



2025 Annual Report

American Women for International Understanding

Meet AWIU President, Nancy Annick



Since 1968, AWIU has connected women leaders from around the world to exchange ideas, forge lasting friendships, and contribute to goodwill among nations. As current conflicts persist and divisions deepen, AWIU's mission to build international understanding through personal connections has never been more urgent.

I am pleased to report that 2025 saw continued investment in the long-term strength of AWIU. We completed an ambitious strategic planning process that will guide the organization through 2031. Grounded in AWIU's mission and focused on expanding our impact, the new strategic plan prioritizes strengthening our membership community, amplifying our programs, increasing financial sustainability, and enhancing communications outreach. We are committed to building a resilient organization that brings women together to learn from one another, celebrate courage and leadership, and transform global challenges into opportunities for growth.

Our investment in AWIU's programs has expanded and deepened our global reach. In January, a delegation to southern India and Delhi strengthened relationships with past micro-grantees and forged new partnerships with women-led organizations. In April, we honored eight courageous awardees at the International Women of Courage (IWOC) Celebration, and created opportunities for them to engage with faculty and students at UCLA Anderson School of Management. Our global micro-grants program supported 19 new and returning organizations dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. We also launched AWIU's inaugural IWOC Alumnae Impact Grants, supporting the work of six past IWOC awardees who continue to champion women's empowerment and advance human rights. In November, we were proud to present the 2025 Internationalism Award to Ambassador Swanee Hunt for her lifelong dedication to global leadership and her pioneering work to include women's voices in conflict negotiations and peacebuilding.

Developing the next generation of globally minded women leaders remains central to AWIU's mission. More than 150 students attended our largest ever Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., where they explored diverse career paths and expanded their professional networks. Our Passport to the Future program continues to grow, connecting interested young women with IWOC Awardees and AWIU micro-grantees on collaborative global projects.

As I reflect on my term as president, I am reminded of what AWIU's founders understood from the beginning -- lasting change begins with relationships. It has been an honor to lead this sisterhood of women who care so deeply about each other and about the world. I leave this role inspired by what we have built, and hopeful about what will come next.

My heartfelt gratitude to all of AWIU's supporters who make this work possible. Your generosity makes every delegation, every grant, and every connection possible.

Nancy McAniff Annick
2025 President, AWIU

Our History

- 1968 AWIU begins with a focus on international learning and connection through study, symposia, and travel. An AWIU delegation of American women leaders travels to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to meet with members of the Soviet Women's Committee, the first such group to do so in decades. Dozens of delegations have since followed.
- 2008 The grants program is founded to support projects that are women-led, that have an impact beyond the immediate need, and that focus on health, education, and entrepreneurial development.
- The International Women of Courage (IWOC) program collaboration with the U.S. Department of State begins.
- 2010 The Passports to the Future program launches and connects young women, typically students or those just beginning careers in international fields, with opportunities for professional skill building, networking, and mentorship.
- 2014 The annual one-day Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., takes place for the first time. COIR brings young women together with leaders in the field for practical advice, inspiration and networking.
- 2022 AWIU receives the Gender Champion Award from the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues at the *15th Annual International Women of Courage Celebration*.



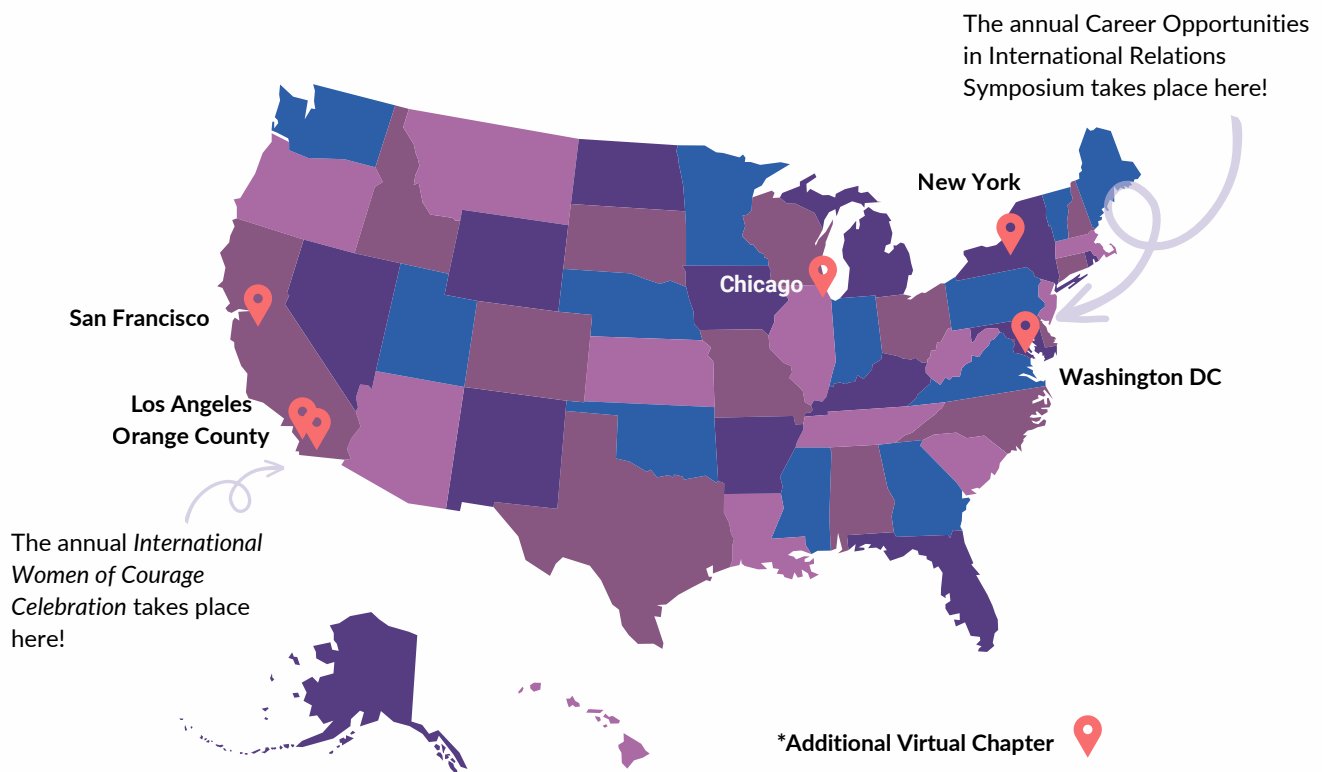
AWIU's founder, Bernice Behrens



AWIU President Martha Atherton being interviewed by journalist Christiane Amanpour during the 2002 Saudi Arabia delegation



AWIU receives the Gender Champion Award from the Office of Global Women's Issues in 2022



Active Chapters

In 2025, AWIU continues to thrive with seven active chapters (including a virtual chapter) where members connect, plan events, and engage with global issues. Additional chapters are in development as interest grows across the country.

Chapter members have played a vital role in organizing key annual events, including the *International Women of Courage Celebration* in Los Angeles and the Career Opportunities in International Relations Symposium in Washington, D.C. - both of which saw strong participation and meaningful engagement.

Mission, Vision, Values

Our Mission

To build bridges of international understanding through personal exchange and collaboration.

Our Vision

A compassionate and interconnected world with equality for all.

Our Values

Understanding: Respecting, honoring, and celebrating diversity promotes mutual understanding. Leading with empathy and compassion, we embrace opportunities to engage, learn, and serve the greater good.

Learning: Knowledge promotes understanding. We are committed to collaborative education and approach experiences with curious and open minds.

Community: Personal relationships are the foundation of mutual learning. We build friendship and community locally and globally through a supportive network of women.

Social Responsibility: Equal access for women and girls to education, healthcare, and opportunity is essential. We believe that empowered women are highly effective communicators and problem solvers.



2025 Programmatic Highlights

In 2025, AWIU's core programs - Delegations, Passports to the Future, Career Opportunities in International Relations, Global Micro-Grants, IWOC Alumnae Impact Grant, and the *International Women of Courage Celebration* - collectively made a meaningful impact. This year alone, these initiatives:

- Engaged 128 AWIU members across programs, events, and initiatives—reflecting strong member participation and a shared commitment to AWIU's mission of fostering international understanding and supporting women globally.
- Saw 13 AWIU members travel on a Delegation to southern India and Delhi as part of our mission to create international understanding through meaningful visits abroad.
- Welcomed over 30 young women into the Passport to the Future program who explored global issues through hands-on engagement with IWOCs and micro-grantees.
- Hosted the 2025 Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium in Washington, D.C., bringing together approximately 150 attendees along with professionals in diplomacy, development, and global careers. The event provided mentorship, networking, and concrete pathways for students entering international fields.
- Distributed grants to 19 grassroots organizations in six countries, including Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Uganda. These micro-grant recipients implemented a wide range of high-impact projects—from safe birthing kits in Uganda to tailoring cooperatives in India—reaching and positively impacting more than 5,000 people worldwide. Grants totaled \$51,592 in 2025.
- Awarded \$31,000 to six IWOC Alumnae as part of the inaugural IWOC Alumnae Impact Grant program, helping to further their work, amplify their voices, and sustain their momentum as changemakers.
- Hosted the *18th Annual International Women of Courage Celebration* in Los Angeles - a powerful and inspiring evening that honored eight courageous women from around the world who have shown resilience, integrity, and extraordinary commitment in the face of adversity, demonstrating exceptional leadership in human rights, education, peacebuilding, and justice. Grants to the 2025 IWOCs totaled \$40,000.

Delegations

Since its founding, AWIU has led 66 Delegations, visiting over 100 countries across every continent except Antarctica. Many of these journeys have made history as the first group of American women to enter the country in decades: the Soviet Union in 1968, China in 1973, Saudi Arabia in 2002, and Libya in 2009. These trips exemplify AWIU's mission-driven commitment to fostering international understanding and meaningful exchange.

Delegations are designed to deepen members' understanding of the countries we visit and to promote meaningful connections between our members and women leaders in those countries. Delegation members engage with political leaders, business executives, leading women's groups, nonprofit organizations, embassies, educators, and community members. Our itineraries often include opportunities to connect with International Women of Courage honorees and micro-grant recipients. Each delegation returns with insights that are shared widely through presentations and digital communication.

In January, 13 AWIU members traveled through southern India and Delhi on a Delegation focused on women's empowerment, cultural exchange, and global connection. They began in Kochi, meeting women dock workers and engaging with students and faculty at St. Teresa's College. Visits to women-led enterprises in rural Kerala highlighted innovation, sustainability, and community resilience, including the story of the Chekutty Dolls, which became a symbol of resilience after the devastating 2018 Kerala floods. In Tamil Nadu and Agra, the group experienced India's regional diversity and cultural heritage. In Delhi, they visited a preschool serving low-income families and learned about U.S. programs supporting Indian women in STEM. The journey expanded and strengthened AWIU's global network and showcased the power of women uplifting women.



Passport to the Future

The Passport to the Future program offers young women, typically students or early-career professionals under the age of 26, opportunities to gain critical skills and global perspective under the guidance of a dedicated member-mentor. By connecting the Passports with AWIU micro-grantees and past IWOCs to produce research projects together, the program serves as a bridge for fostering cross-cultural understanding and advancing women's empowerment. The program reflects AWIU's ongoing commitment to developing the next generation of globally-minded women leaders.

In 2025, the Passport to the Future program welcomed over 30 young women, divided into Spring and Fall cohorts. Projects in 2025 included:

- A social entrepreneurship project supporting economic advancement and community development initiatives in India.
- Development of a women-led jewelry venture to promote economic independence in Kasese, Uganda, alongside the expansion of e-commerce and social entrepreneurship initiatives focused on sustainable fashion.
- Legal research and advocacy support, including constitutional law research for pro bono cases and creation of educational materials using storytelling to advance justice.
- Support for the AWIU Delegation committee, including planning, development, and coordination of an upcoming international delegation experience.
- Communications and outreach work to elevate and promote a Guatemalan organization's mission and programs throughout the country.
- Research into environmental issues and policy concerns affecting communities in Sri Lanka.
- Collaboration on women's rights, anti-gender-based violence advocacy, and narrative-based projects.

Career Opportunities in International Relations

Since 2014, AWIU has sponsored the Career Opportunities in International Relations (COIR) Symposium, a one-day program in Washington, D.C., that provides young women the opportunity to engage with and learn from leaders in the field.

The 2025 Symposium focused on the theme "Women Building Bridges: Career Paths Amid Global Challenges." The event brought together an inspiring mix of approximately 150 college students, young professionals, AWIU members, speakers and recruiters.

Breakout sessions on Responsible AI and Social Entrepreneurship sparked honest, solution-driven conversations, while a fireside chat with Ambassador Swanee Hunt, AWIU's 2025 Internationalism Award recipient, offered humor, wisdom, and unforgettable, heartfelt storytelling.

Our final panel on Resiliency and Career Pivoting brought together leaders from CSIS, George Washington University, and the Council on Foreign Relations, who shared how they navigated unexpected turns, demonstrating that throughout the ages, careers grow in ways that are rarely linear.

As conversations flowed over lunch and networking, the excitement in the room made it clear how much it means for young women to connect directly with leaders shaping the field.



Global Micro-Grants Program

Since 2008, AWIU has awarded over \$593,800 in micro-grants to international organizations and initiatives that uplift women in the areas of health, education and entrepreneurship. These small but powerful grants are designed to support short-term concrete projects that make a tangible impact in local communities.

In 2025, AWIU supported 19 inspiring grantees around the world, including organizations based in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Uganda. \$51,592 was awarded, with grants ranging from \$1,740 to \$3,000 each. Funded projects reflected the diversity of local needs and creativity—ranging from safe birthing kits in Uganda to tailoring cooperatives in India. While some organizations had received AWIU support in previous years, many were first-time grantees, broadening the reach and deepening the impact of the program.

AWIU is proud to champion the leadership of women and women-led organizations around the globe, advancing meaningful change one micro-grant at a time. Read more about the global micro-grants program in the 2024 Grants Report, and see the breakdown of funds awarded in 2025 on page 12.



International Women of Courage Alumnae Impact Grant

In 2025, AWIU was thrilled to announce the launch of the International Women of Courage (IWOC) Alumnae Impact Grant, our latest initiative supporting the ongoing work of past IWOC Award recipients. This inaugural program awarded grants of \$5,000 each to the IWOC Alumnae to advance their work in human rights and women's empowerment. The following IWOC Alumnae were awarded this grant in 2025:



Benafsha Yaqoobi – 2024 IWOC from Afghanistan

Funding for a documentary that chronicles and amplifies the lived experiences of women and girls with disabilities in Afghanistan in accessing education under Taliban rule.

Fatou Baldeh – 2024 IWOC from the Gambia

Support for a pilot project to end FGM within Gambian Society by educating and empowering young people to influence change around the practice.

Facia Harris – 2022 IWOC from Liberia

Support for a project to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual exploitation abuse (SEA) in schools by engaging and training students, school staff, and parents about prevention and reporting.

Arbana Xharra – 2015 IWOC from Kosovo

Funding the purchase of technology equipment to create the Voices of Courage podcast, which will amplify the survival stories of women from conflict zones and war-torn regions across the globe.

Quynh Nguyen (Me Nam) – 2017 IWOC from Vietnam

Funding the purchase of essential equipment to improve the quality and reach of the current YouTube channel, which shares stories of political prisoners, women's rights defenders, and social issues in Vietnam and beyond.

International Women of Courage

Courage to Advance Human Rights. Courage to Empower Women. Courage to Lead.

Since 2008, AWIU has collaborated with the U.S. State Department to recognize women around the globe who fight for human rights and the empowerment of women and girls, often at great personal risk. AWIU hosts the *International Women of Courage (IWOC) Celebration* annually and presents grants to every State Department honoree. To date, \$562,500 has been awarded by AWIU to the IWOC honorees, including \$40,000 in 2025.

The *18th Annual IWOC Celebration* was a powerful tribute to eight extraordinary women leaders from around the world who have demonstrated unwavering courage and resilience in the face of adversity. Hosted in Los Angeles, the event honored their remarkable contributions across a wide spectrum of critical global issues - from human rights and disability to hostage advocacy, environmental protection, gender-based violence, and the fight against human trafficking. With moving stories of impact and determination, the evening celebrated not only the individual awardees but also the collective power of women leading change in their communities and beyond.

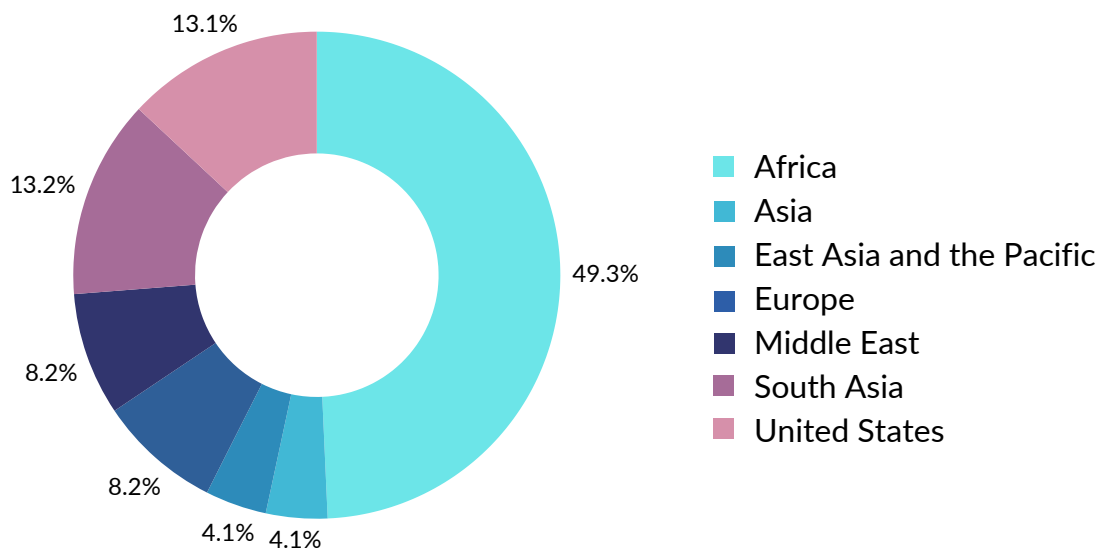


The 2025 IWOC award recipients included (left to right) Amit Soussana (Israel), Henriette Da (Burkina Faso), Georgiana Pascu (Romania), Namini Wijedasa (Sri Lanka), Major Velen Iga (Papua New Guinea), Zabib Musa Loro Bakhit (South Sudan), Angelique Songco (Philippines), and Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj (Yemen).

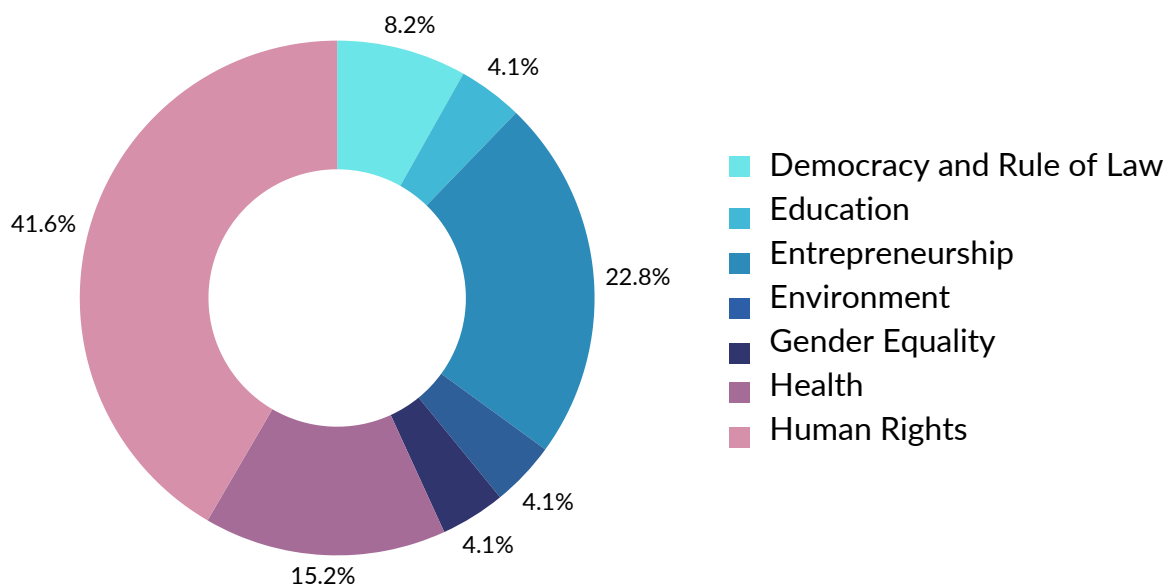
Grants Breakdown

In 2025, AWIU distributed \$122,592 in grants, including to 19 grassroots women-led organizations, eight International Women of Courage awardees, and six IWOC Alumnae.

Grants by Region



Grants by Topic



The AWIU Community

Anthropologist Margaret Mead famously observed, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Small in membership and budget, AWIU is anything but small in reach or impact.

From across the United States, our members bring together a remarkable breadth of experience and perspective—diplomats and entrepreneurs, educators and attorneys, nonprofit leaders and students, women at the beginning of their careers and women whose leadership has shaped communities around the world. What unites us is a shared commitment to AWIU’s mission, vision, and values. In a year marked by conflict and growing polarization, AWIU continues to create opportunities for women to work together across borders, cultures, and generations. It is these relationships that make lasting change possible.

Our impact is amplified through the partnerships and friendships we cultivate—with one another, with IWOC awardees, micro-grantees, students, diplomats, community leaders, and supporting companies (see Our Supporters on page 16). These connections are at the heart of all we do. Together, we are building understanding, expanding opportunity, and demonstrating that even in challenging times, personal connection remains one of the most powerful forces for positive change.



What People are Saying

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My involvement has spanned nearly 3 years now, having begun in early 2022. My future academic/career plans are that I anticipate graduating with an MA (Honours) in International Relations from the University of St Andrew. I plan to attend law school thereafter. One of my earliest projects was conducting an interview with a former ambassador and friend of retired ambassador Eunice Reddick. AWIU has taught me to engage strategically with others, show greater empathy, and enhance my leadership and teamwork roles.

Elizabeth Blakeslee, Passport to the Future

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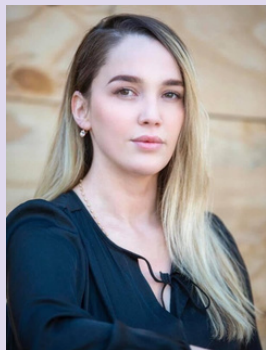
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I joined the Passport Program to access global engagement opportunities, and since then, I have watched the program evolve while continuing to encourage deep exploration of topics of interest. My favorite part has always been hearing about the other Passports' interests and their projects because I value the meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences. I have learned about so many global issues, many of which break my heart, and AWIU offers so many ways to get involved globally.



Jackie Sabbag, Passport to the Future

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Since receiving the International Women of Courage Award in 2015, my relationship with this extraordinary organization has become one of the most meaningful sources of support in my life and work. At a time when I was forced to leave my home and rebuild my life in a new country, AWIU not only recognized my courage but also embraced my mission and stood beside me in ways that went far beyond a single moment of acknowledgment. Their support has been continuous, genuine, and deeply empowering.

Through AWIU, I was introduced to a network of remarkable women, leaders, advocates, diplomats, thinkers, whose experience and generosity helped me strengthen my own work. The connections they opened for me expanded my understanding of global women's issues and helped me grow from a journalist focused primarily on the Balkans to someone who now works on behalf of women facing oppression across continents. These relationships gave me new perspective, confidence, and direction.

Because of AWIU's encouragement and the community they welcomed me into, I was able to take a significant next step in my advocacy: launching my podcast "Not Silent." This platform has allowed me to amplify the voices of women who live under some of the world's most repressive regimes, women who are silenced, persecuted, or forgotten. Many of the opportunities, interviews, and introductions that shaped the podcast were possible because of AWIU's network and the belief they placed in my work.

My perception of AWIU is rooted in profound respect. It is not an organization that offers symbolic recognition; it offers sustained partnership. AWIU invests in women's growth, supports them years after the award is given, and fosters genuine solidarity among women from every part of the world. They create a global sisterhood built on compassion, integrity, and action, women lifting other women with a shared purpose: advancing human rights and freedom.

I am deeply grateful for AWIU's ongoing commitment to my journey. Their support widened my path, strengthened my voice, and gave me new tools to continue fighting for the rights and dignity of women everywhere.

Arbana Xharra, 2015 IWOC, Kosovo

Financial Highlights

Balance Sheet		
Assets	2025	2024
Cash	\$10,752	\$62,988
Investments	\$872,877	\$790,245
Prepaid Expense	\$7,258	-
Accounts Receivable	\$8,817	-
Total Assets	\$899,704	\$853,233
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Deferred Revenues	\$68,867	\$28,296
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$714,926	\$736,435
Restricted Net Assets	\$114,971	\$88,502
Accounts Payable	\$940	-
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$899,704	\$853,233

Income Statement		
Revenue	2025	2024
Contributions	\$53,772	\$164,324*
Programs & Events	\$268,492	\$317,141
Membership	\$28,805	\$29,314
Total Operating Revenue	\$351,069	\$510,779
Delegation	\$2,674	\$86,962
Realized (Gain) Loss on Sale of Investments	\$21,638	-
Total Revenue	\$375,381	\$597,741
Expenses		
Grants	\$122,592	\$86,001
Other Programs	\$288,818	\$158,943
Management & General	\$70,680	\$113,873
Total Operating Expense	\$482,090	\$358,817
Delegation	\$2,653	\$87,460
Total Expense	\$484,743	\$446,277
Net Income	-\$109,362	\$151,464
Investment/Other Income	\$114,322	\$104,655
Change in Net Assets	\$4,961	\$256,119

*Prior-year (2024) contributions include revenue from a one-time round-up campaign with Forever 21, affecting year-over-year comparability.

Our Supporters

American Women for International Understanding thanks the following organizations for their support in 2025:

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United Nations Association - USA, Pasadena Chapter
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Women's Foreign Policy Group

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