

03.08

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## Where is the money for women's rights... and how can we tap it?

### Women's Funds

#### PROFILE

More than twenty public funds led by women explicitly support women's organizations in the Global South. Part of a growing movement of social justice philanthropy, the women's funds are, according to AWID data, an essential source of finance for women's movements throughout the world. New women's funds join the list every year, including funds in the making in the Middle East, the Magreb and Argentina:

African Women's Development Fund - Ghana	Pitseng Trust - South Africa
Alquimia Collective Fund - Chile	Reconstruction Women's Fund - Serbia
Angela Borba Fund for Women - Brazil	Semillas Women's Fund - Mexico
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice - USA	Slovak-Czech Women's Fund - Slovak and Czech Republics
Bulgarian Women's Fund - Bulgaria	Tewa for Women's Empowerment - Nepal
Central American Women's Fund - Nicaragua	Ukrainian Women's Fund - Ukraine
Filia Women's Foundation - Germany	Urgent Action Fund for Africa - Kenya
HER Fund - Hong Kong	Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights - USA
Mongolian Women's Fund - Mongolia	Women's Fund of Georgia - Georgia
Nirnaya Women's Fund - India	Women's Hope Education Action Trust - South Africa

In fiscal year 2005-2006, the Global Fund for Women (GFW), based in San Francisco, increased its overall grantmaking by 5% to USD 7.76 million, while Mama Cash (Amsterdam) provided over USD 4 million to women's rights organizing internationally. In total, the women's funds (outside the US) gave USD 15 million to women's organizations all around the world in 2005. In that year, they collectively earned USD 26.5 million in revenue and held close to USD 27 million in long-term assets.

The women's funds literally sustain hundreds of women's organizations worldwide. They were mentioned by 46% of AWID survey respondents as a source of revenue (up from 28% in 2000). Because of their generally small grant size (between USD 4,000 and USD 15,000) they account for only 5% of combined revenue (up from 3% in 2000), but for many organizations with annual budgets under USD 50,000 (the majority) they are the main source of income.

Women's funds support issues or groups that have difficulty accessing resources (indigenous women, peasants, poor women, lesbians, young women, women with disabilities, etc); provide core/institutional support as well as some travel grants to attend strategic conferences; integrate capacity-building into their grant-making; and rely on volunteer advisors to help assess the overwhelming volume of proposals.

In 2000–05, women's funds in the Global South and East raised USD 18 million, tripling their revenue, with USD 43.5 million projected for the next five years if the growth curve continues

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## GROWTH AND INNOVATION

In 2000–05, women's funds in the Global South and East raised USD 18 million, tripling their revenue, with USD 43.5 million projected for the next five years if the growth curve continues. Revenue is raised from governments, INGOs and foundations. Larger donors see organizations such as African Women's Development Fund and the other funds as critical intermediaries who can get small amounts to remote and marginalized communities. In coming years, women's funds could absorb larger amounts of ODA funding to re-grant. (This could help the funds to support the riskier work of women's rights in socially conservative contexts.)

Larger women's funds (such as GFW and Mama Cash) financially support new and emerging women's funds in their start-up phase, while the Central American Women's Fund gathers all grantees together to decide who will get funded, creating a different grant-making paradigm. Many of the funds are explicitly committed to building women's organizations' capacities (in communication strategies, financial skills, strategic planning, governance, fund-raising, etc).

Unlike the majority of women's organizations, the funds are able to fundraise from individuals effectively. In 2005, 34% of the revenue for women's funds came from individuals (up from 25% in 2004). As well as approaching wealthy philanthropists, the funds draw large numbers of small donations using innovative methods. In a model called 'supermarket philanthropy' for example, socially responsible corporations in the USA allocate a royalty from purchases of 'women's brand' products to women's funds.

## GROWING PAINS?

AWID's ongoing action research integrates discussions amongst women's funds and women's rights organizations about challenges and concerns as the funds grow in scale and significance.

## Women's funds apply for some of the same resources as women's rights organizations

The competition is unfairly stacked, as sub-granting organizations are often seen to be more attractive than program-focused organizations raising money for complex and long-term advocacy, social justice and movement building.

## The demand for accountability increases as revenues grow

Not all of the funds have a clear feminist or women's rights approach. Is it enough just to support women and girls, for example, or should the women's funds be financing the political work needed to transform structural causes of violence, discrimination and patriarchy?

## Movement-building requires funding and strategies

With hundreds of grants going out to small women's organizations worldwide, movement-building needs increased attention. Grantmaking must include capacity building, linking local groups and issues to regional and global work, and funding overall strategy development. Given that the budgets of 66% of women's rights organizations are under USD 50,000, women's funds could be bridging the gap, for example with step-up grants to strategic players with growth potential.

## Both the funds and women's organizations need to be sustainable

To ensure their own financial sustainability, the funds invest in fundraising (in staff training, databases, financial systems, strategy development, visibility, branding, and communication tools); diversify their funding base to ensure independence from specific sources; and invest in long-term assets (such as property) that increase in value.

As a strategy to ensure sustainability for women's-group grantees, the women's funds mobilize an increasing amount of money from individual donors and private companies, sources ostensibly out of reach for many women's groups. In this way, women's funds become a 'fundraising arm' of the movement. AWID's Where is the Money for Women's Rights? action-research initiative brings mainstream funders together with women's funds and women's rights organizations to deepen analysis and strengthen alliances, with the aim of leveraging growing levels of support. ▶