

THE FULLER PROJECT

BRINGING
GENDER EQUALITY
INTO FOCUS.



2023 IMPACT REPORT

OUR MISSION

The Fuller Project is the global newsroom dedicated to groundbreaking reporting that catalyzes positive change for women.

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“The new knowledge, the new thought,
the new hope.”



Photo: Library of Congress

Dear Readers,

Almost 180 years ago, Margaret Fuller – a groundbreaking journalist, transcendentalist leader, and feminist – wrote these words as part of her lifelong literary crusade to lift women from the puritanical straits of 19th-century American expectations. Her foresight and determination were unmatched: She was, after all, the first female foreign correspondent for Horace Greely’s New York *Herald-Tribune* at a time when women were largely consigned roles as wives and homemakers.

What does Fuller’s “new hope” look like today? Her admonition to relentlessly delve deeper into the conditions that constrain and harm women forms the inspiration for our effort that bears her name – The Fuller Project. We embrace her calling, to use our journalistic talents to look behind the curtain to examine the plight of far too many women around the world: the brutal, often backbreaking working conditions, the unequal pay, the sexual violence, and harassment at work and by abusive partners at home.

How can it be that in our lifetimes we are still witnessing the global injustice of women? Why and how has so little changed in the discrimination against women over centuries? Throughout my privileged and lucky



life, mostly spent as a financial journalist at *The Wall Street Journal* and *Bloomberg News*, I have asked myself this question over and over. There are no good answers or explanations, except that it has always been so.

The indignities my women colleagues, especially women of color, and I endured working in corporate America pale in comparison to how half of the world’s population lives day in and day out. But how many decades had to pass before #MeToo exposed the sexual harassment and rapes of women in their workplaces in the U.S.? I find myself beyond angry and frustrated at the disrespect and violence women face and that the pace of change is so slow – so slow that the U.N. predicts it will take 286 years to reach full gender equality at the current rate of progress.

But there is also hope. Ever larger numbers of women are leading countries and businesses, – including media – and gathering to create stronger forces for change. Our co-founders, Dr. Xanthe Scharff and Christina Asquith, created our global newsroom in 2015 to report groundbreaking stories about women that would otherwise be untold and to change the narrative about women altogether, centering them in front-page news stories not as victims, but as strong, valued members of society. They wanted this reporting to drive change, and it has. It has challenged corporations, fueled policy changes, ended abusive workplace conditions, and helped thousands of women lead better lives.

I am proud to present to you a report of what The Fuller Project achieved in 2023. As The Fuller Project’s new CEO and Editor-in-Chief, I am honored to devote myself to leading our courageous staff to continue to report the untold stories of women and hold accountable the corporations, policymakers and social mores that perpetuate women’s inequality and discrimination. This reporting fills a large gap. Less than 1% of news stories in India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the U.K., and the U.S. cover gender equality issues.

Going forward, in addition to the deep investigations for which we are known, we will broaden the conversations related to our journalism with relevant interviews, book reviews, data, and the most important stories of the week by other publications.

In Fuller’s words, we believe “new knowledge” brings “new hope.” Thank you for reading my first letter. I invite you to join us on the side of hope for the future of women everywhere.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurie Hays".



LAURIE HAYS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CEO

Bringing Gender Equality *into Focus*

Every Fuller Project story starts with a profoundly important question: what about the women? Too often unasked, this simple question forms the core of our work. As the only global nonprofit newsroom dedicated to investigative journalism on and about women and reaching mass audiences, we are uniquely equipped to identify, prioritize, and share important stories that do not surface in other newsrooms. We report with a systems focus, going beyond an investigation into, for example, a single instance of abuse, to examine factors such as systemic bias, corrupt incentives, or negligent regulation structures. Policymakers and corporate leaders rely on our reporting to make better-informed decisions and advance women's rights. Since launching in 2015, our work has repeatedly sparked policy and practice change, including expanded health care for women, historic levels of maternal care funding, removal of perpetrators from corporate leadership, and repatriations of foreign workers who say the reporting saved their lives.

The currents that underlie historic events, the movements that spark change, the institutions that shape our future – these are driven by countless trends and stories that often never see the light of the public sphere. These stories are there to be uncovered, but the world isn't paying attention. The work of The Fuller Project is to provide a channel for stories that wouldn't otherwise be told, whether because of bias, the economic incentives of the media landscape, or prevailing cultural narratives. We bring into focus the forces that drive society so that those who make decisions can act to create a more just, more sustainable, more gender-equal world for us all.

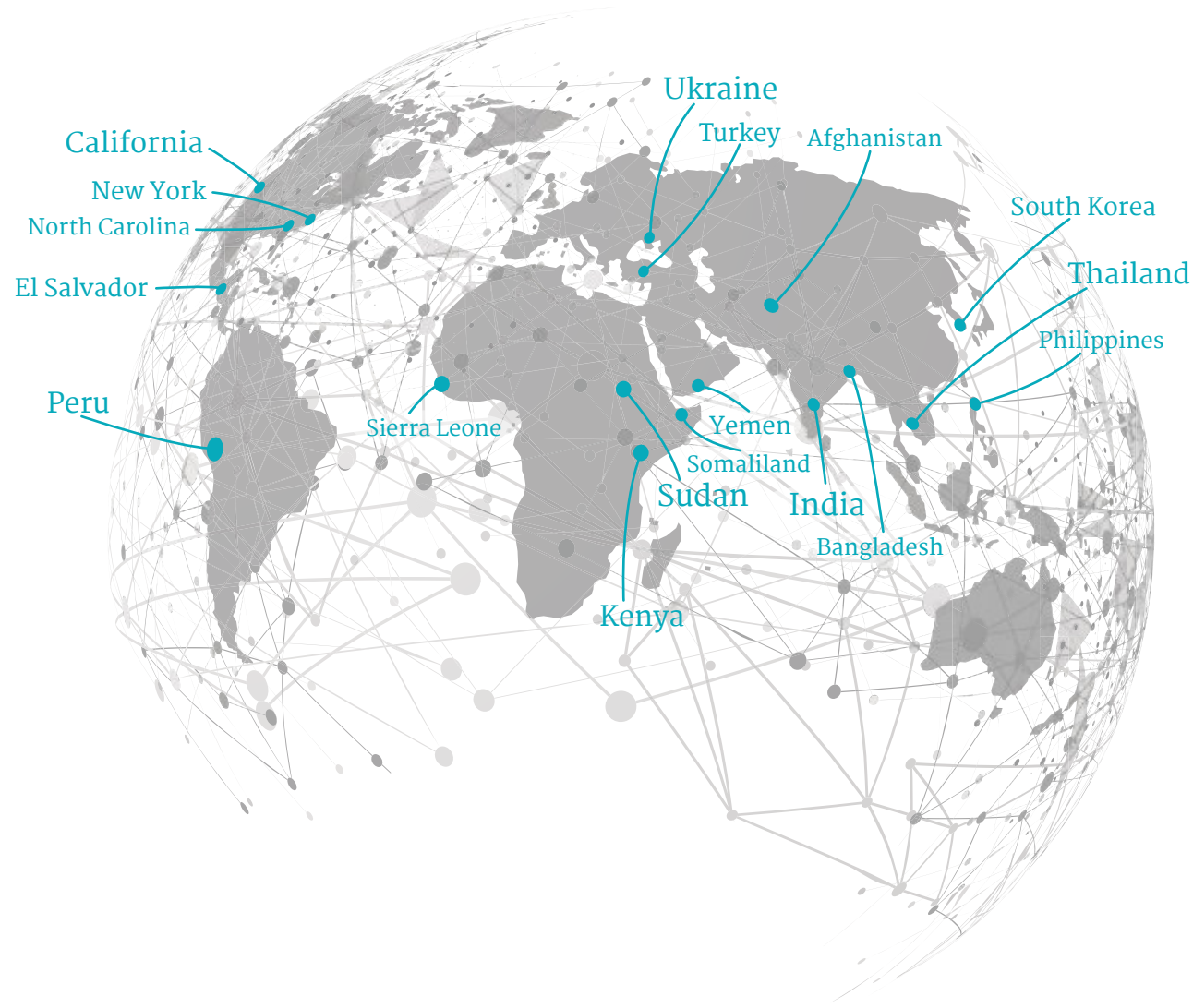
In 2023, our impact continued to spread. Our reporting directly led to supply-chain changes at a U.S. wellness company, a landmark law in California, and cancer treatment and victims' compensation for 9/11 first responders. We kept reporting on what's happening for women and their communities in Afghanistan and Sudan even when the headlines of traditional media had moved on. And we saw proof that those with the power to act, from the [medical community](#) to [U.N. agencies](#), are paying attention to and amplifying our work.

Over time, these kinds of individual victories add up to tangible, life-altering change for millions. 2023 saw milestones for women and gender equality around the world. Women were instrumental in voting out Poland's far-right regime. The Nobel Peace Prize went to imprisoned Irani activist Narges Mohammadi for her ceaseless efforts against the oppression of her countrywomen. [UNESCO reported](#) that record numbers of girls are enrolling in and completing both primary and secondary school, where they're matching boys in mathematics and outperforming them in reading. And more women hold political office than ever before: worldwide, almost a third of ministerial positions on environment, public administration, and education are now held by women, [according to the U.N.](#)

The arc toward gender equality may be slow, but certain moments can be flashpoints for cataclysmic change. 2024 will be one of those moments. This year will be the biggest year for elections in history, with approximately half the world's population going to the polls. This will be a global referendum on human rights and a tipping point for democracy, holding out the promise of either unprecedented progress or of disaster.

Democracy rests on the foundation of an informed citizenry, one with access to the full picture of how policies and practices affect the most marginalized among us. Rarely has the work of The Fuller Project seemed more important. As we enter 2024, we do so with a renewed commitment to telling the stories that go overlooked, documenting injustice and persistent progress alike as the world builds toward gender equality across the globe.

Global Footprint



As the only nonprofit investigative news organization covering women globally, The Fuller Project offers a unique perspective, bringing untold stories to light. We work with journalists who are from the countries or regions where they report, and we center the experience of the women who tell us their stories, amplifying the authentic voices of those affected by systemic injustice. Rather than reporting from a Western point of view, as is often the case in traditional outlets, we dig deep to reveal stories and issues from the most vulnerable communities around the world. Our work with on-the-ground, local reporters, who provide deep regional expertise, enables us to offer unparalleled authenticity and nuance as we expose the challenges, battles, and successes of women from communities across the globe whose stories may otherwise never be heard. Throughout this report, you'll see excerpts and summaries of stories we've covered this year.

The women who helped bring down Sudan's dictator hoped it would end discrimination against them. Instead, they're fighting for their lives

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY NEHA WADEKAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY



Photo by AFP via Getty Images

Sudan's women's movement has a long history dating back to the 19th century, and helped kick out the British in the 50s. When they helped topple Omar al-Bashir in 2019, they thought they'd finally secure equal rights after decades of a military dictatorship that had institutionalized many policies that discriminated against women.

Instead, the women who were at the forefront of the revolution were sidelined, and the military leaders who took over continued to emphasize the primacy of Islamic law. Today, with a war raging between two rival generals, women in Sudan continue to be targeted with sexual violence, strict dress codes, and systemic exclusion from the political sphere.

El Salvador fully outlawed abortion 25 years ago. Now a Latin American human rights court might finally overturn the ban

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY ANNA-CATHERINE BRIGIDA, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY



Photo by Roque Alvarenga/APHOTOGRAFIA/Getty Images

gravated homicide, attempted aggravated homicide, and abortion between 1999 and 2018.

Among those women is Alba Lorena Santos, a rape victim and mother of two daughters, who lost her baby at five months in December 2009. A neighbor she called for help reported her to the police.

Abigail Cortez, a lawyer with the Citizen Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion in El Salvador, says Santos suffered an obstetric emergency and should have received medical help. Instead, she was convicted for aggravated homicide and sentenced to 30 years in prison, based in part on testimony from the neighbor who accused her of killing her baby, The Fuller Project's Anna-Catherine Brigida reports.

In prison, Santos and 16 other women convicted for abortion or-

ganized "Las 17" to advocate for their release. In 2019, after a decade in prison, the Salvadoran Supreme Court reversed the conviction. Other women remain in prison, and at least eight other women are on trial.

El Salvador's law is now under scrutiny as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights hears arguments in Beatriz vs El Salvador. The ruling has the potential to remake abortion law throughout Latin America as it will set precedent for any country in the region that has ratified the authority of the human rights court.

It's a pivotal moment for the women of El Salvador as Latin America's human rights court considers whether the country's total ban on abortion — with no exceptions for rape, incest or the health of the mother — violates a woman's right to life.

Reporter’s Notebook: War in Ukraine is driving up domestic violence. Experts say the worst is yet to come

EXCERPT FROM A REPORTER’S NOTEBOOK
BY JESSIE WILLIAMS



Photo by Jessie Williams for The Fuller Project

In December I took a bus from Krakow in Poland to Lviv in western Ukraine to investigate how the war has exacerbated domestic violence in the country. It was a topic I had wanted to write about for a while. Studies show that war magnifies gender inequalities and increases gender-based violence. I had read many stories about Ukrainian women being trafficked, exploited, and suffering from sexual violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers, but hardly anything on domestic violence. I was curious about how the war had impacted it – and thought it was important to shine a light on what was going on. So I decided to reach out to several Ukrainian organizations that help survivors of domestic violence to see what they had seen since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022.

I found that the war is driving up domestic violence as stress levels rise, families are displaced, and traumatized men return to their families after long spells on the front lines. Yet it usually goes unreported, and, with soldiers seen as heroes defending the country, there is a reluctance to criticize those who are also abusers.



Photo by Seung-il Ryu/NurPhoto via Getty Images

South Korea’s crackdown on false accusations has “chilling effect” on rape survivors

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY HAWON JUNG, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY

In recent years, a wave of feminism swept across South Korea and launched a powerful #MeToo movement that took down prominent abusers, including a presidential contender. Now, South Korean feminists are facing political backlash. A men’s rights movement has rallied around the belief that “false allegations” of rape and sexual assault are widespread, and a year ago, the country elected President Yoon Suk-Yeol, whose top campaign promises included a pledge to crack down on women who make such accusations.

Advocates for victims say the risk of facing charges for “false accusations” will make women even more reluctant than they already are to report instances of rape and sexual assault. Just 1.4 percent of those who experienced sexual violence in South Korea seek help from the authorities.

At the heart of the controversy is an effort by South Korean feminists to reform a 1953 law that defines rape on the basis of physical violence, not a lack of consent.

Authority Areas

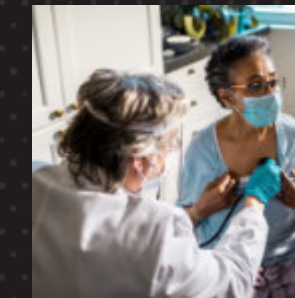
The Fuller Project focuses on four “authority” issue areas, revealing how these issues interact in the lives of women, often exposing compounding challenges. We arrived at these four areas through an analysis of the largest structural barriers women face, areas of coverage that are largely underreported, and issues where the policy environment and other conditions promote our potential to spur impact. We call these issues areas our “authority areas” because our editorial work in these areas is backed by expertise built up through the course of our long-term reporting.



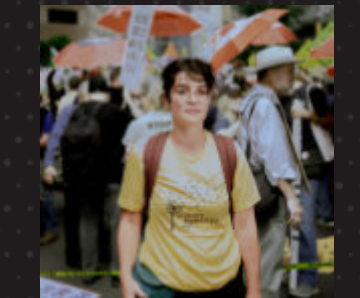
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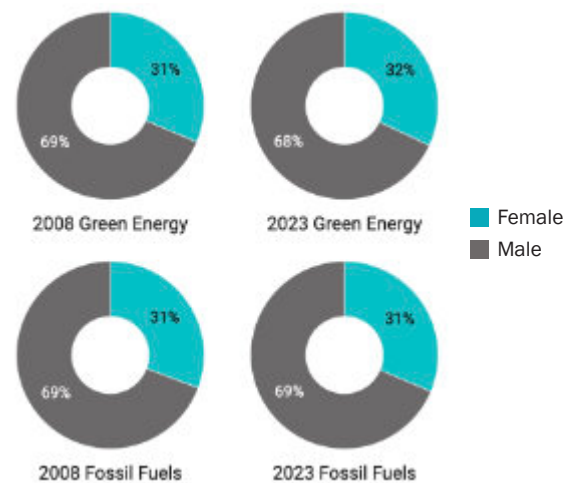
Climate change doesn't just affect our planet, it affects every aspect of human life on its surface, from public health to economic mobility – and those impacts fall first and fall hardest on women. With the first climate and gender beat of any global nonprofit newsroom, we pinpoint the ways in which climate change is entwined in women's lived experience: in [hunger and food production](#), in labor, in health, and more. This year, our investigation into the U.S. green economy found that [women continue to be under-represented](#) by more than two to one, while in the Global South, decades of progress in [maternal health may be at risk](#) from climate change-induced extreme weather – and extreme weather events themselves, as our original reporting discovered, [are linked to violence against women](#).

But we also highlight innovative solutions from across the globe, which often not only protect our environment, but also empower women. This was the case in India, where our reporter found that [solar technologies are enabling rural women to independently earn money](#), gain confidence, and build better lives for their children, demonstrating the inextricable link between a sustainable world and an equitable one.

Can the Climate Tech Revolution Avoid Leaving Women Behind?

EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY KATHERINE GAMMON, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN

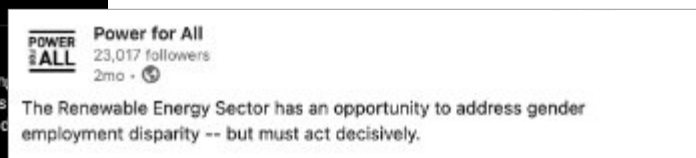
A new analysis of data by The Fuller Project in collaboration with Revelio Labs, a company that uses artificial intelligence to analyze employment data, finds the people who hold clean energy jobs in sectors such as solar and wind tend to be overwhelmingly male.



EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY HANISHA HARJANI

For the first time in nearly three decades, the government is poised to require companies to disclose every month how many women and people of color they employ on federally-funded construction projects.

The new rules, proposed by the Biden administration, follow The Fuller Project's story that revealed women have been systematically left out of the booming alternative energy sector.



Amplification by partner organizations on social media platforms expanded the article's reach to an additional 75,000 followers.



Additional coverage on radio and the web

A growing number of women farmers are changing the face of California's agricultural industry

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY RACHEL SARAH, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN

Most of the country's fruits and vegetables come from California, and as Congress prepares to debate its latest farm bill, many women are calling for it to provide more support for what the legislation calls "specialty crops:" local fruits and vegetables, often grown by women, as opposed to heavily subsidized staples such as wheat, corn, and soybean.

Women in agriculture continue to shake up the field across the country, as the growing presence of women in agriculture impacts how the industry operates, especially in the face of pandemics and climate change. Women-led farms tend to take a community-minded approach to how they operate and fill in gaps during crises.

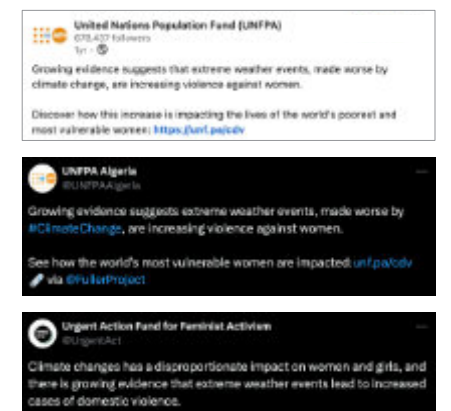
Climate change puts more women at risk for domestic violence

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY GEOFFREY ONDIEKI, DISHA SHETTY, & AIE BALAGTAS SEE, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE WASHINGTON POST & NATION



Photo by Geoffrey Ondieki

Amplification by organizations and individuals on social media platforms expanded the article's reach to more than 1 million followers.



As extreme weather events caused by climate change increase, so too does domestic violence. Growing evidence shows that the correlation is clear. Floods, heatwaves, and drought bring displacement, lost jobs, and uncertainty, all of which exacerbate existing pressures or make it easier for perpetrators to carry out violence.

"When there is no food to eat in the house, the men vent out their frustration by beating the women, who are raised with the belief that leaving is not an option," says Shilpi Singh, director of Bhoomika Vihar, a grassroots organization that works with women in Bihar, India.

Scientists have long warned that climate change disproportionately impacts the world's poorest and most vulnerable, and leaders of wealthy countries meeting at the #COP27 climate summit in Egypt last year pledged to do more to help countries in the Global South already grappling with its devastating effects.

Fuller Impact



Investigation into popular essential oils company doTERRA spurs immediate impact

Photo handouts from Beeyo Maal Cooperative

IMPACT FROM A STORY BY RACHEL FOBAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN

The U.S. essential oils company doTERRA used to source most of its frankincense oil from Somaliland, but workers told us the company did not practice the ethical approach it preached. More than a dozen women working for doTERRA's frankincense supplier, a company called Asli Maydi, said the company routinely underpaid its workers, required them to work in harsh conditions that are linked to health problems and was led by a politically powerful man whom multiple women accused of sexual harassment and assault.

For this two-year investigation, co-published with *the Guardian*, The Fuller Project spoke to 13 frankincense sorters (women who divide frankincense resin by color, grade and quality), three alleged sexual harassment victims, and a former U.S.-based sustainability consultant who accused the supplier, Barkhad Hassan, of rape. He denied all of the allegations.



Photo by Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images

“People are scared of Barkhad Hassan and his gang,” one woman said at the time. “We are living a life of hell.”

Reporting this story was difficult in a culture that made women ashamed to speak about how they'd been victimized. One woman kept describing how she “felt terrible” and was not herself after one of the incidents in question — she was too ashamed to say the word “rape” aloud to our reporter, the translator explained. She later talked more explicitly about the assault in a written statement. Our reporter earned her sources' trust by continuing to show up — speaking with them several times for months before formally interviewing them, periodically checking in with them throughout the process, and being dedicated to the story despite publishing setbacks.

The story's impact was swift and powerful. Presented with The Fuller Project's findings before publication, doTERRA said it would “temporarily suspend” its operations in Somaliland and investigate the matter. Within weeks of publishing, the

sorters had formed their own cooperative and are now working for themselves. In December, doTERRA severed its ties with the local supplier Asli Maydi, citing breaches of contract.

“We can build our future... and the future of other women.”

FATIMA MOHAMOUD MOHAMED,
FRANKINCENSE HARVESTER

The Fuller Project's reporting drew attention for the first time to the exploitation of women sorters by a company that says it champions community investment and competitive wages. DoTERRA markets to women, engages mostly female “wellness advocates” to sell their products, and counts among its influencers prominent female athletes and celebrities including singer/songwriter India Arie Simpson, professional tennis player Sloane Stephens, and Olympic Gold Medalist Jamie Anderson, according to their website.

U.S. customers expressed dismay and disappointment that doTERRA wasn't implementing the ethical practices it promised. This story helped them make an informed choice about the products they were purchasing and gave them the ability to vote with their wallets.

2,872+
HARVESTERS AND SORTERS ARE PART
OF THE BEEYO MAAL COOPERATIVE

Even as women's participation in the global labor force has begun to recover post-pandemic, women workers around the world face unique challenges. In 2023, our investigations found that women are disproportionately suffering the drawbacks of the rapidly evolving global economy while not sharing equally in its benefits – and spotlighted efforts to change that. We documented how women tea pickers in Kenya and garment workers in Bangladesh are [losing their jobs to automation](#), while in California, a new law could [force venture capital firms to be transparent](#) about the founders they fund, only 2% of whom are women. A slate of stories examined the economic precarity of working women in the U.S. – [mothers](#), [undocumented immigrants](#), and

[those who rely on benefits](#) to afford basic necessities – and we exposed the ways in which women are suffering financial exploitation and economic abuse, whether the perpetrators be [domestic partners](#) or [unscrupulous financial apps](#).

The global economy cannot thrive without half the world's population. Future prosperity and economic stability depend on women having equal labor participation, wages, and access to economic opportunity. Through our reporting, The Fuller Project aims to hold accountable those who perpetrate workplace injustice and to expose the barriers that still remain to economic gender equality.

Reporter's Notebook: Kenya's tea sector is automating fast, pushing women workers into a financial crisis

EXCERPT FROM A REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK BY ALLAN OLINGO



Photo by Billy Mutai/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

This September, I went on a field trip to Kericho, a major tea-harvesting region south-west of Nairobi, to report on the impact of automation on women tea pickers.

It was a story that struck a chord with the Kenyan public. Just a few months earlier, protesting tea workers had burned down nine Ekattera tea-picking machines worth \$1.2 million. Sadly, these protests turned violent when police intervened, leaving two dead and dozens injured.



Allan Olingo reporting on Kenya's tea sector, courtesy of Allan Olingo

But it wasn't just the tragic loss of life that made this story resonate in Kenya. It was also because 30,000 female tea pickers had lost their jobs because of automation in the past five years, leaving these poor women, often from rural areas, highly vulnerable.

Some had even turned to the sex trade to make ends meet. Last year, the BBC had broadcast a very disturbing investigation into sex for work on these same plantations in Kericho, showing how male supervisors often took advantage of these women's desperation.

African fashion is booming. It could create millions of jobs for women

EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY LOUISE DONOVAN



Photo by BENSON IBEABUCHI/AFP via Getty Images

In 2017, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie declared Lagos the most stylish city in the world. Fast-forward several years and cities such as Abidjan, Casablanca, Dakar, Johannesburg and Nairobi might also be equally deserving of the title, at least according to a new UNESCO report on Africa's fashion sector.

African fashion is booming thanks to international buyers and increased demand from the continent's expanding urban middle class, the United Nations' cultural agency found. There are now fashion weeks in 32 African countries. Sub-Saharan Africa's US\$31 billion apparel sector is set to keep growing each year, and a fully developed industry would boost prosperity across the continent.

Women could win big, too. Although the sector is already female-heavy, with women weaving and dying fabrics, sewing garments and designing collections, they face ongoing limited access to funding, infrastructure and training opportunities. Remove those hurdles and fashion can be a powerful springboard for gender equality, creating millions of extra jobs across the continent, especially for women and youth, says UNESCO.

"This to me is the easiest way to meet the gender gap [in Africa]," says Roberta Annan, founder of African Fashion Foundation (AFF), a Ghana-based non-governmental organization empowering African fashion designers and creatives.

"Even if it's in tiny, inscrutable ways, we're all so connected. So much so that what happens in one large country, such as the U.S., can dramatically impact – or devastate – the lives of women thousands of miles away."



LOUISE DONOVAN, REPORTER

Fuller Impact

New California law requires diversity among venture capital investments

IMPACT FROM A STORY BY HANISHA HARJANI, CO-PUBLISHED WITH *THE GUARDIAN*



DustyPixel/Getty Images

In October 2023, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law making the Golden State the first in the nation to require venture capitalists to disclose the gender and race of the founders they fund.

Female founders and civil rights groups say this bill could make a huge difference in exposing the most discriminatory venture firms in Silicon Valley and create more opportunities for women-run firms. According to the business data firm Pitchbook, companies founded by all-female teams accounted for just 2% of venture capital funding last year. Those led by Black women and Latinas received even less.

The Fuller Project was the first news outlet to bring significant attention to the issue. Following their story, published in partnership with *the Guardian*, our reporter Hanisha Harjani made appearances on the

national NPR program Here and Now, Marketplace, and CapRadio, in Sacramento, the state capital. Their work was shared widely among advocates and lawmakers ahead of Governor Newsom's deadline to sign or veto Senate Bill 54, which was passed by California lawmakers in September.

California represented over 40% of the \$246 billion in venture capital funding invested in the United States in 2022, according to data provided by Pitchbook. Because the law will apply to venture capital firms based in California along with those that invest in the state or solicit funds from residents, the law's impact will likely resonate from Silicon Valley to Wall Street and beyond. The Fuller Project was widely cited when Governor Newsom signed the law.

“The way that we engage with the issues we are writing about goes beyond just highlighting a problem — this is journalism as a public service.”

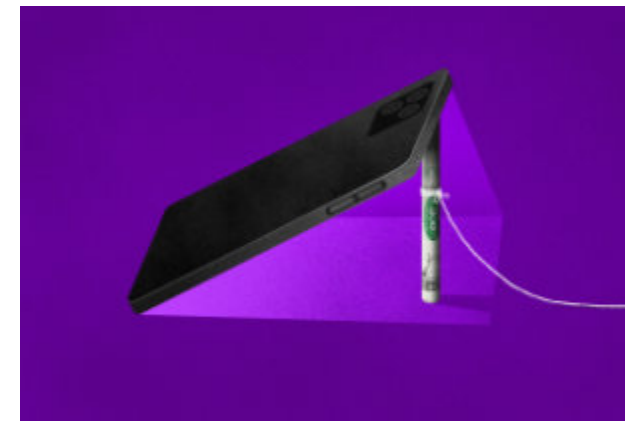


HANISHA HARJANI, REPORTER



Two U.S. states crack down on cash apps that trap women in debt

IMPACT FROM A STORY BY AARON GLANTZ AND MONICA CAMPBELL, CO-PUBLISHED WITH *THE LOS ANGELES TIMES*



Jim Cooke / Los Angeles Times

In May 2023, we reported on the Earned Wage Access industry, a \$9.5 billion, fast-growing sector that was almost entirely unregulated. The story showed how paycheck apps, including those backed by billionaire investor Mark Cuban, NBA star Kevin Durant and actor Ashton Kutcher, offer high cost cash advances, which like payday loans, are disproportionately used by women of color.

We found that the young women who use the apps often end up trapped in a cycle of debt — with promises of quick cash for groceries, rent and children's birthday parties masking effective annual interest rates of over 300%.

Since then two states, Maryland and Connecticut, have stepped in to regulate these apps, requiring most smartphone-based cash advances to follow their states' interest rate limits — 36% for Connecticut, 33% for Maryland for small loans — with tips and instant access fees included.

But in California, where we focused our reporting, regulators retreated. After ferocious industry opposition to initial draft regulations, the state Department of Financial Protection and Financial Innovation posted revised rules in November that require the apps to register as lenders with the state, but exempted them from interest and fee caps.

Suzanne Martindale, the state's senior deputy commissioner for consumer protection, framed the

rules as a step forward that “could have broader implications nationally” and argued that requiring the app companies to register as lenders was “a first step in bringing them into our formal oversight,” she said in an email.

But the new rules will not offer California consumers immediate protections. The apps “can continue to charge consumers whatever they want,” said Andrew Kushner, senior policy counsel for the Center for Responsible Lending.

A recent consumer survey from the advocacy group shows just how dependent users have become on these apps — with more than a third of customers of Dave, the company backed by Mark Cuban, seeking cash advances at least three times a week. At Brigit, the company backed by Durant and Kutcher, that number was closer to 40%. A representative from Dave declined to comment. A spokesperson from Brigit did not respond to The Fuller Project's inquiry.

“If I hadn't been at the Fuller Project, I don't know that I would have the support to stay on the story until we got the results that women all around the world deserve.”



AARON GLANTZ, CALIFORNIA BUREAU CHIEF & SENIOR EDITOR

In our health reporting, The Fuller Project documents the deep-seated obstacles to reliable health care for women and chronicles the ongoing struggle against a rising tide of gender-based violence. The stakes are high: when it comes to health, the lack of gender equality is literally killing women. Our 2023 reporting tracked an epidemic of [domestic violence in Ukraine](#) and the fight for [reproductive rights in the U.S.](#) and abroad. Our dogged coverage of [uterine cancer among 9/11 first responders](#) led to a major policy victory, and our story on how [women are systemically left out of medical research](#) struck a nerve in the medical community, with professionals and organizations amplifying the story on social media and beyond.

We also partnered with Afghanistan's *Zan Times* and, together, the reporters spent eight months assembling original data demonstrating that [women's rates of suicide and suicide attempts have skyrocketed](#) since the Taliban's takeover. Those rates now surpass that of men in nine of the 11 Afghan provinces for which we could obtain data – a global anomaly that experts say is a reaction to [unrelenting and widespread domestic abuse, forced marriage, and an almost complete lack of autonomy, as women show their defiance in the only way left to them.](#)



For *Zan Times* and The Fuller Project

Reporter's Notebook: As suicides rise in Afghanistan, getting people to open up under the Taliban poses enormous challenges

EXCERPT FROM A REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK BY ZAHRA NADER

It has now been two years of women in Afghanistan waking up to their worst nightmares, with little hope or purpose to live. So it is little surprise that news of young women taking their own lives out of desperation has become a regular pattern.

We started noticing these news reports early on. These stories were short and typically had little information and context about the suicide. So, we became interested in digging deeper, and wanted to get a sense of how widespread the problem was.

We knew this wouldn't be easy to work on. Not only because the Taliban targeted women's rights and press freedom, but also because suicide is a taboo topic in Afghanistan. It is considered un-Islamic to kill yourself. This made it hard to get people talking about a relative who had died by suicide.

It turned out we were right – at times, investigating such a sensitive topic under Taliban rule seemed totally unfeasible. It took over eight months to complete our work. We faced enormous challenges in finding trustworthy sources who were willing to share such personal stories, ensuring the safety of the people we spoke to and worked with, and then fact-checking the information we obtained.

Sex Matters: Medical Research Overlooks Women

EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY MAGGIE FOX, CO-PUBLISHED WITH *THE GUARDIAN*



Marko Geber/Getty Images

Women are twice as likely as men to die from heart attacks.

When a nonsmoker dies of lung cancer, it's twice as likely to be a woman as a man.

And women suffer more than men from Alzheimer's and autoimmune disease.

Yet research into these conditions, and many more, generally fails to examine women separately. It's even less likely to look at disparities affecting women of color – why, for instance, Black women are nearly three times more likely to die in pregnancy than white women are.

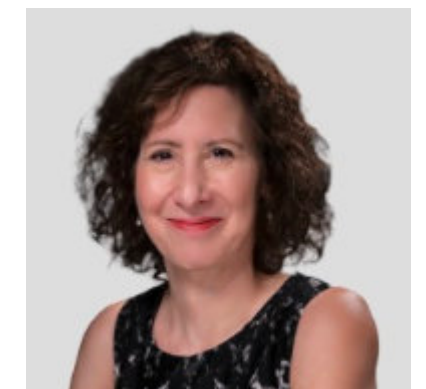
It's been 30 years since Congress ordered the National Institutes of Health to make sure women were included equally in clinical trials. But despite some progress, research on women still lags, and there's growing evidence that women and girls are paying the price.

"Research on women's health has been underfunded for decades, and many conditions that mostly or only affect women, or affect women differently, have received little to no attention," first lady Jill Biden said in announcing a new White House Initiative on Women's Health Research on Nov. 13.

"Because of these gaps, we know far too little about how to manage and treat conditions like endometriosis, and autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis. These gaps are even greater for communities that have historically been excluded from research – including women of color and women with disabilities."

The article was shared on social media by health organizations such as the Mayo Clinic, Women's Brain Project, Women's Equality Party, and The Menopause Society.

"At The Fuller Project, we understand that women around the world face problems that men do not, that discrimination still exists and, despite the gains of the past half century, that women have a long way to go in order to obtain economic, political and social equality. Until that happens, we need a place like The Fuller Project. We have a lot of work to do."



JODI ENDA
WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF &
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT



Fuller Impact



Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images

“We can finally exhale.” Women left out of 9/11 benefits finally eligible for health care, compensation

IMPACT FROM A STORY BY ERICA HENSLEY, CO-PUBLISHED WITH RECKON AND NJ.COM

For the last decade, every survivor and first responder of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City who later developed cancer has been eligible to receive health benefits from the U.S. government. Everyone except women with uterine cancer.

But following The Fuller Project’s reporting, U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) officials added uterine cancer to the list of conditions covered by the government program that monitors and treats those who lived and worked in Ground Zero — the 1.5-square-mile portion of New York City where carcinogenic dust and debris lingered for months after hijacked planes took down the World Trade Center twin towers in 2001.

By the beginning of 2024 more than 318 uterine cancer patients had received access to cancer treatment, monitoring and victim compensation funds.

“We’re relieved and feel like we can finally exhale, knowing many women will now receive the benefits

they deserve,” said Tammy Kaminski, a chiropractor based in West Caldwell, N.J. who volunteered for months at Ground Zero and later developed uterine cancer in 2015.

The decision to add uterine cancer to the list came after multiple stories from The Fuller Project and its partners about how women were systemically left out of the government’s World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP).

The reason cited for uterine cancer exclusion was “insufficient evidence” that it was linked to 9/11. But stories run by The Fuller Project and its partners — *Reckon*, *The Star-Ledger/NJ.com* and *The Cut* — revealed the lack of data was due to the small number of women included in the early days of the program, which resulted in skewed data that ultimately excluded conditions that affect women.

The program uses its own data to aggregate 9/11 causation and subsequent treatment coverage, so

uterine cancer and other female-specific conditions like auto-immune disorders were left off the list because patients in the mostly male program never developed those conditions — a catch-22 with women as the collateral damage. There was no data to prove causation for women’s conditions because it wasn’t collected — part of a systemic problem in health research.

318
9/11 SURVIVORS AND FIRST RESPONDERS WITH UTERINE CANCER HAVE ENROLLED IN HEALTH CARE SINCE OUR INVESTIGATION

Following our collaborative reporting U.S. congressman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) sent a letter to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and health program administrator John Howard urging them to act. Pallone sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee with jurisdiction over federal health policy, and also serves a district where many 9/11 survivors and first responders live.

Just over a week after Pallone’s letter, HHS released a final rule that uterine cancer patients could immediately apply for the program, noting

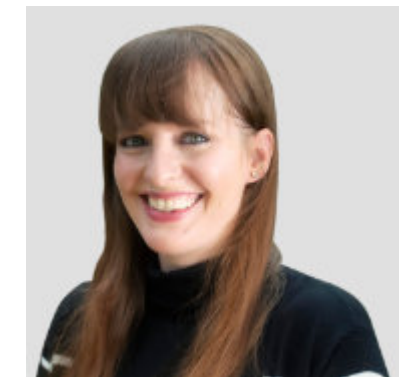
“I always try to approach storytelling with empathy and curiosity, meeting people where they are. Our sources don't owe us their stories, we have to earn them. That means spending time in communities, earning trust and listening, rather than parachuting in and extracting — not only is that approach the right thing to do to respect people's autonomy and lived reality, it makes for better storytelling.”

that a “delayed effective date would defer the agency’s ability to provide life-saving treatment and result in less favorable treatment outcomes and survival rates for covered individuals.”

This story and subsequent outcome resulted from dogged follow-up and innovative newsroom collaboration. Over the last four years, reporter Erica Hensley and The Fuller Project exposed the initial exclusion, followed the policy process to add uterine cancer, and ultimately, the delay, when after more than six months officials hadn’t followed through on their promises to add women with uterine cancer to the coverage rolls. It was our final story about the delay in January 2023, which landed in front of Pallone and his constituents, that finally prompted federal action.

Advocates for uterine cancer awareness say the news is an opportunity to spread the information about 9/11 health program enrollment, but also uterine cancer in general, which is often misdiagnosed or diagnosed late and leads to worse outcomes.

“They were told the air was safe to breathe. They were told their cancer wasn’t caused by 9/11,” said Matthew Baione, a lawyer who has been one of the earliest advocates for the cancer’s inclusion. “Now these women can feel vindicated and can access free healthcare that is statistically more likely to extend their lives.”



ERICA HENSLEY, REPORTER

Movements

Women are shaping the political currents of our world, leading unprecedented calls for change – from protests in Iran to resistance in Ukraine. Despite setbacks, the reproductive rights movement is driving action across the globe, from the U.S. to Poland to El Salvador. Our reporting this year investigated women’s role in changing the face of politics in [Peru](#), [Turkey](#), and [Sudan](#), and we took a wide-angle view of women’s political representation worldwide in our story about [the effectiveness of election gender quotas](#).

What we’ve consistently found is that, despite the forces stacked against them, women everywhere are undertaking courageous and

cutting-edge work in the fight for rights, equity, justice, and positive change. And they are winning victories – ousting dictators, overturning tyrannical regimes, obtaining human rights. But rarely does victory mean crossing the finish line. The work goes on, and women continue to grind the gears of justice toward equality. Previous generations have built these movements, won concessions, made hard and slow progress. Now, we stand on their shoulders as the next generation takes on the mantle of building toward gender equality around the world.

‘Women bear the biggest brunt of climate change,’ says climate scientist Susan Chomba

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY NEHA WADEKAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN



Fredryk Lerneryd for The Fuller Project

Kenyan Susan Chomba is a leader in the fight against climate change and for the environment in a high-profile role at the World Resources Institute. Chomba is a rarity. Roughly 12 percent of the world’s top climate scientists are women and fewer than one percent are from Africa – a continent likely to be one of the hardest hit by climate change.

Susan Chomba defies those statistics as a woman in an influential position at one of the world’s best-known environmental organizations. Her success comes from her efforts to solicit the views of those most affected and often most unheard – local farmers, community elders and, notably, women.



“BBC contacted me ... after seeing the article you did in *the Guardian*. This is what that article did.”

– SUSAN CHOMBA



Ismail Ferdous for The Fuller Project

How motherhood spurred one New Yorker to take on the fossil fuel industry

SUMMARY OF A STORY BY YESSENIA FUNES, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN

Motherhood opened Marlena Fontes’ eyes to the dangers posed by climate change and spurred her to co-found Climate Families NYC with fellow moms who also wanted to make a difference. The group seeks to help families find a space to act and give their kids a sense of agency over a crisis that can seem overwhelming. Now she’s using skills honed in her work as a labor organizer to take on the fossil fuel industry.

Conservative Muslim Women Helped Erdoğan Win Previous Elections. Now Some Are Turning Against Him

EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY FARIBA NAWA, CO-PUBLISHED WITH TIME

Şeyma Çetin is bursting with color: bright blue and pink eye shadow, a green half-sleeved shirt with jeans, a tie, and an orange headscarf. Her clothes and makeup stand out among other Turkish women in headscarves, and that’s Çetin’s goal: to show that it’s okay to be different. It’s a statement of defiance.



Photo by Özge Sebzeci for The Fuller Project

The headscarf was for a long time a controversial symbol in Turkey, where it was seen as a threat to the modern republic’s secular origins. For Çetin, though, it symbolizes freedom of choice.

“This is part of my political identity,” she says softly with a smile. “Society says a lot about what a woman in a headscarf should do, but actually, we can do anything.”

The 23-year-old student is among a growing number of women who call themselves Muslim feminists—and who aren’t going to be boxed in by

stereotypes. They belong to a new generation of religious women marked by their increasingly vocal opposition to Turkey’s conservative government led by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Their mothers saw Erdoğan as an ally thanks to his lifting of a highly contentious ban on wearing the headscarf in government offices in 2013. Earlier that year, as the Gezi Park anti-government protests swept across Turkey, he had co-opted them as a

constituency, describing them as “our sisters in headscarves.” But in the decade that followed, many younger religious women like Çetin have shifted away from the President and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). They accuse the government of trying to roll back the hard-won rights of Turkish women, including removing legal protections against gender-based violence and severely limiting access to abortion.

Theory of Change

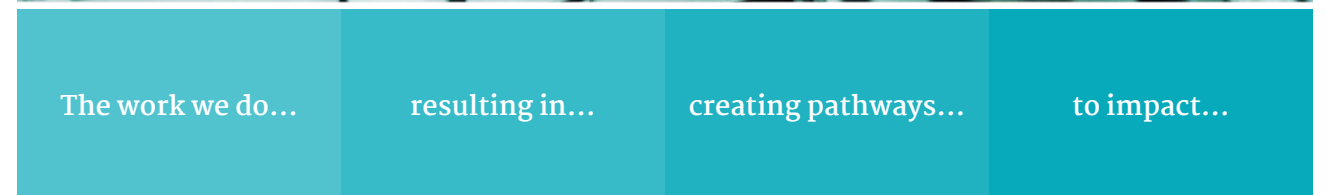
At The Fuller Project, our goal is to catalyze positive change for women through our groundbreaking reporting.

For that to happen, the world needs to see changes in policies and practices at the system level. Among governments, corporations, and institutions, unjust and unequal policies must be improved, and unjust and unequal practices must be stopped or changed. That's how we define impact: positive changes in systems and structures. This includes everything from shifts in social norms and behavior to the balancing of power relations to the reform of policies and practices.

How do we get there? We believe the pathway to long-term impact is exposing unjust or negligent policies and behaviors, and getting information into the hands of decision-makers who can deliver change. Through our reporting, decision-makers are equipped with evidence on the issues we cover, and academics, advocates, civil society organizations, and funders are armed with our reporting as they pursue their work advancing gender equality.

Impact is our north star. Our rigorous, data-driven reporting centers stories affecting women that would otherwise not be told, and we persistently follow up on those stories to drive impact and accountability. By doing so, The Fuller Project brings overlooked injustices and inequalities into the light of the public sphere and puts vital information into the hands of those who are placed to change an inequitable status – ultimately leading to sustained improvements in the lived experience of women and their communities.

Our vision is a world where women have equal standing in society.



Rigorous, data-driven reporting and investigative series

Exclusive stories centered on women that otherwise would not be told

Persistent follow up on stories to drive impact and accountability

Partnership with renowned outlets and local journalists

Groundbreaking journalism in each of our focus areas:

Health
Economy & Labor
Climate & Environment
Movements

Decision makers are equipped with evidence on the issues we cover

Academics, advocates, and funders use Fuller's reporting in their work advancing gender equality

Unjust or negligent policies and behaviors are exposed

Unjust and unequal government, corporate, and institutional policies are improved

Unjust and unequal government, corporate, and institutional practices are stopped or changed

Partners

Partnership is at the heart of The Fuller Project. The exclusive in-depth stories reported by our journalists are published in renowned global outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *the Guardian*, and *Foreign Policy*, and in partnership with leading outlets around the world, from India to Afghanistan to Kenya. Through these partnerships, our work reaches the biggest digital and print news audiences in the world. Our reporters are from the countries or regions where they report, and they bring deep gender and regional expertise to our partner organizations. Deeply rooted in their regions, they can report authentically and from a place of trust when dealing with vulnerable populations, offering our partner outlets a nuanced perspective on stories that they may otherwise be unable to tell. Our publishing partnerships are not only mutually beneficial for outlets, reporters, and readers; they also shift newsroom practice worldwide toward a more equal representation of women's perspectives.



Funders

The Fuller Project is generously funded by a diverse group of supporters who share our commitment to expert journalism about women and the issues that shape their lives. Their support enables us to undertake often lengthy investigations, track long-term trends, and keep telling the story even when most of the media headlines have moved on. We are deeply grateful to all of our supporters.

- Ravi Agrawal
- Gail Louise Auerbach
- Leslie Bernard
- Mary Berner
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- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- The Frankel Family Foundation
- The Hitchcock Hoagland Foundation
- The Philanthropy Workshop
- The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting
- The Schmidt Family Foundation
- Two West Foundation

Financials

INCOME*	2023
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	1,085,863
Blue Shield of California Foundation	295,761
Humanity United	260,000
Nation Media Group	186,666
Packard Foundation	125,000
The Philanthropy Workshop	125,000
Schmidt Family Foundation	110,000
Craig Newmark Philanthropies	100,000
Foundation Support under \$100K	254,868
Individual Donors	341,913
Other Income (Interest, Earned Revenue)	87,276
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,972,347
EXPENSES	
Editorial Salaries and Benefits	1,166,088
Editorial Expenses	294,892
Communications Salaries and Benefits	378,144
Communications Expenses	187,008
Administration Salaries and Benefits	312,196
Administration Expenses	266,610
Fundraising Salaries and Benefits	226,134
Fundraising Expenses	134,154
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,965,226

*Income is shown in an annualized view to align use of contributions with 2023 expenditures.

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A note of thanks from our Co-Founder, Xanthe Scharff

In 2023, I transitioned from my role as CEO at The Fuller Project, and I am filled with pride and gratitude for how far we have come.

Nine years ago, I met author and journalist Christina Asquith at the gate of her home on a hilltop near my apartment in Istanbul. She'd written *Sisters in War*, the only foreign policy book about Iraqi women during the U.S. invasion. In 2004, I had been on the other side of that war, supporting a deployed partner, and at times terrified that he wouldn't come home.

When we met in 2014, we were working as journalists in Turkey. While ISIS gained ground in Syria and Iraq, we saw that amid the cycle of violence, women's rights suffered, but their story was rarely reported. In the decade prior, I'd worked to support women activists who faced political and physical danger to help others. I didn't see their stories of courage reported either. I joined Christina to launch The Fuller Project to change that.

At first, The Fuller Project was a loose network of frontline freelancers and war correspondents. Reporting on women was not a viable career path for most of us in 2014, so those who focused on women were often lone story hunters. More than one of us had been told to avoid the 'pink ghetto' of reporting on women. Once we banded together, instead of chasing down editors, we were fielding multiple assignments.

Even so, launching The Fuller Project was not easy. Unlike the large nonprofit newsrooms that inspired us, we didn't start with big names or big money. We had to create something that didn't exist – a top-tier investigative newsroom focused on women – while disrupting sexism in the industry.

The women we reported about, from Iraq to Nigeria to Minnesota and beyond, fueled us. Soon, their stories were in and on the front pages of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, *The New Yorker*, *Reuters*, the *LA Times*, *Foreign Policy*, CNN, the *Guardian* and so many others.

We stayed with their stories long after other headlines moved on.

Like women leaders everywhere, we did more with less while trying to do better. We reached audiences of millions – not on our own, but through partnerships. We worked with local reporters, centering their on-the-ground contributions. We asked funders to take a chance on us, and for many of those who did, we were the first newsroom or the first team focused on women that they funded.

Since then, we have published hundreds of articles in over 50 news outlets. We contributed to improved outcomes in maternal health, helped save women's lives, and spurred the passage of groundbreaking bills. For this, we've won 30 industry awards and the trust of the women who honor us with their stories.

We have worked with over 100 contributors and editors around the world, and in so doing we contributed to a powerful movement for better journalism. We created a new model with *Nation* in Kenya by embedding our reporter in their newsroom as they launched the first gender desk in Africa. We've partnered with and brought attention to many other global newsrooms that risk everything to challenge the status quo, like *Rukhshana Media* and *Zan Times* in Afghanistan.

All around us, the forces of authoritarianism and insularity threaten women and the universal principles of human rights and freedom of expression. In these dark times, it's hard to see the possibility of a brighter future for humanity. There is, however, one sure way for us to move forward.

Listen to the women.

Thank you for staying with our story. My greatest salute to our journalists, to our new leader, and all our people who lift up our reporting. The best is yet to come.



Support Us

Our vision is to catalyze positive change for women and their communities through groundbreaking reporting that exposes injustice, changes policies, and shifts practices. If you share our goal, we ask you to consider making a gift to The Fuller Project to support our work.

Donate now through our secure site at FullerProject.NetworkForGood.com

or send a check made out to:

Fuller Project for International Reporting
7920 Norfolk Avenue, #310
Bethesda, MD 20814.

The Fuller Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and all contributions are fully deductible within the limits of the law. For questions about supporting our work, please email Leslie Bernard at lbernard@fullerproject.org.

As more than half the population consists of women and girls, it is vital to address and highlight the challenges, successes, and innovations of women facing inequities around the world through investigative reporting. The Fuller Project, as a global newsroom, is an essential resource, giving me the full story about these issues. I am grateful for its significant role in driving change towards a world with greater dignity and equity for all of us.

– GINA MAYA, BOARD MEMBER

We are proud and happy to support The Fuller Project, both because of their commitment to deeply researched, high-quality investigative journalism, and because of the real and meaningful positive impact their work has on some of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in the world.

– JOE SLAUGHTER, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
THE HORACE W. GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION

2023 REPORTING

Climate change puts more women at risk for domestic violence

[GEOFFREY ONDIEKI, DISHA SHETTY, AND AIE BALAGTAS SEE, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE WASHINGTON POST AND NATION](#)

Somaliland's frankincense brings gold to companies. Its women pay the price

[RACHEL FOBAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN](#)

The only cancer that won't get covered for women of 9/11

[ERICA HENSLEY, CO-PUBLISHED WITH RECKON AND NJ.COM](#)

On these women-run Himalayan farms, even climate-resilient crops are failing

[DISHA SHETTY & ANVI MEHTA, CO-PUBLISHED WITH SCROLL](#)

Eating last and least: Widening gender hunger gap raises climate alarm

[RITWIK MITRA, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY](#)

In Thailand, an Uphill Battle to Legalize Sex Work

[NEHA WADEKAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY](#)

A growing number of women farmers are changing the face of California's agricultural industry

[RACHEL SARAH, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN](#)

'This War Made Him a Monster.' Ukrainian Women Fear the Return of Their Partners

[JESSIE WILLIAMS, CO-PUBLISHED WITH TIME](#)

Anxious wait for working mothers as last of California's pandemic relief set to expire

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Peru has its first female president — but feminists aren't celebrating

[SIMEON TEGEL, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY](#)

"There's no support" — Undocumented and unemployed in pandemic-era California

[YUSRA FARZAN, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN](#)

"Cornered on all sides"

[ANNA-CATHERINE BRIGIDA, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY](#)

The Carolina Abortion Fund: A lifeline for Southern women, struggles to meet demand amid state bans

[ERICA HENSLEY, CO-PUBLISHED WITH RECKON](#)

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Conservative Muslim Women Helped Erdoğan Win Previous Elections. Now Some Are Turning Against Him

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"This is ours" — Somaliland women smell success as frankincense business takes off

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Will California crack down on cash apps that trap women in debt?

[AARON GLANTZ & MONICA CAMPBELL, CO-PUBLISHED WITH LOS ANGELES TIMES](#)

'Women bear the biggest brunt of climate change,' says climate scientist Susan Chomba

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South Korea's crackdown on false accusations has "chilling effect" on rape survivors

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She escaped her husband's physical violence — but economic ties kept them connected for years

[CARLY STERN, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN](#)

The women who helped bring down Sudan's dictator hoped it would end discrimination against them. Instead, they're fighting for their lives.

[NEHA WADEKAR, CO-PUBLISHED WITH FOREIGN POLICY](#)

Afghan women take their own lives as despair grows under Taliban rule

[ZAHRA NADER & ZAN TIMES REPORTERS, CO-PUBLISHED WITH THE GUARDIAN](#)

Silicon Valley VCs Invest Almost Exclusively in Companies Founded by Men. Could a new California law change that?

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Women workers at high risk from automation

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India has made remarkable progress cutting maternal deaths. Could climate change pose a threat?

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THE FULLER PROJECT™

The Fuller Project is the global newsroom
dedicated to groundbreaking reporting that
catalyzes positive change for women.

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