



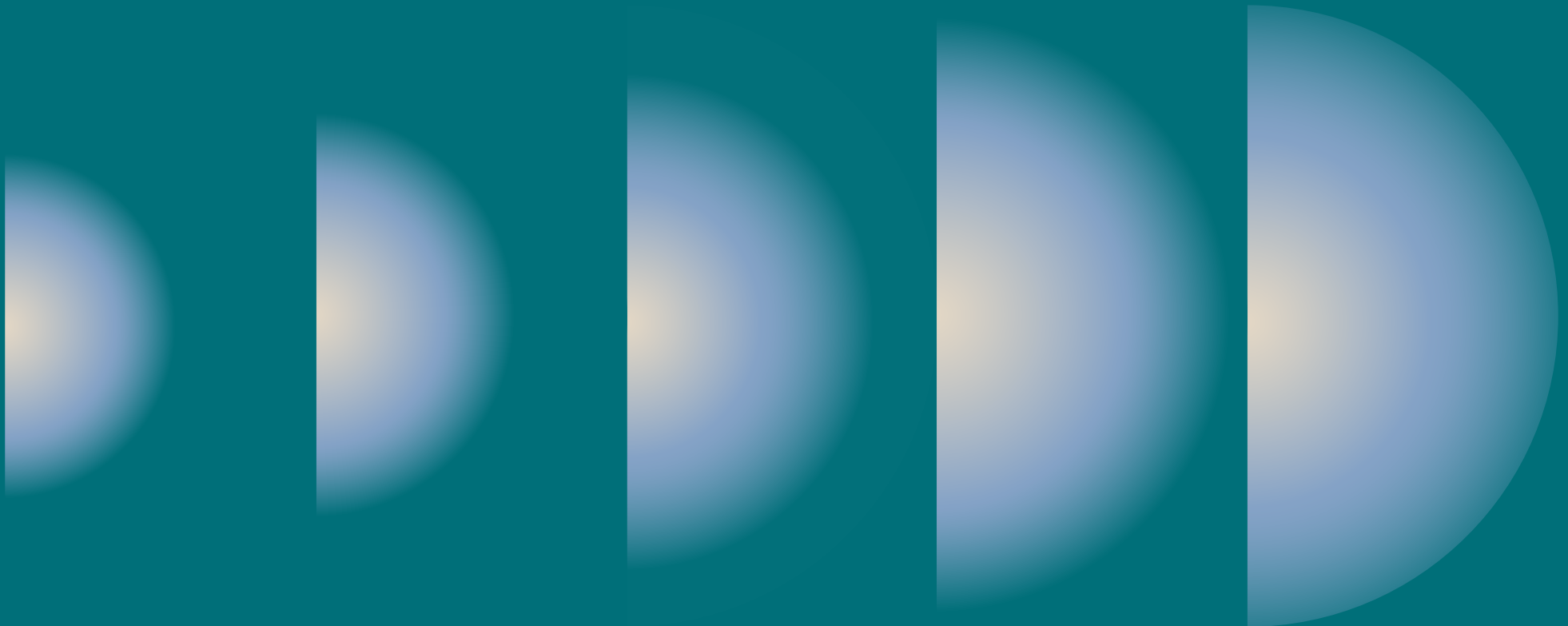
Dalan Fund's

**Theory of
Transformation**

2026

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The background features a light beige color with several abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of teal and light green. These shapes include circles, triangles, and curved, leaf-like forms, arranged in a symmetrical pattern that suggests a stylized face or a pair of eyes. The shapes are layered, with some appearing more prominent than others.

How We Understand Transformation

Our Theory of Transformation articulates how we at Dalan Fund understand and contribute to transformative change in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central and North Asia (CEECCNA regions).

It embodies reflections and reckoning of our shared past of oppression and interconnected injustices, analysis of the current moment of political turbulence, and visions of a liberatory future for people from the regions.

It also builds on historical achievements and strives to expand hard-won rights and democratize institutions while also resisting their erosion, dismantling, or co-optation.

It is rooted in a deep awareness of how systemic and historic oppression operates across the CEECCNA regions—through lived experiences of colonization, authoritarianism, nationalism, militarism, and the erasure of voices of descent. It recognizes that systemic transformation calls for bold political imagination, redistribution of power and resources, and coordinated and consistent actions.

Our role as a multi-regional participatory fund is to build connective tissue and catalyse the change that is already happening - in mutual aid networks, in underground organizing, and in everyday resistance of CEECCNA communities. We see ourselves as facilitators, weavers, and political allies for the local grassroots ecosystem, as well as the ecosystem of funders.

Our work is guided by the belief that transformation is not an endpoint in itself, but an ongoing, interconnected, and relational process - one that unfolds through collective visioning, mutual solidarity, and action.





Situating Our Theory of Transformation

In late 2022, six months into the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and decades after **Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central and North Asia (CEECCNA)** regions lived through cycles of crises and emergencies, an idea emerged to build an activist-led fund to resource regional intersectional social justice organizing. After months of consultations with CEECCNA-based grassroots activists and international human rights funders, in January 2023, the Dalan Fund was seeded in a complex political terrain, which we navigate with the following grounding truth:

People across CEECCNA regions live in compounded and accumulated poly-crises that are often invisible and overlooked:



Geopolitical crises in the CEECCNA regions are rooted in historical and ongoing imperialist control, exploitation, and harm. Imposed political and economic agendas have stripped people of self-determination, fueling conflict and forced migration, extracting resources, and propping up authoritarian regimes. This legacy endures through economic dependence on Russia and the influence of other colonial actors, reinforced by legal shifts that consolidate authoritarian rule.



Socioeconomic crises, fueled by exploitative global systems, regions are stuck on the global semi-periphery— isolated and forced to compete rather than collaborate. In this fragmented landscape, authoritarianism spreads, rolling back the gains of social justice movements and limiting basic rights, dignity, and freedom. As social mobility declines, frustration grows and is often redirected as hostility toward marginalized groups, deepening social divisions.



Humanitarian crises continue, marked by forced displacement, food insecurity, and collapsing health and social systems. As these conditions drag on, they are becoming normalized and largely ignored by the international community.



Political crises are deepening as democratic spaces shrink, creating fertile ground for anti-rights, anti-gender, and anti-democratic movements. Resistance is silenced through repressive laws, mass surveillance, intimidation, and attacks on activists and marginalized communities. With no real systems to hold those in power accountable, the rule of law is often ignored. Political elites use propaganda, nationalism, division, and fear to stay in power.



Militarization is increasing amid ongoing wars, frozen conflicts, and border disputes. While military spending grows, people face deep, intergenerational poverty and constant fear of violence. Displaced people, refugees, and migrants endure systemic discrimination, with their safety and well-being under threat.



Environmental destruction worsens due to extractive industries, land grabs, and pollution—often in areas with no protections in place. These activities destroy ecosystems, trigger disasters like landslides, and strip communities of their livelihoods and futures. Affected people are excluded from decisions about their land and resources. Those who resist face institutional barriers, personal risk, and little chance for accountability, while future generations bear the consequences.



Social justice movements in CEECCNA have been systematically and chronically underfunded

Trapped in a cycle of democratic decline and weakening human rights systems, social justice movements in the CEECCNA regions continue to lead efforts to address and transform the ongoing poly-crisis. Despite their vital role, these movements remain severely underfunded and often operate in survival mode. Funding data and movement experiences highlight the urgent need for movement-led analysis and strategy. This would help guide philanthropy to support local movements in a more strategic and responsive way.

Of direct funding, the average human rights grant to the regions is lower than any other region around the world.¹ HRFN finds that **only 6% of human rights funding for the regions comes as direct, flexible grants.** HRFN notes, “... a staggering 94% of the funding is earmarked for specific projects or doesn’t directly reach the region at all.”²

Funding is characterized by boom-bust cycles and crises. Sustained, flexible, multiyear support is extremely limited.

According to activists, **most of the funding they receive (71%) is project-based and for one year or less.**³

**\$11,000-
\$30,000**

The average organizational budget range in the CEECCNA regions was USD 11,000-30,000 over the five years (2019-2023).

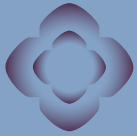
¹ Thomas, Rachel and Kellea Miller. 2024. [Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Human Rights Grantmaking. 2020 Findings.](#) Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN)

² Thomas, Rachel and Kellea Miller. 2023. [Trust Gap: The Troubling Lack of Direct, Flexible Funding for Human Rights in the Global South and East.](#) Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN)

³ [Growing Against All Odds: Mapping Funding for Intersectional Organizing in the CEECCNA Regions.](#) Dalan Fund. 2025



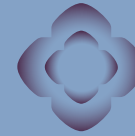
Several key factors contribute to the lack of adequate funding:



The **CEECCNA** regions are often **overlooked and deprioritized** by funders due to geopolitical complexity, limited systemic analysis, a lack of understanding of diverse local contexts, and operational challenges in certain geographies.



A top-down funding approach has created fragmented relationships within grassroots movements, leading to **misaligned strategies** that often contradict local political visions, needs, and priorities. Funder-driven agendas have been **contradicting** movement priorities, and there has been an inadequacy of movement-led funding strategies and participatory mechanisms.



Intersectional organizing is present in all CEECCNA countries. However, organizers often have to **pigeonhole their work** into a single silo to receive funding, rather than present the full richness of their organizing to funders.



Hostile political environments and repressive laws make it risky for organizers to receive international support in traditional ways. Funders, often risk-averse, **avoid regions** where funding is difficult. Moreover, due to security concerns in highly restrictive countries, organizing often occurs underground and out of the public eye. Therefore, it is not easily identifiable to funders' radars.



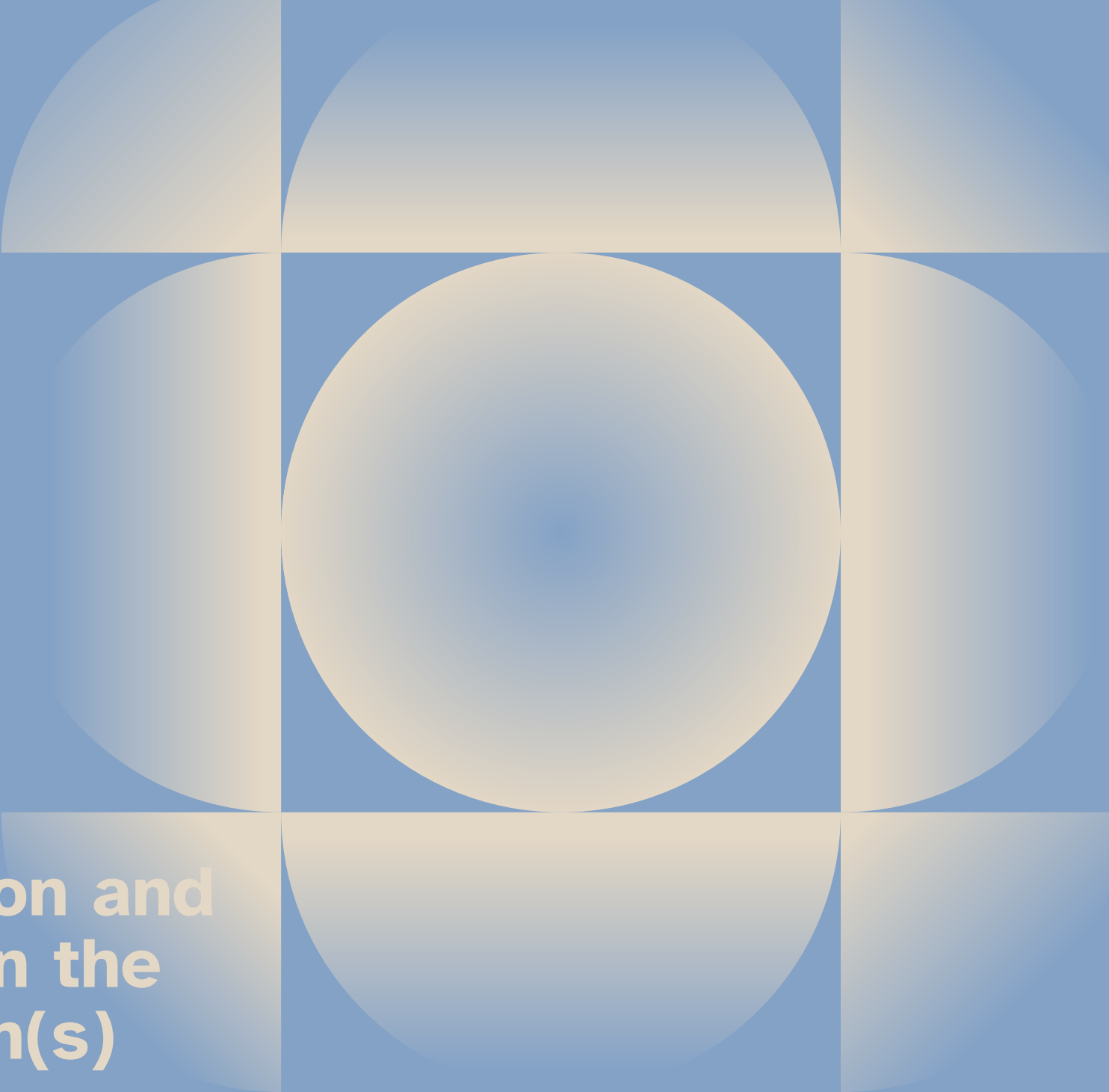
“Funder priorities are at odds with movements. Funders focus on visible actions and policy wins, which may place movements at greater risk.”

- Growing Against All Odds Report



Social justice movements are at the frontline of systemic crisis work, and due to limited available resources, they are put in **survival mode**. Crises need to be situated in local contexts. The definition of crisis is narrow and fails to capture the layers of silent and invisible crises; therefore, funding mechanisms are not adequately addressing a vast range of movement-led strategies to prevent and prepare for, as well as respond to and recover from crises, as well as to imagine futures beyond crises.





**Our Mission and
the Role in the
Ecosystem(s)**

Dalan Fund's role is shaped by the two worlds we are part of - the funding ecosystem and an ecosystem of CEECCNA movement organizing, facilitating connections and synergies between movement-led political visions, funding strategies, and collective actions to advance human rights and dignity for all.

We are on a mission to transform how Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central and North Asia are resourced, fostering resilience and the collective power of intersectional social justice organizers and movements in and for the regions.



Intersectionality -

We acknowledge that for historically and currently excluded communities, there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle. Our intersectional approach transcends artificial funding silos and is reflective of the complexity of how movements organize cross-movement, cross-thematic, and cross-identity.



Participation -

We are the first regional fund in CEECCNA with participatory grantmaking, bridging the political vision and priorities of local movements and the global funding ecosystem. Collective co-design and decision-making processes ensure that we are in tune with dynamic and ever-shifting organizing landscapes in the regions, and we move resources in nimble, responsive, responsible, and strategic ways.



Multi-regional Approach -

In recognition of the deeply entangled roots of our shared past, diverse realities, and the artificial grouping of the regions of CEECCNA, we affirm interconnectedness and distinction of the local contexts.



Comprehensive Crisis Work -

We are reflective of the vast array of strategies and tactics employed by organizers in rapidly changing and complex political environments. To provide a systemic response to the poly-crises in the regions, we fund four dimensions of crisis work - prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery- as well as future visions, imaginations, and systemic alternatives led by local organizers.



We believe that by investing in decentralised but connected movement-led organizing ecosystems, we strengthen community-rooted leadership, infrastructure for long-term resilience, and bold political imagination that reaches beyond crisis.

To do so, we resource the critical movement infrastructure that includes, but is not limited to:

- **Political, Legal, and Strategic Infrastructure**
- **Community, Trust, and Care Infrastructure**
- **Financial, Operational, and Institutional Infrastructure**
- **Knowledge, Monitoring, and Narrative Infrastructure**
- **Technological Infrastructure**





Central and Eastern Europe

Belarus | Hungary | Moldova | Poland Romania | Slovakia
| Ukraine



South Caucasus

Armenia | Azerbaijan | Georgia



Central and Northern Asia

Kazakhstan | Kyrgyzstan | Tajikistan | Turkmenistan |
Uzbekistan

*In the Russian Federation, we aim to fund organizing within and by indigenous peoples' movements from the North Caucasus and North Asia.

Acknowledging the historical and ongoing complexities of forcible exile, displacements, and dislocations of peoples from within the regions, the fund supports political organizing led by multi-regional migrant and diasporic activists working for social justice in the CEECCNA regions.

Centering the decolonial approach to how CEECCNA regions are seen, understood, and funded, we deliberately name them as three regions that need simultaneously distinct and interconnected resourcing approaches.

We distribute resources to movement-based registered organizations and unregistered collectives led by historically and currently excluded communities. We prioritize organizing primarily led by, working for, and with women, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people



We fund at the intersection of the following movements:

- **Feminist, Gender Justice, and Bodily Autonomy**
- **Racial, Ethnic, and Indigenous Justice**
- **Economic and Labor Justice**
- **Climate and Environmental Justice**
- **Migration and Displacement**
- **Sex workers' rights**
- **Harm Reduction and People Living with HIV**
- **Peacebuilding and Anti-Militarization**
- **Digital Rights and Tech Justice**
- **Disability Rights and Justice**

Please note that the list mentioned above is by no means exhaustive. We acknowledge that movements use various articulations to identify themselves, and we do not intend to offer a fixed framework to name the movements. The list serves as a generalized framework that is being adapted along the way, as we intend to offer spaciousness in how self-identifications may shift.





Our Approach to Crisis Work

Our practice of crisis work is informed by our belief that while crises are systemic, they are also contextual and situated, and communities with lived experiences and movements at the frontline response are best placed to define them. This framework is our contribution to rethinking how humanitarian and human rights crises are understood and to reshaping how frontline organizers are funded. It responds to often-overlooked, overlapping forms of oppression and complex crises. We recognize that social justice movements are not just responders—they are essential actors in all areas of crisis response and transformation.



Crisis Prevention -

Local activists and community organizers are the first to signal that a crisis is on the horizon, assess risks, and develop strategies and tactics to prevent escalation. Dalan Fund intends to listen to these signals and move resources to strengthen movement-led crisis prevention work.



Crisis Preparedness -

To address emerging crises across the regions timely and effective manner, the fund aims to resource strategic and proactive infrastructure and coordination efforts. This supports movement-led frontline responses so that organizers can strategize and address crises as they see fit.



Crisis Response -

To address the complexity of multiple ongoing and interconnected humanitarian and human rights crises in the regions, the fund resources emergency, mid-term, and long-term movement-led strategies and responses.



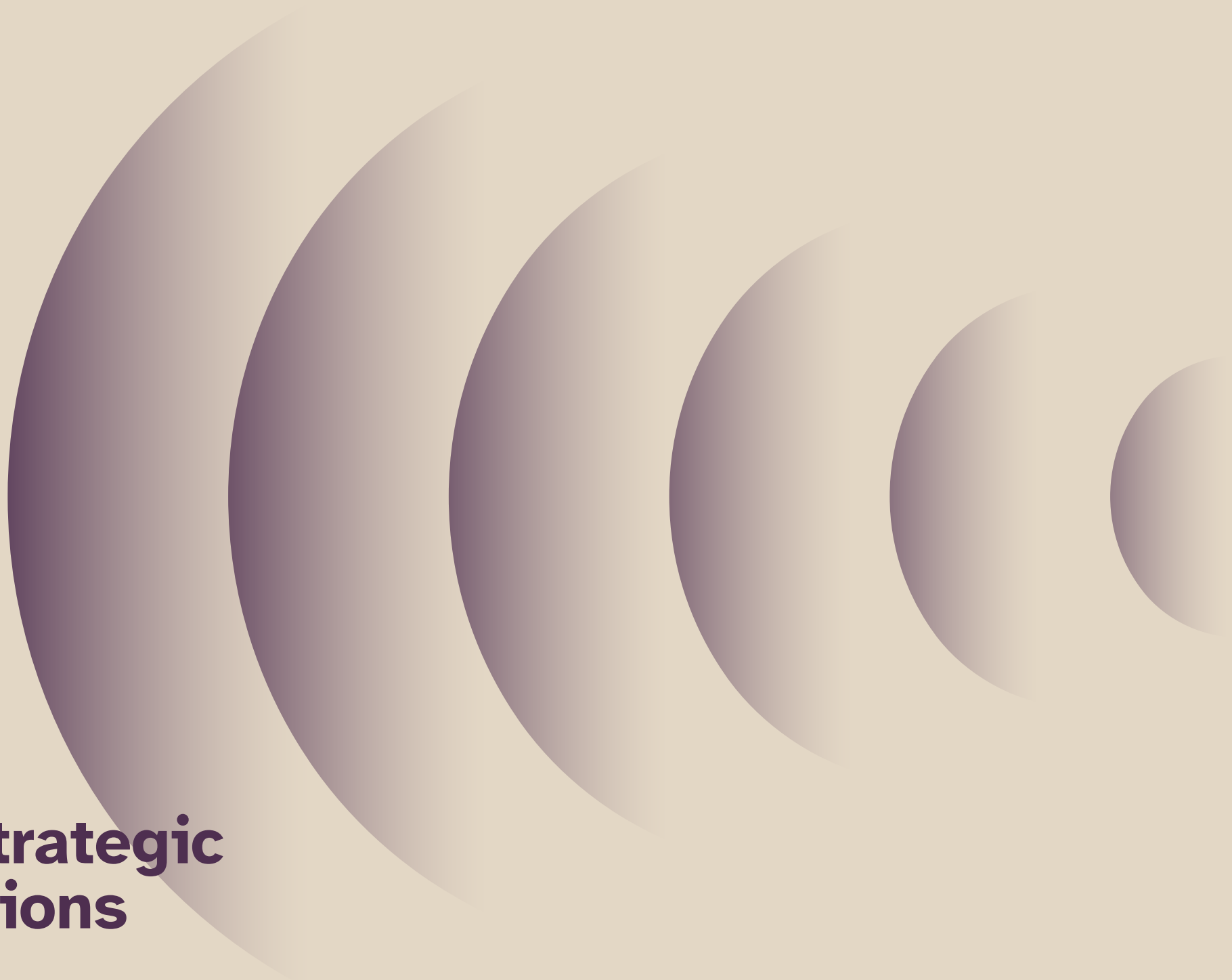
Crisis Recovery -

Coming out of the state of emergency and moving toward stabilization and full recovery is crucial, especially with the movement-led vision and tactics at its very core. The Fund enables the creation of movement-led crisis recovery strategies and supports rethinking and rebuilding, as well as generating vital resources for continuing activism.

Crisis does not define us—our imagination and resourcefulness do.

We invest in regional organizing ecosystems not just to respond to crisis, but to build the futures we deserve. Movements are already leading with vision, courage, and care. Our role is to move resources in alignment with their strategies, timelines, and collective power.





Our Strategic Directions

To ensure that we move toward our mission as a participatory multi-regional fund, we employ the following strategies centering on lived experiences and political guidance of social justice organizers from Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central and North Asia:



Resourcing The Organising Ecosystem in CEECCNA

Through our participatory grantmaking, we distribute resources for movement-led crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, as well as political imagination beyond crises.



Transforming The Funding Ecosystem

We mobilise donor communities and put CEECCNA regions on the funders' map. We advocate for increased and improved funding and offer funders an alternative infrastructure for safely transferring resources to regional, intersectional movements.



Fostering Collective Power and Critical Movement Infrastructures

We foster cross-regional exchange and knowledge production, facilitate collective strategizing among organizers and funders, and strengthen critical movement infrastructure for movement resilience.





Shifts

We believe that the strategic directions outlined above will enable the following shifts in funding and organizing landscapes:

Resourcing Regional Organising Ecosystem

Increased Access to Resources for Movements

Grassroots and frontline movements in the regions receive **timely, flexible,** and **sustained resources** tailored to their needs.

Enhanced Capacity for Crisis Anticipation and Response

Regional organizers develop and implement collective **tools, knowledge,** and **protocols** for early warning, community-based risk assessment, and rapid response grounded in the local context.

Strengthened Movement-Led Decision-Making and Resource Governance

Participatory mechanisms enable CEECCNA movements to **lead in setting funding priorities,** decision-making processes, and accountability systems for resource allocation and impact assessment.

Decolonized and Contextual Approaches are Centered in Resourcing the Regional Organizing

Regional knowledge and **wisdom, ancestral practices,** and lived experiences shape how resources are distributed and how responses are designed, rejecting one-size-fits-all models.

Movements Are Centering Political Imagination, Not Just Survival

Regional intersectional movements have breathing space and support to build **long-term strategies,** co-creating transformative visions for justice, care, and liberation in the CEECCNA regions —moving from cycles of crises to strategic transformation.

Transforming Funding Ecosystem

CEECCNA Movements Are No Longer Invisible in Global Philanthropy

Through active **donor mobilization** and **advocacy**, Dalan Fund is **putting the regions on the map**—elevating the region's visibility and strategic importance in global funding spaces.

Political Allyship and Sharing Risk

Through its grantmaking infrastructure, Dalan Fund works alongside peer funders to **navigate repressive laws** across the CEECCNA regions, sharing the risks and enabling safer, more effective resourcing.

Nuanced Crisis Funding

Funding strategies reflect a **deep understanding of local crisis contexts**, enabling movements to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from complex crises.

Shared Strategy Spaces for Organizers and Funders

Dialogue and co-strategy spaces between movements and aligned funders lead to greater alignment, transparency, and trust.

A Just and Strategic Funding Ecosystem is Emerging for CEECCNA Movements

In collaboration with funders and strategic allies, Dalan Fund **enables an ecosystem approach**—fostering trust-based, participatory, and movement-led funding strategies that align with the lived realities, organizing characteristics, and priorities of CEECCNA grassroots organizers.

Fostering Collective Power and Critical Infrastructures

Strengthened Regional Ecosystems of Solidarity

Regional networks and alliances are **built**, better **connected, resourced,** and capable of collaborative response and mutual solidarity to emerging and overlapping crises and structural injustice.

Increased Resilience and Preparedness

Organizing and **funding ecosystems have mechanisms** in place to anticipate and respond to future crises.

Propelled Collective Learning and Cross-Regional Exchange

Practices, learnings, challenges, and **successes are documented and shared** across regions to deepen mutual understanding, solidarity, and replicability of organizing strategies.

Increased Agility of the Movement Infrastructure

Regional organizers build and maintain decentralized critical movement infrastructure as a tool for collective power that is resilient, durable, and transforming in relation to shifting political contexts.



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Transformations

All the shifts above will pave the way to the transformations from **Starvation to Strength: Regenerating CEECCNA Movements, and Reclaiming Justice** that we work for at Dalan Fund:

Funding Ecosystem Transforms:

By changing how the regions and crises are understood and funded, we **shift power toward regional movements** as indispensable forces for justice. We strengthen the resistance of movements against the structural inequalities, authoritarianism, anti-human rights, and anti-gender backlash.

Organizing Ecosystem Regenerates:

Movements recover from perpetual crises, polarization, and cycles of starvation. Cross-movement and region-wide knowledge and solidarity are cross-pollinated, making movements grounded yet agile, innovative, and rooted in community-centered political visions and alternatives.

Just Futures in CEECCNA Regions are Built:

We dismantle persistent patterns of oppression, marginalization, competition, and fragmentation, **fostering new modes of relationship-building** centered on autonomy, mutual trust, collaboration, and accountability, enabling transformative justice, freedom, and dignity for all.