



International Funders

IFIP

for Indigenous Peoples

**Time to Step Up:
From Solidarity to Redistributing
Funding to Indigenous Women**

February 2024

Acknowledgements:

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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 report. Please use the following citation:

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Introduction

The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) has been organizing donors to bring attention to the systemic gaps in resourcing Indigenous Women's organizations. IFIP not only has raised and acknowledged these gaps but has committed to addressing the issue in collaboration, dialogue, and support of funding partners and grassroots Indigenous Women's organizations (IWOs) to sustain movements and achieve social justice.

To ignite the crucial conversation on the funding landscape and gaps, IFIP created the Indigenous Women Funders Working Group in 2018, the first of its kind in philanthropy dedicated to addressing the priorities, rights, and aspirations of Indigenous Women globally. Since then, IFIP has hosted multiple dialogues and events to bring the philanthropic community into right relations with Indigenous women by justly and equitably resourcing the Indigenous Women's movement. Throughout this process and collaboration, IFIP was asked to support funders by developing research and a roadmap for donors.

Between June and September 2023, IFIP invited Indigenous Women's networks and organizations to join consultations. IFIP hosted regional consultations for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, and Africa. Approximately 100 Indigenous Women from Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America attended the regional consultations. Subsequently, IFIP conducted a survey in Portuguese with Indigenous women's networks and organizations in Brazil to gather insights on their needs and priorities within their movements and feedback for funders to foster collaboration and partnership to strengthen grassroots Indigenous Women's movement. The consultations were instrumental in identifying context and funding gaps experienced by Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations in the respective regions.

IFIP presents this position paper, underscoring the imperative task of empowering Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations. The findings and recommendations from these consultations serve as a guide to philanthropic communities, especially feminist funders and women's funds, in recognizing the pivotal role of Indigenous Women in the local to global landscape and a call for inclusion, representation, and just redistribution for the Indigenous Women's movement. This position paper urges and invites feminist funders and philanthropy at large to join IFIP in advocating for these recommendations, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that the voices and contributions of Indigenous Women are fully recognized and supported on the global stage.

The journey to address systemic gaps in resourcing Indigenous Women's organizations has been a collective effort. IFIP acknowledges the pivotal role played by funding partners and grassroots Indigenous Women's organizations (IWOs) in collaborating, dialoguing, and supporting the movement for social justice. Our commitment to fostering right relations with Indigenous women continues.

Navigating the Financial Frontier: Assessing the Funding Landscape for Indigenous Women's Organizations and Networks

Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous Women (IW), are rights holders and play a vital role in preserving and transforming culture, biodiversity, and advancing social justice worldwide. Nevertheless, they face systemic challenges in accessing resources and support. Specifically, IW's grassroots organizations and networks lack access to financial resources and support compared to other women's human rights and feminist groups. Limited administrative capacity, the political scenario of the state, and legal status of organizations/groups, along with reliance on traditional philanthropy and other socio-economic factors, hinder their access to robust and sustainable funding.

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.


Data from IFIP's global landscape on funding shows that Indigenous organizations received only 0.6% of all recorded philanthropic funding between 2016 and 2020, which is disproportionate and insufficient for the Indigenous Peoples' movement.

Globally, from 2016 to 2020 about 28.5 billion (Candid) in philanthropic funding 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. However, there is an absence of sufficient research and disaggregated data availability about funds received directly by Indigenous Women's rights organizations. This creates a vacuum between Indigenous Women's rights groups and the philanthropic community, hindering collaboration to mitigate the systemic gap and address the challenges faced by Indigenous Women and girls.

Understanding and addressing the Needs and Priorities:

Priorities and needs for Indigenous Women's organizations vary depending on the specific context, location, and challenges faced by different Indigenous Communities. It is, therefore, important to note the intersections and interconnections of priorities of Indigenous communities which often overlap, requiring holistic and culturally sensitive approaches. Nevertheless, Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations are actively engaged in a wide range of thematic areas, including identity rights and cultural preservation, land and territory rights, women's rights, health, education, economic empowerment, biodiversity, agro-forestry, food security and livelihood, and attention to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health. The traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities is invisibilized in the mainstream knowledge system, making it another important advocacy issue for the community.





It is crucial to advocate for increased political representation and participation of Indigenous Women at the local, national, and international levels to ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

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| *The existing funding gaps include limited access to information about resources for grassroots organizations, a lack of technical capacity to draft complex proposals, and insufficient incorporation of feminist approaches to streamline the application and compliance processes required during reporting.*” Richa Pradhan, Asia.
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In the neoliberal and colonial context, these issues appear multi-dimensional and cross-cutting, requiring feminist and intersectional approaches and strategies to tackle them. With the pre-existing systemic gap and lack of skills and access to funds and resources, Indigenous Women are unable to respond to these issues. Additionally, there is an urgent need for institutional capacity strengthening, creating co-learning spaces, network and leadership building of IW organizations for the sustainability of the movement. Administrative difficulties in the organizational registration process, complex funding requirements, and lack of negotiation with funding partners that limit their access to resources on a larger scale have been collective experiences of grassroots IWOs. Funders, therefore, are urged to draw their attention to these systemic and nuanced issues along with the following endorsements.

Recommendations:

- Funders should adopt a flexible and intersectional approach to funding, recognizing that Indigenous women often work across multiple thematic areas simultaneously.
- Funders should effectively advance thematic areas and issues for Indigenous Women through targeted strategies and resources in collaboration with the communities.
- Funders should allocate grants for institutional capacity strengthening and well-being, technical assistance, and leadership building of IWOs. Empower IW's Networks and Organizations by facilitating capacity-building initiatives and co-learning platforms and increasing resource pools to effectively strategize and operationalize their priorities.
- Funders should reduce administrative complexities by adopting a flexible process, suitable strategies for IW and IWOs, such as optional requirements for organizational registration, simple and accessible forms and formats, and allowing both online and email submission of grant applications.
- Create an online platform or repository for Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations to share successful grant applications and proposals. This resource can serve as a reference for others navigating complex application procedures.

- Funders should supply easily accessible resources specifically designed for Indigenous Women to cater to their uniqueness. Easily navigable and accessible application formats and guidelines for grant proposal submission, accessible platforms tailored for Indigenous Women acknowledging their specific needs, as well as honoring traditional knowledge and practices of the communities.
- Introduce mentorship programs and interventions connecting established Indigenous Women's Networks with new initiatives and space for multigenerational exchange of knowledge and opportunities within. Further, it may facilitate the process of developing need-based strategies and knowledge sharing.

Acknowledging and Shifting the Paradigm:

The funding challenge is evident for Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations due to the lack of intersectional and culturally sensitive funding mechanisms. Having distinct socioeconomic and cultural dynamics, the availability and utilization of funds have been deeply impacted. For instance, Indigenous Women with Disability (IWD) face limited access to resources while they still struggle for recognition within women's rights, indigenous, and disability rights movements.

Additionally, the gap occurs in terms of volume, duration of funds, urgency and flexibility, language barrier, and intermediaries' presence in the funding landscape. Donors provide small grants of \$2,000 to \$50,000 to Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks to implement development programs within a limited timeframe. While these grants are helpful to initiate activities on the implementation level, the sustainability and best outcomes from the movements could not be ensured. The multifaceted structural challenges, on the other hand, hinder achieving broader social transformation as expected. These dimensions are not properly acknowledged among the mainstream funding scenarios, creating challenges in monitoring changes, reporting, and sustainable funding security of the Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks. Similarly, rigidity in the grant ceiling and expenditure guideline does not reflect the immediate needs of the communities during emergencies like environmental and sociopolitical crises or even to serve the foundational need of capacity building, organizational and tech and infrastructural development, and organizing of the IW and communities.

The presence of intermediaries between funders and grassroots organizations is also a prevalent issue. Fundings are provided to such intermediaries with annual budgets, technical assets, and skills such as a website, annual monitoring, and reporting, whereas grassroots Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks are deprived of such holistic support. Despite the potential impacts of Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks on broader movements, they lack trust from funders in terms of capacity and funding management. Few efforts are seen recently from funders directly supporting the Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks yet, these initiatives are still not enough.





Recommendations:

- Creating flexible, long-term, and unrestricted funding channels tailored to enhance accessibility in terms of language, process, and address the unique needs of Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations is essential. Engaging with communities along with governments, philanthropies, and international agencies has no alternatives to establish culturally sensitive, effective, and accessible funding avenues that prioritize empowerment without strict limitations.
- Funders should ensure to provide multi-year grants to grassroots Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations. This stability can help them plan and implement long-term projects in thematic areas like cultural preservation and economic empowerment effectively.
- Funders should allocate resources for organizational development, well-being, and emergency grants to address immediate needs, capacity building along with advocacy intervention which might be overlooked in larger funding schemes. Likewise, encourage grantee partners to create sustainability or core funds to ensure self-reliance and self-sustainability in the long run.
- Funders should adopt direct funding strategies to Indigenous Women's Organizations and networks while recognizing their technical limitations. Assisting and allocating funds and resources to build the desired capacity of the community is important.
- Funders should link and facilitate communication with other funders; resource pool is a key part of the partnership.

From Absence to Recognition and Redistribution:

Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations underlined the importance of respectful and equitable collaborations with funders. IWOs shared the experience of unequal treatments as partners, right holders, and contributors to development. Instead of ensuring the inclusion and intervention engagement of IW in strategizing and implementing projects and programs that have a direct impact on the entire communities, they are treated only as beneficiaries and passive receivers. Whereas, the relationship building should be able to furnish trust, care, and feminist values between the funders and IWOs. Likewise, collective decision-making and power-sharing are core to feminist principles. Unfortunately, it seems to be one-directional in practice from funders and even the negotiation becomes a privilege for grantee partners, particularly marginalized and IWOs.

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To form a partnership involves building both a relationship and trust between us and the funders. It's important to encourage funders to respect each other. Additionally, open communication is crucial, whether it's to rectify a mistake or to acknowledge a successful outcome. This way, everyone understands what is expected from each other. **Delaria Festus, Africa**

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Additionally, they also highlighted the importance of open communication, whether it's to rectify a mistake or to acknowledge a successful outcome. Fundamental to successful collaboration is the enhancement of funders' understanding of the requirements and real challenges faced by Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations. Despite collaboration in terms of the time duration is crucial, current collaboration practices are short-term, limiting impactful interventions. It shows the need for improving funders' understanding of the cultural, social, and economic contexts in which Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations operate. This will contribute to more informed and effective collaboration.

Meanwhile, feedback to funders should include but is not limited to challenges during the implementation phase, achievements, best practices, and testimonies. Such approaches to collaboration can only foster equal power relations, open communication, and trust out of the partnership.

Recommendations:

- Guidelines and principles for ethical collaboration between funders and Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations are needed, recognizing power relations among partners and emphasizing mutual respect, cultural sensitivity, and the acknowledgment of Indigenous self-determination.
- Funders should continue the collaboration for a minimum of five years for effective and visible changes.
- Funders should engage in joint assessments with Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations to better align goals and expectations. These assessments should result in mutually agreed-upon strategies, timelines, and outcomes.
- To ensure that the needs and priorities of Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations are effectively understood and addressed, it is essential to involve them in decision-making processes, designing and implementing projects where they can exercise their agency effectively and autonomously.
- Regular dialogue and networking opportunities between funders and Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations must be institutionalized to build trust and foster partnerships.

Develop cultural competency training modules for funders, emphasizing Indigenous history, worldviews, and the importance of cultural humility. This training should be mandatory for funders who support Indigenous initiatives to ensure a respectful and informed collaboration.



A Call to Step Up

Moving together ahead requires trust, collaboration, solidarity, and the combined power of philanthropic communities to honor the voices, legacy, power, and leadership of Indigenous Women. Join us and stand with us to create a just, fairer, equitable, and more harmonious world for all.

Walk with us, dream with us, and stand with us! Partnering with and funding directly Indigenous Women's Networks and Organizations is the key to dismantling systemic barriers, ensuring women's rights, and changing paradigms.

We extend an invitation to feminist funders and philanthropy at large to join IFIP in advocating for these recommendations, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that the voices and contributions of Indigenous Women are fully recognized and supported at the national, regional, and at the global stage.





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