

Scoping study: Women's movements and the role of funders

Elanor Jackson & Kanwal Ahluwalia, January 2018



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### 1. Background and scope of work

In October 2018, Comic Relief launched an open funding call named Power Up, the aim of which is to **support a diverse range of women's rights organisations to fight against systems which perpetuate the injustices they encounter** in their daily lives. Applications are limited to organisations led by women and girls only in Comic Relief's priority countries.<sup>1</sup> Grants are for 3-5 years and start at £150,000 - £300,000 for single organisations; up to £500,000 for those organisations working in partnership and; up to £750,000 for women's funds or for sub-granting.

In launching this call, Comic Relief recognised that much funding in both the UK and internationally goes into extremely valuable and much needed individual projects of support around women and girls' needs and rights, however, that such individual projects and interventions will always be limited in the systematic change they are able to bring about. As such, Comic Relief believes that women and girls' power over decision making for their own lives and collectively for creating or changing systems will be best achieved through well-resourced, connected and valued women's and girl's movements. As part of Power Up, Comic Relief aims to have an **ongoing learning strand with the organisations they fund** around what they collectively understand to be the key elements of building effective women's movements and how best to support and engage with them.

This report was commissioned by Comic Relief to provide findings and recommendations to inform funding decisions and to shape the learning work to accompany the Power Up Programme. Specifically, the study aims to explore:

- 1. The role of women's movements**
- 2. Models and frameworks of women's movements**
- 3. The processes and support needs in building women's movements**

### 2. Methodology and approach

Two consultants, Elanor Jackson and Kanwal Ahluwalia, were commissioned by Comic Relief to undertake this scoping study for 25.75 days from December 2018 to February 2019. The consultants identify as feminists, and consider themselves allies of feminist movements. They believe that feminist activism is a political project; that the contexts in which we work to achieve gender equality are politicised and our stance, as feminists comes from this viewpoint and influences our approach and analysis in this report. The consultants believe that

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<sup>1</sup> These include: United Kingdom; Africa – Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa; Asia – India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

achieving women's rights and gender equality requires an examination of how sex, ethnicity, class, sexuality and other factors intersect with power. These power structures are maintained through discriminatory patriarchal norms and institutions, where women and girls are largely excluded from exercising power.

The scoping study included a number of steps:

- **Initial discussion with key funding and learning staff<sup>2</sup> at Comic Relief** to fully understand the brief and the critical learning areas to support Power Up as well as previous learning which has informed the Power Up call.
- **Creation of a database** of constituents of women's movements (primarily women's and girls' rights and feminist alliances, networks and movement building entities); women's rights organisations (largely NGOs) and key donors funding women's rights movements. This is a summary of a random selection of entities known to Comic Relief, the consultants or those interviewed that was possible to compile within the time available. Other entities could be added to this.
- **Desk review of literature on women's movement building** including Comic Relief's own documentation such as a previous review on the value add of women's led organisations; learning from Comic Relief's Safe Spaces work in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa; the MAANDA Empowerment Framework; a scoping study on the policy and legal context within which women's movements operate in Comic Relief's priority countries. See **Appendix 1** for full bibliography. Where additional documents were identified in the process, but the consultants were unable to review them due to time constraints, these are also listed in the bibliography.
- **Key Informant Interviews with donors and activists** using semi-structured questionnaires which were conducted remotely with 19 respondents identified either by Comic Relief, the consultants or others suggested by respondents themselves. In consultation with Comic Relief, the consultants tried to ensure a mix of staff from donors, women's funds, women's rights organisations and activists. Respondents were emailed the questions in advance to allow time to prepare in advance to maximise time use. Respondents from organisations, spoke from both an organisational perspective but also from their wider experience. Respondents were very willing to share their experience and learning and several were keen to continue to dialogue and collaborate with Comic Relief. See **Appendix 2** for a list of the organisations of those individuals consulted and **Appendix 3** for the semi-structured questionnaire used. A summary of the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning models, which emerged from the literature review and KIIs was also shared with Comic Relief.
- **Analysis** of the interviews and literature reviewed to pull out emerging findings and recommendations for Comic Relief in a draft initial findings report for feedback from Comic Relief to inform the final report. An independent consultant also reviewed these initial findings and provided feedback. The final report was an internal document for Comic Relief. This was then anonymised and adapted for sharing with a wider audience, although where relevant we have indicated which type of organisation respondents are part of or if they were suggested as individual activists or consultants.

### **Limitations**

The timeframe for completion of the study was relatively narrow and fell over the Christmas holidays period which meant there were some challenges in scheduling interviews, in particular with activists from the South who were contacted later in the process, hence the majority of respondents were from organisations which fund women's and feminist movements.

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<sup>2</sup> Comic Relief staff included commissioning manager, Anya Stern – Investment Partner, Gender Justice; Jake Grout-Smith - Evaluation and Learning Lead and; Louise Byrne, Investment Associate.

### 3. Key findings

This section draws on findings from respondents interviewed as well as from the literature reviewed.

#### 3.1 The role of women's movements

##### 3.1.1. Definition of women's and feminist movements

The literature on women's movements highlights that they are hugely diverse and represent a broad range of often competing values, priorities and approaches. As such, there is **no one women's movement, but rather a multitude of women's movements representing different constituencies of women experiencing differing levels of oppression and power, and working on an array of issues from grassroots to global level.**<sup>3</sup>

Several different types of entities can be included within movements including: collectives, coalitions, networks, women's rights organisations, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, workers, activists and academics.

Comic Relief defines movements as being **'made up of a number of constituents working collectively towards a shared long-term goal.'**

Many of the definitions contributed by respondents consulted in this study draw from Srilatha's Batliwala's work on defining women's and feminist movements. Batliwala writes that *'feminist movements are social movements and have the same characteristics of movements...but they have certain features—certain feminist characteristics—which many or most other social movements lack'* which include having a gendered analysis and political goals that are gendered; that women form a critical mass of the movement; that they espouse feminist values and ideology; that they systematically build women's leadership; that they use gendered strategies and that they build feminist organisations.<sup>4</sup>

Shamillah Wilson cites the work of Gaidzanwa, who usefully makes clear the **distinction between women's movements (WMs) and feminist movements (FMs):**<sup>5</sup>

*A women's movement is defined as a social movement constituting women who collectively decide to further interests specific to women, using perspectives that draw from and highlight their lived experiences. As such, women's movements tend to have a "reformist agenda: focused on women's equal rights with men, and social and political rights on par with men." On the other hand, Gaidzanwa defines a feminist movement as "often a smaller section within broader women's movements, which tend to have a transformative agenda: going beyond opposition to patriarchy, to critiquing the architecture of oppression and the political struggle necessary to transform rather than reform the structural inequalities at national, regional and international levels."*

In practice, however, some women's movements may not define themselves as such and the definition of women's movements may vary in different contexts. Whilst respondents shared the view of movements being made up of constituents working collectively, all of those consulted emphasised the importance of the goal of movements being a **political goal**. Many respondents emphasised that movements should be **led by those directly affected by the issues and that they should be setting the agenda**. Others emphasised that women's

*What is a social movement?*

**'An organized set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action'**

They have the following characteristics:

- Mobilised constituency base
- Members collectivised in formal or informal organisations
- Some continuity over time
- Clear political agenda
- Variety of strategies and actions
- Clear internal and external targets

*From: AWID (2012), Changing their World: Concepts and practices of women's movements, 2nd Edition, Srilatha Batliwala*

<sup>3</sup> ActionAid UK (2016), **Guidance Note: Good practice approaches for engaging with social movements for women's rights**, DFID PPA Women's Rights and Social Movements Pilot Project, by Rachel Noble and Daphne Jayasinghe

<sup>4</sup> AWID (2012), **Changing their World: Concepts and practices of women's movements**, 2nd Edition, by Srilatha Batliwala

<sup>5</sup> Shamillah Wilson (not dated), **Feminist and Women's Movement Building in Southern Africa**, Open Debate

and feminist movements are engaged in **challenging embedded sources of power, transforming power dynamics and overthrowing systems of oppression:**

- One respondent from a research organisation said that they consider **movements** to be *‘engaging with entrenched and embedded sources of power that are hidden from public view’* by changing narratives, attitudes and views to *‘topple, transform and absorb the institutional, cultural and social pillars that prop up the status quo’* including for example, religious institutions, business or the media.
- Respondents from a funding organisation articulated their definition of **feminist movements** being *‘intrinsically political in nature with the goal of interrupting patriarchy and patriarchal oppression.’*
- Another respondent from a funding organisation talked about **feminist movements** being *‘focused on power and system and systemic changes and moving beyond the binary.’*
- Respondents from two other funding organisations further emphasised moving beyond the binary using an intersectional approach. One of these respondents also talked of a spectrum in terms of the change that women’s and feminist movements seek: *‘women, girls, trans and non-binary people and their allies are focused on ensuring that the systems of oppression that they encounter due to their gender and due to other forms of repression, such as class, race, age and ability, are addressed, changed or overthrown. There is a spectrum.’*

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) also usefully highlight what a movement is not: *‘one organization with a social change agenda and a base of support or a civil society sector with common concerns but no action towards a common agenda’*<sup>6</sup>.

**Some respondents highlighted the importance for funders in this space to retain language which stressed the political edge of movements.** Whilst some respondents did not see a need to distinguish between women’s movements and feminist movements, others felt **this distinction was important** even though the terms are often conflated in practice. It was highlighted that women’s movements can reinforce women’s caregiver roles and the status quo, whereas feminist movements have more of a political objective. One respondent from a funding organisation reiterated that *‘mainstream approaches to women’s rights are located within a neo-liberal and human rights framework but lack an analysis of power and power differentials. Feminist movements, on the other hand, also consider women’s rights but go beyond this to **focus on unequal power and the need for systemic change**’*. They are providing *‘counter cultural proposals; i.e. it’s not just about women needing a seat at the table, but that there’s an issue with the table itself.’* Another, from a feminist membership organisation, argued: *‘...using the term women’s movement instead of feminist movement is very political and they shouldn’t be collapsed. I feel that we should at least use the term women’s rights movements. What is most important is that we’re funding feminist social change... (which) fundamentally aims to shift the forms of oppression.’*

Feminist analysis is political and is central to the work of feminist movements, which is a different approach to that of non-feminist organisations who work on issues which affect women and girls: ***‘Having a feminist vision which makes it unique. The realisation of women’s rights is the overriding goal and purpose. That doesn’t mean that feminists aren’t working in other important places like economics or climate change, but that it’s done within that shared goal. You don’t see that in other mainstream movements; it’s often side-lined. How we do the work being just as important as what we’re trying to achieve makes us different to other movements.*** (INGO respondent)

A respondent from a funding organisation focussed on young feminists highlighted **some of the differences between women’s movements and young women activists and movements**, which tend to be more informal with an emphasis on online organising; more radical in terms of trying to challenge the status quo; more likely to take risks (which comes with pros and cons); more likely to mobilise around taboo subjects such as pleasure and sexuality. The respondent stresses that young women activists that they are working with are linked to women’s movements but are more likely to be working across other movements such as climate change, indigenous movements etc: *‘they are very intersectional in their politics and this is related to them working across movements and building bridges.’* Interestingly, the respondent highlights how the way that young activists are organising is part of their politics of challenging oppression – from wanting highly consensual and

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<sup>6</sup> From AJWS’s Social Movement Assessment Tool

transparent decision-making processes to seeking self-generated financial and non-financial resources, such as giving circles and charging membership fees, as well as highlighting the importance of safety.

Two respondents (from a funder and an INGO) highlighted **young women’s frustration with ‘NGO form and structure, preferring different, less formal types of organising’ with ‘flat leadership structures and consensual decision-making.’** The worrying trend of young activists burning out at the age of 18 years was also highlighted but it was noted that their consistent use of *‘art, music, technology, using public space for art, dance, as a way of generational healing (has been a way) to deal with personal trauma and to build changing narratives in popular culture.’*

In their definitions of women’s and feminist movements, respondents highlighted the following characteristics as important:

<b>Table 1: Characteristics of women’s movements and feminist movements outlined by respondents</b>	
<b><u>Strategy and approach</u></b>	
1.	<b>Women mobilising or taking collective action</b> using a <b>variety of strategies</b> towards a <b>shared political goal/vision to end oppression</b> across a range of issues which create inequality over time. (This particularly applies to feminist movements).
2.	They take an <b>intersectional approach</b> with an analysis of how sex intersects with other factors e.g. sexual identity, sexual orientation, race, class, ability etc. (This particularly applies to feminist movements).
3.	They have a <b>vision for long term economic, political, cultural and social change which addresses the root causes of inequality</b> ; they are persistent and want to change the status quo. Changes they are seeking lie on a spectrum from addressing practical needs to gender inequality to overthrowing patriarchy etc.
4.	<b>Self-led, self-determined</b> – led by grass roots people who identify as women, girls, and LGBT groups directly affected by the issues. They are supported by women.
5.	They are <b>not uniform</b> ; the needs of the movement are always shifting and being negotiated as communities are dynamic; this is part of the evolution of movements.
<b><u>Movement actors</u></b>	
6.	<b>Multiple actors</b> be they in organisations, alliances, coalitions etc within the wider movement ecosystem.
7.	They form a mix of <b>formal and informal</b> (registered or not) groups; they are <b>flexible/agile</b> and; <b>organic</b> in terms of who joins them and leaves them.
8.	Women activists can be located <b>within women’s rights and feminist movements themselves or in other movements for social change</b> , where they bring a gender perspective, and particularly younger feminists who tend to work across movements.
9.	They are <b>autonomous</b> i.e. not reliant on a specific donor, political party etc. Younger feminists in particular seem to be hesitant to take money from donors to avoid dependency and to ensure autonomy. <sup>7</sup>

It is useful to note, also, the difference between *building feminist movements* to mobilise those who identify as women and their allies for feminist outcomes and *feminist movement building* which attempts to bring feminist analysis into other social justice movements.

**The role of women’s and feminist movements, as compared to civil society actors, in progressing towards women’s and girls’ equal power and agency in decision making at all levels**

The relationship between movements and organisations is a **complex, contentious and sometimes confusing** one; organisations sometimes claim to be movements. According to Zemsky and Mann (2008) there are at least three ways in which social movement organisations differ from social change organisations. First, they are

<sup>7</sup> Although it should be noted that there is a long tradition of feminists in the South not wanting to take donor money and groups that have worked voluntarily.

permeable, meaning in this context that they **benefit from more forces** rather than get diluted. Second, they **seek to change systems, rather than work within systems**. Third, that they take a **long-term perspective and work to develop a long-term narrative**.<sup>8</sup> Solome Lemma from Thousand Currents writes that what differentiates movements from other social good efforts is that they are **rooted in and led by “the people”**. This collective leadership can take many forms, but it is seen in its **accountability to people** – not boards or funders.<sup>9</sup>

Batliwala (2012) notes that organizations are *not*, in and of themselves, movements — but they do play critical roles in building movements and as organizing structures within them. Organisations are **sites from which movements are built, supported, serviced and governed —and sometimes, destroyed**. They are the primary structures in or through which movement leaders, activists, and members are organized, trained, capacitated, protected, and energized to pursue the transformational agenda of movements.<sup>10</sup>

One respondent from a research organisation reflected a perspective that is also helpful here – *‘movements change narratives, values, ideologies and world views in a way that advocacy or organising campaigns don’t do at the same level.’* Another respondent emphasises that *‘No one movement is uniform – if it presents itself as such there is a power issue. There is always the possibility of many things to be created e.g. as Zapatista said – a world where many worlds exist. It is still rooted in community but community may have differing needs.’*

Many respondents recognised the **important role women’s rights organisations play as movement constituents**. Sometimes referred to as movement allies, women’s rights organisations have been critical in strengthening women’s and feminist movements. However, the relationship between women’s rights organisations and movements has become **increasingly contentious**. Batliwala highlights the debate around whether these organisations are truly serving movements or have become entrenched in their own survival in executing donor projects or becoming their ‘technical assistance arms.’ These difficult dynamics raise questions about their loss of focus and legitimacy for building movements.<sup>11</sup> In addition, one respondent from an organisation that supports feminist movement building, highlights that compared to movements: **‘Women’s rights organisations don’t have a mobilising force behind them so they are not sustainable.’**

The table below summarises the role of women and feminist movements compared to other entities as outlined by respondents interviewed:

<b>Table 2: The role of women’s and feminist movements as compared to other types of civil society actors:</b>	
1.	Have a <b>feminist vision</b> encompassing a range of issues, which has a power analysis and intersectional analysis at its core – which is often side-lined in other movements, organisations etc. Working on power and agency more broadly instead of specific project goals.
2.	They are <b>directly impacted by the issues</b> so are drawing from their lived experiences; have a mobilising force around them so are more sustainable than individual NGOs.
3.	<b>Collective groups working on multiple levels of change</b> . They link micro to meso to macro. Are aware of the need to be inclusive, even if not always successful in practice. Voices that may be unheard and dismissed (i.e. organising led by trans and intersex people) are now on the table
4.	<b>More diverse set of decision-making structures</b> , whereas organisations tend to be top down with more bureaucratic and usually governed by external expectations which have to be met, like metrics

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, Rachel Rosner (2011), **TRANSACTIONS TRANSFORMATIONS TRANSLATIONS - Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements**. Accessed here - [https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/transactions\\_transformations\\_translations\\_web.pdf](https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/transactions_transformations_translations_web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> **25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements**, Solome Lemma (Thousand Currents), Guest Contributor – May 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 article on Inside Philanthropy - <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2018/5/10/25-powerful-ways-funders-can-support-social-movements>

<sup>10</sup> Batliwala, S., (2012), **Changing their world: concepts and practices of women’s movements**, AWID

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. See also Batliwala’s useful distinctions between formal and informal organisations that are associated with movements: (1) movement building or support; (2) movement created; (3) movement allied and; (4) movement serving organisations (pages 15-19).

5. **Ability to respond to events rapidly** - coalesce around particular moments or issues specific to their context which spark some action.
6. They **rupture tradition, taking risks and creating counter cultures**, narratives, ideologies, views etc. Have a **political approach to fundraising, valuing non-financial resources** (solidarity economy, finding alternatives to the current system). They have a **political approach to resource mobilisation, questioning where money comes from** (particularly young feminists)
7. They **address power and agency** rather than operating on a project basis
8. **Different model of social change** which sees a 'departure from institutionalised, top-heavy, Northern led model' which work to specific start and end dates and metrics.
9. **Goes beyond projects or advocacy or campaigning work**; can mobilise groups that are beyond direct beneficiaries/clients and change narratives, values, ideologies and world views in a way that advocacy or organising campaigns don't do at the same level.
10. **Sustain change** - able to advance social change through changing social norms; reframing discourse and changing policies and laws which they then continue to advocate for these laws and policies so they are key to sustaining change.
11. **Engage in the long run** towards social change and transformation using a variety of strategies, including networking at different levels – local, national, regional, continental, international.
12. The **ways in which they work is as important as the outcome** e.g. leadership models and decision-making; young people using their bodies on the front line to raise visibility

### 3.1.2 What existing evidence is there about the role and importance of women's movements in progressing towards equal power and agency in decision-making at all levels for women and girls?

Jessica Horn states that '*progressive social justice movements emerge in response to situations of inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands.*'<sup>12</sup> In line with this, women's and feminist movements have been active in challenging inequality for decades. Indeed, few of the gains made on women's rights in the last 20 years – the landmark Beijing Platform of Action, the recognition of women's rights as human rights, legislative and policy changes at the national level – would have been achieved without the advocacy of women's rights organisations and movements to raise public awareness and pressure governments for change.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the documents reviewed highlight the role that women's and feminist movements have played in response to oppression over several decades to **progress the achievement of women's rights, policy change as well as social norm change at different levels**. They have been successful in bringing about meaningful change due to their **relevance and connectedness to women's and girls' lives as well as their approaches**, such as the ability to unite and mobilise large groups of women, and make their collective voice heard through consciousness raising and collective action. Women forming their own movements outside of mainstream organising has been paramount. Davis and Sweetman emphasise how '*feminist political scientists studying social movements have long pointed out that mixed-sex political action does not result in all the changes women need to see. To further those interests they share with other women but not with men...feminist activism is necessary.*'<sup>14</sup>

Srilatha Batliwala (2012) emphasises the importance of **collective power** in women's achievements: '*women speaking not just as individuals, or through particular organizations, but with a powerful, collective voice*' and reiterates how movements drive forward political change; protect women from backlash; enable those without a voice to be heard; provide a training ground for women's political participation and create changes that go beyond legal change.<sup>15</sup> As one respondent from a funding organisation emphasised, **rarely is one organisation able to achieve these levels of change and it was not achieved through a project based approach but a**

<sup>12</sup> BRIDGE (2013), **Gender and Social Movements - Overview report**, Jessica Horn

<sup>13</sup> UN Women (2011), **Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice**, New York: UN Women

<sup>14</sup> Imogen Davies & Caroline Sweetman (2018), **Introduction: development and young feminisms**, *Gender & Development*, 26:3, 387-401

<sup>15</sup> Batliwala, S. (2012), **Changing their World: Concepts and practices of women's movements**, 2nd Edition, AWID. Available online at: [https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing\\_their\\_world\\_2ed\\_full\\_eng.pdf](https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing_their_world_2ed_full_eng.pdf)



**collective one** – *‘it is about power and agency, and shifting power requires movements and collective work done on multiple levels.’*

Batliwala writes that women’s movements play a **pivotal role in ensuring that laws and policies are implemented by raising awareness, influencing elected officials at local and national levels, mobilising communities, building the capacity of duty bearers, and monitoring and holding governments to account** in international arenas. In the absence of autonomous feminist movements, governments tend to ratify treaties but do not follow up with meaningful action.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there is considerable evidence around the changes that women’s and feminist movements have made in terms of **policy change**. The oft cited Htun and Weldon research (2012) on the role of feminist activism in bringing about policy change to prevent violence against women and girls<sup>17</sup> is a clear example of the value of women’s and feminist movements. The research which covered 70 countries over 40 years, found that **autonomous feminist movements were the most critical factor in achieving progressive policies on violence against women and girls (VAWG)**. It highlights how a range of entities were working on this at different levels – some worked on litigation and policy and legal change; others with women in communities on feminist consciousness raising and awareness raising around violence; and work was also done to transform discriminatory gender norms which was critical for new laws to be put into place and implemented.<sup>18</sup> The importance of work to challenge discriminatory gender norms, alongside lobbying for policy change is highlighted by Jessica Horn (2013) who writes that strides made in both formal equality *as well as attitudes and behaviour* has been achieved by movements **‘pushing forward progressive agendas and challenging gender-biased social and cultural norms at a popular level as well as in law, policy and institutional practice.’**<sup>19</sup>

A critical way for women themselves to continually analyse the issues they face and seek collective solutions has been through grass roots organising. Helen O’Connell (2013) reiterates the importance of **safe spaces to build consciousness raising for grassroots women** and across women’s movements to build ideas and test strategies in an intersectional way, as well as allowing new actors, such as younger feminists and new ideas, to be incubated.<sup>20</sup> These spaces are also important for enabling members to co-create activities as well as paving the way for collective action. Emily Esplen (2013) points to the work by the Pathways of Women’s Empowerment Programme which shows that **relationships fostered in the spaces created by women’s rights organisations often bring about the kind of changes associated with the empowerment of women**, such as a growth in self-confidence; acquisition of new capabilities and consciousness about gender injustice and; the capacity to act collectively to demand rights.<sup>21</sup>

## **Challenges**

When considering how to support women’s and feminist movements and where funders could best place their efforts, it is also important to reflect on the **contexts within which movements are working** and the current challenges they are facing.<sup>22</sup> For example, Kvinna till Kvinna’s research asked women human rights defenders in 32 countries whether the situation has changed during the past years, and if so, how. **More than 60 percent say their space to act as an activist has shrunk**. The main reasons for this development are believed to be

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> The authors ‘analysed policies on violence against women in 70 countries from 1975 to 2005. Our analysis reveals that the most important and consistent factor driving policy change is feminist activism. This plays a more important role than left-wing parties, numbers of women legislators, or even national wealth. In addition, our work shows that strong, vibrant domestic feminist movements use international and regional conventions and agreements as levers to influence policy-making. Strong local movements bring home the value of global norms on women’s rights.’ (Respondents from Mama Cash informed us that this research will be complimented by forthcoming research by Laura Weldon on economic empowerment and women’s movements funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation).

<sup>18</sup> Htun, M. and Weldon, S.L. (2012), **The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005**, American Political Science Review, 1-22

<sup>19</sup> BRIDGE (2013), **Gender and Social Movements - Overview report**, Jessica Horn

<sup>20</sup> O’Connell, H. (2013), **What added-value do organisations that are led and managed by women and girls bring to work addressing the rights, needs and priorities of women and girls?** Comic Relief

<sup>21</sup> Esplen, E. (March 2013), **Leaders for change: why support women’s rights organisations?** Womankind Worldwide

<sup>22</sup> There is a growing body of literature on the shrinking spaces for civil society further restraining the work of movements and organisations, some of which is listed in the bibliography.

governments' fears for political change, increasing nationalism including hostility towards foreign funding, and conservative ideals.<sup>23</sup> One activist talked about government oppression and the shrinking space for the women's movement in Tanzania – '*At the moment there are few spaces to come together to discuss strategies and priorities.*'

In spite of the crucial role of women's rights organisations and movements in ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls, key challenges remain which are summarised in the box overleaf.

In fact, **for decades, women's rights movements and women's rights organisations have been severely underfunded.** AWID research in 2010 revealed that the median budget for 740 women's organizations all over the globe was US\$20,000. In the same year, as a point of reference, the income for Save the Children International and World Vision International was US\$1.442 billion and US\$2.611 billion respectively.<sup>24</sup>

AWID reported in 2012 that this flow of donor resources away from movement building approaches towards projects is in turn a product of more serious and subterranean political trends in many developed countries: **a backlash against feminist ideology, politics and power; a growing tide of political and social conservatism; pandering to the sexist and conservative elites in developing countries;** and above all, a growing suspicion of approaches that do not somehow return benefit to the investing countries.<sup>25</sup>

The literature and some respondents, highlight the depoliticisation of women's rights work which has resulted in funding being channelled to non-feminist organisations for programmes on, for example, '*large-scale funding for girls' education*', in the absence of a focus on dismantling patriarchy and ensuring an analysis of power informs their work.

However, in spite of the need for better resourcing of feminist movements, there is a growing distrust of donor funding by some movement actors around the acceptance of this type of funding and the loss of autonomy which often comes with that.

Davis and Sweetman (2018) report that despite a focus on 'women's rights' being a priority for most INGOs, many are partly or completely silent on the current crisis for women that the rising phenomena of fascisms and fundamentalisms represents. Kate Bishop (2017) sums this up well in writing that '***closing spaces is the new norm which needs to be addressed head on with a human rights approach.***'<sup>26</sup> Instead as Davis and Sweetman

**Summary of key challenges, drawn from the literature review:**

1. Donors co-opting the agendas of local women's groups/organisations; the depoliticization of these agendas and consequently the instrumentalization of groups.
2. Suspicion around movement building in terms of governments supporting local elites.
3. Favouring project funding with tangible outcomes and a lack of core flexible funding.
4. Need for strengthened capacity in leadership - strategic and organisational, evaluation, and fundraising.
5. Shrinking spaces for women's movements (this varies across Comic Relief's target countries\*) – women human rights defenders seen differently to men; not seen as political actors, travel bans, attacks on prominent women etc., young feminists remain on the margin. Backlash from the religious right. Online safety.

In the UK context:

6. Funding and closing of essential services in the UK; the feminist movement being seen as white and middle class, mental health issues – fatigue, a lack of self-care, not being taken seriously – how to harness social media positively, funding competition.

\*CIVICUS monitors civic space according to the following categories: *closed, repressed, obstructed, narrowed*. Comic Relief's target countries for Power Up include: Repressed – 5 Obstructed – 7, Narrowed – 3 (see more at <https://monitor.civicus.org/Ratings/#closed>)

<sup>23</sup> Wassholm, Christina (2018), **Suffocating the Movement – shrinking space for women's rights**, Kvinna till Kvinna

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/20-years-shamefully-scarce-funding-feminists-and-womens-rights-movements>

<sup>25</sup> Batliwala, S., (2012), **Changing their world: concepts and practices of women's movements**, AWID

<sup>26</sup> Bishop, K. (July 2017), **Standing Firm - Women- and Trans-Led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society**, Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund

note, there has been a bias towards focusing on economic aspects of gender inequality at the expense of political and social aspects, as well as depoliticising the economic issues by focusing on increasing the earnings of individual women within the existing grossly unequal global economic system.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst as pointed out by Catherine Nyambura (2018), the **internet has opened up spaces** for new forms of harassment, abuse, surveillance, censorship, control, and violence against women, it has also had the positive impact of creating new political spaces for young people including young women. She reports that it has become one of the most effective ways to engage and disseminate information to young people. Nevertheless, it is not readily available, or affordable, to all young feminists.<sup>28</sup>

Some respondents also mentioned **inter-generational tensions** within movements for example, the fact that younger activists have sometimes felt excluded from the work of more established women's and feminist movements; that the approach of younger activists are quite different e.g. more online activism, less face to face work and; that using age as an entry point can be limiting (for example the current focus on ending child marriage doesn't question the patriarchal institution of marriage, just the age at which girls marry). Conversely, older female activists may have more to lose in terms of speaking out as given they are older, they are more likely to have families and other responsibilities, so their decisions are not just their own. As women activists get older 'they don't have anywhere to go' (noted by one respondent from a funding organisation) and with limited incomes, they are dependent on income they earn being part of movement entities. One activist raised this issue in the context of Tanzania, highlighting the gap between young feminists and older women – the former focusing on issues like sexual and reproductive health and older women focusing on land rights and representation in political parties – and the need to come together at movement level to strategise and succession plan. These sorts of issues **need examining at movement level as well as the need for far more intergenerational dialogue and collaboration**. A role for older activists is to nurture and support newer activists joining ranks encouraging a cross flow of learning and a pipeline of leadership. This may help strengthen intersectional approaches of movements, given younger activists tend to be better at integrating such approaches.

Several respondents talked about the need for women's and feminist movements to adapt tactics to respond to the **increasing backlash from right wing and conservative forces**. One respondent added that these forces have received huge investment over several decades, funding which has been unconstrained by complex donor reporting templates. Another highlighted how, in the last two years in increasingly authoritarian contexts, women were more often **holding the line or providing alternative spaces and structures** for women, whereas previously they would have been lobbying for policy change. In addition to supporting movements to respond to backlash, respondents also talked about the increasing risks facing individual women who have become more visible in their societies and the need for increased safety and security. She went on to articulate some of the risks that activists face such as house arrests, imprisonment and travel bans and how they are spending considerable resources to support women to heal from the trauma that they are facing and provide them with safety and security.

These reflections by respondents are corroborated by Kate Bishop's research (2017) for Mama Cash and Urgent Action fund which stressed that **intentional support for movement building and for building constituencies of support for citizen-led alternatives to current power structures and ideologies** are seen as urgently needed. At the same time, funders should recognise and **support the safety of individual activists** by funding personal and organisational security measures, raising international awareness of and support for their activist work, and respecting activists' request for anonymity.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Imogen Davies & Caroline Sweetman (2018) **Introduction: development and young feminisms**, *Gender & Development*, 26:3, 387-401

<sup>28</sup> Nyambura, C. (2018) **Repoliticising women's rights in development: young African feminisms at the cutting edge**, *Gender & Development*, 26:3, 423-437

<sup>29</sup> Bishop, K. (July 2017), **Standing Firm - Women- and Trans-Led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society**, Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund

## 3.2 Models and frameworks of women’s movements

### 3.2.1 What are key elements for effective movements?

A number of respondents questioned use of the term ‘effective’ by Comic Relief in the Terms of Reference for this work and in its guiding questions, both in terms of what is meant by it and also the issue of a Northern based donor like Comic Relief asking about this, given that it should be movements themselves identifying what is working for them and what is not. It should be noted here, that the respondents were asked what *they* understood ‘effective’ movements to be, so the consultants did not unpack how Comic Relief itself might define this. In spite of this, respondents identified a number of common elements which are included in the table below. Some stressed that a donor is not often close enough to the work taking place to be able to gauge effectiveness. This means moving beyond the a more transactional relationship to one where donors work alongside communities to understand what *they* understand as impact and effectiveness, which is a critical part of movements’ ability to self-determine. **‘As a funder – I don’t think it is our role to decide what is effective or not. The reason we often use this language in the philanthropic world is because we don’t take time to build relationships. Our role is to engage with communities and have the communities decide the support which is needed. The question of effective movements is the role of the community to decide....We only know this if have conversations with people about how they understand that work’** (stated by one respondent). Another respondent (an independent consultant) noted that feminist movements are exposed to **far more scrutiny than other movements**, e.g. environment movements receive millions in funding for campaigning and are not expected to deliver projects.

Many felt that determining if movements are ‘resilient’ and ‘strong’ is less loaded than the concept of them being ‘effective.’ Some respondents also added that we need to be thinking more about resilience and the idea that redundancy has to be built in to supporting movements. One respondent talked about the concept of sustainability being questioned as it tends to have a linear capitalist notion of what it means to continue. She reflected that resilience thinking is also being informed by climate change activists and noted that maintaining the status quo is not actually sustainable so we should no longer be talking about sustainability – *‘We have to build in recognition that things will fall apart and we have to keep going in the face of this - we can’t sustain the status quo’*. Another respondent from a funding organisation shared that when reflecting on support to the Ugandan Human Rights Fund with a group of funders, they identified a gap in relation to supporting resilience building as part of grantmaking. Her colleague urges funders such as Comic Relief to think about what it means to support organisational and movement resilience.

A summary of the key elements suggested by respondents at that point in time (recognising that movements are dynamic and constantly evolving) is included below:

<b>Table 3: The elements of effective women’s and feminist movements as outlined by respondents</b>
<b><u>The movement base:</u></b>
1. <b>Broad, critical mass of diverse women</b> and different types of people embedded in their communities. Led by those most affected rather than women being seen as targets/objects. Not driven by a single actor – either an individual or an organisation.
2. <b>Diverse</b> – networked across a range of actors and allies. A <b>diversity of voices</b> actively participating. Holding those voices however uncomfortable that may be.
<b><u>Vision, strategy and ways of working:</u></b>
3. <b>Shared collective political agenda.</b> The movement’s <b>political goals are gendered.</b> They seek not only a change in the problem, but a change that privileges women’s interests and seeks to transform both gender and social power relations. Feminist movements include an intersectional approach.
4. Use <b>multiple strategies</b> that are mutually reinforcing (e.g. feminist consciousness raising, also looking at services being made and shaped by women, also at policy reform, as well as discourse and communication and the language we use). Work at both the <b>individual (consciousness raising) and collective level.</b> They challenge existing power structures using long term strategies. They change narratives, norms etc. Movement actors regularly evaluate and change strategies.

5. **Recognise hierarchies of privilege and power within the movement** that need acknowledging and addressing both in practical issues based work and in the organising part.
6. **Autonomy and self-determination** – accountable to their constituents rather than a donor, with the ability to make decisions on how to operate, what strategies to employ without being beholden to an external source such as a donor.
7. **Strong collaboration** within women’s and feminist movements and with other allied movements.
8. **Have cycles of activity** (big moments and quiet moments) so in it for the long haul.

**Leadership:**

9. **Feminist leadership**, accountability, decision-making. Disbursed power and leadership within the movement and the sharing of learning and power with younger activists to support leadership pipelines.
10. **Leaders come from within the movement** and are able to articulate the issues and solutions as they see them. Has a momentum about it; includes the next generation of leaders within the movement.

**Capacities:**

11. **Credible, influential** - being credible to movement constituents and having legitimacy to be influential in achieving change and the ability to shape a narrative, or offer a narrative.
12. Have the **ability to analyse the context**, when it’s safe and when it’s better not to be visible. Use a gender and power analysis and gendered strategies which build on women’s own mobilizing and negotiating capacities and involve women at every stage of the process. Decide for themselves when they are effective (it’s not for donors to decide).
13. **Organising** – long term approaches for organising and building diverse alliances which need to have shared agendas.
14. **Agile** - Draw on both non-financial (e.g. volunteer time and passion) and financial resources (core multi-year funding) to respond to opportunities as they arise. Whilst this funding may go to organisations within movements who are movement building, this is very different to top down project funding for organisations. It means having funds available to react quickly for groups that may be formalised or not; the work may be very political if that’s what is needed and; provides the ability to pay for staff (to get to safety, pay for an office space that is secure etc).
15. **Use self-generated resources** – particularly by younger feminists drawing from their own contexts, rather than using external resources.
16. **Strong support infrastructure** that includes strong anchor organizations and effective decision- making structures and communication systems.
17. **Resilient** – to different threats and external shocks.
18. Strong collective capacities of human rights defenders and their organizations to ensure their **safety and security**.

**Learning:**

19. **Cross movement learning** – including cross generational learning such as peer exchange, alliances, shared campaigns, learning together, convening spaces.
20. **Document change as it’s happening** - which informs strategy.

### 3.2.2. What existing models and frameworks have been developed to help understand and define what effective women’s movements are? How do others assess and learn about these elements?

There are a number of factors why funders may be reluctant to support movement building, including worries about being too political, movement constituents not being formal organisations, or how this type of work can be explained to trustees. However, a key concern shared by many is that movements are hard to measure. Many respondents in this study talked about the **lack of useful tools to measure movement work**, whilst at the same time, sharing **concerns around burdening movements with detailed monitoring and evaluation frameworks**.

Pastor, Ito and Rosner laid important groundwork in 2011 in their report which argued for a **new relationship between funders and the field**. They pointed out that movement metrics are not about a stand-offish assessment of grantee performance but are about setting markers that reach beyond organisations and ask whether the whole being created by grassroots organizing and alliance building is actually more than the sum

of its parts. They recommend that movement metrics ‘are a co-creation that involves the world of movement builders and philanthropic leaders working together to develop a common language to reach common goals’.

They also argue that **approaches to measurement should value transformations as well as transactions.** (See explanation in the box opposite).

They go on to provide sample metrics in relation to the ten common movement-building strategies they identified through their literature review and interviews: *organizing, civic engagement, leadership development, alliance building, campaigns, research and policy analysis, communications and framing, traditional and social media, organizational development, and movement building.* They also provide **practical recommendations to funders** that are useful to consider, which include guidance on building a new toolbox of measures, to more far-reaching suggestions that leadership development and the connection of policy outcomes to movement building become central parts of evaluative approaches.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 4: Transactions and Transformations**

**Transactions:** involve the quantifiable markers both internal (e.g., how much funding, how many members, etc.) and external to the organization (e.g., voter turnout, policies passed, etc)

**Transformations:** the vital but sometimes “invisible” work. They show how people, organizations, and movements have been altered through the collective efforts. Taking the transformation further, they can show how societal and political views have shifted or been impacted by movement building. (Transformational metrics are more qualitative in nature which make them more difficult to define, capture and track.)

In more recent research by Kate Bishop (2017) for Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund, many activists spoke about the **value of donor relationships built on mutual respect and trust** – trust that organisations have the best knowledge of reality on the ground and are best placed to decide how to respond, and trust that donors are not going to exacerbate the difficulties they are facing by insisting on particular strategies or requiring excessive reporting. One activist stressed the importance of understanding what communities want and designing community based approaches with them so ‘**funders learn with them and adapt.**’

**Table 5: Thousand Currents reporting approach**

- Eighteen months ago, the reporting format was based on their current ToC – a long report, with a section at the end where the grantee could share anything else they wanted to add.
- Partners said the format was clunky, took ages to go through and they didn’t feel it was giving a sense of their work.
- In response, Thousand Currents shifted to reports with only one question – *What would you like us to know about the work over the last year?*
- As a result, reports have been much richer and Thousand Currents have been able to do more philanthropic advocacy from their side.
- The Regional Director Africa, has *quarterly check ins* – a one hour call with African partners to share what is going on in Thousand Currents and with space for partners to share.
- Meetings take place with grantees every 18 months in the communities where they work, which helps the Regional Director get to know them and their day to day work.
- Importantly, partners are often evaluating the work of Thousand Currents e.g. in 2012, they had a partnership evaluation with an external consultant. *‘This is part of creating a constant feedback loop so grantees understand that MEL is not just a one-way thing.’*

**Models of reporting that activists felt reflected a partnership approach** were those that required a reduced level of paperwork appropriate to the size of the organisation and scale of the grant, rather than applying standard reporting requirements that add to the burden of work of already stretched organisations. Valuing the group’s own assessment of their work and their responses to new challenges was also seen as important rather than relying solely on quantitative results.<sup>31</sup> This is an approach that has been adopted by **Thousand Currents** which has done a lot of thinking about monitoring approaches and their **relationship with**

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, Rachel Rosner (2011), **TRANSACTIONS TRANSFORMATIONS TRANSLATIONS - Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements.** Accessed here - [https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/transactions\\_transformations\\_translations\\_web.pdf](https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/transactions_transformations_translations_web.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Bishop, K. (July 2017), **Standing Firm - Women- and Trans-Led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society,** Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund

**grantees.** They see the role of funders is to be in **solidarity with and having trust in what is happening**, whereas they consider that what drives M&E frameworks is not usually trust: *'it tends to be risk management, which often means you lose the nuance of learning because of overly focusing on things like financial management.'* See Table 5 for how they have evolved their reporting process.

As noted by one respondent (an independent consultant), it is important for **funders to make a decision about their role in the movement building process**, in order to identify what they want to track and what they need to learn to do this work better. The respondent cautioned that we often rush over the strategy part too quickly in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) with organisations talking about outcomes before being clear on the strategy, so this reflection is important to identify the funder's unique role and support offer. She reminds us that **movements are a means to an end – people mobilising towards a strategic set of goals** so funders are **supporting a process, a strategy and a motive for action**. *'The quantitative metrics can tell us something but not a lot, especially with the political challenges and setbacks; it is the qualitative data that is important'*. However along with other respondents, this respondent noted that we **often collect far too much information, so it is important to step back and reflect on how we want to use this data**.

Some of the organisations represented by respondents have done considerable work on their approaches to monitoring and evaluating their support to movement building, creating **bespoke tools and frameworks**. Most of these are focused on assessing the elements of a strong women's or feminist movement outlined in **Section 3.2.1** above (like setting agendas/framing, legitimacy, collaborative working across different sectors but also with other movements, consciousness raising, women's participation and leadership, how forward looking their strategies are etc.) in order to refine their strategies and direct their investments. Some of the organisations consulted are guided in their monitoring approaches by their **theory of change (ToC)** and continue to evolve their ToC as they analyse and learn and test their assumptions, whilst others are focusing on the movement building process and have been developing and piloting assessment frameworks for use by staff and local consultants embedded in movements, or by movement constituents themselves. Others spoke about focusing on different levels of MEL – both the process of movement building and the impact of the movements. All respondents were nevertheless united in that:

- there can be no one-size fits all approach
- understanding the context is vital
- it is important to be mindful of long-term change processes
- the onus should be on the donor to be flexible and listen to the movements themselves to understand what learning is useful to them - *'Donors need to recognise that there is already so much knowledge and learning within the movements'* (noted by one respondent from a feminist, membership organisation)

One or two respondents spoke of using and adapting the **Gender at Work Framework**<sup>32</sup> when measuring impact level changes. Comic Relief also has experience of developing and using an **empowerment framework** based on the Gender at Work Framework with its Maanda Programme grantees. AJWS advises donors to rethink what 'success' or 'impact' entails, to reflect the wider contributions and aims of social movements, given that movements catalyse social transformations that often transcend the achievement of measurable and time-bound political and policy objectives.<sup>33</sup>

**Rosa – the UK Fund for Women and Girls**, are clear about the level of change they are measuring. They have developed a MEL framework based on their ToC and focus their MEL on the value of **investing in strong women's organisations rather than on beneficiary level changes**. *'This is important for anyone in movement building – to demonstrate the value of the constituents themselves and the importance of strengthening them and helping them work together'* (respondent from Rosa). Rosa has collected evidence linked to this framework through their online forms (monitoring) and there are **story tools for grantees to capture stories of empowerment for individual women and girls and also stories of influence**, in order to demonstrate how

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<sup>32</sup> <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

<sup>33</sup> **Ten Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements**, American Jewish World Service (no date)

influence has increased – an approach which was used in a recent evaluation of their *Women to Women programme*. Grantees found the tools accessible and enjoyed using the stories tools. One of challenges for Rosa is to determine how they can use the stories of change gathered from grantees, e.g. converting them into case studies.

**Womankind Worldwide is guided by the seven pillars of their ToC** – these are the areas which they consider need attention if they are able to strengthen movements or their constituents. Womankind’s partner survey asks questions which are linked to the ToC pillars. They are also aiming to develop some level of MEL framework for movements. They recognise the **potential to use existing tools for measuring impact** such as outcome harvesting and that it is key to identify what the movement constituents want to achieve, help them identify what the markers of change are and then be clear about what success looks like. As well as defining specific changes, Womankind recognises that the **process that women’s movements go through to get to that point is also fundamental**, so for them, this means understanding how people are coming together, how leadership is fostered, how safe spaces are put together, how people are navigating conflict within those spaces, how social media is amplifying the issues and how backlash is mitigated.

Some of the tools feminist organisations and movements themselves are using include *stories of change, outcome harvesting, change diaries, creative approaches* such as art and participatory video etc. For example, FRIDA are working on documenting a study next year looking at the effectiveness of young women’s movements. This will involve **longitudinal case studies** – exploring what it has meant for them to have long term flexible funding over five years and how this relates to the work they have been able to do. They will be exploring multiple elements and it will be visual. *‘We feel that there is a lack of evidence around the change that younger activists are making, but that this isn’t really captured’* (respondent from The Young Feminist Fund).

As noted above, some of the respondents have experience of **developing and then adapting their own frameworks**. Examples from Global Fund for Women (GFW) and American Jewish World Service are included in Table 6 below. It should be remembered that **creating a framework, has political implications**, as noted by one respondent. For funders, **the approach they adopt to create a MEL framework, is therefore key in order for it to be legitimate and valuable to grantees**.

<b>Table 6 – Summary of experiences of organisations which have developed movement assessment tools</b>
<p><b>Global Fund for Women</b> have developed a <b>movement capacity assessment tool</b> (MCAT) to assess the strength of the movement and where it is in its evolution – e.g. <b>emerging, coalescing, maturing, in decline</b>. When developing this tool, they saw that there are tools to assess the strengths of coalitions and networks but not to assess movements. The tool has a rating system and there are elements which are subjective and depend on local contexts. They are <b>now partnering with 5 women’s funds (WFs) to use the MCAP tool to assess their movements</b> and over 3 years will fund what the tool tells them e.g. if it identifies that there is a clear political vision but not a strong leadership pipeline or not a strong grassroots base then they would focus their grant-making in these areas. One respondent noted that <b>GFW and the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative in the W. Balkans</b> have realised that learning about the members of the movement you fund gives a narrow and limited view so what they have started to do at country level is to <b>hold conversations with self-identified women’s rights movements actors and have created town hall meetings inviting anyone who wants to discuss the issues, to talk with them</b>. Basically, they are creating baselines on where a movement is and then return a year later to map out the conversation with whoever is in the room at that time, in that movement.</p>
<p><b>American Jewish World Service</b> have developed a <b>Social Movement Assessment tool</b> and found that focusing on the three broad domains of <i>base, structure</i> and <i>strategy</i> has been really helpful. The tool was developed to help inform their strategy development and also builds on GFW’s work. Staff complete the tool every three years as a way of developing and informing their country strategies, focusing on the key movements implicated in their Strategies. They also hold a biannual reflection process on strategy outcomes and milestones – successes and failures and reflect on how to together share learning across portfolios for grant-making and funding. The <b>tool is subjective</b>, completed by both staff and in-country consultants who come from the movements and if not, some intersectional movements which inform both portfolios. The purpose is to identify</p>



strengths and weaknesses and gaps in the knowledge of staff and consultants, then to reach out to inform these gaps and given what they know – identify how to direct their resources. Staff have been able to engage with this framework in a confident way and have a more **nuanced understanding of what movements are**. AJWS have been piloting ways to take the tool to the field to bring to grantee partners engaged in movements to inform their actions and thinking.

**In addition, below are examples of some *existing* tools shared by respondents and the consultants:**

- Global Fund for Women’s [Movement Capacity Assessment Tool](#) – this was mentioned by a number of respondents (various funding organisations in the USA were drawing on collaboration with GFW and learning from the MCAT tool, in relation to developing their own MEL approaches).
- American Jewish World Service – [tool to assess social movements](#)<sup>34</sup>
- Manual Pastor, Jennifer Ito, Rachel Rosner – [Metrics that matter for building, scaling and funding movements](#)
- Management Assistance Group – [A Tool for Mapping Successful Movements](#)<sup>35</sup>
- This [Fact sheet from the Building Movement Project](#) highlights some key differences between capacity building for organizational sustainability and capacity building for social justice and change and a [Framework of cross-movement approaches](#) – offers a useful summary which distinguishes between *transactional, collaborative and transformational* approaches in a table of movement characteristics. Also see [tools2engage.org](#) for over 100 additional tools on this topic from across the sector and [Pathways for Individual and Collective Empowerment](#)
- Report by Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice with their [Movement Building Indicators](#) - lengthy list of indicators but quite creative.
- Just Associates’ [We Rise toolkit on cycles of movement building](#).
- The collective impact approach - <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>
- The Barefoot Guide 4 – [Exploring the Real work of Social Change](#) - stories and analyses from change approaches at individual, community, societal and global levels, with rich learning and practical insights around the questions we should be asking, how to foster co-creative partnerships, and measure and evaluate the real work of social change with rigorous humility.

### 3.3 The processes and support needs in building women’s movements

#### 3.3.1 What are the processes involved in building women’s movements?

Many of the respondents consulted shared their approaches to supporting movement building and a common strand for many organisations (e.g. GFW, AWJS, Global Fund for Human Rights, Thousand Currents) was having local staff and consultants both linked to and from within the movements in the countries and regions where they fund. They see this as **important for building long-term and close relationships over time** and ensuring they are better able to provide **relevant and timely support** to movement building.

In the same way that there are differing but overlapping views on the elements of effective women’s and feminist movements, there are also a number of ways that organisations have defined the **steps involved in movement building**. However, as one respondent noted: *‘Movement building is the new buzzword for what feminist organising has tried to do for a long time and social justice activists have been doing always – build*

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<sup>34</sup> The AJWS tool features 20 questions (“yes/no” or 1-5 scale) focused on assessing each movement according to the characteristics of successful social movements. We have organized these characteristics into three critical domains: base, structure and strategy.

<sup>35</sup> Identify **10 factors in successful social movements**: (1) vision and frame; (2) authentic base of constituents mobilized; (3) commitment and long haul; (4) underlying & viable economic model; (5) vision of government and governance; (6) a scaffold of solid research; (7) pragmatic policy package; (8) recognition of the need for scale (& infrastructure to do so); (9) a strategy for scaling up and; (10) a willingness to network with other movements. Their tool allows an organization, coalition, or network to chart out what movement actors are currently working on to strengthen each of those 10 movement success factors and to create a shared understanding of: where your organization or network is making a distinctive contribution; where work is being duplicated across the movement; where the movement as a whole needs to either consolidate or ramp up its efforts.

bases, approach communities where they are, listen to them, the leadership of these engagements are from the people in these communities. So, movement building is not new but it has somehow risen to the level of visibility for those with resources to think about'. Furthermore another respondent noted: 'movements build themselves, it is not the role of funders to build movements'.

Wilson, in her paper examining women's and feminist movements in Southern Africa<sup>36</sup> and Batliwala in her reflections on what elements make for strong and sustainable feminist movements<sup>37</sup> highlight a number of strategies and actions:

- (1) **Political consciousness-raising and empowerment** – raising women's own consciousness of their oppression and exploitation is a critical first step to them having an awareness of the issues so that they find themselves asking why, what and how. This involves experiential learning through reflection on personal experience when women can gain a deeper understanding of the experience of other forms of oppression based on class, race, ability, religion, age etc and use the exclusion of others as a basis for collective action. In the Southern African experience, this strategy also recognised the need to expand the ranks of feminist movements, not just by incorporating more young women, but also more women from poor and marginalised groups.
- (2) **Constituency building for mobilisation and organisation for transformation** - the second step starts building a constituency and mobilising it for action around a particular issue. This involves the mobilization of aware, conscious women into varied forms of collectives or groups, named and framed using culturally and locally appropriate and familiar forms. This allows the mass base of the movement to form visible and accessible units that can link up to amplify their voice, vision, and struggle. Batliwala also highlights how particularly younger generations of activists are creating new forms of virtual organising that are erasing not only space-time barriers, but also many of the other constraints that made it hard to mobilize certain constituencies.
- (3) **Convening of spaces (nationally and regionally) for reflection and dialogue with allies to build theories of change, common political agendas and action strategies** - to build a common understanding across a range of constituencies and actors of a particular issue or agenda. These agendas are generated through bottom-up processes, arising through debate and democratic discussions where constituents have a large and even defining role. Agendas are concerned not just with changes at the formal institutional level but at the informal level – the contexts and communities in which their constituents live their realities. Both authors highlight the dynamic cyclical process of re-grouping, assessment and evaluation, critical reflection to ensure that strategies are modified as necessary over time. Kabeer et al in their work on women workers organising within the informal economy state that '*organising for change...does often require an external catalyst, to introduce or nurture ideas of change. But it does mean that groups evolve at their own pace, and around their own evolving agenda.*'<sup>38</sup> The convening of spaces for reflection and experience exchange was emphasised by the majority of respondents as being a critical area of support to movements that is valued by their grantees.
- (4) **Developing critical alliances and partnerships** – in the Southern African experience this has been to share information and analysis and to develop collective political agendas that would influence mainstream human rights and development agendas, which would lead to sustainable change and enhance women's human rights. This would not necessarily be restricted to those women who are most intimately affected and involved by the issue but could also include decision-makers, other movements, and the broader feminist movements. This point was reiterated by an INGO respondent who stresses the importance of building and collecting support from others, who are not directly impacted. This respondent and another highlight the importance of cross-movement collaboration with other social justice movements to deepen impact. Kate Bishop reiterates that **strong alliances and networks are critical for survival**, sustaining morale in the face of abuse and public denigration.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wilson, S. (not dated), **Feminist and Women's Movement Building in Southern Africa**, Open Debate

<sup>37</sup> Batliwala, S. (2012), **Changing their World: Concepts and practices of women's movements**, 2nd Edition, AWID

<sup>38</sup> Naila Kabeer, Kirsty Milward & Ratna Sudarshan (2013), **Organising women workers in the informal economy**, Gender & Development, 21:2, 249-263

<sup>39</sup> Bishop, K. (July 2017), **Standing Firm - Women- and Trans-Led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society**, Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund

- (5) **Building a new kind of knowledge** – is an interesting addition by Batliwala which seeks to challenge the monopoly of knowledge professionals (academics, researchers, development and gender “experts”), by democratizing the processes of learning and knowledge generation within and by their movements. This was also highlighted by a respondent who reflected that much of the research is carried out by international NGOs and institutions and it is crucial to offer spaces to activists to share what is working, their challenges and learning as well as disseminating research and offering resources in these spaces.
- (6) **Internal work which focuses on transforming movements’ own practice of power**, to build new models of power and leadership within their own structures and processes.
- (7) **Ensuring support and solidarity around collective strategies for change** - which include protests, mobilisation, vigils, petitions, media campaigns and broader public education. Solidarity actions are often connected through a common objective, linking together different women in different contexts, who can carry out the solidarity actions at the same time.

Respondents added further ideas to the processes above as important steps in the process of building movements, for example:

- Identifying the **issue and opportunity**
- **Mobilising** people for both the ‘low hum’ and well as the ‘big moments’
- **Framing the issue** - which is why language matters. Movements are only as successful as how they articulate and mobilise people around that.
- **Identifying people to influence ~~targets for campaigns~~**
- Doing the **different types of activities** that are required
- **Resting phase** – no movement that has had major success has done it without levels of low activity to ensure long term sustained activity.

The respondent from JASS talked about **movement building cycles** in which 4 interconnected cycles are recognised - Rising Up, Building Up, Standing Up and Shaking Up.<sup>40</sup> Like Batliwala, she stressed the importance of **challenging norms and values** (invisible power) at the centre within movements, allowing members to challenge hidden power (e.g. the church, corporations etc) and visible/formal power like the state. Several respondents also emphasised the need for financial resources for movements to develop.

The respondent from the Innovation Network referred to three phases of movement building and, usefully, the **role of donors at each stage**:

- (1) **Pre-movement moment** – which is the part often neglected by funders – building the network; identifying the message/story, the ultimate goal and the narrative that is being put forward about your issue; communications; base building (recruiting, training volunteers), all of which is getting ready for the trigger event. There is a need for a good base of volunteers; have to have relationships with others, a strong communication strategy, and knowing how to proceed.
- (2) **Movement moment** – this is about **mass mobilisation** and is almost out of your control. You can organise events, and then the moment happens and the media is running with it. Donors often get involved here and then provide rapid response funds. These funds are really important but donors don’t always do it very well (i.e. they’re not rapid). During the Black Lives Matter protest - even in the midst of the Ferguson protest, groups were asked to submit applications and budgets but of course they don’t have time to do paperwork while protesting so donors need to understand this.
- (3) **Post movement moment phase** – donors need to stay involved. They shouldn’t define the impact of a movement by concrete policy reforms; this will take many moments to build sufficient support across different pillars. It’s important to ensure that funders are thinking differently about what success is.

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<sup>40</sup> Rising Up and Building Up are about laying the groundwork and organizing—we develop the political awareness, relationships, skill and organization needed to make lasting change, both inside and out. Standing Up and Shaking Up are about getting heard, taking action and making impact – we resist, challenge, change and transform power dynamics and decision making, policies and institutions, cultural norms and practices. See more on - <https://werise-toolkit.org/en/cycles-movement-building>

### 3.3.2 What types of support are needed for movement building?

#### Financial and other types of support

A summary of the different types of general support for movement building suggested by the respondents, which was reinforced by the literature review, is included below. However, these areas for support need to be understood in relation to where respondents 'are at' within the evolution of movements, given that movements are dynamic and continuously evolving. In other words, the assessment of support needs should be regularly re-visited. Respondents highlighted the importance of both financial and non-financial support for women's and feminist movements to thrive. Non-financial support was seen as more informal, often without a clear outcome, but equally important (although some of what was described as non-financial types of support also require financing e.g. capacity strengthening and convening spaces). **Respondents also pointed out that funders were not always the best placed to provide support** and that support could come from others either within or outside movements.

#### Financial support

- **Core, multi-year support** - that allows organisations that are part of an ecosystem to be responsive and to cover things like communications. Although as noted by one respondent, multi-year support is not put into practice in terms of donors giving the multi-year funding upfront, rather they always disburse tranches on an annual basis before releasing the next year's funding: ***'It would be better to make multi-year commitments and send the money right at the beginning – so send the money at the beginning of the 5 years and continue to be in a relationship and work out other ways to leverage resources and support. This would shift the power dynamic - giving multi-year partnerships goes some way to shifting power.'*** Whilst this may not be feasible for many donors, including Comic Relief, who do not have 5 years' money in the bank or have other accountability considerations, an independent consultant noted that donors could make a clear commitment to automatically release the following year's funds early/on time unless something major goes amiss with the movement.
- **Money that is string free**, otherwise movements will continually be under-resourced and will never be effective collectively.
- **Carefully consider the role of project funding** – one respondent felt strongly that **project funding in particular 'kills women's organisations'** and is **'self-defeating for movement building.'** She felt that it would be a challenge for Comic Relief to encourage grantee partners to think beyond projects because organisations are conditioned that way, to think about, for example, the number of people that they are reaching. Others suggested that as well as core funding, **project support can be helpful if that would help movements progress towards their goals**, given that it takes so long for them to bring about the change they seek.
- **Rapid response funds** outside of projects for individuals and for digital security for organisations.
- **Emergency funding** for a variety of gaps – bridge funding, being able to respond to opportunities as well as specific funds dealing with backlash, security threats and assaults, online safety etc.
- **More devolved and core funding via specialists like women's funds** – Several respondents talked of the valuable role played by women's funds. As noted by one respondent from a funding organisation, **national women's funds can provide really solid close non-financial support to groups and movements**, like helping them with networking, meeting other activists, application writing. If working globally, funders can **focus on linking groups to others that can provide support to them**.
- **Gender budgeting** – tracking the percentage of funding provided by donors for women's and feminist movement building compared to other work.

#### Other types of support

##### Working in partnership/solidarity

- **Support for the direction of travel i.e. the overall vision and agendas** of feminist movements especially those movement actors that are most marginalised (recognising that progress isn't linear).
- **Candid engagement among different members and components of the movement to do self-reflection** was suggested by one respondent – this may sometimes involve challenging lack of inclusivity or conservative views within a movement through fostering dialogue between groups with different values and experiences.
- **Support solidarity** – One respondent from a funding organisation talked about how they see themselves as 'grant makers +' which means they follow the lead of grantee partners on what sort of solidarity they want from her organisation.

### Capacity development

- **Capacity strengthening for those that want it** – this may be delivered directly, or a funder may sign post to another funder. Other groups feel that capacity building is a burden, so asking groups what they want is important. This includes access to advice and expertise, information and analysis, experience-exchange, networking linkages.
- **Work to change the narratives around the language of right-wing conservative forces** – two respondents emphasised how the language of women’s rights has lost its currency and that right-wing forces have co-opted the language of rights and empowerment, and that there is a need to build strategic communications by movements to work against this.
- **Building leadership in general and leadership across movements** – was seen as important by many, to support leadership development due to burn out.

### Offering safe spaces for meetings, strategising, learning

- **Convening safe spaces to step out of their everyday spaces to come together and strategise** and look for opportunities to take forward an issue or topic - the majority of respondents highlighted the need for **safe spaces to connect and convene** as important. One INGO respondent emphasised the importance of *‘restorative spaces to be together and be yourself and to learn from others about different strategies they use and also to reflect and to process what they have been going through, as the rest of the time people are rushed off their feet.’* The need to **build outwards** was noted rather than the same people always coming together, so sharing beyond a single movement and making sure that different voices are getting heard and accessing spaces.
- **Cross regional and cross movement learning** – as well as linking women’s and feminist movements to learn from each other around how to create effective change. This includes building linkages between women’s rights organisations, women’s and feminist movements and Women Human Rights Defenders. One activist highlighted the need for linking rural women activists with urban activists to learn from each other, suggesting that offering opportunities for women in rural areas to be mentored by urban activists would go some way to challenging discriminatory gender norms which are still entrenched in rural areas of Tanzania. Another respondent highlighted the huge amounts of learning that has taken place amongst women’s funds who have received grants under the Leading from the South Programme:<sup>41</sup> *‘women’s funds have learned so much from each other, e.g. how they do calls for proposals; how to deal with challenges; how they do local fundraising etc. The cross regional learning has been vital – for them and also for their grantees.’*

### Support for safety, security and wellbeing

- **Safety as an issue for women who are part of movements as well as a way to build stronger women’s and feminist movements.** One INGO respondent highlighted how violence against women and girls remains a pertinent issue, both within movements, by the state as well as by multi-national companies. So, there is a need to protect both individual women and collective groups of women, when most current mechanisms support individual women’s human rights defenders and not collective groups. Another respondent suggested that whilst **younger activists are facing similar risks as older activists, the level of risk is amplified by the way that young feminists work**, i.e. the informality of their work and the fact that many younger activists are not registered and therefore not protected by an organisational structure, so not receiving funding can make them very vulnerable when there is a crack-down. Also, as they are younger, they **may be more vulnerable to different types of discrimination**.
- **Most respondents strongly emphasised the importance of wellbeing and respite due to extreme levels of backlash.** One respondent reminded us how a number of movements are floundering in both extreme and less extreme contexts, due to the toll on leaders. She highlighted the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative (IM-Defensoras) which has adopted a good approach to self-care<sup>42</sup> and emphasised there is a need to look at both the work of an organisation as well as the people doing the work in a holistic way. Another respondent highlighted how 18 year old activists, who started their activism at 13 years, are dropping out of movements due to burn out, but that there are good examples of how they are defending themselves in the digital space through reclaiming a feminist internet to talk about closed topics such as pleasure in safe spaces, and are

<sup>41</sup> **Leading from the South** (LFS) supports women’s organisations and networks dedicated to the political, social and economic empowerment of women. Through grants, capacity development, and lobbying and advocacy, LFS will help equip organisations to influence policy, tackle power imbalances and reduce exclusion, violence, discrimination and inequality. This €40 million fund (2017-20) is administered by the South Asia Women’s Fund (SAWF) for activities in Asia and the Pacific, the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) for activities in Africa and the Middle East, Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) for activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the FIMI Indigenous Women’s Fund (AYNI) for indigenous women’s activities throughout the South.

<sup>42</sup> Based on IM-Defensoras and Consorcio Oaxaca’s experience with women who are victims of violence and women human rights defenders at risk and suffering from chronic burnout, we believe it is necessary to look at women defenders and human rights organisations from a comprehensive perspective. For us, such a perspective includes a personal and collective level, and has physical, psychological, mental, energy-related and spiritual dimensions. See more - <http://sur.conectas.org/en/self-care-as-a-political-strategy/>

drawing on self-healing practices from, for example, indigenous practices. Various respondents suggested that funders build on these good practice examples, whilst one highlighted the need for funders to encourage and fund movements to conduct risk and threat analysis, and integrate individual and collective wellness and self-care in their work.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Influencing other donors**

- **Advocate with less supportive funders to continue to make the case that women’s and feminist movements are valuable, credible and worth funders’ time.** This was a common suggestion from respondents, who stressed that Comic Relief is well placed to play a valuable role in influencing other funders and bringing different actors together to learn and share how better to support movement building. They highlighted how funders can be sympathetic insiders and through their access to spaces of power they should do more to open different doors or amplify the voices of movements. One respondent from a feminist membership organisation reiterated that some funders are already on board with supporting feminist movements; **their starting point is that feminist movements are a really important part of social transformation**, and as such their approach is less about doing effective work, but more about learning what is working well and why and how to share this learning across grantees.

### 3.3.3 How can funders, including Comic Relief, best support women’s movements?

Critical approaches to both financial and non-financial support that emerged from both the literature review and key informant interviews are outlined below. Many of the ideas in this section about how funders can support movement building are relevant for Comic Relief in its approaches to funding and supporting feminist and women’s movement building.

The section above lists the types of financial and other support that donors can provide. However, as several respondents pointed out – the way in which funding is provided is as important as *what* is provided. AJWS’s *10 Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements*<sup>44</sup> urges donors to look beyond direct funding to support physical and virtual infrastructure and organising efforts, as this can sometimes result in ‘*more harm than good, such as by corrupting or dividing movements, undermining the political nature of movements and making them vulnerable to government accusations of being foreign agents.*’ AJWS suggest more **indirect forms of support for movements** (e.g. funding for research that bolsters the agendas and aims of movements; engaging in advocacy in support of movement policy priorities; funding legal defence for criminalized movement activists; and facilitating the travel of movement activists to attend trainings and convenings, or to engage in regional/international advocacy). Solome Lemma’s article: *25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements* (2018)<sup>45</sup> states that donors should see ‘**multiple entry points to movements**’ through which support can be provided, rather than getting attached to one group or one leader within a movement. This requires learning about the various actors and relationships *within* a movement.

Further insights on ways in which donors can approach supporting movements are listed below:

#### **(a) Investing time in building relationships, understanding power dynamics and local contexts**

**Funders cannot create movements** – this was noted by a number of respondents so what is vital here, is **being responsive to what movements need; how they need to get support and; having a clear understanding of the power that is held by the funder** because they hold the ‘purse strings’. Linked to this, a few respondents noted that funders are not in the best position to determine what support is needed. As one INGO respondent stated: *We think we know what women’s rights organisations need, but they may think differently.* This means **funders ceding power to movements and creating more participatory processes.**

A critical part of this is the importance of **building relationships of trust with grantees**, as highlighted by a number of respondents who talked about some of them doing this through having staff from and based in

<sup>43</sup> **Ten Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements**, American Jewish World Service (no date)

<sup>44</sup> American Jewish World Service (no date) **Ten Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements**

<sup>45</sup> Inside Philanthropy (May 10 2018) **25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements** by Solome Lemma (Thousand Currents), Guest Contributor - <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2018/5/10/25-powerful-ways-funders-can-support-social-movements>

countries and working with consultants allied to movements. Respondents highlighted **that funders need to understand the context** and look at existing research and knowledge about that context. One respondent noted that: *'It is all about relationships and context – if you do this level of work, your staff need the skill-sets and networks or you decide: we don't have that and will just get the money out to where it is needed.'* Others also talked about this issue of being connected with a place and the politics which means having practical skills, but also being able to facilitate introductions to others and carry out a networking role. American Jewish World Service recommend that donors that want to engage with social movements should integrate an approach across their grantmaking priorities that values grassroots participation and leadership.<sup>46</sup> And as noted above this has implications for funders with limited numbers of staff working on programmes which fund feminist movements and those staff having the time to do the **walking together aspect and enabling feminist movements to access other networks and knowledge**, all of which takes time.

### **(b) Learning from participatory grant making**

In research undertaken by the Innovation Network which interviewed over 40 funders, movement builders and evaluators,<sup>47</sup> they learnt of the challenges for funders in getting real time information. They felt that literature on **participatory grant making processes** could be helpful and also **suggested an advisory committee of movement actors to help funders identify grantees and to provide vital on-the-ground, real time information**. The respondent from Innovation Network suggested that the most common approach is to select a committee (and there are different ways in which members are selected), they usually participate in the development of grant making strategy and guidelines and they help choose who gets awarded the grants; **they are a critical part of the decision-making process, whilst the funders role is more facilitatory**. The role of the funder is to carry out due diligence on grantee partners, but a significant amount of power is given to the committee. Another respondent from a feminist membership organisation also suggested that funders learn from participatory grant making guidance, such as GrantCraft,<sup>48</sup> a webinar on participatory grant making by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE),<sup>49</sup> resources by the Lafayette Practice on participatory grant making<sup>50</sup> as well as Justice Funders' Choir Book: A Framework for Social Justice Philanthropy,<sup>51</sup> as well as monitoring and evaluating participatory grant making by the Baring Foundation.<sup>52</sup>

### **(c) Offer long-term, core, multi-year and flexible funding**

**Funding should be very explicit, working to support movements building** - respondents consistently reiterated **the need for long-term, core, multi-year and flexible support** to movement building.

- **Long term** – recognition that people are not going to deliver big changes in 2-3 years or even 5 years; that it is a very long term business and **things go backwards as well as forwards**. Being there for the long haul requires being willing to see what people in the movement think has changed and what they want to see, even if it is small. An independent consultant highlighted: *'Just building women's capacity to analyse their situation and who the blockers are and where the allies and stakeholders are is key. This is as valuable as getting a law changed.'*
- **Core support** is more essential for movements than for organisations because of the nature of their work – they are not activity based.
- **Flexibility** means responding to changes in context/political moments, without such an approach funders lose opportunities to effectively support movements; it also allows movements to invest in strategising.
- **Multi-year** – having flexibility around budget arrangements between the donor and grantee partner is vital, whether this is offering this funding up-front, or increasing the budget each year. *'If women's rights organisations or women's funds are just scraping to get by, they are not able to do knowledge building and*

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<sup>46</sup> American Jewish World Service (no date) **Ten Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements**

<sup>47</sup> See - [https://www.innonet.org/media/Exec\\_Sum-Amplifying\\_Movement\\_Knowledge\\_for\\_Philanthropy.pdf](https://www.innonet.org/media/Exec_Sum-Amplifying_Movement_Knowledge_for_Philanthropy.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> The publication **Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grant Making** looks to support donors who are 'increasingly looking to engage the communities they serve in the grantmaking process, but there are few resources about how to do so. In this guide, we explore how funders can engage in participatory grantmaking and cede decision-making power about funding decisions to the very communities they aim to serve. See - <http://www.grantcraft.org/guides/deciding-together>

<sup>49</sup> See - <http://www.pacefunders.org/participatory-grantmaking-webinar/>

<sup>50</sup> See various reports and links to Wikimedia resources - <http://www.thelafayettepractice.com/reports/>

<sup>51</sup> See - <http://justicefunders.org/thought-leadership/choir-book/>

<sup>52</sup> See - <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Discussion-Paper-ME-for-Participatory-Grantmaking.pdf>

*learning exchange which helps grow and strengthen the movement and allows experimentation and trying different things'* (quote from an independent consultant).

#### **(d) Thinking outside the short-term project box**

Overall it was emphasised that funders need to think outside of the short-term project support box as movements are long term and need to survive and continue their work after international NGO projects end. A consultation by Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights (PAWHR) with over 100 grantees (self-identified as movement building grantees) who were asked what they thought were the barriers to movement building, reported that **if the donors always set the terms** (i.e. what is capacity, strong programming, scale and that there is a need to go to scale) then movements can't respond well. One respondent suggested that this was manifesting by, for example, funders saying that *'movements don't have the capacity to absorb funding; don't have systems to account for it; don't have tested programming; aren't able to go to scale.'* Whilst funders like Comic Relief are constrained by their legal and accountability considerations, they could place less emphasis on working to scale, but more of an emphasis on adaptive programming.

Grantees also highlighted that **funders are too busy focusing on their specific strategies and priorities** and this can be problematic for a movement which can't work in a projectized, siloed way. AJWS states that funders need to **'recognise that movements transcend single issues'** and that donors should avoid supporting movements in ways that prioritise their own thematic areas at the risk of compromising a movement's autonomy and ability to engage in intersectional organising.<sup>53</sup>

In response to some of these dilemmas, Solome Lemma suggests that funders should **'quit looking for a "toolbox" on supporting movements'** and that Thousand Currents has learnt over 30 years of funding grassroots mobilising that it's 'not about having the correct tools or technical fixes, nor sharing answers or the "one right way." Rather, our support to movements requires grounding ourselves in collective, iterative learning.' She also suggests "knowing when and how, to ask the 'right kinds of questions (that) unleash "next level" thinking/planning. And if you don't know how, then just listen and learn some more.' Lemma reminds donors to be **'mindful of time as a crucial resource'** for time-poor movements so as not to ask them to do more than is actually required by being clear about what information is needed (including correspondence, not just reporting) and be ready to negotiate.<sup>54</sup>

#### **(e) Prioritise feminist movements and women's funds**

Many respondents stressed that funders wanting to work in this space need to make a commitment to **supporting feminist movements**. This means, prioritising movements self-led by women and girls and LGBT people that are working to **dismantle patriarchy and structural discrimination**.

It was noted that there is much rhetoric around funding women and girls, but the **vast majority of money goes to governments or to NGOs which are not feminist**. These are not self-led groups. In relation to this, respondents from one funding organisation talked about the importance of facilitating connections, supporting leadership, not funding the known actors but the unknown actors. This means funders **taking some risks to work with organisations that are not registered through sub-granting to women's funds**. One respondent saw this as key, **especially in relation to supporting young feminist organising**, where groups may not have traditional structures like NGOs or be registered, so may need help to develop proposals and other support needs such as on the ground scoping, mapping, being in key spaces, exploring opportunities and in some cases research to inform thinking. Linked to this, another respondent noted that *'whilst there is political will from funders to support grassroots groups, in their contracts, they are still asking for the same things that they ask of large bureaucratic organisations. There is a lot of fear, as donors don't want to take risks even though that's where norm change is taking place. People still want certain types of things so there needs to be a loosening of expectations, of risk taking. After all, we are trying to support people to build a world that doesn't exist so it requires doing things in different ways'*.

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<sup>53</sup> American Jewish World Service (no date) **Ten Considerations for Donors Engaging with Social Movements**

<sup>54</sup> Inside Philanthropy (May 10 2018) **25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements** by Solome Lemma (Thousand Currents), Guest Contributor - <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2018/5/10/25-powerful-ways-funders-can-support-social-movements>



**Women's funds play a critical role in reshaping the access of organisations and advocates to financial resources** through their own local resource mobilization practices. They also contribute to shifting local cultures of charitable giving to address structural causes of discrimination and support equity among all people. Local resource mobilization helps to build local constituencies of support for women's rights and local support is a crucial piece of the global architecture of support for advancing women's rights and a promising area for further exploration, growth, and investment.<sup>55</sup> These are funds which have emerged from activists who understand the context and that resourcing movements is crucial. The challenge for women's funds is that they are able to receive small amounts of money because are told they don't have capacity for large amounts and funding is often very projectized. *'So, if Women's Funds are granted **core support or programme support for resourcing women's groups and collectives** in their countries, we will see a stronger base across a country as they in turn can make small grants e.g. 1000 USD which no funder in the global north can make'* (quote from one respondent). Respondents highlighted there are certain Women's Funds which are less well resourced, e.g. national funds in Tanzania, funds in Francophone West Africa and that supporting a country level Women's Fund or in a sub-region will ensure an amplified effect. AWID (2013) highlights that the reach of many national-level women's funds is critical in getting a 'pulse' of local movements.<sup>56</sup>

**(f) Take risks to invest greater amounts of funding in smaller and less well-known movement constituents**

As noted above in **Section 3.3.4**, there are often assumptions made around the **absorptive capacity of movement constituents** and respondents also had concerns about limiting funding to those that can already receive this level or type of funding – *'If you want to see huge changes then you need big money behind it'* (quote from an independent consultant). Another respondent urges Comic Relief to *'be very **conscious of the way that resources have been flowing to larger organisations** and the implications of this (AWID research states that \$20k is the average grant size for women's rights organisations). It is much more acute for young women's organisations who are vastly underfunded with average grant sizes of \$5k'*. However, a different respondent felt that **grass roots organisations don't have the capacity to absorb huge amounts, so having a range of grant sizes is good.**

Reflecting on this issue, one respondent (an independent consultant) reminds us that there is a role for different types of movement actors. Feminist, urban based, 'professional' women's rights organisations, particularly those involved in advocacy and legal reform have a vital role to play in holding policy and decision makers to account; pressing for constitutional and legislative changes; working with the media and networking internationally. Many of these types of organisations have seen significant drops in funding in different contexts and many are struggling to survive. However, their role may be more useful as intermediaries as long as they work closely with grassroots women who are less visible and less likely to be funded.

**(g) Support network building and sharing learning from others in different contexts**

**This was considered a key role for funders such as Comic Relief.** There is a huge wealth of information which exists on what is working but it often stays in a country context or within networks. For example, one INGO respondent suggested that Comic Relief could really use this opportunity to **connect the Global North and Global South**: *'Women's activism has been thriving in the South, but it's having a reassertion in the North after Weinstein and the #MeToo issue. So, this is the moment to get some strong visible connections between women in the UK and what women are doing in the Global South. An ideal opportunity to target women supporting other women in Comic Relief's own campaigns to mobilise resources'*. She also suggested **structuring interactions in an organic way, so it is not donor driven but offers opportunities for organisations to visit neighbouring countries and find areas of collaboration.** Womankind Worldwide suggests actively creating opportunities for specialist WROs, women's movements and WHRDs to have a voice in national, regional and

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<sup>55</sup> Christen Dobson with Lucía Carrasco Scherer (2015), **Collective Change: The Value of Mobilizing Local Resources for Women's Rights in the Global South and East, Case Studies of Ten Women's Funds**, International Network of Women's Funds

<sup>56</sup> Angelika Arutyunova and Cindy Clark (2013), *Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots: the status of financing for women's rights organising and gender equality*, AWID

international forums, including organising their international travel and using technology to facilitate dialogue, for example, by playing video testimonies.<sup>57</sup>

#### (h) Actively engage in the funding ecosystem and influencing other donors

**To be effective**, funders first need to think about **where they are positioned in the funding ecosystem**. The ecosystem approach moves away from how funders, want, can, and should fund feminist organising, to how activists themselves think resourcing should look like.<sup>58</sup> The respondent from PAWHR noted that in a study with 100 of their grantees one of the key findings was that they want funders to ‘get their act together’ and **be better allies and work with each other to reduce the burden of administration, proposals, reporting and upwards accountability requirements** grantees have to respond to. She added that starting the conversation in the UK funding community around harmonization e.g. through some type of standardisation in relation to application processes and reporting could be invaluable. She also noted that because groups and movements seem to continually struggle with making their case that they are valuable, legitimate, credible actors, it is actually **the funders who should be doing this and advocate within the funder community for support for these groups and that these groups are credible and make change**. She noted that Comic Relief **has produced documents in the past about making the case for women’s rights and could build on this experience and package and create an advocacy arc for other donors interested in movement building**.

This means **Comic Relief being in conversation with and linked up to other donors, sharing what they are doing** and are looking at to ensure how each actor in the funding ecosystem can work in different ways so that all that deserves funding is resourced. It was suggested that as Comic Relief does the first round of the Power-Up grants, they should be thinking further about who they *really* want to fund and about their role in supporting groups to connect to larger policy shifts – i.e. acting as a bridge.

Respondents were excited about the possible **role of Comic Relief in relation to influencing other funders and their practices**, recognising that it has long been an ally for women’s and girls’ rights. *‘Comic Relief is such an interesting funder; it has a different appeal than some of the usual women’s funds, which may get dismissed by more mainstream donors’* (respondent from a funding organisation). Comic Relief should identify what it can do as a donor that is funding at this particular level, which is different from, for example, those who exclusively fund women’s rights or feminist movements – e.g. putting feminist work into other portfolios, connecting groups to other donors. **Being really clear on Comic Relief’s funding for women’s movements, who it is funding and why and how it fits into the wider funding ecosystem is vital**.

#### (i) Intentional support for feminist movement building against current conservative ideologies

Research for Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund in July 2017, which explored how women and trans-led organisations were responding to the closing space for civil society, stressed the urgent need for **intentional support for movement building and for building constituencies of support for citizen-led alternatives to current power structures and ideologies**. Activists also shared that they need funders to recognise and **support the safety of individual activists** by funding personal and organisational security measures, raising international awareness of and support for their activist work, and respecting activists’ request for anonymity. In addition, they suggested funders adapt funding approaches and mechanisms to better **support particularly marginalised sections of civil society**, whose voices are increasingly being targeted and silenced. Activists also noted the importance of **resourcing networking and convening** to create spaces of exchange and mutual support between activists as a strategy to counteract the fragmentation of civil society.<sup>59</sup>

Respondents questioned the extent to which funders are prepared to support **political work, given that ultimately the work of feminist movements is political**. To date, many funders have funded work that is not political, e.g. girls’ education, but the work of feminist movements is about challenging discriminatory social norms and this may require **funders to be bolder and to fund something more political**. The funding gap is

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<sup>57</sup> Womankind Worldwide (2017) **Standing with the changemakers: lessons from supporting women’s movements**

<sup>58</sup> See blog on AWID’s website (5 July 2018) **Why we need a feminist funding ecosystem** by Angelika Arutyunova - <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/why-we-need-feminist-funding-ecosystem>

<sup>59</sup> Kate Bishop (July 2017), Standing Firm - Women- and Trans-Led Organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund

usually for this kind of politicised work as donors are risk averse. This would require funders **putting the power analysis front and centre** of what they fund. It was felt by some respondents that Comic Relief potentially has the scope to be **a more progressive donor**. Recognising the nature of political support required, one respondent noted that in the current context of the shrinking civil society space, where women's rights organisations and movements are being targeted by governments as not representing the interests of the majority and where movements may not have the resources to work on the messaging and narratives for campaigns, that **testing messages and identifying what resonates and sharing this data with movements is a much needed area of support** that some of the big donors could offer. In relation to challenging narratives, Kate Bishop in her report urged donors to make greater efforts to **maintain the accessibility of funding to larger numbers of organisations, including feminist groups, that are in conflict with patriarchal power structures for challenging nationalist narratives that are inherently sexist and heteronormative.**<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid

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## Appendix 2: Key Informant Interviews

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2	AWID
3	FRIDA the Feminist Fund
4	Just Associates (JASS)
5	Oxfam GB
6	Sigrid Rausing Trust
7	Mama Cash
8	Innovation Network
9	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
10	Philanthropy Advancing Women's Rights (PAWHR)
11	Global Fund for Women
12	Womankind Worldwide
13	Rosa Fund UK
14	Urgent Action Fund
15	AJWS
16	Independent Consultant/ Impact Mapper
17	Thousand Currents
18	Did previous CR report on women's movements
19	Global Fund for Human Rights
20	Southern based activist
21	UK based independent consultant

## Appendix 3: Key Informant Interview Questionnaire

### Questions for women involved in/connected to women's movements and donors

**Background to interview:** Comic Relief have recently launched an open call (called **Power Up**) to fund and support women's rights organisations and women and girl's movements to seed, sustain, and strengthen change towards equal power in decision making at all levels. As part of the Power Up programme they also aim to have an ongoing learning strand with the organisations they fund around what are the key elements of building effective women's movements, how best to support and engage with them and how to capture and assess the contribution of the work of women's and girls' movements towards systemic change for women and girl's lives.

To provide context for Comic Relief's funding decisions and to inform the design of the learning they hope to develop from this programme, Elanor and Kanwal have been commissioned by Comic Relief to undertake a scoping study to synthesise existing evidence, literature and experiences around the role, key elements and support of women's movements. As part of this study they aim to talk to a selection of women involved in or connected to women's movements and individuals in agencies funding women's/girls' movements. The findings from the literature review, mapping and interviews will be compiled into a report for Comic Relief.

*Note on language - please note that we are using the term women's movement – in that we would include, feminist movements and young feminist movements.*

**[Ask respondent how they'd like to be recorded – name/title/pronoun/job title/organisation if relevant]**

Role, length of time in the role

Any questions before we start?

1. How do you define a women's movement?



2. What are the elements (or characteristics) of an effective women's movement? (What is the evidence for this?)
3. What is the role of women's movements, as compared to other types of entities, in progressing towards women's and girls' equal power and agency in decision making at all levels? (distinguish between these outcomes for women and for girls – do young feminist movements have a different role than women's movements etc?)
4. How do you/your organisation approach the monitoring, evaluation and learning around women's movements and their constituents? (or think it should be approached)?
5. What makes this different from how you would approach the monitoring, evaluation and learning for an individual project/organisation? Should it be different? (for the Power Up fund)
6. Do you know any other existing models and frameworks which help us assess and learn about the effectiveness of women's movements?
7. What works well and what are the challenges/gaps in relation to how you assess and learn about what makes an effective women's movement?
8. In your experience, what are the processes involved in building and sustaining women's movements?
9. What different types of support do women's movements need to become stronger/more effective? (both financial and non-financial support)
10. How can funders best support the work of women's movements or the different parts of movements?
11. What could Comic Relief do to support women's movements and organisations to become effective constituents in a movement?