



VITAL VOICES
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

THE POWER OF THE POSSIBLE





CEO & President of Vital Voices

LETTER FROM ALYSE NELSON

When we think back on 2023, what first comes to mind is so often the world's fractures and fragility: the resurgence of violence in Israel and Gaza, ongoing conflict in Sudan and Ukraine, climate change, and pushback against women's rights and autonomy—whether in Afghanistan, in Iran, or here in the United States. But it is too easy to dwell on history's inevitable share of catastrophe and forget that each year also brings indelible change for the better. In 2023, we also witnessed the women and girls of Iran sustaining the largest women-led movement the world has ever seen. Young women continued holding powerful institutions accountable for the climate crisis. Women political leaders cut across divisions and took decisive action to uphold the principles of democracy in the face of autocratic forces.

What makes women leaders different is their unfailing defiance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. They refuse to believe that change is impossible, that there exist any barriers that cannot be broken, any challenges beyond hope. They know that progress is slow and change is hard—but that it is possible. And that the word “possible” has transformational power. It is faith in the possibility of something better that spurs women changemakers to reimagine economic conditions, break cycles of gender-based violence, defend human rights, or

dream of a more equitable world—and then build it. At Vital Voices, we believe that there is no challenge that cannot be solved, because we know that women are the solution. In 2023, we kicked our environmental justice efforts into high gear by sending a delegation of women climate change leaders to COP28, because we know that including women's voices in international climate action is the key to forward progress. In our new building's first full calendar year of operation we connected leaders at the Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership, because we've seen that when women changemakers come together, they devise creative strategies and unforeseen innovations. And we deepened our efforts to provide women leaders with visibility, training, grants, and networks, because we know that women have the solutions to the world's greatest challenges; all they need is the support and amplification to turn their ideas into action.

Around the world, women leaders are told “no” again and again, but nevertheless persist in driving change. Amid despair, when the world is darkest, the fire of their hope burns to light the way toward a brighter future. At Vital Voices we honor that ineradicable hope which drives them to triumph over adversity, bring a better future into being, and always keep faith in the power of the possible.

Onward,



Alyse Nelson
President & CEO
Vital Voices Global Partnership



ABOUT VITAL VOICES

For more than 25 years, Vital Voices Global Partnership has been investing in women leaders solving the world's greatest challenges. We are “venture catalysts,” identifying those with a bold vision for change and partnering with them to make that vision a reality. We scale and accelerate their impact through long-term investments to expand the skills, connections, capacity, and visibility of women leaders.

Vital Voices provided early support for leaders who went on to become Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, U.S. Youth Poet Laureates, prime ministers, and breakthrough social entrepreneurs. Since its founding in 1997, Vital Voices has directly supported more than 20,000 women changemakers across 185 countries and built a powerful global network of women leaders who are daring to reimagine a more equitable world for all.



2023 BY THE NUMBERS

542 

→ Provided direct training to 542 women leaders in 85 countries tackling the world's greatest challenges

172 

→ Supported 172 threatened women leaders in 26 countries with rapid-response financial resources

\$2.5 ^{MILLION} 

→ Disbursed more than \$2.5 million in urgent assistance funds to 811 survivors of gender-based violence

72 

→ Permanently resettled 72 Afghan women leaders and their families, after supporting them for two years following a collaborative evacuation effort in 2021

15 

→ Piloted our Women and Climate Program with a delegation of 15 women at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference with the goal of catalyzing a global movement to highlight women's voices in international climate action

100 

→ Activated the Vital Voices building—the Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership—by hosting nearly 100 events, ensuring that our home serves as a hub for women leaders to convene and connect



LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Vital Voices leadership programs provide women with critical skills training and access to our network of over 20,000 global changemakers. In 2023, 410 women leaders participated in our leadership programs—all of them driven by passion and by belief in the power of possible to find solutions to the greatest challenges we face.

The remarkable women changemakers we support through leadership training are determined, courageous visionaries. They are social impact entrepreneurs, peace builders, activists working on a diverse array of issues, and current and aspiring political leaders who hail from every corner of the globe. Their solutions are rooted in art, journalism, technology, business, and more. They are innovators, dreamers, and disrupters, and they seek to build a future anchored in equality, opportunity, and justice for us all.

Through Vital Voices programs, women grow their leadership skills, meet like-minded peers and mentors, and expand their personal and professional networks as they participate in proven curricula. Our programs also initiate participants into our Vital Voices Global Network of women leaders and are a key entry point for further opportunities for visibility, thought leadership, and collective action.

Fellowship programs are adapted to the needs and interests of each specific cohort, but they are all founded upon the Vital Voices Leadership Journey model, a set of practices that describe how women lead differently.

The model has five pillars:

- **A Driving Force or Sense of Mission**
- **Strong Roots in the Community**
- **An Ability to Connect Across Lines that Divide**
- **Bold Ideas and Bold Action**
- **A Resolve to Pay it Forward**



Through networking and shared experiences, I learned that when individuals and organizations come together with a shared vision and purpose, they can achieve remarkable results in empowering indigenous communities, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable development.

Voices That Inspire Fellow,
Guatemala



POLITICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

VVEngage

Supports outstanding women political leaders making and influencing policy across the globe.

Vital Voices launched its fifth cohort of VVEngage fellows in 2023 in partnership with the Freeport McMoRan Foundation. Twenty-six political leaders from 23 countries were selected for this competitive program. The fellows attended training sessions led by expert trainers from around the world and developed their skills in topics such as negotiations, digital communications, online safety, political fundraising, and building coalitions. The fellows also spent a week connecting in-person in Nairobi, Kenya where they built lasting connections, honed their public narratives, and were mentored by former female heads of state, in partnership with the Council of Women World Leaders. Learn more about the extraordinary VVEngage Fellows [here](#).

VVPeace

Supports women leaders working to address gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

The Intergenerational Fellowship on Women, Peace, and Security in South Central Europe, or VVPeace, made possible by Voices Against Violence: The Gender-Based Violence Global Initiative (VAV), is a year-long program that supports emerging and established women leaders working to address gender-based violence (GBV) in four Balkan states. As part of the VVPeace program, fellows are invited to apply for 6-10 month subawards focused on cross-regional strategies for addressing women, peace, and security and GBV. Read more about our VVPeace fellows [here](#).

94%

→ of VV Engage program participants reported that they increased their skills in setting and achieving personal goals and developing their personal narratives.

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The impression of similar — if not the same — problems within the region stimulated my energy and will for further support and action.

VV Peace Fellow

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Global Ambassadors Program (GAP)

Provides mentorship opportunities for emerging women leaders.

Now in its 22nd cohort, the Global Ambassadors Program, a partnership between Vital Voices and Bank of America, took place online for the first time this year. The mentees included 52 women from 29 countries who are in the handcraft and handmade industries. These emerging women leaders received targeted training, access to a network of support, and technical assistance from a team of expert global trainers, and built relationships with their peers and mentors. Learn more about the Global Ambassador Program cohort [here](#).

Fortune – U.S. State Department Mentoring Program

Enhances the business and leadership skills of international women professionals. The Fortune–U.S. Department of State Global Women’s Mentoring Partnership is a public-private partnership between Fortune’s Most Powerful Women, the U.S. Department of State, and Vital Voices Global Partnership. In 2023, Vital Voices welcomed 14 mentees from 11 countries to the program. Over three weeks, mentees engaged in leadership and communications trainings, community-building activities, and a mentorship program with top women executives and their teams. The 2023 mentors came from some of America’s most well-known companies, including CVS Health, Morgan Stanley, AIG, and Morgan Lewis & Bockius. Learn more about the Fortune–U.S. Department of State mentees [here](#).

VV GROW

Fosters growth and skills advancement to support the creation of a holistic and sustainable foundation for women-owned businesses. The ninth cohort of the VV GROW Fellowship graduated 91 women from 40 countries who are leading purpose-driven businesses. During the 10 months of VV GROW—a partnership between Vital Voices, Visa, Inc., and FedEx—fellows received customized training on strategic planning, financial management, human resources, sales and marketing, communications, networking, and leadership. VV GROW participants leave the program with a strategic plan for growth and a new network of peers. Learn more about the VV GROW fellows [here](#).

80%

→ of GAP participants reported the same or increased levels of confidence as a woman leader.

90%

→ of Fortune post-program respondents implemented changes in their business/organization as a result of their participation in the program, as reported in their 6-month post-program survey.

86%

→ VV GROW survey respondents have implemented changes to their businesses as a result of their participation in the fellowship.

RISING VOICES

Voices That Inspire

Supports young women who are making a positive impact in Latin America.

The Vital Voices team launched the fourth cohort of the Voices that Inspire (Voces Que Inspiran) program in partnership with Procter & Gamble. This year, the program expanded into three new countries, welcoming participants from Chile, Colombia, and Peru in addition to Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama. Through the Voices that Inspire Program, young women leaders increase their opportunities, leadership capacity, network, and resources to create sustainable change and transform the meaning of leadership in Latin America and beyond. Learn more about this year's cohort [here](#).

Grassroots Voices

Supports young women leaders in the U.S. who are implementing community-focused projects.

In October, the 10 Grassroots Voices participants completed their seven-week program. Grassroots Voices is made possible through a partnership between Vital Voices, Sarva Rajendra, and Sarah Johnson. The program is designed to develop the leadership capacity of American women aged 18–25 who are already engaged in grassroots justice work on some of the biggest obstacles that American society faces. Learn more about the 2023 Grassroots Voices fellows [here](#).

88%

→ of Voices That Inspire respondents accomplished or exceeded all the objectives they set at the start of the grant.

100%

→ of Grassroots Voices participants agreed that they gained or improved knowledge and skills that are applicable to their work.

LEADERSHIP EVOLUTION

VV Visionaries

Invests in trailblazing women by increasing their access to leadership training and the networks that sustain them.

The VV Visionaries program in partnership with the Estée Lauder Emerging Leaders Fund (ELELF), the charitable fund of Estée Lauder, was created to support the next generation of emerging leaders who are redefining leadership in their everyday lives. In 2023, the VV Visionaries program ran three cohorts with a total of 150 participants from 40 countries. Participants completed a seven-week curriculum based on the Vital Voices Leadership Journey—a set of proven practices that Vital Voices has distilled over 25 years from the successful leaders in our Global Network. Learn more about this year's fellows [here](#).

Next Movers

Supports emerging women in leadership positions at organizations paving the way for equity and empowerment.

This year, the inaugural cohort of the Next Movers program, in partnership with Bumble, Inc., brought together eight women leaders from eight different countries for training on community building, communications, courage, and diversity. Between June and September, the Next Movers received tailored training customized to their cohort based on a needs-assessment survey that captured key areas of needed support. Learn more about the Next Movers [here](#).

94%

→ After completing the program, 94 percent of participants in cohorts 3-5 feel very confident in their ability to engage with uncommon allies to work toward an uncommon mission.

71%

→ of Next Movers participants used the knowledge gained from the program in their work and/or their communities within the first month post-program.

WOMEN AND CLIMATE PROGRAM



Although climate change affects everyone, it does not affect everyone equally. The impacts fall hardest on those who are already disadvantaged, marginalized, or poor – and 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide are women. Women and girls have disproportionate responsibilities in food production and water collection, both of which are becoming ever more difficult as the climate changes. And the economic and other pressures caused by climate change both perpetuate and increase existing gender inequalities in access to education and employment, control over land and natural resources, and participation in decision making.

To respond to these imperatives, Vital Voices piloted a new Women and Climate program in 2023, building on our many years of investment in and partnership with women leaders in the environmental justice field. Our Women and Climate program seeks to elevate the voices of—and solutions conceived by—women and girls, and to advance gender equity in climate solutions.

Our pilot formally launched in December 2023, when Vital Voices—supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and in collaboration with Daughters for Earth—brought a delegation of 15 women climate leaders from our network to COP28. The opportunity gave these remarkable women a forum to collaborate with experts and gain visibility on the international stage. Among the week’s activities, we gathered women climate ministers from around the world

to work with Patricia Espinosa, former Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, on a declaration calling for the inclusion of women’s voices in international climate action. We also partnered with FP Analytics and Daughters for Earth on an issue brief entitled [Accelerating Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change Through Women’s Leadership](#), participated in a Women Climate Solutionaries panel, and engaged in the Foreign Policy Forum.

To build on the momentum created at COP28, we partnered with Espinosa again and several Vital Voices Network Leaders to develop a Climate Advocacy Toolkit that will be piloted in 2024. The Toolkit is based on the diverse experiences of network leaders who work on climate justice—including a network of Indigenous women of the Amazon region—and is designed both for activists and leaders who want to start addressing climate change and for those who wish to advance current efforts. Because climate change has enormous impacts on women in every sector and in every aspect of their lives, we’ve seen that network leaders are often approaching it intersectionally, bringing together programs that were once viewed as distinct—such as addressing climate change’s effect on gender-based violence prevention. The Climate Advocacy Toolkit will be offered to all Vital Voices Global Network members and shared with coalition partners such as SheChangesClimate, MenEngage Global, and others.

VITAL VOICES COP28 DELEGATION:

Habiba Ali (Nigeria)

Janice Allen (Jamaica)

Denise Ayebare (Uganda)

Gina Barbieri (South Africa)

Andrea “Andy” Blair (New Zealand)

Susan Blanchet (Canada)

Chante Harris (United States)

Michelle Hong (China)

Vanessa Nakate (Uganda)

Nidhi Pant (India)

Karin Sempf (Panama)

Ayisha Siddiq (Pakistan)

Lucy Waruingi (Kenya)

Vinatoli Yeptho (India)

Patricia Zanella (Brazil)

CRISIS RESPONSE PROGRAM

The Crisis Response program was created to respond to two realities. First, women who speak truth to power are targeted with violence, threats, and intimidation at alarming rates. Second, when emergencies strike—from armed conflict to natural disasters—women are on the front lines of response, organizing their communities and countries to save lives. Vital Voices sees its role as that of an active ally, walking hand in hand with women leaders in times of crisis. Taking a proactive approach, we also help women leaders to protect themselves *before* emergency strikes, working with them to prepare for threats and reduce the severity or occurrence of crises in the first place.

The Vital Voices Crisis Response Program, which launched in 2022, approaches crisis management through three pillars: **Readiness, Response, and Recovery**. In 2023, we dramatically increased our direct individual assistance caseload and jumpstarted our readiness initiatives, bringing direct assistance to hundreds of women and preparing to exponentially scale our model. We also responded, both urgently and systematically, to crises affecting women around the world:

→ In **Sudan**, we collaborated with women leaders and women-led civil society organizations on the ground to evacuate and assist 34 threatened women leaders.

→ In **Morocco**, we responded within hours to September's earthquake, providing essential resources to aid four women-led cooperatives and other leaders as they immediately began rebuilding their communities.

→ In **Guatemala**, we supported the movement of indigenous women leaders who prevailed in their fight to prevent democratic backsliding.



“

It has been a long time since this emotional and mental fight was in myself. But after the support, I could not only change myself but the community.

Woman Leader, Madagascar



—> In **Israel** and **Gaza**, we engaged in every aspect of crisis response: emergency aid, defense of women leaders, and support for forward-looking advocacy. We supported five women leaders in the region to enable their peacebuilding efforts, helped Gazan doctors procure supplies, and protected 40 Palestinian women journalists and doctors.

—> In **Uganda**, we supported 38 individuals in the LGBTQI+ community to safely relocate to Kenya after the government passed anti-LGBTQI+ legislation.

—> We designed, developed, tested, and piloted the Readiness Training and Toolkit with 10 women leaders from the **Middle East and North Africa**, ensuring they're better prepared to respond to war, climate crisis, and government targeting. The training launched a multi-year effort to distribute our model of effective crisis response and take it to scale.

—> We created an evaluation procedure that built our evidence base. After receiving assistance from the Vital Voices, **94 percent of individual women leaders reported feeling emotionally safer and 88 percent reported feeling physically safer.**

—> We **expanded our Crisis Response referral network** to over two dozen women leaders and organizations from the around the world. This has furthered our ability to identify and support women leaders in areas that are difficult to reach due to barriers such as language, geography, and visibility.

—> We disbursed **\$237,941 to 172 individual women leaders** in 26 different countries and **\$96,777 in grants to women-led NGOs** in Lebanon, Sudan, Uganda, and Ukraine.



“

I was in a high-risk situation and the support was immediate. I was seeking support at other organizations, but Vital Voices responded immediately and that was important. I feel like Vital Voices was part of my daily work and life when everything went wrong.

Woman Leader, Nepal



Gabriella | Guatemala

Gabriella is an activist, an indigenous leader of the Poqomam Maya Nation, and a Vital Voices Global Network leader in Guatemala. She is part of the progressive coalition of youth, women, and indigenous peoples that fought for democracy propelling Guatemala's first democratically elected president in six decades to victory. When the country's ruling political elite attempted to undermine the election results, she and other women indigenous leaders led nationwide protests for over 90 days and courageously forewarned of the country's democratic backsliding on the global stage.

In October, following several physical and online threats to Gabriella from supporters of the incumbent government, the Crisis Response Team worked with her to determine a plan of action that would allow her to safely continue her advocacy work. The team sent her funds to address her health, shelter, transport, and communication concerns.

As a result of the team's tailored individual assistance and advocacy support, Gabriella was able to mitigate her security concerns, continue amplifying the voices of indigenous peoples, and carry on her advocacy for their democratic and collective rights.

At the start of 2024, Gabriella and the Crisis Response Team conducted a [Q&A on Guatemalan indigenous women leaders and their importance in the fight for democracy](#) (translated in English and Spanish). As Gabriella put it in the Q&A:

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As female leaders, we have a double or triple burden, because we have to face what state violence represents, but we also often have to face the internal violence from communities. But they refuse to give up: We carry the message as indigenous women and as indigenous peoples that we are human and we have rights.



Yasmina | Morocco

Last September, when a 6.8-magnitude earthquake caused mass devastation in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains, the women's cooperative that Yasmina led was destroyed.

Virtually all the cooperative's members lost their homes, and many lost multiple family members. In that moment, Yasmina stepped up—like she has done so many times before—to meet the needs of her community. She organized medical caravans and distributed essential supplies, tents, and food. In everything she did, she kept women and girls at the heart of her approach and the forefront of her work. When women in the community found themselves physically unable to breastfeed due to the trauma of the earthquake, Yasmina ensured the delivery of baby formula along with essential hygienic products for women.

Five months after the earthquake, the Vital Voices Crisis Response team traveled to the High Atlas region of Morocco to meet with Yasmina and other women leaders. The visit drove home two important points.

First, investing in local women leaders who are grounded in their communities has enormous opportunity for impact. With years of trust already built, Yasmina had the ability to respond quickly to benefit her entire community.

Second, women leaders are positioned to lead in times of crisis. When Yasmina was asked if she thought a man could have led her community post-earthquake, she laughed. "They would fight," she said. The difference, Yasmina insisted, is in how women communicate. From the start of the response, she spoke to women about their needs, discussing hard truths about when aid would arrive, and advocated to aid groups on behalf of her community.

For Yasmina, as for so many others impacted by the earthquake, the journey ahead will be a long one. But Yasmina's story is one of hope and resilience. It illustrates the power of leadership and fortitude of women in times of crisis, which leaves a lasting effect on the lives they touch in the aftermath of crisis.





AFGHANISTAN UPDATE

Vital Voices has a long history of allyship with the women of Afghanistan in their struggles for both security and equality. In 2021, our work expanded exponentially in the wake of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, which seriously jeopardized the lives of women activists and politicians. Vital Voices created the Emergency Fund for Afghan Women with two goals. The first was to immediately evacuate women leaders and their families from Afghanistan before the Taliban could harm them—including finding a country willing to take them in on a temporary basis while they awaited asylum elsewhere (most evacuees were hosted in Albania). Second, as soon as their evacuations were effectuated, the program provided holistic support for their myriad of needs—clothes, food, shelter, medicine, schooling, childcare, trauma counselling, and permanent resettlement assistance—so that they could begin the long process of rebuilding their lives.

This is the most complex project that Vital Voices has undertaken in its 25-year history. We took on this challenge with the knowledge that we had to rise to the occasion with the support of our generous donors and our coalition partners, a group of Afghan and American women, and organizations who refused to accept the status quo. Believing in the power of the possible, the coalition worked around the clock to save the lives of the evacuated women and their families.

We are particularly proud that, of the more than 1,000 people who were evacuated from Afghanistan, all but 16 have now been permanently resettled. We are committed to helping the remaining 16 people find their permanent homes, maintaining the holistic, long-term, relational approaches that are the hallmark of the Vital Voices philosophy of allyship and support.

We've also provided continuous assistance to the women who remained in their homeland. In 2023, UAF supported 173 Afghan survivors of gender-based violence, providing them with lifesaving support including medical costs, relocation assistance, shelter, food, legal services, and psychosocial support. We are also involved in initiatives offering university scholarships for young Afghan women, and we are supporting shelters for survivors of gender-based violence.

We're further supporting Afghan women who have survived gender-based violence through the Vital Voices Urgent Assistance Fund. By partnering with 11 Afghan women-led NGOs, the UAF disbursed over \$1 million in 2023. These funds empowered Afghan women to directly address the critical needs of their communities in the immediate aftermath of violence.

Afghanistan Emergency Fund

BY THE NUMBERS:

- More than 1,000 people were evacuated in 2021 to a temporary location in Albania.
- As of December 2023, we have helped to resettle 854 Afghans in Canada, 81 in the U.S., 34 in Germany, 11 in the U.K., 8 in Sweden, 6 in France, and 1 in Turkey.
- All but 16 people were permanently resettled by the end of 2023, with many of the remainder set to be resettled in early 2024.

WORKING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Voices Against Violence: The Gender-Based Violence Global Initiative

Voices Against Violence (VAV) is a public–private partnership led by Vital Voices and funded with support from the U.S. State Department and the Avon Foundation for Women. VAV is designed to ensure that victims and survivors of gender-based violence and harmful practices have better access to the services, protection, and justice they deserve. Together, a consortium of partners including Vital Voices, Promundo, CARE, and Global Fund for Women work to provide:

- Increased access to global resources to address urgent needs in the aftermath of violence or the threat of violence
- Improved protections and access to justice
- An international network to serve as a focal point and coordinate efforts around GBV

Urgent Assistance Funding is a key element of our Violence Against Women program. The focus of our Urgent Assistance Fund (UAF) is on survivors of extreme forms of gender-based violence—cases that require extensive expertise and sensitivity to the needs of survivors.

A young girl found by the side of the road in Guinea, sexually assaulted and severely injured. A Yazidi who had been held as a sex slave, beaten, and raped repeatedly, and who became pregnant while in captivity. Women in Honduras who were assaulted by gang members. A Ukrainian woman raped and tortured with electric shocks by Russian soldiers.

Our expert staff helps women and girls navigate their recovery from these extreme, unimaginable forms of violence. UAF supported 811 such survivors in 2023. Vital Voices and its local partners strive to give these women and girls holistic support so that they can begin to heal. The funds enable survivors to receive medical and psychosocial support, recover in safety, pursue legal remedies, and more.

Until we achieve a world without GBV, Vital Voices helps women reclaim their voice—and the power to raise it in pursuit of justice. Through Voices Against Violence, we hope to show survivors that they are not alone—that every Vital Voices staff member, board member, Network Leader, and donor is beside them, offering succor and support at the worst moments of their lives.





→ Cuba

Our work alongside Vital Voices Network Leaders in Cuba is one example of how we partner with locally rooted activists to create change. In 2023, Vital Voices worked in partnership with local women leaders in Cuba to document 81 femicides on the island. Alongside Vital Voices Network Leaders, we supported public policy engagement to raise awareness of gender-based violence by calling for a comprehensive law against GBV. Vital Voices Network Leaders held in-person meetings with 23 diplomatic missions in Geneva to contribute their data to Cuba's Universal Periodic Review, a peer-review mechanism of the U.N. Human Rights Council. Vital Voices also supported the training of 14 GBV service providers and 12 activists on digital security and risk analysis for operating in repressive regimes.



→ Ukraine

Sexual violence surges during armed conflict, with rape and abuse used as a weapon of war. In recognition of its expertise in this critical issue, Vital Voices received a \$1.8 million award from the U.S. State Department's office of Global Women's Issues, focused on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Transitional Justice within Ukraine. In 2023, Vital Voices launched the first three subawards to local Ukrainian organizations working with survivors: Center Women's Perspective, which works with internally displaced persons in West Ukraine; Insight, which works with LGBTQ+ survivors; and NGO Resource Center, which trains governmental institutions on survivor-centered approaches and documentation.



→ Uganda

Vital Voices continues to receive a surge of cases from vulnerable individuals, particularly members of the LGBTQ+ community, seeking assistance to fund their most urgent needs within Uganda. Through collaboration with a trusted regional partner, we successfully funded 103 survivors in 2023. Relocation is currently the most pressing need, with survivors seeking refuge in neighboring countries until the situation stabilizes. We are actively monitoring the situation in close collaboration with our partner to continue providing critical support.



▶ SPOTLIGHT

UKRAINIAN WOMEN-LED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Vital Voices President and CEO Alyse Nelson traveled to Kyiv, Lviv, and Ternopil to further engage with and show solidarity for our courageous network leaders in Ukraine. Vital Voices staff and network leaders met with key government officials, including the Ukrainian Gender Commissioner, Dr. Kateryna Levchenko. During the trip, the NGO Resource Center released a new study, supported by Vital Voices, documenting the role that women-led organizations have played by quickly pivoting to provide humanitarian and basic services amid a brutal conflict that, two years on, remains cataclysmic for Ukrainian lives and futures.

This visit came on the heels of a retreat that Vital Voices hosted for seven Ukrainian network leaders. The gathering met a great need: despite their urgent, committed, and ceaseless efforts, local leaders too often do not benefit from the strategic, tactical, and wellbeing partnerships they need to sustain their work in conflict and danger zones. At the retreat, the participants worked together to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women-led NGOs in Ukraine, contributing to their strategic planning. Wellness and psychological support activities fostered a sense of community among the leaders, building a support network that will be crucial for their long-term resilience and effectiveness in this ongoing fight.

JUSTICE INSTITUTES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Justice Institutes are interactive training programs that promote a holistic response to addressing violence against women, focusing on victim safety and offender accountability. Each Institute brings together 50 to 60 diverse and often siloed participants from across the criminal justice system, including judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and service providers. These actors build their capacity to identify, investigate, and prosecute GBV crimes in their communities; they receive training on how and why to collaborate across disciplines; and they learn the importance and benefit of relying on women leaders during GBV response. In 2023, the Justice Institute was held in Bucharest, Romania. The central theme was strengthening the coordinated response to gender-based violence in Romania and Ukraine.

In 2023, Vital Voices also launched a new Technical Institute to refine the Justice Institutes' work over the past 10 years. The Technical Institute is designed to increase the capacity of former Justice Institute participants, UAF referrers, and subaward recipients.

→ Increasing Awareness and Action

Gender-based violence is frequently an invisible crime and, too often, people who witness GBV do not know how to respond. To reach a new cadre of people in a position to report GBV, Vital Voices conducted trainings for Airbnb hosts in Latin America and Europe on how to respond when GBV occurs in their rentals and advised them on accessible resources in their home countries. Vital Voices also facilitated conversations on best practices for preventing GBV in Airbnb settings.

→ Connecting Women from Across the Americas

Vital Voices hosted a successful event for the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in June, called "Breaking the Mold: a New Approach to Political Leadership from the Voices of Women in the Americas." The all-day event featured high-level speakers such as Michelle Bachelet, former president of Chile.

The event led to increased engagement between the OAS and Vital Voices, with the signing of a formal MOU codifying our intention to work together to promote women's rights and leadership in the Americas, including on issues of gender equality, indigenous women, climate change, and the prevention of gender-based violence.



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Joining the efforts of the OAS and Vital Voices is a very valuable opportunity. This association will allow us to learn and create by connecting women from across the Americas. It is not only about creating spaces to incorporate more women, but also about achieving labor, social, and health conditions that allow them to influence and exercise effective leadership for the benefit of all citizens.

Luis Almagro,
Secretary General of the OAS



SEEN AND HEARD

Visibility Opportunities for Women Leaders and Their Allies

Today, less than 23 percent of parliamentarians are women, only 4 percent of news stories challenge gender norms, and among U.S. nonprofits with an annual budget of over \$50 million, only 17 percent have a female CEO. By amplifying the work of women leaders through visibility and thought leadership, Vital Voices seeks to change this current landscape. Our vision is to bring into being a world in which women are seen, their voices are heard, their expertise is sought out, their innovation is honored, and their inclusive model of leadership is celebrated and shared.

VITAL VOICES GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

2023 Year in Review

2023 was the first full calendar year spent in our new Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership in Washington, D.C.—a first-of-its-kind global embassy for women. It is a home away from home for our thousands of network leaders and a hub of collective action and empowerment. The Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership was designed by women for women, and we provide free and reduced-rate use of the space for our social justice allies.

Below is a small sample of the nearly 100 events hosted at the Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership in 2023:

- The Women's Forum for the Economy and Society's first U.S.-based event, which focused on Climate, Peace, and Health Advocacy and welcomed over 200 attendees
- The Kode With Klossy Summer Camp for girls aged 13–18
- A fireside chat and reception with Geeta Rao Gupta, the United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, moderated by Vital Voices CEO Alyse Nelson
- "Sudan Can't Wait: Voices from Darfur Six Months into Sudan Crisis," an event hosted by Vital Voices in collaboration with Alliance for Peacebuilding, Human Rights Watch, and Refugees International
- A dinner hosted by New Theory Collective that brought together women in the financial sector to address the gender wealth gap





2023 VITAL VOICES FESTIVAL

The Vital Voices Festival took place on May 5 and 6, with the theme *The Power of Our Voice: 25 Years of Inspiration & Impact*, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Vital Voices. The Festival, held at the Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership, created a space for network leaders to come together, share stories and best practices, and to foster partnerships. The two days of connection, collaboration, and celebration included wellness activities, art exhibitions, and a marketplace where women entrepreneurs from the Vital Voices Global Network could showcase and sell their products. Festival panels included:

- › **The Power of the VV Network** with Aline Kamakian, Bevin Mahon, Ana Inés Álvarez, and Jag Gill
- › **Using Art to Empower and Inspire** with Gayle Kabaker and Alyse Nelson
- › **Celebrating Indigenous Women Leaders** with Fatima Abbas, Lillian Sparks Robinson, Coti-Lynne Haia, and Kate Boyce
- › **Women in Conflict: From Crisis to Resiliency** with Mahbouba Seraj, Yasmin Kayali, and Marina Pisklakova-Parker
- › **Social Entrepreneurship: The Challenges & Successes** with Takia Ross, Claudia Castellanos, Silvana Gonzalez, and Rasha Qamhayeh
- › **Food, Fear, and Feminine Power** with Nicole Joseph Chin and Eugenia Podesta
- › **Celebrating Young Women Leaders** with Stephanie Villanueva-Villar, Perna Dangi, Tsehaitu "Tubi" Retta, and Tazreen Hussain
- › **The Future of Women at Work** with Jacintha Jayachandran and Marilyn Edmunds Bowser
- › **16 Days of Activism** with Gary Barker, Marina Pisklakova-Parker, Oumie Sissokho, and Manira Alva
- › **Career Pathing: Reimagining and Rewiring** with Val Quinn, Ceylan Rowe, and Zoe Dean-Smith
- › **Owning Your Narrative: How to Get Published & Harness the Power of Storytelling** with Denene Millner and Markette Sheppard

2023 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Each year, Vital Voices celebrates remarkable women whose leadership is shaping our world for the better.

The Global Leadership Awards highlights the work of these extraordinary women and provides them with capacity-building programming.

The 2023 Global Leadership honorees were:

OUR HONOREES:



Inna Braverman

Founder and CEO of ECO Wave Power, Inna Braverman is an innovator and technology entrepreneur who's proving that wave power can be game-changing in the fight against climate change. Her renewable energy company developed a pioneering technology that produces clean electricity from ocean and sea waves.



Ava DuVernay

A writer, producer, and director whose work includes the dramatic feature *Origin*, the historical saga *Selma*, the criminal justice documentary *13th*, Disney's *A Wrinkle in Time*, and the Emmy-nominated *When They See Us*. She amplifies films by people of color and women of all kinds through her non-profit narrative change collective ARRAY, the winner of a Peabody Institutional Award.



Hellen Lunkuse

Founder and Executive Director of the Rape Hurts Foundation. She is a fearless human rights defender who advocates for women, girls, and marginalized communities in Uganda and leads a team of dedicated activists who support survivors of gender-based violence to pursue justice, recover, and rebuild. She has supported more than 850,000 people in the last 10 years.



Sara Minkara

A pioneering advocate for inclusivity and the rights of people with disabilities. Since becoming legally blind at age seven, she has overcome barriers, challenged stigmas, and created opportunities for authentic inclusion. She founded Empowerment Through Integration, a nonprofit that empowers youth with disabilities, and serves as the U.S. Special Advisor on International Disability Rights at the State Department.



Enass Muzamel

A pro-democracy activist and human rights defender in support of women and girls in Sudan. She was the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Madaniya, an organization that promotes civic engagement, and was instrumental in the 2019 pro-democracy movement that led to the ousting of Omar al-Bashir.



→ Presenters and performers at the 2023 Global Leadership Awards included Grammy- and Emmy-winning composer, songwriter, producer, and pianist Emily Bear, philanthropist and fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg, author, actress, and social justice humanitarian Ashley Judd, co-anchor of PBS NewsHour Amna Nawaz, and marketing hall-of-famer Bozoma Saint John.

2023 VOICES OF SOLIDARITY

The Voices of Solidarity Awards highlights the importance of male allies to the fight for women’s rights. Gender equity benefits everyone, and it cannot be achieved by women alone. This work must be undertaken by all who seek to live in a world marked by equality, opportunity, and justice. Each year, the Voices of Solidarity Awards recognizes remarkable men who have shown courage and compassion in advocating on behalf of women and girls globally.

On December 11, Vital Voices held the 10th Annual Voices of Solidarity Awards at the IAC Building in New York City. Hosted by the Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation, the honorees included:

OUR HONOREES:



Representative Jimmy Gomez

(CA-34), a champion for care equality who created the U.S. Congressional Dads’ Caucus and advocates for national policies on paid leave, childcare, and gender equality.



Fallu Sowe

A fearless human rights activist who provides survivors with critical services and leads cross-sector efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in The Gambia.



Tony Hawk

A dedicated philanthropist and advocate for girls in sport who creates safe, public skateparks for young people in low-income communities across America and around the world.



Omaid Sharifi

A pioneering artist and activist who leads ArtLords, a global grassroots movement founded in Afghanistan to promote peace, women’s rights, and social transformation through street art.

2023 GLOBAL MENTORING WALKS

The 16th Annual Global Mentoring Walks were held on March 4 as a prelude to International Women's Day, with an incredible 135 walks taking place in 45 countries. Each year, the mentoring walks offer a chance for women across all sectors and experience levels to create lasting connections and relationships. From India to Guatemala to the U.S., women from around the world joined together for a day of mentorship and empowerment. The Mentoring Walks prove what every woman leader knows to be true: that power expands when shared—and that when women have power, they can change the face of our future.

DVF AWARDS

Vital Voices was thrilled to be a part of the 2023 DVF Awards in Venice, Italy, an annual event that honors extraordinary women and provides grants to further their important work.

This year's 14th Annual DVF Awards, held in Venice, Italy, honored two Vital Voices Network Leaders: Dr. Joy Buolamwini and Helena Gualinga. Dr. Joy Buolamwini, who received a Global Leadership Award in 2020, is a groundbreaking MIT researcher, founder of the Algorithmic Justice League, artist, and the author of *Unmasking AI: My Mission to Protect What Is Human in a World of Machines*. She has exposed bias against women of color in AI and advises world leaders on preventing AI harms. Helena Gualinga is an environmental activist and human rights defender who advocates for the protection of the Amazon rainforest and Indigenous people's rights. She is from the Kichwa community of Sarayaku, a community that has been fighting against big oil for decades.

Dr. Joy Buolamwini and Helen Gualinga were recognized alongside Amal Clooney, Amina J. Mohammed, and Lilly Singh. We congratulate both on this well-deserved honor!



GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON ONLINE VIOLENCE AND DISINFORMATION

Vital Voices convened top women leaders in the technology space with activists and policymakers at the Global Dialogue in Venice, Italy. In conjunction with the DVF Awards, 43 women technologists, activists, policymakers, and experts met for an in-depth symposium on disinformation, online violence, and online threats.

The event featured experts included Nobel Laureate and journalist Maria Ressa; former Chief Technology Officer of the United States and Vital Voices Board Member Megan Smith; and MIT-based AI specialist and digital activist Dr. Joy Buolamwini. This was the first time many of the convening's premier experts had come

together to discuss these critical issues, their effect on democracies, and their chilling consequences for women's political participation.

Participants discussed how to address rising online threats and disinformation from the perspective of technology policy, governance, artificial intelligence, collective action, and defense for women leaders. The result was a series of short- and long-term recommendations on how Vital Voices can amplify, protect, and support women leaders in tech, as well as recommendations on how to pursue policy changes, legal remedies, and global standards to fight disinformation and broaden users' rights.



2023 IN THE PRESS

Media highlights include:



Forbes: [A Powerful Way to Make Authentic Connections](#)



CNBC: [132 Years for Equality](#)



Devex: [Afghanistan op-ed](#)



CNBC: [We're Seeing a Triple Threat](#)



Africa Business Journal: [Sudanese Woman Honored with Hillary Clinton](#)



Girl Talk HQ: [Women Lead India feature story](#)



Voice of America Africa: [Retour sur le Women's Forum ... à Washington](#)



ABC News: [Women-led organizations leading the relief efforts for Ukrainians](#)



Harper's Bazaar Arabia: [How Alyse Nelson Is Pushing Forward on Women's Equality](#)



The Story Exchange: [Ways to Support Afghan Women - Bringing Visibility to Those the Taliban Seeks to Erase](#)



Airbnb News/Notcias Puerto Rico: [Airbnb expands safety product to help solo travelers as solo travel surges / Airbnb solo travel Puerto Rico feature](#)



In Memoriam

ENASS MUZAMEL (1981–2024)

Enass Muzamel was a dear friend and beloved colleague, a fearless and steadfast Sudanese pro-democracy activist and human rights defender. As her country descended into brutal conflict last year, Enass did not waver in her commitment to her nation's future. Her safety threatened, she sought refuge abroad and spent nearly every waking hour serving the cause of peace and a democratic future for Sudan. She worked to bring the world's attention to the cause to which she devoted her too-brief life.

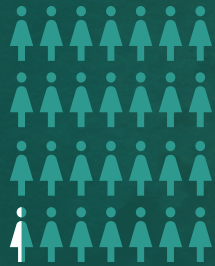
As the co-founder and managing director of Madaniya, an organization that promotes civic engagement, she was instrumental in the 2019 pro-democracy movement that led to the ousting of autocratic President Omar al-Bashir. Even while displaced, she led critical relief efforts and connected survivors of sexual violence to healthcare, medicine, and basic services.

She often reflected on life in Khartoum and her wish to return home, even as she was aware that this dream was receding further into the future as the conflict continued to rage. Those of us at Vital Voices who were lucky enough to know her will cherish those conversations, along with her kindness and her fierce and determined commitment to the cause of democracy and a lasting peace.

We were fortunate to be able to publicly recognize Enass in October of 2023 as a Vital Voices Global Leadership Award Honoree. We had thought that evening would be one stop on a long journey ahead. But the memory of Enass striding across the stage to accept her award stands for all of us at Vital Voices as a testament to her life's work, her indomitable spirit, and the dream of peace that she ensured would live on.

IMPACT FUND

JUST 2%



OF PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT GOES TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS.

→ This massive under-investment has stifled women's voices and opportunities to shape the decisions that affect our lives.

Vital Voices has launched an exciting and ambitious \$100 million campaign to ensure that women's voices are loud and clear in every discussion and debate. The Impact Fund will enable us to invest in our future—creating the resilience, flexibility, and program growth needed to increase the Vital Voices Global Network to 50,000 women by 2030. Our model of investing in women for the long-term, providing leadership training, visibility, grants, collective action opportunities, and a professional and personal network is dedicated to changing the status quo for women and girls worldwide.

Thank you to our early Impact Fund supporters:

American Express
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An Embassy for All Women

FOUNDING MEMBERS

The Founding Members are a small group of compassionate, dynamic philanthropists and foundations who made a campaign commitment of over \$250,000 to the Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women's Leadership. Founding Members are dedicated to catalyzing women's leadership and catapulting the world toward the goal of global gender equality. Vital Voices Global Partnership thanks all our Vital Voices Headquarters for Women's Leadership Founding Members for their commitment and solidarity.

Michelle Renee Alberda

Madeleine Albright (in memoriam)

Ritu and Ajay Banga

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Vital Voices Global Partnership thanks all of our contributors who helped support our programs in 2023.

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FINANCIALS

ASSETS	2023 TOTAL
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 7,908,370
Certificates of deposit	\$ 71,094
Grants and contributions receivable, net	\$ 9,122,432
Government grants receivable	\$ 132,262
Accounts and contracts receivable	\$ 91,352
Prepaid expenses and deposits	\$ 261,447
Inventory	-
Property and equipment, net	\$ 41,656,890
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 59,243,847

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	2023 TOTAL
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 688,894
Accrued payroll liability	\$ 535,198
Grants payable	\$ 120,657
Refundable advances	\$ 67,000
Funds held on behalf of others	\$ 8,205
Bonds payable, net	\$ 25,373,943
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 26,793,897

NET ASSETS	2023 TOTAL
Without donor restrictions	\$ 18,668,884
With donor restrictions	\$ 13,781,066
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$ 32,449,950
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 59,243,847

ACTIVITIES

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	W/O DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	2023 TOTAL
Grants and contributions	\$ 6,240,779	\$ 12,653,738	\$ 18,894,517
Government grants and contracts	\$ 10,092,700	-	\$ 10,092,700
Contract revenue	\$ 472,948	-	\$ 472,948
Special events revenue	\$ 1,016,278	-	\$ 1,016,278
Donated services	\$ 60,345	-	\$ 60,345
Other revenue	\$ 251,457	-	\$ 251,457
Net assets released from restrictions:			
Satisfaction of program restrictions	\$ 5,582,913	(\$ 5,582,913)	-
Satisfaction of time restrictions	\$ 851,811	(\$ 851,811)	-
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$ 24,569,231	\$ 6,219,014	\$ 30,788,245

EXPENSES	W/O DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	2023 TOTAL
Program Services:			
Global Network and Regional Engagement	\$ 11,789,286	-	\$ 11,789,286
Leadership and Social Impact	\$ 2,444,723	-	\$ 2,444,723
Crisis Response	-	-	\$ 1,818,504
Issue Advocacy	\$ 1,601,709	-	\$ 1,601,709
Global Leadership Awards	\$ 1,395,550	-	\$ 1,395,550
Global Engagement and Public Awareness	\$ 1,172,223	-	\$ 1,172,223
Total Program Services	\$ 20,221,995	-	\$ 20,221,995
Supporting Services:			
Management and general	\$ 1,511,561	-	\$ 1,511,561
Development and fundraising	\$ 2,165,293	-	\$ 2,165,293
Total Supporting Services	\$ 3,676,854	-	\$ 3,676,854
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 23,898,849	-	\$ 23,898,849
Change in Net Assets from Operations	\$ 670,382	\$ 6,219,014	\$ 6,889,396
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 17,998,502	\$ 7,562,052	\$ 25,560,554
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 18,668,884	\$ 13,781,066	\$ 32,449,950

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In Memoriam

Dr. Carol Lancaster

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LOOKING AHEAD...

A record-breaking number of elections will take place in 2024, and existential issues from climate change to democracy itself are on the ballot. Women leaders must be at the table—in this pivotal year, and every year—pushing innovative solutions to the world’s biggest challenges, ensuring that women’s lived experiences are reflected in policy and practice, and influencing decisions at the global, national, and community levels. Only with the equal representation, leadership, and contribution of women can we hope to overcome the world’s greatest challenges and build a sustainable future that realizes the power of the possible.

Our plans for 2024 are dedicated to both meeting this moment and preparing for the long term:

- Expand the reach of our proven Vital Voices Leadership Journey course, with the goal of increasing our network to 50,000 women by 2030.
- Scale our Women and Climate Program from the pilot phase to a core Vital Voices program dedicated to ensuring that the voices of women are front and center in climate solutions.
- Increase our Crisis Response Program’s direct assistance to women under threat, expand grants to assist with safety, and scale crisis readiness training for women-led organizations.
- Build our Solidarity Council of male allies who are taking concrete action on gender equality, with enhanced programming and engagement.
- Provide a lifeline to women who are experiencing extreme violence, and share financial resources and training with local partner organizations who are on the front lines of the fight against gender-based violence.
- Pilot a new program on online violence and discrimination, beginning with a research report in partnership with Columbia University’s Institute for Global Politics Women’s Initiative. This report will review the state of the field, lay out key issues, explore current legislation and regulation globally and identify gaps, and forecast the effect of AI on online violence.
- Organize a Democracy Summit for Women Leaders in partnership with the Empiria i Wiedza Foundation to share best practices on challenging authoritarianism and to foster collective action. The Summit will be held in Poland and welcome network leaders from all over the world.
- Continue providing Vital Voices Network Leaders with opportunities for visibility, thought leadership, and networking—from major global events like the U.N. General Assembly, the World Economic Forum, and COP to events hosted at our own Vital Voices Global Headquarters for Women’s Leadership.
- Invest in the infrastructure of Vital Voices, including monitoring, learning, and evaluation; technology; and resilient, global operations that reflect the importance of our mission to a future anchored in equality, opportunity, and justice for all.

