

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY, WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY, AND FEMINIST PHILANTHROPY

UNDERSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR COLLABORATION
TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S AND COMMUNITIES' REALITIES







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**Summary Report¹
January 2022**

**Authored by Marija Jakovljević
with editorial support from Dana Doan
Illustrations by Shrujana N Shridhar**

¹ Note: This is a summary report extracted from a more detailed conversation document, which can be accessed at: <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/comm-phil-womens-phil>

PREFACE

The Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) supports the development of community philanthropy as a deliberate and specific development practice globally. The recognition and mobilization of community resources is an important part of larger efforts to shift power in philanthropy and development aid, which has for so long insisted on the primacy of external resources as drivers of change. Community philanthropy recognizes communities – however they are defined - as a source of different kinds of assets (money and other physical resources, but also knowledge, relationships and trust), and situates them as co-owners of their own development processes. In this framing, the act of giving or of pooling of resources can be understood as an expression of trust, solidarity, empathy or dissent, the flexing of a collective and powerful social muscle.

Since we were established in 2006, the GFCF has always embraced the diverse forms and expressions of community philanthropy and grassroots grantmaking in our network. Alongside community foundations, community development foundations, socio-environmental funds and other grassroots grantmakers, women’s and feminist funds have always been an important part of our community and of the emerging, distributed, networked and locally-rooted global system that we are working towards.

This report is the culmination of an extensive process of consultation, discussion and reflection which dates back to August 2020, when the GFCF invited Marija Jakovljević to embark on what was initially a rather modest piece of work aimed at deepening an understanding of the intersections, overlaps and any major differences between the emerging fields of “community philanthropy,” “women’s philanthropy” and “feminist philanthropy” in the context of local and regional funds and foundations in the Global South and East. Over time, as Marija delved meticulously into theory, language and practice, the research expanded into a much more substantive piece of work. With additional editorial support from Dana Doan in the later stages of the process, and beautiful illustrations by Shrujana Shridhar, we are delighted to be publishing this report, both the full research and a summary version, as a contribution towards larger efforts to foster agency and ownership and to advance justice (especially gender justice), from the ground up.

July 2024

Jenny Hodgson, GFCF Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

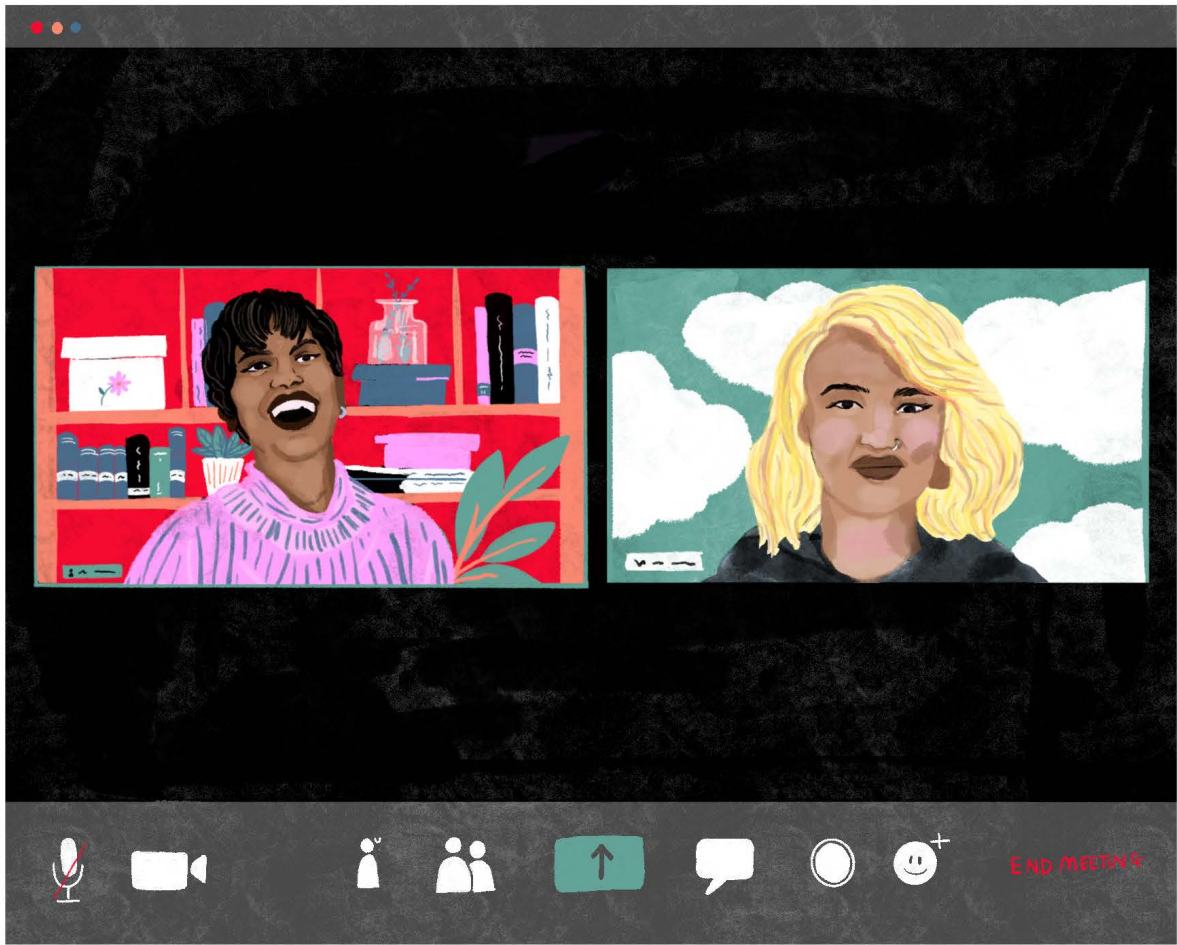
From 2020 to 2021, the GFCF engaged practitioners and interested parties in community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy to explore relationships among and between these three approaches and points of interest related to the broader philanthropy ecosystem, with special focus on women's human rights. This report is the result of the first phase of this global, collaborative project, which involved a literature review and 18 interviews with community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners and close allies. The starting assumption for this research was that community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy are each rooted in similar values and goals, with mutually relevant practices and shared challenges. As such, there is potential for each approach to lift the other in achieving shared objectives and overcoming shared challenges. Based on this starting assumption, the author of this report set out to explore the potential for an enhanced collaboration in shifting power towards people on the ground – to shape and guide rights-based philanthropy to improve women's and communities' realities. This report summarizes a more detailed and comprehensive conversation document. This summary report offers an overview of the research methodology, a short description of community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy approaches, and a brief discussion of key findings and main recommendations relating to the potential for enhanced collaboration across these approaches.

Within these three approaches, progressive community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors identify two key points of common interest: (1) shifting the power dynamics within the philanthropic sector to influence better resource flows towards people on the ground; and (2) mobilizing communities to autonomously resource underfunded issues (e.g., women's human rights with an intersectional lens). By understanding that community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy each bring unique expertise and value to the field, there is an opportunity to explore what each approach might offer to, and learn from, the other two. As such, this report has two aims. First, it aims to build on existing knowledge to inform and contribute towards change efforts in philanthropy and development. Second, it aims to establish, or strengthen, relationships and foster solidarity among philanthropy practitioners who share in the goal to shift power, especially regarding gender² equity.

2 The author of this study uses the term "gender" as it is used by women's funds, which understands gender to go beyond binary categories. As such, when referring to women, trans women are included. A more detailed explanation is offered by Jessica Horn, former director of programmes at AWDF, in Alliance Magazine's December 2019 issue. Horn, J. (2019). "Beyond the binary." Alliance Magazine, 24(4), p. 39. Retrieved at: [http://givingdoneright.org/Women's philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/12/December-2019-Alliance-Magazine.pdf](http://givingdoneright.org/Women's%20philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/12/December-2019-Alliance-Magazine.pdf).

Women's Human Rights as a meeting point for community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy

Women's human rights are seen as one of the meeting points among progressive community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners and as a domain for building trust and moving beyond fragmentation and silos. Women's human rights are universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights that must be protected and further expanded. In this exploration, women's human rights are discussed in relation to systemic, structural, and other types of injustice, discrimination, and stigma (e.g., class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, disability). They are approached from the perspective of historical achievements led by feminists, which continue to diversify and acknowledge different lived experiences. Hence, using a gender perspective for the analysis and contextualization of women's human rights is not a uniform nor standardized practice. Rather, it is a complex experience that requires understanding about how systemic, cultural, and other types of oppressions and injustices interact with different identities and structural positions to shape a person's realities and chances in life.



METHOD

In 2020, initial consultations with selected partners, allies, and stakeholders of the GFCF resulted in a proposal to study, with a gender lens, the ecosystem and roles, similarities, differences, and possible overlaps among community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy approaches. This study set out to reflect on theory and practice to identify mutual interests, points of concern, and critical questions across the three approaches. To do this, the author focused on two key sources of information: a literature review and key-informant interviews.

First, the author undertook a review of the literature on community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy. The reviewed literature consisted of both academic and non-academic publications, including books, articles, sector reports, manifestos, and participating organizations' websites and social media channels.

Second, the author conducted 18 semi-structured Zoom interviews (from 60

to 90 minutes), from September through December 2020. Interviewees were engaged in follow-up exchanges, based on their availability and interest in topics emerging from the study.

Interviewees were purposefully chosen for their experience in community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and/or feminist philanthropy and women's human rights. In selecting practitioners, a diversity of perspectives was the goal. Although the original plan was to conduct ten interviews, additional interviews were undertaken with individuals identified as being able to share experiences relating to ideas and topics emerging from the research. Participants brought diverse perspectives due to their different countries of origin, backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, ages, and involvement in different philanthropic and activist circles.

Based on self-identification, the study included representatives from: six women funds (regional and national), one feminist fund³, three community foundations, one resourcing organization⁴, three movement supporting

³ This feminist fund is part of a network of women funds (WFs) but primarily identifies itself as a feminist fund (FF). Keeping in mind that other WFs identify with feminist philanthropy, they may also identify as FFs; however, they perceive their primary identity is WF. Thus, boundaries between these primary identities appear relatively permeable. It might be communicated differently in different contexts to be better understood, but it may also change over time.

⁴ This resourcing organization is a grantmaker as well; however, due to their local history and desire to be better understood, the organization does not use philanthropic vocabulary.

virtual organizations (global and regional), and one users' organization⁵. (Refer to the appendix for a list of interviewees.)

This study was designed to weave a conversation across emerging points of interest. It was not intended as an academic study, and it did not attempt a systematic literature review. While building knowledge

and connecting concepts and practices were primary goals for this research, healing and collective care throughout the research process emerged as an accompanying and important feature of this study.

⁵ A user's organization refers to the self-organized users of a service for a specific community. Besides organizing and providing services, a user's organization engages in advocacy for all people in their specific community, in line with a human rights-based approach. While a user's organization uses community Philanthropy for mobilizing resources to support their work, it sees itself as distinct from other philanthropic actors in this list.



CONTEXT

To understand the role and state of community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy, it is important to provide context. While many studies are devoid of historical perspective or context, participants in this study stress the need to move away from such ahistorical analysis. Recent historical developments shaped the space for community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy and reflections on those developments promotes understanding.

The increasing privatization and commercialization of public services, the accelerating growth of extractive industries, and financial austerity measures are all direct attacks on basic human rights (HRs). These

developments particularly affect economic and social rights. These developments also resulted in the alienation of traditional forms of organizing, the tearing down of social tissue and safety nets, growing insecurity, rising inequities, deterioration of people's quality of life, and further depletion of the natural environment. Conflicts and wars are also connected to geopolitical reorganization and the competition for resources, such as land and other natural resources, cheap labour in a post-conflict environment, technology, etc.

In this scenario, human rights are inaccessible to many and often held "hostage" by the development industry.

Private philanthropy seeks to fill gaps, establish or maintain public facilities, offer social services, or provide other forms of support to different populations⁶. However, the reach and capacities of private philanthropy cannot compare with state provision. Meanwhile, development aid from the Global North, which has outsized influence on civil society and the public sector in the Global South and East, is predominately grounded in a neoliberal ideological framework. From that position, what is considered to be a “successful political transformation” is viewed by progressive scholars as an attack on achieved social and economic rights through “accumulation by dispossession⁷.”

In addition, trends in funding by big donors are known to fluctuate in terms of geographic focus, thematic areas, and prioritized strategies. There are significant regional discrepancies in available money for human rights work⁸.

When total philanthropic funds are assessed by target population, types of organizations reached and supported strategies, it becomes clear that self-organized grassroots collectives working on women’s human rights and improving their communities and societies

are extremely under-resourced. While there is a registered increase in total available funds from the development and philanthropic sector, the amounts that trickle down to the ground are unacceptably low⁹.

Critics of the global non-profit industrial complex are concerned that it keeps people in a dependent position¹⁰. Co-optation of authentic HR narratives and work is perceived as a frequent consequence. In response, some actors examine compatible or alternative forms for moving the control over resources and infrastructure closer to people on the ground. Reorientation to locally-led development, revival of local traditions of mutual support and generosity, and autonomous resourcing are suggested as some of the ways to rethink, redesign, and reinvent parts of civil society. Community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy have each come to play a major role in this endeavour.

6 Roitstein, F. & Thompson, A. (2015). (Presentación de la conferencia) Filantropía y género en la Argentina: Innovaciones y tendencias (p. 13).

7 See Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. OUP Oxford

8 See Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. OUP Oxford

9 Reports tracking human rights funding, from 2014 to 2018, can be accessed here: <https://humanrightsfunding.org/strategies/research/>.

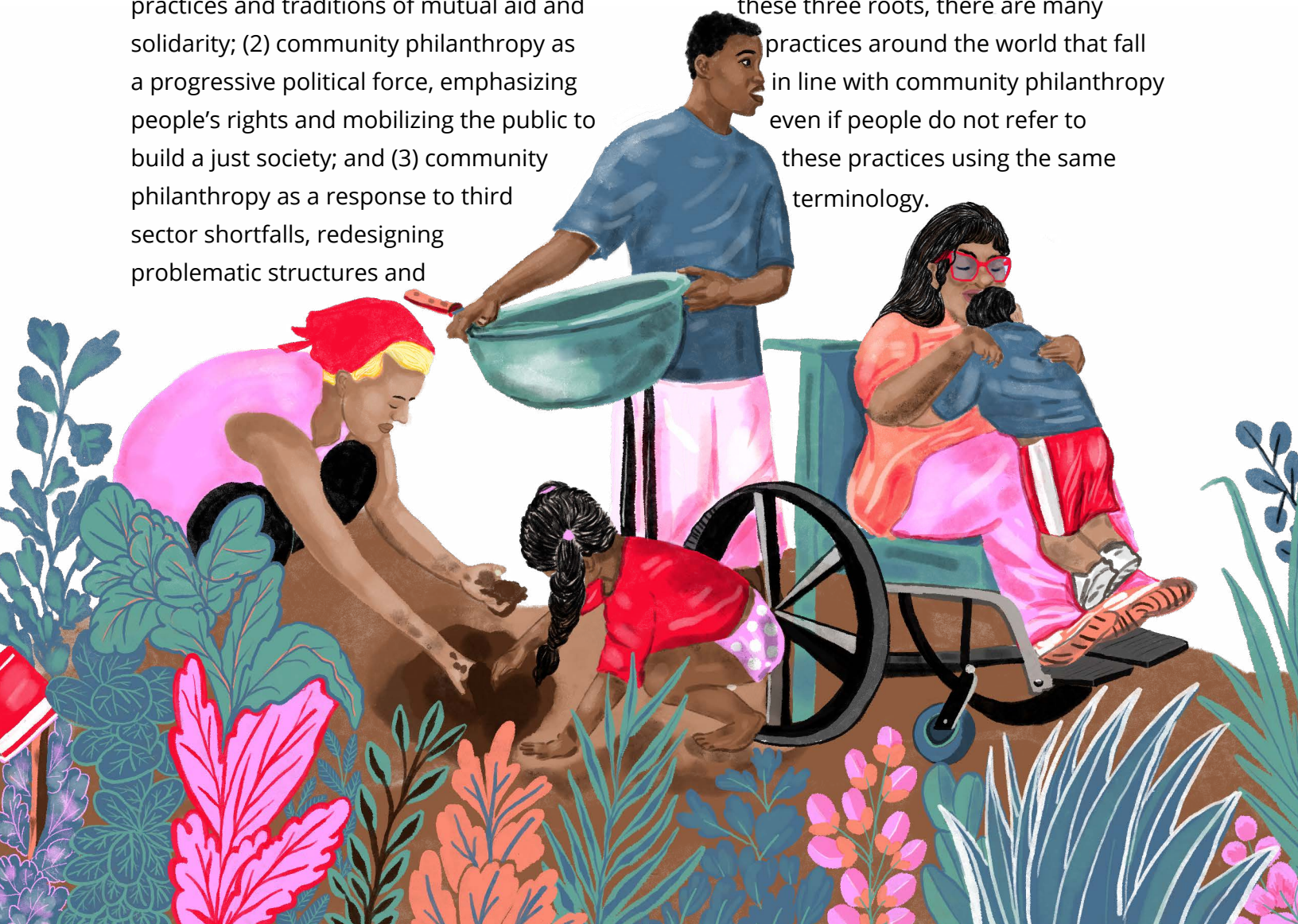
10 Roy, A. (2004). “Help that hinders.” *Le Monde diplomatique*. Retrieved at: <https://mondediplo.com/2004/11/16roy>; Lester Murad, N. (2014). “An alternative to international aid.” *OpenDemocracy*. Retrieved at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openglobalrights-openpage/alternative-to-international-aid/>.

DISTINGUISHING COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY, WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY, & FEMINIST PHILANTHROPY

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY

This study maps three roots of community philanthropy, including: (1) community philanthropy that builds upon local cultural practices and traditions of mutual aid and solidarity; (2) community philanthropy as a progressive political force, emphasizing people's rights and mobilizing the public to build a just society; and (3) community philanthropy as a response to third sector shortfalls, redesigning problematic structures and

moving the locus of control and ownership to communities. Understanding community philanthropy as deriving from one or more of these three roots, there are many practices around the world that fall in line with community philanthropy even if people do not refer to these practices using the same terminology.





WHAT IS COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY?

Community philanthropy is both a form of, and a force for, just locally driven development that strengthens community capacity and voice in claiming, operationalizing, and expanding human rights; builds understanding and trust; nurtures solidarity; and, most importantly, taps into and builds on local resources, which are pooled together to build and sustain a strong community.¹¹

Progressive community philanthropy practitioners stress the importance of their processes over the importance of their forms. For example, the GFCF describes community philanthropy using the **ACT** (Assets, Capacities, Trust) **Framework**.¹² Practitioners who identify with this framework, find that assets, capacities, and trust are mobilized and amplified through the practice of community philanthropy. Accompanying values are reciprocity, solidarity, social cohesion, self-reliance, and interdependence. Community philanthropy actors recognize the need to work with marginalized and oppressed groups and foster an inclusive and just environment. From that perspective, an orientation on women appears as one of the meeting points for community philanthropy with women's philanthropy and feminist philanthropy.

One of the driving forces for community philanthropy is the community foundation (CF). While some CFs do not adhere to the ACT framework and do not focus on shifting power to communities¹³, the focus in this report is on CFs with a progressive lens. The stated purpose of these CFs is to contribute to durable and responsible development by mobilizing a community and managing resources according to that community's values and needs; meanwhile reducing its dependence on external, top-down assistance. CFs build on local giving traditions and experiment with innovative horizontal approaches to community engagement. CFs are sometimes the only piece of infrastructure supporting community-led development. Generally, this situation occurs in places where other donors do not engage with grassroots initiatives, or at least not in a way that is needed or desired by the community.

11 This definition was first shared in "Giving for Change: Community-led Development through Community and Domestic Philanthropy, Multi-Annual Plan 2021-2025." This document elaborates plans for an international consortium consisting of the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF), Africa Philanthropy Network (APN), Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF), and Wilde Ganzen (WG). The definition elaborates on three previous efforts to define community philanthropy (Hodgson & Pond, 2016; Doan, 2019; Jakovljević: 2020).

12 Hodgson, J., & Pond, A. (2018). How community philanthropy shifts power: what donors can do to help make that happen. Grantcraft (p. 11). Retrieved at: <https://grantcraft.org/Women's-philanthropy-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/Community-Philanthropy-paper.pdf>.

13 Doan, D. R. (2019). What is community philanthropy? A guide to understanding and applying community philanthropy. GFCF (p.5). Retrieved at: <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/Women's-philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/08/WhatsCommunityPhilanthropy.pdf>.

Community philanthropy is both a means and an end related to the Palestinian context. Decades of international aid have shifted the priorities of the Palestinian community. Most aid comes with pre-set conditions and a global donors' agenda that does not necessarily meet the needs of the people. After the Oslo agreement, the founders of Dalia Association saw that international aid does not always serve the needs of Palestinians. So, the founders sought to bring back local Palestinian values - the indigenous aid system that is known as Al Ouneh. With international aid, the people started losing such values. To bring this concept back to modern-day Palestine, we adopted the methodology of community philanthropy: whereby people come together, discuss their needs and priorities, come up with solutions, and then decide on a small grant - through a community voting process that chooses the most beneficial initiatives. This brings back values like solidarity and enhances the role of women and youth.

Rasha Sansur, Dalia Association

WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY



Women's philanthropy means different things to different people. Most commonly, women's philanthropy describes giving by women. Giving by women can take different forms, such as: (1) charity work; (2) support to women's human rights where women are understood in a traditional sense; or, in recent decades, (3) support to movements, such as the women's movement, the environmental movement, and other movements dealing with issues affecting women. Forms of women's philanthropy include but are not limited to women's donor circles, women's foundations and funds, women's donor networks, and research on women's philanthropy.

Women's giving circles, as a form of women's philanthropy, are a developing strategy that does not attempt to simplify complex problems nor is it a magic wand that can simply be expanded. Instead, they open space for solutions that are specific to time, space, and the participants involved. They [also] help [to ensure] that resources mobilized by women adapt to different circumstances and involve new allies.¹⁴

Historically, essentialist perceptions of a "natural relationship" between women, community, nature and traditional roles like caregiving, shaped women's charitable work in a way that sometimes fed harmful social processes perpetuated by the church, oppressive governments, and the military.

Much effort has gone into untangling these patriarchal relationships. Even with a reorientation towards women's human rights, there remain concerns that a substantive part of women's philanthropy maintains these patriarchal relations without taking efforts to overcome them. Additionally, rights and entitlements sought through women's philanthropy are not necessarily extended to gender non-conforming people.

For some practitioners, women's philanthropy means the same thing as feminist philanthropy. However, others suggest the two are related but distinct. Women's philanthropy is considered less political than feminist philanthropy. And, in general, women's philanthropy is perceived as easier to explain to broad audiences compared with feminist philanthropy. In some contexts, it may make sense to use less political terminology. In such contexts, women's philanthropy can offer a viable strategy for fostering desired changes through the gradual unpacking of harmful social layers and supporting progressive social change work.

¹⁴ Roitstein & Thompson (2015: 25), translated from Spanish.

FEMINIST PHILANTHROPY

Feminist philanthropy emerged from the feminist movement as a driving force for resourcing feminist work. It also aims to transform the philanthropic sector by operationalizing feminist values in organizational cultures and grantmaking processes (i.e., how resources are mobilized, how resources are allocated, and how actors relate to one another). Being explicitly political is highlighted as a key distinction of feminist philanthropy compared with both community philanthropy and women's philanthropy.

10 Feminist Funding Principles

By the **Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice**¹⁵

1. Fund those most impacted by gendered oppression.
2. Fund at the intersection of women's rights and LGBTQI liberation movements.
3. Apply an intersectional lens to break down funding silos.
4. Provide flexible and sustained core funding to activists.
5. Fund efforts to make social and cultural change, alongside and as part of legal and policy change.
6. Support cross-issue and cross-regional movement building.
7. Go beyond grantmaking: accompany activists with capacity building and leadership support.
8. Invest in holistic security and healing justice.
9. Support work at the crossroads of feminist activism, digital rights, and internet freedom.
10. Partner with women's and other activist-led funds to ensure that funding reaches the grassroots.

Feminism uncovers the layers of inequity and injustice that a patriarchal society trains us not to see. It also demands a reimagining of society and, in its most progressive form, liberation and justice for all people in addition to non-human beings and the natural environment. Consequently, feminist philanthropy is not just about women. It also goes beyond the binary lens (men or women) by looking at the range of human identities on the margins and centring them. Feminist philanthropy also addresses systemic power relations. Going beyond gender equality, feminist philanthropy cannot be reduced to charitable giving to women and girls as a targeted population. Instead, feminist philanthropy is rights-based, applying an intersectional lens to address multiple layers of oppression.

Engaging with and preserving both art and cultural work and connecting these works to the academic and activist spheres is an important feature of feminist philanthropy,

¹⁵ Retrieved at: <http://astraeafoundation.org/microsites/feminist-funding-principles/>.

which is designed to decolonize knowledge and nurture an alternative progressive culture.

Feminist philanthropy strives to operationalize feminist values through organizational culture, structures, and processes; however, this goal remains a work in progress. The most common feminist philanthropy organizational forms include women's funds (WFs) and feminist funds (FFs), which were

created in response to a lack of access to adequate resources for feminist work. Depending on their contexts, WFs serve as movement pioneers and/or catalysers of change.

“ Feminism is about disrupting power, so feminist philanthropy is about challenging and disrupting the power of resources and the power dynamics between those who give the resources for gender justice and those who claim them¹⁶. **”**

—
Tulika Srivastava,
Women's Fund Asia



16 See: Srivastava, T. (2019). Revolutionising philanthropy across Asia and the Pacific. Alliance Magazine, 24(4), p. 52. Retrieved at: http://givingdoneright.org/Women's_philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/12/December-2019-Alliance-Magazine.pdf.



MAIN POINTS

A. REVEALING OVERLAPS IS A PROCESS

The process confirmed that, given the right conditions (where no one feels as they are losing anything of themselves but that there is a real sense of mutuality), there are huge opportunities to join dots, strengthen connections, deepen practice, and expand networks.

Jenny Hodgson, GFCF

One interviewer said she could not recall other conversations linking feminist philanthropy and community philanthropy. She believes the lack of such conversations prevent people from coming together. When people start talking with others, they can strategize and overcome their isolation, which is why she found this initiative to be transformative. For example, when participants were asked to identify their work using one or more of the three domains, nine identified with community philanthropy, five with women's philanthropy, and 10 with feminist philanthropy. This suggests that many participants identified with two, or even three of the approaches. According to the interviewees, fluidity is the result of chosen strategies shaped by the politics of organization founders, local history, and current perceptions of the field. Most interviewees say they rely heavily on a human rights (HR) framework, but not necessarily in an explicit way.

This report uncovered shared values and principles, which link to community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy processes, such as:

- Focus on rights, entitlements, equity. Attention to intersectionality, holistic approaches, balancing social and environmental needs.
- Aspire towards healing justice, collective care, standing for each other.
- Attentiveness to the local environment, being locally rooted.
- Awareness of systemic problems and the history of oppressions, internationalism.
- Building of understanding, trust, and social bonds.
- Mindful accountability.
- Attention to power relations, shifting and sharing the power.
- Demonstration of flexibility, resilience, resourcefulness.
- Commitment to collaboration, participatory decision making, solutions developed in community, co-production.
- Supporting interdependence, solidarity.
- Fostering autonomy, local resourcing, self-reliance, internal strength, safety-nets.
- Building collective ownership (of the process, assets, knowledge).

COMBINING ART & ACTIVISM

Like community philanthropy, feminist philanthropy supports cultural projects. A prominent dimension of feminist philanthropy is its groundedness in artistic work and education. Activism refers to the combination of art and activism. Feminist philanthropy typically connects and supports academic, artistic, and activist spheres to build and decolonize knowledge, increase outreach, strengthen community's sense of belonging, and enhance communications. In that respect, progressive, feminist education and art are both a domain supported by feminist philanthropy and a strategy used by feminist philanthropy to communicate its values, confront harmful mainstream narratives, and nurture an alternative progressive culture.

B. MIND THE LANGUAGE

Community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy exist around the world in diverse forms. Local histories and current realities shape the pluriverse of understandings of these three concepts in any community. Even the terms - community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy- are not always used when their respective approaches are put into practice. Moreover, the same concept can be described using different terms. Meanwhile, these terms and

others relating to philanthropy are loaded with layers of debatable meanings. This can create a distance among similar actors due to the lack of mutual understanding. As such, making space to uncover and reflect upon meanings of the language used is the first step towards a better understanding of each concept and towards building trust among practitioners engaged in distinct but related approaches.

The public's general understanding of philanthropic work, in general, is predominately rooted in the concept of charity. And progressive philanthropic actors often struggle to direct the meaning of philanthropy towards progressive, social, and political engagement. To guide philanthropy in a new direction, some opt to coin new terms by building on locally understandable concepts. Others prefer to use familiar terms that evoke the desired meaning. As language and reality mutually shape each other, building a mutual understanding of philanthropy, let alone reinventing the term, remains an ongoing endeavour.

REFLEXIVE LANGUAGE PRACTICES

Solidarity Foundation speaks about gender sexual minorities rather than LGBTQ+. This language is used not only because it translates well into the local language but also because it offers a broader framework for the work. In India, the term “minority” comes with constitutional protections and signals that current power distribution is a problem. Solidarity Foundation explains that identities are intersectional and therefore the work must apply an intersectional lens. So, while gender and sex are important and a key focus, the foundation also focuses on issues of class and cast, as they determine access (or lack of access) to resources within the same identity.

“...Community philanthropy is like a solidarity economy: it’s not one thing. It’s contextual. It’s about values and certain key elements. In different contexts, community philanthropy will come up in different forms and some may not call it community philanthropy... Let’s say, if you are looking at a human being, you are showing what the skeleton comprises of and different parts of the body. But the face can be different, the way they dress, and other forms of appearance. But the structure is there and it’s different from the structure of a lizard or a whale. It’s a way to explain something based on its essence. We don’t try to define its form, because the form is diverse, and the form is not the key.”

Kamala Chandrakirana

C. REINVENT PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy is the broader field and term within which community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy all operate. However, the term philanthropy itself is perceived to be loaded with both positive and negative connotations. For some, philanthropy is viewed as a form of civic participation and is encouraged for continuing a long history of giving and mutual aid. For others, however, the term is closely connected to power structures within oppressive and extractive systems.

Critics reflect on the role philanthropy has played in colonial, populist, and authoritarian times through moral control, pacification of resistance, management of inequalities, and other harms done under the banner of good¹⁷. Today, philanthropy can be closely related to a development sector rooted in a neoliberal agenda. While development aid is often promoted as generous help from

the Global North, others recognize it as a smokescreen for extraction through monetary mechanisms¹⁸. Many prominent voices note that it steers social change work towards commodification and depoliticization¹⁹, the dilution of human rights work²⁰ and co-optation of feminist struggles²¹.

Philanthropic structures often appear distant from movements and ordinary people²². It is noted that access to key positions in philanthropic organizations is still largely inaccessible for less privileged people. Furthermore, it is detected that philanthropic resourcing often requires professionalization of activists who gradually became detached from their community, which can further lead to establishing gatekeepers²³ and harmful power dynamics, with organizations becoming more "top-roots" than grassroots²⁴.

17 See for example the historical reflections in Roitstein & Thompson (2015).

18 From a macro perspective, development aid can operate as an ally of extractive politics, rather than a supportive system. This view is elaborated by Kavita Ramdas, former president and CEO of the Global Fund for Women, in a published SSIR discussion on philanthrocapitalism: "...the reality that the \$50 billion of 'aid' (including private philanthropy) trickling from Global North to Global South annually is but a tenth of the \$500 billion being sucked out of the Global South each year in the form of interest payments on loans and other mechanisms imposed by international financial agencies, including the World Bank and the IMF." Retrieved at: [ssir.org/point_counterpoint/philanthrocapitalism#:~:text=Philanthrocapitalism%2C%20a%20term%20that%20came,a%20social%20sector%20wedge%20issue](https://ssir.org/point-counterpoint/philanthrocapitalism#:~:text=Philanthrocapitalism%2C%20a%20term%20that%20came,a%20social%20sector%20wedge%20issue).

19 See: Al-Karib, H. (2018). "The dangers of NGO-isation of women's rights in Africa." Women's Rights News, Al Jazeera. Retrieved at: aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/12/13/the-dangers-of-ngo-isation-of-womens-rights-in-africa/. See also: Carapico, S. (2002). "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World." Middle East Journal, 56(3), 379-395 (p. 385). Retrieved at: [jstor.org/stable/4329784](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4329784).

20 Younis, M. (2018). "Back to the Future: returning to human rights." Open Global Rights. Retrieved at: openglobalrights.org/Back-to-the-Future-returning-to-human-rights.

21 Hao, A. (2020). "On 'female leadership', the neoliberal co-optation of feminism, and the language that we use." New Wave. Retrieved at: newwave.substack.com/p/on-female-leadership-the-neoliberal.

22 See, for example, the critical reflections of a Roma activist: Savić, J. (2017). Nemušti Famosni Feministički Donatorski Jezik. Retrieved at: <https://usernameka.wordpress.com/feminism/nemusti-famosni-feministicki-donatorski-jezik/>.

23 See, for example: Bias, L. (2019). "NGOisation and generational divides in Serbia's feminist movement." Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 77 (p. 102292), Pergamon.

24 See, for example: Younis, M. (2018). "Back to the Future: returning to human rights." Open Global Rights. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/Back-to-the-Future-returning-to-human-rights>.

With all this in mind, and while recognizing that philanthropy emerged from traditional patriarchal values, parts of the philanthropy ecosystem have since evolved, diversified, and attempted to reshape harmful relations from the past. For example, the feminist movement, which questions and works to dismantle oppressive patriarchal structures, developed its own model of philanthropy. Many manifestos, pledges, declarations, and principles²⁵ have been produced to guide mindful and responsible philanthropic work. Such efforts focus on correcting historical injustices²⁶, transforming the sector²⁷, altering people's relationships with their work²⁸, changing the global system²⁹, or a related goal. Regardless of the goal, the overarching principles behind these efforts are similar.

It is about unlearning and learning. It is about rethinking previous or dominant ways of thinking, doing, and using language. It is about being mindful of context, being flexible, using power in a responsible manner, taking care of diverse needs, and ultimately redesigning the system in a just and sustainable way. This aspiration for radical change is not new to community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, nor feminist philanthropy. Rather, it is part of the DNA of many community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors, and it continues to evolve.

25 See, for example, the sector's gold standard, created by the Astrea Foundation for Justice. Retrieved at: astraeafoundation.org/microsites/feminist-funding-principles/#footnote-010-backlink. A new contribution to this domain includes: "Principles for Feminist Funding," co-developed by the Canadian Women's Foundation, Community Foundations of Canada, and the Equality Fund (formerly The MATCH International Women's Fund). Retrieved at: [canadianwomen.org/Women's philanthropy-content/uploads/2020/05/Feminist-Philanthropy.pdf](https://canadianwomen.org/Women's%20philanthropy-content/uploads/2020/05/Feminist-Philanthropy.pdf).

26 See, for example: The Philanthropic Community. (2015). The Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action. The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, whereby Canadian philanthropic organizations and individual funders came together to support the process of dealing with harms done by the Canadian residential school system to Indigenous communities. Retrieved at: the-circle.ca/the-declaration.html.

27 See, for example: #ShiftThePower: a Manifesto for Change. Retrieved at: <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/news/announcing-the-pathways-to-power-symposium-london-18-19-november-taking-shiftthepower-to-the-next-level/>.

28 See, for example, a manifesto by FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund, which argues that: "individual and collective self-care are political strategies of resistance that help us become more resilient, and better prepared to respond to the threats, violence, and discrimination that we often face." FRIDA (2019). Happiness manifestx. Retrieved at: [https://youngfeministfund.org/Women's philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/06/Happiness-Manifestx-web.pdf](https://youngfeministfund.org/Women's%20philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/06/Happiness-Manifestx-web.pdf).

29 See, for example, AWID's manifesto for post-covid recovery: Bailout Manifesto: From a Feminist Bailout to a Global Feminist Economic Recovery. Retrieved at: <https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/bailoutmanifesto-en-final.pdf>.

D. COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY, WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY, & FEMINIST PHILANTHROPY ARE DISTINCT BUT MUTUALLY RELEVANT APPROACHES

Whether they call themselves community philanthropies, women's funds, human rights funds, peace funds or something else altogether, they represent a new and more democratic movement in philanthropy and foreign aid. They play an important and unique role in society by recognizing and pooling local assets, harnessing the power of small grants, building constituencies within and across communities – especially those at the margins – and negotiating the territory between horizontal and vertical forms of power.³⁰

Community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy are evolving concepts, each harbouring a wide scope of meanings. For some practitioners, they are three distinct approaches. For others, these concepts fall on a spectrum. Any stakeholder may identify with one, two, or all three concepts. Moreover, all three concepts come into practice using a diverse array of organizational forms and approaches. And the most suitable form and approach may change as an organization develops. All this indicates that these concepts are permeable, changeable over time, and adaptable to different environments.

Common strategies used by community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors:

- Mobilizing resources: giving circles, crowdsourcing, fundraising events, running income generating activities (e.g., women cooperatives), engaging companies to support women's human rights organizations through financial and in-kind donations and skill building.
- Allocating resources: different forms of grantmaking, capacity building, connecting partners for mutual support – skill and knowledge sharing.
- Building understanding and documenting history: conducting research and publishing papers, producing Maps of events,³¹ organizing courses and trainings, building documentation centres.
- Promoting awareness: awards, campaigns, advocacy work.
- Participatory decision-making (PDM) and co-production: bringing people together for strategizing, setting a common agenda, assigning roles according to assets and capacities.

³⁰ Hodgson, J., & Knight, B. (2019, November 12). #ShiftThePower: from hashtag to reality, OpenDemocracy. Retrieved at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/shiftthepower-hashtag-reality/>.

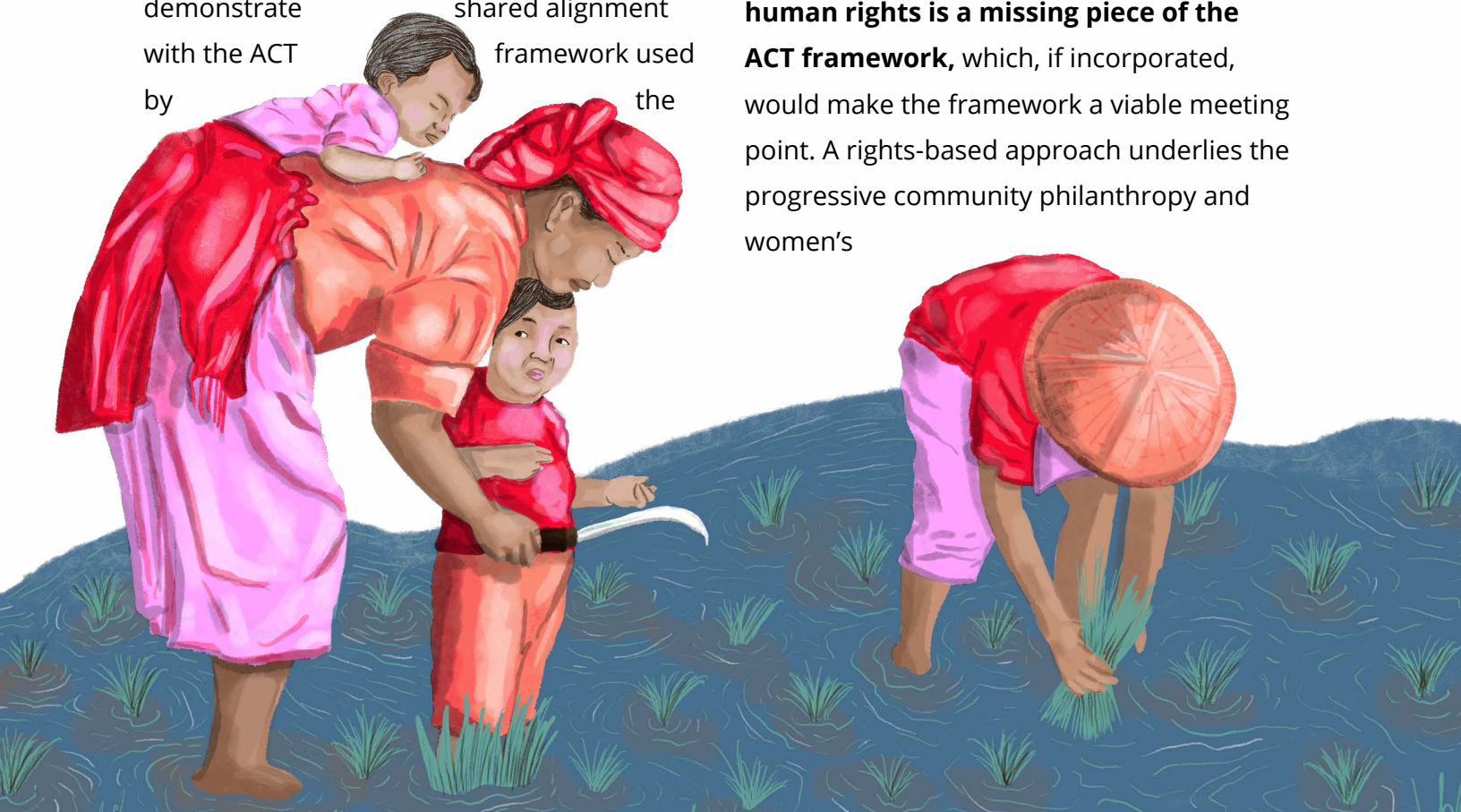
³¹ See, for example: <https://www.rwfund.org/8-mart-mapa-dogadaja/8-mart-rwfund-arhiva/>.

Understanding the distinctions and intersections is necessary to avoid oversimplifying or misleading interpretations of complex realities. Historically, these three concepts aligned with various ideological matrices and power structures. Hence, when talking about similarities and crosscutting issues among community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy it does not include individuals and organizations holding traditional or conservative positions. Nonetheless, it is worth drawing attention to those groups who strive to deal with problematic layers of philanthropy while contributing to a responsible sector, a just society, and resilient communities.

Interviewed practitioners engaged in community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy demonstrate shared alignment with the ACT framework used by the

GFCF to describe community philanthropy. For these practitioners, community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy develop, gather, and leverage assets such as people, knowledge, skills, time, materials, tools, spaces, relationships, networks, infrastructure, and money. At the same time, their respective approaches are designed to help people acknowledge, nurture, and build capacities such as collaboration, collective leadership, problem solving, and co-production. And, through authentic communications and meaningful and transparent processes and procedures, they foster trust.

While there is alignment on the importance of assets, capacities, and trust, progressive community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners believe that **a focus on human rights is a missing piece of the ACT framework**, which, if incorporated, would make the framework a viable meeting point. A rights-based approach underlies the progressive community philanthropy and women's



philanthropy movements and presents a meeting point with feminist philanthropy movements. While community foundations, women's funds, and feminist funds are the driving force of community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy, they are also part of their respective movement's infrastructure, safety net, and bridge towards other relevant actors. Thus, while each of their starting points and historical development are different, all three have generosity and an aspiration for social change in their DNA.

Indonesia for Humanity (IKa) elaborates that working with women requires a holistic approach. Depending on the context, working with women might require working at both the community level and the cultural level with special attention to underlying, unresolved, and burning issues. Applying a gender lens makes it possible to uncover layers of normalized gender-based oppression.

In Mexico, for example, the communitarian concept of owning and managing land traditionally excludes women. It is for this reason that Fondo Semillas uses community philanthropy to engage the whole community and women's human rights-based Feminist philanthropy to support women to access land ownership and assemblies. Interviewees engaging in discussions on women's human rights work stress the importance of working with the broader community, as women do not exist in bubbles, and the responsibility for changing harmful patterns should not be left only with women. Women's human rights cannot be operationalized without mindfully engaging with existing structures, actors, relationships, and processes shaping women's positions and realities. However, this does not mean that any work on a communal and societal level can be labelled a contribution to women's human rights. Further, it matters who does the work and how these actors are resourced.



IKA'S WOMEN'S FUND, HUMAN RIGHTS FUND, GREEN FUND & CULTURAL FUND

Ika's women's fund does not function in a silo. Ika established three other funds as well, including a human rights fund, a green fund, and a cultural fund. The human rights (HR) fund is the longest running fund. The HR fund supports victims of gross HR violations under the country's former authoritarian regime. Because these cases are not resolved, there is no accountability or recognition. Ika's HR fund deals with this historical injustice and resulting trauma by supporting women victims and survivors. Ika's green fund is for disaster response (e.g., in the case of a tsunami, earthquake, or volcanic eruption) and food sovereignty, and it is community based. Finally, Ika's cultural fund supports social change makers that are working to advance issues of diversity and religious tolerance. In that way, historical injustices are not neglected, and mechanisms are developed to respond to urgent needs, while continuously working on resisting harmful tendencies and broadening the space for a diverse society. As such, Ika supports women with different experiences without reducing them to a unidimensional identity.



TAKEAWAYS

There is potential for community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors to collaborate and lift each other up to achieve joint and interrelated objectives while overcoming shared challenges. Their diversity can be their strength if they can find a way to work together on connected causes, through different entry points, by respecting do not harm principle. The following five recommendations suggest ways to move this joint work forward.

1. ENSURE CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND THE CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Legacies of movements contributing to the expansion and operationalization of human rights ought to be core knowledge in community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy circles. Understanding and passing along the memory of previous struggles is necessary for practitioners to be strategic in their endeavours. While monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) are pushed by the broader sector as a best practice for knowledge management and impact measurement,

community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners argue that social change requires learning beyond measurement. Knowledge for social change starts with sense-making and continues in the co-production of ideas, concepts, and change.

Measurement, MEL, and knowledge production are each deeply entangled in capitalistic and patriarchal relations. As such, they present one more area of struggle to shift power, decolonize knowledge, and change how philanthropy approaches learning and uses that knowledge. To achieve meaningful results from MEL, it is critical to utilize context-appropriate tools, indicators, and a theory – or theories - to make sense of the information collected. MEL should also endeavour to capture the unintended consequences of philanthropic initiatives.

Feminist practitioners point out that it is critical to stop the harmful practice of chasing a "good story" and instead also pay attention to the importance of "maintaining the past gains," particularly in situations of shrinking space for, and backlashes towards, civil society. Feminists also call for deep political analysis to uncover hidden layers behind (un) successful experiences.

All of this calls for making time to reflect, engaging in honest conversations across the sector, learning from each other, and embracing mistakes as learning opportunities to figure out what works. Co-production³², one of the main principles of the independent living movement, could very well become a cornerstone for MEL in community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy. Without mutual learning and joint sense-making, there is no space to talk about power sharing and power shifting. As such, feminist MEL must be a process for co-production, for re-examining and re-shaping tools and approaches for learning to keep on top of complex and constantly changing realities.

GIVING THE MEANING

Community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners develop their own methods to strengthen collective learning. For example, Ika (Indonesia) talks about "giving the meaning," rather than measurement. In one Indonesian province, Ika asked partners to identify activists and thought leaders knowledgeable about local context and dynamics. Their partners recommended four individuals recognized as knowledge builders for social change: a historian, a journalist, an artist focusing on social issues, and a cultural worker. These four individuals joined Ika to work on post-disaster, community-

based reconstruction. With their deep knowledge of the local context, they served as mentors to young community leaders while offering critical reflections on progress throughout the initiative. These "meaning-providers" shared with Ika their insights, what efforts prove to be meaningful, what concerns arise from the work, and what considerations are linked to achieving long-term transformation. This experiment is a thoughtful, community-based, transformative learning approach. Ika's approach is different from top-down, extractive measurement processes that are too common in the development sector. Here, the community chose their own local "experts" and created meaning together, for themselves. This experiment resulted in a long-term relationship that continued long after the grant itself.

2. SHARE AND SHIFT POWER

Progressive community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners are calling for philanthropy to share and shift power. Identified, but insufficiently tackled, power issues in communities and movements relate to gatekeepers, generational gaps, and the professionalization of grassroots activists. Furthermore, those who were once oppressed can also become oppressors. Meanwhile, unhealed traumas from toxic power dynamics

32 See: [http://www.enil.eu/Women's philanthropy-content/uploads/2014/05/FAQ_Co-production.pdf](http://www.enil.eu/Women's%20philanthropy-content/uploads/2014/05/FAQ_Co-production.pdf).

can perpetuate and mutate to different forms of violence. From the nuanced knowledge generated across the community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy fields, two main entry points for sharing and shifting power arose.

First, there is a need to re-examine composition, structures, processes, and cultures within philanthropic organizations and the philanthropic sector as a whole and find ways to make it more self-reflexive, agile, representative, and accountable to those it is supposed to serve. Practically, this means making space for people with diverse backgrounds, especially the underprivileged and oppressed, to be able to shape decisions and resource flows. It also means embedding feminist values into organizations, dealing with toxic cultures, acknowledging power misuse, enabling

meaningful participation, and creating an environment where people thrive. Interviewees echoed a point made by Srilatha Batliwala, a feminist scholar and activist, that women and feminist organizations are not automatically better at leadership, accountability, inclusion, democratic functioning, and sharing power. Advances in these domains happen through ongoing and intentional work that translates feminist values into practice. Talking about "flat" structures and "accountability to the movement" does not mean a thing if there are no mechanisms to regulate power, responsibilities, and operating principles³³. Furthermore, continuously acquiring knowledge across an organization is important to avoid becoming rigid and stagnant. But what underlines the direction of an organization is the ideological position at its core.

33 Batliwala, S. (2011). Feminist leadership for social transformation: Clearing the conceptual cloud. New Delhi: CREA, p. 44-46. Retrieved at: <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ucwc/docs/CREA.pdf>.





“Skills are not neutral, portable abilities – they are shaped by values and politics – as for example in the way relationships are managed, conflicts are resolved, or salary scale and job descriptions are framed³⁴.”

Second, **when engaging with communities and movements, an intersectional approach is needed.** Communities and movements are not homogenous, nor static, and they can harbour oppression and marginalization, even when they consist of actors gathered around progressive values. To be present, resourceful, and facilitate processes in a manner that is not extractive, tokenistic, or harmful calls for patience, introspection, and a break with both the saviour complex and romanticized notions of communities or movements.

Building cross-issue alliances is critical for sustaining interrelated struggles. People often fail to see prospective allies in others who are struggling. Solidarity Foundation is cautious about comparisons, such as, ‘nobody else’s suffering is as bad as mine,’ because it leaves less room for empathy. “If you don’t have empathy, how will you build solidarity links? How will you build stronger alliances? The first thing is to understand you are not the only one suffering.” To overcome self-centeredness, people must talk to each other, understand each other’s realities, and develop a sense of collective responsibility.

Responsible philanthropy is possible when those engaged proactively reflect on their power and privileges, show up for the unjustly marginalized “other,” and check regularly to ensure that their practices correspond with their narratives. The experiences of interviewees suggest this can be achieved with intention. An intentional approach incorporates the following practices:

- 1. Understand the hierarchy of needs and preconditions for achieving long term goals.** Philanthropy must begin by meeting basic needs while working to build trust and collaboration. Then spaces must be carved out to transform harmful attitudes and practices and work towards healing, solidarity, inclusion, and justice.
- 2. Acknowledge the spectrum of gender identities and diversity in the community and steer clear of essentialist expectations from community and movement members.** While most work that is designed to build better communities is undertaken by women, youth, and marginalized members, it is limiting to create programs targeting only women, youth, and marginalized members. Moreover, women, youth, and marginalized members must not take all the burden of fixing society and historical injustices. If the goal is to improve their position and realities, the environment needs to change. It must be open and just, inclusive of the whole community

³⁴ Ibid. p. 52-54.

3. Any approach should be sensitive to class, caste, race, ageism, ableism, and any other layer of oppression, discrimination, exploitation, or neglect. With that in mind, appropriate mechanisms must be put in place to ensure just participation while fostering solidarity.

4. Know when to step-up and when to step back. Practitioners warn against easy wins that can contribute to the monopolization of power. For example, a policy of the Reconstruction Women's Fund is not to step into another group's space and to function only as a door opener. For example, when media approach RWF for a comment, their first consideration is whether there is a group in the field they can introduce with direct expertise. And, when donors or other ecosystem actors seek out collaborators, RWF forwards those inquiries to groups in the field to promote new contacts and improve access to different decision-makers. RWF also only goes after funding opportunities that are out of reach for groups they aim to fund and works to channel those resources to them.

3. ENGAGE CAREFULLY AND INTENTIONALLY WITH THE STATE AND BUSINESS SECTORS

As one participant put it: resources can either go towards supporting women's human rights or against women's human rights, so it is up to feminist philanthropy, women's philanthropy and community philanthropy actors, and their allies, to claim these resources for women and their communities. Influencing resource flows from different entry points, without stepping into each other's domain, while addressing harmful practices behind the dominant creation, extraction, and allocation of resources is a difficult task. Practitioners call for cautious engagement with the state and business sectors, which hold a great power in channelling resources and must be held accountable.

The state is supposed to guarantee the protection of human rights (HRs). The state is also one of the main regulators of resource flows. How these two responsibilities function in practice, depends on the ideological framework within which each state operates and their history in relation to HRs and women's human rights. Monitoring state policies and resource flows and engaging with

state bodies is highly contextual and requires different approaches.

Attitudes towards the business sector are mixed. The business sector is frequently seen in terms of its negative impacts (e.g., colonization of bodies and environments, depletion of nature, extraction of labour and community resources, making profits out of the social and other services that are supposed to be accessible to everyone). Since the private sector manages a great proportion of resources, interviewees recognize a need to influence those resource flows and address private sector practices. However, due to a substantial power imbalance, forms of engagement must be carefully designed and strategic.

In relation to that, some practitioners draw attention to the situation of “growing wide” vs “growing deep” in a community.

Growing wide was sometimes described as chasing down resources before filtering out meaningful opportunities and engagements. Interviewees shared concerns about becoming “corporate” while growing wide. This is described as a culture of competition, which becomes visible and manifests in an organization’s approach to visibility, branding, outreach, outcomes, and expertise, which further fails to encourage reflection and critical conversations. On the other side, growing deep refers to strengthening one’s roots in the community and prioritizing autonomy, which affects attitudes toward acceptable funding arrangements. Clearly, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all recipe for whether or how community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors claim resources and support from the state and business sectors.



**Whatever you do now, think for the future - is it going to enable you to
be the organization of the future?**



Hope Chigudu



FEMINIST



4. DO RESOURCING RESPONSIBLY

The way in which an organization gathers and disseminates resources determines whether it is engaging in meaningful or extractive approaches. Community philanthropy, Women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners agree it is important to acknowledge and nurture **diverse** resources to sustain social change. Many interviewees stressed that resourcing is not only about finances. Resourcing is also about knowledge, skills, pro-bono services, contacts, materials, spaces, and all sorts of in-kind contributions that different actors contribute. This includes contributions from

both inside and outside communities and movements. **Internal** resources come from within the community or movement. **External** resources come from others who are aligned around a similar interest, which might include the broader public, philanthropic donors, state bodies, interested businesses, and so on. While internal resources are critical for maintaining autonomy, external resources can offer an additional safety net.

VALUING INTERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Resourcing that is internal to movements and communities typically receives less attention than resourcing from external donors. Various community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors believe it is important to shed more light on the importance of internal resources for social change. Fondo Semillas believes **communities contribute more than they receive in grant funding**, but their contributions are not recorded as easily as grant dollars can be recorded. They are currently working with CFs to assess the quantity of resources communities contribute to the work. They plan to disseminate their findings to generate more conversations and acknowledgement for contributions communities bring to the table, which are generally taken for granted. Interviewees also noted that many activist funds were started and, to a certain extent, maintained using personal savings and individual contributions from founders, staff, and/or board members.

It is advised that people for whom support is meant, must be involved as active **partners, rather than passive recipients.** Their voices and experiences cannot be in the background or reserved only for special occasions. Ensuring that people who are marginalised, oppressed, and disempowered have a voice is a start; however, this practice must evolve into co-production with other relevant actors.

The movement for independent living offers an example and guidelines for establishing a **meaningful collaborative environment.** Support is inadequate if people face barriers or it is too complicated, restrictive or fragmented. A support system should be as simple as possible. Accessibility is non-negotiable and must guide the simplification of structures, procedures, language, etc.

This study makes clear that **activists are the key resource** and the driving force for social change. As such, an obvious recommendation is to invest in activists: invest in their education, their personal and professional development, and their well-being. It is also important to provide activists with social protection and security. Investing in activists is a necessary investment into resourceful movements and resilient communities.

Being able to allocate resources requires attention to the power that position brings. Calling attention to power centres can become more challenging in the context of a centralized movement or community,

which tends to harbour power imbalances and divisions around sensitive issues. Women's funds have learned the importance of funding more than one organization in a community. community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners look for ways to prioritize support for groups that are underfunded, isolated, and marginalized. Most have open calls for proposals, which provides opportunities for different voices to receive funding. Many are working to simplify their structures, processes and procedures, language, and more. Some use targeted strategies to reach groups in underfunded regions or to make their funding available exclusively to grassroots groups. These experiences all point to the need for responsible resourcing, which entails flexibility, long-term orientation, and participatory approaches whenever possible - but never tokenistic. **The ultimate goal must be the democratization of control over resources.**

CALLING FOR A CONSCIENTIOUS APPROACH TO PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

One practice currently promoted by a growing segment of the donor community is participatory grantmaking (PGM). While far from established, there is a significant and growing interest in this practice around the world. Although the willingness to challenge existing power structures and create new ways of channelling funds is commendable, PGM must not be considered a panacea as it one of many important steps in addressing underlying issues and systemic inequalities. Literature and practitioners' experiences point to the need to reflect on the following aspects of the PGM processes: (1) Who is - and who is not - involved? (2) How is the process of applying for grants structured? (3) How are decisions made and do they consider context, history, and power dynamics? And (4) what are the broader implications of a PGM process? Hence PGM and other approaches to fostering democratization require conscientious considerations.

The aspiration to change the way that resourcing is done for progressive social change must advance beyond the networks and circles of the pioneers for this change. Participatory philanthropy, which seeks to grow **multi-stakeholder local support**, is believed to serve as both a shield and source of strength for movements³⁵. Building local, multi-stakeholder alliances, such as those that may form among feminist groups and other grassroots groups, trade unions,

universities, and political parties is a dream for many progressive community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy actors. While alliances can prove hard to establish and maintain, once established they can be: *"the most effective strategy for sustaining the expenses required for mobilization"* around social change³⁶.

35 Younis, M. (2017). Community philanthropy: A way forward for human rights? GFCF. https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/Women's-philanthropy-content/uploads/2019/04/CommunityPhilanthropy_WayForwardForHumanRights.pdf.

36 Tesoriero, V., & AWID. (2019). Feminist funded organizing: our money, our decisions. AWID. Retrieved at: https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/feminist-funded-organizing-our-money-our-decisions?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=autonomous-resourcing&utm_content=RFM%20.

5. EMBRACE COLLECTIVE CARE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Social change work is hard and structures in which social change work occurs can and often do perpetuate harmful patterns. As such, it is important to acknowledge that many people are hurt, worried, angry, and stressed. According to feminist Hope Chigudu, **healing** is a critical part of a social justice struggle. Other practitioners agree that resources, including space and time, are needed for healing to occur. First, practitioners need time and space to heal and rebuild their collectives. Then, they need more time and space to properly engage with communities and women. Otherwise, the vicious cycle of toxic power-forms and harmful experiences cannot be overcome.

Collective care is an indispensable ingredient in justice-oriented community philanthropy, women's philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy. Collective care has both internal and external components. Inside, an organization focuses on the well-being of its people, respects their labour rights, and is orientated towards improving working conditions. Meanwhile, the external dimension of collective care means that an organization extends such measures and practices towards their community, partners, and collaborators while remaining mindful of the natural environment.

One interviewee mentioned that, "So many things are standardized and not accommodating different working styles." But if there is a will, different organizational structures and cultures are possible. Seasoned professionals agree that a working culture must reflect organizational values, such as inclusivity, accessibility, respect for labour rights, and humanity. Practitioners call for greater flexibility and adaptability to support a work environment that is inclusive of mothers, disabled people, and the wide spectrum of human needs influencing one's ability to work.

One interviewee noted that, without a humane infrastructure and procedures, people who are part of these institutions face "a whole bunch of inequalities, which leads to frustration, demotivation, being disoriented, not having a connection to the values, not being mission driven anymore, burning out, questioning where do you see yourself. And then they quit." With that in mind, work policies should clearly indicate what organizations aim to change in the world.

That said, collective care is also contextual. As such, it must be tailored to the specific needs of people in the organization, movements, communities, and natural environment. No matter the form, the underlying principles are universal: solidarity, inclusion, co-production,

human rights, and environmental justice. Several interviewees pointed to the role of a leader in setting the right tone around collective care. African Women Development Fund emphasizes the importance of value-based leadership. That is, being mindful of different forms of power and being oriented towards nurturing people's talents and enabling them to thrive in their roles. In this way, people are enabled to lead the change from various positions in a system and co-create their environment with constituencies that embody all previously mentioned values and principles.

Collective care also encompasses the "do no harm" principle. Going beyond an anthropocentric lens, collective care attends to an organization's ecological footprint and works to reduce it.



Encouraging Collective Care – An example from practice Women's Fund Grantee Report Template, excerpt translated from Serbian:

(The items below are optional and we understand that it is not easy to undertake all listed items, but we would like to start thinking together about these aspects of our work and start finding ways to make our activities as sustainable and democratic as possible, while preserving and improving our environment. If you have developed good practices regarding some of these aspects, please share them with us.)

During project implementation, did you take into account any of the following:

To organize events in spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities.

All information, communications, and content your organization produces will be accessible and understandable to as many people as possible (e.g., subtitled, adapted for the blind, available online, easy to carry and distribute, etc.) – except in the case of specialized content for a narrow target group.

- All participants in the project are to be informed in a timely manner about events, changes in plans or processes, and other important information.
- Employed persons are to be paid in a timely manner.
- Not to misuse volunteer contributions (i.e., the focus is on creating a community of people working in solidarity, creating a work environment in which volunteers have the opportunity to acquire knowledge / skills / contacts without being exploited, where volunteer contributions are appreciated; volunteering is not used if there is a possibility to compensate the work, etc.).
- To provide adequate food for participants with different preferences and restrictions (vegan, gluten-free, etc.)
- Any leftover food or refreshments are to be shared or donated.
- To procure resources from local producers whenever possible.
- Whenever possible, to use the most environmentally friendly and economical means of transport (public transport or multi-participant vehicle).
- To avoid printing redundant promotional materials.
- To avoid wasting electricity, water, and other resources.
- To minimize waste and recycle whenever possible.

CONCLUSION

**“When the webs of the spider join,
they can trap a lion.”**

Amhara Proverb³⁷

Community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy form a small part of a large and diverse philanthropic sector. Nevertheless, these three approaches comprise a robust environment offering a variety of roles, approaches, and skills. These three approaches also intersect and complement each other, both in theory and in practice.

Community foundations and women’s funds, as a driving forces of community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy, are increasingly recognized as effective models for mobilizing resources, as conductors of informed and responsive grantmaking, and as good listeners who prove to be more responsive to activists and require fewer administrative hurdles compared with traditional funders. Though they are bridging organizations, they are not passive, apolitical intermediaries. Instead, they are autonomous actors with a role to play in shifting conversations, power, and resources in a responsible manner. Their comprehensive understanding of systems, (movement) histories, and local realities makes them better equipped to deal with the messiness, challenges, and even pain that comes with social struggles for a just society.

While some community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy practitioners have already come together to amplify their respective efforts, there is great potential for broader and deeper collaboration across these three fields to enhance women’s rights and communities’ realities. However, the ability to influence the sector and society and create lasting social change depends on the capacity of these actors to be self-critical, to hold space for healing, to appreciate the uniqueness of each approach, to respect autonomy, and to find modalities for strategic collaborations that complement one another’s efforts. And they will be guided by the “do no harm” principle. It is crucial to proactively develop mechanisms to resist co-optation from oppressive and exploitative systems and avoid duplicating harmful practices. Bridging constituencies across these complementary, though fragmented domains, is possible and would be a boon to their organizations, communities, and movements. Cross-pollinating community philanthropy, women’s philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy assets and capacities while building trust and solidarity across actors in the three fields offers great potential for these actors to guide a decisive turn towards a just and sustainable ecosystem.

³⁷ CivSource Africa (2020). African Proverbs on Giving & Generosity, p. 5. Retrieved at: <https://wings.issuelab.org/resource/african-proverbs-on-giving-generosity.html>.

APPENDIX - LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- 1. Abigail Burgesson**, Special Programmes Manager: African Women Development Fund (AWDF)
- 2. Agni Baljinnyam**, Executive Director; **Davaanamjil Purevdorj**, Grantmaking Program Coordinator and **Uyanga Chimgee**, former MEL Officer: Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES)
- 3. Alexandra Garita**, Executive Director, Prospera – International Network of Women's Funds
- 4. Florencia Roitstein**, Director and **Andrés Thompson**, Coordinator: ELLAS – Mujeres y filantropía
- 5. Galina Maksimović**, Community Coordinator: Reconstruction Women's Fund (RWF)
- 6. Judy Kan**, Executive Director: HER Fund
- 7. Kamala Chandrakirana**, Chair of the Board: Indonesia untuk Kemanusiaan' / Indonesia for Humanity (IKa)
- 8. Magdalena Pocheć**, Co-founder and board member: FemFund / Fundusz Feministyczny
- 9. Mima R. Novković**, President and Coordinator of the Program for Equality in Public Speech
- 10. Shubha Chacko**, Executive Director: Solidarity Foundation
- 11. Snehlata Nath**, Founder Director: The Keystone Foundation
- 12. Rasha Sansur**, Communications and Resource Mobilization Officer and **Lina Isma'il**, Community Programs Officer: Dalia Association
- 13. Tania Turner**, Executive Director: Fondo Semillas
- 14. Tenzin Dolker**, Resourcing Feminist Movements Coordinator: Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- 15. Urmila Shrestha**, Executive Director: Tewa

INTERVIEWED AS INDIVIDUALS:

- 16. Hope Chigudu**, women's rights activist and organizational development strategist, former GFCF board member
- 17. Laura Garcia**, President and CEO of Global Greengrants Fund, former Executive Director of Fondo Semillas
- 18. Nino Ugrehelidze**, former MEL officer at Taso Foundation, former Co-Executive Director at FRIDA - Young Feminist Fund, former Beijing Unfettered Project Coordinator at AWID