

Summary Note: Evaluation of the Leading from the South I Programme

The Leading from the South (LFS) I was a four-year (2017–2020) €42 million programme that was implemented by four Leading Funds (LFs): the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women’s Forum/Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI), and Women’s Fund Asia (WFA). The programme had four **key objectives**, which were to:

- Provide innovative and flexible grants to women’s organisations in the Global South;
- Support capacity building through technical and financial resourcing to strengthen capacities of change agents;
- Promote advocacy by supporting women’s movements and networks in the Global South; and
- Help build partnerships across strategic regional and global alliances, South-South learning and joint progress on common goals.

The programme targeted 208 grantees in 76 countries in Africa (34), Middle East (3), Asia (16), and Latin America (23). The **findings from the independent evaluation** conducted included:

- The programme was highly relevant and was designed to respond to the needs of beneficiaries.
- Grantees had the flexibility to determine the thematic areas they want to work on, which generally fell into their domain of expertise, as well as challenge(s) that they wanted to address.
- The way in which coordination and dialogue was promoted between the MFA and LFs, helped to open the door for a more horizontal and trustworthy relation between the LFS and the grantees.
- Increased coordination among partners has helped to increase awareness on intersectionalities across the feminist and indigenous agendas, and especially the need to pay specific attention to the needs and priorities of women with disabilities, African-descendent communities, and Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons.
- The programme was adapted to the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) context.
- The programme contributed to enhancing women’s capabilities for influencing a wide range of policy changes at different levels, thereby providing them with the agency, voice, identity and recognition denied them over the years.
- The institutional development support has provided most of the grantees with the capacity to further build on the gains of the LFS I.

Some of the **key recommendations** provided that can be of relevance to LFS II include:

- Maintain and if possible, increase the level of training, capacity and exchange opportunities provided, particularly one-to-one support for grassroot organisations.
- Include a budget item for emergency support and additional resources (monetary, training, support) to ensure physical and mental health and well-being of individual activists and leaders.
- Linking and learning processes could be specifically focused on generating inter-regional conversations on existing and emerging limitations and challenges.
- Start bringing Dutch Diplomatic Missions as partners of the programme will be useful for sustainability of the process but avoid creating additional workload into the LFs or diminishing their decision-making power.