

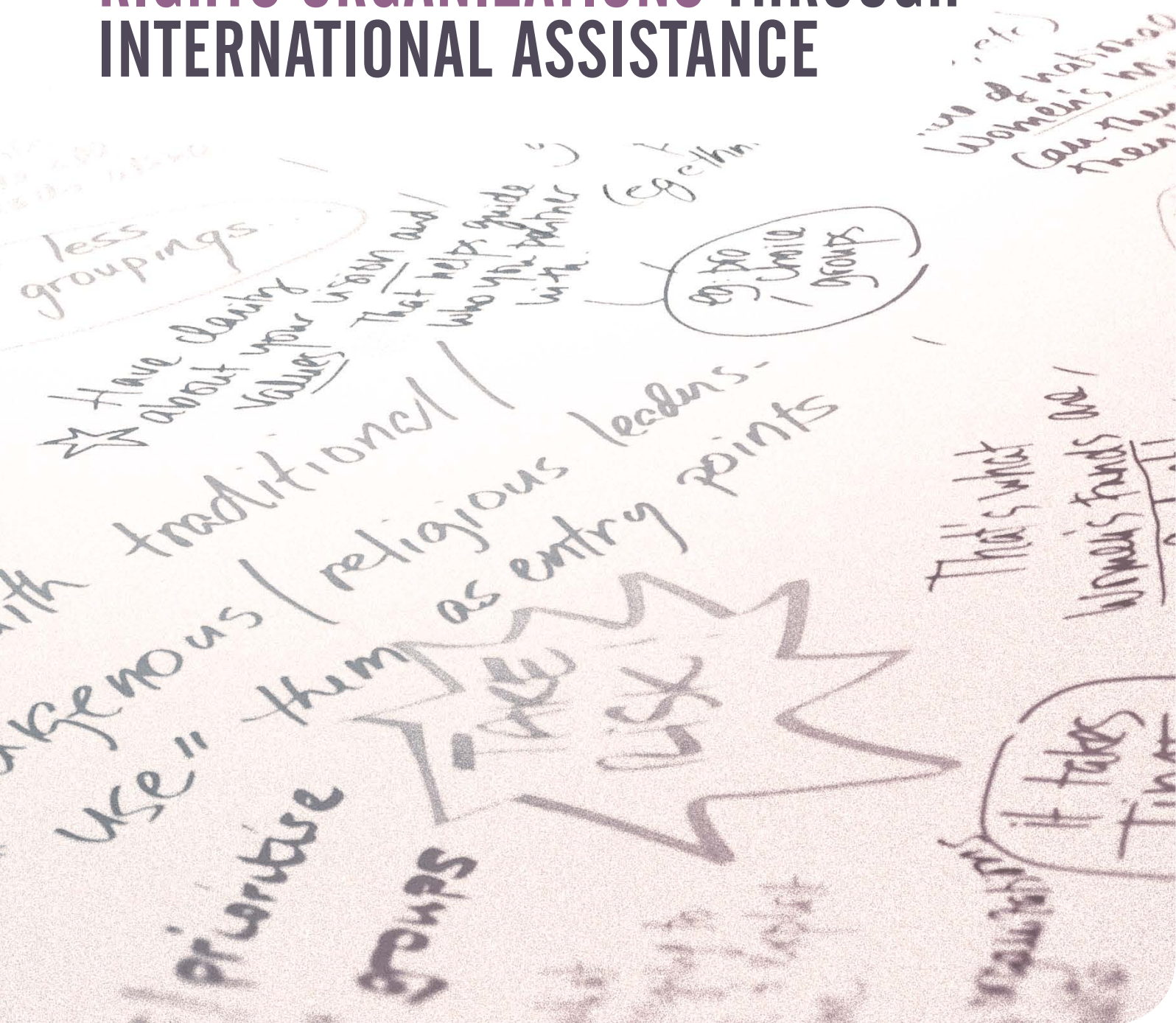


Advocating for peace, justice & equality



THE MATCH
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
FUND

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



Report:

Strengthening Women's Rights Organizations Through International Assistance

Ottawa, March 10, 2017



Advocating for peace, justice & equality

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Executive Summary

Canada is committed to ensuring that women and girls are not just seen as beneficiaries of international assistance, but are recognized as the actors, leaders and change agents they are in their communities and societies. However, recent data from the OECD shows that out of US\$562 million of gender-focused Canadian aid directed to CSOs (average from 2013 and 2014), only US\$1.7 million reached women's rights organizations directly (0.3 percent). In 2010, more than half of women's organizations globally had budgets of less than US\$25,000.

To tap innovative thinking on this global challenge, the Nobel Women's Initiative and The MATCH International Women's Fund partnered with Global Affairs Canada to convene a workshop to draw on the insights and expertise of panelists from other governments, women's funds and civil society. The conversation explored international lessons learned on funding mechanisms, models and approaches that effectively support women-led organizations and movements, including those in fragile states.

Key Learnings

Long-term relationships are key.

Social change at the grassroots level takes time, and requires collaboration between donors, intermediaries and local activists. Research shows that the power dynamics between funders and grantees can work against relationships of trust, and undermine the autonomy of women's organizations.

Women's organizations need to set the agenda.

A responsive approach to funding partners is key. Mission-aligned funding empowers women's organizations to respond to realities on the ground, better enabling them to respond to the risks they face.

Complex M&E /reporting frameworks squeeze out frontline women's organizations.

Donors' complex monitoring and evaluation frameworks, such as overly onerous Results-Based Management requirements, end up squeezing out small organizations in favour of bigger non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that can recruit or pay for the expertise needed. The net effect is that local experts and advocates receive a fraction of the funding that goes to international and other large NGOs.

Intermediaries can help donors achieve impact and scale.

Intermediaries such as women's funds serve as a vital link to grassroots groups. As they come from the movements they support, they know how to work with and support local organizations, beyond simply providing grants. For example, they can work with groups not legally registered — a key strategy for reaching those advocating for rights in fragile states, conflict zones, or under repressive regimes. Several donors and private foundations have been experimenting with specific funding mechanisms that are showing promising results in empowering local women's organizations and movements.

Women's organizations at different levels make meaningful change.

Building strong movements requires supporting women's organizations at the local, national and regional levels. The local work of frontline women's organizations needs to be reinforced by women's groups working to change national legislation and vice versa. Regional networks facilitate crucial exchanges and learning among women working on similar issues in different contexts. Organizations at all of these levels need support to be able to bring about substantive shifts.

Recommendations

Serious about social change? Fund women's organizations.

Women's organizations are desperately underfunded. Long-term, core funding is essential to enable them to bring about social change. This could include stand-alone funding mechanisms as well as innovative approaches within existing funding channels to partner and support local women's organizations. Be bold and take risks—the field is not crowded. The key is to seek out organizations committed to feminist goals and approaches.

Reduce the administrative burden.

Both donors and grantees suffer from administrative overload; the key is to simplify. Solutions include initially only asking grantees for strategic documents (such as a Theory of Change and an organizational track record), or following a bottom-up approach to create a monitoring framework around partners' experiences. Intermediaries, including women's funds and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) committed to directly funding and supporting women's rights

organizations, can play a valuable role in linking donors and locally-based grantees—especially those that are hard-to-reach and at risk.

Strengthen partnerships.

Meaningful partnerships are key to advancing a women's rights agenda. This requires ongoing dialogue and collaboration between governments and CSOs, and between women's funds and larger organizations and those at the grassroots. Between INGOs and women's funds, there is a need to unite and mobilize to 'grow the pie' for women's organizations and movements rather than seeing one another as competitors for limited funds.

Identify immediate opportunities and innovations while building for long-term engagement.

While setting up ambitious new approaches or mechanisms can take time, it is possible to identify immediate actions within current partnerships and funding structures. What are the current opportunities for experimentation and building Canada's commitment to women's leadership?

Canada's recently announced funding of \$650M to address gaps in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights presents an immediate opportunity to ensure that women and women's organizations are engaged as partners, leaders and change agents and that women's organizations at all levels are engaged.

The March 10th workshop generated fruitful discussion and sharing. There is still much more to learn from international experiences and the work of Canadian NGOs committed to a feminist approach. Next steps for a made-in-Canada solution to support local women's groups effectively will require commitment to a process that includes experimentation, innovation and investments.

Introduction: Why we need to talk about funding for women's rights

As Canada moves forward with the review of its International Assistance Policy, the Honorable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister for International Cooperation and La Francophonie, has clearly stated that Canada aims to place women and girls at the centre of the international assistance agenda. But questions remain about how best to directly support women on the frontlines. A **2016 report** by the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) found that only eight percent of gender-focused aid to civil society went directly to CSOs in developing countries, with only a miniscule portion reaching women's rights organizations. In the case of Canada, out of US\$562 million of gender-focused aid directed to CSOs (average from 2013 and 2014), only US\$1.7 million reached women's rights organizations directly (0.3 percent). In 2010, more than half of women's organizations surveyed by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) had budgets of less than US\$25,000. The hardest-to-reach women — whose rights have never been realized or are under assault — include those in conflict zones and fragile states.



To tap innovative thinking on this global challenge, on March 10, 2017, the Nobel Women's Initiative and The MATCH International Women's Fund partnered with Global Affairs Canada to convene a day of learning and discussion, animated by the insights and expertise of panelists who are making a difference. The conversation explored international lessons learned on funding mechanisms and models to best deliver aid to women-led organizations and movements, including those in fragile states.

In her opening remarks, **Minister Bibeau** noted that dignity and human rights, women's empowerment, and developing local capacities had emerged as clear themes through the 2016 consultations on Canada's international assistance review. Even as final policy recommendations are taking shape, Global Affairs Canada has already begun to ask partners to reinforce women's empowerment across projects and programs. The Minister noted how CSOs have very much welcomed these directions.

In exploring how to more directly support local initiatives—reaching those in the least developed countries, fragile states, and pockets of deep poverty in middle-income countries—the Minister highlighted a number of practical questions where input is needed: *How does Canada strike the right balance between working with multilaterals, Canadian NGOs and local organizations? What types of partnership are most effective to enable work with local women's groups? Do these groups have the capacity to manage money? How do we ensure Canadian tax dollars will be well used? And does Canada need to set a hard target for the portion of funding for local initiatives that must be directed to women's rights and empowerment?*

While a single day's event could not do full justice to each of these questions, the dialogue surfaced a number of key issues, and set a positive tone for ongoing collaboration between Global Affairs Canada and its civil society partners.

How does Canada strike the right balance between working with multilaterals, Canadian NGOs and local organizations? What types of partnership are most effective to enable work with local women's groups? Do these groups have the capacity to manage money? How do we ensure Canadian tax dollars will be well used? And does Canada need to set a hard target for the portion of funding for local initiatives that must be directed to women's rights and empowerment?

1. Highlights: What we learned about funding women's organizations

In exploring ways to invest more directly in women's rights organizations, the discussions drew on panelists and participants with considerable experience — in civil society organizations (CSOs) working closely with grassroots women's groups; in women's funds and philanthropic agencies that directly fund and strengthen these groups; and in like-minded governments that have taken bold steps to fund and support women's rights advocates.

To tap the collective wisdom in the room, the day was organized in a series of conversations, animated around eight related question areas:

1. The do's and don'ts of funding women's rights organizations (i.e. lessons from funding mechanisms)
2. How to ensure impact and the creation and communication of evidence on women's empowerment
3. How to manage the administrative burden for Governments related to increasing numbers of funding relations throughout the program cycle
4. The role multisector stakeholder partnerships play in successfully advancing women's rights at national and international levels
5. How to support harder-to-reach women's groups doing transformative work at the community level
6. The role of international NGOs (INGOS) in supporting women's organizations
7. How to fund innovation to advance women's rights while managing risk
8. What women's rights organizations need from their funders to succeed

Expert panelists:

TO TJOELKER, Head of Civil Society Division, MFA, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, The Netherlands

NICKY MCINTYRE, Executive Director of Mama Cash, the first international women's fund to be established

CINDY CLARK, Co-Executive Director of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

LEE WALDORF, Director of Policy at the Stephen Lewis Foundation

FLORENCE TERCIER HOLST-RONESS, Director of Issues Affecting Women at Oak Foundation

EMILIEENNE DE LEÓN AULINA, Executive Director of Prospera - the International Network of Women's Funds

MAVIC CABRERA-BALLEZA, International Coordinator of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and a civil society representative on the Steering Committee of the Global Acceleration Instrument

RITA MORBIA, Executive Director of Inter Pares

Facilitator **Ellen Sprenger** led panelists and participants in deepening the conversation over the day, pushing for innovative thinking about how to enable transformative change, owned and led by women. Following panel discussions, the afternoon featured small-group 'deep dives' on key areas. The main highlights of the day's conversation are captured below.

What women's organizations need to succeed

While the funding shortfall for women's organizations is critical, panelists stressed the need for donors and allies to also focus on the organizational, relational and security needs of those on the frontlines, while respecting their autonomy in setting their own agenda.

Relationships are key, said To Tjoelker of the Dutch **Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation**, whose Civil Society directorate has over the years partnered closely with CSOs in developing programs and policies. Relationships need to be strengthened not only between donors and grantees, but also horizontally, among women's groups and allies working across sectors (such as mining and the environment) and at different levels, from the local to the international.

To illustrate how these connections were vital in Mali, for example, to confront female genital mutilation: "We need to fund women's voices – not just those at the village level, but women who go to Parliament and do the lobbying. Local, national, regional – all three levels are important."

Cindy Clark of the **Association for Women's Rights in Development** (AWID) noted that the importance of relationships has been confirmed through years of research undertaken by AWID. The power dynamics between funders and grantees can work against relationships of trust, and undermine the autonomy of women's organizations. She stressed

If you really want impact and scale and monitoring, you really need professional intermediaries.

— To Tjoelker, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

For many activists, asking for money is very uncomfortable.

— Cindy Clark, AWID

that funders need to engage with women's groups recognizing their leadership and vision rather than treating them primarily as recipients. She urged donors and activists to focus on finding common ground in a shared agenda. Research has shown some women's groups are extremely uncomfortable asking for money. This requires that donors recognize the power differential when they come to the table. They also can't assume that funds given to southern governments for women's rights and gender equality will automatically "trickle down" to women's organizations. These organizations are often on the frontlines protesting abuses by these same governments.

Nicky McIntyre of **Mama Cash**, the first international women's fund, echoed the need to strengthen the autonomy of women's organizations by providing mission-aligned funding, rather than expecting groups to implement someone else's vision. She also noted that women need support — funding and solidarity — to address the risks they face, in circumstances that are often difficult and dangerous. Women's funds play an essential role in strengthening organizational capacity, and reinforcing the links between local, regional and international organizations. These connections help to forge a shared vision and amplify women's voices, while also assisting groups to address their own safety, security and self-care.

Rita Morbia of the Canadian CSO **Inter Pares** later revisited the need for women's organizations to set the agenda. She stressed that Global Affairs Canada can enable this — and in the past has done so — by taking a responsive approach to funding partners, moving away from call-for-proposals mechanisms that position CSOs as implementers rather than true partners. She decried the 'projectization' of the development agenda, stressing that organizations need multi-year core funding to build an institutional base for women's rights.

WHAT ARE WOMEN'S FUNDS?

Women's funds are philanthropic organizations that channel resources to grassroots women's, girls' and trans* organizations to equip them as agents of change. They provide funding, expertise, connections and structural support, and operate at national, regional and global levels.

Some 38 women's funds are registered with **Prospera**, the international network of women's funds. Each year, Prospera's members mobilize an average of \$66.3 million and provide over 1,800 grants to women's organizations across 170 countries. The **MATCH International Women's Fund** is the Canadian member of this international network.

Focused table discussions in the afternoon confirmed the importance of these funding do's and don'ts, while participants added that support for women's groups should also entail a rights-based, feminist approach; provide the space and tools to innovate and take risks; strive for greater simplicity in grant making and monitoring processes; and offer various scales of funding — leaving room for short-term experimentation and scaling up success.

Ensuring impact, communicating evidence while reducing administrative burden

To sustain public support, donors and advocates need evidence that their funding and efforts are making a difference. How can they effectively work together to gather and communicate this evidence? Panelists and participants stressed that producing and sharing evidence of change is important, and it takes time and collaboration. But it does not justify, nor require, imposing a burden on grantees.

The global trend of projectization is wreaking havoc.

— Rita Morbia, Inter Pares



Lee Waldorf of the Stephen Lewis Foundation noted that donors' insistence on complex monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and various incarnations of results-based management, has had the unintended effect of squeezing out small, frontline organizations in favour of bigger NGOs that can recruit or pay for the administrative expertise needed. The result is that the real local experts and advocates receive a fraction of the funding that goes to international and other large NGOs that can more easily package their programming to suit donor requirements.

The push for greater proof of impact certainly didn't originate in a desire to prevent frontline activists and people living in recipient countries from being funded. But highly complex funding applications and reporting procedures have had that precise effect. Donors need to look head-on at the real life implications of what appear to be neutral administrative procedures, and design new approaches that will better serve their actual intent.

Lee flagged two effective approaches for making funding more accessible. One is to create separate funding tracks for different types of organizations and work, with simplified application and reporting procedures where appropriate. Another approach is to make better use of 'intermediary funders', such as the various international women's funds and funds created to support community-based organizations. Intermediary funds can shoulder much of the administrative burden on behalf of their grantees, and Lee shared the SLF's experience of using its impact framework to meet donor requirements while ensuring that grassroots groups don't get overwhelmed.

To Tjoelker highlighted the importance of using a flexible theory of change rather than specific activity-based logical frameworks, and the utility of bottom-up monitoring and evaluation approaches that allow partners to identify the indicators that are most relevant to their work.

Florence Tercier Holst-Roness recounted how **Oak Foundation** has come together with ten other grant makers through **Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights** (PAWHR), an affinity group of funders, to explore how they can strengthen their effectiveness. In addition to strategizing on how to attract more resources for women's groups, PAWHR members are collaborating to review and streamline their reporting requirements to reduce the burden on grantees.

We've developed sophisticated techniques for tracking progress, but they've put up a grey wall between human rights groups and the funding they need.

— Lee Waldorf,
Stephen Lewis Foundation

Cindy Clark of AWID noted how auditors' focus on quantitative results fails to grasp the real story of social change at the grassroots level. This is where collaboration between donors, intermediaries, and local activists is essential. Grassroots organizations come with the narrative of what matters, and what has changed on the ground.

Deeper discussion among participants brought out several questions and solutions relevant to tracking and communicating evidence of change. A perennial question is what counts as evidence, coupled with the challenge of attributing observed changes to an organization's efforts. The most significant milestones of progress for women, such as achieving the vote, or securing sexual and reproductive rights, have been achieved by social movements, not individual projects or organizations. A key challenge, therefore, is to better tell the story of these movements, and why support for advocacy is essential.

Specific tools and approaches recommended included the Theory of Change, a simple tool that enables organizations to define their vision of the steps that lead to meaningful transformation; **Impact Mapper**, a storytelling and qualitative data analysis software developed for the non-profit sector; and MELC (Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Communication), which puts communication and learning at the heart of monitoring frameworks.

Participants also noted the need for care with human impact storytelling, which often focuses on change at the individual level. This ignores complexity and can overshadow the need for structural change in the bigger picture. Funders need to look beyond 'low-hanging fruit' in defining the changes they aim for and strive for meaningful long-term changes, even if they are the hardest-to-reach.

Supporting transformation for the hardest-to-reach women

So how can donors and civil society partners best support locally based women's rights organizations, including the hardest-to-reach? The discussion brought to light a wealth of experience in supporting

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY:

THE ROLE OF THE GAI

Resolution 1325 and the seven supporting Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, have underlined the leadership roles that women play in preventing and resolving violent conflict and humanitarian crises. Yet little money has been invested in implementing the resolutions.

The **Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action** was launched in 2016 to address this gap. It is "a pooled funding mechanism which aims to re-energize action and stimulate a significant shift in the financing of the women's participation, leadership and empowerment in humanitarian response, and peace and security settings."

As of March 2017, seven donor countries have committed just under US\$7 million to the GAI.

Source: UNDP <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/GAI00>

those on the front lines, and insights into the special challenges they face. Flexible funding, long-term, sustaining relationships and connections that can open space and provide security for them are key.

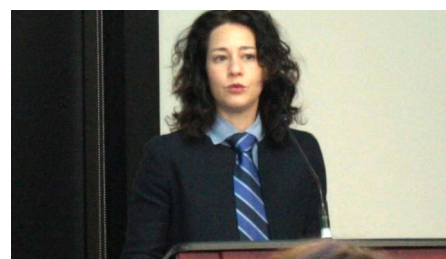
From her perspective within the Dutch government, To Tjoelker stressed the need to work with professional intermediaries to achieve impact and scale, and gave numerous examples where women's funds have served as a vital link to grassroots groups.

Nicky McIntyre expanded on how women's funds, having grown out of the movements they now support, know how to empower local organizations, beyond simply providing grants. They are able, for example, to work with groups not legally registered, which is essential to reaching those advocating for rights in fragile states, conflict zones, or under repressive regimes. They remain in close contact to promote security, self-care and to connect groups to build shared strategy.

Intermediaries are also essential to Oak Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation that grants about US\$150 million per year, of which 18 million support feminist movement building. With an average grant of US\$320,000, Florence Tercier Holst-Roness described how the Foundation seeks out larger, capable partners as links to grassroots women's organizations. In the Balkans and in Mexico, they have worked with intermediaries who in addition to re-granting funds, also create connections and mobilise other resources to advance a women's rights agenda.

Rita Morbia described how Inter Pares has played the role of intermediary, directing Canadian aid to locally-based social justice groups to support their feminist agendas. It is crucial, she stressed, that funding be responsive, rather than positioning recipients as implementers.

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders outlined the intended role of the [Global Acceleration Instrument \(GAI\) on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action](#) as a funding mechanism to support women's organizations in fragile and conflict-affected states. While it is housed within the United Nations, Mavic stressed that the fund was shaped by civil society — the Global



Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid — and is governed by a multi-stakeholder body, in which civil society organizations make up one-third of members. The need for the fund stems from the failure of UN Member States and the donor community to put predictable funding behind their commitment to the women, peace and security agenda.

The GAI aims to provide women's organizations engaged in peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities with direct access to funding. Many of them work in remote areas beyond the safety of capital cities. Fifty percent of total GAI funds is earmarked for civil society, and in countries where the UN's Peacebuilding Fund is not present, 100% of the funds allocated to that country are intended for civil society.

To date, the funding committed by member states is dwarfed by the need. Thus far, the GAI is only able to fund peacebuilding initiatives in Burundi, Colombia, Jordan and the Solomon Islands. Progress is also hampered by layers of complexity within the UN bureaucracy. What the GAI needs to be effective, according to Mavic, can be boiled down to FSF: Funding increase; Simplicity (in the proposal submission and review process); and Flexibility (in terms of the types of projects and organizations to support). She also echoed other panelists in emphasizing the need to connect local initiatives with advocacy at the national, regional and international levels.

Questions arose in table discussions about how to identify and work with a diverse range of locally-based women's organizations, and how to support them through the inevitable backlash they face from powerful groups threatened by progress on women's rights. Participants noted the wealth of knowledge that can be found through regional women's funds, national women's organizations and regional advisory groups that many women's funds and larger NGOs have. Doubts were voiced about relying on local consulates and missions, as staff is not always attuned to the local rights agenda. Participants stressed the need to be in for the long haul, building ongoing relationships, and suggested looking to the future, identifying a next generation of women leaders to support in agricultural unions, other local organizations and social movements.

Member States line up every anniversary of Resolution 1325 to say beautiful words about their commitments. With the GAI we say put your money where your mouth is.

— Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

Funding innovation while managing risk

There is considerable scope and need for innovation to support women's rights organizations, and the connective tissue that links them as a movement. Support for organizational strengthening and networking demands that donors step back from a focus on short-term results in favour of looking to long-term capacities. And given low levels of funding currently available to women's organizations, there is a clear need to find new ways of financing their work.

Oak Foundation has based its investments in strategic feminist philanthropy on evidence that real social change results from long-term, effective organizing from the ground up. Florence Tercier Holst-Roness cited the findings of a 2013 study (Weldon & Htun) that examined 40 years of evidence in 70 countries to pinpoint what accounted for policies to curb violence against women. It found the key determinant driving policy change was feminist activism and the presence of strong local movements. The number of women's advocates played a stronger role than either the number of women legislators, national wealth, or left-wing parties.

Oak Foundation's funding support for women's rights, gender equality, and ending violence against women thus aims to build the 'infrastructure' of movements — working with intermediaries, including 22 women's funds, and investing from the grassroots to the international levels. It provides long-term support to ensure sustainability of the activists, and targets change at the formal (policies and laws) and informal levels (social norms). By providing flexible core support to its partners, the foundation is investing in social infrastructure, which is key to achieving sustainable changes. At the same time, it conducts financial due diligence to ensure compliance with high accountability standards. Through the PAWHR affinity group, Oak Foundation and likeminded foundations are trying to strengthen and define a shared approach to feminist philanthropy, while building outwards

WIN-WIN:

WORKING ACROSS SECTORS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

The Win-Win Coalition grew out of a series of meetings hosted by AWID and Mama Cash between 2013 and 2015, with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These explorations focused on opportunities for new collaborations around investing in women and girls and mobilizing greater resources for work to empower women and advance their rights.

The Coalition is informed by research — including *The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment* — on what meaningful cross-sector engagement might look like.

The Win-Win Coalition officially launched in August 2015 with thirty members. In September 2016, the Coalition became part of Win-Win Strategies, a new non-profit social enterprise organized in the Netherlands to advance and operationalize the work of the Coalition.

to reach other donors. They are looking at options for public-private collaboration and partnerships with corporations.

Emilienne de León Aulina, Executive Director of **Prospera**, the international network of women's funds, described how women's funds and various foundations are reaching out to find common ground with private sector companies through the **Win-Win Coalition**.

The Coalition brings together donors, companies, and women's advocates to multiply the strategies and resources available to empower women and advance their rights. The private sector and women's activists clearly come at the issues from different interests and perspectives. Emilienne acknowledged that there are doubts in many corners. "We talk about the rights of women, and they talk about access to opportunities — the language they use is very different from our language." Nonetheless, Win-Win provides a space for exploring potential partnerships and mutual learning. It attempts to overcome women's organizations' challenges in communicating with the corporate sector. It also provides a 'one-stop shop' for companies interested in understanding how women's rights and issues relate to their bottom line.

Emilienne acknowledged that building these relationships demands a leap of faith: "When we look at the corporate sector there are many companies that are not doing well." The challenge is to go beyond their focus on the bottom line to understanding how women's rights also relate to labour and environmental conditions as well as their business model. As Win-Win Coalition evolves into a social enterprise, the approach is long-term. It involves taking some risk for the greater good of building the credibility of women's organizations and funds with the private sector, and diversifying funding sources and relationships.

We invest like companies—building the infrastructure to create social change 'products.'

— Florence Tercier Holst-Roness,
Oak Foundation

We are making [companies] see women as their suppliers, as their employees, as their consumers, and as women in their communities working for a better life.

— Emilienne de León Aulina, Prospera

2. Recommendations

The discussion harvested a range of mechanisms for donors to consider in advancing a women's human rights agenda and building a strong global movement.

Funding

The biggest take away message on funding was that there remains a shortfall in support for women's organizations. Recommendations included: be bold, take risks, and don't worry about duplication — the field is not crowded.

Where might Canada's value-added lie? If Canada seeks a unique niche, it can look at what the Netherlands, Norway and other likeminded countries are supporting, and find complementarities by region or sector. Latin America and francophone Africa were cited as two regions where Canada has a valued presence, as it does in the peace-building sector.

Deciding 'who' to fund demands examining the values base of potential partners and intermediates. To enable a feminist agenda, donors need to seek out organizations fundamentally committed to feminist goals and approaches. AWID has compiled extensive research on funding for rights-based advocacy.

The 'how' of funding was stressed as equally important. Enabling social change — a long-term process — demands long-term and core funding. Equipping grassroots advocates to take leadership demands responsive funding.

DIALOGUE AND DISSENT:

A CASE STUDY OF PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

The Dutch government worked closely with civil society — including the women's fund Mama Cash — in designing its flagship program **Dialogue and Dissent**, which explicitly funds citizen lobbying and advocacy. Over 2016-20, D&D will devote 1 billion Euros to supporting 25 partnerships, across a range of sectors. It uses a bottom-up monitoring and evaluation approach, whereby those closest to the frontlines define the changes they envision, and signs of progress.

What does the Ministry demand of would-be partners? A compelling theory of change, and a track record demonstrating past results. Co-creating this program has taken long-term relations of trust between government and civil society, and its success demands ongoing collaboration and negotiation.

Reducing the administrative burden

Both donors and grantees suffer from administrative overload, and there was much emphasis on the need for greater simplicity and a fresh take on measuring results. Experiences shared included asking grantees for a Theory of Change and an organizational track record, or by following the Stephen Lewis Foundation's bottom-up approach to defining its monitoring framework around partners' community-based experiences.

Intermediaries, including women's funds and INGOs committed to directly funding and supporting women's rights organizations in their work, can play a valuable role in linking donors and locally-based grantees. They can simplify contract management for donors, while strengthening and connecting smaller organizations at the frontlines, supporting the 'hardest-to-reach', and working with them to track and communicate compelling evidence of change.

We are not always on the same page [with the Dutch ministry]. But we are genuinely learning from each other.

— Nicky McIntyre, Mama Cash

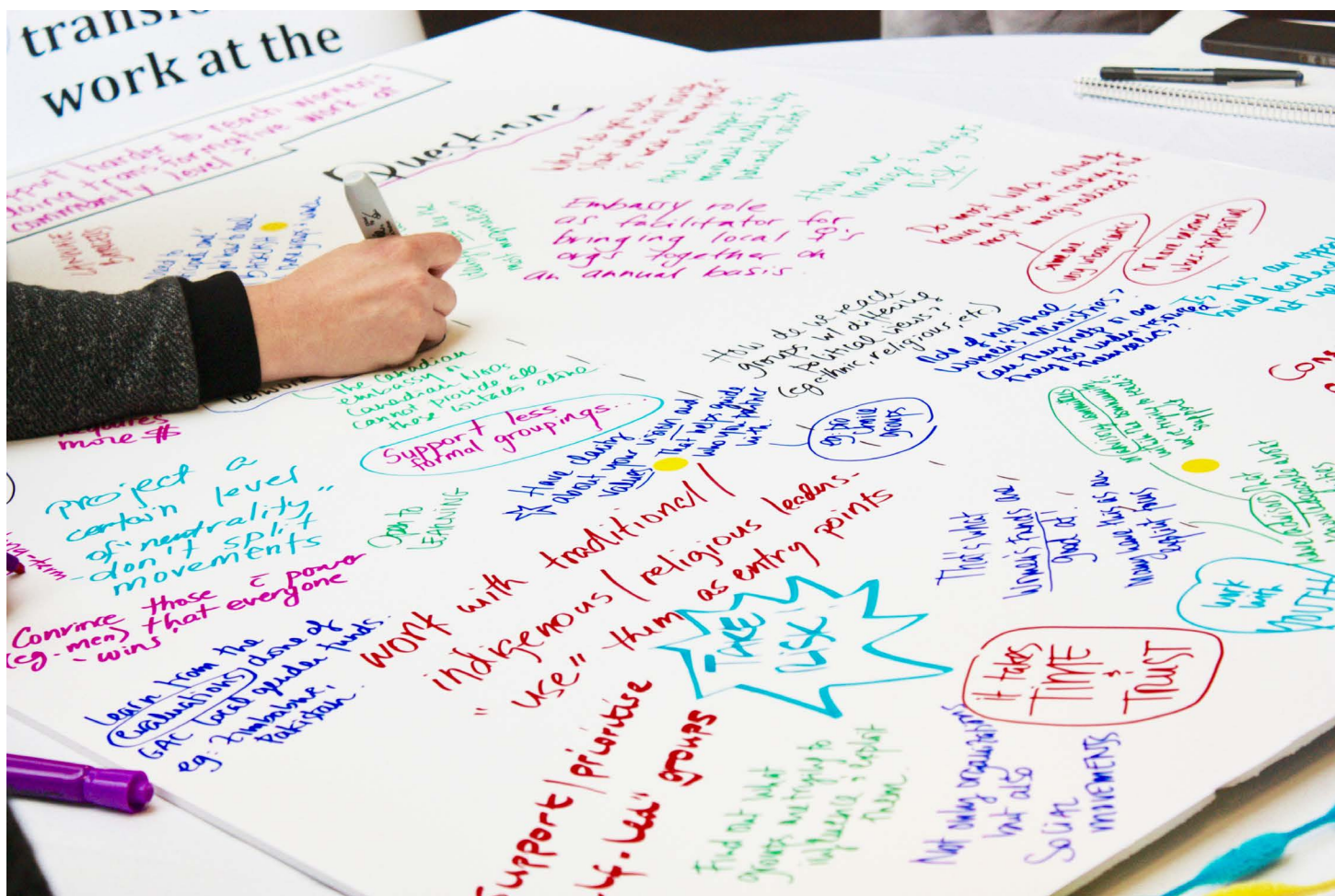
Strengthening partnerships

Donor directions should reflect and support a women's rights agenda, not impose one. In addition to responsive funding, this requires ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government and CSOs, and between women's funds and larger organizations and those at the grassroots. Between INGOs and women's funds, there is a need to unite and mobilize to 'grow the pie' for women's rights advocacy rather than seeing themselves as competitors for limited funds.

The importance of multi-level and inter-sectorial relationships was also stressed as integral to strengthening women's movements and ensuring that local organizations are empowered rather than isolated. The Netherlands' Dialogue and Dissent program provides a case study in CSO-government co-creation at work.

Reaching the hardest-to-reach

Women's funds, AWID, and feminist philanthropists such as the Oak Foundation provide a wealth of knowledge of organizations working in fragile states, conflict zones and under repressive regimes. They stress the need for flexibility, sustained support and investment in security and self-care for women advocates on the frontlines. The Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action is an interesting innovation aimed at funding women's organizations in conflict zones and fragile states. As a recent donor, Canada has already shown leadership.



3. Conclusions: Keeping the dialogue going

Participants and organizers welcomed the day's discussion as a concrete measure of Global Affairs Canada's openness to working with partners as it continues to shape its new aid directions. There was a strong consensus that funding for women-led organizations was an essential element in a feminist approach to international assistance.

While the presentations and conversations crystalized valuable examples that Canada can learn from, a number of practical issues remain to be explored in more depth — across government, and in consultation with partners. These include:

- » The tensions between meeting government of Canada accountability frameworks and the need for more responsive programming and less onerous evaluation and reporting requirements;
- » The right balance between different potential channels for Canadian support: through multilaterals, Canadian NGOs and women-led organizations;
- » The skills required by Global Affairs Canada staff if they are to support women-led organizations; and
- » The sectoral and regional areas where Canada is best positioned to contribute to women's rights.

The event provided rich examples of how Canada can apply a feminist lens across its foreign policy and international assistance. Importantly, the discussion also provided constructive input on ways to support women-led organizations within a new international assistance agenda.

Strengthening Women's Rights Organizations Through International Assistance

March 10, 2017, Ottawa | Global Affairs Canada | 111 Sussex Drive, Bytown room

FRIDAY MARCH 10	
8:30AM	Registration & Coffee
9:00AM	OPENING WORDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau Liz Bernstein, Executive Director, Nobel Women's Initiative
9:30AM	PANEL DISCUSSION: SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ANYTHING IN BETWEEN (PART 1) <i>[Interview style with audience participation]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Tjoelker, Head of Civil Society Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, The Netherlands Nicky McIntyre, Executive Director, Mama Cash Cindy Clark, Co-Executive Director, Association for Women's Rights and Development (AWID) Lee Waldorf, Director of Policy, Stephen Lewis Foundation KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The do's and don'ts of funding women's rights organizations (lessons from funding mechanisms) How to ensure impact and the creation and communication of evidence on women's empowerment? How about the administrative burden for Governments managing increasing numbers of funding relations throughout the program cycle? What role can multisector stakeholder partnerships play in successfully advancing women's rights both at national and international levels?
11:00AM	BREAK
11:30AM	PANEL DISCUSSION: SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ANYTHING IN BETWEEN (PART 2) <i>[Interview style with audience participation]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florence Tercier Holst-Roness, Director, Issues Affecting Women, Oak Foundation Emilienne de León Aulina, Executive Director Prospera- the International Network of Women's Funds Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, International Coordinator, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders; Civil Society Representative, Steering Committee, Global Acceleration Instrument Rita Morbia, Executive Director, Inter Pares KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How to support harder-to-reach women's groups doing transformative work at the community level? How about international NGOs (INGOS) and their role in supporting women's organizations? How to fund innovation to advance women's rights while managing risk? What do women's rights organizations need from their funders to succeed?
12:30PM	LUNCH

1:30PM	DEEPENING THE CONVERSATION: <i>[Participants vote and select 4 topics for more in depth exploration in small groups following from the panel discussions in the morning. Each group is facilitated by a table host.]</i>
2:30PM	BREAK
3:00PM	KEY INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS (PLENARY) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with table hosts on each of the topics: key insights, areas of convergence and questions still on the table • Reflections
3:45PM	CLOSING WORDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative Global Affairs Canada • Jess Tomlin, Executive Director, The MATCH International Women's Fund
4:00PM	CLOSE

VENDREDI 10 MARS	
8 h 30	Inscription et café
9 h	MOT D'OUVERTURE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Présentation de la Ministre — Représentante d'Affaires mondiales Canada • L'honorable Marie-Claude Bibeau, ministre du Développement international et de la Francophonie • Liz Bernstein, directrice générale, Nobel Women's Initiative
9 h 30	DISCUSSION EN GROUPE : DE L'ÉCHEC AU SUCCÈS (PARTIE 1) <i>[Style entrevue avec la participation de l'audience]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To TJOELKER, directrice, Direction de la société civile, ministère des Affaires étrangères, du Commerce et du Développement des Pays-Bas • Nicky MCINTYRE, directrice générale, Mama Cash • Cindy CLARK, codirectrice générale de l'Association pour les droits des femmes et le développement (AWID) • Lee Waldorf, directeur des politiques, Fondation Stephen Lewis QUESTIONS CLÉS À TRAITER : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. À faire et à ne pas faire en matière de financement des organisations de défense des droits des femmes (leçons tirées des mécanismes de financement) 6. Comment assurer les effets ainsi que la création et la communication d'éléments probants sur l'autonomisation des femmes? 7. Qu'en est-il du fardeau administratif pour les gouvernements qui gèrent un nombre croissant de relations de financement tout au long du cycle de programme? 8. Quel rôle les partenariats impliquant plusieurs intervenants affiliés peuvent-ils jouer pour faire avancer avec succès les droits des femmes tant au niveau national qu'international?
11 h	PAUSE

11 h 30	<p>DISCUSSION EN GROUPE : DE L'ÉCHEC AU SUCCÈS (PARTIE 2) <i>[Style entrevue avec la participation de l'audience]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence Tercier Holst-Roness, directrice, Enjeux qui touchent les femmes, Oak Foundation • Emilienne de León Aulina, directrice générale, Prospera – Fonds pour les femmes du Centre international MATCH • Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, coordonnatrice internationale, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders; représentante de la société civile, Comité directeur, Global Acceleration Instrument • Rita Morbia, directrice générale, Inter Pares <p>QUESTIONS CLÉS À TRAITER :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Comment soutenir les groupes de femmes qui font du travail de transformation au niveau communautaire et qui sont plus difficiles à atteindre? 6. Qu'en est-il des ONG internationales (ONGI) et de leur rôle dans le soutien aux organisations de femmes? 7. Comment financer l'innovation pour faire progresser les droits des femmes tout en gérant les risques? 8. De quoi les organisations de défense des droits des femmes ont-elles besoin de leurs bailleurs de fonds pour réussir?
12 h 30	REPAS
13 h 30	<p>APPROFONDIR LA DISCUSSION : <i>[Les participants votent et choisissent 4 sujets pour une exploration plus approfondie en petits groupes à la suite des discussions de groupe du matin. Chaque groupe est dirigé par un animateur à la table, y compris un membre choisi parmi les OSC canadiennes.]</i></p>
14 h 30	PAUSE
15 h	<p>IDÉES PRINCIPALES ET RÉFLEXIONS (PLÉNIÈRE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrevues avec les hôtes de table sur chacun des sujets : Idées principales, domaines de convergence et questions toujours sur la table • Réflexions
15 h 45	<p>MOT DE LA FIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Représentante d'Affaires mondiales Canada • Jess Tomlin, directrice générale, Fonds pour les femmes du Centre international MATCH
16 h	CLÔTURE



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