining the cusp of sexual violence and caste discrimination, and many of her cases are rooted in these issues. Parallel to her litigation career, Sasimansi also works as a coordinator for All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM), where a lot of her work involves undertaking fact-finding and advocacy for the rights of adivasi and Dalit women.

“Dalit and adivasi women are not taken seriously in the system. The police don’t file FIRs, lawyers ask them to withdraw complaints. In this scenario, my work is to facilitate access to legal services for women.”
Our Grantees

Romita Reang

Romita, is a women’s rights lawyer, from a remote village in Gomati district in Tripura, and belongs to one of the nineteen tribes of Tripura that is considered Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG/PTG) in India. In her region, the community-based justice system comprises of mostly men, who do not acknowledge violations of women's rights. In cases of sexual assault, the system forces marriages between the perpetrator and the violence survivor.

During the fellowship, Romita has transitioned from a mere observer at community-based tribunals, to an actual stakeholder, who encourages the use of formal law to bridge the gaps in the community-based system. Romita also works with the community leaders as a trainer of human rights issues. Because of her work, there is more participation of women at the community-level, and she has ensured that women’s rights is at the centre of the legal process.
Our Grantees

Priti Murmu

Priti is one of the five tribal women lawyers at the District Bar Association in Jamshedpur, where there are at least 1600 registered members. She began litigating in 2004 at Jamshedpur Civil Court. As a woman lawyer from the Santhal tribal community, she began taking up criminal and civil cases for adivasi women. In her experience, the legal profession is extremely male-dominated and women lawyers are intimidated to practise law.

Priti specialises in domestic violence litigation. In fact, she was one of the first in her district to have filed a case under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Priti’s approach to litigation is pragmatic - she maintains a balance between client-oriented litigation and an adoption of the human rights approach, while emphasising on implementation of law in court.

“The lack of awareness around rights and access to the justice system is one of the biggest obstacle of our legal system. Through my work I hope to bridge the gap between rights and justice.”
Our Grantees

Urmila

Urmila is the one of three Dalit woman lawyers in Chitrakoot-Karvi and has been practising for the past ten years now. Within Chitrakoot, Bundelkhand district in Uttar Pradesh, there are 695 registered practising advocates, and out of this, only seven are women who practise. Urmila’s personal experience of violation has led to her becoming a lawyer, and building her practice to respond to and address cases of violence in the private sphere, particularly domestic violence. She currently works on a plethora of issues that has gender and caste discrimination at the centre. She is also taking up cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012.

Besides litigation, she also mobilises and trains women on matters pertaining to their rights and entitlements. In the past few years, she has worked directly with 1500 women across 30 villages. Urmila has previously been associated with Mahila Samakhya and Vanangana.

“Working with women to combat violence and discrimination makes me proud to be a lawyer. This fellowship has given me the confidence to grow as a person and a lawyer, and create an environment to facilitate the growth of others.”
Networking and Building Alliances

SAWF-IN legal fellows participated in the South Asia Women’s Fund (now known as Women’s Fund Asia) Regional Feminist Convergence in Kathmandu, Nepal, on July 2017. The convergence was attended by over 100 partners and allies working to further women’s and trans* rights in South Asia.

The convergence aimed at understanding the current wave of ‘right wing’ politics, ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’; its impact on feminist and trans* rights; and the strengths and challenges in asserting and claiming identities.

The methodology of the convergence was a mix of plenary sessions, parallel sessions, workshops and talks, film screening as well as performances. SAWF-IN legal fellows, with many other south Asian women lawyers, participated in many sessions and round tables to reflect their challenges and re-strategise.
SAWF-IN was formally launched by its Board of Directors on August 2017, amongst potential donors and women’s rights supporters.

The event was sponsored by The Park Hotels (Delhi). At the event Board of Directors - Suneeeta Dhar, Priya Paul, Tulika Srivastava, with Women’s Fund Asia Director of Programmes, Anisha Chugh, (who was serving temporarily as the interim Executive Director of SAWF-IN) discussed the larger politics of influencing philanthropy for women’s and trans* rights work and thereby encouraged support to the legal fellowship programme. SAWF-IN was also introduced at the Prospera Biennial Meet in Srilanka, co-organised by Women’s Fund Asia, with other global sister funds.
**Finances**

SAWF-IN received its first donation in 2017-18 towards grant making and strengthening of the legal fellowship programme.

We thank Priya Paul, Suneeta Dhar and Rahul Jacob for their contributions and support.

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<table>
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<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Note No.</th>
<th>For the year ended 31st March 2018</th>
<th>For the year ended 31st March 2017</th>
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**NOTES FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 1 to 16**

This is the Statement of Income and Expenditure referred to in our report of even date.

For KI/MAR MITTAL & CO.,
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 010500N
(Aniruddh Gupta)
Partner
M. No. 090553

By order of the Board
for and on behalf of
SOUTH ASIA WOMEN FOUNDATION INDIA

(M. No. 090553)

Place: New Delhi
Date: 10 SEP 2018