



Improving the funding of women's peacebuilding activities

Alba Boer Cueva, Keshab Giri, Caitlin Hamilton and Laura J. Shepherd

Abstract

In this research, we wanted to better understand the funding of women's peacebuilding activities. We spoke to a number of women's civil society organisations across Colombia, Nepal and Northern Ireland and found that their work tends to be funded by a patchwork of donors, and is largely project-based with year-to-year uncertainty. We have identified a number of opportunities for donors and civil society organisations to work together to better understand the needs on the ground and recognise the practicalities of working in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Recommendations

From speaking to a number of civil society organisations across Colombia, Nepal and Northern Ireland, we have found the following:

- There is a need to increase periods of funding for maximum impact; our interviewees reported that **funding for at least three years** offers an organisation the opportunity to establish a programme, run it effectively, scale its impact and evaluate its success.
- Donors should consider providing support for **core funding** for organisations, and move away from project-based funding. Many organisations (and the communities they serve) need things like transport, room hire and office space, and funding these core needs can make as much (if not more) difference to an organisation's activities and impact than a series of workshops.
- While tangible and measurable goals are appealing on paper, they aren't necessarily the best way of building and maintaining peace, not least given the unpredictability of conflict and post-conflict settings. This means that **funding needs to be more flexible, as do deliverables**.
- Donors need to meaningfully engage with civil society organisations to **determine the actual needs of the communities**. There can be a disconnect between what donors are willing to fund or think should be funded as compared to the work that organisations see as critical to building peace. Open dialogue and the alignment of interests between donors and organisations in a spirit of collaboration should ideally guide the identification of funding priorities.

“You know, you can't guarantee there's going to be ten meetings of people from different communities over the next year, because you might have a shooting or a bomb, and people go back to their houses, basically.” (Interviewee from Northern Ireland)

“[O]ne year projects are really complicated, but when these projects have the possibility of being two, three years, of being renewed, that improves the quality and the impact of the project itself.” (Interviewee from Colombia)

- Priority should be given to **reducing or eliminating unnecessarily complicated or arduous administrative processes and eligibility requirements**. Donors should work with civil society organisations to find ways of administering funding (including the tender process and requests to vary a project) that does not exclude smaller organisations from participating in calls for funding.

- **Dedicated funding for grassroots organisations** who are working on women's rights (including rural organisations and those that represent a diverse demographic, including age, ethnicity and sexuality) is important; these groups have an intimate on-the-ground understanding of the needs of people and communities, which is essential in conflict and post-conflict environments.
 - **Investment in capacity building of the grassroots organisations** can enable more CSOs to meaningfully participate in the implementation of the WPS agenda, making the WPS agenda more inclusive.
 - Conflict and violence take many different forms, some which tend to be directed more frequently at women. It is important for donors to recognise that **violence can and does take place even without bombs and bullets**, and to continue to provide funding in areas that might seem to be 'peaceful'. There are many aftershocks to conflict, and removing funding from environments marked as 'post-conflict' can restrict civil society organisations' ability to continue to offer community support and deliver peacebuilding initiatives in the longer term.
 - Young women need to be engaged in this peace work, at both policy and grassroots levels. Beatriz Mosquera Hernández of Federación Humanitaria de Mujeres Negras, Afrocolombianas Raizales y Palenqueras de Arauca (FUMNARPA), expressed it in an interview as the need for '**generational relays**'; there is practical knowledge that must be transferred from one generation to the next in order to keep this vital work going.
 - **COVID-19 has created challenges for women's civil society organisations**: many organisations report an increase in the perpetration of violence against women; the needs of the community – including mental health needs – became even more pronounced; and the activities that the organisations had expected to be able to carry out were no longer feasible in this new environment.
- “Now the donors are purely market-based. They say value for money. Tools, technologies, and terms are market-based. Programs are projectized.” (Interviewee from Nepal)*

Recommended further reading

Arutyunova, Angelika and Cindy Clark (2013) *Watering the Leaves Starving the Roots: The Status of Financing for Women's Rights Organizing and Gender Equality*, AWID, Toronto, Mexico City, Cape Town.

Cordaid and The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) (2014) *Financing for the Implementation of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325: Critical for Advancing Women's Human Rights, Peace and Security*, The Hague, Netherlands and New York, USA.

Popovic, Nicola (2011) *Costing and Financing 1325: Examining the Resources Needed to Implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 at the National Level as well as the Gains, Gaps and Glitches on financing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Cordaid and The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, the Hague, Netherlands and New York, USA.



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www.thegenderhub.com