THE CRITICAL ROLE OF AUTONOMOUS WOMEN’S FUNDS IN STRENGTHENING WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS

INVESTING IN WOMEN
What is a Women’s Fund?

A social change organisation established by and for women to mobilise resources and award grants in support of women’s rights initiatives and strengthening women’s movements.
FEATURES OF WOMEN’S FUNDS

• Explicit social change/feminist philanthropy agenda

• Leadership and management closely aligned with the grantee constituencies

• Additional support to grantee partners such as capacity building and peer learning

• Investments in movement building
FEATURES OF WOMEN’S FUNDS

• Thematic/programmatic priorities shaped by grantees

• Focus on marginalised groups of women such as commercial sex workers, LGBT, refugees, migrant women, etc

• Public fundraising using diverse strategies
THE AFRICAN WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT FUND

VISION
For African women to live in a transformed world in peace and with integrity.

Mission
To mobilise financial, material, and human resources to support initiatives for transformation led by African women.
Sources of income

• We raise our funding from private foundations, funding agencies, bi/multilaterals, corporations, and individuals within and outside Africa

• Current annual budget of app. US$3.6m
EXAMPLES OF RECENT AWDF FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

• Establishment of a HIV/AIDS Fund with support from The Nelson Mandela Foundation ($1m), SRT, UNAIDS, HIVOS, OSI, etc

• Comic Relief (UK) direct funding partnership of $2.5m over three years

• DANIDA grant of €1m for grantmaking

• African Capacity Building Foundation grant of $1m for grantee capacity building

• Ford Foundation lead gift of $3m for an Endowment Fund
Profile of AWDF Grantees

- Women’s organisations working at local, national and international level

- Projects which enable women address structural challenges (law reforms, economic policies, etc)

- Community based initiatives led by women

- Projects aimed at empowering women and increasing women’s access to resources
AWDF’S GRANTMAKING STRATEGY

• Grantmaking in six thematic areas

• Main Grants Program (Africa Wide)

• Special Projects (Solidarity Fund, Legacy Fund, Small grants, etc)

• Capacity Building Unit

• HIV/AIDS Fund

• Fund for African Women’s Leadership (New)

Since October 2001, AWDF has awarded U$5m to app. 400 women’s organisations in 41 African countries.
CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN’S FUNDS

• Demand exceeds supply

• The idea of Women’s Funds is still quite new, many people do not know about them

• Limited fundraising capacity

• Limited grantmaking capacity
CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN’S FUNDS

- Sustainability issues
- Operating in environments with a weak infrastructure
- Ambivalence towards non-profits locally
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

• Significant investments in Women’s Funds

• Investments in movement building as well as organisations and projects

• Developing conceptual clarity around the need for women’s spaces to exist and for their voices to be heard
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

• Donors should support existing local philanthropic initiatives, and be supportive of the establishment of new ones. Please refrain from using local NGOs as grantmakers.

• We need a Sustainability Compact

• Support for the architecture and infrastructure of the Women’s Movement
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

• Develop mechanisms for channeling funding direct to women’s organisations, movements and Funds in the South

• Help develop a business case for supporting women’s rights to the corporate community

• Listen to women
PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HEART IS