



Session Two: Supporting the Women’s Movements in Advancing EVAWG Policy and Reaching a Feminist Funding Ecosystem

Key Lessons Learned

The Spotlight Initiative Global Learning Session on *Women’s Movements* focused on two areas of interconnected work to support women’s rights movements: **expanding and ensuring flexible funding,¹ and facilitating a space for civil society as key decision-makers to influence government policy making and achieve institutional change.** Flexible funding supports movement building which, in turn, further amplifies the ability of feminist and women’s rights movements and organizations to collectively advocate for progressive EVAWG policies and legislation. This session highlighted insights and experiences from members of the Spotlight Initiative Global Civil Society Reference Group, the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), and Spotlight Initiative programmes in Jamaica, Malawi, and El Salvador, as well as the Safe and Fair programme. This document highlights critical lessons that surfaced during the session and can be used to build inclusive and flexible structures for funding and support resilient and autonomous women’s movements through the Spotlight Initiative and beyond.

Lesson Learned #1

A harmonized UN procurement and partner selection process that is tailored to the needs and capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) strengthens the ability to meaningfully partner with a diverse set of CSOs and to channel funding to national and local feminist and women’s rights organizations.

Partner selection processes and funding procedures should be shifted to better meet the realities of groups on the ground rather than framing low local reach as ‘local capacity issues’².

Lesson Learned #2

To effectively support movement building and strengthen women’s rights organizations, funding should be made flexible and support reliable core funding for local, grassroots, women’s rights, and feminist organizations. This should always be a priority and is critically important to allow these organizations to respond to new and challenging contexts, such as COVID-19. Grant-making strategies should transform power relations at their core, allowing feminist activists to define funding priorities.

This can be done through developing and implementing a **feminist funding strategy**, which should include **prioritizing core, multi-year, flexible funding** (including proper coverage for overhead and

¹ 18 feminist recommendations: How can the Spotlight Initiative end gender-based violence? AWID, 18 May 2018.

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/have-your-say-how-can-spotlight-initiative-end-gender-based-violence>

² **Practical ways to do this include:** joint call for proposals; simplifying templates; setting reasonable timelines for applicants to submit proposals, encouraging consortium applications; accepting applications in multiple languages and on a rolling basis by email, mail and through e-Procurement systems; tailored grant sizes; extensive local outreach and capacity support before, during and after the call is advertised (such as supporting prospective applicants with proposal drafting through Open Days and videos to help fill in different sections); and revisiting the selection criteria to assess what is really mandatory and reasonable.

indirect costs³⁾ for feminist movements and community-led organizations. The Civil Society Global Reference Group highlights that **structural funding barriers can be addressed by partnering with regional and national women’s funds** that channel direct core support to small local, grassroots women’s rights and feminist organizations.

For example, the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund launched a funding stream that allows organizations to apply for **institutional funding** from USD 2,500 to USD 30,000 aimed at **strengthening organizational resilience**. The Fund also supports **demand driven grant-making** that **allows applicants to decide** the necessary interventions and funding priorities based on local needs and circumstances, aiming to be flexible and responsive to feminist activism.

The Spotlight Initiative in Jamaica leveraged UN Women’s Small Grants Policy, which does not require a risk capacity assessment and **eases the burden of extensive requirements** usually imposed. **This allows the Initiative to channel direct, core, multi-year funding to national and local organizations, strengthening their institutional resilience and capacity.**

Lesson Learned #3

Initiatives that recognize the expertise and leadership of women and women’s rights organizations, including those that represent marginalized groups, are most effective. By “taking a back seat”, the UN can facilitate space for women’s rights organizations and movements to convene and drive the agenda.

A series of workshops that **ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups and allow for honest, open, and creative dialogue between groups and across identities can foster movement building.**

For example, the Initiative in Malawi held **intergenerational workshops** between the Young Feminist Network, cultural leaders, and traditional chiefs to **address the absence of a strong intersectional and intergenerational women’s movement**. The pre-workshop addressed issues of **intersectionality**, particularly the rights of LGBTQI-persons, and centered around how to “pass the torch” to younger generations whose voices are usually neglected. **The UN participated as an observer.** The government was engaged at a strategic level to launch the Network, which was important for buy-in, but did not participate in the dialogues. **This approach recognizes the autonomy of the movement and its power to set and drive its own agenda.**

In El Salvador, the Spotlight Initiative partnered with the women’s organization CEMUJER to **implement participatory mechanisms and strengthen women’s political participation**. The programme trained and equipped women’s groups organizations to **support network building to ultimately influence EVAWG policies and treaties.**

The Spotlight Initiative Safe and Fair programme supported the establishment of a network and organization PERTIMIG in Malaysia, created by Indonesian women migrant domestic workers. PERTIMIG is a new network that **creates safe spaces for women migrant domestic workers to have a support system** and learn from one another, including on **how to prevent and address violence in the workplace**. PERTIMIG supports organizing as a key strategy to empower women workers and enhance their agency. The Initiative, by providing institutional support,

³ From a Feminist Bailout to a Global Feminist Economic Recovery. AWID, 16 November 2020.
<https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/bailoutmanifesto-en-final.pdf>



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recognizes the critical work being done by PERTIMIG and the agency of women migrant domestic workers.

Lesson Learned #4

Working through existing feminist and women's rights organizations, networks, and platforms, rather than setting up parallel structures, is key for sustainability.

With 70% of women in Malawi living in rural areas, **local women's forums** were a key entry point for the Initiative to provide support in a **sustainable way**. The Initiative also supports other **existing platforms** such as the African Women's Leaders Network and the Malawi Women's Police Network.

Access the *Women's Movements* Learning Session presentation, recording and resources [here](#).