Leaders and Stewards: Global Analysis of Funding to Indigenous Women
Acknowledgements

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples and Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas

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Maslah Rompado, Dusun Malaysia

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A Message to Readers

We ask readers to please cite this report and acknowledge the collective wisdom of the knowledge holders who contributed to this research. Please use the following citation:


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Definitions and Terminology


**CEDAW General Recommendation N.39:** the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adoption in General recommendation No.39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls. It represents the first language in a binding international treaty focused on the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls and is a result of the years of advocacy and leadership of Indigenous Women.

**Indigenous Governments and Autonomous Regions (IG/AR):** This category includes Tribal, First Nations, Aboriginal Governments and Councils Organizations created by sovereign First Nations (Tribal, Aboriginal, Indigenous) governments or councils. Funding programs created by regional federations of Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Colleges and Universities, and economic development agencies are also included.

**5Rs of Indigenous Philanthropy:** Respect, Relationships, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Redistribution.

**Indigenous Peoples:** An official definition of "Indigenous" has not been adopted by any United Nations system body. Instead, the United Nations uses an understanding that intends to honor the diversity of Indigenous Peoples based upon the following: self-determination at the individual and community level; historical continuity; strong links to territory; distinct social, economic or political systems; and distinct language, culture, and beliefs. The most fruitful approach is to identify, rather than define, Indigenous Peoples. This is based on the fundamental criterion of self-identification as underlined in key human rights documents. (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues n.d.)

**Indigenous Women’s Collective Rights:** This term refers to the recognition that Indigenous Women are a distinct group within Indigenous communities, and therefore their collective rights need to be addressed as such. Collective rights include but are not limited to cultural rights, language rights, collective ownership of resources, educational rights, gender rights and healthcare rights.
**Indigenous Women’s Individual Rights:** This term refers to the recognition that Indigenous Women are a distinct group within Indigenous communities, and therefore their individual rights need to be addressed as such. Individual rights include but are not limited to freedom of expression, the right to education, and the right to life.

**Indigenous Women’s Organizations (IWOs):** This category includes an organization, forum, platform, or other body Indigenous Women use to organize that has as its primary role to serve Indigenous Peoples and their communities, rights, self-determination or has as one of its main roles to fund Indigenous organizations or community projects, and whose mission is for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples.

**Indigenous Philanthropy:** Global grant-making by Indigenous Led Funds and non-Indigenous funding organizations, and intermediaries to fund organizations and initiatives to support Indigenous Peoples.

**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP):** Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007, UNDRIP is a UN document that contains minimum standards for the recognition, promotion, and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
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In 2016, the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI), and International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) published *A Call to Action: Insights into the Status of Funding for Indigenous Women’s Groups*. The report was the first of its kind to offer high-level analysis of the funding landscape. It highlighted the lack of funding for Indigenous Women and the challenges of the lack of disaggregated funding data, and also provided ideas for action and solidarity between funders and Indigenous Women’s Organizations.

FIMI and IFIP have worked collectively and in allyship, as well as from our respective expertise areas, to address the priorities, challenges, barriers, and rights violations faced by Indigenous Women. Understanding the reality of the state of funding for Indigenous Women, FIMI and IFIP have also collaborated to address the gaps in funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations. While there have been strategic gains made by Indigenous Women to advance their collective and individual rights, self-determination, and women’s rights, we see the funding gaps largely unaddressed by the funding community.

The purpose of this new report, the second of its kind, is to assess the progress, funding status, and challenges in funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations. The report shares the findings from interviews and a survey conducted with Indigenous Women’s Organizations around the globe. Participants were asked about their organizational priorities, activities, annual budgets, and funding strategies. The report highlights four main sections that identify the priority areas for the organizations, opportunities to advance Indigenous Women’s rights, challenges organizations face when accessing funding, and the need to justly and equitably fund Indigenous Women’s Organizations.

We envision this report, together with the companion piece *Essential Principles of Partnering and Funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations*, will open dialogues and space to further unpack the findings and provide guidance on how the funding community can leap into action to increase philanthropic and international cooperation funding support for Indigenous Women’s Organizations. Indigenous Women require increased and direct access to funding in a meaningful, respectful, flexible, and effective way.

We invite you to reach out to us, and we welcome guiding funders in their giving journey. We look forward to seeing the funding community addressing the systemic and historical funding gaps by moving swiftly to resource the leadership, priorities, and rights of Indigenous Women.

**Lourdes Inga**, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP)

**Teresa Zapeta**, International Indigenous Women’s Forum / Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI)
Indigenous Women globally share a common vision of enjoying their collective and individual rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination against Indigenous Women. Their work has demonstrated to the world ways to nurture the equilibrium between human and nature interactions. As stewards of the earth, Indigenous Women have agility in their roles as caretakers, educators, custodians, healers, leaders, and many other roles to safeguard their communities and mother earth. They are knowledge holders across generations. Their traditional and Indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices weave together to offering solutions to global challenges and threats. These solutions are climate smart, socio-economically just, ecologically sustainable, collectively owned, and guided by Indigenous cosmovision of human and nature’s harmonious interdependency.

Indigenous Women constitute about 238.4 million people—approximately 50% of the 476.6 million Indigenous people (ILO 2019) and approximately 3% population in the world. Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous Women, manage 80% of the earth’s biodiversity in the ancestral land and territories they live in. Their way of life is intricately connected to the diverse ecosystems that encompass forests, water, and land. Their socio-economic, customary, cultural, and spiritual connections foster Indigenous engineering of mutual support, accountability, kindness and sensitivity towards humankind, and co-existence with nature. Their rights to self-determination and self-governance are key to affirm and advance Indigenous engineering to re-imagine a better world. Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women’s movements, organizing, and mobilizing, are stronger than ever to ensure their collective rights, rights to self-determination, and self-governance.
Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women's movements have witnessed historic progressive landmarks within their movements. Global Indigenous Women’s movements have paved a collective pathway of organizing, connecting different local, national, regional and international initiatives. In Beijing during the Fourth World Conference on Women, Indigenous Women leaders across the globe came together, reflected, strategized, developed, and adopted the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women. This established an important milestone for Indigenous Women across all levels of the Indigenous Women’s movement and provided a solid foundation to advocate for Indigenous Women’s rights.

Indigenous Women’s movements have since stronger and more visible, encouraging new platforms and mechanisms to emerge and amplify their voices. Global Mechanisms like the International Indigenous Women Forum (FIMI) have been conceived and nurtured under the framework of the Beijing Indigenous Women’s Declaration. The World Indigenous Peoples Conference and the two World Conferences of Indigenous Women have played an instrumental role for continued strengthening, nurturing, and solidifying of the collective agenda of the Indigenous Women’s movements.

Indigenous Women have organized themselves across national, regional, global, and thematic networks; regional networks from different socio-cultural regions (namely AIWN, AIWO, ECMIA, NIWA, PIWN, Sami Nisson Forum and, The Central American and Mexico Indigenous Women Alliance) play a significant role shaping the Indigenous Women’s rights and political agenda and strengthen local to global movements.

In the global arena, different international instruments and mechanisms specific to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women have been devised with continued advocacy of Indigenous Women. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labor Organization (ILO 169) under the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) have ensured the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has recognized the rights to self-determination and self-governance; identities, culture, and languages; land, territories, and resources (LTR); and free prior informed consent (FPIC) among many other rights of Indigenous Peoples. Similarly, the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN SRIP), and Expert Mechanism on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) have advanced the recognition and issues of Indigenous Peoples. Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development has six times referenced Indigenous Peoples inclusive of the political declaration sections and targets. The UNFCCC and Biodiversity Conservation Strategic Framework have recognized Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women including their gender action plan.

Indigenous Women’s movements have galvanized and achieved noteworthy cornerstones to advancing their rights and improving their situation, yet there are very limited substantial improvements in their context. ILO study of 2020 on the impact of UNDRIP has indicated very limited progress on the situation of Indigenous Women and Children.

Despite their enormous assets and contribution to society, Indigenous Women and Girls, and different intersectional groups within, face multiple and interrelated forms of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, geographic location, and disability. They are also affected by broader contexts of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, which have their roots in colonial domination, limited access to public services, and dispossession of their ancestral lands. They are subject to extreme poverty, trafficking, illiteracy, lack of access to ancestral lands, and territories, non-existent or poor healthcare, and violence in the private and public spheres. This violence is exacerbated when Indigenous communities find themselves in the middle of conflict and women become the target of harassment, intimidation, criminalization, and violence.

According to data from 23 countries that represent 83% of the world’s Indigenous population, almost 19% live in conditions of extreme poverty. Indigenous Women are at the lower end of all socioeconomic indicators.

18% of Indigenous Women live on less than $1.90 a day, compared to 6.8% of the non-Indigenous population.

18.3% of Indigenous Women live on less than $1.90 a day, compared to 6.8% of the non-Indigenous population.

Only 8.8% of Indigenous Women have higher education, compared to 22.9% of non-Indigenous Women.

The political participation of Indigenous Women is scarce and limited. (Diaz, 2022)
The FIMI and IFIP study (2016) mentions the limited meaningful participation and representation of Indigenous Women in decision making space as well as the lack of representation in funding for women’s rights. The study findings on the funding landscape indicate that Indigenous Women received 0.7% of all recorded human rights funding between 2010 and 2013, or less than a third of their proportion in the population. Indigenous Women are not markedly different in size and profile compared to women human rights groups or other feminist groups (ie. Size, income, age, assets etc.) Additionally, there is an underrepresentation of groups funded in Asia and Africa, which houses more than 85% of Indigenous Women’s global population. Further, Indigenous Women face three main barriers to accessing long-term financing for their work: lack of administrative and budgetary capacity, lack of legal status as Indigenous Peoples or their organizations, and the prominence of “traditional philanthropy” by various financial sectors as an approach rooted in the philosophy of providing charity and aid, rather than financing social change.

Indigenous Women have demonstrated extraordinary resilience and movement-creating power. Indigenous Women’s persistence and struggle account for the overall improvement and success so far, yet there is a long way to go to where every Indigenous Women lives with dignity and enjoys equal human rights without any forms of discrimination against them. This report not only seeks to elevate the power of Indigenous Women but to highlight the deficiencies in justly and equitably resourcing the Indigenous Women’s movement.
Findings at a Glance

This report is one part of a series of reports commissioned by the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) and Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI) to capture the status of funding for Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women. These include:

- Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy (2024)
- A Call to Action: Insights into the Status of Funding for Indigenous Women’s Groups (2016)

Each report highlights the necessity to better fund Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women to reflect the impactful and unique contributions that Indigenous Peoples and especially Indigenous Women have on the betterment of their communities, nations, and across the globe.

This report examines how Indigenous Women’s Organizations are funded, the challenges they face, and any funding gaps that exist. Researchers interviewed 14 individuals from 11 different Indigenous Women’s Organizations and surveyed 286 Indigenous Women’s Organizations from around the globe.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Assess the funding status, challenges and gaps to Indigenous Women’s Organizations and Indigenous Women-led Organizations
- Identify the priority areas and opportunities for philanthropic and funding communities and Indigenous Women’s Organizations and Indigenous Women-led Organization
- Demonstrate the importance and need for philanthropic and funding communities to fund Indigenous Women and Indigenous Women-led Organizations
Participants were asked to describe the priorities, activities, annual budgets, and funding strategies of their organizations. Interview participants spoke the following languages and came from countries from the following countries:

- **English (9):** Australia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Norway, Thailand, The Philippines
- **Spanish (3):** Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay
- **Portuguese (1):** Brazil

Survey responses came from the following countries:

- **Africa:** Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, and Niger.
- **Central and South America and the Caribbean:** El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Puerto Rico
- **Asia:** Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand.
- **The Pacific:** Fiji, Guahan, New Zealand, Papa New Guinea, Republic of Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands.
- **North America:** Canada, The United States, and Mexico
- **Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia:** Norway and Spain
The report is divided into two sections: interview findings and survey findings. The interview findings discuss the four key themes: Priority Areas, Advancing Indigenous Women’s Rights, Challenges Accessing Funding, and Why Fund Indigenous Women’s Organizations, each explored below.

**Organizations’ Focus Areas**
Interview participants disclosed that their priority areas included ensuring efforts related to Indigenous rights were Indigenous led; eliminating violence against women, girls, and youth; promoting community healing; and providing culturally appropriate services. Recognizing the interconnectedness of Indigenous Women and the environment, many participants expressed that addressing climate change, water hygiene, food sovereignty, and resource rights were priorities of their organizations. Participants further emphasized that healthcare, education, and economic opportunities were priorities for them. Finally, participants explained that empowering Indigenous Women and working to ensure they are recognized, respected, and valued for who they are as Indigenous Women was a motivating factor in their work.

**Advancing Indigenous Women’s Collective Rights**
Many strategies and opportunities were highlighted as crucial to advancing Indigenous Women’s collective rights. These centered around capacity building, empowerment of women, and digital activism. Participants emphasized the important role philanthropy has in supporting Indigenous communities and organizations. They also highlighted the need to link regional activities to global initiatives, improve access to resources including training opportunities, and provide funds to strengthen organizations’ capacities to participate in decision-making processes. Core funding is needed to strengthen Indigenous Women’s organizations, enabling them to identify needs, organize, and disseminate training and education at local, national, and international levels.
Challenges Accessing Funding
Many of the challenges and barriers encountered by Indigenous women when working to access funding for their work stem from a lack of alignment between funders and organizations. Participants emphasized that the criteria required to apply for funding is rigid and inflexible, and that they need more information to navigate the application process effectively. Finally, participants shared that due to lack of staff, language barriers, lack of long-term funding, and technical capacity, Indigenous Women’s Organizations find it challenging to compete with larger organizations affecting their ability to apply and secure funding.

Advancing Indigenous Women’s Collective Rights
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Why Fund Indigenous Women’s Organizations
When Indigenous Women’s organization are funded, Indigenous Women are empowered to increase their societal contribution, preserve their culture and knowledge, and enhance their political participation. Participants emphasized the importance of funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations because empowering Indigenous Women has a positive ripple effect on communities, and properly funding these organizations contributes to protect and recover cultural knowledge, traditions, and language. Participants also emphasized the need for innovative and comprehensive funding approaches to address the diverse challenges faced by Indigenous Women and amplify their vital contributions.
The survey, which was open for a one-month data collection period beginning in November 2023, consisted of 30 questions across two broad themes: an organizational profile of Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations and the funding realities and barriers of these organizations. Key findings regarding the survey include:

- The majority of surveyed organizations have an annual budget under $100,000.
- Most respondent organizations reported receiving grants between $25,000 - $50,000.
- Most grants were for less than one year.
- A lack of capacity of Indigenous Women’s Organizations was most cited as a challenge to accessing funding. This included a lack of technical capacity, a lack of staffing, and limited ability to navigate complicated funding application processes.
- The most common response in terms of the number of staff, including non-remunerated staff, was between five and ten (34.3%).
- Mexico, Kenya, and the Philippines stand out as locations with the most Indigenous Women Organizations.
- Thematically, most respondents identified working in the environmental realm and/or women’s equality.
- 34% of respondents to the survey spoke English as their primary language, followed by an Indigenous language are their primary language (23%), Spanish (20%), French (16%), Portuguese (1%), and other (5%).

In summary, a significant portion of Indigenous Women’s Organizations operate with limited financial and human resources, which speaks to their dedication to their communities. Challenges with capacity and accessing funding, and the trend towards modest grant sizes and shorter funding durations, hinder the sustainability and ability of organizations to engage in long-term planning. The diversity of the languages spoken by survey respondents highlights not only the global nature of those surveyed, but also the necessity of multilingual support in funding processes. These findings can be used to guide initiatives to enhance support for Indigenous Women’s Organizations working on the social, economic, political, and environmental issues that Indigenous Peoples face globally.
Global Funding Trends from 2016 to 2020

From 2016 to 2020 about **28.5 billion** was given in grants supporting women and girls, however, looking specifically at Indigenous Women we find only 392 million (1.4%) was given to organizations benefiting Indigenous Women.

![Figure 1: Global Funding Trends for Indigenous Women](image)

Our analysis of Indigenous People’s grant-making across the globe highlights disparities in grant-making for Indigenous People’s organizations serving women.

From 2016 to 2020, only **4.5 billion in grant-making benefited Indigenous Peoples globally** and 392 million (8.7%) benefited Indigenous Women and Girls.

Majority of the funding for Indigenous Women and Girls went to non-Indigenous organizations with only 62.8 million going to Indigenous Peoples organizations.

![Figure 2: Global Funding Trends for Indigenous People](image)
Interview Findings

Please note: Some relevant findings from IFIP’s 2024 report Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy are included in the following section and are referenced as such. All other findings are derived from the interviews conducted for the present report focusing on Indigenous Women’s funding.
Priority Areas

Participants shared a number of areas that they prioritized in their work related to women and Indigenous rights. Overall, many participants expressed that ensuring efforts related to Indigenous Women’s rights were led by Indigenous Women was a priority for them.

Eliminating violence against Indigenous Women, girls, and youth was also a key concern. Gender-based violence (GBV) is “a direct form of violence used to control, subjugate, and maintain rigid gender roles and inequality. Forms include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse; harassment; threats; coercion; economic or educational deprivation; and control over freedom of movement” (The Sage Fund n.d., 10). Participants explained that addressing gender-based violence included addressing human trafficking, forced marriage of girls, violence in migration processes, domestic and familial violence, and racism. A major priority for some participants was providing culturally appropriate services for Indigenous Women facing domestic violence.

IFIP’s Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy (2024) report also highlights the need to address violence that disproportionately affects Indigenous Women. One participant shared how addressing violence against women includes measures that can change domestic and family structures to broader transformation within communities:

We have a lot of stories of women that have been struggling with violence and they made a lot of things change internally in their homes. [Thay] also [had] to make changes in their communities, [and] began to work with other women, men, and also with the traditional authorities. So, they can together make something different. (Interview Participant from Global Funding Trend Analysis [IFIP 2024])
The majority of the participants voiced a need for greater representation of Indigenous Women in decision-making and leadership roles. Participants expressed that Indigenous Women are essential to the continuation of Indigenous practices and livelihoods, often holding and transferring cultural knowledge, while also upholding and supporting community and family. Despite the key role Indigenous Women have, they are often overlooked when it comes to leadership and decision-making, including within their own communities and within Indigenous specific spaces (Interviews 4, 6, 9).

At a national level, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women may be recognized legislatively but in practice they are not included in decision-making processes (Interview 8). Sometimes in order to be able to have influence, Indigenous Women’s organizations must partner with another organization with similar goals.

At an international level, often areas of influence that are available to Indigenous Women are available to what one participant called “elite Indigenous,” those who speak English and may already have influence and power (Interview 7). Lastly, a participant shared that there is a problematic narrative around Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women that they are inherently anti-development, further detailed in the quotation below.

One [challenge] is a global narrative that blames Indigenous people, like Indigenous people are against development. No, this is a global federation, because we fight for our rights, we protect our land, territory, and resources. We don’t want unsustainable development in our areas. So, that is the global blame […] There are many instances where we don’t have high demands, but we just want to be included in its decision-making processes. (Interview Participant)
Community healing was frequently cited as an area that participants prioritized in their work. One participant explained:

There is a lot of illness among us. Both older and younger women. We see the care agenda differently than the way it is being pushed at the international level. We see it from the perspective of healing: “We need to heal.” We work on our individual issues, but also on the collective issues. We have an expression that says, “You get sick of sadness.” We see healing in the light of the “generational trauma” that our peoples have suffered. We are now also talking about “economic trauma.” We act and operate affected by that trauma. It is a different take on the right to care and the care agenda internationally; we don’t see it from the perspective of getting paid for the care work that we do inside our families, but from the perspective of redistributing care. Now that Mexico has a gender parity law, we see that women who participate in politics end up exhausted because they have two or three times the work, because they are also caregivers. We need to change the normative frameworks and have the work that we do in our communities recognized: the care work that we do for the collective, for our territory, and our healing.

(Interview Participant)

This participant explained that generational and economic trauma was a hindrance to women having full and equal participation in society. Addressing this was a major priority for this participant.

Some participants expressed that connection amongst Indigenous Women was a priority area and a motivating factor in their work. One participant described a project where women from the Mura nation in the state of Amazonas met women from the Mura nation in Rondônia. This gathering carried immense significance as it provided the opportunity for these women who come from a common lineage to meet each other, exchange knowledge and ideas, and discuss common struggles. The gathering happened during the Indigenous Women’s March in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. A vital part of promoting Indigenous Women’s rights is to provide opportunities for women to come together, talk, and organize.
The protection of land and resources, and how these issues were interrelated to the needs of Indigenous Women, was a priority for many interviewees. Land is central to Indigenous Women’s justice because it is intimately connected to the well-being of Indigenous communities and to Indigenous Women’s roles within those communities. In many Indigenous communities, women play important roles in land use, resource management, and decision-making. However, the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the imposition of colonial systems have often excluded women from these roles. This has had profound impacts on Indigenous gender relations, often exacerbating gender-based violence and inequality.

The Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls in the Framework of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by FIMI reports that in Africa, in recent decades, the Indigenous communities inhabiting the equatorial forest in their various countries have been victims of forced displacement due to logging, mining, tourist activities, and armed conflict. This means that they are also exposed to food insecurity, health problems and deterioration of cultural, physical, spiritual, and economic integrity (Musafiri 2009). In Asia, the displacement or relocation of IP from their traditional territories and the dispossession of their lands and resources due to extractive industries are common. In the name of forest conservation, forest-dependent Indigenous Peoples and communities are also being expelled from their lands.

This has put more burden on Indigenous Women who are expected to provide food for the family. As a result, gender-based violence is exacerbated at the household level, and women are forced into migration (International Indigenous Women’s Forum 2020).

Indigenous Women are also the disproportionate targets of ecologically destructive extractivism. For example, Indigenous Women in the U.S. are dealing with historical trauma from genocide alongside the issues presented by extractive industries such as “birth defects caused by uranium mining in Navajo Nation or violence against women stemming from “man camps” set up to extract oil in North Dakota” (Chitnis 2018). Similar issues arise around the globe, Indigenous Women argued that extractive industries have a large negative impact on health, traditional knowledge and Indigenous knowledge, cultural fabric, biodiversity and ecological balance in their territories (FIMI 2019).

One participant explained the need to prioritize Indigenous Women’s access to land and resources:

It is important to access land and resources so Indigenous Women can produce their own quality food. My colleagues from Africa, for instance, suffer disproportionately from the consequences of climate change. It is important to secure access to resources. (Interview Participant)
Further, another participant spoke about the important work that Indigenous Women in Brazil were doing to advance the legal land demarcation to protect the rainforest:

The pioneers of the Indigenous Women’s movement in the Amazon region are the women from Rio Negro. They are the ones that got COIAB (Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon) off the ground and advanced legal land demarcation in the region. (Interview Participant)

Some participants explained that they understood issues of land rights and climate change to be deeply interconnected with Indigenous Women’s rights.

Participants further explained that much of their work is centered around food sovereignty and maintaining traditional harvesting practices in their territories. One participant explained:

There should not be a reliance on industrialized food and other store-bought foods. As guardians and caretakers of the land, women are thinking of the collective livelihood of their people and asserting their rights to grow and harvest their own food in their own territories utilizing their own cultural practices. (Interview Participant)

Therefore, some organizations interviewed are prioritizing initiatives that support Indigenous Women to protect their territories.

Similarly, food sovereignty was mentioned by participants as a priority area. One participant explained a project with Indigenous Women from various nations to teach sewing. The garments are hand painted, thus providing an outlet for women to use their creativity and weave their histories in the process. This project sought to build communities, strengthen women’s ties to each other, and also provide a source of income.

Access to clean water was highlighted through the interviews, although it was only mentioned directly as an issue that needed to be addressed by one participant (Interview Participant). Other participants shared that researching water access, the status of water access, and supporting water movements was a part of the work that they do. The participant that spoke directly to the need to access drinking water in their area, and the relationship between water access and Indigenous Women as the members of the community that go and seek water for their families. With increasing drought, it has become harder for Indigenous Women in their area (Chaco region in Paraguay) to find clean drinking water. The participant estimated that 80-90% of the Indigenous people in their area depend on rainwater; this is a result of limited ground water resources and the over-salination of the water due to the type of soil in the region. This is an example of an ongoing threat to the human right to water and sanitation, recognized by the United Nations in 2010 (United Nations General Assembly 2010).
Broadly speaking, access was a recurring theme throughout the interview process. This included access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. One participant explained:

Access to opportunities has to be done from our own perspectives and cosmovision. Economic development is crucial to reduce and, hopefully, eliminate poverty among Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Women must have labor opportunities, support for their businesses, and access to resources. (Interview Participant)

Poverty alleviation was a major theme and several participants expressed that working to address this through income-generating activities was a priority. Access to healthcare, and in particular reproductive healthcare, was another key priority.

Some participants also expressed that more access to decision making for Indigenous communities was a priority, with one participant noting:

Even from my experiences in Malaysia, even though we people said we are a developed country, but if you go to the Indigenous communities, we still don’t have the proper infrastructure and don’t talk about the decision making, you we are not part of the decision-making process. (Interview Participant)

Similarly, access to education for Indigenous Women and Girls was a priority area for some participants.

Recognition of Indigenous Women was also a recurrent theme amongst participants. One participant explained “We have to be recognized, respected and valued for who we are as Indigenous Women: with our languages, cosmovision, and perspectives” (Interview 7). Working to improve women’s rights through training and education was a priority for another participant:

We cannot deny that patriarchy still exists even in progressive Indigenous organizations. We have been directly giving trainings and orientations on Indigenous Women’s rights based on the UNCEDAW [United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women]. We believe that knowing that one has a right enables her to act on it. Part of this is building on their roles to realize their rights as Indigenous peoples and as women. (Interview Participant).

Many participants also wanted to see more Indigenous Women in leadership positions. One participant expressed that this was a key motivation for their work:

My dream is that every Indigenous woman is given the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential without discrimination. And of course, we need to strengthen the capabilities of Indigenous Women. (Interview Participant)
Empowering women was a priority area for many participants, as demonstrated by this quotation:

Women in Indigenous communities are not accepted as the leader. This is a challenge, and it is very hard for us to work on it. And we try to strengthen our woman, especially NIWA members to raise their voice and to work hard in their community to support their own women in the group. (Interview Participant)

By contrast, some participants expressed that involving more Indigenous men in their work was a priority area, as they have had difficulties getting men involved in the past. One Saami participant explained that many Saami women are strong leaders and tend to be in charge and involved in many initiatives. Their organization is attempting to get men included more but they are struggling with this they understand there could be potential structural reasons that Saami men are not getting involved. The potential structural reason that they may not be able to get men involved included lack of education, men are directly working on the land, or men who are educated and want to work in the Indigenous rights realm tend to work for other larger organizations.

Finally, in terms of the priorities of their organization, participants cited capacity building and rights awareness as key priorities. Rights awareness is a key part of advocating for and advancing the rights of Indigenous Women worldwide.

Rights awareness must begin with education within Indigenous communities about what their rights are, so that they are able to practice self-determination while pursuing recognition and protection of them. It is also important to note that governments that oppress Indigenous Peoples benefit from an Indigenous population who are not educated on their rights as they are unlikely to demand something they are unaware of in the first place. One participant noted this saying:

We don’t have training and that is convenient for the government, because in this way, Indigenous Women cannot demand their rights. (Interview Participant)

Education on rights awareness also helps break gender barriers in Indigenous activism. Increases in organizing and education results in more women taking space advocating for their rights in areas where men were generally regarded as the ones had the responsibility of fighting for Indigenous rights. One participant noted this correlation while acknowledging the resistance women still face, saying:

[Before COIAB] there was this generalist view that women had to stay home while men went out to fight and organize for Indigenous rights. Indigenous Women still face some resistance today, but they are actively breaking paradigms and carving out their space in the Indigenous movement as protagonists. (Interview Participant)
One area of importance for the advancement of Indigenous Women’s rights is capacity building. Indigenous Women and organizers need training to arm them with the tools to successfully navigate funding structures that help advance their work in and out of community. Capacity building empowers the self-determination of Indigenous Women in their ability to advocate for their individual and collective rights in ways that they see fit for themselves and not under the control of larger organizations who may not fully understand Indigenous worldviews and approaches. One participant noted the importance of capacity building as a tool for self-determination noting:

One of the trainings that we do in the last few years is that we have decided to be able to train the women strongly on how to manage their own funding, because then we say they know and they are strong, and they get to understand it and do it very well. (Interview Participant)

Another area identified where capacity needs to be built is with the operation of technological tools. Technological literacy will increase the global reach of Indigenous Women’s rights advocates when accessing funding as well as campaigning across various social media platforms.

Advancing Indigenous Women’s Collective and Individual Rights

Indigenous Women are of central importance to the cultural continuity of Indigenous knowledge and practices. However, Indigenous Women are also more likely to face consequences and challenges associated with human rights abuses. Therefore, Indigenous Women are central in resistance movements for their collective rights. As the report *A Funder’s Toolkit: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states, “at the heart of the struggles of Indigenous Women are the very struggles of their peoples” (IFIP 2014, 40). Nonetheless, many funders have not acknowledged how Indigenous Women are “indispensable partners in advancing Indigenous peoples’ movements” (IFIP 2014, 40). It is critical that funders consider the fundamental role that Indigenous Women play in resistance movements and allocate funding accordingly.

The unique experiences of Indigenous Women in the Caribbean and Latin America are further explored in the report *Widening the Path: An Overview of Philanthropy’s Role in Supporting Indigenous Peoples* coordinated by the Caribbean Central American Research Council (CCARC) for the Ford Foundation.
Indigenous Women frequently rank at the bottom of all social and economic indicators. Further, there is a common goal between organizations that focus on Indigenous Women and youth: “women’s organizations advocate for the welfare and rights of Indigenous Women, and youth organizations advocate for the welfare and rights of Indigenous young people” (CCARC 2022, 15). To achieve systemic change, funders should invest more in these organizations, while considering them to be separate, specific groups. The report concludes that “making women’s and youth engagement a condition of funding would encourage organizations and communities to include it as part of their projects” (CCARC 2022, 21).

Women are frequently leading Indigenous communities’ efforts for self-determination. Supported by cross-movement coalitions and allies, women in frontline communities are articulating new frameworks that reflect their visions for the future. These are being translated into bold policy agendas that meet the planet’s most urgent demands, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, while addressing the problems’ roots, such as corporate impunity or insecure land tenure. In this way, women are creating new realities while they advocate for structural transformation.

SAGE research revealed several key strategies women and feminists are using to set policy agendas.

These include partnering with bridge-building organizations that can socialize and disseminate alternative frameworks; coalition-building, especially with environmental and climate groups; and advocating for feminist leadership in decision-making spaces. Women are changing the power structures around who participates in discussions, the terms of debate, and ultimately the decisions themselves (The Sage Fund n.d). In frontline communities, women tend to build and mobilize power differently than men—in ways that are often less formal, visible, or easily understood. Feminist coalitions are calling attention to barriers to women’s representation—particularly rural and Indigenous Women—in global and regional agenda-setting spaces.

In the pursuit of advancing Indigenous Women’s rights, the participants highlighted the strategies and opportunities they view as crucial to this endeavor. Participants outlined multifaceted approaches to capacity building encompassing rights education and multiple avenues towards empowerment, as well as addressing immediate needs including income generation, environmental concerns, and reproductive health.
Across interviews, participants highlighted the critical need for capacity building as a foundation for advancing Indigenous Women’s rights through philanthropy. Capacity building is also understood as a key element in bolstering organizations to become self-sustaining groups within Indigenous communities, and to further empower them in their advocacy. Participants emphasized the significance of philanthropy in supporting Indigenous communities and organizations over the past three to four decades, a stark departure from the earlier reliance solely on community support. The funds accessed through philanthropic endeavors have empowered Indigenous Women’s organizations to take strides in the advancement of Indigenous Women’s rights. Notably, as one participant representing FIMI highlighted, they are actively working to transform the relationship donors have with their funding of Indigenous Women’s organizations, stating “donors do not come to save us with their money” (Interview 7). Instead FIMI has worked to transform philanthropic donors to see their funding as a compliment to the resources already present in Indigenous communities and organizations, such as co-investment. One participant explained:

“We invest our time, knowledge, work and organizations, and donors invest their money and sometimes their technical capacities” (Interview Participant).

It is important to avoid deficit-based, victimhood and rescuer approaches when working with Indigenous Women. Deficit-based approaches focus on the negative or missing aspects of a person or community, rather than their strengths and resilience. This includes a focus on inequities, poverty, and social problems to the exclusion of narratives of resistance, survivance, and community success. Victimhood and rescuer approaches can disempower and perpetuate harmful stereotypes. The strengths and resilience of Indigenous Women must be recognized, and philanthropy must approach Indigenous Women as partners rather than solely as victims of oppression or recipients of charity.

Participants understood the utility and necessity of linking regional or national activities to global initiatives. This supports access and resource sharing such as opportunities for training, and roots their advocacy in initiatives with built momentum. As one participant shared, there is a major opportunity for organizations to align their work with the adoption of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’s (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 39 on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls. CEDAW’s General Recommendation No. 39 underscores the urgent challenges faced by Indigenous Women and Indigenous communities and articulates a roadmap towards the prevention and response to discrimination.
These national to regional solidarities prove to be of heightened importance in instances where the organization may not be able to access global high-profile events, conferences, and meetings. As one participant representing a South American organization stated, United Nations mechanisms and bodies such as the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the CEDAW Committee, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination were not accessible to most of their colleagues. The participant stated, “sometimes it is said that only the elite of Indigenous leadership gets into those spaces” (Interview 7). The participant went on to say that those spaces are more accessible to some, for instance, if they speak English. Another participant representing an Indigenous Women’s organization in Asia stated:

Our challenge is the language barrier. There are only a few of us who can speak English – even if we can speak English, it doesn’t mean that they can understand all English. […] So, it’s very difficult sometimes to represent our voice […] in a regional level or international level. (Interview Participant)

The participants conveyed the importance of Indigenous Women occupying those halls of power where decisions are often being made on their behalf, and the need for funding to strengthen organizations’ capacities to be there.

Philanthropy can play a crucial role in raising awareness and supporting advocacy to counter stereotypes, discrimination, and racism against Indigenous Women and Girls. Through philanthropic efforts, people can promote equity, empower Indigenous Women, and provide opportunities to address the root causes of discrimination and marginalization. In addition to building relationships and providing direct funding, philanthropy can raise awareness about the challenges faced by Indigenous Women and the impacts of stereotypes and racism. This could include supporting community-based research, media campaigns, and public education initiatives that promote understanding and empathy.
Philanthropy can support advocacy efforts to address systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous Women. This could include supporting legal challenges, policy advocacy, and community organizing efforts that promote equity and justice, including those relating to countering racism that contributes to sexual and domestic violence against Indigenous Women and Girls.

Indigenous Women have the inherent right to actively participate in and influence their own destiny, as one participant detailed: “We need to move forward in seeing ourselves, and being seen, as subjects of rights to political actors” (Interview 8). The participant further articulated that the acknowledgement of the ongoing and meaningful contributions of women in various realms such as academia, textile arts, cultural expressions, and politics reflects the social transformations led by Indigenous Women both within their communities and beyond. This participant went on to speak about some of this transformative work led by colleagues in the realms of academic and digital activism. Within academia, Indigenous Women are working to combat epistemic violence and towards the recognition and adoption of Indigenous narratives and methodologies. Indigenous Women have also been at the vanguard of digital activism playing an important role in, for example, documenting violence and spreading information about sexual and reproductive rights.

The same participant elaborated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous Women and youth were the ones creating content and spreading information in Indigenous languages because the government was not doing it.

There is a need for core funding to aid in strengthening Indigenous Women’s organizations. Core funding allows Indigenous Women’s organizations to identify their needs; get organized; create collective meeting spaces to bring together different voices; create networks and alliances that would allow them to connect with aligned entities; and demonstrate Indigenous Women’s leadership in their communities. This core funding enables organizations to further disseminate training and education at local, national, and international levels. Such approaches that emphasize the need for funding to be less project-specific contribute to the well-being of Indigenous Women and the sustainability of their initiatives and foster support for their multifaceted needs.
IFIP’s *Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy* (2024) report similarly identified the need for holistic approaches to philanthropic funding for Indigenous communities, and that these approaches should center support for Indigenous Women as interconnected with the funding of other aspects of Indigenous community life. This includes an emphasis on the need for general operating funding and wraparound support that incorporates the holistic approaches common to many Indigenous communities. One interview participant stated clearly:

I’m always going to be 100% for general operating [funding], because our philosophy is what the community says is important. […] I think we also have to get philanthropy to understand that you can’t fund one thing in Indigenous communities because we’re holistic; the way that we see it is nothing lives alone. (Interview Participant in *Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy* [2024])

Another participant in the *Global Funding Trend Analysis* report asserted that Indigenous-led projects need access to “unrestricted multiyear funding, really investing in leadership, investing in the organizations through a trust model that will help them do what they need to […] I think we just need stronger field wide strategies.”
Philanthropy can be a powerful vehicle of reciprocity for Indigenous Women, who often face significant challenges and barriers in accessing resources and opportunities. Reciprocity is a fundamental principle in many Indigenous communities, and it is often Indigenous Women leading the charge of nurturing and developing reciprocal relationships. Philanthropy as a whole will benefit from the perspectives and contributions of Indigenous Women.

Participants in the present research were asked to describe the challenges and barriers they encountered when working to access funding. These areas included a lack of alignment between funders and Indigenous Women’s organizations; constraints related to funding application and criteria; a general lack of funding for Indigenous Women’s organizations; barriers to building relationships with funders; and a lack of necessary organizational infrastructure and systems impacting organizational capacity. The characteristics of these barriers are detailed further below.

IFIP’s 2024 Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy found that there may be powerful impacts of putting Indigenous Women at the center of philanthropic efforts, as one interview participant explained:

We have this gathering of Indigenous Women on land defense—can we bring a woman from the same community to participate in that training, [or] if there is a threat to community can we bring a representative to come with us to Geneva, to advocate during the review of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, and advocates on the floor with us and in real time in front of the governments. […] It is not just grant making. It's tons of technical support, tons of emotional support, and, and solidarity around us, the issues that Indigenous communities are facing. (Interview Participant from Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy [2024])

The Global Funding Trend Analysis report found that opportunities should be made for Indigenous Women to occupy leadership roles in philanthropic organizations, including in areas outside of traditional Indigenous funding streams.
In terms of the specific needs of Indigenous Women and funders, one priority was the need to better tailor funding applications to the needs of Indigenous Women. Indigenous Women’s organizations often must work to align with funders’ priorities, but this poses a barrier for applicants. Participants spoke both about instances where they worked to adhere their organizations’ work to the areas of interests of the funders (Interview 3) and where the strict funder categories deterred organizations from applying. One participant (Interview 8) shared that the funder criteria was too strict to be in line with the organization’s ethics and vision, specifically in relation to the political views of the organization and their willingness to participate in political issues and take a stance. Additionally, one participant (Interview 7) highlighted that the areas that their organization worked within were too politically sensitive for funders: examples of their work included support for individuals that had been criminalized for protesting, protesting resource extraction, and protection of natural resources. The misalignment of objectives and priorities between Indigenous Women’s organizations and funders can be seen as one of the first stumbling blocks for these organizations to access funding.

One participant spoke of the lack of clarity related to the requirements of a funding application and the need for more information to navigate the application process effectively (Interview 4): examples included requirement of methodologies that participants were unfamiliar with or forms that were too difficult to complete. Specifically, when applying for transnational funding or bi-lateral funding, a participant spoke to a lack of funds available and thought that the requirements for transparency and monitoring are too complex. Further, some funds require full-time employees dedicated to a specific funding stream (Interview 7), which can be a challenge for organizations that may have a small number of staff, no full-time staff, or operate largely from the support of volunteers. As a result of these complexities and the need for legal registration, some organizations are required to partner with another organization such as an international NGO (Interview 7, 8). In cases where there is an intermediary, it is also possible for the intermediary to take a percentage of the funds for their administrative support.

Multiple participants spoke about the requirements of applications as challenging and difficult to obtain. For some, there were specific challenges related to being a legally registered organization in their country. For participants in the Philippines and Mexico, political challenges influenced their ability to become a legally registered organization.
In Mexico, one participant shared that if an organization has a political stance or is involved in any political movement, they cannot be legally registered. In the Philippines, a participant (Interview 6) shared concerns about the push from the government there to “red tag” any organization that may be politically “progressive” as a terrorist organization and freeze their accounts.

Another area where there was a lack of alignment between organizations and funders included cultural differences and a lack of intercultural understanding on the part of funders. One participant (Interview 7) spoke about the differing worldviews and expectations related to time and timelines of projects. The expectation of work to be completed within a specific time frame can be a deterrent and may not allow for adherence to Indigenous ways of change and development, which can often require additional steps to involve the community and build trust with Indigenous communities. The same participant shared that there is often no recognition of Indigenous expertise and lived experiences and a detrimental emphasis on formalized education (Interview 7). Another participant shared challenges related to Indigenous identity appropriation (Interview 8). This is a concern as funders are not educated in understanding the nuances of Indigenous identity and affiliation, which can create room for error that allows non-Indigenous organizations to access funds. One participant shared that the general lack of understanding on the part of funders when it comes to Indigenous Women’s issues is a widespread gap in the funding ecosystem:

There is a huge gap in this funding ecosystem to really understand the issues of Indigenous Women, whether it is in a box of women or in a box of an intersectional group or in a box of its own. […] I won’t say [women and Indigenous Women are] very different; [they are] overlapping, but they have distinct challenges. So, understanding this challenge is still there, the gap is still there. (Interview Participant)

Lack of funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations and initiatives or a lack of the type of funding needed arose in multiple interviews. Participants shared that the available funding for their particular focus area is narrow and limited (Interviews 4, 5, 7, 10). Reasons for this included that Indigenous Women’s needs were not a priority for their governments, the specific region that they worked in was not accounted for in funds that exist, and a general marginalization and discrimination against Indigenous Women. One participant shared (Interview 5) that being located within the Arctic, environmental and climate initiatives are challenging to fund as they have seen the most available funds for these initiatives are specific to other biomes in other parts of the world.
Many participants spoke about the challenges of most funding being project-based; participants expressed a need for core funding, such as support for the operations of their organization to support strategic planning, growth, and ultimately success.

Participants expressed a need to build relationships and connections with donors, as they saw this as a pathway to create dialogue with funders about their priorities and needs, as well as a way to stay informed about the funding opportunities that arise. A participant shared that they feel they need to build trust with funders in order to receive a grant (Interviews 4, 11). To build trust, they need to have access to funders to build relationships; a participant shared that they have a lack of access to funder networks, which limits their ability to negotiate with them (Interview 10). The lack of connection and relationships between organizations and funders influences their ability to know about funding. Often organizations are unaware of the funding opportunities that arise or learn about them too late to apply (Interviews 6, 8).

Lastly, some interview participants shared that they could not apply for funds as often as they wished that they could. The main barriers organizations shared were not having the staffing to apply to, language barriers (especially those that primarily speak an Indigenous language), and technical capacity (Interviews 1, 2, 6, 10, 11).

A lack of capacity for Indigenous Women’s organizations makes it challenging for them to compete with larger organizations, as the quote below details:

Indigenous Women’s Organizations’ capacity may not equal other organizations’ capacity. We also have to consider – how can the donor be more flexible on that? Or will the donor have to consider additional funding for capacity building to ensure the strengthening of the Indigenous Women’s Organizations? [...] Is there any technical support or any closer monitoring from the donors themselves? Or any technical partners to support them? Otherwise, if they cannot access any funds or the donors use the same standard criteria as for others, there will be less chances for Indigenous Women to access funding. (Interview Participant)
IFIP’s 2024 Global Funding Trend Analysis on Indigenous Peoples Philanthropy likewise found that despite their impact, Indigenous Women’s groups face structural barriers making them ineligible for funding. One activist described Indigenous Women’s groups as a “movement of volunteers,” but cautioned that this should not deter funders from building partnerships (IFIP, FIMI, AWID et al 2016). The Central American Women’s Fund echoes this point: “It is too easy for funders to simply state that Indigenous organizations are not formalized enough or do not have the administrative capacities…this can serve as a pretext for denying funding” (IFIP, FIMI, AWID (2016).

It is important to remove barriers to directly funding Indigenous Women Organizations. This was reflected by survey participants in IFIP’s Global Funding Trend Analysis report (2024), who, in terms of funding priorities for Indigenous Women’s rights, identified the need for direct support to Indigenous Women-led organizations (85%); funding support for training Indigenous Women (including advising and/or mentorship; 42.5%); and direct support to Indigenous-led organizations (32.5%).

To advance Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ rights and priorities, respondents in the Global Funding Trend Analysis report identified funding is needed for direct support for Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ led organizations (69.2%); direct support for Indigenous-led organizations (33.3%); and funding support for training 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals (including advising and/or mentorship; 33.3%).

One survey participant in the 2024 Global Funding Trend Analysis report asked: “How can we shift more gender funders to directly support Indigenous Women and nonbinary organizations, communities, and rights and ensure that those funds are unrestricted, general operating support and that Indigenous Women and their organizations have autonomy?”
The discussions with interview participants centered on the critical importance of funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations, revealing three key areas of focus: empowering Indigenous Women and increasing their societal contribution, cultural and knowledge protection, and enhancing their political participation to amplify their voices.

Indigenous Women sit at the centre of Indigenous societies, acting as nodes of kinship and connection in the face of historic and ongoing colonialism, racism, and dispossession. They play key roles in the protection of lands, the transmission of knowledge to children, the care of Elders, and the preservation of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, including plant science. Supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer amongst Indigenous Women has strong, complex, and positive impacts (FIMI, IFIP, and AWID 2016). Combined with support for capacity building and for women’s participation in decision-making processes and leadership, support for intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge supports existing community efforts. In general, supporting Indigenous Women means supporting Indigenous children, Elders, men, ancestors, and future generations.

The participants argued that empowering Indigenous Women has a ripple effect on communities, leading to positive changes in family dynamics and societal structures.

According to one of the participants, funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations is important, emphasizing their pivotal role as caregivers, matriarchs, and community pillars. Participants also emphasized that empowered Indigenous Women innovate and contribute to various community needs when given resources. One of the participants, while emphasizing the importance of funding Indigenous organizations, mentioned:

Indigenous Women are the key to our family, community, even our environment, especially our Mother Earth. In our small hands, we not only hold babies, but also hold the traditional knowledge for thousands of years that our ancestors gave us. And now our small hands are trying to fight against the speechless violence [...] We try to use our small hands against those things out there, and those things try to end our Indigenous cultural language and society. So, the funding, if it come to Indigenous Women, it is not only coming to an Indigenous woman herself, but also the people’s future, the earth’s future. (Interview Participant)
Participants also discussed the importance of empowering Indigenous Women economically, and its effect on reducing abuse and discrimination towards them. An example from the interviews spoke to the transformation in a community in Tanzania where domestic abuse was reduced after Indigenous Women became informed of their rights and began to take on leadership roles within the community. The quote below details this experience:

If you educate women, if you empower them, you are empowering the whole world. At the community level, they're the ones who look after the family. Among Indigenous people, especially in Africa, they're the key people in the family. [...] The moment you really empower them, you enhance their capacity, you empower them to be able to innovate. [You] accept and respect them and let them know their rights, then the whole family changes. We have seen communities changing completely. I was working with the women from Tanzania [...] it was very interesting, one older woman [was] saying that the men are no longer beaters, they are no longer abusers, because they know [women] are powerful in the community. They have accepted us, they are giving us the power to be able to continue leading and doing a lot of work so long as we respect them and leave the place for them. (Interview Participant)

Further, a participant stressed that funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations is collective investment in women’s leadership (Interview 7). Funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations is directly entwined with support of women’s leadership globally; if they are not funded, then it is a missed opportunity to support diverse perspectives and worldviews that can contribute to the future.

Participants emphasized the role of women in preserving Indigenous culture and knowledge. Indigenous Women are seen as holders of traditional knowledge passed down for thousands of years. The funding is crucial for preserving this knowledge and resisting forces threatening Indigenous cultural languages and society (Interview 11). One of the participants highlighted the cultural legacy and mentioned they have oral cultures where knowledge may not always be “systematized,” and therefore, there is a need for funding technology to record their epistemes through audiovisual registries (Interview 7).

Indigenous Women are identified as the caretakers of the earth, highlighting their vital role in protecting lands and cultures, particularly in the Amazon region in Brazil; therefore, Indigenous Women should be supported to carry out their roles effectively (Interview 11).
This includes the need for financial assistance and tangible resources to safeguard their lands and cultures. Participants also identified a funding gap for Indigenous organizations in supporting their objectives such as the transmission of intergenerational knowledge and land stewardship (Interview 11). Furthermore, one participant also stressed the interconnected roles of Indigenous Women in climate change support, cultural preservation, family, and land protection and suggested the need for funding streams that align with these broader perspectives of Indigenous Women’s contributions and moving away from specific objectives to acknowledge the multifaceted contributions of Indigenous Women (Interview 5).

Likewise, a participant emphasized the importance of funding to recover and protect ancestral knowledge and culture (Interview 4). The participant also raised concerns about the lack of documentation of Indigenous knowledge, narratives, and culture, stressing the urgency to preserve this for future generations (Interview 4).

One participant also highlighted that Indigenous Women and their communities face multiple threats, including development aggression, direct attacks, criminalization of land defenders, demographic/population engineering, and inappropriate development schemes. These threats contribute to the erosion of Indigenous knowledge, practices, and spirituality.

The participants underscored the challenges arising from internalized discrimination and the lack of basic services, which further disempower Indigenous Women (Interview 6).

One of the participants stressed the need to fund not only the individual leadership of Indigenous Women but also the organizational capacities that enable them to make a broader impact (Interview 7). Similarly, another participant emphasized the importance of funding supporting processes and strengthening the organization rather than solely focusing on specific projects (Interview 8). For instance, the participant mentioned that although project-oriented funding, such as training on international conventions like CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), is important, they are not always clear on how to use these tools or turn them into advocacy. The participant suggested that there should be a balance between the funding for the training on international conventions and their epistemological frameworks (Interview 8). Stressing the resilience and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Women, a participant asserted that funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations is essential for effective community support (Interview 4). The participant also emphasized the ability of Indigenous Women to drive initiatives themselves, ensuring that funds directly address the unique needs and challenges faced by Indigenous communities worldwide (Interview 4).
Similarly, another participant also highlighted that mainstream women’s organizations may not adequately represent their voices and concerns. The emphasis is on the distinctiveness of Indigenous Women’s needs, interests, and issues. This participant explained:

Because Indigenous Women’s needs, interests, and issues are very unique, they are different from other women. So, to understand and to empower them, I think only Indigenous Women’s Organizations can do that, and to build their capacity to strengthen them. (Interview Participant)

The participant further emphasized that to strengthen the work of Indigenous Women, Indigenous Women’s Organizations should be supported. They explained:

To amplify the work and voice of Indigenous Women, we need to fund Indigenous Women’s Organizations and networks. It’s [important] to strengthen the capacity so they can voice out their issues; they become able to advocate and lobby with their government or a state against all the injustices and then biases. And then to be able to connect with the other Indigenous Women in inside or outside the country, build alliances, regional alliances, and then also bring those issues and voices in the global platform. So, for that, I think we need to really fund Indigenous Women’s Organizations and networks. (Interview Participant)

Funding to increase Indigenous Women’s political participation to amplify their voices is another key sub-theme that emerged from the data. As one of the participants suggested, there is a need for increasing Indigenous Women’s participation and presence in decision-making roles (Interview 5). The participant also emphasized the importance of being perceived in their full ability to transform and highlight Indigenous Women as agents of change who can manage and execute their own projects. Similarly, a participant also suggested that Indigenous Women should be supported to increase their political participation at the local, national, or global levels and at meetings and discussions regarding legislation and public policy concerning development and climate change are being debated (Interview 7). This kind of funding can include supporting their presence in strategic meetings, travel, food, access to technology, and training/capacity building on specific issues. Additionally, a participant emphasized amplifying Indigenous Women’s voices and allowing them to represent themselves rather than others “speaking for them”; therefore, Indigenous Women’s Organizations need to be supported (Interview 9).
Indigenous Women have been playing a critical role and leadership in regional to global policy fora. Despite their significant roles in current issues related to biodiversity and climate change, they often remain invisible. This highlights the need for increased attention and support for Indigenous Women (Interview 6).

Participants also presented some suggestions for funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations. One of the participants suggested that Indigenous Women’s Organizations should be viewed as direct channels for effective change within their communities. Likewise, another participant called for allocating resources to produce research and aggregated empirical data on issues relevant to Indigenous Women and communities that will be effective for advocacy (Interview 7). While supporting long-term funding, one of the participants also suggested that it should be accompanied by project-based support. The hands-on training provided through project conceptualization, development, implementation, management, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation is viewed as important. This approach allows for developing practical skills throughout the project cycle (Interview 6). Participants also emphasized support should be provided focusing on their needs.

The discussions underscore the multifaceted nature of funding needs for Indigenous Women, encompassing empowerment, cultural preservation, political engagement, and tailored support. The participants’ recommendations call for strategic and comprehensive funding approaches to address the diverse challenges faced by Indigenous Women and amplify their vital contributions.
A quantitative survey was launch in November 2023 and shared with Indigenous organizations across the FIMI and IFIP networks. The survey consisted of 30 questions across 2 broad sections. The first section aimed to capture the organizational profile of Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations, including questions on annual budget, number of staff, and operational characteristics. The second section focused on the funding realities and barriers of these organizations, including questions on top funders, average amount and duration of grants, thematic areas, and their range of funding sources. The survey was made available in four languages: English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

**Organizational Profile: Who Responded?**

Over a one-month data collection period, there was a total of 286 organizations that responded to the survey. The sections below describe the profile of these organizations.

**Annual Budget**

Of the 286 organizations, the majority (176 organizations; 61.5%) had an annual budget of less than $100,000.

50 organizations (17.5%) had an annual budget of $100,000 to $200,000.

35 organizations (12.2%) had a budget of $200,000 to $500,000.

The remaining organizations had $500,000 to $1,000,000 (7 organizations; 2.4%) or over $1 million (18 organizations; 6.3%).

![Annual Budget Chart]

**Figure 3: Annual Budget**
Regional Representation

During data analysis, the countries were divided into seven regions:

**Africa:** Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, and Niger.

**Central and South America and the Caribbean:** El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Puerto Rico

**Asia:** Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand.

**The Pacific:** Fiji, Guahan, New Zealand, Papa New Guinea, Republic of Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands.

**North America:** Canada, The United States, and Mexico

**Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia, Transcaucasia, Norway and Spain**

**The Arctic**
When asked to identify the region in which their organization operated, survey participants responded with the following frequency. Participants were not required to specify whether their organizations operated in multiple countries or to define the extent of their organizational scope.

![Figure 4: Location of Organizations](image)

Additionally, six participants identified their organizations as working in multiple regions or country. These were:

- Guatemala, Honduras, México, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panamá
- Africa, North America, Latin America, Eurasia, Arctic, Pacific, and Asia
- Belgium, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda
- Burundi, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
- Guatemala, Honduras, México, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panamá
- Nicaragua and Mexico
Figure 5: Locations of Organizations
The most common response in terms of the number of staff was between one and ten (192 responses), followed by between 11 and 20 (44 responses) indicating that Indigenous Women’s Organizations characteristically operate with 20 or less staff.

Figure 6: Size of organization based on the number of staff

100 participants responded that they had no salaried staff at their organization, leaving 186 organizations that have some salaried staff.

Figure 7: Number of Salaried Staff
Benefits for Staff

Survey respondents were asked about the benefits that they are able to offer their staff. The majority of respondents do not offer their staff benefits.

Figure 8: Organizations that Offer Benefits to Staff

Of those that do offer benefits to their staff, they included brief summaries of the types of benefits they offered. The types of benefits are ranked from most offered (1) to least offered (8) below:

1. Health Coverage - 38 IWOs

2. Paid Leave / Holiday - 26 IWOs

3. Retirement Funds 18 - IWOs

4. Social Security - 17 IWOs

5. Employment - 10 IWOs

6. Professional Development - 6 IWOs

7. Gratuity Pay - 3 IWOs

8. Childcare - 1 IWO
Registered Organizations

The chart presents the dates organizations registered officially with an authority in their country of operation. It is important to mention that some of the organizations mentioned they were operational before their registration. Also, two organizations mentioned that they are not registered yet under any authority. It is important to note here that the spike in the creation of Indigenous Women’s Organizations correlates with the 1995 Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women (International Indigenous Women’s Forum 2024).

Figure 9 Organizations’ year of registration with the authority from the country of operations

Thematic Areas of Focus

Survey respondents were asked what their organization’s thematic areas of focus were. Respondents were able to write detailed accounts of the areas that their organization focused their work and efforts. Most respondents answered with multiple areas that they worked within. In order to capture and synthesize as best as possible the areas that various different Indigenous Women’s Organizations worked within, researchers developed 11 themes that arose. The 11 themes are as follows:

1. **Education** – this focuses on education initiatives for the people and community that a specific organization supports.
2. **Health** – this includes sexual and reproductive health, healing, and mental health.
3. **Employment and economic empowerment** – this focuses on enabling communities or individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence through the provision of tools, resources, training and skills geared towards gaining employment.
4. **Self-determination** – this includes protection and support of Indigenous cultures, languages, intellectual property, practices, livelihoods, food sovereignty, and arts.

5. **Basic needs** – this includes access to food, water, housing, including agricultural initiatives.

6. **Environment** – this includes climate change, climate protection, biodiversity, habitat protection, land rights and sovereignty, and other land-based activities excluding agriculture.

7. **Support for people with disabilities** – this includes assistance for people with disabilities including the provision of financial support or physical support.

8. **Gender and women’s equality** – this includes violence against women, women’s empowerment, and empowerment of trans people.

9. **Children and youth** – this includes support and initiatives geared towards children and youth.

10. **Leadership** – this includes areas to support women in leadership roles and areas of influence, such as governance, organizational capacity building, political organization, research, and policy.

11. **Justice** – this includes working with people who are incarcerated, working to support people involved in legal issues, work involving Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, working toward peace, or ending conflict.

The survey showed that the area most organizations identified as a theme of their work was the environment, with **126 out of the 286 respondents indicating the environment as an area of focus**. The next most frequent area of focus of respondents was Indigenous self-determination (157/286), followed by gender and women’s equality (94/286), and employment and economic empowerment (92/286).

The least common areas of focus were support for people with disabilities (11/286), justice (27/286), and children and youth (43/286).

![Figure 10: Organization Thematic Areas of Focus](image-url)
Thematic Areas of Receiving Grants

The survey showed that organizations most frequently received funding for projects related to environmental initiatives (100/286). The next most frequently funded initiatives were those related to gender and women’s equality interests (99/286), followed by educational initiatives (63/286). The least commonly funded areas of focus were support for people with disabilities (7/286) and leadership (4/286).

Primary Language

Of the survey respondents 34% spoke English, 16% spoke French, 1% spoke Portuguese, 20% spoke Spanish, 23% spoke an Indigenous language, and 5% selected another language as their primary language.

Figure 11: Thematic areas of grants received

Figure 12 Primary spoken language of respondents
Average Grant Time Length

- Half of the organizations (50%) reported that their average grant length was less than one year.
- 36% of organizations responded that their average grant length was between one and two years,
- Only 6% reported two years, and
- 8% as over two years.

This data points to the reality that Indigenous Women Organizations face vastly operating with short term funding limiting their organizational development and capacity.

Average Grant Sizes

- The majority (42%) of the respondent organizations reported receiving grants totaling between $25,000 to $50,000,
- 22% reported receiving grants in the $75,000 to $150,000 range
- 16% received grants in the $50,000 to $75,000 range, and
- 13% received grants totaling between $150,000 to $500,000. Only 7% of organizations reported receiving grants over $500,000, and 55% of those organizations were located in Africa.
Types of Funding

Survey respondents were asked about the types of fundings they currently receive from philanthropy/cooperation. They had the option to choose between 1) general support/core funding, 2) project or program specific funding, and 3) other. 61% shared that their funding was project or program specific, 17% shared that they received general support/core funding, and 22% selected other.

![Figure 15: Types of Funding](image)

61% Project or Program Specific
22% General Support / Core
17% Other

Of the respondents that selected other, participants had the opportunity to share more detailed explanations of the other sources/types of funding they receive. Respondents provided detailed responses on the type of funding they received. To capture and synthesize the frequency of other types of funding, as best as possible, the type of funding was categorized into ten themes:

1. **No Funding**: The majority (29) of organizations mentioned that they do not receive funding or support.
2. **Donations**: 11 organizations mentioned receiving in-kind donations, gifts from friends and family, and support from people supporting causes.
3. **Self-funded**: 6 organizations are self-funded.
4. **Commercialized Product/Service Provision**: 5 organizations reported sustaining funding by providing services such as talks or seminars or selling products they produce.
5. **Multiple Sources**: 12 organizations have multiple funding sources, including members’ contributions, grants, and donations.
6. **Member Fee**: 6 organizations mentioned that they rely on member fees as their other source/type of funding.
7. **Not Specified/Not applicable**: 4 organizations did not specify any other sources/type of funding or mentioned not applicable in their response.
Top Five Funding Sources

Many of the organizations identified 3 to 5 funding sources they rely on to sustain their work, ranging from governments, foundations, funds, and Indigenous funders. Only 21 organizations (7%) mentioned they have no funding sources.

**Indigenous Funders as a Top Source of Funding.** There were 56 organizations (32%) who identified FIMI or the AYNI Fund as one of the top funding sources. 25 organizations mentioned Pawanka Fund as a top funding source.

**Government and Foundations as Main Funding Sources.** Most organizations mentioned regional or local government grants as one of the top sources of funding. 15 organizations received funds from a regional or national government locally or internationally. In comparison, 42 organizations (15%) mentioned foundations, including national, international, cultural, or family foundations. Although many different regional foundations were named, 7 organizations included Ford Foundation as a top source of funding (other foundations mentioned can be found in the Appendix A).
Financing Strategies

Survey respondents were asked to share their financing strategies to ensure that their movements were sustainable over time. From the question, the results showed:

- Self-contribution of resources (27%)
- Fundraising (25%)
- Sale of products (20%)
- Creation of alliances or consortia (19%)
- Other (8%)

In the other category, 41 respondents shared alternative ways that they manage their financing strategies to sustain their organization over time. Some of the methods that were shared included:

- Adapting and developing projects to calls from funders
- Donations or membership contributions
- Working with other organizations to co-develop submissions for funding
- Working with local governments to make the movement more sustainable
- Networking with funders at different events
- Use of solidarity savings and credit products for funds collected from the sale of products
- Creation of an endowment fund
- Support through religious organizations
- Renting out part of their facilities or using facilities to make income; one example was a community pool or hosting events
- Cooperative volunteer work
- Some also said that they do not have strategies to support them for long-term financial health
- Involvement in local tourism
- Creation of a micro-finance social enterprise
- Providing various services to the community such as translation and social support
- Act as an enforcement group to collect penalties from violators of the Smoke-Free Program

Figure 16: Funding Strategies
Fund Diversification

When asked how their organization diversifies their sources of funding, survey participants responded in the following ways:

- We apply to calls for proposals (62.3%)
- Self-contribution or own economy (48.3%)
- We depend on international donations and cooperation (32.3%)
- We apply for government programs (26.7%)
- We depend on local donations (22%)
- Other (6.7%)

Figure 17: Fund diversification

In the other category, survey participants shared the following strategies to improve funding diversification:

- Activities like selling mole paste, ground coffee, vegetables, and native chickens to sustain the organization when there is no funding
- Agriculture
- Promoting community self-management
- Member contribution
- Endowment funding
- Donations from institutions
- Participating in calls for proposals at the invitation of partners or allies
- Volunteer workers
- Creation of a giving circle
- Contributions from partners
- Government programs
- Annual financial members registration
- Looking for open calls to apply to
- Financed through its own income, such as rental of premises
- Receiving small amounts from individual members living abroad
- Local donations
- International donations
- Conducting fundraising activities in the local community
- Self-contribution
- Funds from tourism
- Support from micro projects
- Donations by institutions
- Answering unsuccessful calls
- Enrolment in funding notices
Respondents of the survey were asked what the challenges they face accessing funding. Respondents provided detailed accounts of the challenges and barriers they face accessing funding. To capture and synthesize, as best as possible, the challenges and barriers faced by different Indigenous Women’s Organizations, seven major themes emerged from the data. The seven themes are as follows:

**Short-term or project-based funding:** This focuses on short-term or project-based funding as a challenge for organizations. Based on the responses, organizations face significant challenges when relying on short-term or project-based funding.

**Lack of Capacity:** This focuses on capacity challenges the organizations face in various aspects, including difficulties in writing well-organized proposals, the lack of sustained funding jeopardizes program sustainability, and awarding only small funds for large initiatives limits their scope and impact. A competitive funding landscape with stringent criteria demands extensive justification and reporting, diverting resources from core activities. The limited feasibility of short-term projects due to approval timelines necessitates alternative implementation strategies. Moreover, constrained channels for project calls delay the diversification of funding sources.

The lack of sustained funding jeopardizes program sustainability, and awarding only small funds for large initiatives limits their scope and impact. A competitive funding landscape with stringent criteria demands extensive justification and reporting, diverting resources from core activities. The limited feasibility of short-term projects due to approval timelines necessitates alternative implementation strategies. Moreover, constrained channels for project calls delay the diversification of funding sources.
restricted access to funds based on specific criteria, and limited support for capacity-building initiatives. Technical constraints, language barriers, and reliance on volunteer-based models hinder their ability to source funds, develop projects, and compete for opportunities.

Lack of Access or Reach to Big Donors: This focuses on accessing big donors for funding. This challenge is rooted in inadequate visibility, a lack of direct connections to major funders, and a small budget threshold that hinders attracting additional partners. Compounding these issues are difficulties securing sponsors due to resource triangulation and currency devaluation. Donors' limited understanding of Indigenous Women's issues and struggles, coupled with competition with larger organizations, adds complexity to the funding landscape. Limited access to financing networks abroad and the reliance on relationship cultivation further underscore the need for guidance and mentoring in assertively seeking core funding and financial resources.

Requirements: This focuses on the organizations' requirements to access funding primarily due to legal and structural barriers. These include difficulties obtaining legal recognition while facing challenges and external pressures that delay legal updates and renewals. Additionally, the absence of a dollar account limits conventional resource management, necessitating alternative strategies.

Complicated procedures for accessing Indigenous Women's funds, language barriers in funding calls, and strict project registration requirements pose further obstacles.

Lack of Transparency Among Donor Agencies: This focuses on challenges associated with a lack of transparency and bureaucracy among donor/funding agencies. Organizations face challenges in obtaining responses and support from funders. These challenges include a lack of transparency in promotional efforts, with calls often directed internally, and a perception that funds are granted preferentially to some organizations. Bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures, including instances where institutions claim to exceed their capacity for financial support, create obstacles. Organizations express difficulties due to a lack of funding for their requests and instances where they are not considered after applying. The overall theme revolves around issues with communication, transparency, and bureaucratic processes, indicating a need for more efficient and inclusive funding mechanisms.

Not Registered or Newly Registered Organizations: This focuses on organizations that recently achieved legal status or are still waiting to obtain legal status. However, some organizations, despite registering, face challenges in obtaining funding. Challenges also persist for local organizations, as many lack legal status.
### Regional Breakdown of Essential Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Total Staff (avg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>503 (5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>753 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>146 (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1963 (49.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120 (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34 (2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28 (9.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19: Regional Breakdown of Essential Questions

### Annual Budget
The majority of organizations had an annual budget of less than $100,000 (61.5%). There is a similar pattern across regions. The two largest regions represented are Africa and South America. In Africa, 69% of the organizations have an annual budget of less than $100,000. In South America, 80% of the organizations have an annual budget of less than $100,000. We see a similar pattern for average duration of grants. For Africa, the grant duration of less than one year is the most common at 17%. For South America, it is 12%. 
Relationship to FIMI
Organizations were asked if they had any grant-related relationship FIMI’s Ayni Fund and were given the option to choose multiple responses. 24% (79) of responses indicated that the organization had submitted an application, 21% (73) of responses indicated that the organization had received a positive response from the Ayni Fund, and 56% (157) of responses chose “other,” with the vast majority indicating that they did not have any grant-related relationship with FIMI’s Anyi Fund. Of the respondents who chose “other,” 84% (132) had no grant-related relationship with FIMI’s Anyi Fund.

Average Number of Staff by Region
There are several interesting patterns in the distribution of staff across organizations and regions. Although Africa has the largest number of organizations represented in the survey, organizations in Africa have few staff. We find organizations from South America are larger and have more staff in general. Although patterns of annual budget are similar across these regions, there are more staff in organizations in South America than Africa. We also see organizations from Asia have the largest number of staff, however, we find only two organizations, each a university, account for up to 1500 staff for this region. Overall, organizations in Central America and North America have fewer staff on average.
Essential Principles of Partnering and Funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) encourages the funding community to practice the 5Rs of Indigenous Philanthropy when partnering, supporting, and funding Indigenous Women’s Organizations.
Respect for Indigenous Women is crucial to creating a more equitable and just society. Indigenous Women play crucial roles in maintaining their cultures and have been guardians and providers for the land since time immemorial.

1. Strengths-Based Philanthropic Structures that Recognize Indigenous Women’s Existing Leadership - many funders and stakeholders have not fully acknowledged the central role that Indigenous Women play in these struggles. Indigenous Women are essential to the advancing of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women’s rights.

2. Avoiding Deficit-Based and Victimhood/Rescuer Approaches - Deficit-based approaches can lead to a narrow focus on problems and challenges, rather than on the assets and capacities that exist with Indigenous Women and their communities. This perpetuates disempowerment, cycles of poverty, and marginalization. Refocusing on the strengths and resilience of Indigenous Women can build on assets and capacities that exist within communities.

3. Countering Stereotypes, Racism/Discrimination and Colonialism Against Indigenous Women - Philanthropy can support advocacy efforts to address systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous Women. This could include supporting legal challenges, policy advocacy, and community organizing efforts that promote equity and justice, including those relating to countering racism that contributes to sexual and domestic violence against Indigenous Women and Girls.

4. Acknowledging Individuals and Collective Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls - Philanthropy plays a crucial role in recognizing and respecting the inherent rights of Indigenous Women and Girls. This involves supporting initiatives that empower them on both individual and collective levels, such as education programs, economic opportunities, and community-led projects that reinforce the autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous Women and Girls within their communities.

Recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples’ rights and worldviews. Seek to uphold the principles articulated in the UN Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Respect and recognize Indigenous Women’s rights by upholding CEDAW General recommendation No.39 on the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls. Work directly with Indigenous Women’s Organizations to advance their rights and to gain understanding of their aspirations, solutions, and initiatives.

Respect for Indigenous Women is crucial to creating a more equitable and just society. Indigenous Women play crucial roles in maintaining their cultures and have been guardians and providers for the land since time immemorial.
Philanthropy can be a powerful tool both for relationship building and for supporting positive relationships within communities. Positive relationship building requires active listening, support, and responsiveness. It is important for philanthropy to support both Indigenous Women and their web of kinship and relations within their communities:

1. Women and Intergenerational Transmission - Strengthening the intergenerational transmission of knowledge among Indigenous Women yields profound and positive impacts. By providing support for capacity building, encouraging active participation in decision-making, and fostering leadership roles, we contribute towards the empowerment of Indigenous Women and youth and the preservation and enhancement of cultural knowledge.


3. Organizing movement building and networking at all levels within Indigenous Women and all other women - Supporting and equitably resourcing initiatives that facilitate movement building and networking among Indigenous Women and diverse communities is crucial. By nurturing these connections, we enhance the impact of empowering Indigenous Women, foster collaboration, and address shared challenges effectively.

Engage directly with Indigenous communities by understanding the nature of their relationships with Mother Earth, their culture, traditions and spirituality. Build and nurture relationships based on mutual respect and trust that eliminate the tendency to exert power over another through building long-term commitments and mutual learning.

This support aligns with and bolsters ongoing community initiatives.
1. Advocate, support, and fund the eradication of all forms of violences against Indigenous girls, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and Indigenous women with disabilities. This commitment seeks to address and eliminate the unequal forms of violence disproportionately affecting these communities, promoting a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

Responsibility to the Lands and Territories as Central to Indigenous Women’s Justice.

1. Advocate, support, and fund the eradication of all forms of violences against Indigenous girls, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and Indigenous women with disabilities. This commitment seeks to address and eliminate the unequal forms of violence disproportionately affecting these communities, promoting a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

Be accountable and transparent in ensuring the effective, meaningful, and intersectional representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples where critical decisions that affect them are made. Use funding processes and approaches that are accessible, adaptable, flexible, transparent, and accountable.

Responsibility to the Lands and Territories as Central to Indigenous Women’s Justice.

Practice the essence of Indigenous ways of living, giving, and sharing that connects people, their beliefs, and actions. Be open to learning, unlearning, and receiving. Giving and receiving from a place of mutual benefit and solidarity is also part of a virtuous circle of healing principles.

1. Strengths-Based Philanthropic Structures that Create New Opportunities for Indigenous Women’s Leadership in All Sectors of Philanthropy - This seeks to empower and amplify the capabilities of Indigenous Women, recognizing and leveraging their unique strengths to drive positive change.

2. Recognition and acknowledgement of Indigenous Women’s co-investment with tangible and intangible resources. This recognition emphasizes the significance of their multifaceted contributions, reinforcing the importance of equitable partnerships and collaborative efforts in philanthropy.
2. Understanding the socio-political, cultural, and economic contexts of each region for just and equal redistribution - By recognizing the diverse socio-political, cultural, and economic landscapes in each region, we aim to achieve just and equal redistribution. This strategy ensures that interventions are culturally sensitive, socially relevant, and economically impactful, fostering sustainable change in diverse regions.

Practice redistribution based on Indigenous Values and ways of living, sharing, and giving to shift towards a just and equitable world. Do this through building trust, ensuring Indigenous People are at the decision-making table, and directly funding Indigenous-led solutions, initiatives, and organizations worldwide.

1. Direct funding and co-investment for all Indigenous Women and their diversity of organizations. By fostering direct financial support, we aim to empower and amplify the impact of these diverse organizations, contributing to their autonomy and sustainability.
Conclusion

This report was developed by Archipel Research and Consulting for International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) and International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF/FIMI) to evaluate the funding status, challenges, and gaps in funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations. This report summarizes the results of 11 interviews and 286 survey responses from global Indigenous Women’s Organizations. This research revealed priority areas for Indigenous Women’s Organizations, areas for support for advancing Indigenous Women’s rights, challenges that Indigenous Women’s Organizations experience when trying to access funding, and the reasons why funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations is critical and necessary.

The interviews demonstrated that the areas that Indigenous Women’s Organizations are working in are vast. Areas of work that were frequent amongst participants included Indigenous rights; community healing; addressing intergenerational trauma; connecting Indigenous Women; protecting land and resources; providing healthcare, education, and economic opportunities; and eliminating violence against women and girls. Participants saw the role of Indigenous Women in addressing these issues and advancing Indigenous rights as essential.

Nonetheless, participants identified a number of challenges that their organizations face. These included a lack of access to national or international platforms, a disconnect and misalignment between their organization’s activities and funder’s priorities, a general lack of capacity, and limited funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations within the funding ecosystem.

The survey revealed that most organizations have an annual budget under $100,000 and are working within the environmental realm, Indigenous rights, traditional knowledge, and cultural preservation, or human and Indigenous Women’s rights. The survey findings further demonstrated that the greatest challenges to accessing funding are a lack of capacity and a lack of access to and connection with large donors. The most common strategy to address a shortfall in funding was fundraising from other sources and self-contribution. From the interviews and the survey, it is clear that the majority of global Indigenous Women’s Organizations are small and operate on short-term project-based funding that is typically granted for a single year. Participants spoke about how this structure of funding limits their ability to plan strategically for their organization. Despite these challenges, Indigenous Women’s Organizations continue to complete meaningful and impactful work.
Ultimately, if funders wish to adequately support Indigenous Women’s Organizations, the barriers to funding access need to be removed. To improve funding for Indigenous Women’s Organizations, a network and communication channel between organizations and funders are needed. Funders must rethink funding organization, ensuring sustainability, flexibility and adaptability, while also listening to the needs and priorities of Indigenous Women’s rights organizations of all sizes and from all regions.
Works Cited


