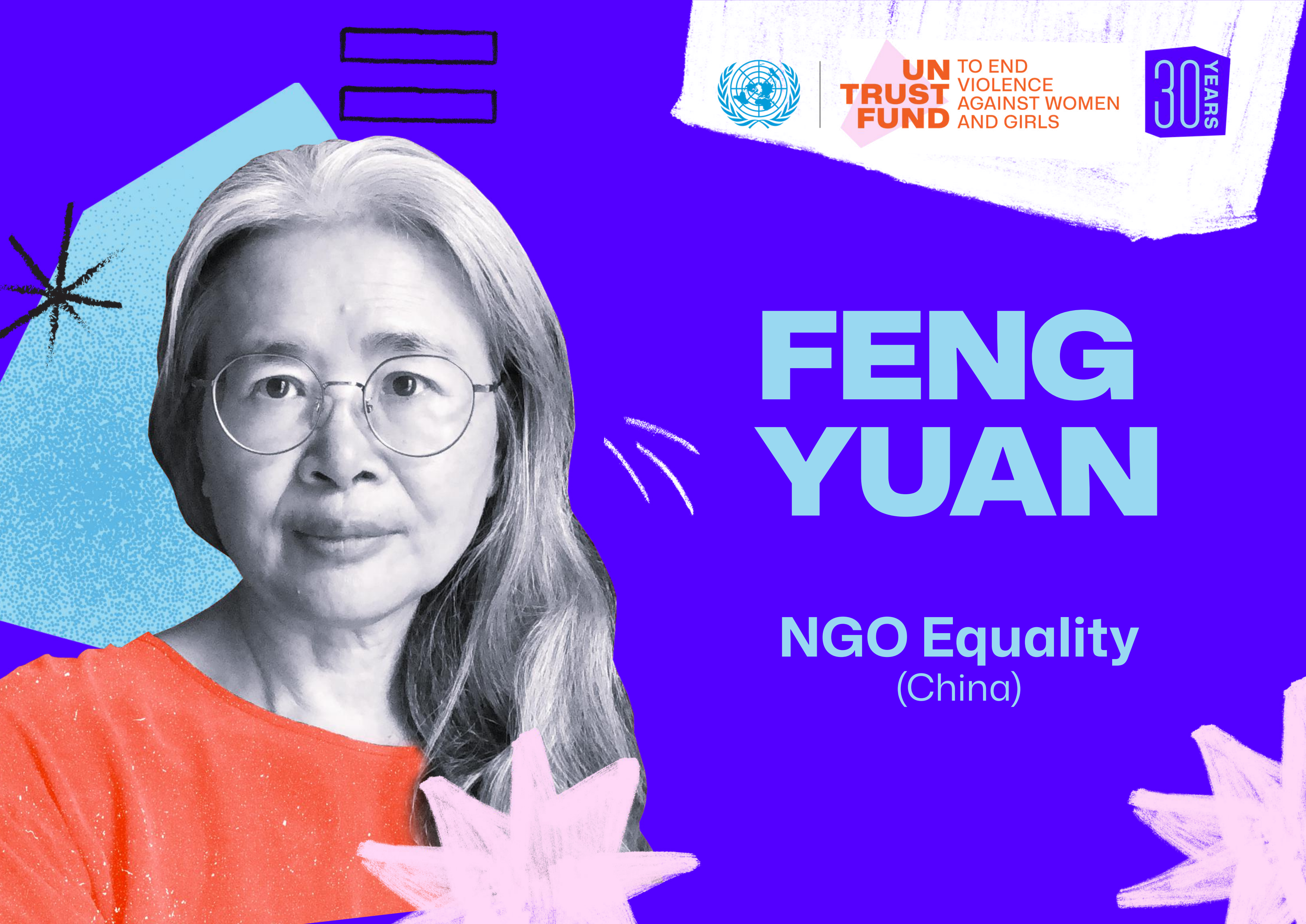




UN TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

30 YEARS

**FENG
YUAN**

NGO Equality
(China)

“

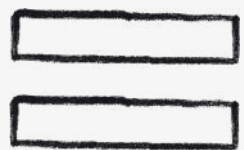
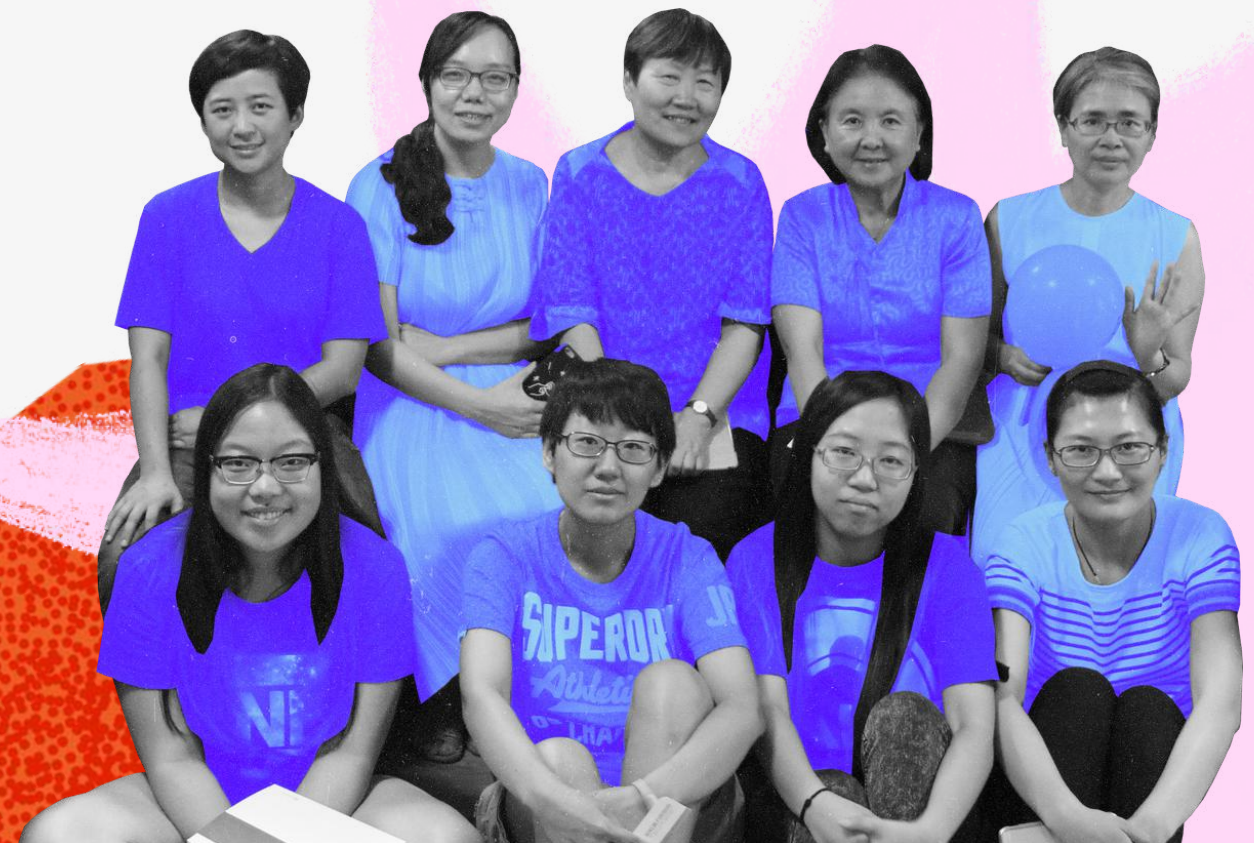
I wanted to be an actioner.

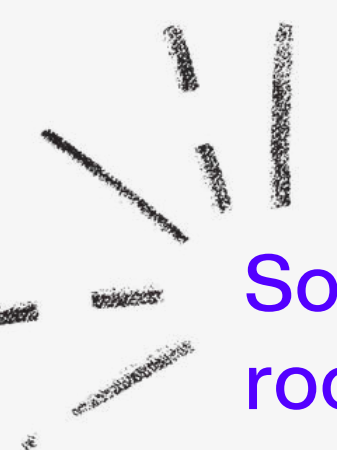
In Chinese, activist is a heavy word, so I began using actioner for myself – someone who acts. I spent twenty years in journalism, hoping to make a difference for women's rights. But for me, reporting was not enough. I wanted to act.

In 1995 the World Conference on Women came to Beijing. There, I found that "activism" was not confined to a meeting room; it could happen anywhere women could find a place, and that it could take the form of a song, a dance, a drama, an exhibition. There, I also understood something different: that we were independent actors from the State, while also partners for good governance.

That is not a small idea in a place where the space to act is narrow. It meant we were not asking for permission to act for women's rights. We were bringing something the State needed and did not have.

Domestic violence was one of the places where that idea became real for me. At that time, it had no name in China, and you cannot ask a country to end something it has no word for.



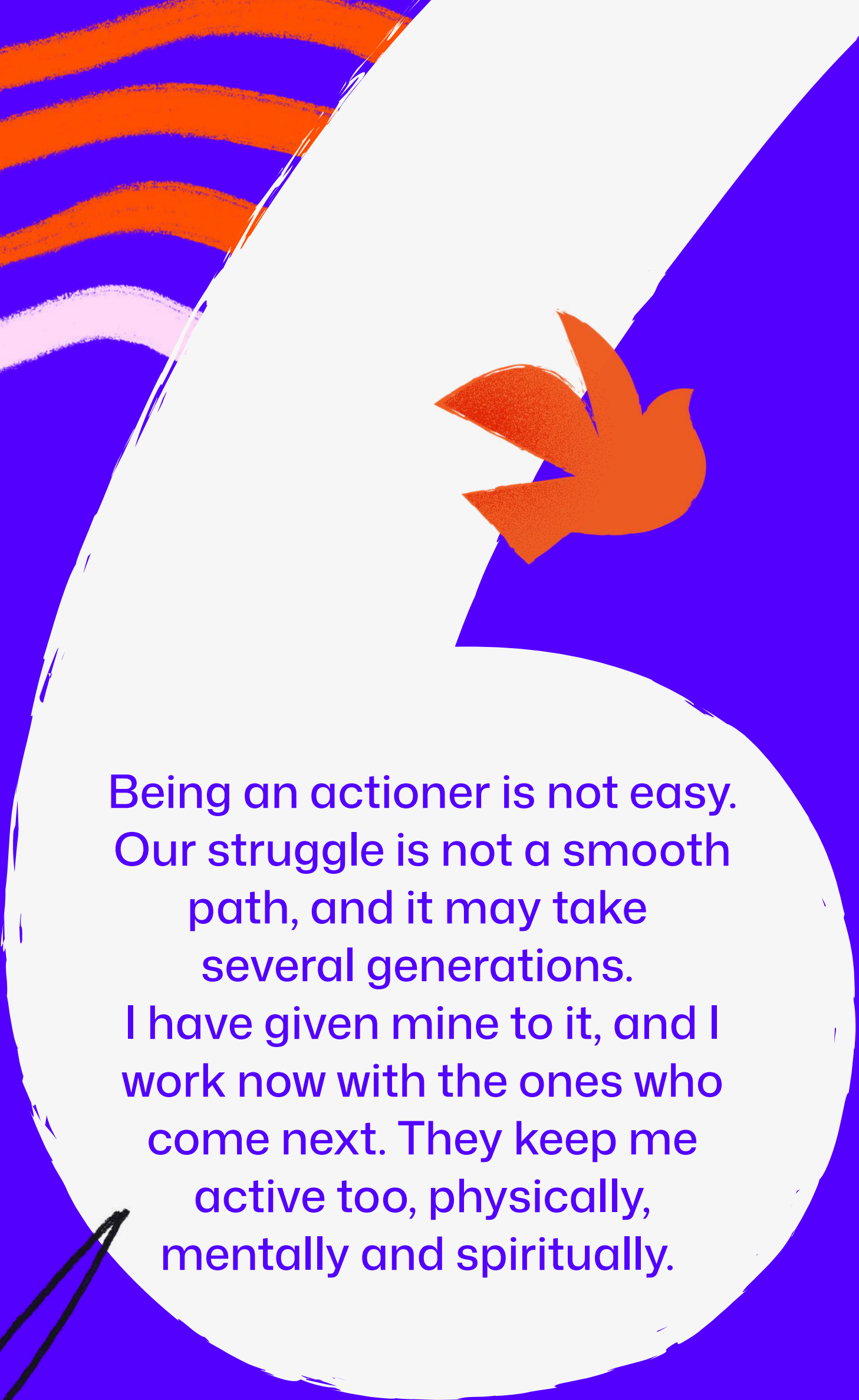


So, immediately after Beijing, we built the language. We built networks. I was in those rooms delivering training sessions, and every one of them was a battle, though not ones we could fight as soldiers, but as “soft-spoken” advocates. We asked others to unlearn deeply embedded assumptions, to open up, and to rethink how gender shaped the way they understood the law and violence. It was hard work and it was meaningful work, and I was learning as much as anyone there. Twenty years later, China had a first Law of Anti-Domestic Violence, which took effect in 2016.

But changing the law was only one part of the work. Women experiencing violence also needed somewhere to turn, where they could find safety, support and a path forward.

That was when the UN Trust Fund became part of our journey. We were still a very new organization, at a moment when it was difficult to find support. The funding was practical, but the recognition from a UN mechanism mattered too. It gave a small, emerging organization like ours credibility at a critical moment, something that would have been difficult to establish on our own. With that support, on top of pushing for the law, we launched China's first 24/7 helpline for survivors.





Being an actioner is not easy.
Our struggle is not a smooth
path, and it may take
several generations.
I have given mine to it, and I
work now with the ones who
come next. They keep me
active too, physically,
mentally and spiritually.



Feng Yuan is a pioneering Chinese women's rights advocate and former journalist who has spent decades advancing recognition of domestic violence, strengthening civil society action, and supporting survivors. Her efforts contributed to China's first Anti-Domestic Violence Law, passed in 2015 and entered implementation in 2016.

