

GLOBAL FEMINISM IN SOLIDARITY AND ACTION.



IMPACT REPORT 2022-23

WELCOME TO THE CIRCLE

THE CIRCLE NGO IS A UNIQUE AND DYNAMIC ORGANISATION WHICH BRINGS GLOBAL FEMINISTS TOGETHER TO FIGHT FOR THE SAFETY AND EQUALITY OF MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD.

Founded by a group of passionate, leading women, The Circle is a space for creative ideas, connections and the opportunity to make change. From small beginnings in 2008, we have grown into an independent and diverse network of women and allies from all walks of life who are bonded by the desire to live in a world where women and girls' equal rights and equal opportunities.

OUR VISION

A future where there is safety and equality for all women and girls.

OUR MISSION

To economically empower and end violence against marginalised and vulnerable women across the world by building a network of Global Feminist changemakers who fund, advocate, and amplify.

OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS, THE CIRCLE HAS RAISED OVER £4.5M

AND SUPPORTED OVER 1.4 MILLION PEOPLE DIRECTLY ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- THIS INCLUDES FUNDING COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS ON THE FRONTLINE, ADVOCATING FOR LONG-TERM CHANGE AND AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED INEQUALITY, VIOLENCE AND EXTREME POVERTY.

We are proud to have a new, ambitious five-year strategy to support and empower more women and girls than ever before. It is our mission to:

- **Fund and Support women on the frontline:** Women and girls make up 50% of the world's population, yet less than 2% of global funding goes to women's rights. The Circle is on a mission to change that. We fund grassroots organisations with long-term flexible funding, and critical non-financial support through our global feminist network.
- **Advocate for long-term change:** In partnership with activists, lawyers and our partner organisations, we work together to advocate for long-term change.
- **Amplify** the voices of activists, women on the frontline and those with lived experience bringing their stories from out of the shadows using inspiring communications, leading names and our networks in the creative industries.
- **Connect and convene** global feminists to share their experience, stories, give solidarity and take action.



Partnering with the Circle has been so special and given us the opportunity to meet and discuss with influential women around the world which is inspiring and motivating, and to be internationally recognised as a women's rights organisation.

Mukyala Zaituna, Women in Leadership Uganda

ANNIE LENNOX

FOUNDER OF THE CIRCLE



CHANGE IS POSSIBLE,
BUT IT IS NEVER EASY.

WE HAVE TO BE RESILIENT
AND DETERMINED.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annie Lennox".

I'd like to thank **each** and **every** one of you for supporting our work in 2022.

Thank you for embracing the concept of 'Global Feminism' which is the constant North Star and driving force behind everything we do.

Right now there is an **urgent** need to stand in solidarity in demanding action to defend the freedoms and rights of women and girls **everywhere** around the world.

All our sisters, mothers and daughters must have protection against violence, as well as universal access to healthcare, education and fundamental human rights in all private and public spaces.

As we approach The Circle's 15th year, I've become more conscious of everything we've achieved as an organisation, and everything we still have to do. It is a milestone moment for The Circle, and a crossroads moment for women around the world.

The challenges women face are immense.

From the epidemic of gender-based violence to the scourge of modern slavery. And now, for the first time in a century, we face concerted global efforts to roll back the rights won by generations of heroic women past, in order to make the disempowerment and subjugation of women and girls a cultural and political norm.

The Circle's message of 'Global Feminism' and **your** participation and support, offers us a unique opportunity to play a significant role in fighting against these negative trends.

We are developing a network of inspirational partnerships and inroads at grassroots level which can produce powerful, long-lasting influence and transformative change.

So dear Circle friends, supporters and participants, **thank you** once again!

There is **so** much at stake, but we can **all** play our part in changing the collective course of history.

Much love from Annie

THANK YOU

FROM THE CIRCLE CHAIR AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WITH THE HELP, SOLIDARITY AND GENEROSITY OF OUR GROWING NETWORK OF SUPPORTERS AND GRASSROOTS PARTNERS AROUND THE GLOBE, THE CIRCLE HAS BEEN WORKING HARDER THAN EVER OVER THE PAST YEAR TO BUILD A WORLD WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS CAN LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION AND FEAR, AND RECEIVE OPPORTUNITIES THEY NEED TO BUILD THE BEST POSSIBLE LIVES FOR THEMSELVES.

If we need a reminder of why this work is so vital, we need only look at the cold hard facts that faced women around the world in 2022:

- Up to 3 million women and girls died last year because of gender-based violence.
- 1 in 3 women will suffer physical or sexual violence in their lifetime; 1.3 billion women in total, a number bigger than the population of Europe and North America put together.
- 2.4 billion women of working age around the world lived in a country where they do not have the same economic rights as men.
- The most sweeping rollback of women's rights by the Taliban in Afghanistan saw women and girls lose access to education, employment and public spaces as well as other basic freedoms.

We hear the stories behind these harsh statistics all too frequently from The Circle's growing network of grassroots partners around the world, but equally – and inspirationally – we hear the stories of the work our partners are doing on a daily basis with your support to help women stand up for their rights and freedoms, start new lives, or step out from the shadow of violence and fear.

As we reflect on The Circle's upcoming 15-year anniversary, it has been important to take stock of our achievements to date and refresh our ambition for the future. Our new five-year strategy seeks to do just that.

The Board are enormously grateful once again for the energy, creativity and commitment of the staff at The Circle who work every day towards those goals.

But above all, we are grateful to every one of our passionate supporters, partners and donors, whose consistent generosity is what makes it possible for The Circle to have such impact and influence across the world, and to transform the lives of so many women and girls. Thank you for everything you do to help us change the world.



Melanie Ward, Chair of Trustees


ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT


THROUGH OUR GRASSROOTS PARTNERS,
YOU HELPED SUPPORT OVER


4000
WOMEN
AND GIRLS
THIS YEAR


- Under our priority thematic areas of Economic Justice and Ending Violence Against Women, your support helped provided marginalised and vulnerable women and communities with:
 - Safe spaces and refuges
 - Counselling and education
 - Awareness raising campaigns through radio
 - Domestic abuse support workers
 - Psychosocial and therapeutic support
 - Skills development to access employment
 - Mentoring
 - Support through the training of village advocates
 - Emergency Assistance
 - Training in the workplace
 - Workshops to understand their rights
- Through our wider advocacy work continued to push for an end to poverty wages and call for a living wage for garment workers; we joined forces with others calling for an end to gender apartheid and a global summit for Afghan women and girls.
- Centered our grassroots partner organisations and their work throughout the year, reaching over 1 million views on social media.
- We connected and convened our network of global feminists throughout the year bringing solidarity, action and safe spaces to discuss issues.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CIRCLE'S ACTIVITY


 We laid the foundations of future growth and impact by launching our new 5 year strategy which has focused our ambition for change.


 Raised over £670,000 allowing us to build and invest in making more impact over the coming years.

 Built strategic partnerships with TikTok, L'Oreal Fund for Women, One Sony, Universal Music and more which extended our resources and influence.


 Achieved Gold in the Brand Impact Awards with United Us, allowing us to reach more people with our inclusive message of global feminism.

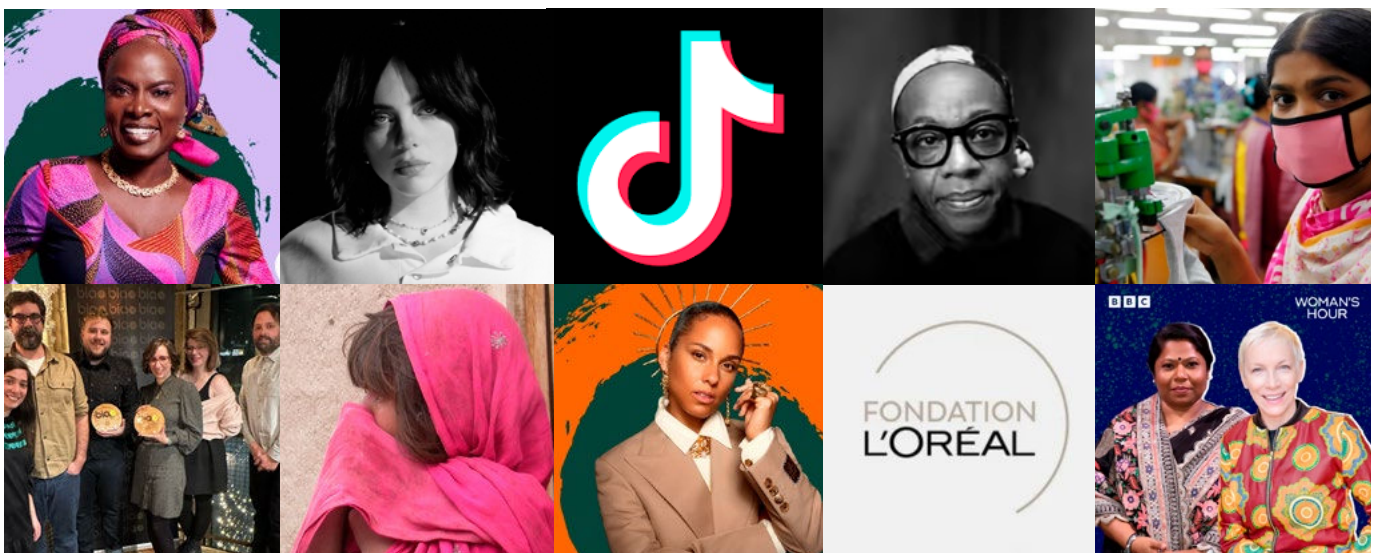
 Reached over 20 million people through our communications work including international media coverage on BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour, People.com, Times Radio; shared our powerful She Came To Me Film with 1.3m people and launched our TikTok account reaching 20,000 followers in the first 3 days – allowing us to reach wider and new audiences.

 Launched new initiatives including our Music Icons Auction with Billie Eilish, Taylor Swift, Alicia Keys; and the Global Feminism Series bringing together activists, leading stars and world leaders to shine a spotlight on the rights of women.

 Working in partnership with activists, lawyers, sister organisations to call for long-lasting change for women and girls, we advocated for a living wage for garment workers and called for an end to gender apartheid in Afghanistan and Iran.

 With Covid restrictions firmly lifted, we gathered during International Women's Day with a series of uplifting and inspiring events, centering the origins of IWD started by garment workers over 100 years ago.

 We saw our Circle networks evolve and celebrate with events from intimate dinners to powerful film screenings, continuing to build feminist spaces for conversation and ideas.





RAAKHI SHAH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE CIRCLE

A NEW FRONTIER OF OPPRESSION

The rights of women and girls came under a mounting assault across the world in 2022. We watched in hope as women in Iran and Afghanistan rose up against repression and gender apartheid in their countries, and then reacted with horror as their voices were brutally silenced, with the international community standing by. We saw the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war continue to surge in the world's conflict zones.

As the world economy reeled from the after-effects of the pandemic, we saw a rise in the exploitation of women as cheap or forced labour in farms and factories across the Global South.

In several countries, we also saw attempts to roll back the hard-won legal rights of women, most notably with the US Supreme Court decision to overturn the abortion protections set out in *Roe v Wade*.

And we saw the surge of a dangerous new culture of online and institutional misogyny, with the violent abuse of women not just excused, but normalised, encouraged and celebrated.

WE MUST ALL RISE

It was more important than ever in 2022 for The Circle to stand strong, both in the solidarity we showed to women, and in the action we took to help

the forces of global feminism fight back in defence of women's rights and freedoms.

Last year The Circle deepened its partnerships with grassroots global feminist organisations in several countries working at the front-line of their communities to end gender-based violence and enable women to build better futures for themselves.

We were able to utilise our global network to support with legal advice, media skills workshops, and funding advice, amplifying the work and voices of our partners and activists, contributing to global advocacy coalitions, hosting events, and reaching new audiences.

A UNIQUE GLOBAL FEMINIST NETWORK

Every woman and ally who is part of The Circle's global network is a changemaker uniting to make The Circle a unique home for impactful change.

The Circle is a growing organisation, entirely funded by the donations and grants we receive from partners and supporters, with a five-year strategy that speaks to our ambition for greater impact than ever.

I want to thank each and every one of our supporters and partners that has helped us stand against the storm this past year and emerge with global feminism a stronger than ever force for good around the world.

You are our strength.

YOUR FUNDING AND SUPPORT

**HAS HELPED OUR GRASSROOTS PARTNERS TO DIRECTLY CHANGE
THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Over £100,000 was granted to support our partner organisations to support their vital work.

This year, we were thrilled to establish partnerships with two new organisations to economically empower and end violence against women and girls:

- Rahela Trust, Afghanistan and UK
- Awer Women, Kenya

We continued to deepen our existing partnerships with:

- Women in Leadership, Uganda
- The Women's Centre, Sri Lanka
- Sikh Women's Aid, UK
- Nonceba, South Africa
- Marie Colvin Journalists' Network, Middle East

The Circle's partnership provides a unique mix of funding and non-financial capacity building support through our global network including **legal advice, media workshops** and **amplification across our channels** and as part of our events calendar, allowing organisations to grow and becoming sustainable.

OUR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS FEATURED IN
70+ CIRCLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS WITH OVER

35,000 COLLECTIVE VIEWS OF THEIR WORK

THROUGH THE POWERFUL *SHE CAME TO ME* FILM,
THE STORIES OF OUR PARTNER NONCEBA REACHED

1.3 MILLION PEOPLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We are delighted over the course of the coming year to be growing these partnerships and will announce a number of new partnerships with additional grassroots organisations around the world, further expanding our global feminist network, and changing even more lives at the front line of the fight for women's rights, protection and empowerment.

SUPPORTING

WOMEN IN UGANDA WITH WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The Circle proudly partners with Women in Leadership, a grassroots, female-led organisation supporting victims of gender-based violence (GBV) in Uganda. With the support of your donations, the Women in Leadership's work went from strength to strength in 2022, in a country where 35% of girls experience sexual violence while growing up, and 56% of women experience spousal violence as adults.

The Circle-funded Justice Project is a community-led Gender-Based Violence campaign, leveraging community radio to raise awareness and challenge harmful cultural practices, alongside training village GBV advocates and engaging local police in the effective response to Gender-Based Violence at the community level. The Justice project seeks to break the silence around domestic violence and amplify the voices of women who have experienced violence.

"I had bought a house and plot of land with my husband. But later I had to separate from him after constant beating and mistreatment from him. One day, I started hearing rumours about him putting the house on sale without my consent. When I went to find out about the rumours, he instead started beating me again. I reported the matter to Women in Leadership Uganda and they referred me to the Village GBV Advocate, Madam Catherine, who accompanied me to police and the health centre to get treatment.

The Women in Leadership team helped me and asked him to meet all treatment bills and I got treated.

While at police, my husband said that he will not sell off the house and the police told me that if he sells it without my consent, he and the buyer will be arrested. My husband apologised to me and the police and said that he will not beat me again. I am now living independently without any threats from him."

MUTESI NADIAH, 32 YEARS OLD



Your donations helped:

- Train and support village health workers as advocates to raise awareness of rights in relation to violence against women and girls and develop effective practical responses to prevent it.
- Women understand where to report violence in their villages.
- Access a trained GBV village advocate to accompany them to police and health centre, building their confidence to report crimes and access healthcare.
- Fund 15 'Break the Silence' radio shows on Busoga FM radio, which raises awareness of how women can find support.



Over 2,500 women and community members were reached through The Justice project in 2022:

201 women were directly supported by village advocates and over 800 women more widely. 1,500 people listened to the 'Break the Silence' radio shows.

Since the start of the project, Women in Leadership have seen an increased knowledge amongst women and girls about gender-based violence and their rights; they know where to report crimes and therefore raise up their voices against violence.

'Break the Silence' Radio shows covers a variety of topics:

- Introduction to the Justice project, its aims, the GBV advocates and their roles. What is GBV and forms of domestic violence.
- The domestic violence act/law.
- Where women and girls can report cases and the different legal bodies and their duties. What is sexual violence and its different forms; what is rape and its different forms. The law about rape and what steps can be taken if you are a survivor.
- Q&A section for callers.

SUPPORTING GARMENT WORKERS IN SRI LANKA WITH THE WOMEN'S CENTRE

The Women's Centre supports women who are subjected to oppression and violence training and equipping them with skills to stand up to injustice and challenge attitudes. In Sri Lanka, the garment sector is a major driver for the economic participation of mainly young women, who originate from rural communities and poor-economic backgrounds. Many are subjected to widespread violations including gender-based violence from their employers, supervisors, boarding house owners and other men living and working around the garment factories.




COVID had seen garment workers severely impacted with many losing their jobs after fashion brands pulled contracts. This was further compounded by the severe economic crisis and curfews across Sri Lanka in 2022.

The skyrocketing costs of living have impacted everyone, but some marginalised communities and groups are particularly hard hit, like the garment sector; among them women who face the double burden of trying to earn an income whilst also performing unpaid care for children and elderly relatives.

Your donations helped with:

- Counselling and psychosocial support for young women and girls working in the garment sector who are survivors of gender-based violence.
- Awareness raising among women on leadership and laws related to gender-based violence.
- Development of referral mechanisms for the survivors of gender-based violence.
- Development of a policy paper on decent working environments for female garment workers.
- Community awareness raising programmes on gender-based violence.

 **275 women were supported through the partnership and 500 women were more widely supported.**



Our project with The Circle is a great opportunity for us to strengthen women workers and survivors in the garment industry through awareness raising, advocacy and psychosocial support.

We should speak out fearlessly by coming forward to build a women's working activist network across the world.



Padmini Weerasuriya is the Director of the Women's Centre Sri Lanka

SUPPORTING SIKH AND PUNJABI WOMEN WITH SIKH WOMEN'S AID, UK

Sikh Women's Aid is a community-based organisation that helps women from a Sikh and South-Asian background who are experiencing domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and violence.

Sikh Women's Aid recent report 'From Her, Kings are Born' found

- 62% of Sikh Panjabi women and girls who responded to the survey, reported they had experienced domestic abuse.
- Nearly half (46%) of all respondents who experienced domestic abuse had more than one perpetrator.
- Almost a third of all respondents (32%) have experienced sexual abuse with 62% of these respondents saying this abuse took place when they were children.

The Circle's initial seed funding last year paid for Sikh Women's Aid first domestic abuse worker and supported them to become a registered charity.

This year your donations have:

- Supported the provision of a part time specialist domestic abuse support worker who provides a confidential support service.
- Supported women and their children, particularly victims of honor-based violence and forced marriage for a period of up to 6 months to help them cope and recover.



80 women in total were supported with Circle donations: 30 women have been directly supported and a further 50 women received advice, guidance or onward referral.



Dear Didi,

I am sending you this message with love and to let you know you are not alone. I have been a victim of emotional, physical and financial abuse for many years now, but I was always told it was my fault, that I got him angry and this is why he physically abused me. I always got told by my in-laws that there should be acceptance on my end, they told me to obey the Hukam and to also think of the children's' futures. They often used quotations from Gurbani to try and humble myself to the abuse I received but the wrong doings of their son were permissible and excusable. Quite often I felt that the teachings of Gurbani were used as a tool for emotional manipulation to control me.

Instead, us women are expected to receive abuse and then humbly accept it as our Hukam. The more we crumble down and accept the abuse, the more they feed on our weaknesses. With humility, comes self respect and dignity. I am a professional who trusted and loved my husband, but he deceived me in many ways I could not even imagine, in addition to the domestic abuse I experienced from him. I felt ashamed of myself that I had let myself become so vulnerable. I even felt helpless in the hands of the police, and when I reached out to Sikh Women's Aid, they intervened and were able to promptly liaise with the police so that my matter was dealt with more efficiently. Sikh Women's Aid is dedicated to listening to our problems and will act on our behalf, tailored to our specific needs. Please reach out for help and speak to any of the sisters from Sikh Women's Aid, even if you think it's a small problem you are facing. I whole heartedly commend Sikh Women's Aid for the hard work they are doing.

A message from a woman supported by Sikh Women's Aid, encouraging other women in the community to reach out for help.


SUPPORTING WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH NONCEBA WOMEN'S SHELTER

A long-term partner with The Circle, Nonceba, a shelter for women fleeing violence in South Africa, provides a vital lifeline for women in crisis. Our funding brings sanctuary counselling and support to women fleeing the horror of abuse, violence, and homelessness.

Your donations helped:

- Provide a safe space for the women and children to stay for an initial 3 months.
- Psychosocial and therapeutic support to the women accessing the shelter.
- Educational Awareness on Gender Based Violence, parenting skills, court processes and rights.
- Skills development for the women to help to access employment.
- A second accommodation site for women who needed to extend their stay.

The long-term effects of the support by Nonceba meant women were able to get employment and be financially independent; securing a home to rent and able to provide for their families; reunification services with family were provided; and relocation to other provinces like Gauteng, Eastern Cape. Nonceba reported women had been empowered, gaining their self-confidence and worth.

 **237 women and children in total were supported with Circle donations: 105 women have been directly supported and a further 132 women and children received advice, guidance, onward referral and community based support.**



Busisiwe, Ntombi and Sandiswa suffered abuse at the hands of their partners and received shelter, counselling and skills training at Nonceba. Now they are forging a new life, continuing to drop in to the centre when they need, and giving each other support. Hear from them in their words:

"These are sisters who I have made a bond for life with. I feel born again!"
Busisiwe, 30

"Since coming to Nonceba, I am feeling free and can breathe again. My children and I have a new family with the women and staff here now."
Sandiswa, 33



They all quoted Nelson Mandela

IT HAS BEEN A LONG WALK TO FREEDOM.

**IN SOUTH AFRICA,
7 WOMEN ARE KILLED
EVERY DAY**

**AND IT HAS ONE OF THE
HIGHEST RATES OF
RAPE IN THE WORLD**

SUPPORTING

FEMALE JOURNALISTS IN THE ARAB WORLD WITH THE MARIE COLVIN JOURNALISTS' NETWORK (MCJN)

2022 marked the 10th anniversary of Marie Colvin's death. MCJN empowers and supports female journalists in the Arab region and was founded by friends of fearless journalist, Marie Colvin after her death in 2012. Incubated within The Circle, MCJN became an independent organisation in 2022, taking their next steps of growth and impact. The Circle and MCJN are delighted to remain project partners on this new journey.

The organisation had 299 members of the Network, comprising at least 15 different Arab nationalities, of whom more than 60 women volunteer their time and expertise as mentors to other members in the Network.

In 2022, MCJN provided 206 network members with mentoring, counselling, training opportunities, travel bursaries and emergencies assistance.

These women are often breadwinners for their extended families, whose continued employability



therefore indirectly benefits hundreds of families across the Arab region, as well as enabling women's voices and perspectives to continue to be heard in the media.


SUPPORTING

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN WITH WOMEN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN



The Circle has proudly supported Women For Afghan Women through our Afghanistan emergency appeal. Funds have supported vulnerable women-led

households facing homelessness and hunger crises. With support from The Circle, funds from the appeal directly supported over 350 families. Humanitarian aid included food and non-food items such as personal hygiene packs (shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.), blankets, pressure cookers, beans, rice, flour, cooking oil, tomato paste, black and green tea, matches, salt, dry milk, and sugar, among other items.

 **1,750 individuals in total were supported with humanitarian aid with Circle donations.**

Brishna was only 15 years old when she was given away in an exchange marriage to a seven-year old boy. When her family refused to go through with the marriage, the in-laws threatened violence against them. Having no choice, they gave in, and Brishna went home with her in-laws. After a year, Brishna was kidnapped by one of her husband's relatives and taken to Pakistan. When she got pregnant, her kidnapper took her back to Afghanistan and abandoned her. After giving birth, Brishna was referred to WAW's women's shelter where she received comprehensive support, including numerous counselling sessions as she was suffering from severe trauma, food, hygiene kits and other basic needs. WAW filed Brishna's divorce case in court, which is still ongoing and contacted her family to help resolve her case, they informed us that they could not bring her back home as if she returned, they would kill her. When Kabul fell to the Taliban on 15 August 2021, Brishna fell into despair. She was scared and had nowhere else to go. As per WAW's security measures, Brishna, along with other high-risk WAW clients, was relocated several times to ensure her safety.

SUPPORTING AFGHAN WOMEN WITH RAHELA TRUST, UK

We are proud to continue our long-standing support to the women and girls of Afghanistan. Rahela Trust is an Afghan-led feminist organisation, embedded in the Afghan diaspora in the UK whose mission is to provide scholarships, mentorship and access to local and global professional networks to disadvantaged and talented Afghan women from rural areas.

The Circle is proud to partner with The Rahela Trust on 'The Diaspora Changemaker Networks' project. This pioneering project for women in rural areas of Afghanistan and beyond will give them access to a wide-ranging network of mentors across the Afghan diaspora globally and within Afghanistan. The project will bolster feminist networks, and support leadership and professional development at a critical time when other routes to education and development are severely restricted.



The partnership with The Circle will see the Change Makers Project reach 45 Afghan women directly and 450 women in indirectly.



The Circle and Rahela Trust share the belief that when women are given confidence, opportunities and access to resources, incredible, positive, change can be achieved. As a small charity, we are eager to learn from the circle's expertise and bring that knowledge to our evolving work. Together, we're confident we can create an equitable future for the women and people of Afghanistan, and we are honoured to have The Circle as an ally in this important mission.



Rahela Sidiqi, founder of Rahela Trust

SUPPORTING

WOMEN IN KENYA WITH AWER WOMEN

Founded by the indigenous Awer women in Kenya, Awer Women Empowerment is a feminist organisation that fights for the rights of Awer women with a focus on violence prevention and eradication, indigenous women's rights and economic justice. The organisation advocates for the rights of indigenous women who have experience violence, be they victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and prostitution, forced marriage or other forms of violence. The organisation offers psychosocial care, organizes medical and legal support, helps in finding house, jobs and vocational training.

Awer Women was founded in 2018 by two ex-conflict concubines from Boni, Lamu District of Kenya who had been kidnapped and trafficked to neighbouring country Somalia as sex slaves and forced labour of Al-Shabaab fighters and terror group.

The aim of the organisation is to prevent violence and promote the re-entry of women back into their communities through social acceptance and empowerment.



The partnership with The Circle will reach over 94,000 directly women over the coming year and 282,000 in the wider community.

YOUR SUPPORT HAS ENABLED US TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE AROUND THE WORLD IN ADVOCATING FOR LASTING, GLOBAL CHANGE.

Throughout 2022, we saw the rights, freedoms and safety of women under unprecedented assault throughout the world. Against this backdrop, it was more important than ever for The Circle to **advocate and campaign for the policy changes** at international level that can transform the lives of millions of women, and which can only be delivered through the pressure that groups like ours are able to place on national governments, multilateral institutions, and global corporations.

CALLING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR FEMALE GARMENT WORKERS

Fast fashion is a feminist issue and hurts the lives of women and girls across the world. With your donations we continue to fight for the rights of millions of women garment workers to end the devastation of poverty pay and demand economic justice.

2022 saw progress behind the scenes on new legislative proposals, especially at the EU, that will be critical in regulating the actions of transnational corporations within global supply chains.

The Circle conducted a geographical mapping of various legislative proposals – looking specifically for those with relevance to wages in the fashion industry. Alongside this The Circle completed parallel scoping of the UK landscape to push for the right to a living wage in the garment industry.

We also publicly called for change. The Circle marked International Women's Day by going back to the roots of the day which was started by garment workers in New York over 100 years ago demanding a fair and

"I ended up working in a factory at the age of 12, because of economic insecurity. It was a shock one day to be at school, then the next be in a factory full of adults... the environment was terrifying. Verbal, physical and sexual violence was common. On my first day, I worked a 16hour shift, standing for the whole time. It was extreme poverty wages. Years later, I realized I was there because my working mother wasn't receiving a living wage. If she had been receiving one, I could have gone to school"



Kalpona Akter, Founder of the Bangladesh Centre for Workers' Solidarity, former garment worker and Circle Ambassador

dignified wage. We linked this to the ongoing fight decades later to our call for a living wage and launched an online petition calling on global leaders to legislate on the issue, which saw hundreds of people join.

We continued to work in partnership as part of two important coalition campaigns: a Good Clothes, Fair Pay is demanding living wage legislation across the garment, textile and footwear sector, and Corporate Justice Coalition who are spearheading a campaign for mandatory due diligence legislation in the UK.



Perhaps this could be the year we subvert everything through what Annie Lennox calls global feminism, and we finally embrace feminist fashion. Women are the biggest consumers of clothes and accessories, and women are most of the workforce who produce them (80% of garment workers are female). In the Global North we keep marching for women's rights and equality, while we are happy to wear clothes sewn by enslaved and abused women in the Global South. It doesn't make sense, does it?

Livia Firth, Co-Founder of The Circle

STANDING UP FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN

Under the rule of the Taliban, even more rights were taken away from Afghan women and girls in 2022: forbidden to work in their former jobs; forbidden to attend school or university; forbidden to enjoy public spaces; stopped from protesting against these changes; and facing brutal punishment if they breached any of the new laws on their appearance or behaviour. It was the fastest rollback of rights of women anywhere in the world.



In addition to funding grassroots organisations, The Circle continued to continue to advocate for women and girls to be reinstated with their rights. In partnership with the Action 4 Afghanistan coalition, alongside Afghan women activists, Malala Fund, Overseas Development Institute, Rahela Trust, Mumsnet, Southall Black Sisters and more, The Circle urged UK and world leaders to:

- Host a Global Summit on Afghan Women and Girls.
- Centre the voices of Afghan women and girls in decision-making.
- Establish an asylum and resettlement route for Afghan women at risk.

The Circle added our voice to letters to the UK Prime Minister and world leaders; whilst hundreds of Circle supporters signed public petitions and joined events.

ENDING GENDER APARTHEID

The Circle and its Ambassadors, Annie Lennox, Livia Firth, Lucy Siegle and more also joined organisations and activists including Fazia Koofi and Nazanin Zaghrai Ratcliffe in calling for an end to gender apartheid in Afghanistan and Iran. This campaign strongly calls to governments to interpret and/or expand the legal definition of apartheid under international and national laws to include severe forms of institutionalized genderbased discrimination.



ACTION 4 AFGHANISTAN HAS SUPPORTED PEOPLE COLLABORATING INCLUDING AFGHAN WOMEN IN AND OUT OF THE COUNTRY, AND A HUGE AMOUNT OF DIVERSE ORGANISATIONS.

A GLOBAL SUMMIT FOR AFGHAN WOMEN AND GIRLS IS VITAL

AS THERE ARE SO MANY INTER-CONNECTED ISSUES

THIS NOW CALLS FOR A CONSOLIDATION OF EFFORTS AND A HOLISTIC PATHWAY FORWARD.



Zehra Zaidi, Founder Action 4 Afghanistan coalition

YOU HAVE ENABLED US TO

AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF WOMEN

SO THEIR DEMANDS ARE
HEARD AROUND THE WORLD

THROUGH THE UNIQUE
SKILLS AND EXPERTISE OF
OUR GLOBAL NETWORK, THE
CIRCLE WAS ABLE TO LIVE ITS
VALUE OF BEING CREATIVE TO
THE CORE AND REACH OVER
20 MILLION PEOPLE WITH OUR
COMMUNICATIONS WORK.



THE POWER OF FILM



'SHE CAME TO ME'

To mark our participation in '16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence', we released 'She Came To Me', a powerful short film directed by Circle supporters Saffron Burrows, scripted by Lorien Haynes,

starring Oscar and Bafta-nominated actress Marianne Jean-Baptiste, and inspired by the words of Nozuko Conjwa, one of the managers of the Nonceba Family Counselling Centre in South Africa, whose work is supported by The Circle.

"I am incredibly proud to be part of this film, to share the stories of just a handful of the brave and resilient women that have come to me for support to escape horrific situations and amplify their words around the world. Our partnership with The Circle is very important to us, not just because of the funding for our vital work but to be connected and be part of a global network of women coming together to make change for their sisters around the world. That is very special."

Nozuko Conjwa, Nonceba Family Counselling Centre



THE POWER OF THE MEDIA & PARTNERSHIPS

We amplified our message of global feminism, the work of our partners and stories of women we support across the world!

MEDIA COVERAGE

From Vogue, BBC Woman's Hour, Rolling Stone Magazine, People.com, Billboard, The Independent, podcasts and more, The Circle saw over media coverage across the world.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Doubling our twitter following
- 2,000 more Instagram followers
- 1,000 more linkedin followers
- Launched our new TikTok account reaching 21,000 followers and 20 million views for one our first videos.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE FEMINIST EVENTS

THE GLOBAL FEMINISM SERIES

We accelerated our efforts to amplify the voices of women on the front line by launching a new, inspiring Global Feminism Series. An inspiring exciting programme of upcoming in-person and online events to shine a spotlight on women around the world fighting for gender equality and empowerment, the series over the coming year will be an opportunity for supporters and partners to hear from world leaders, feminist activists, stars and extraordinary women leading projects on the frontline. The events are also a powerful tool for activists to share their experience in a safe space and for supporters to find out how they can take action to support.

LAUNCH EVENT – AFGHANISTAN EMERGENCY BRIEFING

Introduced by Annie Lennox and chaired by writer, broadcaster and Ambassador for The Circle, Lucy Siegle, the expert panel included Afghan politician, human rights activist, and former Minister of Women's Affairs, Hasina Safi, and the lawyer, campaigner and co-founder of the Action For Afghanistan coalition, Zehra Zaidi.

Our expert speakers combined harrowing stories of the violence suffered by Afghan women speaking up for their rights, and inspirational stories of their courage in continuing to do so, despite the grave danger they face. Circle supporters joined from all over the world including Bangladesh, UK and US showing their solidarity.

"It was a privilege to be part of one of the most powerful events The Circle has ever hosted. The panel was extremely well-informed and deeply committed to securing tangible outputs. This is The Circle at its very best. We brought together women whose lived experience informed both activists and those who are in a position to make a real difference, powerfully communicating the issues and how and why supportive action can make a real difference."



Circle Ambassador, Melanie Hall KC



**Hasina Safi, Human rights activist
and former Minister of
Women's Affairs**



WE ALL NEED TO JOIN HANDS,

**RECOGNIZING AT THIS
CRITICAL SITUATION
EVERYTHING THAT IS
BEING DONE,
BUT IT IS
NOT ENOUGH.**

**THE WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN
NEED OUR SUPPORT'**

GLOBAL FEMINIST CHANGEMAKERS UNITE

WE HOSTED INSPIRING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING CIRCLE EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WHICH WERE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONVENE AND CONNECT HUNDREDS OF PASSIONATE ACTIVISTS, INFLUENCERS AND THOSE WORKING ON THE FRONT LINE. WE WERE ONCE AGAIN SUPPORTED IN 2022 BY AMAZING IN-KIND DONATIONS FROM OUR NETWORK OF GLOBAL FEMINISTS IN DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS, WHO VOLUNTEERED THEIR TIME AND TALENTS GIVING HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF SUPPORT TO OUR WORK. THIS INCLUDED HELP WITH DESIGN, PHOTOGRAPHY, LEGAL ADVICE, FILM-MAKING, HOSTING AND SPEAKING AT EVENTS.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

We marked the global 16 days of Activism with our partners and global network. Highlights included:

- Attending our partner Sikh Women's Aid Annual conference, where our CEO Raakhi Shah shared the importance of partnerships and how supporting women for the diaspora and marginalised communities is critical to The Circle.
- '16 Days Challenge' asking supporters to fundraise creative using the number 16.
- The launch of our Music Icons Auction.

SPOTLIGHT: MUSIC ICONS AUCTION

In November 2022, we convened some of the world's greatest living female singer-songwriters to contribute to a very special fundraising auction to support The Circle's work around the world.

Our founder Annie Lennox joined with fellow music icons Alicia Keys, Angelique Kidjo, Brandi Carlile, and Billie Eilish, Angelique Kidjo to donate signed, hand-written lyrics to some of their most famous songs, including Annie's own 'Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)'. Taylor Swift also donated one of her signed guitars to the auction.



COLLECTIVELY, THE CIRCLE'S 16 DAYS CAMPAIGN RAISED
OVER £250,000 FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

SAFE SPACE DISCUSSIONS

Following Safe Space discussions in recent years that we convened after murders of Sarah Everard, George Floyd, and the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, we held another powerful and successful discussion in 2022 about US Abortion Rights, in the wake of the US Supreme Court decision reversing Roe v Wade. These important events have continued to be powerful moments in bringing Circle supporters together to discuss vital global issues.

EVOLVING THE CIRCLE NETWORKS

As we grew our global network, our individual circle committees evolved into informal networks to continue to increase our impact for women and girls.

We thank them for their fabulous energy and creativity to raise funds and show solidarity. Highlights of their recent activities have included the following:

- **The Lawyers Network** continued to their advocacy support, with a focus on the living wage campaign and gathered again in person over dinner.
- **The Asian Network** hosted their annual Chai Day event at the Peepal Centre, Leicester, raising over £2,000 with a matched donation from Barclays; they also co-hosted a film screening at the Asian Film Festival.
- **The Oxford Network** hosted their Spring gathering welcome new supporters.
- **The Media Network** hosted a two-part series on How to Podcast and screening of 'Lost Girls' followed by Q&A at The Hearth, Women's Space.
- For International Women's Day, over breakfast we convened 25 of the most **senior women in the music industry** from Universal Music Group, Sony BMG, Virgin Music, Deviate Digital, Murray Chalmers PR, Columbia Records, DefJam, Dawbell PR to build creative plans for the coming year.
- We delighted to hold our first Philanthropy Circle dinners in 2022 to bring together a group of committed and passionate feminist philanthropists to support our work.
- Held regular online networking events for members, bringing them together to discuss topics of the day and connect with each other.



CIRCLE

DID YOU KNOW?



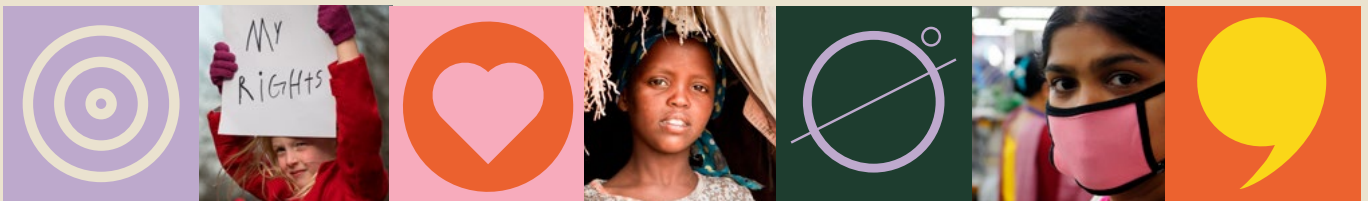
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY has its origins in garment workers striking for better pay in New York over 100 years ago.

The Circle's IWD 2023 campaign went back to these origins, highlighting the fight for garments worker's pay still hasn't been achieved in over a century. Our powerful film took us through the decades and our petition calling a living wage was launched with hundreds signing.

We also gathered in person with supporters new and old at Asia House, London where our host comedian, Shazia Mirza entertained us and introduced us to our partner Women in Leadership who celebrated with us lived from Uganda. The event finished with a powerful moment of guests collectively signing the petition.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

IN MAY 2022, WE DEVELOPED A NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY FOR THE CIRCLE IN RESPONSE TO THE ESCALATING NEED FOR MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD. THE FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY IS AMBITIOUS IN SCOPE AND SETS OUT THE COLLECTIVE VISION AND STRATEGY FOR THE CHARITY FROM MAY 2022 TO MARCH 2027.



As we celebrate our 15th anniversary, our team is intentional about what The Circle will achieve over the next year:

GROWTH IN OUR SUPPORT OF GRASSROOTS PARTNERS AND CENTRING THEIR VOICES TO SHOWCASE THEIR IMPACT

We will fund and support more women-led grassroots women's organisations, and increase the number of women and girls we help, protect and empower through our partners, committing 50% of our income to support grassroots organisations. Our funding will be flexible and long-term. Through our global network of changemakers we will increase our non-financial support, supporting these grassroots organisations to reach their greatest potential.

ADVOCATE FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND ENDING VIOLENCE

Our advocacy and campaigning work will grow and we will invest in our first dedicated advocacy role. We will continue to focus on our two thematic areas: 1) Under our economic justice pillar, we will continue to advocate for a living

wage for garment workers bringing together lawyers, activists and partner organisations; 2) Under our Ending Violence pillar, we will build a new focused strategy in 2023 to end gender-based violence.

INCREASE OUR ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE AND THOSE OF OUR PARTNERS

We will build new innovative partnerships and initiatives using our unique connections in the creative industries, particularly music, film, and the arts to amplify the voices of activists and women who are on the front-line of the fight for change, and whose stories inspire our movement.

FUNDING

In line with our expenditure and plans to support more women and girls, we will focus on our fundraising income growth, building a strong sustainable pipeline with bold, high-value partners who believe in our vision.

BUILD OUR GLOBAL NETWORK OF CHANGEMAKERS

We will continue to focus on The Circle as one global network, evolving our Circle networks and building our network of high-level supporters and changemakers. We will centre the women and organisations we support.

CONNECT AND CONVENE

We will continue to create space for global feminists around the world, building our events including our global feminism series, utilizing our unique network of changemakers to show solidarity and action.

GLOBAL FEMINISM

Ensure we are an inclusive, progressive and diverse organisation, looking at everything we do through the lens of global feminism.



THANK YOU

**TO OUR
GENEROUS PARTNERS,
DONORS AND
CIRCLE SUPPORTERS!**

Immense gratitude to our supporters and partners who have stayed alongside us and contributed to our change and ambition so that we can have greater impact on women's rights and lives at a critical time in history.

CIRCLE CO-FOUNDERS AND AMBASSADORS

Annie Lennox, Livia Firth, Melanie Hall QC, Lucy Siegle, Antonella Antonelli and Kalpona Akter.

CIRCLE NETWORK CHAIRS

Santosh Bhanot, Eve Conway, Leanne Duffield, Melanie Hall, Lynn Harris, Mary McGowne, Alice Sinclair.

CIRCLE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Melanie Ward, Cathy Ferrier, Claire Lewis, Tara Paterson, Jane Wellesley, Sue Turrell, Livia Firth, Lizzie Cadbury, Hilary Waters, Grace Camara, Karis McClarty, and Amarachi Clarke.

PARTNERS

- Coles-Medlock Foundation
- Cotton Crab Clothing
- Different Kind
- Fondation L'Oreal
- International Media Support
- One Sony
- The George Cadbury Fund
- The Oberoi Foundation
- TikTok
- Universal Music Group
- Donors who wish to remain anonymous

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH

2023

INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	299,005	276,510	575,515	421,586
Other trading activities	15,298	3,000	18,298	10,811
Investments	-	-	-	40
Other income	-	45,646	45,646	-
Total income	314,303	325,156	639,459	432,437
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	78,711	-	78,711	55,207
Charitable activities	200,489	210,069	410,558	344,517
Total expenditure	279,200	210,069	489,269	399,724
Net income/(expenditure)	35,103	115,087	150,190	32,713
Transfers between funds	25,634	(25,634)	-	-
Net movement in funds	60,737	89,453	150,190	32,713
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	356,909	105,820	462,729	430,016
Net movement in funds	60,737	89,453	150,190	32,713
Total funds carried forward	417,646	195,273	612,919	462,729

The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.



**WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THE CIRCLE
WHO HAVE GIVEN US SO MUCH SUPPORT
TO RUN OUR SERVICES OVER THE YEARS.**

**YOUR FUNDING AND SUPPORT
MAKES THE WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
TO THE WOMEN WHO NEED US
IN THEIR TIME OF CRISIS.**

NOZUKO, CENTRE MANAGER, CIRCLE PROJECT PARTNER NONCEBA IN SOUTH AFRICA



**GLOBAL FEMINISM
IN SOLIDARITY
AND ACTION.**