



FINAL REPORT

Resource Mobilization for Women's Rights Organizations and Movements in the Middle East and North Africa

Marrakech, Morocco
April 19-22nd, 2008

A MENA region strategy meeting convened by:

Association for Women's Rights in Development

www.awid.org

&

Global Fund for Women

www.globalfundforwomen.org

September 2008

Acknowledgements

Recognition and thanks are due to the many individuals who helped to make this meeting a success:

Advisory Committee members Lina Abou-Habib, Leila Hessini, and Caroline Sakena Brac de la Perriere provided invaluable insight and guidance.

The facilitation team included the advisors above as well as Cindy Clark, Ellen Sprenger, Zeina Zaatari, with support from Lucía Carrasco Scherer, Fernanda Hopenhaym, Ghadeer Malek, Sanushka Mudaliar, and Zawadi Nyong'o of AWID and Bessma Mourad, Rachel Humphrey, and Shalini Nataraj of GFW.

The logistics team included AWID staff Jessica Bokhout, Lina Gomez, Karen Murray, Caroline Sin.

This report is the product of a collaborative effort by Lucía Carrasco Scherer who coordinated the rapporteuring process and prepared the initial transcript, and Zawadi Nyong'o and Kathambi Kinoti who prepared this report, with contributions from Fernanda Hopenhaym.

Memorable Quotes

“I look forward to secular countries, a world where women have rights, where there is no fundamentalism, and where we are not being extremist in our secularism either... I hope that women can be free in body and mind and exercise their freedom in living their lives without being embarrassed by non-veiled people.”

- Areen Hawari (Alssiwar- The Feminist Arab Movement in Support of Victims of Sexual Abuse)

« Just as there is a lot of diversity among us, donors are also diverse so we need different strategies to deal with different donors. We are in need of boldness so we don't feel intimidated. We also need to recognize that all forms of funding are conditional – there is nothing wrong with that, but we need to look for funding where our needs converge. You can accept conditions where there are appropriate margins for negotiation.”

- Amal Abdel Hadi Abou Halika (New Woman Foundation)

“I dream of a world where women (who represent half the planet) have half the power in a better world based on equality, rights, sharing of wealth, a different world with no exploitation of our planet, where rights between nations are shared and the rights of the local people are shared by all women.”

- Asma El Mehdi (Association Initiative pour la Protection des Droits de la Femme/ IPDF - Fes)

“Fundraising is a group activity. We all have to get excited about it. Fundraisers get scared because if they don't get the funds, they will have to tell everybody that they didn't get it. It works however, if the entire organization is involved. If the entire group says, “Money, Money,” and sends vibes to God, the universe, or whatever, money will come. It should be a collective and joyful experience.”

- Nadine, Lebanese activist

Introduction

This report captures the highlights and outcomes of the “Feminist Resource Mobilization Strategy Meeting for Women’s Rights Organizations & Movements in the MENA Region, convened by AWID and the GFW in Marrakech, Morocco. This meeting, which took place from April 19th – 22nd, 2008¹, provided a space for over 50 participant organizations to receive important information on funding for women’s rights work particularly in the MENA region, analyze and define new strategies, engage in multigenerational work, network, build alliances and gain critical skills. It was also an opportunity for women’s rights activists from the region to both celebrate their successes and develop concrete strategies to build and reenergize the movement.

The meeting was officially opened by **Geetanjali Misra**, President of the Board of Directors of AWID, who also spoke on behalf of Lydia Alpizar Duran, AWID’s Executive Director who, due to unavoidable circumstances, was unable to attend the meeting.

Why This Meeting Now?

Zeina Zaatari (MENA Senior Program Officer, GFW)

Women’s Rights activists in the Middle East and North Africa region find themselves today at a crossroad. The region is diverse geographically, politically, linguistically, culturally, religiously, and economically. It faces continued wars, occupations, political upheavals and an imperial US policy through its occupation of Iraq, its support to wars and occupations by Israel, and its support of autocratic and repressive governments in the region. Women’s Movements find themselves in many instances either totally neglected and marginalized or co-opted to particular gains. In the name of women’s liberation, the US invades Iraq and Afghanistan, in the name of protecting women, as the cultural and traditional icons of the “nation” or the “ummah”, many groups end up forcing women’s seclusion, isolation and often deaths, and in the name of liberation and the struggle against neo-colonial powers, the fight against discrimination against women and her inequality in practice and law are often marginalized, placed on the shelf until a later day. While at the same time, in the name of women’s rights, certain activists tend to coalesce with forces intent on deepening other inequalities and discriminations in society.

As such women’s rights organizations in the MENA region face particular challenges that prevent them from accessing even those resources that have traditionally been available to organizations in other regions. The women’s movements in the MENA region have a long and rich history. Currently however, the movements are perceived to be somewhat weak, uncoordinated, and highly fragmented. Some attribute this to the fact that they are simply more diverse, with organizations from across the political and religious spectrum. Some attribute this to the enormity of the challenges facing the region as a

¹ See Annex 1 for detailed Meeting Agenda

whole. Their work is often undermined by persistent and emerging internal conflicts, restrictive government regulations, rising fundamentalisms, and the overarching context of the US occupation and the 'war on terror'. Many organizations are small and run by volunteers with limited capacity, while the larger organizations tend to be government affiliated, influenced by conservative agendas and thus depoliticized. The growth of a strong regional movement is also limited by the huge gap in some countries between rural and urban women, and the very diverse political contexts and different starting points for women's struggles in different countries of the region.

AWID's action-research initiative "Where is the Money for Women's Rights"² has shown that funding for women's rights work has been dwindling during the past 10 years. Gender mainstreaming, basket-funding and lack of support for core funding are just a few of the challenges that have made it difficult for women's rights organizations all over the world to effectively mobilize resources for their work. The MENA region is one of the regions facing the most difficulties accessing resources. GFW's work on increasing resources in the past four years to the region has indicated the great need for additional resources as well as the lack of knowledge and contacts among many donors in relation to the MENA region.

It is within this context and the historical narrative of collective organizing on behalf of women's rights in the region that this meeting was situated. The meeting aimed to link the past with the present, highlighting accomplishments and analyzing challenges to reach concrete steps towards social transformation in the future. This meeting therefore sought to develop strategies to address some of these concerns and challenges and build on successful experiences in the region and beyond. It was important to choose participants representing the diverse spectrum of organizing and constituencies, ensuring that certain women's populations and issues that are often marginalized in such regional gatherings are actually present at the table, including women with disabilities, queer women, young women, women from rural areas, and those living under occupation. The meeting aimed to have a much-needed conversation on resource mobilization and its politics. The beginnings of strategizing processes would then be carried out into future convenings and regional and national conversations.

Meeting Background

In November 2006, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) convened over 300 women's rights activists from all over the world to discuss and learn about the funding situation for women's rights. This three day meeting was an opportunity for both women's rights activists and progressive donors to engage in intense reflections and debates about the situation of funding for women's rights work and movement building. Drawing on the results of AWID's research, participants were able to explore emerging funding challenges and opportunities in different sectors and regions, and begin the critical work of exploring how to increase existing resources and mobilize new support for

² AWID's "First Fundher Report: Where is the Money for Women's Rights: Assessing Resources and the Role of Donors in the Promotion of Women's Rights and the Support of Women's Rights Organizations" and other related resources can be accessed at <http://www.awid.org/moneyandmovements/>

women's rights work. During the MENA regional sessions, however, it became apparent that participants wanted and needed to engage in further discussions to deepen their contextual analyses and develop concrete strategies that would go beyond individual organizational cultures of "survival and resistance" to strengthening and ensuring the financial sustainability of women's movements in the region, and thus globally. At AWID, we were also cognizant of the fact that we had a very limited amount of data from the region, and therefore made a commitment to expand our outreach strategies and work with key partners to enhance our knowledge and understanding of MENA funding trends.

The Global Fund's MENA initiative currently in its fifth year has expanded Global Fund's grantmaking in the MENA region in dollar amounts, number of grants and number of groups and organizations. One of the strategies used by the Global Fund for Women was to engage in outreach efforts to expand the small network that the organization had interacted with historically. Through outreach trips by Board members and staff, meetings with women's organizations in eleven different countries took place in the past four years. Those meetings in addition to feedback from advisors in the region, reports, and applications of grantees clearly laid out several challenges to the Global Fund for Women. As GFW increased its support, it became clear that there was a thirst for additional financial and networking resources. Groups discussed the challenges in receiving funding that really addressed their concerns and not some presumed and stereotyped image of the Arab woman or the Muslim woman. In addition, a heightened interest in the region by the US also meant that several NGOs and Governmental agencies have also increased their funding including promoting a particular agenda in line with the US imperial interests in the region. Thus the problematic of funding movements has arisen to the surface and more organizations are questioning the efficacy of such an establishment and thinking more deeply about the issues; differences, competitiveness, political agendas, etc. For the Global Fund for Women, all these issues raised questions for the fund, in terms of our role in supporting movements and also promoting different models of social change philanthropy, particularly in the MENA.

What does all this mean for the women's movements in the MENA region?

How can women's rights organizations or groups move beyond political, ideological, religious, linguistic, economical, cultural and other differences, to mobilize resources to support common regional movement building and social justice agendas? How can women's rights activists engage with donors differently, both claiming entitlements and influencing their agendas? What role can progressive donors and particularly women's funds play to help increase both the quantity and quality of funding for women's rights in the MENA region? What strategies can be adopted to encourage progressive US-based and other private foundations to support MENA organizations even within the context of the US Patriot Act, the Treasury increasing restrictive guidelines, and the context of the 'war on terror'? How can we mobilize support for a MENA Women's Fund and ensure that grassroots organizations are strengthened and sustained? How can we transform the culture of *zakat* and mobilize resources that support a transformative feminist agenda? How can we maximize the participation of feminist organizations in the international arena, to mobilize resources for MENA women's issues, and develop mechanisms for widening the base of the movement and the field of work related to women's rights? If

money were no impediment, what would the MENA women's movement look like? These are some of the questions that this MENA feminist resource mobilization strategy meeting sought to answer.

Meeting Objectives

Cindy Clark (WITM and BFEMO Program Manager, AWID)

This meeting brought together about 120 key women's rights activists working in different countries, issues, and sectors in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as donors funding in the region to do the following:

- Analyze the funding situation for women's rights in the MENA region
- Deepen critical analysis of the geopolitical and resource-mobilization challenges that women's groups and young women face in the region
- Engage in a critical dialogue about the relationship between donors and women's rights organizations in the MENA region, and how these alliances can be strengthened
- Identify potential strategies for addressing resource-mobilization challenges in ways that strengthen women's movements

AWID and the Global Fund for Women hoped that the meeting would achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased capacity of MENA women's rights organizations to raise more funds to build stronger regional women's movements to advance gender equality.
- Identification of concrete feminist resource mobilization strategies relevant to the region.
- Identification of strategies for donors to increase support for women's rights work.
- Increased awareness among donors of the importance of women activists defining their own agenda and priorities for funding.
- An increase in access to and amount of funding to support women's rights work in the MENA region.
- Increase in networking and collaboration between diverse women's rights organizations across the region.
- Increased linkages between MENA women's rights organizations and other organizations in the international women's movement.

Programme overview

Participants' Profiles

The participants at the meeting included:

- Representatives of progressive funding agencies supporting women’s rights work in the MENA region.
- Women’s activists with vast experience of national, regional and international work, coming from different sectors, regions and groups.
- Women’s activists with less experience of work and engagement at regional and international levels, who require capacity-building in fundraising/evaluation, and who could become more engaged in strategy development at the regional level in the near future.
- Young women’s rights activists (under 29 years) from the region
- Representation of particular priority populations including disability, sexuality, refugee and rural (mountainous) women activists
- Representatives of thematic and strategic diversity

Young Women’s Dialogue

The Strategy Meeting started with one day dedicated to a Young Women’s Dialogue that brought about 20 young women’s rights activists³ from the MENA region together to discuss the specific resource mobilization issues they face, and their perspectives on movement building in the region. The Dialogue also created a space for young feminist activists to hone their skills, and articulate their own visions for resource mobilization and movement building in the region by providing them with the opportunity to:

- Explore key challenges in relation to movement building faced by young women in the region;
- Consider the resource needs of young women working for women’s rights in the region, how these needs are currently being met, and how to fill any gaps;
- Gain new skills in resource mobilisation;
- Build networks with young women’s rights activists; and
- Work collaboratively to design strategies for supporting regional young feminist activism.

The exciting and thought-provoking Young Women’s Dialogue paved the way for an intense three-day Strategy Meeting, during which participants were given the opportunity to engage in critical analyses and debates, learn from expert presentations and skills-building exercises, share best practices, and work in small groups to develop concrete strategies for feminist resource mobilization. The program included a presentation of the latest findings of AWID’s, “Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?” research, discussions about regional dynamics, exercises to deepen the analysis between our personal and political relationships to money, debates about the role of Women’s Funds, resource mobilization skills and strategies, critical reflections about the impact of conflict, fundamentalisms and the US ‘War on Terror’ on funding for transformative and progressive women’s rights work, and much more.⁴

Main programme

³ AWID defines young women as those that are age 30 and below.

⁴ See detailed Meeting Agenda in Annex 1.

The programme of the main meeting that followed the Young Women Dialogue was organized around plenary session, small-group work and sub regional or country-based breakout sessions.

In addition to the main program, AWID and GFW partnered with both internal staff and external resource people with expertise in various areas, to offer a number of “Mini-Consultations”⁵ to participants who were interested in obtaining clarity about key personal or organizational challenges in relation to different topics (see below), and gain new ideas and insights to help improve individual and organizational performance. The lunch-time “Mini-consultations” provided an opportunity for participants to build on some key capacities related to resource mobilization, in a more personalized way, sharing with and mentoring each other. Resource persons were available to work with small groups, of no more than five participants, to discuss the following issues:

1. Proposal writing
2. How to become financially sustainable
3. Financial management systems
4. Communications – sharing your organization’s story
5. AWID’s work on Religious Fundamentalisms
6. Strategies for working with young women
7. Networking
8. Research Methodology
9. Campaigning

Last, but not least, the social and cultural events organized at the meeting provided a space for participants to celebrate MENA women’s history, struggles and achievements, and highlight women’s cultural and political contributions in the region. We were therefore honoured to have long-time Egyptian activist, Shahenda Maklad, grace this occasion and share her powerful story. Shahenda Maklad has been an activist on behalf of peasant rights in Egypt for many, many years, and was recently featured in the movie, “Four Women of Egypt” by Tahani Rached.⁶ Shahenda inspired many of the participants when she shared the story of how her husband was shot down by a feudal family in the struggle against the landlords in Egypt, after which she spent years being tortured, harassed and even imprisoned. Shahenda discussed her journey in the public life, as an organizer, a political activist, a candidate for parliament, and an anti-globalization organizer. She never gave up the struggle for liberation, and is currently facing a legal suit by the feudal family for telling her story.

Our Hopes and Dreams for Women’s Movements in the MENA Region

Leila Hessini (Senior Policy Advisor IPAS/ Board Member of GFW)

⁵ See Annex 3 for a detailed description of the Mini Consultations provided.

⁶ For more information about the film, see: <http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c452.shtml> . To read a review of the film by Margot Badran, see: <http://leb.net/~aljadid/film/0424badran.html>

Inspired by the Algerian feminist musicians in the opening screening of the music video by the campaign *20 Ans Barakat*⁷, participants were asked to spend some time reflecting on and creating their dreams for the women's movements in the MENA region. Through a visioning exercise, Leila Hessini asked participants to answer the following questions in small groups:

- Describe the situation in 2018 when key women's rights goals are realized. What does the MENA region look like? What do movements look like?
- What did women's organizations do to get there?
- What opportunities were captured?
- What threats were averted?
- What contributed to success?
- Who were our key allies?

The aim of this exercise was to get participants thinking in the long term, on the needs, challenges and opportunities for the women's movements within the region. Below are excerpts of some of the dreams that were shared:

"Ten years ago we started a MENA women's TV station through which we raised awareness around discrimination against women and other issues."

"Alliances with trade unions and other grassroots movements were made."

"In 2018, we have a world that is free of wars, capitalism, and dictatorship."

"We open our organizations to as many women as possible, regardless of social class."

"We have been documenting, translating and disseminating our experiences and successes with law reform so that we don't have to keep starting at ground zero."

"We have been building the capacity of women from the grassroots, at individual and organizational levels, upward and downwards, so the grassroots benefits from international gatherings and vice versa."

"We have avoided falling into the trap of foreign funders by building our self-sustainability, avoiding exploitation and asking donors to increase their own levels of transparency."

"We have trained men, ensuring that we have them by our side in the struggle for women's rights."

"We have debunked myths, and fought for freedom of speech."

⁷ To watch or download the video click: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNkHmEN0III> .For more information about the CD, see: www.algerie-femme.com or <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/publications/newsletter/2004-03/algeria.html>

“We have achieved our main objective to build a multi-faceted movement in order to achieve equality between men and women.”

“Now women have access to public positions in decision-making.”

“We have managed to avert our major threats – religious fundamentalism and radicalism.”

What is the Role of Money in Our Movements? Presentation of Findings from the Where is the Money for Women’s Rights? Initiative

Zawadi Nyong’o (WITM Program Coordinator, AWID)

Presenting a summary of AWID’s research findings, from the Second Fundher report, “Financial Sustainability for Women’s Movements Worldwide”⁸ the objectives of this session were to:

- Clarify how women’s rights organizations are doing in the current global funding context
- Highlight key trends and opportunities within different funding sectors
- Present specific regional findings for the Middle East & North Africa

Since 2005, when the “Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?” initiative was launched, AWID has published two Fundher reports, based on information collected through desk research, interviews, and through online surveys that were disseminated in 2005 and 2006. With a sample of about 1000 women’s rights organizations working on different issues all over the globe, the data and analysis contained in these reports is fairly representative and has been used to do some high-level advocacy and awareness raising work. Although the sample of responses from the MENA region in the last survey, was very small (4% or 38 out of 958 respondents), the global data still paints a very alarming picture.

Some of the key findings of the report are as follows⁹:

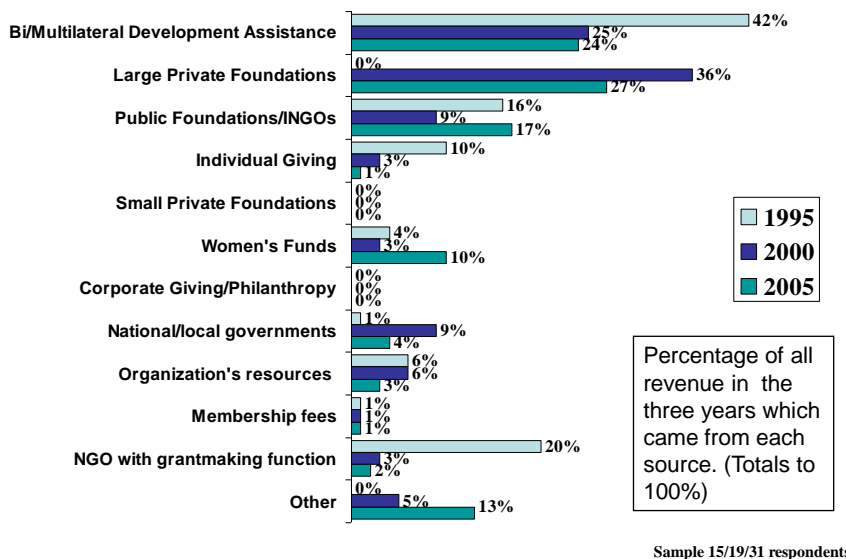
- In 2005, two-thirds of survey respondents (66%) reported revenues under USD 50,000.
- Only 4% of organizations had annual incomes over USD 500,000, the majority of which were in N. America and Western Europe.
- Although about half of the survey respondents reported an increase in funding since 2000, the actual amounts of increase were small (usually less than USD 50000).
- When the survey was completed in the summer of 2006, only 13% of organizations had secured all the funding they needed for that year. In fact, 61% had raised one-half or less of their budget for the year.
- On average, organizations say they would need twice the budget they had in 2006 in order to do all they would like to do.

⁸ The complete report is available for downloading on AWID’s website www.awid.org

⁹ The full power point presentation is available on AWID’s website and was included with other conference documents in a CD-Rom that was distributed to participants at the meeting.

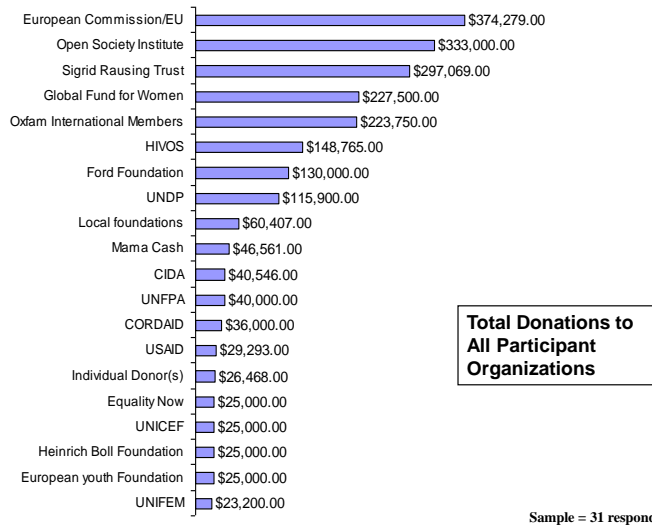
- The combined revenue the survey was able to capture for 2005 was a bit over USD 76 million. Some comparisons:
 - Amnesty International alone raised USD 234 million in 2004
 - Greenpeace raised USD 203 million in 2004
- Women’s funds give grants to organizations working on issues or with groups that have difficulties in accessing resources. They mostly provide core funding.
- Many women’s funds are explicitly committed to building women’s organizations capacities, especially regarding fundraising and evaluation.
- In 2005, women’s funds gave USD 15 million to women’s organizations around the world, an impressive figure given that more than half of these funds were established in the last 5 years.
- Although Bi and Multi-lateral Development Assistance has traditionally been the largest source of income for women’s rights organizations, as evidenced in the graph below, income from this source as well as from large private foundations has decreased in the MENA region, while women’s funds are increasingly providing support to smaller organizations:

Income Sources: Percent of Income in 1995 – 2005
- Middle East and North Africa -



- The figure below shows the top 20 funders of women’s rights organizations in the Middle East and North Africa, in 2005, as reported by survey respondents:

Top 20 Donors: 2005
- Middle East and North Africa -



Main challenges - mobilizing resources for women’s rights in the MENA region:

- Women’s organizations operate under difficult limitations (restrictive government regulations, conflict, rising fundamentalisms).
- There is a dominance of a culture of “charity to the poor” (*zakat*) but not for social transformation.
- Many organizations face the risk of being politically aligned with controversial interests by accepting money from certain sources.
- US foreign policies (especially the Patriot Act) have made giving to this region appear much riskier.
- There are very few progressive donors working in this region.
- Women’s organizations have insufficient resources and capacities to mobilize additional resources.
- Women’s rights are not a priority for donors. Donors want to set the agenda, and often set priorities such as peace building, without gender perspectives or women’s leadership.
- It is difficult to get core funding for administrative and human resources.
- Due to language barriers, it is often very difficult for women’s organizations in the region to access information.

Main opportunities - mobilizing resources for women’s rights in the MENA region:

- There are emerging possibilities for exchanges and networking with other organizations.
- There is a growing donor interest in funding in the MENA region, with new progressive donors entering or advancing their work in the region.
- There are new funding sources, such as the Arab Women’s Fund, the Arab Human Rights Fund, and the Mediterranean Women’s Fund.
- High income Arab countries present a potential for resource mobilization.
- Women’s groups are starting to be more visible and are getting stronger.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that women's rights organizations in the MENA region operate under very difficult limitations. Nonetheless, we need to move beyond the culture of "scarcity" and individual survival, support each other to access funds that are available, and work with progressive donors to shift the current status quo. Our capacity to engage with donors is political, not only as it relates to our resources, but in relation to our capacity as political actors and change agents. The success of our movements, will therefore rely on our ability to strengthen the visibility, voice, influence and capacity of different actors within our movement so that we can collectively influence funding policies & practices. This is a journey we must walk together - women's rights advocates, organizations, and allies within different funding sectors. This is part of what we refer to as a strategy for feminist resource mobilization.

Young Feminist Activist Perspectives

Hadil El Khouly (Center for Egyptian Women Legal Assistance Foundation- Egypt)

Rym Abdou Hadir (Femme Algeriennes Revendiquant leurs Droits- Algeria)

Siba Maraachli (Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women- Lebanon)

Enjila Almamary (Women's Forum for Research and Training- Yemen)

Areej Jaafari (IBDAA Cultural Center- Palestine)

Representing the participants of the one day young feminist dialogue, Hadil El Khouly, Rym Abdou Hadir, Siba Maraachli, Enjila Almamary and Areej Jaafari shared their vision of the state of women's movements in the region, the challenges young women face within the movement and in relation to resource mobilization, and the action steps they believe are necessary to overcome these challenges.

Young women made a clear statement about their responsibility towards women's movements in the way that they continue to build on the work of their predecessors to achieve the movements' objectives. Strong women's movements are therefore seen by young women as steadfast, inclusive and transparent. While they acknowledge the need to capitalize and draw upon the experience of others, young women also express the existence of a feeling of isolation within the movement. This is underlined by the absence of young women's participation at the regional level. They therefore highlighted the need to re-think these working relationships as well as promoting alternative movement building and organizational development strategies that are sustainable and respect the need for having a healthy work-life balance.

Resource mobilization was defined by the young women as a process of building connections and relationships, where the professional and personal skills of young feminists are respected and valued. They also expressed the need for donors to prioritize women's rights, and support marginalized groups such as sexual minorities and single mothers. Finally, rising fundamentalism was identified as one of the major obstacles to young women's participation and contribution to the struggle for women's rights.

The young feminists in the MENA region also identified the following specific cultural, historical and economical challenges they face:

Culture:

- The intimidation young women face in a culture where “older always knows better.”
- The expectation that they will always be volunteers in a society where social work is envisioned as charity work.

History:

- Young women lack historical knowledge of women’s rights and feminist movements in the region.
- There is a need to document and share the history of women’s movements in the region.
- There has been a lack of young women in leadership and decision-making roles within the movement.

Economic:

- There is a lack of funding for young women’s rights work.
- There is a lack of institutional structures that would encourage young women to pursue social justice work.
- Many young women activists lack the skills to effectively fundraise and like other feminists are often fearful or reluctant to ask for as much money as they need.

Some strategies suggested by the Young Women’s Dialogue participants to facilitate the work of young women activists were:

- Organizations need to foster the participation of young women by building the capacity of young and older women to participate in intergenerational dialogue, adjusting their structures to be more inclusive, and developing modes of communication that foster inclusiveness and dialogue.
- Donors should strongly encourage organizations in the MENA region to involve young women;

Following the presentation of the young feminist perspectives, participants were given the opportunity to share their feedback and identify strategies to build more effective and inclusive multi-generational movements in the region. The following statements capture some of the feelings and opinions expressed by the participants:

“I am very moved by the young women’s forward looking opinion. They are the future and engine of change. Building young women’s leadership is therefore necessary.”

“Young women can achieve, in 1 year, what it took us 10 years to achieve in the past.”

“As a young woman, I know that we don’t have time to loose, and that we are starting where others have ended, and building on what already exists. This is an opportunity for donors to trust us and work with us. Try us once and then judge us.”

The Relationship between Money and Movements in the Region

Cindy Clark (WITM and BFEMO Program Manager, AWID)

In national or sub-regional groups, participants reflected on the relationship between money and movements. The key points they discussed were

- The key elements of the regional political/social/economic context that impact resource mobilization for women’s organizations?
- The impact of money of funding on the agenda and situation of the women’s movement.
- Trends and obstacles in terms of funding for women’s organizations.

The following is a synthesis of some of the feedback shared in plenary.

Political, Social and Economic Factors That Impact Funding:

- European Union funding sets the agenda, forcing women’s organizations to change their agendas in order to fit the criteria set by the EU.
- European Union funding only supports established organizations, obstructing small organizations from accessing these resources.
- Due to European Union funding other funding sources are pulling out (for example in Cyprus and Turkey).
- There is a lack of political will to support women’s rights organizations and movements in the region.
- Current legislation is hindering women’s activities.
- The war against terrorism is shrinking women’s movements because it has led to a revisiting and development of unfavourable funding policies for women’s organizations.
- Women are excluded from the decision making sphere.
- There is a lack of volunteer and NGO culture in many countries.
- Negative images are created when local organizations work with foreign agencies or institutions – they are seen as spies or agents of the West.
- The image of gulf countries being very wealthy blocks possible funding within the region.
- Poor dissemination of information makes it difficult for women’s organizations to mobilize resources.
- The Western ideal of democracy is being pushed in the MENA countries.
- Donors lack knowledge of the region, including the diversity of culture and language.
- Few organizations are willing to take risks on behalf of the women of the region.

- Some donors have the perception that women's rights have been achieved in some countries.
- There is an existing double standard in the region around secular versus faith-based work.
- Short term funding makes it impossible for NGO's to have a clear strategy for the long term.
- There is a need to strengthen donors' collaboration with the region's organizations.
- Donors need to be creative and practical (given the number of legal restrictions for NGO's in the region).
- Some donors hesitate to fund activities that discuss customs and traditions, and are afraid of not seeing results.
- Under the pretext of security, funds are not allocated to the Middle East organizations, where the security situation is no better than North Africa.
- Under Israeli occupation, funders tend to only focus on relief and peace-building strategies and initiatives.
- Organizations have the right to access government's funds but refuse to do so due to controlling policies and interference.

The positive impact funding has had in the MENA region:

- Some donors use the power they have to improve the status of women's rights in the region and influence other donors on the need to fund these issues.
- Because of the strict funding, organizations are working in a more structural manner.
- Donors' investments in women's rights create more job opportunities for women.
- Funding is being geared towards capacity building (in Egypt).
- New initiatives such as the Women Moving Millions initiative and the MDG3 fund by the Dutch government have been launched.
- Donors have helped organizations develop new projects and achieve their dreams.
- Funding helps to attract attention to women's causes in the region.
- Some private/bilateral funding agencies do not intervene in the mission/vision of the women's organizations and have been very supportive and committed to building real partnerships.
- The feminist movement has taken important steps forward thanks to the support of some funders.

Particular Funding Trends or Obstacles:

- Funding is conditional, politicized and related to governmental sources.
- Many women's rights organizations refuse funding from certain sources because if they accept it, they become hot spots in the region, security and politically speaking.
- For many women rights activists, most of the problems are caused by religious fundamentalist groups.
- The MENA region is incredibly diverse. The conditions are different in each country. Donors need to understand this and allow local women's rights organizations to define what aspects of their culture to respect.

- Social change is a process and not an end result. Donors therefore need to expand and review the kinds of indicators they use when assessing the advancement of women’s rights in different countries and regions.

Donor Perspectives – Challenges and Opportunities

Panel Moderated by:

Leila Hessini (Senior Policy Advisor, IPAS / Board Member, GFW)

Donor Panelists:

Zineb Touimi-Bejelloun (Regional Program Director for Africa, UNIFEM Morocco)¹⁰

Reem Judeh (Gender Focal Person for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Middle East, Oxfam Novib)¹¹

Boriana Jönsson (Coordinator for Middle East, Kvinna til Kvinna)¹²

Anthony Richter (Director of Middle East Initiatives & Associate Director, Open Society Institute)¹³

This session provided an opportunity for representatives of four donor agencies - Kvinna til Kvinna, Open Society Institute, Oxfam Novib, and UNIFEM Morocco – to share their perspectives on what they like/dislike about working with women’s rights organizations; identify current and future resource mobilization challenges and opportunities for women’s organizations; and share tips or suggestions for effective resource mobilization strategies. The session was conducted in a “Talk-show” format to create a space for participants to pose difficult questions and engage in critical dialogue with the donors.

Below are some of the perspectives shared by each of the donor representatives.

- Most donors are committed to supporting local priorities and their creation of offices in particular countries or regions is a reflection of this commitment. Donors also encourage local partners to provide specific information on their contexts in order to inform their decisions on resource allocation;
- Capacity building is often a priority for donors even though some partners may overlook this. For instance Oxfam Novib allocates money to assist partner organizations hire proposal writing consultants, but few organizations take advantage of this facility or invest in other forms of institutional development.
- To some donors, movement building is important as a means to achieving women’s rights and gender equality. They therefore convene spaces for movement building and it is from movements that priorities are identified. They also encourage networking and joint initiatives around common concerns. UNIFEM for instance has specific program areas like violence against women where large and small NGOs working on the issue can form partnerships in order to access funds.

¹⁰ For more information about UNIFEM, see www.unifem.org/

¹¹ For more information about Oxfam Novib, see www.oxfamnovib.nl

¹² For more information about Kvinna till Kvinna, see <http://www.iktk.se/english/index.html>

¹³ For more information about OSI, see www.soros.org

- Although donors do recognize that there is a need to support new or smaller organizations, some have a long-term partnership strategy, which is not favouritism as it may sometimes appear, but has several advantages. On the other hand they acknowledge that this kind of strategy does limit opportunities to work with new organizations. OSI has offered grants to some partners to do mentoring and provide assistance to smaller organizations.
- A number of donors whose origin is outside the MENA region encounter language barriers, and they address this by employing local staff in order to facilitate communication with local organizations. They also work in English, French and Arabic.

The donor representatives present at the meeting mentioned some insights they gained from this meeting, some of which were the following:

- The need to continue to be sensitive about the process of transferring funds to partners in the region.
- The importance of recognizing and addressing the impact that imposed conflicts, occupation and territorial segregation of people has on women's movements.
- A recognition of the rising demand and visibility of gender issues in the MENA region and the necessity for donors to think about how to address the growing needs.
- The need to address some of the technical barriers presented by application procedures that small, and often volunteer-run organizations face in accessing funding from donors.
- The invitation that women's organizations in the region are extending to donors to work with them is a sign of maturity.

The Role of Women's Funds

Panel Moderated by:

Zeina Zaatari (MENA Senior Program Officer, GFW)

Donor Panelists:

Sarah Mukasa (African Women's Development Fund)¹⁴

Eva Ayiera (Urgent Action Fund-Africa)¹⁵

Caroline Sakina Brac de la Perriere (Mediterranean Women's Fund)

Hibaaq Osman (Arab Women's Fund)¹⁶

Recognizing the critical role that women's funds have played in the last ten years to support both small and large women's rights organizations all over the world, and in the MENA region, as well, representatives of the African Women's Development Fund, the Arab Women's Fund, the Mediterranean Women's Fund, and Urgent Action Fund-Africa were invited to share their experiences both supporting women's rights work, and mobilizing resources. This panel was intended to

¹⁴ For more information about AWDF, see www.awdf.org

¹⁵ For more information about UAF and UAF-Africa, see www.urgentactionfund.org

¹⁶ For more information about AWF, see www.arabwomensfund.org

communicate the history and relevance of some of the existing women's funds in region, their impact on the ground, and their capacity to reach out to grassroots organizations in rural and urban areas. The session also explored panelists' perspectives on why working with women's funds is exciting work, and some of the fundraising challenges and opportunities that women's funds face.

The panelists emphasized that women's funds are about women supporting women, and that they come from a feminist background. This means that they have the same passion and commitment to women's rights issues as other women's rights organizations. AWDF and AWF were founded on the understanding that women themselves can fund their movement and address issues critical to them. UAF-Africa and MWF were initiated to respond to the need for urgent grants to protect and advance women's rights.

The women's funds representatives acknowledged that raising money continues to be a challenge. Changing donor priorities and shifting ideologies have resulted in the shrinking of the funds available for women's rights work. Nonetheless, this presents an opportunity for innovation because women's rights issues continue to exist, and must be addressed.

When AWDF was launched in New York at the Beijing +5 conference, the event was attended by women from all over the world, and from different parts of Africa. Right from the beginning, AWDF's founders promoted the idea that women should contribute to their own funds. The participants at the launch therefore immediately donated small amounts of money and they were able to raise USD 10,000. For many it was the first time they had even been asked to donate to an initiative that was important to them and this created a sense of ownership and accountability. All the organizations represented in the panel have had positive experiences tapping into local philanthropy. However, for various reasons, it has remained a challenge to sustain individual giving. One of the challenges is that people are accustomed to the culture of *zakat*, but not to a culture of giving for women's rights.

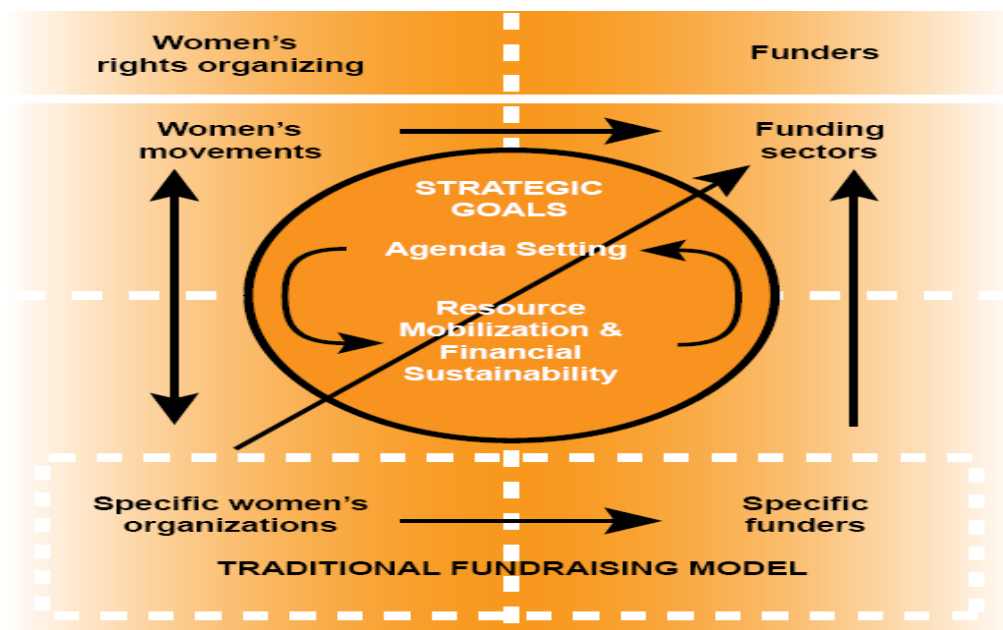
An Alternative Vision for Feminist Resource Mobilization

Cindy Clark (WITM and BFEMO Program Manager, AWID)

Introducing AWID's vision for feminist resource mobilization, Cindy Clark explained some of the challenges within the traditional fundraising model, and the opportunities presented by this alternative approach to fundraising. Under the traditional model, where individual organizations approach individual donors, they have limited negotiating power and find it difficult to influence the donor's agenda. Using a more collective approach to fundraising, multiple women's rights organizations are able to come together to influence not only specific funding agencies, but entire funding sectors in terms of their requirements and the agendas they support. Women's rights organizations are able to think collectively about strategic priorities and reflect on key points they have in common to influence the areas that are being funded or lack funding. Within this model, donors also play a critical role and

work in partnership with each other, and with women’s rights organizations, to influence funding sectors, and set relevant agendas.

The diagram below illustrates AWID’s conceptual shift from individual women’s rights organizations dealing with individual funders, to movements of organizations working with and influencing funding sectors to shift more resources into women’s rights work.



Regional Strategies for Feminist Resource Mobilization

Facilitated by

Cindy Clark (WITM and BFEMO Program Manager, AWID)

Zeina Zaatari (MENA Senior Program Officer, GFW)

Having discussed the different issues affecting women’s movements in the region, this session was intended for participants to work together to develop concrete feminist resource mobilization strategies to strengthen women’s rights organizing in various countries and sub-regions. The donors present were asked to think about the role they can play to help increase both the quantity and quality of funding for women’s rights in the MENA region, as well as ways that they can encourage progressive US-based and other private foundations to support organizations in the region, even within the context of the US “war on terror”.

Below are some of the suggested strategies:

Global organizations¹⁷

- Global organizations can play a role in connecting local organizations with donors so that they can access funding.
- Donors should prioritize women's human rights issues and global organizations can play an advocacy role in ensuring this happens.
- International organizations can play an information dissemination role to raise donor awareness about the work MENA women's groups are doing.

Country and regional groups:

- Work collectively to mobilize resources particularly around points of commonality.
- Strengthen women's movements and enhance networking and collaborative work between all NGOs, large and small.
- Donors should separate government from NGOs.
- Donors should put pressure on country governments to implement international conventions and agreements on women's rights.
- Donors should give core funding to women's rights organizations.
- Donors should support organizations to become financially sustainable, e.g. supporting the hiring of fundraising staff.
- Before donors establish their agenda, they should seek input and advice from local women's organizations.
- National funds or other sources of funding should be created or identified.
- Donors should be proactive about breaking the language barriers.
- Donors should be partners and support organizations' diverse development strategies.
- Develop a shared database to facilitate communication and collaboration between organizations including shared information on donors.
- Capacity building in organizational development.
- Maintaining good relationships with donors and ensuring the free and timely flow of information.
- Increased knowledge about where the money is going.

Donor Group:

- Develop relationships and collaborate through affinity groups and e-lists in order to learn from grantees and women's organizations on the ground.
- In the context of the post 9-11 regulatory environment, share information with other donors about the strategies used to make grants in this environment.
- Co-fund similar or other convenings that meet the needs of women's movements in the region.

¹⁷ This group included all the representatives of international organizations that participated in the meeting.

- Support and enhance the work of already existing donor affinity groups and networks to engage more on MENA work.
- GFW can play a role in developing a list serve for the donors that participated in the conference, to which other international donors can be invited to join.
- Make referrals when they are approached by organizations that they cannot fund. This will require that they know the priorities, grant sizes, countries, and contacts of other MENA interested donors.
- Consider developing different application procedures that take various factors, including language, into consideration.
- Develop methods to increase understanding of the dynamics and issues in the region. One method could be to co-fund a program officer or a partner fund/foundation.
- Feminism within the MENA region is not the same in each country or within a single country. If there is a need for space to discuss this, e.g. using the model of the African Feminist Forum, donors can support a convening. Perhaps this is a role for the new women's funds in the region.

Next Steps

Facilitated by:

Zawadi Nyong'o (WITM Program Coordinator, AWID)

In line with our objective to provide a space for strategizing and forward-planning, participants were asked to answer the following questions in small groups:

1. What should be the next steps in this conversation?
2. Upon returning to your country/organization, what is one action you expect to take to advance some of the strategies or ideas that we have discussed here? (Individually and Collectively)

These questions solicited an array of responses, which included some of the following recommendations and next steps:

- The need to focus more on young women's concerns and promote dialogue between generations. Many participants also made a commitment to create more space for younger women's leadership and effective participation in their organizations.
- In order to ensure that information about feminist perspectives on the MENA region is made available, one participant writing a PhD made a commitment to add her analysis of women's rights issues in the region to *Wikipedia*¹⁸ as a way of countering misinformation in the region about women's issues.
- The need to document feminist organizing around the family code in various countries was also highlighted as a strategy to share best practices with other women's rights organizations in the region.

¹⁸ Wikipedia is the largest free internet-based Encyclopaedia – see www.wikipedia.org/

- Participants agreed to report back to their organizations and partners, sharing the information and insights gained about effective resource mobilization strategies.
- There was also a commitment to continue to collaborate, share information with each other, and form sub-regional or regional feminist networks.
- Some participants recommended that a Palestinian Women’s Fund be created, while others felt that Maghrebi women should also set up a fund.
- Taking the MENA donor directory as a starting point, several participants decided that they would work on developing more detailed lists of different national and international funding opportunities for women’s rights organizations in their countries.
- The African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) made a bold commitment to make at least four new grants to organizations in North Africa by the end of 2008, and to work collectively, if invited, with a possible Arab Feminist Forum.
- The Arab Human Rights Fund (AHRF), entering its very first grant cycle, agreed to take all the lessons, insights and recommendations from this meeting into consideration when processing her first round of grant applications.
- In Qatar, where the government provides all services, one participant committed to raising public awareness about the importance of civil society, and even creating the first association for women in the country.

These are just a few of the recommendations for next steps that were made by participants of this meeting.

Wrap up and Evaluation

Facilitated by:

***Cindy Clark (WITM and BFEMO Program Manager, AWID) and
Zeina Zaatari (MENA Senior Program Officer, GFW)***

To close the meeting after 3 intense days of work, Cindy Clark and Zeina Zaatari shared AWID’s and GFW’s next steps concerning their work in the region.

AWID’s Next Steps:

- The WITM team will ensure that the Fundher 2008 survey is translated to Arabic and invite more women’s rights organizations from the MENA region to participate in this year’s survey.
- The MENA Donor directory will be updated, finalized and disseminated via email.
- AWID will prepare a report of this meeting and make it available in English, French and Arabic.
- The YFA Dialogue group will create an online group to stay connected, and invite other young women from the region that couldn’t be at the meeting, to join.

- AWID will also be convening the triennial Forum¹⁹ in Cape Town, South Africa, from November 14th-17th 2008 and extended an invitation to all those interested in participating in this forum whose theme is “The Power of Movements,” to do so.

GFW's Next Steps:

- GFW reaffirmed their commitment to increase funding for women’s rights organizations in the region, with an eye towards movement building, increasing resources to grassroots organizations in marginalized areas, and pushing partners forward to support advocacy work.
- To identify more strategic partners in the region, GFW will work collaboratively with other funders, and particularly with the older and newer women’s funds.
- GFW reiterated her commitment to continually listen to organizations presenting new ideas and initiatives.
- GFW updated and will continue to update its Fundraising Handbook (available on its website) and translated it to Arabic and French among other languages.
- GFW is committed to donor education and to creating and mobilizing a donor affinity group on the Middle East and North Africa.
- GFW reaffirmed its commitment to support grassroots organizations, contribute to linking and movement efforts in the region, and engage organizations and activists in languages of their preference.

¹⁹ For more information about the AWID Forum, see <http://www.awid.org/forum08/>

Closing Evaluation Remarks:

In closing, participants were invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire and then share some of their insights on various issues regarding the organization, content and outcomes of the meeting. The following is a sample of a few of some of the feedback received in plenary:

“I want to thank AWID because many of us are separated because we come from countries that are separated by conflict, but at this meeting we are sitting next to each other, from both sides of the spectrum, feeling positive with one another. Thank you for creating this positive environment and for connecting us with the funders.”

“I feel really strong, confident, and ready to work more and more. This was really important to me as I have never had the opportunity to meet so many organizations in Morocco.”

“I was expecting this conference to be boring, and I even brought my laptop because I thought I would do work, but I haven’t. First, the way it was conducted was really good. Second, it has provided a short cut for organizations to meet donors and vice versa. Third, we had two evening parties, and all the groups danced and had fun together. Fourth, we had so many young women from the Arab world. I am happy to see the next generation coming and sharing with us.”

“I’m not against an Arab association fund, but I think we should be cautious about making this decision in a workshop like this. Despite bilateral and under-the-table relations, I hope that the Arab fund and donors consider this an opportunity to gain information about and learn from everybody.”

“When I first saw the list I was the only one from Libya and I thought I’d be the odd one out, but I feel like I’m near family. I’m proud of this conference, because we have Shahenda and Amina who are supporting us and charging us. The second point is the young women, and third the women with disabilities – thank you Heba and Shetha for your presence. The last thing I want to say is that my dialect is now a mixture of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian and Egyptian.”

ANNEX 1

MEETING AGENDA:

Resource Mobilization for Women's Rights Organizations and Movements in the Middle East and North Africa

April 19th (Young Women's Dialogue) and April 20th-22nd, 2008

Saturday April 19th

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 9:00 – 9:45 am | Welcome & introductions |
| 9:45 – 12:00 pm | Young Women in Women's Movements of the Region
A look at our definition of "movement", roles young women play in women's movements and challenges to multi-generational movement-building. |
| 12:00 – 12:45 pm | Challenges young women face in resource mobilization |
| 12:45 – 1:45 pm | Lunch |
| 1:45 – 2:45 pm | Everything you ever wanted to know about fundraising but never dared to ask
Tips, insights, and frank dialogue on what it takes to be a good fundraiser |
| 2:45 – 3:15 pm | Quick thinking: What would you do with \$1000? |
| 3:15 – 3:30 pm | Break |
| 3:30 – 4:30 pm | Facilitating the work of young women's activists in the MENA region
A review of the analysis of challenges and discussion of possible strategies to overcome them. |
| 4:30 – 5:30 pm | Wrap-up and Evaluation |

Sunday, April 20th

9:00 – 10:30 am **Welcome & introductions**

10:30 – 1:15 pm **Visioning our Movements: Our hopes and dreams for women’s movements in the region**

Participants worked in small groups (at tables by language) to discuss: What is the vision of the world we’d like to see in the ideal future and what is the role of women’s organizing/movements in the MENA region in achieving this vision?

At 11:15 Break for 15 mins

Given the kinds of movements needed to reach that ideal vision, what are some of the current strengths and weaknesses of women’s movements in the region?

1:15 – 2:30 pm **Lunch**

2:30 – 3:45 pm **What is the role of money in our movements?**

Presentation and brief discussion of AWID research findings: Where is the Money for Women’s Rights?

3:45 – 4:00 pm **Break**

4:00 – 5:30 pm **Our Personal Relationships to Money** *(and how they shape our resource mobilization, distribution and management practices)*

How individuals relate to money at a personal level, as a result of their upbringing or socialization, affects how they ask for it, give it, share it and use it for women’s rights work. Participants explored these issues through a dynamic process in facilitated small groups

7:00 pm **Group dinner at Gharnata restaurant in the Marrakech Medina**

Monday, April 21st

9:00 – 9:15	Synthesis of the previous day
9:15 – 10:30 am	The relationship between Money & Movements in the region Creative presentation on what we understand as movements and the state of women’s movements in the region followed by in-depth analysis in small groups of how the regional political/social/economic context impacts resource mobilization for women’s organizations as well as the impact of money/funding on the agenda and situation of the women’s movements in the region.
10:30 – 10:45 am	Break
10:45 – 12:00 am	The relationship between Money & Movements in the region (cont’d) Representatives from each small group reported back during this plenary session to share highlights from their discussions and examine key similarities and differences.
12:00 – 1:45 pm	Skills Building for Resource Mobilization A hands-on capacity building session that looked at how to build successful resource mobilization strategies, how <i>not</i> to fundraise and how to build relationships for long time support.
1:45 – 3:30 pm	Lunch (& Mini-Consultations)
3:30 – 4:45 pm	Donor Panel discussed challenges, opportunities and suggestions for resource mobilization by women’s organizations
4:45 – 5:00 pm	Break
5:00 – 6:00 pm	Role of Women’s Funds A panel of representatives from the women’s funds discussed the history and role of women’s funds, and their work in the region as well as challenges, opportunities and suggestions moving forward.
8:00 pm	Dinner & Celebratory Cultural Event

Tuesday April 22nd

9:00 - 10:45 am An Alternative Vision for Feminist Resource Mobilization

A “feminist resource mobilization” framework and panel “Talk Show” to discuss:

- Building on what you have heard in the last two days: What are the challenges for building stronger alliances between women’s organizations and donors to mobilize greater resources to advance our agenda?
- What are some opportunities to strengthen these alliances?

10:45 – 11:00 am Break

11:00 – 1:00 pm Strategizing for Feminist Resource Mobilization

Small group discussions around concrete strategies for resource mobilization that took into account the strengthening of women’s movements; and the role progressive donors and particularly women’s funds can play to help increase both the quantity and quality of funding for women’s rights in the MENA region?

1:00 – 3:00 pm Lunch (& Mini-Consultations)

3:00 – 4:30 pm Next Steps

This session provided participants with a space for individual reflection as well as plenary sharing and discussion of possible next steps to the meeting both at an individual and a collective level.

4:30 – 4:45 pm Break

4:45 – 5:30 pm Wrap-Up and Evaluation

7:30 pm Dinner