

Through the Philanthropic Lens

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Chapter 1

Overview

Despite Black feminist movements holding the line against authoritarianism, mobilizing and leading social movements, and advancing visions of a more just world, this report validates the concerns that too little funding is going directly to Black feminist organizations and movements.

While not seeking to make a case for the importance and impact of Black feminist organizations and movements (please refer to *A Movement View* chapter to learn more), this chapter unveils the ever-present barriers and challenges faced by these organizations in resourcing their work. These barriers include trust deficits, disconnects by funders between stated priorities or commitments and practices, and deeply rooted institutional biases to accessing funders and funding opportunities.

The information in this chapter was drawn primarily from the two databases that have been collecting and analyzing funding on human rights, women's rights and gender equality by private philanthropy and governments, Candid (used in the Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) report) and OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet). Additional information was obtained through a review of published reports and articles, including mappings of funding to Black communities in the US, Canada and the UK, and primary source interviews with Black and other feminist funds.

The research revealed that too little data about funding to Black feminist organizations is systematically collected and analyzed, rendering the important work done by these organizations and movements, often documented in gray literature or orally, invisible. It makes having a comprehensive and diverse view of efforts to fund Black feminist work

across issues/sectors and geographies almost impossible at present. This chapter is a small contribution in that direction.

The lack of data also makes it difficult to assess the commitment to feminist, racial justice and equity and anti-colonial funding that many donors are increasingly expressing. The racial justice-focused commitments are relatively new outside the United States context in particular, and may not yet be documented. Donor tracking and analyses that have been taking place for some years, such as the Candid/Human Rights Funders Network annual review of human rights funding indicates that the current reporting by donors is insufficient to provide a clear picture. Specifically, the data that is reported does not allow capturing of intersectional funding such as that done by Black feminist and women's funds.

On the other hand, this chapter shows how important feminist funds are in providing resources for intersectional efforts, while some Black feminist funds are becoming more successful in mobilizing resources, and more funds focused on Black feminists and communities are being established around the world.



What do we know about the funding

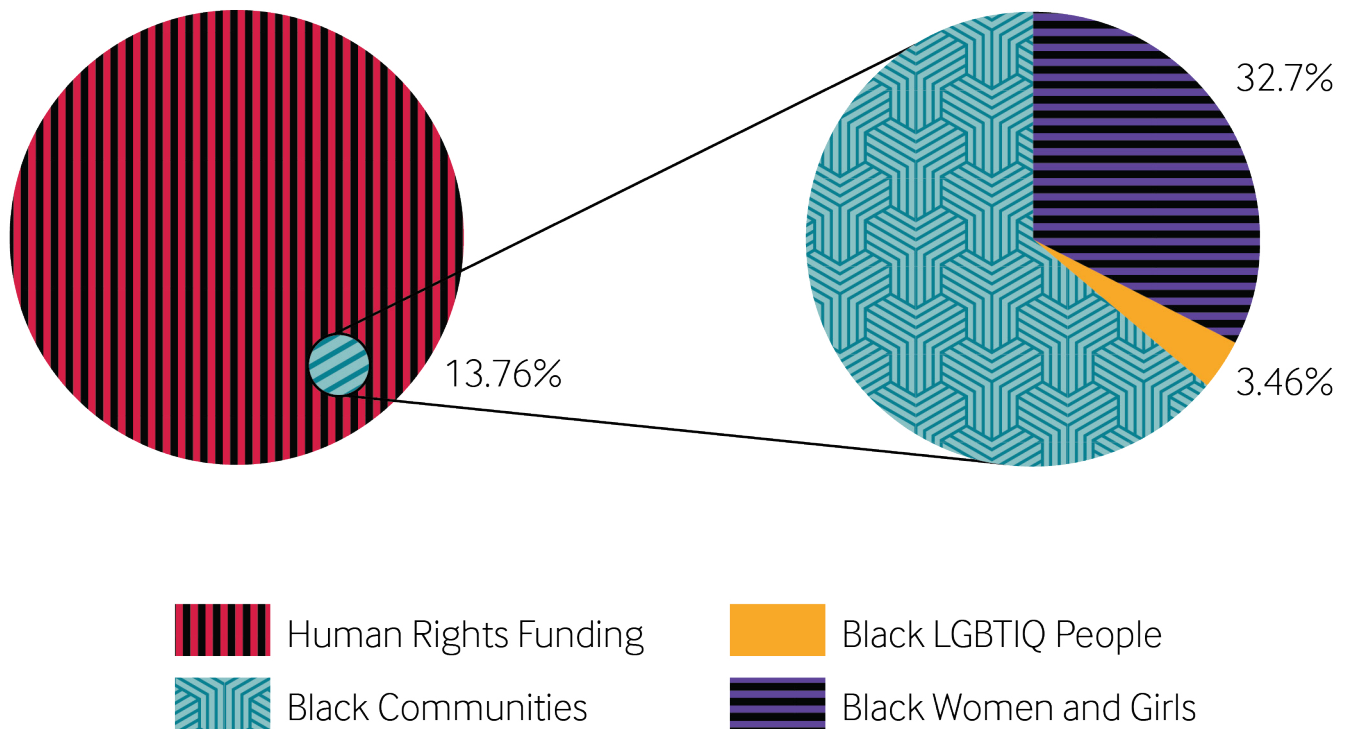
Human rights funding is increasing overall.¹ Women and girls received \$752 million or 20% of overall human rights funding, though only 33% of the funding analyzed included population specific data. Deepening this analysis, our research shows that an additional \$198 million was also coded to transgender people. Bilateral funding on gender equality has been steadily increasing with \$53 billion committed in 2018–2019, comprising 44.5% of bilateral official development assistance (ODA). The majority of this, \$47.4 billion (40% of ODA), went to programs with a focus on integrating gender while just \$5.6 billion (5% total ODA) went to efforts with gender equality and women's empowerment as the principal objective. Only \$690 million (1.3% of total ODA for gender equality) went to women's rights organizations and

1 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.

movements as part of government and civil society sector giving.²

13.76% of human rights funding goes to serve Black communities globally (USD 511,093,082 annually)

of the human rights funding for Black communities, 32.7% goes to Black women and girls and 3.46% goes to Black LGBTIQ people.



On the other hand, only 6% of philanthropic dollars supported racial equity work and only 1% supported racial justice work.³ While there is a positive trend, particularly in the last two years, of commitments to increased funding to racial justice and equity—Candid data showed an increase in funding or pledges from \$3.3 million between 2011–2019 to \$4.2 billion by mid 2020⁴—and commitments to respond

2 GenderNet, Development finance for gender equality and women’s empowerment: A 2021 snapshot, 2021.

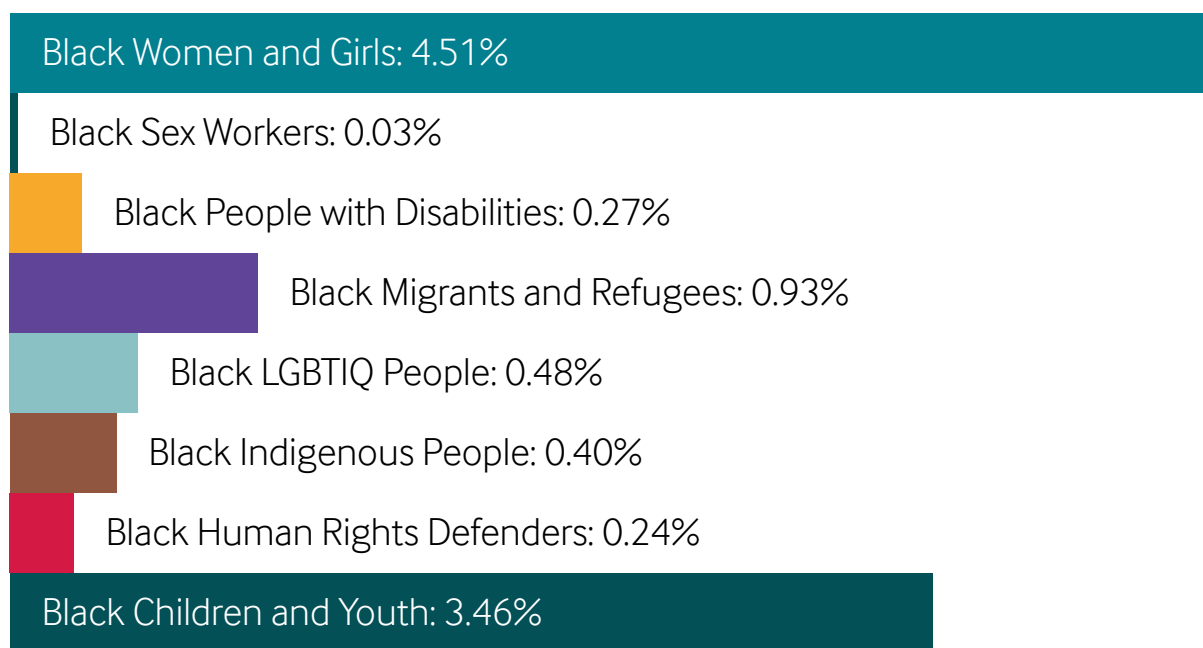
3 Philanthropy Initiative for Racial Equity (authors Malkia Devich Cyril, Lyle Matthew Kan, Ben Francisco Maulbeck, and Lori Villarosa), Mismatched: Philanthropy’s Response to the Call for Racial Justice, 2020.

4 Anna Koob, What does Candid’s grant data say about funding for racial equity in the United States, 2020.



to the impact of the pandemic on particularly vulnerable communities,⁵ there are concerns about whether pledged funding came through and whether this funding will be sustained; only \$1.5 billion of the \$11.9 billion public pledges in 2020 for racial equity could be tracked to recipients.⁶ Of human rights funding, \$511 million was coded as benefiting people of African descent globally (\$291 million to sub-Saharan Africa and \$220 million to people of African descent in other regions). Evidence suggests that funding is not going to the full range of work needed for transformative change, and is insufficient to address historical underfunding of Black groups.⁷ The meager funding to Black-led groups was also highlighted in research showing that only 0.5% of 66.9 billion in US foundation giving reported in 2018 went to women and girls of color⁸ and an even lower 0.7% of grants in 2017–18 in Canada went to Black-serving organizations, and 0.07% to Black-led ones.⁹

Percentage of human rights funding (in dollar amounts) that goes to Black communities globally



5 The Black Trans Fund described seeing an increase in funding to trans-led groups during the pandemic but also noted that this funding has not been sustained.

6 PolicyLink and Bridgespan, Moving from intention to impact: funding racial equity to win, 2021.

7 PolicyLink and Bridgespan, Moving from intention to impact: funding racial equity to win, 2021.

8 Ms. Foundation and Strength in Numbers (Erin Howe and Somjen Frazer authors), Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More With Less, 2020.

9 Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and Carleton University's Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership program, Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy, 2020.

What we can extrapolate from these figures on the funding of gender and the funding for racial justice for Black feminist work was the impetus for our research.

Of all human rights funding—\$3.7 billion in 2018—only \$178 million, about 5% of funding (in money terms and number of grants), went to Black women, girls and trans people. Meaning that a mere 0.1%–0.35% of overall foundation giving globally went to Black women, girls and trans people.¹⁰

Years of advocacy and hard work by feminist and women’s rights organizations and movements are bearing fruit, with the last few years seeing particular emphasis on funding and funding practices that are ‘decolonial’ and contribute to racial and gender justice. While celebrating this trend, which has contributed to some increases in funding, the figures still tell a story of dire underfunding and there are concerns about how genuine the commitment is and whether it will be sustained or turn into a passing trend.

Issue and sector funding

It is difficult to ascertain sector- or issue-focused funding going to Black feminist groups. However, even on issues where evidence shows feminist groups have the most impact, such as violence against women, there is a dire underfunding of constituency-led groups. Of the \$541 million funding to violence against women (VAW) from official development assistance (ODA) for example, \$138 million (25% of VAW funding) was allocated through civil society organizations, which may or may not be women’s rights or feminist organizations. Of the dollars going to human rights funding, 0.75% goes to freedom from violence for Black women, girls and trans people.¹¹

Bilateral funding data reveals that gender equality-related giving is lowest in the energy and humanitarian aid sectors.¹² In at least two sectors that are heavily resourced, and where women are most affected and simultaneously instrumental

10 Hakima Abbas and Kellea Miller, *The Dire State of Funding for Black Feminist Movements—and What Donors Can Do About It*, 2021.

11 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.

12 GenderNet, *Development finance for gender equality and women’s empowerment: A 2021 snapshot*, 2021.



in finding solutions, climate change and humanitarian responses (much less so for women, peace and security within that sector), it is safe to say that little to perhaps no resources are going to Black feminist groups. In the case of bilateral resources to climate change, for example, of the \$18.9 billion (57% of the \$33.1 billion of ODA in 2018–2019 to climate-related issues) for integrating gender or dedicated to gender equality/women’s empowerment, \$2.4 billion (12.6%) went to NGOs but only \$43 million (0.22% of climate funding and 1.8% of what went to NGOs) went to “feminist, women-led and women’s rights orgs and movements and institutions.”¹³ The report did not specify where the organizations receiving this funding were based, however, only two of the top 10 countries receiving climate-related aid, were in Africa—Ethiopia and Mozambique—and the rest were in Asia. None were in the Caribbean despite the region being disproportionately impacted by climate change. Of the dollars going to human rights funding, just 0.37% goes to the environmental and resource rights of Black women, girls and trans people.¹⁴

0.22% of bilateral climate funding went to feminist organizations and only two of the top 10 countries receiving climate related aid were in Africa.

0.37% of human rights funding goes to the environmental and resource rights of Black women, girls and trans people

In the women, peace and security/humanitarian sector, ODA is the second largest source of external funding after remittances. Of the \$20.3 billion in aid integrating or dedicated to gender equality in 2018–2019,¹⁵ only \$199 million went to “some type of women’s rights civil society organization” and a meager \$25 million (between 12%–13% of total aid to feminist/women’s rights groups) went directly

13 Gendernet, Development finance for gender equality: the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions, 2021.

14 Candid and HRFN, Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking, 2021.

15 OECD data from 2017–2018 describes total bilateral aid from DAC countries to fragile contexts as reaching \$46.8 billion, representing 45% of bilateral aid. Gendernet, Twentieth Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: financing gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile contexts, 2020.

to an organization in a partner country. This is corroborated by a 2020 survey of local women's organizations funded by the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which showed that 60% of local women's organisations surveyed noted how insufficient funding opportunities and information put their organisations at risk and how inflexible funding doesn't take into account crisis and fragile working contexts. Out of 154 respondents, 98 were from Africa, 40 from Arab states and 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the dollars going to human rights funding, just 0.09% goes to the transitional justice and peace and and 0.10% to migration and displacement.¹⁶



1.46% of human rights funding goes to sexual and reproductive rights for Black women, girls and trans people



0.98% to equality rights and freedom from discrimination of Black women, girls and trans people



0.75% goes to freedom from violence of Black women, girls and trans people



0.37% to environmental and resource rights of Black women, girls and trans people



0.33% to health and wellbeing of Black women, girls and trans people



0.22% economic and labor rights of Black women, girls and trans people



0.10% to migration and displacement of Black women, girls and trans people



0.07% to civic and political participation of Black women, girls and trans people



0.09% to access to justice/equality before the law of Black women, girls and trans people



0.09% to transitional justice and peace of Black women, girls and trans people



0.01% to expression and information rights of Black women, girls and trans people

16 Candid and HRFN, Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking, 2021.





Is funding going to the diversity of Black feminist groups?

Funding in majority Black regions and US mapping reports shows that overall, there is limited disaggregated data to give a good picture of funding going to a diverse range of Black feminist groups. Our research reveals the very small funding benefiting Black women, girls and trans communities. Similarly, the mapping by Mama Cash of Black and Muslim feminist movements in Europe showed the lack of a “reliable mechanism for tracking or identifying philanthropic giving to Black girls because most funders do not disaggregate giving by race and gender”¹⁷ and that “a colorblind approach to funding predominates in philanthropy [with] grantmaking that specifies a focus on people of color [that] is substantially smaller than the proportion of the population they represent.”¹⁸ As noted earlier, a targeted secondary analysis of the data shared in the HRFN report revealed that just 5% of total human rights funding in 2018–2019 went to Black women, girls and transgender communities.¹⁹

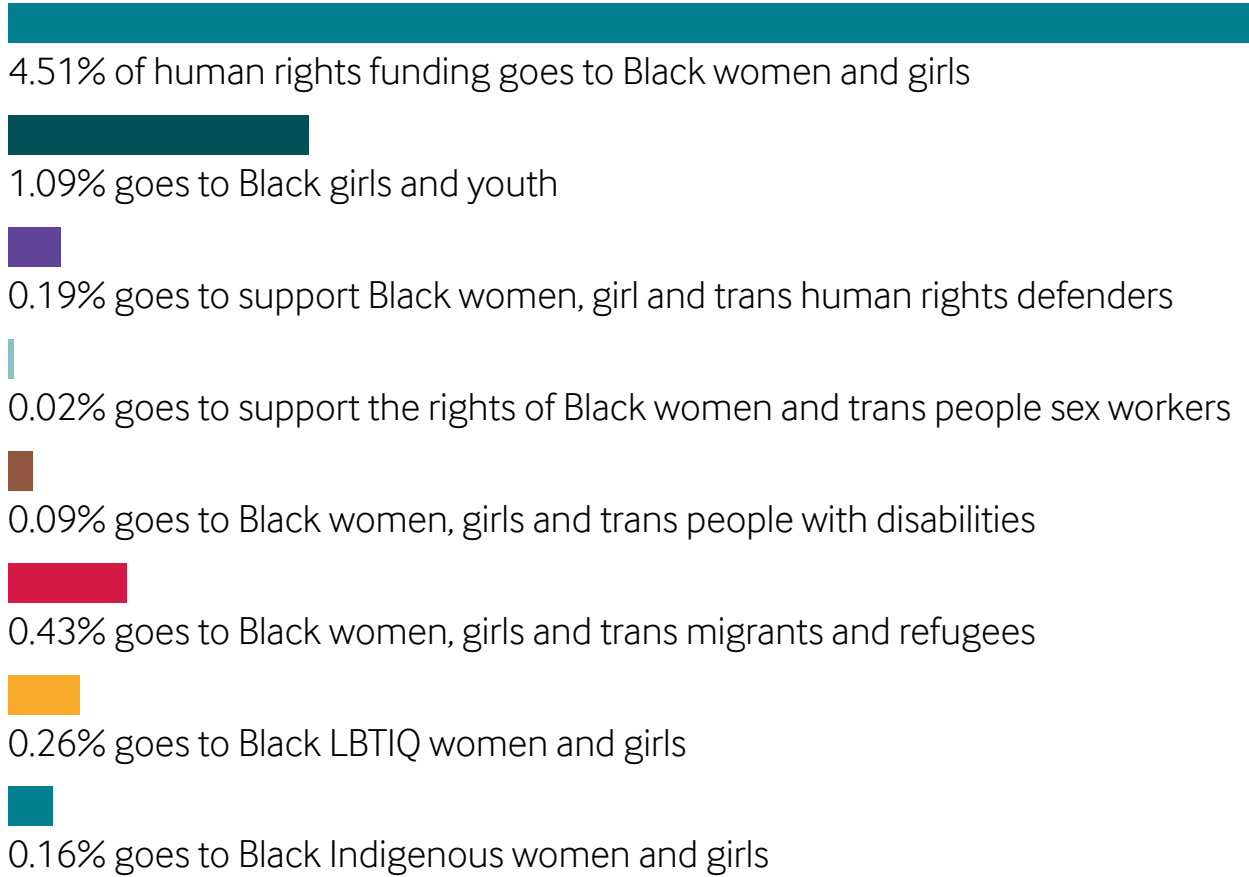


17 Urban Institute, *Assessing the Funding Landscape for Programs in Support of Black Girls*, 2021.

18 Anna Koob, *What does Candid’s grant data say about funding for racial equity in the United States*, 2020.

19 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.

less than five percent goes to the following areas



4.51% of human rights funding goes to Black women and girls

1.09% goes to Black girls and youth

0.19% goes to support Black women, girl and trans human rights defenders

0.02% goes to support the rights of Black women and trans people sex workers

0.09% goes to Black women, girls and trans people with disabilities

0.43% goes to Black women, girls and trans migrants and refugees

0.26% goes to Black LGBTIQ women and girls

0.16% goes to Black Indigenous women and girls



Given that human rights grants make up 2% to 7% of foundation funding globally, even at the most broadly defined, this means that:

less than one percent goes to the following areas

- 0.09%–0.31% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black women, girls and trans people globally
- 0.02%–0.08% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black girls and youth
- 0.002%–0.006% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black women, girls and trans people with disabilities
- 0.003%–0.011% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black Indigenous peoples
- 0.004%–0.013% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black women, girls and trans human rights defenders
- 0.005%–0.018% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black LGBTIQ people
- 0.009%–0.03% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black women, girls and trans migrants and refugees
- 0.0004%–0.0014% of foundation dollars annually goes to support the rights of Black women and trans people sex workers

Regional funding trends

\$674 million (comprising 1.3% of the \$53 billion total ODA to gender equality) was committed annually in 2018–19 to supporting “feminist, women-led and women’s rights organizations, movements, institutions.” Of this, only \$40 million (6% of the funding to feminist and women’s rights groups, but 0.08% of ODA on gender equality) went to a local feminist or women’s rights civil society organization based in a partner region. The majority went to “donor-based NGOs,” followed by multilateral institutions, public sector institutions, and international NGOs.



Africa

For Africa, between 2011–2015, just 5.9% of the \$9 billion in US foundation funding for sub-Saharan Africa went to local organizations and in 2017, a mere 0.4% of the \$21.2 billion in total international humanitarian assistance was received directly by local and national organizations.²⁰ Another report cited data from Candid and the African Grantmakers' Affinity Group (AGAG) showing that, while "US foundation funding to Africa jumped more than 400% from \$288.8 million in 2002 to nearly \$1.5 billion in 2012... [m]ost of this funding, however, went to organizations headquartered outside Africa."²¹ This trust gap is discussed further in the section on barriers to and challenges around accessing funding experienced by Black organizations. For bilateral funding, while the Gendernet report does have some summary information on funding to feminist organizations and movements, this is not disaggregated enough on recipient organizations.

North America

For North America, a total of \$356 million in grants to women and girls of color account for a miniscule "one half of one percent" of the \$66.9 billion in foundation giving to those populations, as a proportion of the population they represent based on the 2017 US census. While much less information is available for Canada, the first systematic report²² on funding to Black organizations revealed almost negligible funding of Black-led organizations with only 6 of 40 public and private foundations surveyed funding Black-serving organizations and only 2 funding Black-led organizations. The report, in addition, notes that this funding was "miniscule, sporadic, unsustainable, and not investing in long term capabilities" and concludes with a call for the creation of a Foundation for Black Communities.

20 African Philanthropy Forum and The Bridgespan group, Disparities in Funding for African NGOs: unlocking philanthropy for African NGOs as pathway to greater impact, 2021.

21 Bhekinkosi Moyo and Kenny Imafidon, Barriers to African Civil Society: building the sector's capacity and potential to scale-up, 2021.

22 Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and Carleton University's Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership program, Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy, 2020.

Europe



Data from Europe, while very thin, indicates very low levels of funding to Black communities and Black-led organizations. Some insights from targeted research did, however, reveal a poor funding situation; a report²³ on funding in 2020 to Black-led organizations and communities experiencing racial injustice in the United Kingdom showed that only 44.5% of approximately 100 million pounds went to Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organizations, including a number focusing on women and one fund specifically targeting Black and Minority Ethnic organizations. Much of this funding focused on COVID-19 responses and “lacked funding for... wider strategy, core infrastructure beyond March 2021.” Relatedly, a mapping of Black and/or Muslim feminist movements in Europe underscored the challenges, described further below, that such movements face accessing funding.²⁴

23 Baobab Foundation UK, Dilhani Wijeyesekera, Digging deeper: insights on tailored funding to organizations led by Black people and communities experiencing racial injustice in 2020, 2021.

24 Mama Cash and Elpida, Fatima Ali (author), Mapping the European landscape of Black and/or Muslim feminist movements, 2021.

Very little published information is available about private or bilateral funding to Black feminist organizations in Latin and Central America.

Funding Lesson: Name Black Feminists

In an interview with Central American Women's Fund (FCAM), which has been operating for 18 years, they reported receiving very few proposals from Black feminist organizations. This changed in 2019 when they did their first ever call for proposals with active outreach to women with disabilities as well Afro-descendant women, girls and trans people and that, along with an environmental justice focused funding call. FCAM actively reached out to Afro-descendant-led groups, which resulted in their funding to 10 Black feminist organizations, including trans- and youth-led organizations, in 5 countries (Panama, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua). These grants amounted to approximately \$210,000, with grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000, and organizations working on a range of issues including sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women and environmental justice. FCAM's targeted call came on the heels of a mapping by two private foundations, and that information was subsequently shared with FCAM, enabling them to do targeted outreach to Black feminist organizations. The grants are multi-year and flexible and FCAM intends to continue both the grantmaking and other engagement by actively engaging Black feminist organizations so as to better understand their priorities and needs. FCAM's experience underscores the importance of funders explicitly naming commitments to supporting Black feminists if they want to be more successful in reaching them.

The Caribbean

There was quite a bit of variation in the information available about funding in the different regions where there are large populations of Black women, girls and trans people. The region with the least available published information was the Caribbean. A secondary analysis of the Gendernet database revealed a total of aid to that region in 2018 and 2019 of approximately \$ 1.235 billion, with a significant reduction in 2019 (~\$448 million) compared to 2018 (~\$786 million). However, many of the countries in the Caribbean (according to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition) did not receive development aid for gender equality in those years. Haiti received the most aid for gender equality in both those years, with Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Montserrat and regional funding rounding up the top 5 recipients (not consistently in that order across the years). There was a 25% reduction in regional funding (i.e. not specific to a country) between 2018 and 2019, while funding to Jamaica doubled. The data did not indicate whether funding went to feminist organizations. One important funding effort has been the Canadian government's initiative Women, Voice and Leadership, which has distributed approximately \$3.6 million (CAD 4.8 million) over five years for women's rights organizations and LGBTQI+ groups in the region (excluding Haiti).²⁵

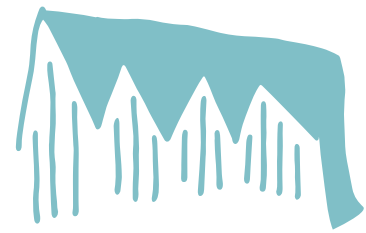
Middle East and North Africa + Global

Notably just 1 grant went to Black women, girls and trans people in the Middle East and North Africa and a single global grant was intended to serve Black women, girls and trans people. The chapter *Embarking on a quest* reveals the important activism of Black women, girls and trans people in the Middle East and North Africa regions, which further begs the question of why this activism is not being supported. Similarly, "Black feminist organizing has always been transnational and deeply internationalist. Black feminist activism and agendas are global, while rooted in the local, and funding should reflect that."²⁶

25 <https://equalityfund.ca/what-we-do/womens-voice-and-leadership-caribbean/>

26 Hakima Abbas and Kellea Miller, *The Dire State of Funding for Black Feminist Movements—and What Donors Can Do About It*, 2021.

The Barriers and Biases



Our research reveals that a number of barriers and biases exist that obstruct access to funding for Black feminist groups globally. The barriers need to be torn down and the biases systematically addressed.

Stated donor priorities and funding practices don't always match

Stated funder priorities are also not always aligned with who is directly funded to do the work. The Black Trans Fund, for example, shared their experiences of funders claiming to support trans communities but not actually funding trans-led community organizations directly.²⁷ Similarly, philanthropy is fickle and can often be more interested in funding an issue when there is visibility around violence, rather than consistently supporting transformation. As Tynesha McHarris, of the Black Feminist Fund, put it “funders are often mobilized around Black death, but less interested in funding Black life”.

The Black Trans Fund described the experience of organizations in their community receiving large amounts of resources one year and funding then ending abruptly, resulting in instability for the organizations and their work. The surge in funding was also described as being project-focused and therefore not contributing to the long-term sustainability of organizations on the frontlines.

Funding continues to be largely siloed by issue or population, making it difficult for organizations doing intersectional work across issues, populations and movements, and using a range of different strategies to get funded. Yet, most Black feminists work in intersectional ways across multiple issues, such as racial, economic and gender justice, among many others.

Despite funders increasingly describing their work as trust-based funding, most maintain burdensome application and reporting practices that are not experienced as trust-based by recipients. While Black feminist funds might be the solution for many community groups to receive low-barrier funding, feminist funds themselves

27 Interview with the Black Trans Fund, December 7, 2021.

expressed concerns about how the conditionalities attached to some of their own funding and the heavy reporting requirements risked turning them into compliance technocrats.²⁸ However, during the COVID-19 pandemic some private foundations introduced significant flexibility in reporting requirements, including being able to submit oral reports on phone calls—suggesting that such flexibility is in fact possible and a matter of will. Project-specific and inflexible funding is particularly challenging for constituency-led Black feminist groups at this time of increased attack on Black feminist agendas and a world experiencing multiple crises. The global moment demands of Black feminist groups agility and boldness that only flexible and core funding can support.

The racialized and gendered trust gap

The current funding system has a deeply rooted and racialized trust gap globally as demonstrated in how funding intended for work in Global South or with Black and other marginalized communities of color in the Global North flows. The gap is particularly wide for Africa and the Caribbean, both majority Black regions. Only 33% of human rights funding went directly to organizations based in Africa, with just 8% of this as flexible funding, while for the Caribbean, only 18% went directly to organizations based there, with a meager 2% that was flexible. Contrast this with North America, where 100% of the funding was directly received by groups, with 29% of it flexible, followed by Western European groups receiving 87% in direct funding, with 11% flexible. Next was Latin America, with 60% in direct funding and 20% flexible, then the MENA region, at 46% in direct funding and 9% flexible funding.²⁹ The “Disparities in Funding for African NGOs” corroborates this, showing that just 5.9% of US foundation funding in Africa in 2011–2015 went to African based organizations, with one interviewee noting that generally there is a “significant lack of trust related [to] the capacity of African NGO leadership.... That’s how most people think... Local leaders can’t deliver on contracts, they could be involved in corruption, they won’t report honestly, all those things are part of the image that frequently dominates international donor thinking about Africa.”

Unsurprisingly, the trust gap is both racial and gendered with some of the clearest

28 Interview with Urgent Action Fund-Africa, December 6, 2021.

29 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.

data coming from a report by Echoing Green about their own work, showing that in the 2019 US applicant pool of early-stage groups considered to be the most promising, the disparities amounted to a \$20 million gap between Black-led and white-led early-stage organizations—492 Black-led organizations raised \$40 million compared with \$61 million raised by white-led ones—and that these disparities grew as organizations try to grow. Even more concerning is that unrestricted net assets of Black led organizations, “a proxy for trust,”³⁰ were 76% smaller than the white-led organizations. They also noted that Black women leaders received less support than Black men and white women. Echoing Green also highlighted intersectional inequalities seen in their applicant pool, noting specifically that “along gender lines, Caucasian, European, and white female applicants have a median funds raised \$25,000 less than their male counterparts—though the effects of race and ethnicity on funding are evident, as well, with African, African-American, and black women applicants raising a median \$47,400 less than Caucasian, European, and white men.”³¹ Further evidence came from an interview conducted for this research with Women Fund Tanzania Trust where they described how international NGOs received more funding for work related to constitutional reform than national/local organizations that know more about their context and were therefore better placed to do the work.

Region	Direct Funding	Flexible Funding Percentage
Africa	33%	8%
Caribbean	18%	2%
North America	100%	29%
Western Europe	87%	11%
Latin America	60%	20%
MENA	46%	9%

30 Savage, B., Dorsey, C., Kim, P., Daniels, C., & Sakaue, L. (2020). Overcoming the Racial Bias in Philanthropic Funding. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

31 Echoing Green, State of Social Social Entrepreneurship 2019, 2019.



Multiple biases

The trust gap resulting in disparities in geographic, racial, and gendered funding described above is rooted in historical biases that continue to play out to this day. These biases include racial ones described in the previous section that manifest in more funding to white-led organizations; familiarity bias where preference is given to organizations that are known to funders or have credentials that funders are more familiar with, as discussed more below; and cultural bias³² that manifests through preference for Western communication styles, English as the main language of communication, and subjective, largely Western-defined terms like “polish” and “professionalism,” used to assess capacity.

“Donors prefer funding international NGOs because they are professionalized, urban, and have the required skills, credibility, and resources to deal with donors’ architecture. In addition, INGOs understand ‘donor jargon,’ including accountability and the reporting requirements that are seen to ensure value for money and project effectiveness. It is also convenient for Northern donors to fund Northern organizations working on African issues rather than local African organizations.”³³

Biases and barriers in funding practices

There are many ways that biases show up and are experienced in funding, from perceptions about capacity and risk, to opaque processes, to accessibility of funders and funding opportunities, funder proximity to certain organizations, coupled with distance from marginalized contexts and communities, and burdensome application and reporting requirements. We must be clear that these barriers are not essential technical barriers for due diligence, but rather systemic barriers rooted in white supremacy that come from the ‘civilizing’ and ‘charity’ roots of development and philanthropy.

32 The framing of racial, familiarity, and cultural biases was drawn from “African Philanthropy Forum and The Bridgespan group, Disparities in Funding for African NGOs: unlocking philanthropy for African NGOs as pathway to greater impact, 2021.”

33 Bhekinkosi Moyo and Kenny Imafidon, Barriers to African Civil Society: building the sector’s capacity and potential to scale-up, 2021.

1

Risk assessments are loaded with bias. The Black feminist-led and serving organizations and funds interviewed for this research described being faced with excessive requirements to “prove themselves” and extra scrutiny during due diligence, as coming from biased perceptions about their capacity and the ‘risk’ of funding them. They challenged donors who say “trust Black women” to actually show it in practice. A related, though less documented bias is expressed through concerns by donors (often behind closed doors) about the “absorptive capacity” of constituency-led and community grounded (often described as ‘local’ and mis-associated as ‘small’) organizations, which results in much lower funding to these groups or donors preferring to fund Northern based organizations to then subgrant small amounts to constituency-led groups. Of course this narrative is self-fulfilling: because funders do not provide larger, core, flexible and long-term funding to constituency-led and community grounded organizations, these groups face constraints to growing their work, reach and impact, have a harder time attracting more funding, do not have the funding to pay staff or grow their staff and can rarely sustain their work over the long term (and thus become well-established). More funders must consider funding Black feminist groups in ways that intentionally build their absorptive capacity, their organizational strength and support their resilience and sustainability in the long term.

2

There is an established practice of gatekeeping access to funding. With funders largely based in the Global North, organizations that don’t have previous connections or personal recommendations have easier formal and informal access to them that puts them in a privileged position to access information about and advocate for funding opportunities. The “Moving more money to drivers of change”³⁴ report, for example, discusses the difficulty of accessing donors for organizations. The Black feminist organizations and funds interviewed for this research shared similar experiences along with tensions they experienced in establishing autonomy from global organizations which had incubated them and had direct lines to funders which they were now establishing independently. Building and maintaining relationships with donors takes a significant amount of time for Black feminist groups and funds.

34 AWID, Mama Cash and Count Me In Consortium, Moving more money to the drivers of change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements, 2020.

3

Compounding the impact of the previous bias are what the “Moving more money to the drivers of change” report describes as “stumbling blocks within philanthropy” which include limitations in internal capacity, such as lack of experience and/or knowledge about feminist organizing. This stumbling block is particularly exacerbated for Black feminist organizations in a context where few Black women and gender expansive people occupy positions of power in philanthropic organizations. Such staffing is important as the report discusses how foundation staff who are connected with feminist movements sometimes work closely with the movement on strategies to help them shift their institutions from the inside, despite the often isolated space for change within institutions. This can be transformative for Black organizations; the Black Trans Fund, for example, described the support they get from Black and other staff of color in philanthropic institutions. The staffing issue reinforces the importance of spaces such as the Bringing it B(l)ack conference which created an important opportunity to bring Black women in philanthropy together in community to share, learn from each other and collectively strategize about how to better resource Black feminist movements. This is also important given the documented racism and patriarchy experienced by Black women and trans people working in philanthropy.³⁵

4

Application and reporting requirements are opaque, burdensome, and expensive. Participants in the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Survey on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, reported how “cumbersome and complex application processes and procedures act as a deterrent for engaged and qualified local women’s organizations,”³⁶ how funding is not flexible for smaller organizations and doesn’t consider the realities and constraints of working in crisis and fragile contexts. Indeed, Black feminist groups globally face the barrier of short and strict budgets, policy time frames and funding thresholds that are either too high or too low, and formulaic approaches to due diligence and risk mitigation.³⁷

35 Maria. S. Johnson, Black Women Face Multiple Forms of Racism in Philanthropy, 2021. <https://johnsoncenter.org/blog/black-women-face-multiple-forms-of-racism-in-philanthropy/> accessed March 14, 2022.

36 Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, CSO Survey on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, 2021.

37 AWID, Mama Cash and Count Me In Consortium, Moving more money to the drivers of change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements, 2020.

The Problem with Data

Our research has revealed several challenges with the data collected and reported that make it difficult to truly assess the funding going to Black feminist groups globally.

The majority of data on funding that we reviewed can be described as “intersectional blind” in that the data does not allow for a cross-sectional analysis of funding of issues, populations, identities and organizations receiving the funding. This lack of intersectional funding data makes it difficult to assess what “populations” are receiving the funding and who is driving the work. When funders are not explicit about supporting intersectional efforts, including in particular those undertaken by constituency-led Black feminist groups it makes it difficult for these organizations to know about funding that might in fact be available to them. This could include, for example, COVID-19-responsive funding opportunities that do not explicitly mention a focus on equity and/or specific racial and ethnic groups, which could discourage organizations focusing on these issues and communities from applying. This analysis will also allow for a better view of how well funders stated intentions about intersectional funding (i.e. funding to organizations working on multiple issues concurrently and using multiple strategies, match actual giving, identify gaps and indicate where funding practices need to change). At present, the data shows a real disconnect between statements about the importance of supporting Black women and feminists and the reality of how these organizations and movements are resourced.



Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) —Moving Toward the Intersection

While covering different issues and populations, HRFN recognises that their reports have thus far been done so in a siloed way, with little to no analysis on funding of multiple issues and populations with multiple identities. HRFN has recognised this as a shortcoming and plans to improve in future reports with, for example, explicitly analyzing racial and ethnic data. HRFN wrote in its 2021 report that not previously including racial and ethnic groups—amounting to approximately 5,000 grants and 25% of grantmaking dollars in 2018—into their analysis “has been a gap in... past analyses and hampered [their] contributions to supporting a more coordinated philanthropic response to systemic racism and inequality.” HRFN is now working to deepen their understanding of intersectionality and how it can be used in future reports to address this bias in data reporting, collection and analysis.

Overall, too little data is regularly and systematically collected that provides a good picture of funding available and going to Black feminist organizations, and indeed, intersectional funding writ large. Similar to the Ms. Foundation report, Pocket Change, the Urban Institute’s report, *Assessing the Funding Landscape for Programs in Support of Black Girls*, found that for the US, there is “no reliable mechanism for tracking philanthropic giving to Black girls because funders don’t disaggregate by race or gender.”³⁸

One of the main challenges is how donors and funders themselves categorize and subsequently report on their funding. Human rights funders might, for example, use different language for similar issues, and often work on multiple issues and support work on multiple populations and report on their work in broad ways that do not allow for nuanced understanding. They could also be supporting multiple issues and populations in siloed ways as would sometimes appear to be the case, for example,

38 Urban Institute, *Assessing the Funding Landscape for Programs in Support of Black Girls*, 2021.

of the 64% of grants that name any of the nine populations reported on, $\frac{2}{3}$ name just one population despite most activism addressing more than one identity.³⁹ This data gap makes it difficult to assess the stated intentions of donors to increase racial and gender justice funding with their actual practice. A worrying implication about this lack of data is that the work of Black feminist organizations is not adequately captured and reflected, thereby rendering the work invisible.

Black Feminists Changing the Game




Despite these challenges, there are also rays of hope that illuminate potential pathways for funding Black feminist movements in ways that match the boldness of their vision.

For Us By Us: Black and Black Feminist Funds

The top 12 human rights funders based in the Global South and East by grant dollars are either women's or feminist funds.⁴⁰ These funds are most likely to both support community groups and intersectional efforts. The African Women's Development Fund, for example, is at the top of the list of funders based in the Global South and East by grant amounts, with an annual giving in 2018–2019 of \$6 million (representing 0.16% of human rights funding captured in the report). Black feminist funds are critical in the funding ecosystem for many Black feminist organizations. The past 2–3 years have also seen the creation of new Black-led funds, feminist and otherwise. These have come out of gaps identified through research and include, the Black Feminist Fund (global), The Black Trans Fund (US, Caribbean), the Black Girl Freedom Fund (US), the Baobab Foundation (UK), and Foundation for Black Communities (Canada). Existing Black feminist funds are also growing in number and budgets. For example, UHAI-EASRI's budget has grown from an annual budget of \$200,000 at its creation, to \$10 million over 10 years. UAF Africa underwent similar

39 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.

40 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2021.



growth over 10 years, from \$250,000 when it was created, to \$13.5 million in 2021. Other funds indicated ongoing and planned slow and steady growth.

Despite the increased budget and numbers of Black feminist funds, primary source interviews for this chapter with Black feminist funds that support Black feminist movements revealed a significant gap in meeting the demand for funding. While the majority of Black feminist funds mentioned increasing their resources and budgets, the ability to meet demand was as low as 12% for some funds and only as high as around 40%. Urgent Action Fund Africa, for example, covers 55 countries and has gone from giving 87 grants in 2018 to 450 in 2021, though they could only meet 40% of expressed demand, while the relatively new Black Trans Fund awarded 60 grants by the end of 2021 that included small community care response grants to general operating and capacity strengthening support. This is of great concern considering how critical feminist and women's funds have been to resourcing feminist movements. In 2018, women's funds were the top funders based in the Global South and East, despite having significantly smaller budgets in grant dollars compared with other private philanthropic funders in particular.⁴¹ Several of the Black feminist funds we talked to had reserves. However, there are no Black feminist funds that hold an endowment for their work into the long term.

41 Candid and HRFN, *Advancing Human Rights: Annual Review of Global Foundation Grantmaking, 2021*.

**These
barriers**

are not essential technical
barriers for due diligence,
but rather

**systemic barriers
rooted in white
supremacy**

**that come from the
'civilizing' and 'charity'
roots of development and
philanthropy.**

We are our own pillars: the depth and breadth of autonomous resourcing

There is a long history of feminists self-funding in a variety of ways from volunteering time to giving in kind services, financial and other resources. This type of giving that comprises significant resources is not comprehensively documented, often captured in gray literature that is not readily accessible to a wide audience or, increasingly, in reports mapping Black-led and/or Black feminist led organizations. In this report, the chapter *A Movement View* documents for the first time how Black feminist organizations autonomously resource their own work and collectively resource each other. One European organization noted that “we are self-funded; we share our finances and our biggest resource is ‘people’”⁴² and another report about giving by communities of color in the United States highlights the different ways these communities fund their organizations, including through mutual aid groups and crowdsourcing.⁴³ While these other resources are very important, Black feminists deserve to be robustly financially supported by philanthropy for their bold visions and should not be left to fund their movements alone.

Strength in numbers: Black feminists in philanthropy

Recognising the power of collective organizing, the Black Feminist Fund organized “Bringing it B(l)ack,” the first ever global conference for Black feminists in philanthropy in November 2021. The conference brought together over 100 Black feminists working in different capacities in the broad range of philanthropic institutions and entities around the world. The conference provided a space for community, celebration, solidarity, strategizing and more. This and other spaces that will continue to be created also provide critical coalition-building opportunities that can strengthen efforts to increase funding to the community through collective efforts. An organized and connected group of Black feminists in philanthropy is also important given how relatively new funding to feminist movements is for many

42 Mama Cash and Elpida, Fatima Ali (author), Mapping the European landscape of Black and/or Muslim feminist movements, 2021.

43 Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Everyday Donors of Color in the US - diverse philanthropy during times of change, 2021.

funders. The expertise they would bring in feminism and Black feminist organizing is critical to not only increasing funding, but doing so in an informed way. It would also mitigate against the isolation that Black women in philanthropy often experience in the sector and, with their connections to the wider movement and communities, help them effectively bridge the movements with the donor community.⁴⁴

Conclusion and recommendations: “If you trust Black feminists, fund them!”

This research is a first attempt to get a holistic picture of funding to Black feminist organizations and movements around the world. A challenging, though rewarding exercise. What is clear is that Black feminist movements are making a huge imprint on social change. The question remains, will philanthropy follow?


Recommendations

Many of these are not new and have been recommended for many years by feminist and Global South organizations and organizations working with Black and other marginalized communities in the Global North. It is long past time to listen and act on them and it is encouraging that some funders are doing just that.

Close the trust gap

First, there is a need to honestly acknowledge that the trust gap exists and how it perpetuates lack of funding directly to Black feminist-led organizations. Then philanthropy has to work to close it! Closing this gap will necessitate interrogating where biases exist, how they manifest and their impact then identify concrete and measurable ways to address them. This work will be uncomfortable but critical to shifting the current systems whereby those closest to the issues funding seeks to

44 AWID, Mama Cash and Count Me In Consortium, Moving more money to the drivers of change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements, 2020.



address receive the least funding. The oft heard mantra to “trust (Black) women” must be accompanied by funding Black women, girl and trans-led organizations and doing so commensurate with the well documented impact of their work, the huge demand for resources for the work and that is expressed by the communities they represent and work with. The evidence about the impact of Black feminist organizations and movements is clear and funders need to stop requiring more evidence in order to fund them, but rather show trust through robust and long-term funding.

Shifting power means giving up control

Funders need to be intentional about listening to the people from the places where funding is intended to have impact, and to ensure that these voices and perspectives are in the rooms where decisions about money and where it goes are made. This shift means giving up control and trusting, in word and deed, those who are most grounded in the context and communities. It also means providing the kind of funding that allows constituency-led groups to do the generational work of social change, without the barriers of conditions and with the flexibility of core funding.

Align intentions with funding practices

The disconnects between intention and practice in priority setting through grantmaking processes need to be urgently addressed. This again includes centering the voices of the most affected in determining priorities, as well as assessing internalized biases and how they affect access to funding and make grantmaking processes burdensome. Critically, funding should never be racial- and gender-“neutral” if it is to be truly intersectional and meet the needs of communities identified as a priority. This is particularly important for sector-specific funding such as climate change and funds broadly targeting Black communities. Finally, making funding priorities explicit and clear helps increase access to often excluded communities and organizations.

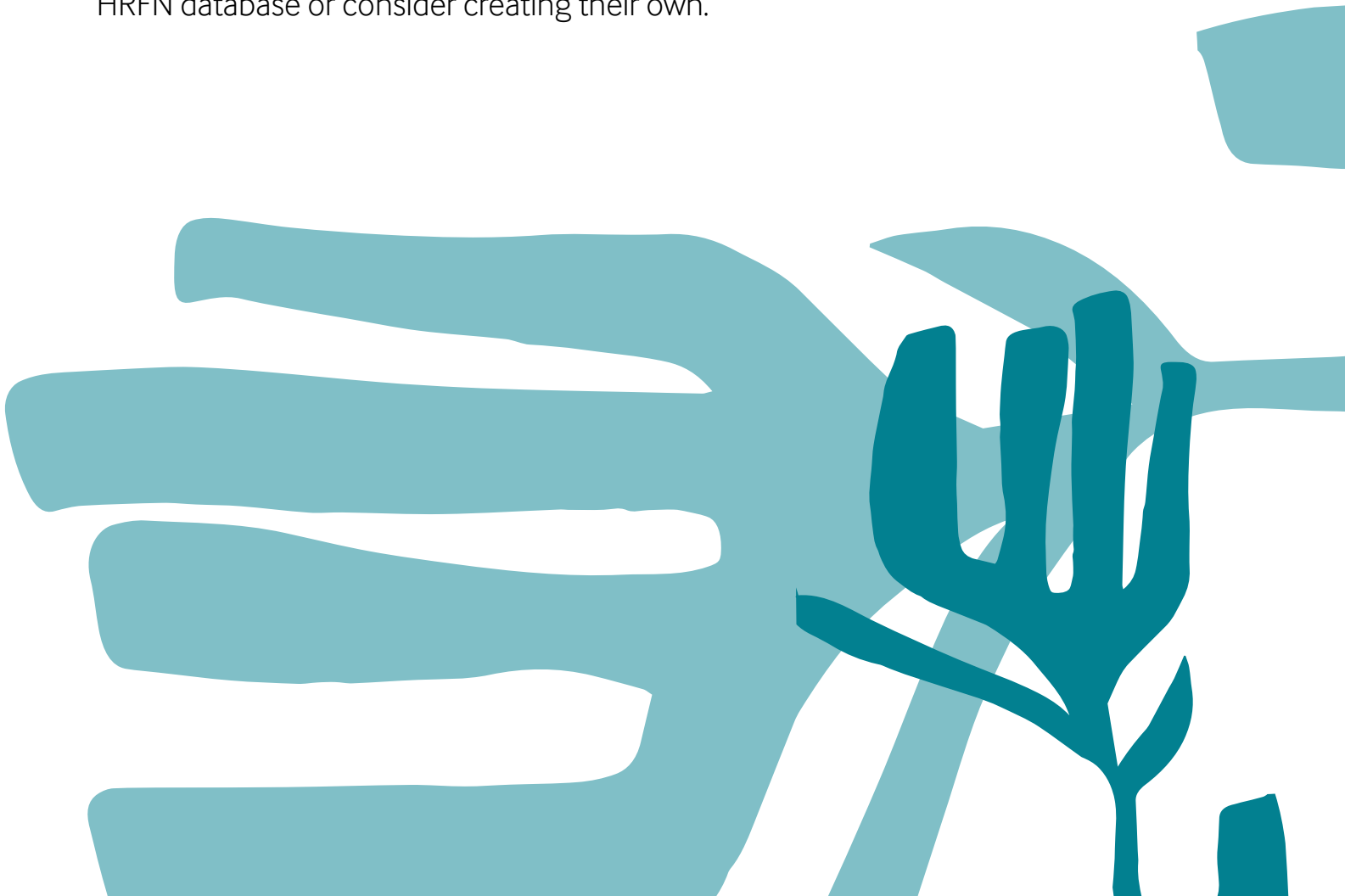
Support the Black feminist ecosystem to thrive

For Black feminist organizations to thrive, there will need to be significant investments to ensure organizational and ecosystem sustainability. Given that their

work focuses on addressing and redressing long-standing systemic issues, a stable ecosystem of well-funded organizations is critical. Black feminists are in it for the long haul and short-term or trend-driven funding risks destabilizing them and their important work.

More and better data

Collecting and disseminating data about funding going to Black feminist organizations is essential to get a good picture of what is available, which organizations are getting funding, the types of funding (flexible or not) and duration of funding. Such data is important in making visible the critical work of Black feminist organizations. Importantly, the data needs to capture intersectional funding and which organizations are receiving (or not) resources in different countries and regions, especially the Caribbean and Latin and Central America. Multilateral organizations in particular need to make the significant resources they receive for gender equality work more transparent through, for example contributing to the OECD database. Feminist, women and other funds can also provide valuable information about their funding and should be encouraged to contribute to the HRFN database or consider creating their own.



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