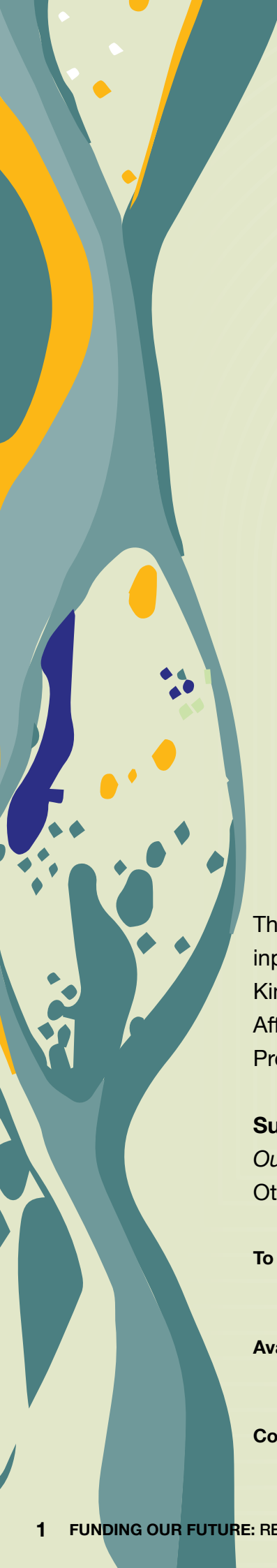


Funding our Future:

**RESOURCING THE FEMINIST
MOVEMENTS DRIVING
CLIMATE ACTION**





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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COP: Conference of Parties, official United Nations Climate Change Conference

GAGGA: Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action

LBTQI: Lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, and intersex

ODA: Official Development Assistance

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WEDO: Women's Environment Development Organization



Organisation: Bai Indigenous Women's Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Feminist movements¹ are driving climate solutions, bringing critical perspectives and building initiatives to advance climate justice at the local, national, regional, and international levels. As governments and philanthropic actors increase climate finance investments, there is increasing recognition of the intersection of gender equality and climate justice. There is also a growing understanding of the role of local organisations in adaptation and mitigation and in addressing the root causes of the crisis. Despite this, organisations led by women, girls, trans and intersex people remain dramatically underfunded.

To meet the urgency and severity of the climate crisis, and its disproportionate impact on women, girls, trans and intersex people in the Global South, multiple, diverse, and creative funding strategies are needed. Resourcing feminist movements is a key yet underused approach in delivering on ambitious policy goals on climate justice, gender equality, and sustainable development.

The good news is that the infrastructure to fund these actors exists. Women's funds around the world are already supporting and channelling resources to the feminist movements implementing robust, transformative and sustainable climate action. This brief sets out the case for funding feminist movements and organisations through climate finance and highlights women's funds as a key partner and mechanism to realise this strategy.

It demonstrates how:

- Many feminist organisations work effectively at the intersection of gender equality and climate justice
- Feminist movements and organisations are driving action on climate adaptation and mitigation
- The work of feminist movements is complex and gradual, though early, measurable results are being seen
- While many funders are concerned about the 'risks' in supporting less traditional climate actors, there is greater risk in **not** funding the feminist movements driving transformative climate action
- Feminist movements and organisations' climate activities are scalable

The brief concludes with a set of tangible actions for government donors to realise their commitments to advancing climate justice and gender equality, and ensuring funding reaches the local level.

- 1** At a minimum, meet existing targets on climate finance, sustainable development, and gender equality and ensure climate finance is contributed as additional to ODA budgets.
- 2** Increase the proportion of climate-related ODA that serves gender equality objectives to 88%, including ensuring 15% of this funding has gender equality as a principle objective.
- 3** Direct a greater proportion of overall civil society funding to women's and LGBTQI rights organisations, particularly those based in countries in the Global South, and those led by structurally excluded groups.
- 4** Track and report on the percentage of climate finance going directly to women's and LGBTQI organisations in the Global South, including setting specific targets to significantly increase this number (for example quadrupling in the next 4 years).
- 5** Increase the proportion of climate finance that is delivered through transparent, accessible, grants-based mechanisms that protect human rights and is in accordance with the commitments set out in the Paris Agreement and OECD guidance on development cooperation.
- 6** When direct funding is not possible, engage with women's and feminist funds as equal partners, grounded in trust-based cooperation, in order to reach a wide range of organisations working on different intersections and various levels.
- 7** Deepen collaboration with feminist climate activists, including through their meaningful engagement in climate finance discussions and decisions, to support greater understanding of the intersection between gender equality and environment.

WHAT ARE WOMEN'S FUNDS?

In this report, 'women's funds' and 'feminist funds' refer to a specific set of organisations, purpose-built to provide funding and other support to feminist movements. These funds emerge from, are embedded in, and are accountable to the movements they serve.

They are able to reach grassroots women's and LGBTQI (lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, and intersex) rights organisations, often prioritising underfunded and otherwise structurally excluded groups. Given their location within feminist movements, a fundamental aspect of women's funds is the particular kind of relationship they have with their partners, one that is grounded in trust that partners know best their multiple and interrelated challenges and how to solve them. This kind of relationship lends itself to women's funds providing core, flexible, predictable, and long term funding, as well as other supports like capacity strengthening, networking, and shared learning.

The [Prospera International Network of Women's Funds](#) comprises 47 women's funds that collectively provide grants in over 172 countries, totaling over \$214 million in 2020. It serves as a global political network of autonomous women's and feminist funds that nurture transformation by resourcing, supporting and accompanying movements led by women, girls, trans, intersex and non-binary people, and collectives primarily in the Global South and East.

INTRODUCTION: The role of feminist movements

Across the world, feminist movements are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, developing effective strategies and solutions, disrupting the status quo, and resisting injustice in various forms. In an interconnected world, feminist movements and organisations tackle the root causes of climate injustice, recognising how patriarchy, racism and other forms of oppression intertwine to accelerate the destruction of the planet and worsen interlocking political and social crises. Led by the populations that are most vulnerable to the climate crisis, including girls, women, trans and intersex people from the Global South, feminist movements strengthen efforts to advance climate justice and democracy, and hold international institutions, transnational corporations, governments and investors accountable.

Much of this work has been well-documented in the literature on gender-just climate solutions, a term that describes the rights-based, bottom-up and people-centred approaches that put gender justice and democracy at the centre of climate action, and therefore seek to address the root causes of climate injustice. As explained by WEDO in their Feminist Agenda for People and Planet, the climate crisis is rooted in ideologies that embrace a goal of infinite growth which—on a finite planet—can only happen through extraction, exploitation, and destruction.² By challenging existing power structures and tackling the root causes that lie behind the climate crisis, feminist movements challenge traditional notions of what climate action entails, contributing to broader changes in how our economies and societies operate. Crucially, these movements also take an intersectional approach, building inclusive, trust-based and resilient networks that centre the knowledge and perspectives of diverse community-led and structurally excluded groups.



Organisation: Helen's Daughters, Saint Lucia (Photographer: Allen Cherry)

SNAPSHOT:

KEY CLIMATE ACTIONS OF FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS

- Mobilising and responding during rapid onset climate-related emergencies
- Advancing just and sustainable energy practices at the community level - solar options, fuel efficient stoves, etc.
- Promoting practices to address water shortages and drought adaptation (sustainable water resource stewardship)
- Developing more sustainable, regenerative, and circular production systems, from agroecology to green enterprises
- Advocating for land tenure systems that support more sustainable agricultural practices
- Holding international institutions, corporations, governments and investors involved in any harmful projects or policies to account
- Mobilising communities to support ecosystems at risk, promoting community-led forest conservation and building seed conservation initiatives
- Advocating for policies that support community-driven systems of solidarity and collective care and alternatives for a gender-just transition
- Building long-term capacities to respond to climate-related shocks, resilience and sustainability to advance effective and lasting transformation

Addressing the climate crisis requires multiple and diverse strategies. The following section of this brief provides an overview of the limitations of existing climate finance in advancing climate justice and reaching the communities and organisations most impacted by the climate crisis. It then addresses two positive developments: 1) the growing interest in the intersection of gender equality and the environment, and 2) increased momentum in funding locally-led climate action. Despite these developments, climate finance has not been mobilised to support feminist movements and organisations.

This brief analyses this funding gap and uses evidence to make the case for why supporting these organisations with dedicated and accessible resources is a critical step in delivering on both gender equality and climate justice goals. The final section sets out how to achieve this, highlighting women's funds as a key mechanism, and offers seven tangible actions for governments. This approach will enable donors to meet the urgency of the moment and fulfil commitments on climate finance, as well as broader global agendas relating to gender equality, locally-led sustainable development, and strengthening democratic societies.

CLIMATE FINANCE: Intentions and limitations

WHAT COUNTS AS CLIMATE FINANCE?

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), climate finance is ‘local, national, or transnational funding from public, private, and alternative sources that seeks to support actions that will address climate change’.³ The majority of Annex I to the UNFCCC⁴, who are also members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, rely on their climate-related Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows, both bilateral and multilateral, as a base for reporting to the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. What counts as climate-related ODA depends upon the mechanism: for reporting to the OECD-DAC members use the Rio markers methodology on climate adaptation and mitigation, whereas the multilateral development banks follow the climate components methodology. While these two methodologies have different scopes and accounting methods, their definitions on climate-change mitigation and adaptation are closely related.⁵

According to the UNFCCC Biennial Reports, climate-related ODA accounts for over 80% of the total amount provided and mobilised for climate finance (in 2020, ODA flows accounted for 84% of USD \$83.8 billion).⁶ Yet research by CARE International estimates that only 6% of the climate finance provided between 2011 and 2018 was new and additional to countries’ existing ODA commitments, and suggests little effort has been made to contribute to climate finance on top of existing development obligations.⁷ In other words, climate finance to date is largely a reallocation (and often, rebranding) of existing development assistance. This means that the obligation for countries to contribute their fair share of climate finance, which is dependent upon their ability and contribution to the crisis, has direct implications for meeting existing targets for gender equality, sustainable development and poverty alleviation, particularly in a context of shrinking ODA budgets worldwide.

The Paris Agreement itself includes explicit language on the intrinsic relationship between climate action, sustainable development and eradication of poverty. It calls on parties taking action to address climate change to ‘respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment, of women and intergenerational equity.’ Article 2.1 refers specifically to strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, by making ‘finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.’⁸

WHO IS CLIMATE FINANCE FOR?

Climate-related ODA is delivered through a variety of mechanisms, with international financial institutions delivering the majority (the World Bank is currently the largest multilateral provider), followed by bilateral development initiatives and the multilateral climate funds of the UNFCCC, such as the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund.⁹ These delivery mechanisms are significantly limited in terms of reach and accessibility for the communities and local organisations on the frontlines of the climate crisis, despite the potential of climate finance to offer essential support to the countries and communities most impacted. In 2021, the least developed countries received only 18% of climate finance,¹⁰ and from 2011-2020, less than 1% of climate-related ODA went to Indigenous peoples and local communities.¹¹

Moreover, the majority of climate finance (57%) is distributed in the form of loans rather than grants, reinforcing regional inequalities and colonial legacies by increasing the burden of debt on countries already disproportionately affected by climate change.¹² Mechanisms for accessing climate finance are often slow, complex, resource intensive, and project-based, with an overall lack of transparency and few grants-based mechanisms.¹³ A new report by the OECD highlights how these barriers and systemic inequality prevent local civil society organisations from obtaining the resources needed to carry out their work, with limited and irregular financing reaching this level.¹⁴



Organisation: Helen's Daughters (Photographer: Allen Cherry)

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

Locally led climate action and intersection with gender equality

It is evident that the existing global climate finance architecture is simply not set up to allocate climate finance in just and accessible ways. Yet the growing interest in climate justice and its links with gender equality, including increased support for locally led solutions, presents an opportunity to shift power and resources to the feminist movements and organisations on the frontlines of climate action.

Ensuring a more effective distribution of climate finance requires a broad approach that addresses the interconnectedness of climate finance, aid effectiveness and development cooperation goals, rather than having these agendas compete for financial resources and policy attention.¹⁵ The need to align and integrate development cooperation with the Paris Agreement was made explicit in a joint declaration issued by DAC members ahead of COP26 in 2021.¹⁶ The declaration included ambitious climate-related development finance commitments and systematic application of the Busan Principles for effective development co-operation across the broader climate finance landscape to accelerate progress against the Paris Agreement. It also outlined specific targets on the need to invest in locally led solutions and advance gender equality through climate action, revealing growing recognition of the interconnected nature of climate change, gender equality and sustainable development.

This growing awareness amongst government and philanthropic donors is complemented by increased funding targeting the intersection of gender equality and climate justice, with climate-related ODA that integrates gender equality objectives almost quadrupling in the period 2011-2020.¹⁷ While this shift is largely the result of a need to meet urgent and ambitious targets for both climate finance and gender equality, it reflects a growing commitment towards a more justice-centered approach to address the climate crisis. Climate justice as a concept recognises that the causes of the climate crisis are rooted in intersecting gender, social, intergenerational and racial injustices, resulting in those who are least responsible suffering the gravest consequences. While the global response has historically focused on reducing carbon emissions and supporting countries and communities to adapt to climate change, there is increasing recognition that the magnitude and urgency of the crisis requires also addressing the root causes and power structures that lie behind it through an approach that centres justice and human rights.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Resourcing the organisations on the frontlines

These positive ambitions are limited by the constraints of the development and climate finance architecture. Specifically, the majority of ODA that integrates climate and gender equality objectives is not accessible to the organisations who are not only the most impacted by the climate crisis, but are also leading efforts to address the systemic inequality that led to the crisis in the first place.

Despite the crucial role of feminist movements and organisations in advancing climate justice and progress towards multiple development goals,¹⁸ according to OECD data, women's rights organisations received just USD \$547 million in 2020-2021, around 1% of total ODA dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment.¹⁹ While literature on the gender equality and environment intersection does identify the need to engage and support feminist movements and organisations, including local CSOs, Indigenous peoples and local communities,²⁰ still only 0.22% of climate-related ODA went to women's rights organisations in 2018-2019.²¹ Likewise, of the total amount of philanthropic giving estimated to be allocated to climate related issues, only 3% directly supports women's environmental activism.²²



Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva (Photographer: Mica Stacey)

While Canada has adopted a Feminist International Assistance Policy and is a global leader in funding women's rights organisations, it too struggles to fund the intersection of climate action and gender equality.²³

In 2021, the percentage of ODA with both an environment and gender equality marker of 'principal' (i.e. both environment and gender equality are main objectives) was just 0.5%.

WHY THIS DEARTH OF FUNDING?

Even when the political will is there, donors who wish to fund feminist movements and organisations face constraints, many of which are identified as ‘stumbling blocks’ in AWID and Mama Cash’s *Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change* report.²⁴ For example, they may believe the administrative burden of managing many small grants is too great. They may also perceive local organisations as being unable to meet funder requirements like planning and reporting, financial and risk management, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

For climate finance decision-makers, there are often misconceptions around the role of feminist organisations in climate action, alongside more general donor concerns about risk, scale, and MEL. Our conversations with funders highlighted several misconceptions about feminist movements and their work on climate issues. In the following section, we outline the critical role of feminist movements in driving climate action, unpacking each of these assumptions in turn.

THE REALITY: Feminist movements and climate action

01.

MANY FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS WORK AT THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

‘For women supporting the long-term well-being of their families, communities, and culture, environmental protection and women’s rights are not distinct “funding silos” – they are what need to happen in order to survive and thrive.’

- (Our Voices, our Environment: The state of funding for women’s environmental action) ²⁵

Feminist organisations work across movements and siloes to advance women’s and LGBTQI rights across multiple issues that impact the daily lives and wellbeing of women, girls, and trans and intersex people. Environmental degradation, climate forced migration, food and water shortages disproportionately impact women and other structurally excluded groups, with women’s disproportionate responsibility for care work, lack of mobility, land rights and economic resources compounding their vulnerability and ability to navigate these challenges. For the LGBTQIA+ community, climate change further exacerbates their precarious living conditions and puts them at increased risk of violence by both state and non-state actors.²⁶ At the same time, there is growing literature on the role of women, girls, trans and intersex people as not only victims but as leaders on climate action, playing major roles in emergency responses to disaster, developing gender-responsive climate solutions, and building alternatives for just transitions.

Given the severity and multifaceted nature of the climate crisis, funders can learn from and support the cross-sector nature of women’s and LGBTQI rights work.

Feminist movements address the climate crisis and gender inequality in tandem by, for example:

- Improving women's access to land ownership and recognition of Indigenous land rights, which formalises their stake in land use conversations. They can then govern the land in ways that mitigate and/or adapt to the climate crisis. Land managed by Indigenous Peoples with strong land tenure has significantly lower rates of deforestation than land under other governance systems, including protected areas.²⁷
- Enhancing women's access to land, finances, and other farm inputs, which support women to farm in more climate resilient, productive, and sustainable ways (see box).
- Advancing women's rights to decent employment and full participation in the economy, as well as their participation in national and international policymaking, supports the just transition to a green economy.²⁸
- Increasing community resilience to the climate crisis, which has been shown to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence.²⁹
- Strengthening women's participation in disaster risk reduction planning and recovery initiatives, ensuring that these initiatives equitably reach women, girls, and trans people who, due to gender norms, roles, and lack of rights, are more likely to be impacted by disaster.³⁰

HELEN'S DAUGHTERS, SAINT LUCIA

In Saint Lucia, gender norms mean that women's valuable participation in the agriculture value chain is often under-acknowledged and under-supported. In response, Helen's Daughters is supporting prospective and existing women farmers to engage in sustainable, climate smart agriculture.

This women's rights organisation takes a multi-issue approach that recognises and addresses the complex dynamics of gender, climate justice, and agriculture. Its holistic programmes include education (training programs, scholarships, apprenticeships), farmer supports (subsidies, market access), and health and wellness (rural health clinics, medical insurance). One of Helen's Daughters' most profound impacts is redefining what it means to be a woman in the agricultural field, starting with women farmers' view of themselves. It has sparked a transformation from women feeling invisible to recognising their important role in strengthening Saint Lucia's food security.



Helen's Daughters, Saint Lucia

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS ARE DRIVING ACTION ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

The OECD generally defines climate-related ODA according to the Rio Marker definitions of investments in biodiversity, desertification, adaptation, and mitigation initiatives.³¹ Despite being underfunded, feminist movements are at the forefront of both adaptation and mitigation interventions, in many cases leading the ‘country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent’ approaches encouraged within the Paris Agreement.³²

Women’s disproportionate responsibility for care work, lack of mobility and land rights, and unequal economic resources compounds their vulnerability and ability to navigate the challenges of climate change. Yet feminist movements are leading adaptation interventions, responding to natural disasters and building long-term capacity to face climate shocks and enhance community resilience and sustainability. The Principles for Locally-Led Adaptation, endorsed by over 70 institutions, encourage climate actors to fund ‘context-specific, coherent, agile, and cost-effective solutions and benefits’, while underlining how the engagement of traditionally-excluded groups leads to more effective adaptation measures.³³ Within the Paris Agreement itself, Parties are encouraged to follow a gender-responsive approach to adaptation, with particular consideration to vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, including Indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems.

Women are also at the forefront of mitigation efforts, through their leadership and participation in the just energy transition, championing community driven, decentralised, and renewable energy solutions to address the triple threat of gender inequality, climate change and energy poverty. Yet a 2016 OECD report found that just 8% of bilateral climate ODA for energy targeted gender equality, despite the energy sector receiving the largest share of climate ODA overall.³⁴ This points to a clear opportunity gap for donors to dedicate more energy sector climate finance to initiatives led by women’s and LBTQI organisations. A CLIMA Fund report on grassroots solutions to the climate crisis highlighted the benefits of community governance of renewables, including reducing emissions from fossil fuel production; increasing resilience by decentralising energy grids; and returning control of energy resources to those with the greatest stake in ensuring sustainable and just distribution.³⁵

03.

THE WORK OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IS COMPLEX AND GRADUAL, THOUGH EARLY, MEASURABLE RESULTS ARE POSSIBLE

The comparative advantage of feminist work is deep, long-lasting social, political and economic change, a critical contribution often overlooked by funders. By organising across climate, gender and racial justice to address the complexities of intersecting oppressions, the work of feminist movements is complex and often cross-movement, securing success that is not always immediately measurable. That said, over the last seven decades, women's frontline participation in mass movements has proven to be a significant advantage both in terms of a movement's immediate success and for securing long-term social change. A growing body of evidence shows feminist movements are essential to creating and sustaining social change through their critical role in addressing the structural drivers of inequality and other forms of injustice.³⁶

Movements rooted in their own communities have contextual expertise and lived experience, giving them a concrete stake in the outcome of their work and meaning they are more likely to support consistent engagement and follow-through. This sense of ownership places feminist movements and organisations in the best position to pursue solutions that are deep, empowering and lasting, with evidence that the participation of and leadership by women and women's groups improves the effectiveness and efficiency of development and climate funding.³⁷ A recent evaluation of the Dutch FLOW 2016-2020 Fund recognised that greater representation of Global South women's rights organisations as partners would have improved the coherence of the fund, and that local organisations have commitment and durability to play civil society roles long after programme closure.³⁸ Moreover, the International Institute for Environment and Development asserts that local actors are able to respond rapidly to changing circumstances, and are more transparent and accountable to communities, enabling them to build trust among government, donors, local communities and pay greater attention to trade-offs between groups.³⁹

Movements like [Fossil Fuel Treaty](#) and [Fridays for Future](#), which emerged from local activism to form global movements, have helped shift the discourse from climate action as a technical fix led by scientists to a people-centred, human rights-based project that implicates everyone.

04.

THERE IS GREATER RISK IN NOT FUNDING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENTS TAKING TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Government and multilateral donors define risk based on their institutional priorities and apply a risk framing that centres concerns about fraud, lack of accountability, and failure. As mentioned above, the perception that funding feminist organisations is ‘risky’ may in part be based on smaller organisation’s challenges to meet the onerous reporting and MEL requirements of government donors. Even when the political will exists to support feminist movements, the colonial history and legacy of international development narratives and practices around risk and compliance create formidable barriers to funding these organisations.

However, there is a much greater risk to advancing climate justice by failing to resource frontline struggles than in upholding current risk frameworks. This is because narrow definitions of risk overlook two more urgent and real risks. Firstly, the risk that an unjust status quo—the same one that produced the climate crisis—will be reinforced. Activists must be supported to challenge it. Secondly, feminist activists, particularly Indigenous women and women’s environmental and human rights defenders, carry out climate justice work at great personal risk, often facing severe retaliation and finding their health and safety under threat. Since 2012, 1,910 land and environmental defenders have been killed, 34% of whom were from Indigenous communities.⁴⁰ Despite these risks, they persist in their roles as leaders and movement builders, bringing critical perspectives to work on climate justice at the local, national, regional and international level. Donors have a responsibility to match the courage of these activists and fund from a frame of potential and opportunity.



Organisation: Integrated Health Outreach

05.

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS' ACTIVITIES ARE SCALABLE

Because feminist organisations are chronically underfunded and many have small operating budgets, they are often perceived as unable to deliver initiatives at the scale needed to address the climate crisis. Donor pressure to move significant financing quickly leads to an unfortunate bias towards large-scale, technology-centric projects and initiatives.

Yet feminist movements are capable of delivering at scale, building power of frontline communities to draw connections across local, national, regional and global advocacy work. To date, however, they have not had the resources to realise this promise.

Facilitating local feminist climate organisations to work across borders and engage with national and global climate policy and finance architecture can support climate policies to succeed locally, where increased resources have the potential to produce catalytic impacts on development of national action plans and UNFCCC discussions. The agreement made at UNFCCC COP27 on a new Loss and Damage Fund - a crucial victory for Pacific and other climate frontline states - was supported by an online campaign called [#COP27Pacific](#) led by [Diverse Voices and Action for Equality Fiji](#) (DIVA). Their campaign promoted the political demands of Pacific feminists at COP27, highlighting the specific loss and damage experienced by Pacific countries.

As part of the second African People's Counter COP held in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), partners of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action ([GAGGA](#)) organised the first-ever [Women's Climate Assembly](#), bringing together over 200 women from 14 countries across West and Central Africa. The Assembly featured workshops on the climate crisis and its origins, false solutions, climate debt, activism, and just development alternatives, and is now a permanent Assembly of West and Central African women working to promote climate justice and African alternatives to development. In 2023, the assembly organised across the region to prepare concrete recommendations for leaders at COP28, building a crucial political space to share knowledge and strengthen a collective movement for African climate justice.

REDRESSING THE FUNDING GAP: The role of women's funds in feminist climate action

‘Supporting women’s funds is one of the most effective ways for donors to get resources to southern women’s rights organisations and movements’

- OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET)⁴¹

Resourcing feminist movements and organisations with dedicated and accessible resources is a critical step in delivering on ambitious policy goals on climate and gender justice. By directing a greater proportion of the ODA that targets climate and gender equality objectives towards these organisations, governments will be able to simultaneously fulfil commitments on climate finance and support the type of transformative change necessary to advance progress towards multiple development goals. While supporting these organisations may seem complex, the good news is that the infrastructure to do so already exists. Around the world, women’s funds are strengthening funding portfolios, adapting their grantmaking approaches, and developing partnerships to address the climate crisis.⁴² The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency’s 2023 brief *Support to Women’s Rights Organizations and Feminist Movements* highlights the key role of women’s funds in reaching grassroots actors, as they ‘often work long-term and have built trust with feminist activists, movements and women and girls’ communities over time, and they also tend to be the first ones to respond to crises and the last to leave’.⁴³

Embedded in the feminist movements they serve, women’s funds have awareness of the broader feminist funding ecosystem and ensure organisations working across different issues and in different contexts are well-resourced and able to access the funding to carry out their work. By providing core, flexible, predictable, long-term funding, women’s funds are ideally placed to support such multi-sector work. Two of the eight Principles for Locally Led Adaptation are ‘Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily’ and ‘Flexible programming and learning’, which together ‘allow local actors to respond to dynamic climate risk factors by investing in a range of priorities’.⁴⁴ Women’s funds are uniquely suited to bring these principles to life through their ways of working and approach to grantmaking.

Women's funds play a key role in facilitating funders to reach local feminist organisations, particularly those working in the Global South, given the limitations of international aid and climate finance architecture. They enable funders to work through single mechanisms by being able to absorb large amounts of funding and shouldering the administrative and human resources costs needed to meet donor requirements. They then strategically redistribute this funding and seek to alleviate the grant management burden for smaller organisations that are unable or unwilling to access large-scale funding.

Moreover, women's funds are key to mitigating risk as traditionally defined by donors, as well as the more fulsome understanding of risk, with the experience and resources to meet donor risk requirements. A portfolio approach to funding a variety of organisations allows feminist funds to balance risk across the portfolio, as well as maintaining a principle of trust with their partners. As they are embedded in the movements they serve, women's funds also have the tools, networks and knowledge of local contexts to help protect activists' safety and security and better respond to the needs of their partners. Finally, women's funds have the ability to flow a large amount of total funding to many smaller organisations, with outsize impacts, recognising the benefits of supporting a range of feminist movements to advance gender, social, racial and climate justice. There is further work to be done to document the strategies and impact of feminist organisations in delivering on climate action. With adequate resources, women's funds can fulfil their potential in showcasing the impact of the movements and organisations they support, sharing lessons and strategies for success.



Organisation: Lokiaka, Women Day of Action

There are promising practices that donors can build upon and replicate. Below are three illustrations of how governments are partnering with women's funds to support feminist movements and organisations deliver on climate action.

EQUALITY FUND:

WOMEN'S VOICE AND LEADERSHIP – CARIBBEAN PROGRAMME

The Equality Fund's [Women's Voice and Leadership – Caribbean programme](#) supports 26 grantee-partners in the region, of which climate, environmental rights, and sustainability is one of the top five issues of focus. One such organisation is the Wapichan Women's Movement. The Indigenous Wapichan community did nothing to cause the climate crisis. Still, they are using their traditional knowledge and ways to combat it, despite lacking recognition of their traditional territory and the encroachment of mining interests.

The [Wapichan Women's Movement](#) is supporting Wapichan women to take up leadership positions and develop recommendations and priorities for community development, including climate resilience. They have provided training in 21 communities and hosted a conference on empowering Indigenous women for climate resilience. Participants explored ways to strengthen village governance for sustainable development and climate resilience; value traditional knowledge and community resources in addressing climate change; and contribute to policy changes. On the latter, community members are engaged in the ongoing Amerindian Act revision process (the act that governs Guyana's relationship with its Indigenous peoples) and advocating for land recognition.

'To ensure climate justice for all, we need to be able to protect our lands and natural resources. We also need solidarity from our friends internationally as we work to ensure respect for our rights, including our rights to free, prior, and informed consent.'

– Immaculata Casimero,
Wapichan Women's Movement



Immaculata Casimero

FCAM, BOTH ENDS, MAMA CASH:

THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GREEN & GENDER ACTION

[GAGGA](#), a consortium led by Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, in collaboration with Mama Cash and Both Ends, provides a strong example of multi-year support for feminist organisations.

GAGGA's vision is for a world where women's rights to water, food security, and a clean, healthy and safe environment are recognised and respected. To achieve this, the alliance focuses on strengthening and connecting community-based women's rights and environmental justice groups and movements, with a model that ensures it reaches a diverse network of actors and movements working at the local, national and regional level. GAGGA provides direct funding to 24 national, regional, and global women's and environmental justice funds, and more than 400 grassroots women's rights and environmental justice organisations across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The alliance is a strategic partnership that is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) through their Power of Voices framework, under the climate adaptation and mitigation theme. In the first 5 years, GAGGA received €32m from the MFA, and was renewed for a second round of funding in 2020 with €35.5m over 5 years until 2025. In 2023, Global Affairs Canada committed to supporting GAGGA through their climate finance programme with CAN \$11 million over 3.5 years.

Multi-year funding from the MFA has allowed adequate time for implementation, monitoring and learning, rather than expecting community-centred work and regranting mechanisms to yield immediate results. It has also provided reliability and predictability, allowing room for GAGGA partners to fully operationalise their vision and generate robust outcomes.

CASE STUDY:

PACIFIC FEMINIST FUND

The [Pacific Feminist Fund](#) is a new fund that emerged from the Pacific feminist movement, and was established following endorsement by over 150 feminists at the 2nd Pacific Feminist Forum. The fund is jointly set up by Urgent Action Fund - Asia & Pacific, Women's Fund Fiji and Women's Fund Asia, and is supported by Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Amplify-Invest-Reach (AIR) partnership. Less than 1% of direct funding reaches women's rights organisations in the Pacific and this is just one of the reasons why a stand-alone Pacific Feminist Fund has been established to address the chronic under-resourcing of organisations that are having an impact in the lives of our people at community and family level.

The fund is modelled on the values and lessons learnt from established global women's and feminist funds. It aims to de-risk donations from diverse sources, safely and quickly deliver funds to Pacific women's and gender non-confirming organisations and groups, and draw international and regional attention to the needs and priorities of women, girls, and trans people in the Pacific.

The fund will play a key role in tracking and understanding the funding flows for climate justice in the Pacific, specifically to women's groups, networks, and organisations. It will play an active role in securing funding for climate justice, and advocate for more resources for feminist movements in the Pacific.

CONCLUSION: Seven tangible actions

Confronting the climate crisis is daunting, particularly in the face of the multiple and interlocking challenges. It requires bold action and innovative thinking. Amidst the multitude of possible strategies, there is one clear opportunity: to better resource feminist movements and activists on the frontlines of climate action. Investing in these organisations is a key but underutilised tool to rapidly accelerate and drive progress towards climate finance targets and broader sustainable development goals, and crucial to ensuring a just transition.

Governments who are committed to advancing climate justice and gender equality, and ensuring funding reaches the local level, can follow these tangible actions:

- 1** At a minimum, meet existing targets on climate finance, sustainable development, and gender equality and ensure climate finance is contributed as additional to ODA budgets.
- 2** Increase the proportion of climate-related ODA that serves gender equality objectives to 88%, including ensuring 15% of this funding has gender equality as a principle objective.⁴⁵
- 3** Direct a greater proportion of overall civil society funding to women's and LGBTQI rights organisations, particularly those based in countries in the Global South, and those led by structurally excluded groups.
- 4** Track and report on the percentage of climate finance going directly to women's and LGBTQI organisations in the Global South, including setting specific targets to significantly increase this number (for example quadrupling in the next four years).
- 5** Increase the proportion of climate finance that is delivered through transparent, accessible, grants-based mechanisms that protect human rights and is in accordance with the commitments set out in the Paris Agreement and OECD guidance on development cooperation.
- 6** When direct funding isn't possible, engage with women's and feminist funds as equal partners, grounded in trust-based cooperation, in order to reach a wide range of organisations working on different intersections and various levels.
- 7** Deepen collaboration with feminist climate activists, including through their meaningful engagement in climate finance discussions and decisions, to support greater understanding of the intersection between gender equality and environment.

END NOTES

1. Under the 'feminist movement' umbrella, this brief focuses on women's and LBTQI rights organisations in the Global South and the women's funds that serve them as key actors in moving and employing climate finance. Distinguished from the acronym LGBTQI, which includes gay men, LBTQI places an emphasis on individuals who identify as women or non-binary. A 2022 Bridgespan and Shake the Table report defines feminist movements as: 'Organisations, leaders, and networks working together to change power structures that reinforce gender and other inequalities. Led by people with lived experience of the gender power imbalance and other injustices, feminist movements challenge the compounding factors of discrimination, taking an intersectional approach to address our most intractable problems'. [Lighting the Way: a report for philanthropy on the power and promise of feminist movements](#), The Bridgespan Group, April 2022
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POLICY BRIEF ON CLIMATE FINANCE

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