



igdc center for equality
advancement

A Year of Inclusivity

2023 activity report

Center for Equality Advancement (CEA) –
Lithuania-based NGO carrying its work since 2003.

We organize informational campaigns, advocacy,
provide training courses and seminars, publish
articles, manuals and other publications, carry out
research, provide expertise on the themes of gender
equality, diversity and human rights.

Our vision – women* being safe and free

*Considering themselves women and/or socialized as women.

Our mission – to identify and address gender
inequalities.

I. 2023 in a nutshell

- We have **raised the rights of women with disabilities** as one of the priorities of feminism, as well as reduced the barriers that negative societal attitudes create for those of us with disabilities. The research showed significant change in attitudes in Panevėžys and Tauragė, where we worked consistently with the community for 3 years.
- **We strengthened the protection of women with disabilities against violence**, by developing and testing a disability-sensitive algorithm for a coordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence. It is an extremely useful instrument for municipalities.
- **We supported women's rights activists in Ukraine** by making the opportunities and challenges they face visible at the European level and gaining experience in strengthening the implementation of gender equality policy. This is important for Ukraine's accession to the European Union.
- We distributed a **methodical tool for early education** that helps **reduce gender stereotypes** and promotes caring behavior in boys.
- We help companies and institutions take care of employees' **well-being and diversity** - from now on, we conduct seminars and trainings on these topics, and we provide consulting.

>500

people participated in our trainings and seminars.

8700

views of The Feminist Guide.

50

comments and articles in the media.

15

volunteers and interns contributed to CEA activities.

304 000

Internet users reached through social networks.

II. Reduced barriers for women with disabilities

Feminism accessible to all! **We have prepared the first Feminist Guide in Lithuania**, which is easy to read not only for women without disabilities. The guide covers 11 topics, from beauty standards, housekeeping and fashion to sexual harassment and violence. [🔗 The guide can be read](#) and [🔗 listened to as podcasts on the Spotify platform](#). The guide's text is personal, witty, sensitive and action oriented. It was also translated to an easy-to-read language. This version of the guide is available on the CEA website. The printed version has been distributed to day centers attended by girls and women with intellectual disabilities.

- **CEA website was updated and made accessible to all.** Principles of the universal design were taken into account: you can change contrast, fonts, stop animations, etc. All that while browsing the page.
- **We have significantly changed society's attitudes towards women with disabilities** in Tauragė district and Panevėžys city and district.
 - In Tauragė and Panevėžys, we gathered **groups of active women with disabilities** in 2021. They discussed the reality of disability and womanhood and we have shared our knowledge and helped them shape advocacy goals and achieve them. These groups were the backbone of all our activities in the communities. Together on March 7, 2023, we organized the conference "March 8th: What do women with disabilities celebrate?", which received a lot of attention. Special thanks

“ Women's rights organizations owe a debt to women with disabilities. For many years, we did not know how to work by means of not increasing, but decreasing the separation, too. The year 2023 is considered as a turning point. Ensuring the rights of women with disabilities was made as one of the priority goals of the CEA.

to Irma Zabulionytė, the manager of the Family home of the Panevėžys, as well as to the activists Irma Laiškonienė and Rasa Malinauskaitė.

→ In both Tauragė and Panevėžys, community leaders Eglė Laurinaitytė and Irma Zabulionytė participated in public campaign where billboards in the city spoke about their experiences. We invite you to read [Irma's story](#).

→ In the spring of 2023, after intensive work in Tauragė and Panevėžys for almost 3 years, we have repeated a survey of the public's attitude towards women with disabilities. The results revealed a significant change. Communities were ready to respond more favorably to women in public space, politics, leadership positions, were more favorable to friendships. Unfortunately, the changes in reproductive rights still have to be fought for.

➤ **We discussed the issues relevant to women with disabilities in the media as common human issues**, inseparable from the movement for women's rights and the welfare of society as a whole.

→ In the radio series at "Žinių radijas", not only we talked about the [importance of inclusive education](#) (with CEA expert Monika Orechova), [the experiences of disability](#), but also about the women with disabilities in the context of [gender equality](#) (with CEA expert Margarita Jankauskaitė), [differences between men and women](#) (with CEA expert Aurelija Auškaľnytė) and [motherhood](#).

→ In partnership with NARA, we've produced an exclusive podcast that covers the topics of motherhood, sexuality and disability. We are impressed by the courage of Živilė Bagdonavičiūtė to speak about what



was kept silent for so long. This is a profound documentary that simply **must be listened to.**

→ We **invited you to celebrate** Mother's Day by talking more about the motherhood experiences of women with disabilities.

These activities were partially funded by the Active Citizens Fund, with the funds of the EEA Grants, implementing the project **“At the Intersection of Gender and Disability: to Talk, Inspire and Act”**. Our partners were the Tauragė Woman's Employment & Information Centre and Panevėžys branch of the Lithuanian agency “SOS Children”.

The updating of the CEA website was partially funded by the Fund for Strengthening Non-Governmental Organizations under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania during the implementation of the project.

Huge thanks to the volunteer programmer **Justina Baškytė** for her help in managing our website.

Iceland
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**Active
citizens fund**



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III. Strengthened response to violence against women with disabilities

Women with disability experience domestic violence 3-5 time more often than women without disability. This risk is particularly increased by isolation.

➤ Systemic changes! **We have updated the algorithm of the coordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence.** From now on, the algorithm is disability sensitive.

→ Context: we have been closely cooperating with municipalities of Alytus city, Ukmergė and Jonava districts for 5 years now, to which solving the problem of violence is an important priority. In 2020, together with representatives of various institutions, we prepared multi-agency response algorithms. When different institutions know their function, properly share information with other institutions and coordinate actions, greater safety for victims is created and the scale of violence is reduced in the long run. In 2021, the above-mentioned algorithms were approved and validated by these municipalities.

→ In 2023 these algorithms were improved by considering the extent, specifics and needs of assistance in case of violence against women with disabilities. The updated algorithm also reflects changes to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. This time, we have expanded the circle of municipalities with which we cooperate - we presented a model algorithm in municipalities of Utena, Kaunas and

“ National instruments are not enough. Considering the available resources and challenges, each municipality must develop its own algorithm. Representatives of various institutions gathering at the same table, guided by a common goal, can do a lot in each municipality.

We have created a tool that will make it much easier to create YOUR OWN ALGORITHM. Contact the CEA if you would like assistance with this process. You can make your community much safer. In addition, the algorithm means that in the long term the workload and emotional load for specialists will decrease.

Varėna districts municipalities, which are interested in its adoption.

[🔗 More about the algorithm](#) (in Lithuanian).

- **We provided specialists with the knowledge and skills** needed to properly respond to violence against women with disabilities and to prevent it by creating an inclusive society.
 - 118 specialists participated in seminars on the coordinated multi-agency response algorithm to domestic violence. During them, we paid special attention to the formation of attitudes towards disability, the recognition of forms of violence (including those specific to disability) and risk factors, referrals for seeking help, and the planning of preventive measures. Social service providers, police officers, representatives of medical institutions, specialists of specialized comprehensive assistance centers, employees of the municipal councils, etc. participated.
 - 71 employees of the education system participated in the training **“Creating a safe school community – inclusive education as violence prevention.”**
- In order to strengthen the effectiveness of the response to domestic violence against women with disabilities, we **worked together** with like-minded women and men!
 - We cooperated with other non-governmental organizations. Warmest thanks to the Lithuanian Disability Forum and Mental Health Perspectives.
 - Thanks to The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and Nomoshiti initiative - the website [🔗 visureikalas.lt](#) has been updated



as part of the joint project and a campaign to inform municipalities and specialists about violence against women with disabilities is underway.

- We also gained experience on this topic from women's rights experts in Iceland, which were visited by CEA executive director Virginija Aleksejūnė and expert Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič.
- The violence against women with disabilities issue and possible solutions **were presented to the public.**
 - The webinar “New Practices in the Municipality: A Disability-Sensitive Response to Violence” attracted great interest. It was extremely relevant for specialists and representatives of municipal administrations working throughout Lithuania.
 - We hosted a [discussion](#) on the restricted reproductive rights of women with disabilities at the National Human Rights Forum. Listen to a radio interview on this topic with our expert Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič.
 - The situation was commented on in the media. We kindly invite you to read our expert Aurelija Auškalnytė's [comment on Irt.lt](#) about the violence experienced by women with disabilities and listen the [interview](#) broadcasted on “Žinių radijas” with expert Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič.

“It's mandatory to understand that disability is part of the diversity of life. The impact of disability may be stronger or weaker depending on what obstacles a person faces due to an inaccessible physical or informational environment, negative attitudes, etc. By reducing barriers, we reduce isolation, thus ensuring the prevention of violence.

These activities were co-funded by the European Commission. The project [“SEEN: Gender Based Violence Against Women with Disabilities in Focus”](#) is financed by the 2021 Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program as well as co-financing mechanism of the Fund for Strengthening Non-Governmental Organizations under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania.

[Sharing good practices with Icelandic NGOs](#) and part of the public awareness activities were funded by the Active Citizens Fund, with the funds of the EEA Grants.



IV. Greater opportunities for Ukraine to become a member of the European Union by implementing gender equality policy

Every meeting with like-minded women from Ukraine is a precious experience. We worked closely together even before the Russian invasion began. This collaboration is now more important than ever.

- **Strengthened Ukrainian organizations working in the field of gender equality.**
- In May 2023, we have organized women's rights activists from Ukraine visit to Lithuania. Ukrainian women were interested in legal regulation of parental leave, response to domestic violence, collection of gender-disaggregated statistical data and other gender equality issues. The delegation met with employees of the State Data Agency, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of National Defense, Vilnius City Municipality, national radio and television, representatives of other institutions and NGOs.
- In July 2023, a three-day training was held in southern Poland, which gave Ukrainian women the opportunity not only to rest from the tension caused by sirens, to revive their creativity, but also to deeply analyze the origins of gender inequality, to discuss what such decisions as the change in masculinity norms can mean for today's Ukrainian society. The training was conducted by CEA expert Margarita Jankauskaitė.



➤ A huge conference was organized together with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Vilnius, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and the European Institute for Gender Equality where **issues of women in Ukraine** and other Eastern Partnership countries were raised on an **international scale**. Women's rights activists from 6 countries were carefully listened to by members of the European Parliament and the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, and other participants from 23 countries. The spotlight was on the **pandemic scale of violence against women**, made even more important with war, political persecution, victim blaming attitudes and a lack of political will to see the importance of the issue.

All this happened thanks to our wonderful partners [Український Жіночий Фонд](#) / [Ukrainian Women's Fund](#).



The activity was co-funded by the Delegation of the European Commission in Ukraine, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Vilnius and the Parliament of Lithuania. Project [“Network of Gender Think Tanks: Capacity Development for Advanced Policy Design, Impact Assessment, Strategic Advocacy and Specialized Policy Communication”](#).



V. Early childhood education specialists are encouraged to educate caring boys

A game “Find and Seek” designed by us for children aged 4+ years. It was distributed to early childhood education institutions. This tool is similar to the usual memory training games where you must find two identical cards by turning them over. However, in this case, the pairs are not identical – they depict people of different looks and genders who carry out the same caring jobs or activities. For example: recycling, taking care of animals, washing dishes or doing various jobs.

The game helps to tackle the stereotypes of “feminine” and “masculine” professions and activities, encourages discussion of how important it is for everyone to take care of others and share work.

The project [“ECaRoM: Early Care and the Role of Men”](#), which ended in early 2023, was co-funded by the European Commission’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program (2014–2020). We implemented it together with international partners.



“ Gender stereotypes, including harmful masculinity norms, prevent boys from becoming caring husbands and fathers. By educating the new generation without gender stereotypes, paying attention not only to girls, but also to boys, we can not only reduce the scale of violence against women, but create a better society based on mutual care.



VI. Strengthened leaders of Lithuanian NGOs working with migrants from Ukraine

In October 2023, 19 volunteer advisors from advanced US and EU technological companies arrived for a week of intensive work. With one goal in mind - to provide individual consultations for the NGOs who administer assistance to Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania. Entrepreneurship seminars for Ukrainian women took place for one day as well.

This is an initiative of the international organization WAKE, which invited CEA to organize this event in Lithuania.

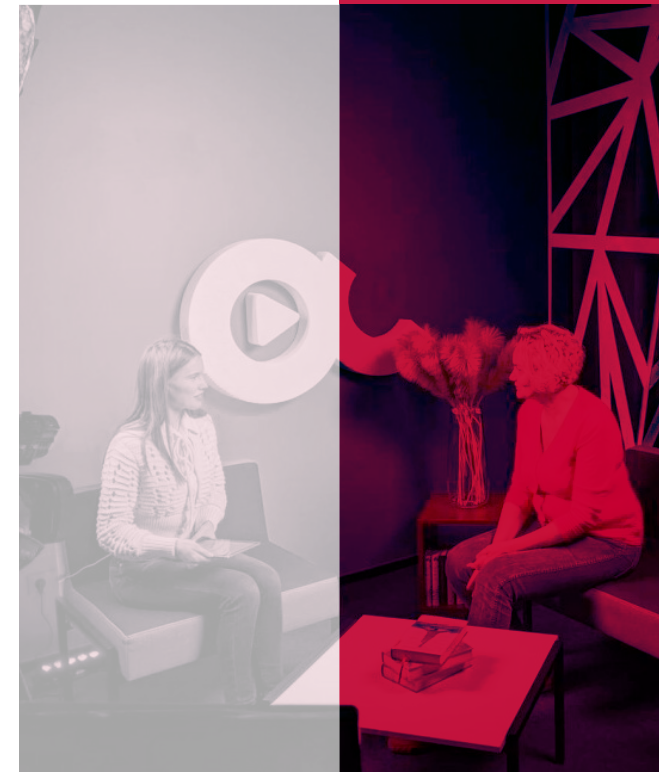


“There is a saying, if you are in the jar you cannot read the label”. We are living within very fragile jars these days, but still with immense treasures to share, as well as personal growth and development to gain. Tech2Empower has provided me the opportunity to become a better global human through collaborating, learning and gaining lifelong friendships, all focused on amplifying our allies’ work -the global women-led work for social change.

- Renée Lahti
(Linei Kōkua Advisory Corporation)

VII. The public is getting more and more knowledge about the ideas of gender equality and the feminist approach

- › Facts about the history of women's rights and activism were shared on our [Facebook](#) page. We have even written about the [anatomy of the clitoris](#) in 2023. By means of commemorating the 20th anniversary of CEA, we also remembered the organization's greatest achievements, [such as the adoption of the Domestic Violence Law](#).
- › We speak about feminism – it's a great word to describe our activities. You may listen to CEA expert Margarita Jankauskaitė's comment on the [alfa.It show](#) on why we are still afraid of the word "feminism" in Lithuania.
- › Are herstories already unfolded enough? Is the margin widened just a little? CEA expert Aurelija Auškalnytė discussed this on the ["LRT Klasika"](#) on March 8.
- › Discussions about domestic violence are often fueled by celebrity dramas. CEA expert Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič commented on why the public is in a hurry to scalp survivors on ["LRT"](#).
- › Every year, unfortunately, we're vocal about wage gap between women and men. This indicator reflects many deep problems of gender inequality. Our expert Margarita Jankauskaitė talks about this topic in the ["LRT" program "Important hour"](#).



- Are there enough women in Lithuanian politics? Margarita Jankauskaitė reveals why the answer is “no” on [the air “Žinių radijas”](#).
- About why women in Lithuania sleep less and other effects of cultural sexism, Aurelija Auškalnytė discussed in detail on the [Gold.fm](#) podcast “Blind Date”.
- Margarita Jankauskaitė wrote the article [“Let’s talk about sex”](#) about women’s right to their own bodies as a fundamental issue of gender equality. A must read. Margarita spoke about intimacy and gender in discussions too, including [the discussion on the book “Mažasis o”](#).



VIII. Stronger protection of women's rights and human rights

- **The Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** (also known as the Istanbul Convention) is still not ratified in Lithuania! This is the most important political issue for us now.
- In 2023, we also responded to changes in the regulation of prostitution in the EU, misinformation about the life skills program. Our team member Greta Kraujalytė participated in the discussion regarding the legalization of writing non-inflected surnames ending in -a, -ia for women.
- CEA expert Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič represented our position in the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Council.
- CEA expert Margarita Jankauskaitė participated in the work of the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.
- We joined other advocacy actions initiated by NGOs, for example, in 2023 we supported an appeal to the Constitutional Court regarding the compliance of the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Effects of Negative Public Information with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, and together with the Lithuanian Women's Lobby Organization we have **appealed to the candidates participating in municipal council elections**, emphasizing the issues to be resolved at the level of self-government problems related to inequality between women and men.



“Why do we still have to encourage women not to give in to barriers in the 21st century? Maybe it's time to remove those barriers? Let's roll up our sleeves and work with the norms of masculinity. It is time to promote caring masculinities, especially to constantly remind us that caring is a human quality without which we would not survive. Until we do this, we'll be in a vicious circle.”

- Margarita Jankauskaitė at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania conference “Will Lithuania remain on the outskirts of Europe due to the Istanbul Convention?”

- Together with the Lithuanian Women's Lobby Organization, we contributed to the preparation of a shadow report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) in Lithuania.
- Participation in protests! In 2023, a large group of our team participated in the Vilnius Pride march.



IX. Organizations in Lithuania increase employee well-being and gender equality

- We have offered seminars and training for businesses or public companies. Our topics:
 - Creating a safe working environment (recognition of harassment and violence!);
 - Implementation of principles of diversity (gender, age, race and ethnic origin, disability) and inclusion;
 - Ensuring work-life balance.
- We invited companies to embark on a journey together to fundamentally improve organizational culture:
 - **Plan MINI.** We carry out analysis of the situation and documents, advise on creating an activity plan and monitor the results.
 - **Plan MIDI.** We not only analyze, but also provide additional expert resources in the formation of the internal communication of the organization.
 - **Plan MAXI.** We conduct an analysis of employee attitudes, and the entire organization learns in the process.



Organizations focused on the well-being of employees are characterized by higher efficiency, lower employee turnover, higher motivation and satisfaction with the work environment.



CEAs team of experts is ready to help organizations learn to recognize problems, identify their causes, and find ways to successfully solve them.



The received income finances social activities and ensures our financial sustainability.

- In 2023, we worked with:
 - ➔ Together with Lithuanian Human Rights Center training was conducted on a safe working environment for employees of the Prison Department Lithuania.
 - ➔ We consulted Ignitis Group on gender equality goals.
 - ➔ During the International Women’s Solidarity Day, challenges facing gender equality were discussed with employees of the ad agency Ogilvy.
 - ➔ Readiness of Lithuanian businesses to employ people coming from Ukraine were assessed in cooperation with Nordic Consulting Group (NCG).

- We took part in discussions on gender equality and raised awareness:
 - ➔ Together with the House of Diversity and Education, we discussed issues of gender equality with youth workers from all over Lithuania.
 - ➔ We deepened the awareness of the members of the NGO education network about the issues of gender inequality.
 - ➔ On behalf of ESFA, we conducted diversity and discrimination prevention training for social workers and psychologists.

[🔗 More about all our services for companies.](#)

The formation of the service package was partially funded by the Fund for Strengthening Non-Governmental Organizations under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania in the framework of the project

[🔗 “Gender Equality Expertise – the key to the social entrepreneurship and financial sustainability of the organization”.](#)



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X. Acknowledgments

The results of LGPC's activities would not be so impressive if similar goals were not pursued by a large group of organizations and activists working in this field.

Thanks to our partners!

- Alytus City Municipality
- Anna Lindh foundation
- Center of Women's Studies and Policies (Bulgaria)
- Coalition of Human Rights Organisations
- Dissens – Institut für Bildung und Forschung e.V (Germany)
- Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Vilnius
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
- European Network Against Racism
- European Women's Lobby
- Icelandic Women's Rights Organisation (Iceland)
- Institute for Masculinity Research and Gender Studies (Austria)
- Istituto degli Innocenti (Italy)
- Jonava District Municipality



Thanks to CEA volunteers and interns!

Agnė Raščiūtė, Audrė Gruodytė, Aušra Šimkuvienė, Beatričė Kukulskytė, Inga Gegužytė, Ingrida Mikalkėnė, Justina Baškytė, Katarzyna Bytowt, Kristina Virbalaitė, Miglė Stumbraitė, Milda Gaigalaitė, Neringa Tsodikov, Ramunė Kochanauskaitė, Rita Vyšniauskaitė, Vida Grišmanauskienė.

- Kaunas District Municipality
- Lithuanian Disability Forum
- Lithuanian Human Rights Center
- Lithuanian National Foundation
- Lithuanian Women's Lobby Organization
- Mental Health Perspectives
- National Non-Governmental Development Cooperation Organisations' Platform
- Nomoshiti initiative
- Open Lithuania Foundation
- Panevėžys branch of the Lithuanian agency "SOS Children"
- Tauragė Woman's Employment & Information Centre
- The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson
- The Peace Institute (Slovénija)
- Ukmergė District Municipality
- Ukrainian Women's Fund (Ukraina)
- Utena District Municipality
- Varėna District Municipality
- WAKE-Women's Alliance for Knowledge Exchange (JAV)



Thanks to the supporters of CEA, who donated 1.2 % of the personal income tax!



Thanks to the funders!



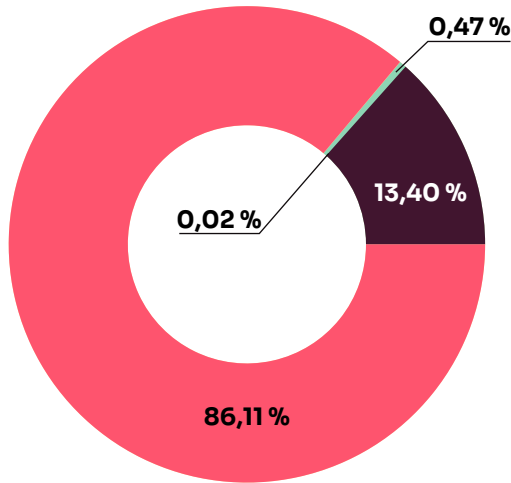
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XI. Finance



Income: 139 615,54 €

- Project funding received in 2023 - 120 227,50 €
- Funds received for sales and services - 18 707,98 €
- 1,2% contribution from personal income taxes - 655,06 €
- Other support - 25 €

Project funding received in 2023

Funder	Amount (Eur)	Project
European Commission	270,00	“Everybody’s Talking: Work-Life Balance Goes Mainstream”.
The Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Republic of Lithuania	54824,00	“Gender Equality Expertise - the key to the social entrepreneurship and financial sustainability of the organization”.
Active Citizens Fund, funds of the EEA Financial Mechanism	8922,60	“Building enhanced approaches to end gender-based violence: Mutual learning and networking in Northern Europe”.
Delegation of the European Commission in Ukraine	20000,00	“Network of Gender Think Tanks: Capacity Development for Advanced Policy Design, Impact Assessment, Strategic Advocacy and Specialized Policy Communication”.
European Commission	12339,99	“ECaRoM: Early Care and the Role of Men”.
The Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Republic of Lithuania	11450,00	“SEEN: Gender Based Violence Against Women with Disabilities in Focus”.
Active Citizens Fund, funds of the EEA Financial Mechanism	12420,91	“At the Intersection of Gender and Disability: to Talk, Inspire and Act”.


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