

SUPPORTING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE

An approach for donors Jessica Horn



Young Tunisian woman at the opening march of the World Social Forum, Tunis, March 2013. Photographer: Jessica Horn

Why movements matter

Social movements are forms of collective action that emerge in response to situations of inequality, oppression, and/or unmet social, political, economic, or cultural demands. They comprise 'an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change with some continuity over time' (Batiwala 2012:3).

There is strong evidence from around the world that progressive social movements¹ are a critical force for creating vibrant participatory democracies and for promoting social justice, development, peace and environmental sustainability.

Recent pro-democracy movements in North Africa and the Middle East have revived discussion around the power of mass-based citizen action to create new forms of political voice and participation, at times creating changes that foreign policy or formal development interventions have not been able to do (Sholkamy 2012). Movements represent 'demand driven' change (Arutyunova and Clark 2013), with marginalised people calling for accountability and offering tangible solutions – from community to

state level – to major societal problems. Women's movements, for instance, have been a leading force in advancing gender justice, by asserting women's rights as social and political norms, and pressing for government policy and legal change that have advanced gender equality in several arenas (see Box 1). At the same time, a rise in mass-based religious fundamentalist movements and the growth of 'popular conservatism' is pushing back the legal, policy and social gains made by social justice movements and, particularly, equal rights for women (Balchin 2011; Göle 2011; Horn 2012). Social movements present an antidote to these regressive forces, particularly if gender justice is at their heart.

Still, despite global progress in putting gender 'on the agenda' from popular debate to law and policy, many seemingly progressive social movements have yet to make it a consistent priority in both their internal policies and their external change strategies. It is thus strategic for donors interested in advancing inclusive development and human rights to resource the work of social movements in ways that promote the full integration of women's rights and gender justice in the politics and practices of the movements themselves.

¹ Progressive social movements are movements that affirm inclusion, rights and the redistribution of power toward equality and justice.



Why we need social movements to be gender-just

Women's rights are:

- already an integral component of progressive activism globally
- being demanded for social transformation from the 'ground-up'
- a necessary component of full justice
- an agreed policy priority and binding legal obligation.

It is not possible to fully achieve sustainable development, human rights, peace or democracy without ensuring that the rights of women and girls are also achieved.

Integrating gendered perspectives is not just about 'adding' women or 'thinking about' men and gender minorities but, rather, changing the ways that we think and act around gender justice so that equality itself becomes a social reality.

Box 1: Feminist movements – the leading factor in shaping progressive policy on violence against women

A recent statistical analysis drawing on data from studies over the past twenty years from 70 countries quantifies the leading role that autonomous¹ women's and feminist movements have played in instigating government action on violence against women and girls. Surveying data over four decades (1975–2005), the study also shows that more comprehensive government responses emerge in countries with stronger women's and feminist movements working against violence against women. Autonomous feminist activism is also a more significant factor in influencing progressive policy than having progressive political parties in power, more women in the legislature, or overall improvements in national economic standing.

(Source: Htun and Weldon 2012)

¹ An autonomous movement is a movement that is independent or outside formal organisational control or direction.

How do we build gender-just movements? ²

Develop a gender justice politics

Make women's rights/gender justice a visible priority in the core goals of movements, and across formal movement policies and practices.

Work on the deep structure³

Invest in processes for movements to rethink invisible biases, such as personal attitudes to women, and discriminatory norms and practices including those justified by culture or tradition.

Model the change we advocate in the world

Build movement cultures that model active and formalised support for women's participation and leadership; practise zero-tolerance for gender-based violence; and take into account care work and reproductive roles that affect women's participation in movement processes.

Support internal activism for changing gender norms within movements

Including mechanisms for building the collective power of women in the movement (e.g. women's caucuses and platforms), supporting feminist leadership practices (Battliwala 2011a), and new generations of movement membership with more gender-just visions.

Defend women's rights and gender justice activists

Acknowledge the gendered nature of external backlash that movements often trigger, and develop specific strategies to respond to repression of and violence against women activists and those defending women's rights and gender justice (United Nations 2010).

Build alliances and common cause between social movements

Develop understandings of how advancing women's rights and gender justice reinforces other social movement goals. Intersectional⁴ analysis can help identify how different forms of inequality intersect and thus help locate common ground for joint action.

'Oak Foundation has adopted a movement building approach in its Issues Affecting Women Programme because we believe that women united are more powerful and better able to claim their rights than a woman acting alone. Our key partners in this movement building work are international, regional and national women's funds that contribute to the development and empowerment of the women's groups they support through direct grantmaking, capacity building, and networking.'

Florence Tercier Holst-Ronness, Oak Foundation

How donors can support gender justice within and through social movements

Donor-movement relationships

Movements can include a constellation of actors, including individuals, trade unions, religious organisations, community organisations, national and international non-governmental organisations, businesses and donors themselves. Private and public donors have always played a part in progressive social movements, in particular by funding organisations that have either been created by movements, that provide services to movement members or the public or that are engaged in movement-building.

The relationships between donors and movements, however, can be complex. Legal and policy frameworks around donor funding of civil society activities can affect both relationships within and strategies used by movements. For example, in receiving formal funding, the actions of movement-linked organisations come under the jurisdiction of laws that regulate philanthropy,⁵ which may prohibit strategies such as civil disobedience or certain forms of advocacy (International Centre for Non-Profit Law 2010). Donor policies can also impact upon the ability of movements to voice their full political positions.⁶

2 See the Gender and Social Movements: *Overview Report* (Horn, 2013) for a full analysis including case studies and resources for practice.

3 'Deep structure' describes hidden layers within organisations and movements where unconscious or even conscious but hidden processes occur, including taken for granted assumptions about gender roles and the place of women (Rao and Kelleher 2005). These in turn affect how people think and act, and can explain discordance between 'official' positions on gender equality and actions that reentrench sexism and related prejudices such as racism, classism and able-ism.

4 Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that makes visible the multiple discriminations that people face and the ways in which systems of oppression interact with each other.

5 For up-to-date analysis of changing laws, see the quarterly review of Global Trends in NGO Law produced by the International Center for Non-Profit Law at <http://www.icnpl.org/research/trends/index.html>.

6 For example, in the context of US government policy, see Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2003; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2008.

Donor strategies to advance women's rights and gender justice in movements

Support women's rights and gender justice as movement priorities

When you support movements or the organisations affiliated to them, ask for a clear articulation of their approach to women's rights and gender justice both within the movement (its leadership, resource management and decision-making structures) and in their strategies for change (including goals and constituency). Fund women's rights programming and accountability mechanisms such as women's caucuses. Include women's rights and gender justice in discussions on grantee strategy, situation analyses and – importantly – in the indicators for measuring progress and results.

Fund organisations linked to and building gender-just movements

Donor resources should prioritise support for organisations advancing gender-just movement-building. Resourcing women's funds or independent public funds established to support initiatives aligned with gender-just social movement goals, for example, is one viable strategy. Funding organisations that in turn have links to grassroots movements with a strong focus on gender equality is another way of ensuring that funds reach movement actors, in particular for donors with larger than average grants (see Box 2).



Representatives from women's movements and wider social movements at Gender and Social Movements *Cutting Edge* Pack launch in Guatemala City, March 2014. Photographer: Julia Hamaus

Box 2: The Dutch MDG3 Fund: Advancing gender equality by funding women's collective action

The Dutch government's MDG3 Fund created in 2008 was the largest-ever governmental fund for gender equality directed at women's rights and other civil society organisations. It awarded 82 million Euros in grants to 45 projects, of which 34 were led by women's rights organisations or women's funds. By funding organisations with strong links to women's movements and grassroots women's activism, the grants themselves had an amplifying effect. An impact study showed that movement-building outcomes were in the top ten achievements, with grants contributing to mobilising women's goals for collective power for change, building alliances with other movements and organisations and strengthening women's leadership. The study, involving 35 MDG3 Fund recipients, found that grants in turn succeeded in strengthening capacity in 105,304 women's organisations, increasing financial resources for 3,662 women's organisations and raising awareness about women's rights for over 224 million people, including 65 million grassroots women. These efforts helped influence gender equality programmes and policies of 46 national governments, and 14 international policies and instruments.

(Source: Batliwala, Rosenhek and Miller 2013)

Fund women's rights movements and organisations themselves

Continue to support women's movements, including through women's rights organisations, as central actors in sustaining a focus on women's rights and gender equality in policy and law, as well as in civil society activism and public debate and thinking.

Offer core and multi-year funding

This resources the heart of a development and social justice agenda, and allows organisations affiliated with and building movements to do the 'thinking' and allow time for deep structure work that shifts gendered power.

Use appropriate monitoring tools

Keep building monitoring and evaluation methods that capture the complexity of gender equality shifts. This includes measures for formal, institutional change (e.g. laws, policies, patterns of access to resources and services) as well as informal change (social norms, individual attitudes and beliefs), and the impact of backlash on achieving expected outcomes (McGarvey and Mackinnon 2008; Batliwala 2011b; AWID Monitoring and Evaluation Wiki).

Consider donors' own accountability to movements

In funding social movements, donors themselves become actors in movements and need to be attentive to the roles that they play in influencing movement dynamics (McGarvey and Mackinnon 2008). Participatory grant-making models are one example of how donors can better align their funding with social movement priorities while increasing donor accountability (see Box 3).

Box 3: Accountability through participatory grant-making models

Several donors are designing grant-making models designed for active participation of constituents in grant-making processes and in strategic advisory roles as a way of increasing accountability and better aligning funding with movement priorities. The Nicaragua-based Central American Women's Fund (<http://www.fcmujeres.org>) has pioneered a model of participatory grant-making where applicants, once long-listed, vote on who receives funding. This model has since inspired donor initiatives in other regions including UHA! – the East African Sexual Health and Rights Fund (<http://www.uhai-eashri.org>) where grants decisions are made by a Peer Grants Committee representing key actors in the region's LGBTI, sex worker and human rights communities. FRIDA – The Young Feminist Fund – supports youth-led activism globally through a peer review model, with a staff and advisory committee made up of young feminist activists.

(Source: Pittman 2011)

Become a donor advocate

Donors can themselves be agents of change within their sectors, commissioning research to track investments in women's rights using movement-based strategies, convening peers and building collaborations to bring greater awareness around movement-based strategies for gender-just social change, critically reviewing donor relationships with social movements to improve practice, and modelling new funding approaches.

About the *Cutting Edge Pack* on Gender and Social Movements

This briefing draws on findings from the *Cutting Edge Pack* on Gender and Social Movements created with input from over 150 social movement activists, scholars and supporters from around the world. This approach has resulted in the multiplicity of voices, experiences, ideas and previously unpublished insights that you can find in the *Cutting Edge Pack*, and it means that the findings and recommendations have been developed as part of a rich participatory process.

This Policy Brief was written by **Jessica Horn**, women's rights consultant and author of *Gender and Social Movements: Overview Report*. She can be reached via www.akiikiconsulting.org.

The production of this Policy Brief was supported by: **Srilatha Batliwala**, a feminist activist and researcher who is Scholar Associate with AWID and lead adviser for the BRIDGE *Cutting Edge* programme on Gender and Social Movements; **Hazel Reeves**, gender equality consultant and member of the BRIDGE International Advisory Committee; and **Julia Hamaus**, BRIDGE Gender Convenor.

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Also available in the Cutting Edge Pack on Gender and Social Movements:

- Gender and Social Movements *Overview Report*, outlining the main issues, examples of innovative practice, and routes to change
- Gender and Social Movements *In Brief*, summarising the main issues of the *Overview Report*
- Gender and Social Movements website, including summaries of key supporting resources, case studies, a multimedia library and contact details for relevant organisations

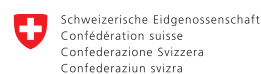
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