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The effects of financing on organising for women's rights

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Began by asking

(1) under what conditions external financial support to women's organising has a positive impact in strengthening the realisation of rights

(2) the extent and manner in which successful women's organising is achievable without such support.

What do we have so far?

Qualitative research carried out by:

- Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam
- BRAC University Bangladesh
- Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy at the University of Ghana
- Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex UK.

Data

- 5 case studies of women's rights organisations, Bangladesh
- 6 case studies of women's rights organisations, Ghana
- Interviews of Principal donors of WROs in Bangladesh and Ghana
- Interviews of gender desks in donor head offices

How external financing helped WROs

- **Institutionalisation** – promoting organisation, efficiency, systems
- **Financial stability** – not only to initiate programmes but to carry them out; expanding outreach, learning to do new things, going from service delivery to policy advocacy
- **Networking/ alliances/ a movement** (Ghana)
- **Connection to international networks** - women's rights and GE movements and moments.

When did external financing not help

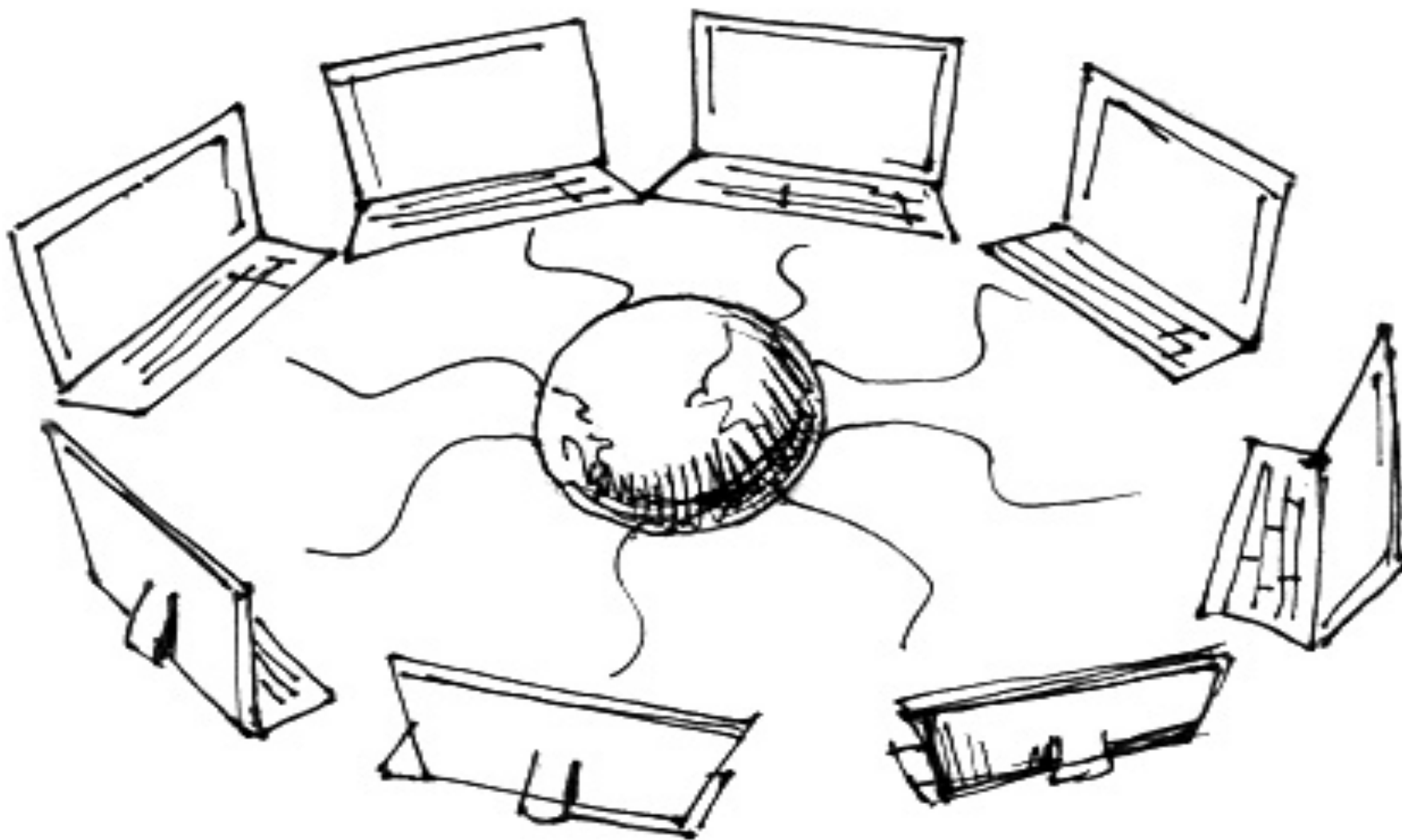
- Homogenisation of style, agendas and strategies in trying to be understandable/ decipherable to donor funding agendas and reporting requirements
- Donor definitions of gender & gender mainstreaming become conditional to being funded
- Donor policies limit funding to activities and not to organisational development and accomplishment
- NGOisation and social transformation.



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THE VIEW FROM HEAD OFFICE



The funding landscape

Ranking of donors in terms of volume:

- 1) bilateral and multi-lateral
- (2) international NGOs
- (3) women's funds and
- (4) philanthropic foundations.

OECD DAC has introduced an additional sector code in its statistical reporting system to track better how much ODA goes to women's equality organisations and institutions (this includes national machineries as well as civil society).

Philanthropic foundations

Women's funds

Multilateral agencies

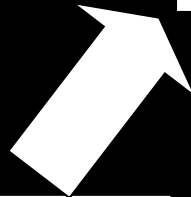
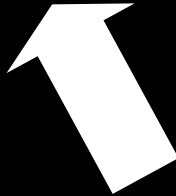
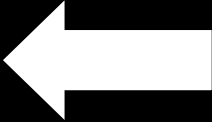
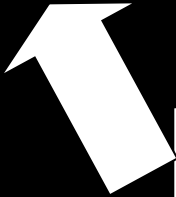
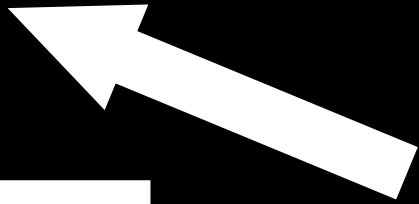
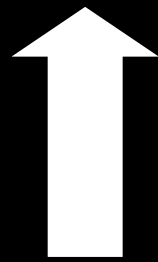
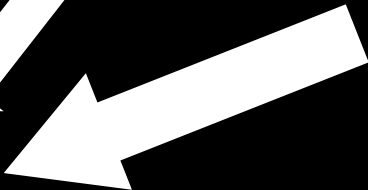
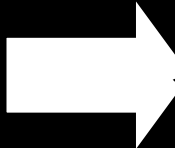
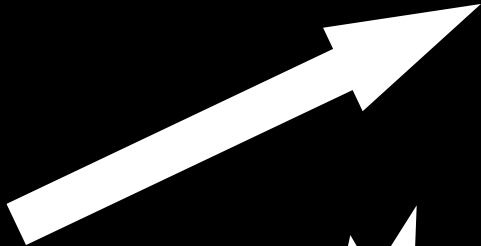
WROs

OECD Government/
bilateral agencies

INGOs

Financial flows to women's rights organisations

OECD citizens



Recent changes

- Shift from rights to efficiency discourses;
- 'Anything that can be counted more easily is becoming more popular';
- Decentralisation of decision-making to the bilateral agency's country offices an opportunity to by-pass intermediaries and provide better quality direct support to WROs
- But international organisations with country offices may compete for resources with local WROs and may also steal their most competent staff.

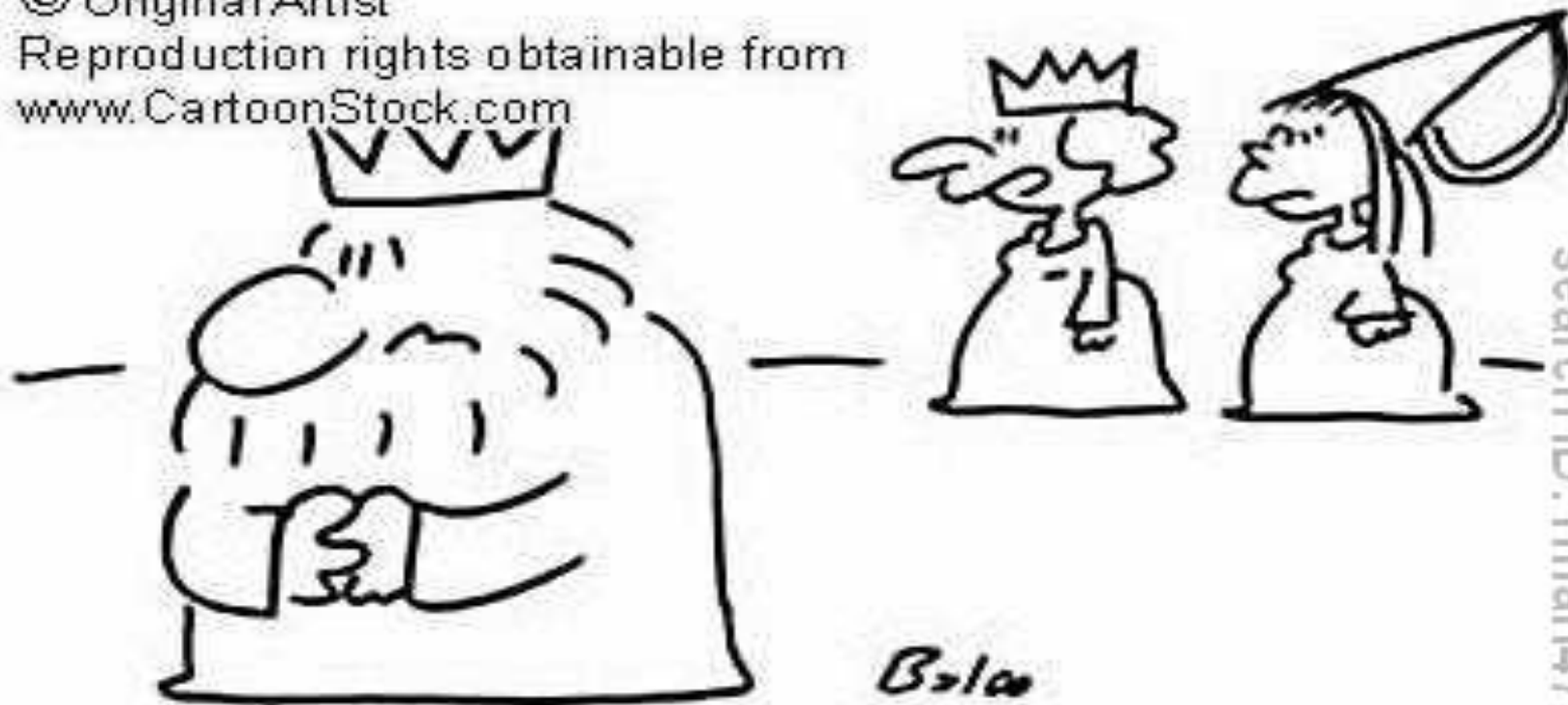


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Whose agendas?

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"Somebody posted his hidden agendas on the Internet."

Agendas

- Anxiety that WROs were being made to respond to donor objectives rather than being supported to implement their own locally identified aims.
- Worry that rapid shifts in donor objectives can leave WROs stranded high and dry.
- Frustration that more support cannot be provided through core funding.
- But not all agree with core funding: 'We fund activities, not organisations'.



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Changing aid agendas and modalities and impact

- Bilateral agencies have rationalised their operations to minimise transaction costs
- New actors have emerged to manage arrangements for funding civil society
- INGOs also affected by changes
- Multilateral agencies and especially the UN bodies have seen resurgence
- Regional and global women's funds are conduits for channelising aid to smaller WROs and thus doing well

Impacts

- Quantity of aid may have remained the same but the changed modality of disbursement has made it harder for WROs to access these funds
- Changed architecture of aid makes it more difficult for women's organisations to access funding in their own right and for the concerns and issues that they have worked for.

Effects on the gender discourse in development

- ***Changing meanings of gender mainstreaming*** – GM in donor speak means not supporting programmes targeting women's interests
- ***Homogenisation & de-contextualisation of gender discourse*** - role that donors played in supporting home spun methods of 'doing' gender equality work is almost over replaced by international frameworks & tools
- ***Idealised version of state-society relations*** in restructured civil society aid modality - WROs doing service delivery fall out



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Successful Women's organising without support?

- External funding did not create women's organisations
- Life before funding was about a cause, about solidarity, charismatic leaders who sacrificed and loads of voluntarism

Staying alive and thriving will entail:

- (1) reorienting strategies in ways where the aid relationship is not so defining;
- (2) Nurturing leadership AND voluntarism;
- (3) Resource mobilisation: commercial ventures and/or partnerships; accessing government funding; enhancing membership to raise donations and earn goodwill; networks and shared platforms to access funding

Unique Capability

- The most important capability that WROs have, and that which is likely to sustain them in the future (in a different form perhaps), is their social legitimacy.
- How can WROs keep their distinctiveness and legitimacy in 'society' while also being able to access funding.
- How should aid modalities be structured in order to promote this distinctiveness