

Session Notes: A Dialogue with Donors and Activists on Funding Women's Economic Rights, Not Women's Economic Rescue.

Myth 1: Economic Justice can't be achieved by working with marginalized communities (sex workers, LGBT people, Dalit women, migrant workers, rural women, restaurant workers, domestic workers...).

1. Bring marginalized communities into the main human rights discourse - break the divide by working together and supporting each other. Use existing mechanisms like the Women's Human Rights Defenders Coalition to do so.
2. Link grassroots organizers to seat of power to counter the image of marginalization. Honor the way women are organizing. Challenge the myth that grassroots groups are too small or don't have impact.
3. Ensure voice. Bring stories to the forefront to make the case and provide testimony to the interplay of issues.

Myth 2: Microfinance is the best strategy to achieve women's economic empowerment:

1. Microfinance is not a magic bullet - but a critical piece of the puzzle. A place to start.
2. There is not just one banking system. Find alternative currency systems and use them.
3. There are access challenges for many people to microfinance systems - only the largest ngos have been successful because they have resources/collateral. Often small ngos aren't trusted.
4. These systems often don't match women's actual needs and interests.
5. Microcredit doesn't respond to the lack of infrastructure, even though it may help an individual.
6. This strategy can't work in isolation, outside of community based strategies for change.
7. Microfinance strategies create competition and can be divisive. It isn't sustainable in the long term.

Myth 3: Measuring rights based change is too difficult:

1. Core funding is important because it enables learning organizations (whether grantees or movement donors) to build on their strengths.
2. Core funding is important for monitoring and evaluation to be internal to a learning organization's work.
3. Measuring social change work is difficult because we work for long term impact, in networks and partnerships, and with disadvantaged populations.
4. Some of our achievements are process, such as working partnership or fostering self-advocacy.
5. We need to set the criteria!
6. We can measure and document household decision-making, political participation, self-advocacy, the size of our networks, and activism for laws.