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FUND

SHIFTING THE POWER

Opportunities for Innovative Partnerships with Women's Movements



EVENT REPORT

January 25 and 26, 2018

Shifting the Power: Opportunities for Innovative Partnerships with Women's Movements

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Contents

Acknowledgements iv

Executive Summary 1

1. Introduction 4

2. What have we learned about supporting women's organizations and movements? 6

3. Recommendations 5

4. Conclusions: Moving beyond business as usual 18

Annex 1. Agenda 19

Annex 2. Summary recommendations from table discussions 21

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We thank Mary O'Neill for her work on drafting this report. Our gratitude also goes to Joanna Kerr for her insightful moderation of the opening panel, and to Catherine Fortin LeFaivre for facilitating the workshop.



Executive Summary

The launch of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy in June 2017 included an allocation of \$150 million over five years to the Women's Voice and Leadership Program, signaling a commitment to work closely with local women's organizations to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. This presents an extraordinary opportunity for Canada to show global leadership.

To explore practical and creative ways of delivering on this commitment, The MATCH International Women's Fund, the Nobel Women's Initiative, and Global Affairs Canada hosted a panel and workshop that tapped the experience and wisdom of international experts, human rights activists, government officials, and civil society partners.

This report has been prepared by the Nobel Women's Initiative and The MATCH Fund as a summary of this two-day event.

What we learned

Shifting the Power surfaced lessons in four key areas: funding architecture, partnership strategies, movement building, and supporting human rights defenders and those in fragile contexts.

...On funding architecture

The experiences of exiled activists Justine Nkurunziza of the Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité and Mariam Jalabi of the Syrian Women's Political Movement underscored the challenges of responding to human rights crises through grassroots organizations that lack sustained funding

or formal recognition. Kate Kroeger of the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) laid out four bold steps that Canada can take to translate its feminist commitments into effective support for women-led human rights action on the ground:

- Get as much money as possible to grassroots women's movements.
- Support women's funds run by and for women activists.
- Give multi-pronged support to help women's organizations overcome barriers and achieve success.
- Fund consortiums, which bring together different organizations with different skill sets.

...On partnership strategies

Panelists and participants stressed that partnerships to support women's rights must be grounded in trust and structured in ways that foster agency and leadership at the local level. Connections with international allies can also provide stability, security, and legitimacy for grassroots women's organizations. Rita Morbia cited the long-term funding that Inter Pares has received from the Canadian Government as key to the flexible support they in turn have extended to Karen Women Organization and other local partners in Burma.

...On movement building

Lisa VeneKlasen of Just Associates (JASS) explained how "movement moments" demand years of behind-the-scenes organizing, most of it invisible, underfunded, and unrecognized. She shared

lessons from JASS's experience in feminist movement building. Effective movements are built through negotiating, agenda-setting, bridge-building, cross-border activity, and institutional capacity building. Like Kroeger, VeneKlasen underscored the vital role that consortiums play in building movements and creating a safe environment for frontline activists.

...On supporting human rights defenders and those working in fragile contexts

Nurturing human rights advocacy in fragile contexts demands rapid, flexible support, a tolerance for risk, and a new perspective on "results". Kate Kroeger explained how the Urgent Action Fund's Rapid Response Program accepts applications from frontline human rights defenders in any format, responds within 48 hours, and extends funding of up to US\$8000 within a week. Along with a short and simple reporting format, the UAF program defines success in terms of the safety and resilience of its grantees.

Recommendations

A series of thematic discussion 'clinics' enabled participants from government and civil society to work together to propose concrete actions to better support women's rights organizations and movements. Their recommendations include:

1. Support bold and creative new ways of working.

The ambitious agenda laid out in the Feminist International Assistance Policy demands a paradigm shift but also presents exciting new opportunities. Women's rights movements are intrinsically pushing for social transformations that do not lend themselves to managerial approaches.

These transformations are nonlinear, context-specific and can't be "log framed".

2. Use incremental approaches to build capacity.

The absorptive capacity and confidence of women's rights organizations can be built in stages. Project life cycles may need to be adapted and funding provided through staged disbursements, or with eligible amounts increasing as capacity grows.

3. Accept risks and manage them.

Funding local women's rights organizations, most of which are small, comes with inevitable risk. One way to manage risks is to fund a mix of organizations large and small, with diverse skills and focal areas. As a number of panelists underlined, many women's organizations already work in consortiums that effectively spread this risk and provide mutual support among members.

4. Adapt and simplify funding models to meet varied needs.

Women's rights organizations need different kinds of funding in different moments and contexts. Participants highlighted the barriers presented by Canada's funding application and reporting requirements, and the need for simplicity and flexibility.

5. Redefine success.

Funding social transformations led by women's rights organizations demands new ways of defining results, given the long-term and nonlinear process of change involved, and the need to invest in organizational strengthening. Along with mapping progress on human rights or development objectives, success must be seen in how organizations and networks build their own strength and resilience.

6. Equip Canadian missions to better protect and engage with human rights defenders.

Participants highlighted the positive role embassies can play in supporting marginalized voices. Canada's human rights defenders guidelines are a valuable tool that can be strengthened to reflect the needs of women's rights defenders and made more visible across Global Affairs.

Conclusions

Shifting the Power provided inspiration and insights into how Canada can move beyond 'business as usual' to achieve the ambitious vision of its Feminist International Assistance Policy. Supporting women's rights organizations and movements will require new types of partnerships, new funding models, new assessment frameworks, and a willingness to take risks and innovate. Courage will be essential if this current opening for innovation is to be seized.



1. Introduction

In June 2017, Canada launched its [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) which puts women's rights and gender equality at the heart of Canada's aid and development agenda. Recognizing the historic role played by grassroots movements in advancing women's rights, the new policy commits to working closely with local women's organizations to advance women's rights as part of its broader strategy to end poverty and fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals. And it acknowledges the transformative role these organizations have played:

“For decades, women around the world have led the struggle for gender equality. Local women's organizations that advance women's rights, particularly at the grassroots level, play an important role in raising social awareness and mobilizing communities to change laws, attitudes, social norms and practices.”

Along with the new policy, Canada has allocated \$150 million over five years to the Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Program. While modest relative to the huge global need, this investment will help reverse a trend across OECD countries whereby only a miniscule fraction of gender-focused aid actually reaches women's rights organizations, as documented in a [2016 report](#) by the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET). The [Association of Women in Development](#) (AWID) estimated that in 2013-2014, only US\$1.7 million (0.3 percent) of Canada's gender-focused aid directed to civil society organizations reached women's rights organizations directly. The

Panelists and speakers

KATE KROEGER, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

RITA MORBIA, Inter Pares

K'NYAW PAW and **ZIPPORAH SEIN**, Karen Women's Organization (Burma)

JUSTINE NKURUNZIZ, Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité (Burundi)

MARIAM JALABI, Syrian Women's Political Movement

LISA VENEKLASEN, Just Associates (JASS)

Panel Moderators:

JOANNA KERR, The MATCH International Women's Fund Board Chair



vast majority of Canada's global investment in gender equality goes through multilateral institutions and northern-based NGOs.

In January 2018, the MATCH International Women's Fund and the Nobel Women's Initiative partnered with Global Affairs Canada to host a panel and workshop that enabled civil servants, feminist movement builders, frontline activists, and Canadian civil society representatives to collaboratively explore innovative ways to build capacity and networks, and direct funding, support, and ultimately more power to grassroots women's organizations. A public panel on January 25 kicked off the discussion, while a half-day workshop on January 26 delved further into how administrative and other barriers can be overcome to more directly support women's organizations and movements. [See full agenda in Annex 1.]

As moderator Joanna Kerr framed the opening panel, the conversation has shifted from debating why we need to support women's rights organizations, to addressing the tough questions about how to do so. *Shifting the Power* aimed to provide a collaborative space to identify opportunities, challenges, and practical ways in which the Canadian government and its development partners can move the agenda forward.

This report outlines highlights and recommendations from presentations and discussions, structured around key questions and priority areas. The Chatham House Rule was observed to encourage open discussion. For this reason, only speakers, panelists and moderators are identified by name.

Now we can stop talking about why [to fund women's movements]. This conversation is about how.

— Moderator Joanna Kerr



2. What have we learned about supporting women's organizations and movements?

Supporting local women's rights organizations presents unique opportunities and challenges for governments and civil society partners. Those on the frontlines tend to be small, informal, and underfunded, with limited administrative capacity. In 2010, more than half of women's organizations surveyed by AWID had budgets of less than US\$25,000. The hardest-to-reach women's groups — often those in greatest need — include those in conflict zones and fragile states. Finding ways to identify, partner with, fund, and account for progress with these organizations can be daunting for bilateral donors such as Canada — and for the organizations that implement much of Canada's development assistance.

Yet, as a previous consultation on [Strengthening Women's Rights Organizations Through International Assistance](#) revealed, a number of funders — including the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs — have risen to the challenge, launching innovative new partnership mechanisms that meet the requirements of public accountability while reducing the administrative burden on partners, often working with intermediaries, such as [women's funds](#) or feminist philanthropic foundations. This allows frontline organizations to focus on what they do best: advancing women's rights and building peace and development.

THE URGENT ACTION FUND FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROVIDES RAPID SUPPORT to women and LGBT people on the frontlines of human rights movements around the world.

In looking at what Canada can learn from international experiences, *Shifting the Power* panelists and participants shared lessons in four key areas: funding architecture, partnership strategies, movement building, and supporting human rights defenders and those in fragile contexts.

Funding architecture that supports grassroots movements

Funding is far from the only support needed by women at the grassroots, but chronic underfunding has been a perpetual handicap. Various speakers underlined how funding structures embody unequal power relationships between donor and grantees and can limit the agency and autonomy of women's organizations. Frontline activists shared examples of how rapid, responsive, and flexible funding has been the lifeblood of their work. And examples of past Canadian leadership in supporting flexible aid funding models were shared.

Keynote speaker Kate Kroeger of the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) underlined what a remarkable step Canada has taken in launching the Feminist International Assistance Policy and earmarking \$650 million to promote women's sexual and reproductive rights. But settling for a business-as-usual approach to implementing the new policy would, she noted, squander a precious opportunity. Kroeger laid out a series of bold steps that Canada can take to translate its feminist commitments into effective support for women-led human rights action on the ground. She presented four key pieces of advice on funding to maximize its transformative impact:

- 1. Get as much money as possible to grassroots women's movements.** Kroeger highlighted the historic role that women's movements have played in combatting gender-based violence and in leading campaigns today against sexual assault, environmental degradation, racism and poverty. Getting resources to the grassroots, said Kroeger, cannot be done by supporting only organizations headquartered in the Global North. A feminist

[To be truly feminist] shift the paradigm away from a managerial funding approach, towards a transformational approach.

— Kate Kroeger

approach demands challenging the status quo and working with new actors to find new ways of putting power in the hands of those who have been historically excluded.

2. Support women's funds. These funds, run by women activists for women activists, are directly accountable to the movements they support, work locally, regionally, and internationally, and have a unique ability to reach the grassroots. Between 2011 and 2015, women's funds invested over \$220 million in 173 countries. A growing number of bilateral and philanthropic donors, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Swedish, British, and Dutch governments, are investing in women's funds as an effective way to build leadership and capacity at the grassroots.

3. Give multi-pronged support — on different timeframes, for different purposes — to help women's organizations overcome barriers and achieve success. Flexible, long-term support is ideal, but organizations working in fluid, shifting terrain also need short-term targeted funds, such as for travel or training support.

4. Fund consortiums. Consortiums bring together different organizations with different skill sets. The Dutch government, for example is funding the [Count Me In Consortium](#), which brings together five feminist organizations, north and south, to work on advocacy, capacity-building, long-term funding; and, rapid response. While consortiums can be challenging to coordinate, they can also push innovation and support the grassroots while meeting government monitoring and reporting requirements.

The challenge of “absorptive capacity” looms large for small organizations and was addressed in panel discussion and later in table clinics. Often, those on the front lines lack the formal structures and capacity to “absorb” and manage funds in ways typically demanded by traditional donors. Discussions also noted that absorptive capacity cannot be built if organizations are not brought into funding relationships.



Activists like **Justine Nkurunziza** of the [Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité](#) have experienced first-hand the difficulty of trying to organize a response, with no funding, in a crisis such as the brutal crackdown on human rights protesters in Burundi since 2015. Movements such as hers, which arose in response to state-sanctioned killings of opponents of the President, have no opportunity to register, and must work underground or in exile. Despite the dangers, “women would not remain silent,” Nkurunziza said. “We networked via emails and WhatsApp for urgent action. And that was how the movement was born.”

Funds for advocacy and travel had to be raised among members, passing the hat, with some funding eventually provided by the government of France. Justine’s experience highlights the conundrum facing allies, of how to get funding to unregistered organizations—often in dangerous and rapidly changing circumstances.

Mariam Jalabi of the Syrian Women’s Political Movement recounted a similar struggle to find funding to support women’s quest to be part of the peace process in Syria. Women have been crowded out of decision-making processes within the country, largely sidelined into humanitarian response and service delivery. Political organizing has moved into the international sphere, but is largely being led by volunteers paying out of pocket for reports and printing.

This, according to Kate Kroeger, is where consortium models can be effective, enabling some organizations to work on crisis response, supported by others that leverage long-term funding and do global advocacy. She stressed that absorptive capacity is built through incremental funding: “An ‘absorptive capacity’ problem occurs,” she said, “when money goes to an organization that is paralysed because it doesn’t know what to do with the money, because it lacks community connections. Grassroots women’s organizations know what to do.”

Most of these [women’s] organizations that are most active are not legally registered. Yet, they do the heavy lifting.

— Justine Nkurunziza

If you don’t give organizations money, they will never develop the capacity to manage money.

— Kate Kroeger

Innovative partnership strategies that truly 'shift the power'

The effectiveness of grassroots organizations and movements can be enhanced by the supportive networks and partnerships they embrace. These relationships are about much more than money: as a number of panelists and participants underlined, they must be grounded in trust and structured in ways that foster agency and leadership at the local level. Connections with international allies also provide a level of security and legitimacy for grassroots women's organizations — many of which face ongoing attacks on their integrity, viewpoints, and personal safety.

Rita Morbia of [Inter Pares](#) and **K'nyaw Paw** and **Zipporah Sein** of the [Karen Women's Organization](#) reflected on what makes their relationship work. With Canadian government support, Inter Pares has worked with local organizations in Burma and neighbouring countries for more than two decades, strengthening their action and advocacy on health, human rights, the environment, media freedom, and refugee relief.

K'nyaw Paw emphasized the importance of shared values and the trust built up over a long-term relationship. This, along with "reasonable" reporting requirements, has enabled her organization to focus energies on real issues, rather than donor orientation. Core funding and shared understandings and expectations also enable them to plan more effectively. More than just funding, the relationship has brought valuable connections. Inter Pares can open doors for their partners to meet with Canadian officials in Burma, Canada, and Thailand. And as Zipporah Sein noted, the partnership has provided opportunities to network with other women struggling for human rights and learn from their struggles. Thanks in part to an exchange supported by Inter Pares, the Karen Women's Organization has produced a book on lessons learned on women's role in supporting the return of refugees, drawing on what they learned from Guatemalan women activists.

Our shared values mean we have more understanding of each other, and there are more opportunities for partnership instead of just applying for money.

— K'nyaw Paw



Rita Morbia cited the long-term funding that Inter Pares has received from the Canadian government as key to the flexible support they have been able to extend to partners from Burma. She recounted how Canada's early funding for human rights in Burma had demanded a paradigm shift. The Burma program was risky at the start, with one of the main groups not formally registered, and with no natural home in bilateral programming due to sanctions. But the former Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) created a mechanism that made it work.

She is concerned that erosion in core support to Canada's development partners in recent years is fueling a trend towards 'projectization' whereby organizations compete for short-term project funds, which come with a heavy administrative burden. She pointed to examples of onerous accountability requirements that undermine the agency and effectiveness of organizations trying to advance human rights.

Movement building

With #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter making headlines, movements have gained incredible visibility for the impact they are having on social norms and public debate. Yet as **Lisa VeneKlasen** of [Just Associates](#) (JASS) explained, these "movement moments" are the result of years of behind-the-scenes organizing. JASS's work focuses on feminist movement building. It trains local leaders, strengthens community organizing, builds broad alliances, and helps link grassroots solutions to global advocacy. It has regional affiliates that link local activists to diverse groups and movements in Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, and Mesoamerica.

VeneKlasen described how JASS Mesoamerica came into being, when journalists, mothers of the disappeared, refugee supporters and others who had experienced political violence started to come together. These gatherings, for the first time, connected groups that had been experiencing repression to jointly discuss how they could build systems of solidarity and support, document violations

Some international organizations have their own criteria — and it is difficult when they do not understand the needs of [...] the women in the field, so their criteria will not fit the needs.

— Zipporah Sein

against human rights defenders, and address the gender dimensions of political violence. In 2010, JASS and other regional, national, and international organizations gave birth to the [Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative](#). Coordinated by JASS Mesomerica, the coalition includes human rights organizations from across the region. The [Central American Women's Fund](#) helps to manage the money.

Resourcing a movement is challenging, said VeneKlasen, because it inherently involves dozens of meetings and lots of invisible work, with women at the forefront. For activists to be able to take to social media when a “moment” arises takes negotiating, agenda-setting, infrastructure and funding, bridge-building, cross-border activity, and the institutional capacity to keep women's organizations safe.

Like Kroeger, VeneKlasen underscored the vital role that consortiums play in building movements and creating a safe environment for frontline activists. JASS along with the Association for Women in Development (AWID) and a number of women's organizations are part of the [Count Me In!](#) consortium, which is led by the Dutch women's fund Mama Cash. Such consortiums bring together groups large and small, to work towards shared goals with minimal competition, leveraging each other's relative strengths. “We have to work with small organizations to help them develop capacity to manage money. Women's groups at the country level have to be part of regional funds' processes and decisions about how to build a movement.”

Supporting human rights defenders and those working in fragile contexts

The fact that Burundian activist Justine Nkurunziza and Syrian activist Mariam Jalabi are both working in exile highlights the precarious situation for human rights defenders in fragile contexts. “Here, I have the chance to express myself and act,” said Nkurunziza. “I'm protected.” Those still in Burundi must work largely underground.

Is six NGOs meeting at the UN really a movement? No. Movements require many organizations working together —with different skills and roles — [...]to be able to mobilize, convene.

— Lisa VeneKlasen



As Jalabi explained, she and other Syrian exiles are able to connect with global women's groups playing a mediating role between outside supporters and groups on the ground who are often unregistered and unfunded. These connections with other women's organizations and human rights activists are vital for information sharing, fundraising, advocacy, and protection of frontline human rights defenders.

As various speakers outlined, human rights advocacy in fragile contexts is by its nature risky, fluid, and context specific. How can bilateral donors and international organizations best support those whose work is both vital and urgent?

Kate Kroeger described how the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights mobilizes rapid support for frontline activists. It was founded 20 years ago with a radical vision: that resources are best managed close to the ground. Since then, every five to seven years, a new urgent action fund has spun off, with new staff and its own budget and administration, with a transfer of funds from UAF. There are now four autonomous regional urgent action funds, each with its own model of rapid response funding. Urgent Action Fund has a unique [Rapid Response Program](#), which receives applications from frontline human rights defenders in any format, from emails to secure video calls. Applicants usually get an answer within 48 hours; funding of up to US\$8000 can be provided within a week. There are always staff on-call for urgent requests. The program is not intended to take the place of long-term funding, but rather to address unanticipated needs. Applicants must be embedded in a movement.

Like other funders, UAF has to balance accountability against respecting the agency of its grantees. Decisions are guided by consulting at least two advisors in the country, drawn from different parts of society – journalists, young women etc. Care is taken to avoid relying on the same women's organizations all the time. Its reporting form is short and simple. But it also looks at success in a unique way: "Our overarching question is about resilience," said Kroeger. "Were you safer? Could you continue your work? 85% say yes."

COUNT ME IN! IS A SPECIAL JOINT INITIATIVE LED BY MAMA CASH that supports the voices and activism of women, girls and trans people who are often the most marginalised. It is a strategic partner within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dialogue and Dissent policy framework.

At an organization I used to work at, we allowed 20% of our grants to fail. This let us take risks and forced us to innovate.

— Kate Kroeger

For its advocacy funding, UAF wants to know how grantees were able to reach new actors and audiences: “Did you reach policymakers? Could you change policies?”

Kroeger noted that private philanthropy organizations have more latitude for experimentation. She recounted how a former employer, the American Jewish World Service, intentionally built in risk and innovation by planning for up to 20% of projects to fail. It also set targets to ensure that some projects each year were with organizations not previously funded.

In table discussions, participants highlighted additional resources and measures for supporting human rights defenders, including the Government of Canada’s [guidelines on supporting human rights defenders](#). It was suggested that more needs to be done to promote awareness and consistent understanding of the guidelines across Canada’s diplomatic missions and headquarters, and across regions and department branches. Participants also noted the risks to physical and mental health that human rights defenders face in their daily work. In many contexts, women who speak out are at heightened risk of sexual assault.

**CANADA'S GUIDELINES
ON RECOGNIZING AND
SUPPORTING HUMAN
RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

are intended to serve as a how-to guide. Launched in 2016, they offer practical advice for officials at Canadian missions abroad and at Headquarters and a clear statement of Canada’s commitment to promoting human rights, including by supporting the vital work of human rights defenders.



3. Recommendations

In table discussions on January 26, participants from government and civil society worked together, tapping their own experience and the lessons shared by speakers, to tackle five key thematic areas and recommend concrete steps that can be taken to realize Canada's commitment to support local women's rights organizations. These 'clinics' focused on how to best support:

- women human rights defenders
- women's movements (not just individual organizations)
- partnerships with women's organizations – going beyond consultations and beneficiary relationships
- women's rights organizations in fragile contexts
- capacity building by women's rights organizations and movements

There was inevitable overlap in ideas on how to strengthen organizations, capacities, and partnerships—in part due to the connections between human rights defenders and movements. The critical role of flexible funding frameworks, support for consortiums, and reducing administrative burden came up in several discussions, given the unique needs of grassroots women's rights organizations which are typically small, and often informal.

A table summarizing high-level recommendations on each question in the clinic discussions can be found in Annex 2. Cross-cutting recommendations that can help inform the Women's Voice and Leadership program and other initiatives to strengthen feminist action at the grassroots include:

We can't log frame our path to justice.

— Joanna Kerr

1. Support bold and creative new ways of working.

Gender equality has been a cross-cutting theme (or integrated) in Canadian policy for more than two decades, but the ambitious agenda laid out in the Feminist International Assistance Policy demands a paradigm shift when it comes to operationalizing programs and projects. This is challenging but also presents exciting new opportunities. Women's rights movements are intrinsically pushing for social transformations that do not lend themselves to managerial approaches. These transformations are nonlinear, context-specific and must be locally-led. They cannot easily be log-framed. Canada can learn from the collaborative and flexible approaches recently taken by the Dutch and other like-minded development partners.

2. Use incremental approaches to build capacity.

The small size and relatively limited capacity of women's rights organizations — especially those in fragile contexts — pose unique challenges to funders. But these risks may be managed through a gradual approach to building capacities, in collaboration with supportive partners.

Absorptive capacity and confidence can be built in stages with adaptation to project life cycles and staged disbursements — perhaps tied to milestones — or with eligible amounts increasing as capacity grows. This echoed advice from Kate Kroeger that in order to build financial confidence, women's organizations actually have to receive funds to manage. Such an incremental approach can also allow for lessons to be taken on board and applied to next steps.

One approach could be for donors to have a multi-year agreement with one local organization and one larger organization or fund that would include various phases through which women's organizations receive a larger proportion of funding every year, as their capacity increased. Women's funds, many based in the Global South, can be effective implementing partners, given they are run by and for activists who are accountable to, and part of, the movements they support. These funds also work with partners to strengthen their capacity.

3. Accept risks and manage them.

Balanced project portfolios, where funding is directed to a mix of organizations large and small, with diverse skills and focal areas, is one way to manage risks. As outlined by a number of panelists, many women's organizations already work in consortiums that effectively spread this risk and provide mutual support among members. These consortiums enable collaboration among high capacity fundraising and advocacy organizations, smaller locally-based women's rights organizations, and national and regional funds and organizations. It is essential that consortium partners be deliberate

in creating the space for southern-led women's rights organizations to drive the agenda. And the partnerships within consortiums must be based on shared values and feminist mandates, rather than merely serving as project delivery vehicles.

4. Adapt and simplify funding models to meet varied needs.

One-size funding approaches aren't well suited to the tremendously varied landscape of women's rights organizing. Groups need different kinds of funding in different moments and contexts and they need simpler application and reporting requirements.

For movement building, participants discussed the need to work with partners to map actors at various levels and apply an ecosystem approach rather than taking a project mentality to funding support. Current programming mechanisms can work against this and lack the flexibility to respond to specific realities. In addition, programmers often don't know the relevant players and their goals. There is a need to start by engaging with local organizations.

In fragile contexts, regional funds, reference systems, and consortium models were cited as possible solutions to address activists' need for emergency aid or urgent, flexible funding. A reference system might draw on individuals and organizations trusted by donors to recommend potential partnerships with credible local organizations.

Along with more flexible funding models, participants highlighted the barriers presented by Canada's funding application and reporting requirements. Small (and

even medium-sized) women's rights organizations typically don't have dedicated staff to write funding applications, so cannot compete against large Canadian and international NGOs. Simplifying the application process and providing some support, including financial assistance for the application process, would go a long way to help Canada reach new partners. Another approach would be to develop application streams that avoid pitting women's organizations against INGOs in the same competition or call for proposals.

Participants also reiterated that funding models must make space for southern leadership. The International Development Research Centre's funding criteria was cited as one that privileges southern-led partnerships.

5. Redefine success.

Funding women's rights organizations also demands new ways of defining results, given the long-term and nonlinear processes of social transformation and the need to invest in the "infrastructure" movements need to achieve these changes. Along with mapping results tied to the changes these organizations are working towards, success also has to be seen in how organizations and networks build their own strength and resilience. JASS, for example, looks at the capacity for diverse organizations to work together on short timeframes as a measure of success in movement building. In fragile contexts, results frameworks and reporting requirements have to be adapted to reflect the informal nature of organizations working in dangerous and repressive conditions.

6. Equip Canadian missions to better protect and engage with human rights defenders.

In discussions on how best to support human rights defenders and those working in fragile contexts, participants highlighted the need for embassies to be more proactive, especially in reaching out to more marginalized voices. This may require training support. Canadian embassies could play a role in establishing a referral system that would help identify local women's organizations that have been recommended by trusted partners of the Canadian government (for example, Canadian civil society organizations). In fragile contexts, steps should be taken to break down the silos and increase shared understanding on women's human rights between those working on humanitarian aid, longer term development, and foreign policy.

Several participants pointed to Canada's human rights defenders guidelines as an essential tool for mission and headquarter staff. They suggested, however, that these be updated, and made more visible across Global Affairs. The guidelines need to be reviewed with a specific eye toward emerging online threats, and the unique situation of women human rights defenders, who are at higher risk of sexual assault, and more threatened by non-state actors. In a digital age, rights defenders face a steady stream of online abuse and, in a number of regions, are increasingly confronted with organized campaigns of disinformation. Supports for women's human rights defenders need to integrate strategies to protect their psychosocial health and help them to counter online fraud and abuse.

4. Conclusions: Moving beyond business as usual

Realizing the ambitious vision of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy — going beyond “integrating gender perspectives” to promoting real social transformation — demands bold new approaches. Supporting women's rights organizations and movements will require new types of partnership, new funding models, new assessment frameworks and a willingness to take risks and innovate. As moderator Joanna Kerr said in opening the event, “The greatest thing we can all do is find our courage.”

Shifting the Power provided an opportunity to look at the inspirational new directions that some feminist funds and organizations are already taking to nurture collaborative ecosystems that enable women's organizations and movements to flourish. Participants shared examples of important innovations, such as gender-budgeting, that Canada has led in recent years, which suggests the capacity for experimentation is there.

In clinic discussions, participants recognized that more collaboration and shared learning is needed between Global Affairs, women's rights activists, and civil society partners. There are more lessons to be gleaned from exploring how other Canadian partners are, like Inter Pares, already working in partnership with grassroots women's rights organizations. Some proposed that Global Affairs play a convening role to strengthen ties between women's rights organizations and movements, hosting networking and other shared spaces to connect and co-strategize with partners.

Ultimately, for the greatest return on Canada's investments in feminist international assistance, funding and programming mechanisms need to be retooled to ensure that funding shifts the power to women's organizations. Movement building will be strengthened when women's organizations in partner countries directly manage funds and set the agenda, rather than relying on intermediaries.

Mechanisms shouldn't constrain what is possible.”

— Rita Morbia

SHIFTING THE POWER DEMANDS:

- » **Courage**
- » **Trust**
- » **Flexibility**
- » **Experimentation**
- » **Acceptance of risk**
- » **Shared feminist vision**
- » **Ongoing collaboration**
- » **Learning from mistakes**

Annex 1. Agenda

Shifting the Power: Opportunities for Innovative Partnerships with Women's Movements

Public panel and workshop – Ottawa, January 25 and 26, 2018

Objectives:

- Increase understanding of the role and position of women's rights organizations and how best to support their work, their networks and movement building.
- Deepen understanding of the possible funding architecture to effectively support women's rights organizations and identify innovative partnership strategies to strengthen these groups.
- Learn from international experiences and best practices in supporting women's organizations and movements at the local level.
- Provide inspiration & motivation -- helping participants to make new connections and generate energy to move new partnership models forward.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25
<p>OPENING WORDS</p> <p>Diane Jacovella, Deputy Minister of International Development</p>
<p>WELCOME</p> <p>Joanna Kerr, Chair of the Board, The MATCH International Women's Fund</p>
<p>KEYNOTE</p> <p>Kate Kroeger, Executive Director, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights</p>
<p>PANEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rita Morbia, Inter Pares • Justine Nkurunziza, Le Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité • Naw K'nyaw Paw, Karen Women Organization (via recorded video) • Naw Zipporah Sein, Karen Women Organization (via recorded video)) • Kate Kroeger, Urgent Action Fund
<p>AUDIENCE Q&A</p>
<p>CLOSING</p> <p>Joanna Kerr</p>

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25
<p>OPENING WORDS</p> <p>Marc-André Fredette, Director General, Southern and Eastern Africa, Global Affairs Canada Facilitator: Catherine Fortin LeFaivre</p>
<p>PANEL</p> <p>WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM FUNDING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mariam Jalabi, Syrian Women's Political Movement • Justine Nkurunziza, Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité (Burundi) • Kate Kroeger, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights • Lisa VeneKlasen, Just Associates (JASS) <p>Moderated by Rachel Vincent, Nobel Women's Initiative</p>
<p>TABLE GROUP CLINICS</p> <p>BUILDING INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p>Clinic questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we best support women human rights defenders? • How can GAC and partners work with women's organizations to strengthen their capacities, including absorptive capacity? • How do we build partnerships with women's orgs – beyond consultations and beneficiary relationships? • What are the challenges of supporting and building women's organizations and movements in fragile contexts? • What lessons and guiding principles in supporting women's movement building?
<p>PLENARY TO SHARE CLINIC OUTPUTS</p>
<p>CLOSING REMARKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoffroi Monpetit, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie • Jess Tomlin, The MATCH International Women's Fund

Annex 2. Summary recommendations from table discussions

HOW TO SUPPORT...?	RECOMMENDATIONS
Women human rights defenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Canada's human rights defenders guidelines more effectively – across streams, regions, between HQ and missions. Need to add a gender lens – dealing with threats to women human rights defenders • Encourage psychosocial support for women human rights defenders and communities • Integrate digital support – tips and guidance
Women's movements (not just individual organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context matters: not one-size-fits-all. Need to map landscape, meet and engage with actors • Need an ecosystem approach: engage with a range of actors, support convergence • Rigid processes are restrictive – project mentality doesn't suit movement building. Need flexibility in how to engage in relationship building and risk tolerance.
Partnerships with women's organizations – going beyond consultations and beneficiary relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership should be driven by a southern agenda • Need new funding models that make space for southern-led initiatives (e.g. IDRC research model) • Support consortiums that connect grassroots priorities to development results • Need a working group that would help to flesh this out.
Women's rights organizations in fragile contexts **	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify logic model and applications; adapt results focus and reporting to reflect the informal/ illegal nature of orgs working in fragile contexts • Need new tools for working with women's orgs and social processes • Need flexible financing tools: Regional funds, reference system and consortium model are possible solutions; recognize risks will be higher; need flexible funds for urgent needs and emergency aid for vulnerable activists who face violence • Breakdown silos between humanitarian vs development vs political • Build capacity through partnerships, in stages • Embassies need to be more proactive in reaching more marginal voices
Capacity building by women's rights organizations and movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address absorptive capacity by changing the project life cycle, disbursements; build confidence incrementally • Absorb risk within a large, balanced portfolio that includes small, newer orgs and larger more established ones (also looking at partners across the spectrum, from grassroots to national) • Consortium building • GAC convening partners to learn and share from each other.

** Two separate tables addressed this question. The bullets here are a consolidation of input from both tables, to reduce repetition.





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