

Our Voices, Our Environment

THE STATE OF FUNDING FOR
WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

NEXT STEPS FOR FUNDERS



Colectivo LEMOW, Grantee partner of Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres.

The global scale and complexity of climate change and environmental degradation make it hard to predict the impact on a given community. But one thing is consistently clear: everywhere in the world, women are upholding, protecting, and managing their environments, leading community responses to combat climate change and environmental degradation. Yet persistent gender barriers mean that this critical work is largely ignored and under-resourced. For funders seeking to support a more just and sustainable world, more attention and resources need to be invested at the intersection of gender equality and the environment.

With an eye to catalyze this shift, Prospera International Network of Women's Funds and Global Greengrants Fund, with support from the Wallace Global Fund and the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), produced *Our Voices, Our Environment: The State of Funding for Women's Environmental Action*. The report offers a landscape overview of current private foundation funding for women and the environment, highlights initiatives at the forefront of this intersection, as well as insights from environmental justice and women's human rights leaders.

In the process of analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data of the report, Prospera and Global Greengrants Fund identified three key opportunities for foundations to support gender equality and environmental justice work more effectively. While this overview is designed to guide next steps for funders, we hope it will inform and inspire all actors in these fields to take action on the following:

1 Leverage greater resources for funding and supporting women's and environmental justice movements.

Interviews with funders demonstrate that there is an increase in the understanding among grantmakers of the strategic ways in which funding at the intersection of women and the environment can yield positive results. Implementation, however, is often hampered by a lack of knowledge and resources to engage with an issue outside their sphere of expertise. Making these linkages and understanding how to fund at this intersection is paramount for achieving both gender and environmental justice.

» Foundation leadership can create internal processes whereby program strategies are jointly developed by those managing environmental justice, climate change, human rights, and gender equality portfolios. Ensuring that these planning processes gather input from grassroots funders, such as women's funds and environmental funds, can provide guidance.

» Initiate and support opportunities for environment and gender justice program officers within and among foundations to meet and understand one another's approaches, and seek to build common investment agendas.

» Actively seek out and participate in affinity groups and other philanthropic spaces of influence in other fields and sectors.

2

Develop a gender and environmental justice analysis of grantmaking portfolios, and support organizations and initiatives doing this work.

Research for this report revealed that of the minimal funding earmarked for ‘women and the environment,’ the majority is invested without an analysis of women’s rights or gender and environmental justice. Yet for those dependent on the environment for their daily sustenance, such as small-holder farmers and forest dwellers, gender roles are deeply connected to the health and management of natural resources. Without working to understand and address those relationships, funders are missing an opportunity to be more effective.

» Start internally: foundations should examine their own grantmaking portfolios and identify gaps and opportunities to develop a gender and environmental lens, and work in partnership with grantee partners to understand how to build and act on this analysis.

» Support existing consortiums, organizations and networks seeking to build common strategies and political agendas across environmental and gender justice movements.

» Support research and documentation of cross-movement efforts to leverage key learnings for both fields.

3

Partner with grassroots funders.

The most effective funding strategies are framed by the needs, priorities and practices of local communities. But often, philanthropic objectives and strategies are defined without consideration of grassroots perspectives. This is partially due to limited capacity: global funders simply don’t have the time or resources to engage at that level with every community they seek to support.

Women’s funds and environmental funds are based in and led by the communities they serve. This firsthand knowledge often means they have access to and understand community needs, what strategies will work, and the flexibility to adapt their strategies if priorities shift. Around the world, the shift both women’s rights and environmental grassroots funders are seeing in the communities where they work is an increase in activism and organizing at the intersection of women and the environment. Data collected for *Our Voices, Our Environment* confirms that grassroots women’s and environmental funders are leading in terms of the number of grants invested in women and the environment. But they need more resources to meet the demand and strengthen their support.

» Support opportunities for grassroots environmental and women’s funders and their grantee partners to meet, develop common analyses and strategies for working together in order to make a greater impact on gender and environmental justice objectives.

» Work with and support grassroots funders. Partnering with grassroots women’s and environmental funders is a way for foundations based in the Global North to channel resources directly to people and communities most impacted by climate change, and to support their decision-making power.



There are increasing examples of innovative funding partnerships that address all three recommendations to most effectively fund at the intersection of women and the environment. One such initiative is the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), a five -year partnership designed to support greater collaboration between environmental and women’s rights organizations at the grassroots in order to build cross-movement analysis and action. Launched in 2016 by three organizations: Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres or FCAM (the Central American Women’s Fund – the Nicaragua-based, lead coordinating organization), Mama Cash (an international women’s fund headquartered in the Netherlands), and Both ENDS (an independent, Dutch environmental justice NGO), and supported by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, GAGGA is currently linking movements and leveraging resources between 14 Women’s Funds, 6 Environmental Funds, 28 NGOs, and at least 300 grassroots groups, working directly in 30 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The depth and reach of GAGGA is tremendous, but it has taken considerable time and investment to build. Grassroots organizations and funders often struggle to access sufficient resources to launch and maintain cross-movement partnerships.¹ In addition, more resources are needed to document and share the key lessons of such collaborations with other funders.

Time is not on our side. Funders seeking to support a more just and sustainable future can’t afford to be short sighted, or single-issue focused. Communities across the globe are already experiencing the significant impacts of climate change, including decreased crop yields leading to food insecurity; extreme weather events resulting in loss of life and livelihoods; and rising sea level causing displacement.² Beyond perpetuating existing inequalities, environmental funding strategies that ignore the gendered aspect of climate change can pit movements against each other in competition for the small amount of funding available, and create a myriad of new challenges for women in communities most impacted by climate change. Funders must take the lead in understanding how to more effectively support women and the environment, and invest where and how it is needed the most.



NOTES

1. The latest Advancing Human Rights analysis, by Human Rights Funders Network and Foundation Center, found that funding for collaborations is just 5% of overall foundation human rights funding: <http://humanrightsfunding.org/overview/year/trends/>
2. ‘Emissions grew more quickly between 2000 and 2010 than in each of the three previous decades...Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow.’ SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>

