

Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements

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Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements

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The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is a global, feminist, membership, movement-support organisation. We support feminist, women's rights, and gender justice movements to thrive, to be a driving force in challenging systems of oppression, and to co-create feminist realities.

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Mama Cash was the first international women's fund in the world, and as of 2021, will be the only women's fund that funds feminist activists anywhere in the world on any topic. Mama Cash mobilises resources from individuals and institutions, makes grants to women's, girls', and trans and intersex people's organisations, and helps build the partnerships and networks they need to successfully defend and advance their rights. Since 1983, Mama Cash has awarded over EUR 72 million to feminist and women's rights activists worldwide.

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About CMI

Count Me In! is a special joint initiative led by Mama Cash, including the sex workers-led Red Umbrella Fund (RUF), together with the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), CREA, Just Associates (JASS), and Urgent Action Fund – Africa (representing its sister funds in the US and Latin America). The Dutch gender platform WO=MEN is a strategic partner for lobbying and advocacy. The initiative is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 2016-2020. Within its programming, CMI! is committed to advocating for the sustainable resourcing of women's rights and feminist movements.

<https://www.mamacash.org/en/count-me-in-consortium>

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

AC	AmplifyChange
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CMI	Count Me In! Consortium
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DFAT	(Australian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
FMS	Fondo de Mujeres del Sur
FWF	Fiji Women's Fund
FGE	UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality
FIMI	International Indigenous Women's Forum/AYNI Fund
FCAM	Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (Central American Women's Fund)
FLOW	Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex
LGBTI-GDP	The LGBTI Global Development Partnership

LFS	Leading from the South
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
POW	Power of Women
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
WFA	Women's Fund Asia
WRO	Women's Rights Organisations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UN	United Nations
UN Trust Fund	The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls

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INTRODUCTION



Between 2017 and 2019, bilateral and multilateral donors committed over USD 1 billion in funding to support gender equality, particularly in the Global South.¹ To date, however, **the bulk of those resources have not reached feminist movements, key drivers of transformative and sustainable change.** Instead, for decades, more than 99% of official development assistance (ODA) funding for gender equality has consistently supported large, more mainstream organisations, gone to governments, or stayed within development agencies themselves.²

Now, in 2020, the United Nations is putting forward the Generation Equality Forum in an effort to drive urgent action in response to insufficient progress on gender equality in the 25 years since member states committed to the Beijing Platform for Action.³ At the same time, in the midst of a global pandemic, feminists are leading on the frontlines of movements to build just economies and healthy communities. The urgency to adequately resource the full diversity of feminist movements has never been greater.

Through the funder advocacy and related research that AWID and Mama Cash have done over the last two decades, we know that many funders are committed to using their resources and voices to shift the needle for gender equality. We also know that there is a growing and vocal cadre of governmental and philanthropic funders who see the critical role played by feminist and women's rights movements in securing lasting change. **Why direct funding needs to reach feminist movements and women's rights organisations is becoming increasingly clear.** Yet we continue to hear about the challenges that funders encounter in terms of the 'how': how to design and implement programmes that succeed in providing sustained and direct funding to reach those movements.

The time has come to grapple with the question of how. This report is an invitation for funders to learn from existing models to put their intent and commitment into practice. We focus on real-world case profiles to show how **MODALITIES OF FUNDING** do—or do not—work towards the goal of resourcing feminist and women's rights movements.

Defining Funding Modalities

Funding modalities are simply the ways money is moved. They encompass the multiple practices, systems, and processes for structuring resources. They are the mechanics of funding, where strategy is operationalised, but modalities are more than (just) technical. **Funding modalities matter because they are the vehicles that put funding intent and commitment into practice.** Indeed, the modality of the funding can determine whether, and to which extent, the funding will successfully make its desired impact.

The practical nature of this report aims to inspire and support action and change, with a focus on bilateral and multilateral development agencies.

Bilateral and multilateral funders face unique constraints in their funding approaches and yet provide the largest quantities of funding oriented to gender equality. While foundation support, autonomous resourcing, and other types of resources are critical for movements, this report focuses in on a group of prominent actors in the funding ecosystem.⁴ There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to funding movements, nor a perfect modality that ticks all the boxes. However, we hope that the concepts, practices, and insights discussed in this report can be used to review and adapt funding modalities in current and future funding programmes, policies, and strategies.

1 Staszewska, K., Dolker, T., and Miller, K. July 2, 2019. "Only 1% of gender equality funding is going to women's organisations—why?" AWID.

2 OECD Development Co-operation Directorate. March 2020. "Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." GENDERNET.

3 "Generation Equality Forum." UNWomen.

4 For more on the funding ecosystem for feminist movements and the roles, recommendations, and analysis of each different funding sector and type of actor in the ecosystem, see AWID's report "Toward a feminist funding ecosystem: A framework and practical guide."

The practices and ideas presented in this report are derived from extensive research and interviews with nine of the leading contemporary funding programmes based in or funded by bilateral and multilateral donors.⁵ They range from the Dutch government's Leading from the South Fund and the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) to the Fiji Women's Fund, established in partnership with the Australian government, to the cross-sectoral LGBTI Global Development Partnership funded by the United States. The variety of modalities they use to deliver resources provides a rich foundation to explore what is possible. Our analytical framework and interpretation of findings are also informed by over two decades of research, advocacy, and experience in engaging with funders, and in particular our most recent collective work: the exchanges between movements and funders at the *Count Me In! Money & Movements Convening* that took place in Naivasha, Kenya in 2018,⁶ and the follow-up conversation held during the UN's Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2019. It also builds on AWID's "Towards a Feminist Funding Ecosystem".⁷

In this report, our goal is to identify and lift up a variety of enabling practices that can be replicated, increased in scale and scope, and adapted.

In the coming pages, we:

- Present the current **landscape** of funding for gender equality;
- Acknowledge common constraints, or **stumbling blocks**, that often emerge as challenges for bilateral and multilateral funders wishing to directly resource feminist movements; and
- Identify concrete **building blocks**, or dimensions of funding modalities, that address those constraints.

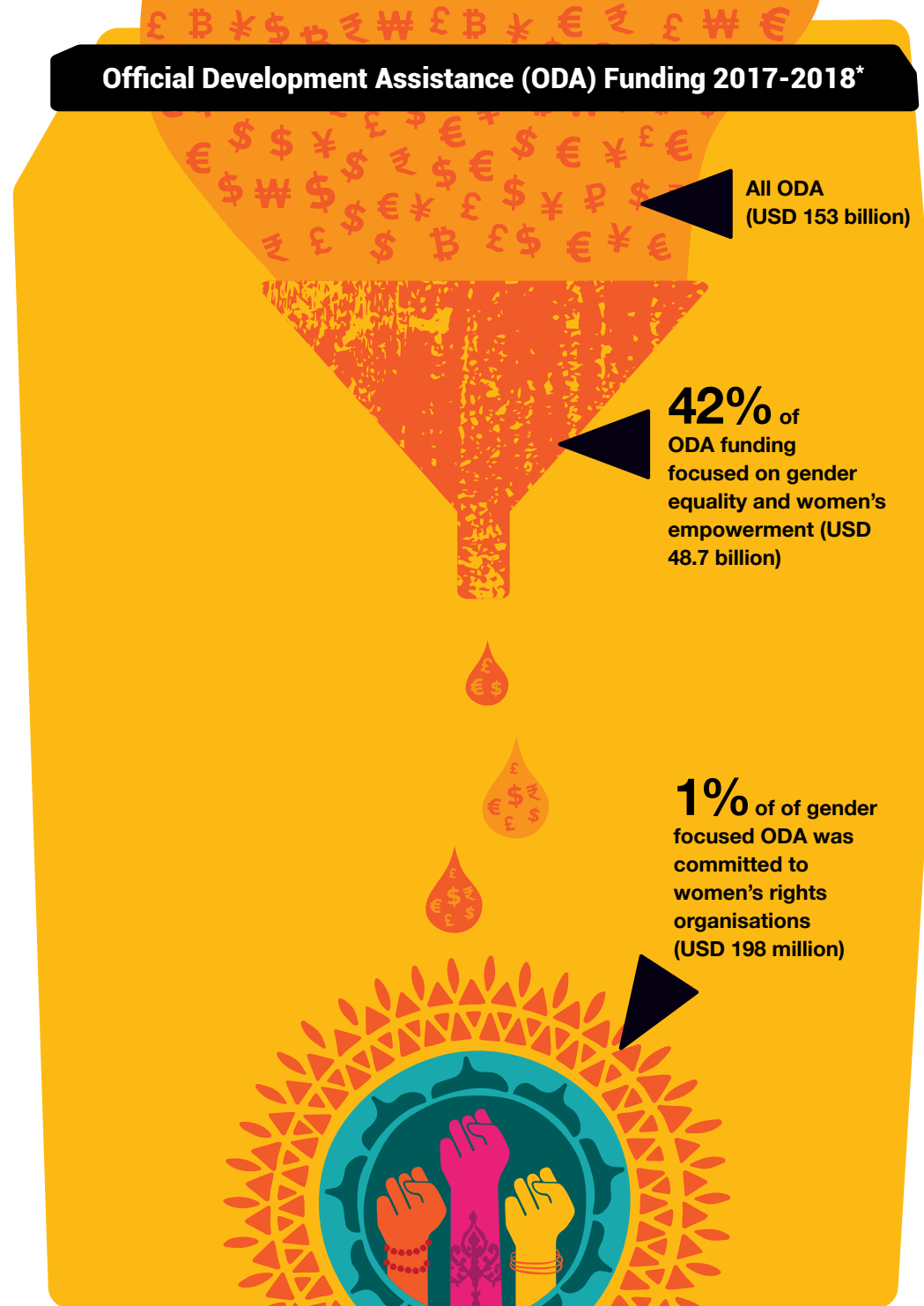
We hope this work can provide practical steps for funders to drive more accessible, efficient, and impactful funding to feminist movements and strengthen the capacity of movements and funders to deliver on the shared mission of advancement and realisation of women's rights and gender equality around the world.

⁵ Research was carried out by a research consultant, Louise Anten, and by AWID and Mama Cash staff. It consisted of: 1) desk review of existing documentation on the current bilateral and multilateral resourcing; and 2) 10 interviews with around 20 key informants connected to the funding modalities profiled as case profiles in the report.

⁶ *Money and Movements*, Count Me In! Consortium.

⁷ Miller, K. and Jones, R. October 2019. "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem." AWID.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) Funding 2017-2018*



*Source: OECD Development Co-operation Directorate. March 2020. "Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." GENDERNET.

In January 2020, the United Nations declared the upcoming ten years a decade of action: our last opportunity to achieve the 2030 global goals. The UN Secretary General called upon all sectors to step up and “[accelerate] sustainable solutions to all the world’s biggest challenges—ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap.”⁸ Within just the first few months of 2020, the new decade presented us with the COVID-19 pandemic which has further exposed gendered and other inequalities and injustices around the world, and will have far-reaching consequences in the coming years. Among all the unknowns, one thing is certain: addressing gender inequality must remain a priority moving forward.

After more than half a century of feminist advocacy, commitments to gender equality and women’s human rights have finally been firmly placed on the international development agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5), for example, urges states to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. Over the course of the last decade, a number of governments have made gender equality a policy priority, and, more recently, some have adopted feminist foreign policies.⁹ Several bilateral and philanthropic funders have also pledged to increase their support for ‘women and girls.’¹⁰ Promisingly, a record 42% of all bilateral ODA, corresponding to USD 48.7 billion, was committed for gender equality and women’s empowerment in 2018.¹¹

Nevertheless, progress towards SDG5 is lagging because of “insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues, and low levels of political participation.”¹² Newly committed resources have not necessarily reached feminist movements, especially in the Global South. Neither ODA focused on gender equality as a “principal objective,” nor ODA committed for women’s rights organisations (WROs, we define these terms on page 11), have seen any substantive increase. Gender equality as a principal objective has remained at roughly 4% of all bilateral ODA, and direct funding to WROs has been less than 1% (USD 4.6 billion and just USD 198 million in 2018, respectively).¹³ Remarkably, three-quarters of ODA does not leave bilateral development agencies, circulated instead into agencies’ gender programming; the remaining money that is allocated outside of development agencies goes

almost entirely to larger international non-governmental organisations (INGOs)—the vast majority based in the Global North.¹⁴ Feminist groups and WROs feel the gap: Mama Cash received nearly 5,500 applications from feminist groups between 2016–2018, and was able to fund just 3% of eligible applications.¹⁵ AWID’s research in 2013 found that only 50% of women’s rights organisations had access to core funding or had funding secured for the next year, and there is little evidence to believe that to date this situation has significantly changed.¹⁶

A separate development affecting the broader funding ecosystem is the effort to undermine progress on gender equality and women’s rights. This increasing backlash against progressive gender policies¹⁷ and social norms favoring gender equality¹⁸ is indicative of how ‘anti-gender ideology’ movements are growing in scale and influence.¹⁹ New research shows that this trend is catalysed by significant funding flows: at least USD 280 million and most likely closer to USD 1 billion has been mobilised by a range of conservative actors to support organising efforts against progressive gender reforms in different countries around the world.²⁰

Hence, considering the overall state of the funding ecosystem for gender equality and women’s rights, **it is clear that the problem is not so much a lack of resources. Rather, the ways in which funding moves, that is the modalities of funding, warrant review and changes to bridge the gap between intent and practice.**

8 “Decade of Action.” UN.

9 Ridge, A. et al. May 2019. “Feminist Foreign Policy: Key Principles & Accountability Mechanisms.” IWDA, ICRW, and NYU.

10 Staszewska, K., Dolker, T., and Miller, K. July 2, 2019. “Only 1% of gender equality funding is going to women’s organisations—why?” The Guardian.

11 OECD Development Co-operation Directorate. March 2020. “Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” GENDERNET.

12 “SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” UN.

13 OECD Development Co-operation Directorate. March 2020. “Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” GENDERNET.

14 OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality. November 2016. “Donor support to southern women’s rights organisations.” GENDERNET.

15 Mama Cash, November 14, 2019. Report: [Resourcing Feminist Activism](#).

16 Arutyunova, A. and Clark, C. October 7, 2013. “Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots.” AWID.

17 Human Rights Council. 2018. “Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.” UN.

18 UNDP, 2020. Report: “2020 Human Development Perspectives - Tackling social norms: A game changer for gender inequalities.”

19 Global Philanthropy Project. “Reference List: Resisting ‘Anti-Gender Ideology.’”

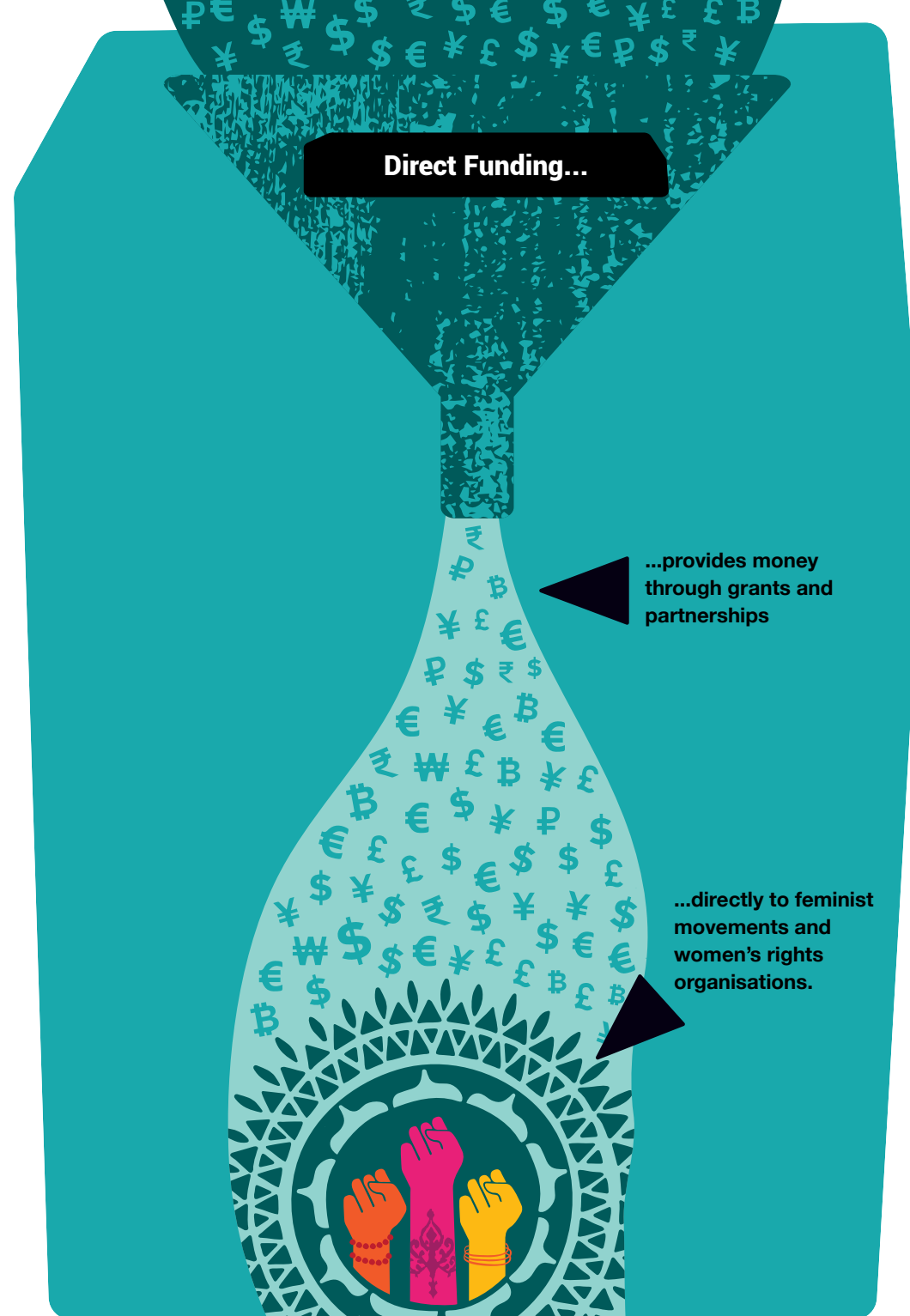
20 Provost, C. and Archer, N. October 27, 2020. “Revealed: \$280m ‘dark money’ spent by US Christian right groups globally.” openDemocracy. Further analysis on funding flows that estimate USD 1 billion supplemented via private research, as of yet to be published.

Calls to “shift the power” in the international funding community have grown stronger, and increasingly funders across sectors are re-examining their policies and practices to see if and how they are fit for purpose.²¹ Within the sphere of bilateral and multilateral donors, for example, the newly launched Action Coalitions—created as multi-stakeholder partnerships within the context of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—can potentially catalyse significant new resources and serve as mechanisms to bring funders together to deliver on their commitments to advance women’s human rights.²²

As new development funding strategies will be launched in the coming years, there is no going back to the situation before COVID-19. **Now is the time to start doing things differently.** Evidence shows that strong and autonomous feminist movements are the most effective actors to ensure progress and sustainable change on women’s rights and gender equality.²³ Around the world, feminist movements have been doing the daily work of resisting oppression and injustice as well as imagining and developing new, more respectful and just ways of being for decades. **Resources supporting those movements should be as rich, significant, and transformative as feminist organising itself.**²⁴

Direct funding to feminist movements

One of the premises of this report is that feminist movements and organisations are critical actors in addressing the structural drivers of gender inequality. That’s why we make a critical distinction between **direct funding for feminist movements** and resources that support generic gender equality programming (often under the phrasing ‘investing in women and girls’) that do not reach these movements.²⁵ Direct funding is delivered in a number of forms, but fundamentally provides money through grants and partnerships to feminist movements and women’s rights organisations, rather than through gender programming within mainstream civil society organisations, INGOs or development agencies (see ‘Defining Feminist Movements’ table below).



21 “Announcing the ‘Pathways to Power’ Symposium, London, 18-19 November.” GFCF.

22 See UN Women. January 15, 2020. “In lead up to Generation Equality Forum, Action Coalition themes announced.”

23 Htun, M. and Weldon, S. 2012. “The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence Against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005.” American Political Science Review, 106(3), 548-569.

24 Miller, K. and Jones, R. October 2019. “Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem.” AWID.

25 For an expanded discussion on types of funding—including those that impede direct funding—see AWID’s “Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem.”

We argue that significantly more resources in the funding ecosystem should be channeled through modalities that are intentionally designed to transfer direct funding to feminist movements in the Global South.

Differentiating direct funding to feminist movements from funding that is more generally focused on ‘women and girls’ (which currently constitutes almost all gender-focused ODA), is an immediate and necessary step for donors to see the full picture and to reassess and re-configure the balance of *who*, *what*, and *how* they actually fund.

‘Direct funding’ intentionally delivers resources to feminist groups and movements, allowing them to determine their own priorities and recognising them as the agents and drivers of change. By definition, these groups are led by women, girls, and trans people speaking for themselves, representing their own interests, and demanding their own rights. When groups and movements are rooted in their local communities and speak on the basis of lived experience about realities that they know well, they own the advocacy and are best positioned to pursue solutions that are deep, empowering, and lasting.

Direct funding to constituency-led feminist movements differs in form and substance from general funding focused on ‘women and girls.’ Specifically, research points to autonomous feminist movements as key drivers of gender justice; as such, these movements are important political actors. New research by Laurel Weldon, and her collaborators Summer Forester, Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson, and Amber Lusvardi, for example, shows that strong autonomous feminist movements—not civil society in general—are critical actors in achieving women’s economic empowerment, including the right to work and to own property, legislation to end sexual harassment and violence, or to women’s right to land.²⁶ This work suggests that funding for feminist movements must be a priority focus for funders who care about achieving gender equality and women’s rights. Given that only less than 1% (USD 198 million) out of all gender-focused aid (USD 48.7 billion) reached women’s rights organisations in 2018, a radical reallocation of resources is called for.²⁷

26 See Weldon, L., Forester, S., Kelly-Thompson, K., and Lusvardi, A. March 2020. “Handmaidens or Heroes? Feminist Mobilization as a Force for Economic Justice.” Simon Fraser University.

27 Staszewska, K., Dolker, T., and Miller, K. July 2, 2019. “Only 1% of gender equality funding is going to women’s organisations—why?” AWID.

Defining Feminist Movements²⁸



The terms ‘*feminist movements*’ and ‘*women’s rights organisations*’ are frequently used and may become diluted and confused. In this report, we use these terms interchangeably to refer to groups that:²⁹

- Work from feminist and/or women’s rights perspectives;
- Are led by the people they serve;³⁰
- Have the promotion of women’s, girls’, and/or trans people’s human rights as their primary mission, and not just as part of their programmes;
- Push for structural change; and,
- Work on issues that are marginalised and/or contested.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) whose missions are not grounded in feminist and/or women’s rights perspectives are different actors. They also have a part to play in fighting for gender equality. It is not the same, however, as women’s rights organisations and feminist movements. While they may do gender-related programming or include a feminist lens in some areas, it is not their core business. They are not doing locally-based, self-led feminist work, and they are not part of or accountable to feminist movements. At best, they can be allies to feminist movements; but, at worst, they compete with them for funding and/or push an agenda that is reformist rather than one that aims to secure structural change for all women, girls, and trans people.

28 Adapted in part from Miller, K. and Jones, R. October 2019. “Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem.” AWID, p. 14.

29 For more concepts and definitions relating to feminist organising, see “Feminist Movement Builder’s Dictionary.” JASS.

30 See Mama Cash. December 4, 2017. “Report: why self-led activism works.”

STUMBLING BLOCKS

that inhibit funding for feminist movements



The paradox in today's funding ecosystem is that the largest funders, especially bilateral donors, primarily employ the most restricted funding modalities that do not—and generally cannot—reach feminist movements. Meanwhile, the most flexible money—tailored to movements' priorities, needs, and demands—sits in the smallest pools: women's funds, a small number of private foundations, and autonomous resources that feminist movements generate themselves.³¹

Staff from bilateral and multilateral development agencies often remark that they want to fund feminist movements, but internal stumbling blocks make it difficult, if not impossible. A number of consistent stumbling blocks resurface in this research, revealing systematic and institutional barriers to directly funding feminist movements in the Global South.³² These include:

Internal capacity.

Managing grants to a number of smaller and mid-size feminist organisations is more demanding and labour-intensive than, say, multilateral funding programmes or funding large INGOs. Many agencies do not have the human resources needed to run such programmes. Commitment to supporting feminist movements requires setting up new ways of working, which takes political will, time, staffing, and resources.³³

Lack of experience and/or knowledge about feminist organising and few movement-connected staff.

As supporting feminist movements and movement-building is relatively new for many, donors may need to expand and/or change the pool of people they consult, look for different kinds of expertise (especially feminist movement expertise), and invest time in building new relationships and networks to reach movements directly.

³¹ Miller, K. and Jones, R. October 2019. "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem." AWID. p. 18.

³² These stumbling blocks were mentioned during interviews for this report, conversations at the 2018 Money and Movements Convening, as well as in articles such as: Esplen, E. November 21, 2016. "Donors thinking big: beyond gender equality funds." OpenDemocracy.

³³ Miller, K. February 2019. "Development funding and the occlusion of feminist expertise." European Journal of Politics and Gender, 2(1), 57-74.

Isolated advocates for change within institutions.

For individuals or programmes seeking to advance funding for feminist movements, bringing decision-makers or agency leadership on board often requires extensive internal advocacy. The 'insider/outsider' role played by those working to bridge development funding models with feminist movements can be isolating in institutions with competing priorities and where direct funding to feminist movements is far outside the traditional forms of operation.

Short and strict policy cycles and budget timeframes.

Funding may depend on changes in political leadership (e.g. through elections) or direction (e.g. in response to evolving issues), which can shift priorities and divert funding in new directions. Not only does this make meaningful engagement with movements difficult, but also it poses a threat to sustainability of funding in the medium to long term.

Funding thresholds are either too high or too low.

Pressure to move significant budgets quickly drives a preference to fund a smaller number of organisations that can absorb larger pots of funding. This effectively excludes small- and medium-sized feminist groups, which are often the core of feminist movements. But the reverse is also problematic: allocating only small pots of funding plays into the myth that feminist groups can't absorb larger amounts of funding.

Resistance to re-granting, working with other funders, and/or collectively pooling funds.

This is driven by in-house pressure for visibility and branding, and/or challenges to manage different due diligence and legal requirements, fueled by limited trust and experience of working with other donors in the funding ecosystem, especially across sectors, for example with private philanthropy or women's funds.

Formulaic approaches to due diligence and mitigating risk.

Many of these stumbling blocks are rationalised in the spirit of ensuring funding is spent well and that activities funded yield measurable results within a given timespan. A combination of well-worn bureaucratic processes, fears of reputational risks, and concerns about accountability or corruption can stifle innovation and creativity. Most bilateral and multilateral agencies approach risk mitigation in a way that seems to presume bigger and older is better and safer. Funding is often predicated on requirements around budget size, proof of financial audits, legal registration, short-term measurable impact, and other factors that may miss the reality of how movements work, mobilise, and organise. Due diligence systems manage perceived risk, rather than addressing real risk or recognising that 'safe' programmes may maintain the status quo and, as such, increase the risk that inequality will not be challenged or changed.

These stumbling blocks underscore that reaching feminist movements requires new partnerships and internal expertise, new ways of thinking, and a deeper level of trust. This is not about eliminating accountability; **feminist organisations have developed many tools of accountability including accountability to the movements and communities of which they are a part.** Funding small(er), agile, and/or new(er) organisations requires a more nuanced approach to understanding and mitigating risk in the context of social change, as well as the internal shifts to overcome isolated programming, lack of movement connections, or limited capacity.

Sound familiar? As a funder, have you ever stumbled over these constraints?

What if you could navigate through or even eliminate these stumbling blocks and still meet accountability requirements? What if you could redirect more and better resources to feminist-led social change?

Read on to see how it is possible.

CASE PROFILES: OVERVIEW

The nine funding programmes profiled for this report show different experiences rooted in feminist funding principles³⁴ that overcome common stumbling blocks to directly resource women’s rights organisations and feminist movements. Programmes were selected on the basis of their focus on women’s rights and/ or social justice and deliberate engagement with feminist movements. There are many examples of bilateral and multilateral funding modalities that we would

have liked to have included in this report, but it was not possible because of limited capacities.³⁵ The nine case profiles below are illustrative examples and are not meant to be a ‘fair representation’ of the richness and diversity of all funding programmes aiming to support women’s rights and gender equality. The annex provides case profiles, with more detailed histories and concrete practices for each of the programmes.

CASE PROFILE	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	DONORS	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	AMOUNTS	FOCUS
1	Leading from the South (2016-2020 and 2021-2025)	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI) / AYNi Fund, and Women’s Fund Asia (WFA)	EUR 40 million (2016-2020) ³⁶ and EUR 80 million (2021-2025) ³⁷	Supporting feminist movements in the Global South
2	Power of Women (2021-2025)		Managed in house by Dutch MFA	EUR 73.5 million ³⁸	Sustainable Development Goal 5
3	The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) (1996-ongoing)	Mostly bilateral donors with some contributions from philanthropic foundations, corporate sector and individual givers (in the case of both funds)	UN Women	USD 183 million awarded in grants since 1996 ³⁹	Preventing and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)
4	The UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) (2009-2020)			USD 64 million awarded between 2009 and 2017 ⁴⁰	Economic and political empowerment of women, addressing structural underfunding faced by feminists and women’s rights organisations

34 “Feminist Funding Principles.” The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice; “Principles for Feminist Funding.” The Canadian Women’s Foundation, Community Foundations of Canada, and the Equality Fund.
35 These include, among others, Candian Women’s Voice and Leadership Programme of 170 mln CAD (approximately US 127 mln) which provides women’s rights organisations and networks with direct funding, and Spotlight Initiative: EU-UN 500 mln EUR programme to end violence against women and girls, including through feminist movements and WROs in selected countries in the Global South.
36 “About Us.” Leading from the South.
37 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. November 2019. 4. “Kamerbrief over Beleidskader Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld.” Government of the Netherlands.
38 Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Besluit vaststelling subsidieplafond ex Subsidiebegroting.” Government of the Netherlands.
39 “About the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.” UNWomen.
40 The FGE last 4th round was closed for applications, focusing primarily on scaling up existing projects and social innovation. See “Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2017-2009.” UN Women, and “Fund for Gender Equality: Annual Report 2019-2018.” UN Women.

CASE PROFILE	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	DONORS	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	AMOUNTS	FOCUS
5	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF) (2017-2022)	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	Cardno, private company, in partnership with feminist movements in Fiji	AUD 10.5 million (EUR 6.6 million) ⁴¹	Violence against women, women's economic empowerment, women's coalitions for change, women's leadership and decision-making
6	The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) (2016-2020 and 2021-2025)	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), Mama Cash, and Both ENDS	EUR 32 million (in 2016-2020) ⁴² EUR 34.5 million (2021-2025) ⁴³	Catalysing the collective power of women's rights, environmental justice and climate movements in addressing women's rights to water, food security, and a clean, healthy, and safe environment
7	AmplifyChange (AC) (2014-ongoing)	Government donors: the Dutch MFA, Danish Danida, Swedish SIDA, and British DfID ⁴⁴ Philanthropic foundations: Packard and Hewlett Foundations Private sector: ViiV Healthcare	MannionDaniels, Global Fund for Women, and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) (AmplifyChange is an independent entity as of 2020)	EUR 92 million disbursed ⁴⁵	Sexual and reproductive health and rights; including young people's rights/ health, rights/health of LGBTIQ individuals, etc.

41 DFAT. March 2020. "DFAT Fiji Women's Fund Mid-Term Review and Management Response." Australian Government.
42 "Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action." Mama Cash.
43 Tentative amount; internal letter from Dutch MFA to GAGGA, June 2020.
44 DfID has since been closed and replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).
45 AmplifyChange

CASE PROFILE	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	DONORS	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	AMOUNTS	FOCUS
8	The LGBTI Global Development Partnership (2012-2019)	<p>The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)</p> <p>With additional philanthropic funds raised by Astraea</p>	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice (Astraea)	USD 15.8 million ⁴⁶	LGBTI human rights in the Global South and East
9	Equality Fund (2019-ongoing)	Global Affairs Canada (GAC), contributions from members of PAWHR (Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights) and individual donors	Equality Fund Collective led by the Equality Fund (formerly, MATCH International Women's Fund)	CAD 300 million (USD 225 million) from GAC ⁴⁷	Funding feminist futures; supporting WROs and gender justice organisations; women's funds; coalitions and networks; and feminist groups responding to natural disasters & armed conflicts

46 Astraea internal programme documents reviewed in June 2019.
47 Global Affairs Canada. July 21, 2019. "Global Affairs Canada - The Equality Fund: Transforming the way we support women's organizations and movements working to advance women's rights and gender equality." Government of Canada.

Each of these programmes is unique. Some have been around for several years, others are only emerging. All of them have been a process of learning, listening, and not always ‘getting it right.’ **What unifies them is that they are all promising real-life examples of how to jump at least some of the institutional stumbling blocks. Together they highlight key practices in what works to fund feminist social change.**

They also provide a window into common means of managing funding modalities in order to transfer funding to feminist movements in the Global South. For example, funding modalities can be:

- *Managed directly* by a bilateral donor, like in the case of funding transferred by the Dutch government through its Power of Women programme;
- *Outsourced* from a bilateral, multilateral, or philanthropic funder to key feminist movement funders—i.e., women’s funds which are rooted in and emerge from these movements—and re-granted in the form of direct funding to activists’ groups like, for example, in Leading from the South;

- *Collaborative funding*, funded by several donors from different sectors that include bilateral donors, private foundations, and other partners. AmplifyChange is an example of such a modality; or

- Traditional *multi-donor trust funds*, in which multiple bilateral agencies contribute funding to a multilateral funding programme that is then granted out either in the form of core funding or funding for a specific project. Examples of such programmes include the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality.

Together, these case profiles and the funding modalities they illustrate give us a way to understand what we are calling the “building blocks” to reach feminist movements.

BUILDING BLOCKS

that create funding modalities to reach
feminist movements



From the experiences of the nine programmes we examined, we have distilled critical aspects of their practice—**their funding modalities**—that were essential in facilitating direct resourcing of women’s rights organisations and feminist movements. They fall into four overarching categories:

- 1. POLITICAL COMMITMENT
- 2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
- 3. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND FUNDING MECHANISMS
- 4. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Think of these as building blocks for resourcing feminist movements.

Recommendations within each of these building blocks are not meant to be prescriptive, nor do they all need to be implemented within a given modality (or utilised at the same time). In the programmes profiled, these building blocks have not all been simply or easily achieved; they have often resulted from engaging with feminist movements, adapting to the moment, and, at times, challenging institutional norms. They are intended as a menu of options that allies within bilateral or multilateral agencies can draw from to strengthen their own practice.

1

POLITICAL
COMMITMENT



2

ELIGIBILITY
CRITERIA



3

PROGRAMME DESIGN AND
FUNDING MECHANISMS



4

GOVERNANCE AND
MANAGEMENT





1. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Of course before you can start to shift your institution's funding modalities and how it moves money to feminist movements, you need to start with a mandate and the political will to get there. For this we have no easy road-map. Our case profiles range from governments that have purposefully aimed to position themselves on the international stage as champions of women's rights, to feminist groups that were able to leverage unusual, and sometimes behind-the-scenes, partnerships with bilateral donors. The following are a series of steps that may help to foster or build political commitment to funding feminist movements.

Leverage political openings and build internal and external support.

Big announcements, shifting political directions, and high-level leadership around gender equality and feminist social change have proven powerful opportunities to advocate for (direct!) funding to match rhetorical commitments. In many of the programmes presented here, high-level leadership publicly committed to women's rights or feminist social change. At the same time, insiders worked to develop funding programmes to match. This was not an accident, but rather was the result of often years-long advocacy by feminist movements and efforts within institutions to make the case for direct funding. For example, Canada's feminist international assistance policy announcement in 2017 put the country on the map as a leader in this arena.⁴⁸ To turn rhetoric into action, staff within Global Affairs Canada and feminist organisers from outside the agency advanced ideas for new groundbreaking ways of moving resources, including what ultimately became the CAD 300 million contribution to the Equality Fund.⁴⁹ More quietly, under the Obama administration, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) slowly strengthened its programming for LGBTI rights. Staff within the agency saw the possibility to create the agency's largest and leading funding programme for international LGBTI rights and engaged the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and several other partners to propose the LGBTI Global Development Partnership.⁵⁰ The Dutch government's long standing promotion of gender equality has been vital for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' experimentation and leadership with new funding modalities over the past decade. All of these cases required persistent and creative insiders who saw possibilities and built partnerships (sometimes over years) with feminist movements.

48 Global Affairs Canada. June 9, 2017. "[Canada launches new Feminist International Assistance Policy](#)." Government of Canada.

49 The announcement of the Equality Fund followed from the earlier ambitious announcement of Canada's Women's Voice and Leadership Programme, which remains outside the scope of this report. For more information see: "[Women's Voice and Leadership](#)." Government of Canada.

50 See USAID. May 12, 2017. "[LGBTI Global Development Partnership](#)."

Build connections with feminist movements and tap activists' expertise to build internal knowledge and understanding. This will provide support as you build your own funding programmes, in-house definitions, and conceptualisations of feminist movements and their roles and contributions to your agency's policy strategies and theories of change.

Feminist movements are not passive, inexperienced beneficiaries. They bring decades of organising and experience to the table and savvy strategising to expand political will in support of gender equality and women's rights. This longevity can serve, in some ways, as a counterweight to the short policy cycles and budget timeframes that are part of the reality for bilateral agencies in particular. Even though a policy cycle may come to an end or priorities shift, feminist movements remain essential actors with an unparalleled track record and range of existing partnerships critical for advancing gender equality and women's rights. They have long navigated the ebb and flow of development financing. They can bring their voices and constituencies to the table to build an understanding of their role and make the political case for their work. Attend feminist movements' events; read up on the decades of analysis and evidence about how social change happens and what feminist funding models work; reach out, listen, and build in meaningful consultations to shape your own ideas and understanding of movements' priorities. When it comes to influencing or involving your agency, host related brown-bag discussions, webinars, and discussions with feminist movements and identify key decision-makers you might be able to bring into these conversations. In recent years, both the Netherlands and

Canada have undertaken deliberate and widespread outreach, as well as smaller and less formal invitations to feminist movements and civil society organisations more broadly, to discuss, debate, and develop policy directions and, in some cases, funding modalities.⁵¹ The UN Trust Fund also held a convention and process to engage with grantee partners to develop its new strategic direction.⁵² Bringing feminist activists to the table in regular and meaningful ways creates a feedback loop that will ultimately strengthen any gender programming.

Be prepared to adjust your agency's commonly-used modalities to reach feminist movements more directly.

It is impossible to transform gender power relations without also transforming how resources flow. Many of our cases show a critical willingness to test new modalities: USAID and Sida entrusted Astraea with the leadership of the LGBTI Global Development Partnership,⁵³ DFAT took an important leap in supporting the Fiji Women's Fund,⁵⁴ and the Netherlands piloted a new model by creating Leading from the South as a Southern- and women's funds-led programme.⁵⁵ UN Trust Fund and the UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) demonstrated a willingness to make changes to their modalities (e.g. adjusting eligibility requirements, grant sizes, dedicated funding windows) over time as they learned about both what was working, and not working, to reach feminist organisations.⁵⁶ Whether establishing a new programme or adjusting existing modalities, these shifts require boldness, innovation, and a willingness to come back to the programme's essential goals and political commitments to gender equality and feminist social change.

51 See, for example: "2016 International Assistance Review: What we heard." Government of Canada.

52 UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. October 24, 2019. "First UN Trust Fund Grantee Convention: Bosnia and Herzegovina 2019." UN Women.

53 See USAID. May 12, 2017. "LGBTI Global Development Partnership."

54 DFAT. November 3, 2015. "Fiji Women's Fund." Australian Government.

55 Ibid.

56 See Barnes, J. Bishop J. and Vaca S. 2016. "Gender Equality evaluations 2011-2015: Meta analysis." UNWomen and Drammis, Z. and Guilbert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."

Show up as an ally to advocate for feminist funding with peer institutions.

Advancing new funding programmes that directly fund feminist movements is important, but funders can also contribute by working to shift the larger funding ecosystem around bilateral and multilateral funding. Finding ways to share your experiences and lessons about direct funding with peers is an important step to show that it is possible. We have also seen the power and potential of bringing others on board with new modalities. For example, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been candid about some of the challenges and lessons learned over the years, and has also worked to develop dialogue amongst bilateral funders about how to more effectively fund feminist movements.⁵⁷ The UN Trust Fund, for example, has committed to serve as a global evidence hub, whilst advocating for increased global giving to ending VAWG.⁵⁸ Such advocacy should not only expand donors' own interest, but also work to shift power in the funding ecosystem towards feminist activists and their movements. The most effective allies are intentional about opening doors and spaces, sharing and exchanging knowledge, and supporting movements' policy priorities and demands in high stakes conversations.

⁵⁷ For example, see this 2018 presentation to activists and funders: Women's Rights and Gender Equality Task Force Social Development Department. April 2018. "[Good practices and lessons learned from the diverse funding modalities in the field of women's rights and gender equality: the Dutch example.](#)" Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁵⁸ Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."



2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Funding programmes often exclude key actors in feminist movements because of eligibility criteria that set funding floors too high, exclude re-granting, or otherwise create barriers for feminist organisations. Funding modalities that are intentional about directly reaching the broad range of feminist organising include at least some of the following elements in their eligibility criteria.

Offer different funding tranches, with a range from small to large, to reach a continuum of women's rights organisations and feminist movements.

One example from the cases examined for this report is the UN Trust Fund, which introduced a 'small grants funding modality' of USD 50,000 to USD 150,000 in order to more effectively fund grassroots organisations missed by the existing grants that start from USD 1 million. After making this change, the UN Trust Fund mid-term review of its 2015-2020 Strategic Programme pointed to small grants as one of the programme's biggest successes and value additions.⁵⁹ Fiji Women's Fund, with funding from DFAT, works with three tranches, with grant size linked to the grant duration.⁶⁰ GAGGA and AmplifyChange both also offer a range of differently-sized grants, again responding to the diversity of feminist movement organisations.

Allow for re-granting.

This is especially critical for funders that are not able to offer smaller funding directly, or otherwise have limited internal capacity or lack of networks within feminist movements. In every region of the world there are feminist or women's funds—which are rooted in, emerge from, and are accountable to feminist movements⁶¹—or other feminist organisations with experience re-granting funding to feminist movements. Leading from the South, the Fiji Women's Fund, AmplifyChange, and GAGGA are all examples where bilateral agencies have directed resources to groups with the mandate to re-grant and reach women's rights organisations at various levels, from local to global. In these cases, re-granting is done by funders with long-standing networks in feminist movements and established practices to reach groups leading social change. This type of partnership has proven highly effective for funding modalities to overcome the internal stumbling blocks that often limit direct funding to feminist movements and WROs.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Fiji Women's Fund. July 2019. "Grants Manual." Australian Aid.

⁶¹ See Mama Cash. February 26, 2015. "Briefing: Why fund women's funds?"

Directly prioritise feminist movements and women's rights organisations in the Global South, over non-constituency-led groups.

Constituency-led (also called self-led) groups play a critical role in advancing structural change for gender equality and women's rights, and funding programmes can recognise this important role by adding this to their eligibility criteria or assigning extra points for groups that meet this criteria. For example, FGE's first two rounds of grantmaking (2009 and 2011) were open to governments and INGOs, as well as WROs. After reflecting on the impact and goals it hoped to achieve, FGE changed its eligibility criteria to focus exclusively on women-led organisations. This shift made its priority clear, created explicit boundaries around its funding, and resulted in a consistent and direct prioritisation of WROs.⁶² Though open to other CSOs, the UN Trust Fund awards additional points to women's rights organisations in the grant review process.⁶³ Similarly, after consultations with feminist movements, the Dutch Power of Women policy framework, the successor to FLOW II, is now only eligible for WROs (unlike its predecessor).⁶⁴

⁶² Source: Interview with the FGE staff (June 2019) and Barnes, J. Bishop J. and Vaca S. 2016. "Gender Equality evaluations 2011-2015: Meta analysis."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society: Power of Women." Government of the Netherlands.



3. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

Funders use a range of different mechanisms to resource programmes, depending on their objectives and internal parameters. From programme design to implementation, these have implications for efficacy and reach. For instance, much philanthropic research has demonstrated the critical importance of long-term, core funding that organisations can use flexibly to respond to their contexts and take advantage of opportunities.⁶⁵ The more a funder predetermines narrow priority themes and geographies, the more constrained the funding mechanism tends to be. This defeats the purpose of relying on the actors who are well placed to develop contextualised strategies to pursue structural change. It also loses valuable links to cross-issue and cross-geographic work that is important to deliver lasting results.⁶⁶ The following suggestions contribute to designing programmes and funding mechanisms that are more likely to reach feminist movements.

Build in flexibility where you can.

In setting out the parameters for a particular funding programme, focus on the primary purpose or the change the programme aims to contribute to, leaving flexibility in terms of specific themes and geographies. Or provide a broad thematic focus that allows for applicants to relate the focus to their own context-specific priorities and strategies of working. Similarly, allowing flexibility across budget items is important to enable groups to respond to opportunities and challenges as they emerge in the context, while still remaining aligned to the programme's objectives. Leading from the South, GAGGA, and AmplifyChange have all intentionally prioritised providing flexible and/or core support and allowing flexibility for groups to work across issues. FGE's 2015 Meta-Analysis of project evaluations 2011-2015 found: "The demand-driven and grantee-led approach of the FGE is a significant comparative advantage and ensured that projects were relevant, responsive to the needs of beneficiaries, and sustainable."⁶⁷ By not predetermining or confining programmes to narrow themes or geographies (i.e., excluding certain countries or even entire regions), these modalities enable feminist groups to identify the most strategic areas to work in in their own contexts.

⁶⁵ Geofunders. May 29, 2014. "What is General Operating Support and Why is it Important?" Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

⁶⁶ See, for example: IOB Study. September 2019. "Strategies for Partners: balancing complementarity and autonomy." Ministry of Foreign Affairs. p. 63.

⁶⁷ Bishop, J., Vaca, S., and Barnes, J. 2016. "Fund for Gender Equality: Meta Analysis 2011-2015." UN Women. p. 2.

Value grantee-partners as part of programme results.

If you are supporting feminist movements and women's funds because you believe they drive positive change for gender equality, the funding mechanisms should reflect that and contribute to strengthening the institutional capacities, sustainability, and resilience of these organisations. Cover salaries and other core or administrative expenses, as well as budget for strengthening operational and institutional capacities. For example, FGE has invested in the institutional capacities of its grantees by allowing 30% of grant costs to be allocated for programme management plus 7% for administrative costs.⁶⁸ Pursue a culture of accompaniment, supporting grantees where needed to harmonise their accountability systems with the specific requirements of your agency, investing in programmes to strengthen their operational and institutional capacities. For instance, Fiji Women's Fund links grantmaking to capacity development in a range of areas, including gender equality and social inclusion, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation.⁶⁹ Facilitate connections (where interest exists) among grantees for knowledge and experience exchange related to the programme scope. GAGGA intentionally built in cross-movement learning between women's rights groups and NGOs more focused on environmental justice.⁷⁰ This mutual learning has been an important contribution of the programme and supports the expansion of women's leadership and gender justice in environment and climate spaces.

Explicitly encourage support to women's rights organisations within general funding programmes for civil society.

Too often, gender-specific funding programmes are both miniscule and the sole pockets of resourcing for feminist activism. While it is, of course, critical that donors develop women's rights-focused funding programmes to resource feminist activists, they also must be deliberate to fund women's rights organisations within broader, more generic and/or issue-based funding programmes for civil society, such as, for example, those focused on environment, economic development, or global health. Finding ways to bring feminist movements and gender equality into other departments and portfolios is critical for two reasons. First, it reflects the cross-movement realities of social change and the fact that feminist organising occurs in all major social movements. Second, it moves past the dedicated, but smaller and more isolated pots of money, and places gender equality on the agenda of human rights, environmental change, economic justice, and more. Translate this commitment into actual, explicit threshold and proposal criteria. For example, the Dutch Dialogue and Dissent policy framework and its successor Power of Voices were not specific to gender equality, and yet recognised the relevance of women's rights towards its ultimate purpose.⁷¹

68 Source: Interview with the FGE staff (June 2019) and Barnes, J. Bishop J. and Vaca S. 2016. "Gender Equality evaluations 2011-2015: Meta analysis."

69 Fiji Women's Fund. July 2019. "Grants Manual." Australian Aid.

70 "Our Approach." GAGGA.

71 For example, Count Me In! Consortium (CMI), of which both AWID and Mama Cash are members, was funded under the Dutch "Dialogue and Dissent" framework (see: May 13, 2014. "'Dialogue and Dissent'. Strategic partnerships for 'lobby and advocacy.'" Government of the Netherlands. Funding for CMI was then renewed under the "Power of Voices" framework, the successor to Dialogue and Dissent: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 3, 2019. "Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society." Government of the Netherlands.)

Be deliberately accessible to reach the rich diversity of feminist movement actors.

This is relevant both in programme documentation (available in multiple languages, if possible, formatted for screen readers for people with visual impairment, and in clear and reasonable grant processes) and in programme design. Prioritise—or build dedicated funding windows for—underfunded activists working at the intersection of different forms of discrimination. Fiji Womens' Fund, for example, puts in extra effort to reach structurally excluded groups through visits to every corner of Fiji, targeted calls for proposals, and word-of-mouth outreach, given that internet/social media does not necessarily reach those they aim to support.⁷² AmplifyChange focuses on where sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) needs are greatest by allocating resources to more difficult or controversial issues (i.e. safe abortion, discrimination against LGBTI people, young people's rights) and to harder-to-reach groups and countries with low-performing SRHR indicators, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. AmplifyChange established targets when it was set up to reach particular 'not to miss' countries that scored low on SRHR indicators.⁷³ It also provides support for groups to apply for what they think is needed in their context, and asks that it responds to their theory of change broadly, rather than imposing narrow agendas on applicants.⁷⁴

Fund activists' holistic security, safety, wellbeing, and collective care—especially given the ongoing backlash and current global context.

Establish protocols for protecting grantee partners' security, including opting out from being named publicly in cases that might put activists at risk. Discuss and support the use of grant monies for wellbeing and collective care. This can be

done through core support and/or dedicated funding. For example, the UN Trust Fund increased the share of core funding for 'smaller' WROs from 7% to 14% and introduced a special USD 2,000 budget line for self-care and to prevent burn out.⁷⁵

Consider pooling funding with other donors to unlock resources at scale, share risks, enhance sustainability, reduce management burdens, and expand the number of donors with which feminist groups have funding relationships.

Pooled funds can also be a way to bring new funders to the table. Our cases include examples of pooled funds that include bilateral donors, private foundations, and other partners (i.e., Equality Fund, LGBTI Global Development Partnership). AmplifyChange is another example of such a pooling mechanism, enabling a range of interested donors to reach feminist groups in the Global South in a reasonably coordinated way, with a level of flexibility that, on their own, many of the participating funders would not have been able to offer. There are also traditional multi-donor funds, in which multiple bilateral agencies contribute to a multilateral funding programme that is then granted out either in the form of core funding or funding for a specific project (i.e. the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women or the UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality).

⁷² Fiji Women's Fund. June 2020. "Communications Strategy 2018-2022." Australian Aid.

⁷³ "Not to be missed" countries." Amplify Change.

⁷⁴ "Our Theory of Change." Amplify Change.

⁷⁵ Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."



4. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The governance and management of a funding programme is a critical site for determining what success looks like, what is valuable in the programme results, and for learning that can support course corrections and stronger programming along the way. If fund management is understood as a technical task, outsourced to consulting firms with limited experience in funding feminist movements and limited connections to these movements, it diminishes the potential impact of the programme and reinforces unequal power dynamics (with most such management firms based in the Global North). It also deprives women's and feminist funds, as well as women's rights organisations and networks with experience in re-granting, from resources that could be potentially used to strengthen feminist organisations' own funding infrastructure, especially in the Global South. Finally, it can also lead to stagnation of ideas by relying on the advice and expertise of the same small group of people and/or organisations over time.

Our cases reflect diverse approaches to governance and management of the funding programmes that draw on the leadership, experience, connections, and knowledge of a diverse range of feminist actors. This is possible both when a programme is managed directly by the funder, or when the management is outsourced. For many bilateral or multilateral agencies, outsourcing of fund management can help with efficacy and reaching movements, whilst also solving for constraints such as limited internal capacities and/or lack of knowledge, connections, or experience. Engaging these actors in turn helps to ensure that funding programmes reach feminist movements. Overall, what our case profiles show is that fund management is not just a technical tool; it is a political practice that can lead to deep engagement with feminist movements and strengthen activists' power as fund managers, advisers, or technical experts in their own right.

Use consultations and informal exchanges to build avenues for movements' input.

When involved in meaningful ways, feminist movements have sharpened funding programmes and helped define approaches that are much stronger than those built in isolation. Such outreach also strengthens mutual accountability between funders and activists, who are more invested in developing a programme that meets real needs and priorities. The Equality Fund's consultation with feminist movements engaged over 1,000 activists from 45 countries and informed the programme from its initial 'design and build phase'.⁷⁶ Input from movements sometimes also comes in the form of resistance or advocacy, which can be an opportunity to listen and adapt to make funding more responsive. For example, the decision by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to create Leading from the South, now a model of bilateral funding, was informed by the strong and challenging reactions received from feminist organisations about the decisions made when the FLOW II programme failed to directly fund WROs.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See AWID. August 19, 2020. "[High Hopes and High Expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund.](#)"

⁷⁷ Women's Rights and Gender Equality Task Force Social Development Department. April 2018. "[Good practices and lessons learned from the diverse funding modalities in the field of women's rights and gender equality: the Dutch example.](#)" Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Assemble steering, advisory, and technical committees made up of feminist and women's rights activists.

In our case profiles, these kinds of committees, or other vehicles for genuine consultation have been used to shape programme design, review applications and for programme evaluation. Connecting with feminist expertise should happen at all levels of governance (steering committees, grant review/technical committee, etc.) and have decision-making power to inform the priorities. Both the UN Trust Fund and FGE have used participatory processes to guide their decision-making on grant allocation and to shape the funds' strategic direction.⁷⁸ Equality Fund consultations in the design and build phase laid the groundwork for feminist leadership at all levels of governance.⁷⁹

When outsourcing fund management, ensure strong feminist leadership is embedded.

Feminist and women's funds are key partners in managing funds, both for their technical know-how and connections to feminist movements. Indeed, fund management is an opportunity to resource and strengthen management expertise and capacity rooted in feminist movements themselves. Leading from the South is one of the most prominent examples, managed by four women's funds—African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) / AYNI Fund (AYNI), and Women's Fund Asia (WFA)—and relying on their experience, knowledge, and connections with activists in the Global South. The LGBTI Global Development Partnership and GAGGA are also managed by feminist funds, though in partnership. The Equality Fund is the first programme of its size to be managed by a women's fund, with governance held by the former MATCH International Women's Fund. AmplifyChange is also co-managed by women's funds in partnership with a private consulting company. Finally, Fiji Women's Fund, despite being managed

by a private company, has been deliberately grounding its work in Fiji's feminist movements from the outset: it engages with feminist activists across its governance in the Fiji Women's Fund's team, Steering Committee, and its Grants Committee.

Actively engage grantees in fit-for-purpose accountability systems.

We know that transformation for gender equality is complex, full of 'two steps forward and three steps back' tendencies. To be fit-for-purpose, donors need to adjust their theories of change and monitoring and evaluation systems to reflect the realities on the ground of complex long-term social change, and support accountability mechanisms that also include internal institutional practices.⁸⁰ GAGGA, for example, builds in participatory processes particularly in key evaluation moments such as mid-term evaluation and final evaluation.⁸¹ Consider including qualitative methodologies and focus on strategic (outcome level) results. Adjust fiduciary risk management requirements to the realities and risks on the ground. Ensure that risk management is geared to the right level; the biggest innovations need some trial and error, and it's only through some mistakes and failures that major breakthroughs and advances are made. To resource social change, risk management must not stifle creativity and innovation. For example, built into AmplifyChange's design from the start was a risk analysis and mitigation system of working with small and informal grassroots organisations. The system created safety in numbers, as the majority of small organisations perform well and risks of non-performance are spread across grantees. Also, AmplifyChange starts funding to small and new organisations with small amounts, with renewals dependent on performance: approximately 20% of grantees have 'graduated' to a higher level of funding over the time AmplifyChange has been working with this model.⁸² This is a contribution to feminist movements' financial capacity and a recognition of the need for new, creative forms of funding.

78 Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020." and Bishop, J., Vaca, S., and Barnes, J. 2016. "Fund for Gender Equality: Meta Analysis 2011-2015." UN Women.

79 See AWID. August 19, 2020. "High Hopes and High Expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund."

80 See AWID. February 15, 2011. "Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation for Women's Rights: 12 Insights for Donors."

81 Athari Consulting and Advisory Services, 2018. *GAGGA Mid-Term Review Executive Summary*. GAGGA.

82 From interview with Amplify Change staff, July 2019.

CONCLUSION

“Seeking a now that can breed futures”

– Audre Lorde⁸³

What do these findings mean in practice? What can they offer individuals and institutions that are either already funding feminist movements or hoping to do so?

First and foremost, **we hope you finish this report inspired**. The nine cases profiled in this report show how significant funding can directly reach feminist movements, particularly in the Global South. **It IS possible**. This work is both a reflection on and a celebration of the collective efforts that, together, are shifting the power and money for feminist organising.

We also hope that you see that **you are not alone**. All of the examples shared in this study relied on individuals with an idea and bold visions and institutions (or parts of them) willing to take risks. Their challenges are common and likely familiar. Their actions are premised on supporting women, girls, and trans people globally to advance their own rights and create lasting change. In some cases, funding programmes have progressed over years of quiet internal action and ongoing learning, while in others, through more acute political openings. In all the cases, the successes are most powerful and enduring when built in partnership with movements. In these connections—with peers, with allies in your institutions and others, with feminist funds and organisations, and, especially, with feminist activists themselves—**you are part of a thriving community working towards sustained resilient and just social transformation**.

Concretely, we also hope you have the case-building materials you need to advance direct and sustained funding for feminist movements. In ‘The Landscape of Gender Equality Funding,’ this report provides a framework to understand *why* we need to move from generic ‘gender equality’ monies to direct funding for feminist organising. Please draw from these sections liberally, use them to craft your own programming, and see them as a resource for bringing peers on board.

If and when the time comes to implement your programming or refine existing funding modalities, we hope you can use the lessons learned and building blocks presented here. Dig into the case profiles for ideas and hard-won best practices. Rather than starting from scratch, learn from the last decade of innovation and experimentation. This report aims to answer the critical question of *how*. Join with movements and funders working to deliver resources that meaningfully advance women’s rights and feminist social change. As you do, share your own reflections and lessons.

Finally, we hope this report leaves you with a **sense of urgency**. NOW is the time. As Arundhati Roy has enduringly written, the COVID-19 pandemic is “a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.”⁸⁴ It is vital that we dedicate ourselves to building that next world. We hope these insights on funding modalities can contribute to further momentum for direct resourcing of feminist and women’s rights organisations as they forge propositions and alternatives for more just systems and ways of being.

⁸³ Lorde, A. “A Litany for Survival.”

⁸⁴ Roy, A. April 3, 2020. “The pandemic is a portal.” Financial Times.

ANNEX: DETAILED CASE PROFILES

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2

Programmes by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands:

Power of Women and Leading from the South

DONORS	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	Leading from the South	African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) / AYNi Fund, and Women's Fund Asia (WFA)	- Re-granting to women's funds - Core, flexible multi-year grants - Project grants	1st cycle: EUR 40 million ⁸⁶ 2nd cycle: 80 million ⁸⁷	2016-2025 (2 cycles of 5 years: 2016-2020; 2021-2025)	Supporting feminist movements in the Global South
	Power of Women	Managed in house by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	Grants for WROs working collaboratively in consortia through a competitive and open call for proposals ⁸⁵	EUR 73.5 million ⁸⁸	2021-2025	Sustainable Development Goal 5

Since 2008, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has funded successive dedicated programmes for women's rights in the Global South including: MDG3 Fund 2008-2011 (EUR 77 million); FLOW I 2012-2015 (EUR 85.5 million); FLOW II 2016-2020 (EUR 102 million); and Leading from the South 2016-2020 (EUR 40 million). Each successive programme tweaked its funding modalities, taking on the lessons learned from its previous iterations.⁸⁹

Power of Women and Leading from the South have an explicit focus on getting direct funding to feminist movements in the Global South; and both are part of the Dutch MFA's larger SDG5 Fund.⁹⁰ Leading from the South is an alliance conceptualised and managed by four leading women's funds: the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) / AYNi Fund (AYNI), and Women's Fund Asia (WFA).⁹¹ Leading from the South is resourced entirely by the Dutch MFA. Power of Women is a new and an in-house managed grant programme, a direct successor of the FLOW II Fund, and builds on its past experience and learning.

⁸⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 3, 2019. "Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society: Power of Women." Government of the Netherlands.

⁸⁶ "About Us." Leading from the South.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. November 4, 2019. "Kamerbrief over Beleidskader Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld." Government of the Netherlands.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Besluit vaststelling subsidieplafond ex Subsidieregeling." Government of the Netherlands.

⁸⁹ Women's Rights and Gender Equality Task Force. April 2018. "Good practices and lessons learned from the diverse funding modalities in the field of women's rights and gender equality: the Dutch example." Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 3, 2019. "Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society: Policy note." Government of the Netherlands.

⁹¹ "About Us." Leading from the South.

Power of Women and Leading from the South

Key Practices

Political commitment to women's rights

Adjusted funding modalities & investing in new Southern and women's fund-led programmes to re-grant direct funding to feminist movements

Grantmaking focused on women's rights organisations

What Works

In 2008, the Dutch successfully pioneered a EUR 70 million MDG3 Fund—the first investment in women's rights at such scale.⁹² This paved the way for calculated risk-taking, experimentation and new approaches to funding women's rights within the MFA.

The Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) programme was a direct successor of the MDG3 Fund. In the second round of funding (FLOW II), it came across a classic 'stumbling block': setting eligibility requirements that most WROs could not meet, such as a minimum grant of EUR 5 million.⁹³ Proposals selected for a grant were submitted by Dutch and international civil society organisations, most of which had a gender equality and women's rights focus in their activities but were not themselves WROs or movements.⁹⁴ In response to strong critical feedback from feminist movements followed by an amendment in Parliament, the MFA set up a new funding programme, Leading from the South.⁹⁵ It also changed the eligibility criteria for the FLOW successor—Power of Women—to exclusively support WROs.⁹⁶ Via open calls for proposals in different languages, Leading from the South—through four regional women's funds—provides smaller grants and core funding support exclusively to feminist groups and WROs working at the regional, national, and grassroots levels in the Global South.⁹⁷

92 DAC Network on Gender Equality. May 2014. "From ambition to results: Delivering on gender equality in donor institutions." OECD.

93 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. June 12, 2015. "Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW 2016-2020)." Government of the Netherlands.

94 Women's Rights and Gender Equality Task Force. April 2018. "Good practices and lessons learned from the diverse funding modalities in the field of women's rights and gender equality: the Dutch example." Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

95 Ibid.

96 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 3, 2019. "Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society: Power of Women." Government of the Netherlands.

97 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. May 18, 2020. "Synthesis Report of the Mid-Term Review for the Leading From the South." Government of the Netherlands.

Power of Women and Leading from the South

Key Practices

Different funding scales respond to varying capacities and demands

What Works

Power of Women supports consortia led by medium to large WROs with at least one partner located in the Global South. In line with its predecessor, it continues the trend of making fewer, but larger grants.⁹⁸ Together with Leading from the South, these two programmes are designed to reach a broad range and scale of WROs. These funds are complemented by the MFA's civil society funding under its Power of Voices programme.⁹⁹ This includes four programmes specifically focused on women's rights (organisations) and/or gender equality.¹⁰⁰

Careful outsourcing of fund management

The MFA designed Leading from the South to be a Southern—and women's fund-led—programme, rather than relying on its own limited in-house capacities or choosing for the fund to be led by a private consultancy firm. Its implementation is guided by the MFA's ambition to develop more equitable partnerships.¹⁰¹ As such, deliberate efforts are made to share power between the MFA and the individual women's funds—from setting the goals to developing a (shared) learning agenda and collaborative monitoring systems.¹⁰²

98 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 3, 2019. "Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society." Government of the Netherlands.
99 Ibid.
100 Government of the Netherlands. May 29, 2020. "Geselecteerde allianties na afronding fase twee beoordelingsproces Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld."
101 Hodgson, J. and Pond, A. 2018. "How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power: What Donors Can Do to Help Make That Happen." GACP.
102 Ibid.

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The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality

DONORS	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
Mostly bilateral donors with some contributions from philanthropic foundations & corporate sector & individual givers	The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund)	UN Women	Project grants through a competitive and open call for proposals	USD 183 million awarded in grants to 572 initiatives in 140 countries and territories since 1996 ¹⁰³	1996-ongoing	Ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) with a specific focus on three areas: preventing VAWG; providing services; implementation of laws and policies
	The UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)			USD 64 million awarded in grants to 121 initiatives in 80 countries from 2009 to its final cycle in 2017 ¹⁰⁴	2009-2020	Economic and political empowerment of women with a focus on marginalised communities, addressing structural underfunding faced by feminists and women’s rights organizations at national and regional levels

103 “About the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.” UNWomen.
104 Due to limited funds availability, the FGE last 4th round was closed for applications, focusing primarily on scaling up existing projects and social innovation. See: “Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2009-2017.” UN Women, and “Fund for Gender Equality: Annual Report 2019-2020.” UN Women.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund) is an inter-agency UN system-wide mechanism established by the UN General Assembly Resolution 50/166 as the first and only global, multilateral, grant-giving fund that focuses specifically on preventing and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG).¹⁰⁵ The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE), initiated in 2008/2009 with the USD 65 million contribution from the government of Spain is a UN Women programme focused on supporting women's economic and political empowerment and offering direct funding, training, and technical support to WROs in the Global South, initially as large as USD 3 million.¹⁰⁶

UN Trust Fund and FGE have occupied a unique niche in the feminist funding ecosystem: tapping into bilateral budget lines allocated specifically to the UN, they have been delivering direct funding at scale to feminist and WROs in the Global South, based on open and competitive calls for proposals. Their experience debunks the long-standing myth that WROs can't manage millions and/or larger pots of funding. Both UN Trust Fund and FGE experience show how much more resourcing the feminist funding ecosystem needs in order to be able to respond to demand: between 2009 and 2017, FGE was able to fund less than 1.8% of the USD 3.5 billion requested in response to the funding proposals it had received during that time.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in 2018 the UN Trust Fund's USD 11 million in grants was the equivalent of just 2% of the USD 528 million requested in response to the call for proposals in just that one year.¹⁰⁸

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) and The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)

Key Practices

Adjusted funding modalities & dedicated grantmaking strategically focused on WROs, especially:

- **Different funding sizes to respond to varying capacities and demands**
- **Increased share of core funding for smaller WROs**
- **Special budget line for staff self-care**
- **Explicit focus on the most marginalised groups**

What Works

Over the years the UN Trust Fund and FGE have both adjusted their funding modalities to address accessibility and needs of WROs and feminist movements. For example, as of 2015, the UN Trust Fund introduced 'special funding windows' to advance funding for under-represented areas such as VAWG in humanitarian crises and forced displacements, as well as addressing VAWG in the context of disabilities; and a 'small grants funding modality' of USD 50,000 to 150,000 was introduced exclusively for 'smaller' WROs with an annual budget of less than USD 200,000.¹⁰⁹ The UN Trust Fund has then further increased the share of core funding for 'smaller' WROs from 7% to 14% and introduced a special USD 2,000 budget line for self-care and to prevent burn out.¹¹⁰ By the end of 2018, the 'small organisations portfolio' made up one-third of all UN Trust Fund grant-giving with the mid-term review of its 2015-2020 Strategic Programme pointing to small grants as one of the UN Trust Fund's biggest successes and value adds.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."

¹⁰⁶ "Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2009-2017." UN Women.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) and The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)

Key Practices

Continued...

What Works

The FGE adjusted its eligibility criteria as it became more established—from INGOs and governments eligible for funding in the first two rounds (2009-2010 and 2011-2012), to focusing exclusively on women-led organisations in round three in 2015.¹¹² Yet, even in its first round a window of ‘Catalytic Grants’ of USD 100,000 to 500,000 was introduced to enable groups that couldn’t reach the USD 1 million threshold to access the funding.¹¹³ Grant sizes were reduced—from up to USD 3 million in round one to up to USD 1 million in round three, serving mostly medium and large-size WROs.¹¹⁴ FGE has invested in the institutional capacities of its grantees by allowing 30% of grant costs to be allocated for programme management plus 7% for administrative costs.¹¹⁵ This shift came together with FGE’s stronger focus on leaving no one behind and reaching the most excluded groups.¹¹⁶

Shared responsibility and accompanying grantees to meet funders’ due diligence

Both UN Trust Fund and FGE have embraced shared responsibility for their grantees to meet UN fiduciary and accountability requirements and pursued a culture of accompaniment—supporting continuous learning and improvement by their grantees. For example, the UN Trust Fund provided special support to its potential grantees during the final stages of the application process; invested to support its grantees’ programmatic, monitoring, financial management and evaluation capacities; and created opportunities for their visibility to other donors and knowledge exchanges on programmatic and operational aspects. This approach paid off with strengthened institutional sustainability of WROs as well as enhanced visibility and credibility for being a UN grantee, which in turn facilitated new partnerships and resource mobilisation opportunities.¹¹⁷

¹¹² “Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2009-2017.” UN Women.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Interview with the FGE staff, June 2019.

¹¹⁶ “Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2009-2017.” UN Women.

¹¹⁷ Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. “External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women’s Strategic Plan 2015-2020.”

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) and The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)

Key Practices

Continued...

What Works

FGE supported its grantees with a package of monitoring and close technical support services throughout the project cycle—from project framework design in the final stages of the grantmaking to monitoring, reporting and evaluation similar to the UN Trust Fund—thanks to the network of specialists based in their countries and regions. FGE was also able to strengthen grantees’ capacities in results-based management and reporting and social innovation. The FGE culture of accompaniment has been positively scored by both FGE Meta-Analysis of project evaluations¹¹⁸ and FGE independent evaluation as being supportive of leadership, continuous learning, and performance improvement by civil society organisations.¹¹⁹

Grant review and decision-making by feminist movements

Both the UN Trust Fund and FGE have also used some aspects of participatory processes to guide their decision-making on grant allocation and to shape the funds’ strategic direction. FGE has been a pioneer in this field by establishing an independent Technical Committee composed of feminists and women’s rights experts from all over the world to review received applications in their original languages and based on knowledge of the context.¹²⁰ The UN Trust Fund pursued a similar model with proposals reviewed by leading VAWG experts rooted in feminist movements and members of the UN Trust Fund governance bodies such as its Regional and Global Programme Advisory Committees, also being informed by UN organs and bodies and feminist movements’ activists.¹²¹

118 “Fund for Gender Equality evaluations 2011-2015: Meta Analysis” UN Women.
119 “Fund for Gender Equality: Independent Evaluation 2009-2017.” UN Women.
120 Ibid.
121 Interview with the UN Trust Fund staff, June 2019.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) and The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)

Key Practices

Serving as an evidence hub and influencing other actors in the feminist funding ecosystem

What Works

Among other donors in the feminist funding ecosystem, UN Trust Fund and FGE have leveraged feminist movements' visibility and legitimacy as key actors in their own right. The UN Trust Fund in particular has committed to serve as a global evidence hub, whilst advocating for increased global giving to ending VAWG.¹²² FGE on the other hand has utilised its final years to infuse grantee partners with scaling up and social innovation skills while also fostering important South-South exchange opportunities.¹²³

Because of their global reach and the volume of applications, both funds have been able to track changes in contexts, priorities, specific regions, as well as demand.

122 Drammis, Z. and Guibert, A. June 2019. "External Mid Term Review of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women's Strategic Plan 2015-2020."

123 See: [Fund for Gender Equality: Annual Report 2018-2019](#) and [Fund for Gender Equality: Annual Report 2019-2020](#).

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Fiji Women's Fund

DONOR	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)	Cardno, which is the managing contractor	- Re-granting - Core, flexible multi-year grants - Project grants	AUD 10.5 million (EUR 6.6 million) ¹²⁴	2017-2022 ¹²⁵	Violence against women, women's economic empowerment, women's coalitions for change, women's leadership, and decision-making

The Fiji Women's Fund (FWF) is an initiative of the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Programme, which falls under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).¹²⁶ It demonstrates how a bilateral donor sought to develop a new funding modality to strengthen its gender engagement with rural women's groups that were less connected and had limited capacity to access funding.¹²⁷ At the moment, the Fiji Women's Fund is the only national women's fund based in the Pacific.

124 DFAT. March 2020. "Fiji Women's Fund Mid-Term Review and Management Response." Australian Government.
125 Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. November 2017. "Annual Progress Report 2016-2017." Australian Aid. p. 50.
126 Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. December 18, 2019. "Flexible funding for women's organisations." Australian Aid.
127 Email correspondence with DFAT staff, September 2020.

Fiji Women's Fund

Key Practices

New Southern and women's fund-led programme to re-grant direct funding to feminist movements

Outsourcing of Fund management for efficacy and scale and to reach feminist movements /

Connections to and co-leadership with feminist movements

What Works

The Australian government prioritises aid to the Pacific region, with trade and women's rights and gender equality as key priorities.¹²⁸ The Fiji Women's Fund was created in response to feminist advocacy and to support the Australian government's delivery of its gender strategy and policy objectives.¹²⁹ The decision to create a new fund was made given that, at the time, there were no other locally-rooted funding mechanisms in place to reach feminists organisations in this region.

The Fiji Women's Fund is managed by Cardno—a private company that provides technical, administrative, and logistical support to Australia's DFAT activities.¹³⁰ The FWF team is made up of local women who come from diverse backgrounds including the feminist movements in Fiji. DFAT has been deliberate about grounding the fund's work in Fiji's feminist movements from the outset, providing seed funding to open funding from other women's funds, philanthropic foundations and development partners working on gender equality.¹³¹ As such, the Fund deliberately set out to include feminist activists across its governance: in its team, Steering Committee, and Grants Committee.¹³² It has also increasingly embraced ways of working that aim to shift power between donors and partners, such as participatory grantmaking and reporting processes, more independent decision-making, and more independent branding as well. The Fund is exploring ways to become (more) independent of DFAT funding and has been consulting with a range of stakeholders in the region to make sure that its next chapter is responsive to and in partnership with feminist movements.¹³³

128 DFAT. February 2016. "Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy." Australian Government.
129 Ibid.
130 "Fiji Women's Fund." Cardno.
131 Interview and email correspondence with DFAT staff, July 2019 and September 2020.
132 Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. December 18, 2019. "Flexible funding for women's organisations." Australian Aid. p. 50.
133 DFAT. March 2020. "Fiji Women's Fund Mid-Term Review and Management Response." Australian Government.

Fiji Women's Fund

Key Practices

Dedicated grantmaking focused explicitly on women's rights organisations:

- Different funding sizes to respond to varying capacities and demands
- Built in capacity support for the grantee partners
- Explicit focus on structurally excluded groups

What Works

The Fiji Women's Fund supports women's rights organisations with flexible funding. The Fund works with three tranches of funding, each serving a different size/ capacity of organisations. Grants range from small (FJD 5,000) to substantial (FJD 150,000) and include multi-year, one-year, or less than one-year grants. The Fund links grantmaking to capacity development in the areas of gender equality and social inclusion, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and child protection.¹³⁴ The Fund also puts in extra effort to reach structurally excluded groups through visits to every corner of Fiji, targeted calls for proposals,¹³⁵ or word-of-mouth outreach, given that internet/social media does not necessarily reach those they aim to support.¹³⁶

134 Fiji Women's Fund. July 2019. "Grants Manual." Australian Aid.
135 Fiji Women's Fund. August 17, 2017. "Fiji Women's Fund 2019 Call for Expression of Interest." Australian Aid.
136 Fiji Women's Fund. June 2020. "Communications Strategy 2018-2022." Australian Aid.

6

The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)

DONOR	FUNDING PROGRAMMES	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	Supported through the Dutch Dialogue and Dissent programme (2016-2020) and Power of Voices (2021-2025)	Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), Mama Cash and Both ENDS	- Partnership programme	EUR 32 million ¹³⁷	2016-2020	Catalysing the collective power of women's rights, environmental and climate movements in addressing women's rights to water, food security, and a clean, healthy and safe environment ¹³⁹
			- Consortium grants - Re-granting to women's and environmental justice funds	EUR 35.5 million ¹³⁸	2021-2025	

Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) is a consortium led by *Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres* (FCAM, Central American Women's Fund – a regional women's fund headquartered in Nicaragua), Mama Cash (an international women's fund headquartered in the Netherlands), and Both ENDS (an independent, Dutch environmental justice NGO). It was the only Southern-led partnership supported under the Dialogue and Dissent programme, and is being renewed under Power of Voices.¹⁴⁰ Both of these funding programmes were the main general Dutch civil society funding policy frameworks at their times.¹⁴¹ GAGGA provides direct funding to 17 national, regional, and global women's and environmental justice funds, and more than 400 grassroots women's rights and environmental justice organisations¹⁴² to strengthen people's resilience in the face of the global climate crisis across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.¹⁴³

137 "Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action." Mama Cash.
138 Tentative amount; internal letter from Dutch MFA to GAGGA alliance, June 2020.
139 Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA).
140 Government of the Netherlands. May 29, 2020. "Geselecteerde allianties na afronding fase twee beoordelingsproces Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld."
141 Nijkraak, L. July 8, 2019. "Tip 3 aan Kaag: 'Lever in op je privilege en geef zuidelijke organisaties meer inspraak bij het bepalen van prioriteiten'." Vice Versa.
142 "Our Impact." GAGGA.
143 Latin America: Fondo de Acción Urgente- América Latina y el Caribe, Fondo Apthapi Jopueti, Fondo de Mujeres del Sur, Fundo Socioambiental CASA, and Fundación Tierra Viva. Africa: Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises, Women's Fund Tanzania, Urgent Action Fund Africa, and Global Greengrants Fund. Asia: Mongolian Women's Fund MONES, Women's Fund Asia, Nepalese Women's Fund TEWA, Keystone Foundation and Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Program. Europe and Global: Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas, Women's Fund Georgia, and FRIDA-Young Feminist Fund. Mama Cash and FCAM, as women's funds, and Both ENDS also provide funding to groups and NGOs involved in the alliance. Source: "Our Partners". GAGGA

The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)

Key Practices

Support to women’s rights organisations via general funding programmes for civil society

New Southern and women’s funds-led funding modality to resource groups working on the intersection of women’s rights and environmental justice

Dedicated grantmaking with a strategic focus on women’s rights and women-led community based organisations

Support for multi-level, cross-movement collaboration to advance gender-just environmental movement agendas and priorities

What Works

GAGGA has been funded via two consecutive broad civil society funding programmes within the Dutch MFA—being the first southern-led partnership to receive direct funding via this general civil society stream of funding.¹⁴⁴ GAGGA was first funded within the women’s rights and gender equality theme of the MFA’s civil society funding programme, and has been renewed under the MFA’s climate theme.¹⁴⁵

GAGGA was designed to hold a cross-movement perspective at its core: for women’s funds to increase their knowledge on environmental issues, and for environmental funds and partners to learn how to integrate women’s rights in their work.¹⁴⁶ Building on this strengthened cross-movement perspective, GAGGA partners advocate for women’s rights and gender justice within environmental and climate spaces. By making this an intentional focus from the start, GAGGA was able to push beyond silos and build a collective, collaborative programme.

By funding local feminist and environmental groups directly as well as regranting to women’s funds and environmental justice funds, GAGGA provided financial and non-financial support to 418 grassroots groups across Africa, Asia, Europe (Georgia), and Latin America in 2019.¹⁴⁷

GAGGA also supports and accompanies local women-led groups in their advocacy within the broader frame of building solidarity and stronger movements. This includes capacity-strengthening, accompaniment and support for advocacy efforts at local, national and international levels of women’s rights and women-led community-based organisations in relation to their rights to water, food security and a clean healthy and safe environment.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “‘Dialogue and Dissent’: Strategic partnerships for ‘lobby and advocacy’.” Government of the Netherlands.

¹⁴⁵ Government of the Netherlands. May 29, 2020. “Geselecteerde allianties na afronding fase twee beoordelingsproces Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld.”

¹⁴⁶ “Our Approach.” GAGGA.

¹⁴⁷ “Our Impact”. GAGGA.

¹⁴⁸ Athari Consulting and Advisory Services, 2018. *GAGGA Mid-Term Review Executive Summary*. GAGGA.

The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)

Key Practices

Provide flexibility in evaluation and learning approaches and practices

What Works

GAGGA built in participatory processes particularly in key evaluation moments.¹⁴⁹
The MFA provided flexible criteria which enabled GAGGA to develop processes that were accountable not only to the donor, but also to its partners.¹⁵⁰

149 Athari Consulting and Advisory Services, 2018. [GAGGA Mid-Term Review Executive Summary](#). GAGGA.
150 Internal documents within GAGGA; [Interested in the Results of the Mid-Term Review?](#) GAGGA.

7

AmplifyChange

DONORS	FUNDING PROGRAMME	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bilateral donors: the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom• Philanthropic foundations: Packard and Hewlett Foundations• Private sector: ViiV Healthcare	AmplifyChange	ManionDaniels, Global Fund for Women and the African Women’s Development Fund <i>Registered as independent entity in 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Re-granting- Project Grants- Core and project-based, flexible multi-year grants- Grants for networks and coalitions	EUR 92 million disbursed ¹⁵¹	2014-ongoing	Sexual and reproductive health and rights; including young people’s rights/health, rights/health of LGBTIQ individuals, etc.

AmplifyChange (AC) was set up as a multi-donor challenge fund to provide direct funding to Global South civil society organisations’ advocacy and practice on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Since launching in 2014, AmplifyChange has awarded over 879 grants with a total amount of approximately EUR 92 million.¹⁵²

151 [AmplifyChange](#).
152 Ibid.

AmplifyChange

Key Practices

New funding modality engaging with women's funds to re-grant direct funding to activists / Outsourcing of fund management for efficacy and scale and to reach feminist movements

Dedicated and accessible grantmaking with a strategic focus on women's rights organisations and groups addressing intersecting forms of discrimination

Staged funding sizes to respond to different capacities and demands

What Works

AmplifyChange's current governance model is a partnership of two women's funds: Global Fund for Women and African Women's Development Fund, and a consultancy-firm, MannionDaniels (lead). AmplifyChange registered as an independent entity in early 2020 and this has a different governance structure.¹⁵³ These women's funds were included for their networks and grantmaking expertise as well as deep knowledge of regional trends pertaining to feminist movements. Contributions from all three organisations informed AmplifyChange.¹⁵⁴

AmplifyChange provides flexible, core funding and offers a range of funding tranches to cater to activists' varying capacities and demands. For example, its grants can be used for core support and organisational capacity building.¹⁵⁵ In its fall 2019 call for proposals, only women-led, LGBTIQ-led, and people with disabilities-led groups were eligible.¹⁵⁶ The fund currently offers four types of grants:¹⁵⁷

- Opportunity grants to support small and new organisations (up to EUR 40,000 and for one year);
- Strengthening grants to support and strengthen the work of small to medium civil society organisations, partnerships, and coalitions (EUR 40,000-100,000, from 6 months to two years);
- Network grants for organisations capable of convening and supporting multiple small-to-medium sized civil society organisations (EUR 150,000-550,000 and for a maximum of two years);
- Strategic grants to support larger organisations working regionally and internationally, to advocate and contribute to policy and strategy development at global, regional, and country level (up to EUR 1 million and two years).

¹⁵³ "Putting AmplifyChange on a sound footing for the future." AmplifyChange.

¹⁵⁴ Khadduri, R. January 31, 2018. "AmplifyChange 2017 Annual Report." AmplifyChange.

¹⁵⁵ "Apply." AmplifyChange.

¹⁵⁶ October 11, 2019. "Strengthening Grants inviting Women-led, LGBTIQ-led and Disabled Persons Civil Society Organisations." FundsforNGOs.

¹⁵⁷ "Apply." AmplifyChange.

AmplifyChange

Key Practices

Multi-donor collaboration for coordination, sustainability, and reduced translation cost

Explicit focus on the most marginalised groups and countries left behind

Collective analysis and management of risks

What Works

AmplifyChange was set up to enable governments, private foundations, and corporate actors to contribute funding to support their SRHR objectives.¹⁵⁸ As a multi-donor effort from the start, the fund had its own branding, instead of being linked explicitly to only one donor. For donors, it provided a way to reach groups in the Global South and fund in a coordinated and harmonised manner.¹⁵⁹ For activists it meant being able to secure funding for their work, and not have to deal with multiple donor forms. This funding would not have been accessible or as flexible via each of these donors' own national or organisational funding mechanisms and processes.

AmplifyChange claims to focus on where SRHR needs are greatest by allocating resources to more difficult or controversial issues (i.e. safe abortion,¹⁶⁰ discrimination against LGBTI people, or young people's rights¹⁶¹), harder-to-reach groups, and countries with low-performing SRHR indicators, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The fund set targets to reach particular 'not to miss' countries that scored low on SRHR indicators.¹⁶² It also intentionally aims to provide support for groups to apply for what they think is needed in their context, rather than issuing narrow funding guidelines.

Built into AmplifyChange's design from the start was a risk analysis and mitigation system of working with small and informal grassroots organisations.¹⁶³ The system created safety in numbers, as the majority of small organisations perform well and risks of non-performance are spread.¹⁶⁴ Also, AmplifyChange funds small and new organisations with small amounts and with renewals dependent on performance. Approximately 20% of grantees have 'graduated' to a higher level of funding over the time AmplifyChange has been working with them.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ "Our Donors." AmplifyChange.

¹⁵⁹ DANIDA. May 2016. "Organisation Strategy Note for Denmark's support to AmplifyChange: 2016-2019." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

¹⁶⁰ "Call for Applications: AmplifyChange Strengthening Grant." UNITE.

¹⁶¹ "Projects." AmplifyChange.

¹⁶² DANIDA. May 2016. "Organisation Strategy Note for Denmark's support to AmplifyChange: 2016-2019." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

¹⁶³ DANIDA. May 2016. "Organisation Strategy Note for Denmark's support to AmplifyChange: 2016-2019." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

¹⁶⁴ From interview with AmplifyChange staff, July 2019.

¹⁶⁵ From interview with AmplifyChange staff, July 2019.

AmplifyChange

Key Practices

Serving as an evidence hub and influencing other actors in the feminist funding ecosystem

What Works

In addition to its grantmaking support, AmplifyChange was set up with the ambition to serve as an evidence hub and share learning with other actors in the funding ecosystem. It actively seeks to support collective two-way learning: from user guides for (prospective) grantees to learning memos (compiling lessons learned on specific topics) to overviews of (external) research.¹⁶⁶

166 “Knowledge” and “AmplifyChange Learn.” AmplifyChange.

8 The LGBTI Global Development Partnership

DONORS	FUNDING PROGRAMME	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)	The LGBTI Global Development Partnership (LGBTI-GDP, or ‘the Partnership’)	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice (Astraea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public-private partnership- Re-granting though feminist fund- Core, flexible multi-year grants	USD 15.8 million in total for the entire programme, with 7.7M granted by USAID and Sida and Astraea matching 8.1M ¹⁶⁷	2012-2019	LGBTI human rights in the Global South and East

Launched in 2012, the LGBTI Global Development Partnership (LGBTI-GDP, or ‘the Partnership’) was a first-of-its-kind public-private model to support LGBTI human rights in the Global South and East over the course of seven years.¹⁶⁸ Led by USAID as its first stand-alone programme with an explicit focus on the human rights of LGBTI communities, the Partnership engaged with multiple private and bilateral partners, including Sida and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice (Astraea), the only feminist fund working exclusively to advance LGBTQI human rights globally.¹⁶⁹ By the end of 2019, the Partnership had granted more than USD 3.5 million to 68 LGBTI organisations in 12 countries.¹⁷⁰

The Partnership initially involved four principal pillars of work: capacity building for LGBTI leadership; research for advocacy; direct grantmaking; and communications, media, and technology labs (CommsLabs).¹⁷¹ Astraea served as the primary implementing partner and a key facilitator between governments’ ODA and local LGBTI groups to which it channeled direct core and flexible funding.

167 Astraea internal programme documents reviewed in June 2019.
168 “The LGBTI Global Development Partnership.” USAID and Sida.
169 All funding and implementing partners in the Partnership included USAID; Sida; Arcus Foundation; Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice; Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute; Williams Institute; Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Rights (RFSL); and the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. See: “The LGBTI Global Development Partnership.” USAID and Sida.
170 Astraea internal programme documents reviewed in June 2019.
171 Ibid.

The LGBTI Global Development Partnership (LGBTI-GDP, or ‘the Partnership’)

Key Practices

Matching ODA with private contributions to unlock core and flexible funding for LGBTI movements in the Global South and East

What Works

The public-private model of the Partnership required matching every dollar received from the government with dollars raised from private contributions. Over the course of the Partnership, Astraea has managed to leverage USD 7.7 million it has received from USAID and Sida with USD 8.1 million raised from private foundations and other partners.¹⁷²

This intentional strategy enabled Astraea to redirect more flexible leveraged resources to support LGBTI movements in a way that might have not been possible with more restrictive government funding. Concretely, by bringing leveraged money to the table for grants, rather than re-granting USAID dollars, Astraea has facilitated the provision of core and flexible grants to LGBTI activist-led groups, following its feminist funding principles¹⁷³ and intentionally shielding activists from the complex administrative and fiscal requirements often attached to government funding. Crucially, Astraea and USAID negotiated terms in both the branding/communications requirements and the use of leveraged funds that allowed LGBTI activists to maintain their confidentiality and have safety and security concerns addressed by Astraea, a trusted partner.¹⁷⁴

New feminist fund-led modality to re-grant direct funding to LGBTI movements in the Global South and East /

Outsourcing of fund management for efficacy and to reach feminist movements

The Partnership was able to work effectively because its funding support was channeled through Astraea. Having led on international LGBTI grantmaking for over two decades, Astraea has huge credibility and extensive networks among LGBTI movements in the Global South and East, with the ability to forge authentic partnerships and the expertise to move funds safely to frontline activists in ways that are structurally difficult for USAID and other large funders. USAID’s collaboration with Astraea has also enabled The Partnership to support LGBTI groups in countries where the U.S. government wanted to invest but did not have the relationships to directly support LGBTI movements and also where USAID is politically not a safe or desirable partner for local civil society.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ “Feminist Funding Principles.” Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Astraea staff, June 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid and Astraea internal programme documents reviewed in June 2019.

The LGBTI Global Development Partnership (LGBTI-GDP, or ‘the Partnership’)

Key Practices

Joint learning and strengthened institutional capacities of key actors in the feminist funding ecosystem

What Works

Knowledge, experience, and exposure gained through the Partnership has been deeply impactful for LGBTI movements in the Global South and East. It has also significantly strengthened the institutional capacities of both Astraea and USAID, and influenced their ways of working. For instance, USAID has created a new permanent post of Senior Adviser on LGBTI issues and introduced two new guiding principles on doing no harm and engagement with LGBTI activists, communities, and populations—doing nothing about them without them. Moreover, for the first time, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) has been included in USAID’s non-discrimination policies, not only with regards to its employees, but also contractors.¹⁷⁶

For Astraea, the Partnership was its first federal grant leading to an extensive review of its internal policies and organisational strengthening. This process was carefully undertaken and was inclusive of staff and board to ensure Astraea’s integrity and that its feminist principles of autonomy and self-determination remained central at every stage.¹⁷⁷ Over the course of the Partnership, and as its lead implementing partner, Astraea’s budget has nearly tripled, while the experience and visibility gained through the Partnership was a large driver of Astraea’s ability to enter into additional significant institutional partnerships with philanthropic foundations and governments.¹⁷⁸ On the flip side, however, these partnerships have been programmatically-driven, and there has not been as much focus by funders on Astraea’s long-term sustainability as a key resource steward.¹⁷⁹ This has implications beyond a single organisation, affecting sustainability and security of a feminist funding ecosystem, especially with regards to LGBTI groups.

176 Interview with Astraea staff, June 2019 and March 27, 2020. “Advancing LGBTI-Inclusive Development.” USAID.
177 Interview with Astraea staff, June 2019.
178 Ibid and Astraea internal programme documents reviewed in June 2019.
179 Interview with Astraea staff, June 2019.

9 The Equality Fund

DONORS	FUNDING PROGRAMME	KEY PARTNERS/ FUND MANAGERS	FUNDING MODALITIES	AMOUNTS	TIMEFRAME	FOCUS
Global Affairs Canada (GAC), with contributions from members of PAWHR (Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights) and individual donors	Equality Fund	Equality Fund Collective led by former MATCH International Women's Fund (now Equality Fund)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-granting through feminist fund - Core, flexible multi-year grants - Gender lens investing 	CAD 300 million (USD 225 million) from GAC ¹⁸⁰	2019-ongoing	Funding feminist futures: Support for WROs and gender justice organisations; women's funds; coalitions and networks; feminist groups responding to natural disasters and armed conflicts

Launched in June 2019 with CAD 300 million contribution from the Government of Canada, the Equality Fund brings together eleven organisations across sectors (women's funds, private philanthropy, and corporate actors) under the leadership of a women's fund (former MATCH International Women's Fund) to apply three interconnected strategies: 1) feminist grantmaking to directly support feminist and gender justice movements and organisations globally; 2) gender lens investing to generate returns for grants and shift the investment field; and 3) multi-sector philanthropy to bring additional resources to the table for grantmaking and investments.¹⁸¹

The unique nature of the Equality Fund lies in its model which combines feminist philanthropy, gender lens investing and ODA funding with an intentional focus on feminist leadership, sustainability, and scale. The Equality Fund has financial and governance structures that meet Global Affairs Canada's due diligence requirements. While the Government of Canada does not sit on the Equality Fund's Board, it can serve as a vehicle for other bilateral donors interested in supporting and investing in the Equality Fund, including through delegated cooperation arrangements.

Governments, private foundations, and feminist activists look to the Equality Fund as a promising new model to resource feminist social change with "High Hopes and High Expectations."¹⁸² If successful, it will have significant implications for shifting power and practice across the funding ecosystem towards feminist-led funding modalities.

180 Global Affairs Canada. July 21, 2019. "Global Affairs Canada - The Equality Fund: Transforming the way we support women's organizations and movements working to advance women's rights and gender equality." Government of Canada.

181 The Collective is comprised of: 1) the former MATCH International Women's Fund (now the Equality Fund); 2) the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF); 3) Calvert Impact Capital; 4) The Canadian Women's Foundation; 5) Community Foundations of Canada (CFC); 6) Oxfam Canada; 7) Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights (PAWHR); 8) Royal Bank of Canada; 9) Toronto Foundation; 10) WUSC (World University Service of Canada); and 11) Yaletown Partners. Out of Collective members, a smaller Equality Fund Consortium of three organisations signed the Contribution Agreement (titled Equality Fund: Sustaining Funding to Women's Organizations and Movements in Developing Countries) with Global Affairs Canada. For more information see: August 19, 2020. "High Hopes and High Expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund." AWID.

182 See AWID. August 19, 2020. "High Hopes and High Expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund."

The Equality Fund

Key Practices

Political commitment to women's rights

Outsourcing of fund management for efficiency and to reach scale of funding / Leadership by feminist movements

What Works

The main driver behind the Canadian government's support of the Equality Fund was its feminist international assistance policy¹⁸³ and the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) unprecedented CAD 300 million (approximately USD 225 million) commitment to establish a new "Partnership for gender equality" (referred to as 'Partnership' below) to support women's rights organisations and feminist movements in the Global South.¹⁸⁴

The GAC requirements for the successful bid to design and manage the 'Partnership'—now the Equality Fund—were very extensive, including a high bar on fiduciary responsibility and assets management experience that no feminist organisations alone could possibly meet.¹⁸⁵ At the same time GAC was asking for experience with providing funding for grassroots women's rights and feminist organisations in the Global South.¹⁸⁶ This has brought together women's funds, private philanthropy, and the private sector in an unprecedented consortium, and eventually led to creation of the Equality Fund. The fact that GAC sought to 'outsource' the 'partnership for gender equality' initiative to the Equality Fund, rather than administer the funding itself, is atypical and promising. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that such a substantial pot of resources has been put under the leadership of a women's fund.¹⁸⁷

183 "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy." Government of Canada.

184 "Establishing Canada's new 'Partnership for gender equality': Framework document." Government of Canada.

185 Interview with Equality Fund staff, May 2019.

186 "Request for expressions of interest to design and manage the partnership for gender equality." Government of Canada.

187 See AWID. August 19, 2020. "High Hopes and High Expectations for resourcing feminist movements: recommendations to the Equality Fund."

The Equality Fund

Key Practices

Sharing power with movements by engaging in a meaningful consultation process to design and build the fund

What Works

From the outset, the Equality Fund put in place a ‘design and build’ phase to establish its structure, goals, and practices. A key component of this period has been in-depth feminist movement consultations to inform the design of the Equality Fund in all three areas: grantmaking, investments, and philanthropy. Led by AWID, the entire consultation process lasted for approximately six months, consisted of three face-to-face two-day convenings with feminists from different regions across the Global South and East and online meetings in different languages. Altogether, consultations engaged over 1,000 activists and organisers from at least 66 countries.¹⁸⁸ To our knowledge, this was one of the most thorough and extensive feminist movement consultations ever undertaken at such an early stage of building a funding programme for women’s rights and gender equality. The Equality Fund’s leadership invested substantial time and money in this process and committed to issue a public response to the consultations’ recommendations by autumn 2020.¹⁸⁹ The consultation process is documented in the report by AWID “High Hopes & High Expectations. Feminist Movement Recommendations to the Equality Fund.”¹⁹⁰

Focus on sustainability and responding to activists’ concerns

The Equality Fund’s central design aims to create a self-sustaining and independent fund that, through gender impact investments, generates resources for grants to feminist movements. Whilst the Equality Fund’s focus on sustainability has been welcomed, its reliance on investments raised legitimate concerns with feminist activists, who pointed out that this strategy is rooted in the same unjust neoliberal economic system that perpetuates oppression and discrimination against women, girls, and trans and non-binary people in the first place.¹⁹¹ The Equality Fund has committed to issue a public response to this and other recommendations in autumn 2020.

188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.

The Equality Fund

Key Practices

Influencing other actors in the feminist funding ecosystem

What Works

With its feminist international assistance policy, and now the Equality Fund, Canada has established its strong position as a global champion on women’s human rights. It has also committed to advocate for more resourcing for feminist movements and women’s rights organisations, including by encouraging other donors to be innovative in how they channel their funding and/or encourage them to contribute to the Equality Fund.¹⁹²

192 Interviews with Global Affairs Canada staff, May 2019.

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