Feminist and Women's Movements in the Context of Ending Violence against Women and Girls – Implications for Funders and Grant Makers (AN EXTERNAL LITERATURE REVIEW)

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Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

UNITED NATIONS TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UN WOMEN

ABBREVIATIONS

CSO   civil society organization

EVAWG   ending violence against women and girls

NGO   non-governmental organization

UN Trust Fund United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

VAW   violence against women

VAWG   violence against women and girls

WRO   women's rights organization

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) launched its new Strategic Plan 2021–2025.[1] The UN Trust Fund's mission over the next five years is to enable civil society organizations (CSOs), especially women's rights organizations (WROs), and those representing the most marginalized groups, to play a central role in delivering survivor-centred and demand-driven initiatives in relation to violence against women and girls (VAWG). It also aims to support their programmes to achieve sustainable impact on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in a way that contributes to global solidarity, partnerships and stronger, **inclusive feminist movements**. In addition, the UN Trust Fund aims to plays a role in enabling a bottom-up approach to transformative change by supporting community-based, local CSOs/WROs, which are often the driving force behind social movements. Building on lessons learned from UN Trust Fund projects funded through the Spotlight Initiative,[2] which focused on supporting women's movements the fund embarked on a learning journey to reflect on and better understand progress on and challenges relating to supporting women's and feminist movements in the context of EVAWG.

A core purpose of this learning journey is to help develop a framework for assessing the UN Trust Fund's contributions to CSOs/WROs to support women's/feminist movements centred on EVAWG. This working paper – an external literature review on feminist and women's movements in the context of EVAWG, including documented literature on the role of funders and grant makers – summarizes the first part of the journey. It aims to document some key concepts, frameworks and areas that the UN Trust Fund and partners can draw on for future learning activities. The first section provides a broad summary of social movements, and of movement ecologies and constituents. This is followed by a more specific focus on women's and feminist movements, their relationship with EVAWG and their funding.

Limitations: It is important to note that the external literature that was drawn on is limited to what is easily available and accessible in English and online, hence it is very possible that there are other key frameworks and definitions in other languages, from the feminist and

social justice movements ecosystems, that have not been included here. Additionally, the external literature review did not focus on academic literature as that is beyond the scope of this learning project and because the academic literature while valuable tends to be inaccessible for activists and practitioners behind publisher paywalls while the grey literature tends to be based on the lived and practice-based experiences of movement actors and funders and is usually informed, reviewed, and in dialogue with movement actors. Hence, it is very possible that there are frameworks and conceptualizations in the academic literature that were not drawn on unless they had a presence in the grey literature.

Positionality: In feminist approaches to learning and knowledge production,[3] sharing one's positionality as a "knowledge creator" is a critical component of sharing out the knowledge one is generating. Hence, as the author of this report, sharing who I am, how I see the world, and my relationship with the topics being explored are important to consider from the outset. I am a South Asian, queer, Muslim, immigrant, mother. My world view and approach to knowledge production is deeply embedded in Black and Third World Feminist epistemology and theories. My understanding of feminist and women's movements is informed and influenced by my lived experience as a feminist activist and researcher with experience in community organizing, feminist movements, gender justice and violence against women research and programming, and feminist and liberatory approaches to funding and knowledge generation.

2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND MOVEMENT-BUILDING

Before discussing women's/feminist movements, it is important to take a step back and briefly outline the foundational concept of social movements, with the understanding that women's and feminist movements are a subset of progressive social movements.

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. According to Srilatha Batliwala *(Scholar Associate, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID))*, they are comprised of "an organized set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action".[4] Pastor and Ortiz posit that they are more than specific interests in or episodic coalitions around issues: they are sustained groupings that develop a frame or narrative based on shared values, **that maintain a link with real and broad bases in the community,** and that build towards long-term transformation in systems of power, occasionally carrying out protests, marches and demonstrations along the way.[5]

The long-term transformation of systems of power involves shifting not only policies, laws and institutional structures but also norms and societal narratives (shaping the way people define right and wrong, good and bad, deserving and undeserving, and even possible and impossible) that entrench inequities and reinforce the status quo.[6] In the context of EVAWG, an example of a common societal narrative that feminist movements are working to change is that of victim-blaming in cases of sexual violence, by pointing to what a woman or girl was wearing or doing as the cause of the crime.[7]

Not all social movements are progressive, as evidenced by movements such as anti-abortion movements or movements against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning people. It is therefore important to distinguish progressive social movements from others so that we can appropriately situate progressive women's movements that seek to dismantle inequities. A progressive social movement engages in "processes that build the collective power of an organized constituency of excluded, marginalized, oppressed or invisible people, around a change agenda that enables them to access the full body of human rights, challenge the distribution of wealth and control of resources, challenge dominant ideologies, and transform social power relations in their favor".[8]

Although there are many ways in which social movements come about (and there are many different theories on this), and the historical roots of movements differ across regions and countries,[10] in most cases, movements are "built" through "active and deliberate investment of labor, thought and resources over time to develop movement consciousness, grow and retain membership and nourish movement structures, while also having external environments conducive enough to enable them to begin and develop".[11]

> Building feminist movements is "a process of mobilizing women and women's organizations for struggles whose goals are specific to gender equality outcomes, such as sexual and reproductive rights or violence against women".[12]
>
> *(Horn, J. (2013), Gender and Social Movements – Overview Report)*

Considering that most social movements are "built", it is important to understand who builds them. This is not always synonymous with who and what constitutes a social movement. This distinction is specifically important for funders to understand, as it provides clarity on who and what funders need to be resourcing to support the building and strengthening of social movements. Building social movements usually involves different groups, organizations and activists working together to move forward a common agenda.

Often, initially, "social movement organizations" build a base or people power through political education.[13] These organizations can exist in many configurations, formal or informal, and work at local and/or national levels. However, some elements are essential to their collective engagement in movement-building. Building on the work of Pastor and Ortiz, the following are a few elements that can help to distinguish the work of these organizations

Movement building is "a process of organizing and mobilizing communities and/or constituencies to respond to common problems and concerns; the organizing process involves developing a shared analysis of why the problem exists, a common vision and agenda for change, and short and long term strategies; movement-building also requires that those involved define shared principles and mechanisms for communication, roles, responsibilities and all of the internal governance of the movement itself."[9]

(JASS (2013), Feminist Movement Builder's Dictionary)

Marching at "Ni Una Menos". Credit: Fernada Rotondo/Fundación Andhes

from that of other groups and organizations that are constituents of the movements but are not necessarily "building" the movements. [14]

- **A vision and a framework:** Social movements come from visions, frameworks and values that provide narratives to explain the problem or injustice that a group is trying to make right and to establish the terms of the debate. Movement-building organizations support and facilitate the collective generation of these visions, frameworks and values. Thus, they invite and incorporate multiple ideologies coming together to achieve a common goal. This has been a critical area of work in different groups within which women's and feminist movements have been able to come together with a vision to dismantle patriarchal gender power relations that systematically exclude and marginalize women and girls and are at the root of VAWG, even if the groups have different views on how to tackle the issues, or where to focus based on their particular intersectional identities and contextual realities. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, women's organizations in India overcame different ideologies, as well as differences in caste, class, geographical origin and religion, through national consultations strategically facilitated by movement-building organizations, to agree on their demands for laws to combat VAWG, based on a common vision.[15]

- **An authentic base in key constituencies:** Social movements cannot exist without a constituent base. Movement-building entails community organizing and working to develop an "organized membership

of the people most affected by injustice and with the greatest interest in creating change".[16] **In the case of women's and feminist movements, community organizing takes place in a plethora of ways, and in most cases involves creating safe spaces for women to gather.** It is important to note that sometimes a movement-building organization is the result of informal community organization where the constituents come together to address an issue and then decide to formalize their structure to continue building their movement. Batliwala, in her classification of organizing affiliated with movements, calls these "movement-created" organizations to distinguish them from movement-building and movement-supporting organizations.[17] **Movement-building organizations are not always constituent led; however, to form a sustainable movement they need to either work towards becoming constituent led or be deeply connected to constituent-led organizations and groups. Movement-created organizations, on the other hand, are constituent led from their inception.**

- **A commitment to the long haul: The long-term vision of movement-building distinguishes it from coalition-building. Although coalition-building is a tool that can be used by social movement actors to strengthen a movement, coalition-building on its own is not movement-building.** It is important that funders understand this distinction, as they often get caught up in funding "coalitions", expecting tangible results in the form of specific policy changes. However, if funders do not invest in actual movement-building work, once a policy is in place, and once the coalition disbands, there will be no long-term constituency or vision in place. Movement-building requires a long-term focus and long-term investments, as movements pivot from issue to issue in alignment with their vision.[18] **In the context of women's and feminist movements and EVAWG, this means resourcing movement-building organizations to work broadly on gender equality and VAWG, rather than expecting them to tackle one type of VAWG, as is common among funders.**

- **Most social movements have long-term horizons and build power and capacity over many years before achieving major victories through policy reforms or structural shifts.** The s*ocial movement theory of change* developed by the Innovation Network[19] provides yet another way to look at how social movements engage in power-building to achieve long-term transformative change. The main components of their proposed theory of change speak to the core processes within social movements: movement capacity (laying the founding of a healthy movement), movement power (building institutional, people, influencer, and narrative power), and movement vision (toppling, transforming, and/or absorbing the institutional, cultural, and social pillars that prop up the status quo). Articulations such as these can be a tool for funders to understand how to gauge progress in power building when supporting movement building work.

Conclusion 1: There are many theories around social movements and movement-building. The literature highlighted provides some key conceptualizations and emphasizes the importance of distinguishing movement-building elements from the other work that groups and organizations are engaged in. By considering these elements, funders can begin honing their perspectives on the work and types of organizations and groups they need to fund when seeking to support movement-building.

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3. MOVEMENT ECOLOGIES AND CONSTITUENTS

Movements are usually composed of many different actors, groups and organizations, and understanding movement ecology opens up space to appreciate the different types of actors and organizations that can be part of movements' constituencies. It is also useful in understanding the different theories of change that are at play.[21] It is especially important that funders understand these theories of change, as this helps discern who in the movement ecology, they are funding and, therefore, the types of changes that can be anticipated as markers of progress based on the work of grantees. According to Batliwala, in addition to **movement-building organizations** (including **movement-created organizations**), described in section 2, movements also have **allied organizations**, **service-providing organizations** and **individual activists**, some of whom are embedded in other structures such as academic institutions and government agencies, or other locations that they can influence from.[22]

In the context of women's and feminist movements, although service-providing organizations may not be explicitly concerned with movement-building, they often still have a relationship with movements and play critical roles in meeting the practical and strategic needs of women from different constituencies. This is especially true in the context of EVAWG. Sometimes movements themselves set up service-providing organizations to meet the needs of constituents as a stepping stone to engaging in community-organizing and actions towards the movements' agendas. These types of organizations are classified as **movement-serving** by Batliwala.[23] **For such organizations to be considered in direct**

In any dynamic ecosystem, many different organisms live together in a productive synergy. Each species has its own role in the environment, and each maintains complex relationships with other organisms. In a healthy ecosystem, species sustain each other and diversity flourishes …
In a healthy movement ecology, organizations with different theories of change recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they work together to produce large-scale social change.[20]

(Engler, P., Lasoff, S. and Saavedra, C. (2019), Funding Social Movements)

relation to or part of movement-building, they must engage in activities beyond service provision where they specifically contribute to the movements' agendas in concrete ways.

However, this does not mean that organizations that only provide services are not important constituents of movement ecologies. In fact, in the context of EVAWG, service-providing organizations, especially in areas where there are no services for survivors of violence against women (VAW), are core constituents. However, they are not movement-builders, and this distinction is important to keep in mind when funding different organizations.[24] With regard to the different movement constituencies, WROs can identify themselves as one or more types of organizations based on their specific actions and strategies and the point they are at in their evolution as an organization.

Launch of the Hotline Service audience - Jointly with Tumaini Lethu Festival in Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Credit: Wanangwa Sichinga/FACT

Table 1 provides a summary of movement constituents by type of organization and roles according to Batliwala.[25]

Organization type	Roles played
Movement-building/movement-supporting organizations exist independently of or outside the movements they build or support, although they work in close and sometimes integral partnerships with them. They are established before the movement itself is set up and usually play a critical role in the emergence of the movement but are not created by it.	Consciousness-raising and awareness-building on gender and power and EVAWG Mobilizing and organizing women and girls, and survivors of VAWG Capacity-building of women's and feminist movement leaders and members Providing strategic support, for example by analysing EVAWG policies and providing convening spaces and opportunities Providing services such as credit, income generation and shelter based on the needs of the constituency Advocating on behalf of survivors in the early stages until survivors themselves can take on these roles Fundraising and managing resources for informal movement groups and organizations that are not established as formal entities
Movement created organizations are set up by movement constituents as ways of organizing their members and pursuing the movement's agenda. They are internal to the movements and usually come into being after the movement itself reaches some stage of development.	All the above roles played by movement-building/-supporting organization, and: Structuring collective power by developing ways of organizing the constituency into units and groupings that channel their collective power in effective and strategic ways Democratizing participation and accountability by creating an accessible space for all those who identify with the movement's agenda to meet and participate in its analysis, actions and decision-making Creating a governance mechanism through organizational infrastructure through which movement members can nominate leaders and representatives Developing advocacy or representation mechanisms to interact with other movements and state entities for advocacy purposes.
Service-providing organizations strictly provide services and are not engaged in any other strategies that explicitly identify them as movement-building or movement-supporting. They are still core constituents of movements but are not builders/supporters of the movements.	Providing services to women such as health care, education, literacy, childcare, rescue homes or shelters, and credit and legal aid. Meeting the practical and immediate needs of women and girls and especially of survivors of VAWG

Table 1: Movement constituent organizations and their roles[26]

In addition to formal organizations, **non-formal organizations** play an important role in social movements and can be movement-supporting, movement-created, allied or service-providing organizations. The following are typical distinctions between non-formal and formal organizations.

- Non-formal organizations usually cannot mobilize resources from formal entities such as funders but typically raise funds through membership fees and individual donations.

- Non-formal organizations are not governed by or regulated by legal requirements and thus have fewer constraints than formal organizations.[27]
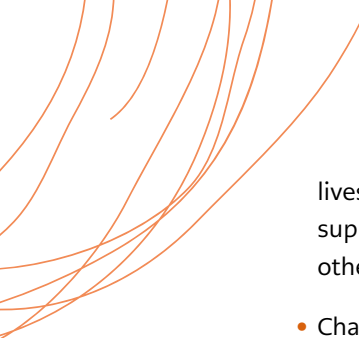
Another useful **framework that helps delineate the roles played by different organizations within movements** is the Miami Workers Center's Four Pillars of Social Justice Infrastructure.[28] The pillars help us to understand how different kinds of work that are often carried out by disparate organizations that may or may not collaborate are intertwined, complementary and essential. The four pillars are as follows:

- **Power** – achieving autonomous community power by building a base and developing leadership: building membership organizations on a large scale and with a great influence (quantity) and developing the depth and capacity of grass-roots leadership (quality).

- **Consciousness** – shifting political paradigms and altering public opinion and consciousness, for example through media advocacy work, creation of independent media and public education work.

- **Service** – directly serving oppressed people and helping to stabilize their lives and aid their survival, including by providing critical services.

- **Policy** – changing policies and institutions using legislative and institutional strategies, with concrete gains and benchmarks for progress.

The developers of the framework consider **power the most essential pillar for transformative and long-term change**. So, ideally, the other pillars should support the pillar of power.[29] It is useful for organizations to use this framework to delineate the role they play in movement-building and to identify the areas where they need to collaborate with others.[30] This framework can be useful for movements to end VAWG because it **provides a model for how organizations providing direct services** (e.g. shelter, hotlines and legal aid) c**an and often do work in ways that make them an essential aspect of building power**, by providing services in a politicized context where "people come to understand their need for services as linked to broader political structures that affect many others like them".[31]

In terms of **how organizations build and support movements**, the Aynii Institute, based on their study of social movements across the world, proposed a social movement ecology that is divided into actors focused on one of three approaches.[32]

- Alternatives are institutions that are building new visions, structures, and ways of being and doing. The theory of change here is that by carrying out successful experiments that are based on aspirational values rather than the status quo, new models and prototypes become visible and can be expanded for more widespread change.

- Personal transformation includes the movement constituents who are focused on changing

lives one person at a time. Their theory of change is based on the idea that by healing and supporting one person at a time, they can enable those individuals to then heal and support others around them.

- Changing dominant institutions encompasses organizations that work to alter or reform dominant structures through advocacy, community organizing and protests, among other things. Their theory of change is that by changing the dominant structures, those affected by them will be impacted at scale.

According to this proposition, the theories of change of different constituents within movement ecologies can vary considerably. For funders looking to support organizations at the intersection of movement-building and EVAWG, understanding these different theories of change alongside theories of change for EVAWG can be useful.

As most funders usually provide grants to formal organizations, it is also **important to understand that although organizations play a critical role in movement-building, ultimately, movements represent something larger and broader than organizations**.[33] The history of the relationship between formal organizations and social movements is varied and includes the use of formal organizations by movements to advance strategic agendas. In some contexts, the formalization of movements has been described as the "NGO-ization" of movements and seen as a dilution of the radical and independent activism approaches of movements.[34] However, although in some contexts, at first glance, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may seem disconnected from activism, this assessment is often only partially correct. The situation is often more complicated, as the boundaries between formal NGOs and informal groups of activists are blurred, and there is much more crossover and collaboration than meets the eye.[35]

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Conclusion 2: In summary, the types of organizations that are movement constituents and the relationship between these organizations and social movements are multifaceted and dynamic and vary considerably across contexts and time. The frameworks presented here give funders a few different ways of considering the typology of these organizations and their roles as builders, supporters and/or constituents of movements. Through this understanding, funders can better perceive how the organizations they are supporting are linked to movements and the types of changes to look for.

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4. WOMEN'S AND FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

In the context of EVAWG, it is "progressive" women's movements that are united around a common cause of challenging gender inequalities and injustices in society with a view to ending patriarchal domination. They may focus on a particular issue (such as girls' education, housing, the vote, environment, peace, decolonization), a particular constituency (for example, indigenous women, workers, or young women), or frame their agendas more broadly as struggles against all forms of oppression on the basis of gender.[36] Women's movements are not monolithic and are usually segmented along many lines, including those of class, caste, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity and geographical location (e.g. urban versus rural). For example, during policy advocacy, women's organizations often negotiate demands among themselves based on their specific constituencies.[37]

What then, if anything, differentiates a women's movement from a feminist movement? The following are a few of the proposed explanations from the feminist movement's discourse. Horn defines feminists movements as "movements that align themselves with feminism as a political ideology and seek to challenge inequalities and injustices between women and men, framing these as a challenge to patriarchy and patriarchal power relations"[38] and contrasts them with women's movements by defining those as "movements that are built and constituted by women and seek to challenge inequalities and injustice between women and men … individuals within women's movements may not always ally themselves with political identity of feminism".[39] Horn proposes feminist political ideology as the "the systematic exclusion and marginalization of women in society is not natural but, rather, is based on patriarchal gender power relations that systematically privilege the collective interests of men and boys over those of women and girls in all spheres of life".[40]

Batliwala (2012) proposes that although there are many movements that focus on injustices against women and girls, they are not necessarily feminist, and that the following are key characteristics that make a movement feminist.

- The movement adopts a gendered analysis and change agenda.

- Women form a critical part of the movement's leadership and constituency.

- The movement embodies feminist values and ideologies.

- Women's leadership is systematically built and centred in the movement.

- The movement's political goals are gendered.

- The movement uses gendered strategies and methods.

- The movement creates more feminist organizations.[41]

Feminist political ideology centres "the consciousness of sexism and sexist oppression", which is what drives many women's movements regardless of whether or not they explicitly use the word "feminist".[42] Different strands of feminism also adopt an intersectional lens to analyse how other axes of power, such as capitalism, racism and ethnic privilege, heterosexism and ableism, interact with patriarchal power to marginalize different groups of women and create hierarchies of privilege among women.[43] Therefore, although many progressive women's movements engage in actions and demands that are feminist in nature and directly tackle gender inequality and VAWG, they do not necessarily identify with the "feminist" label. This is particularly true for poor rural women,[44] and many others choose not to identify with the label owing to the risks of political repercussions and backlash.

Some elements of movements' processes that make them both "feminist" and a "movement" proposed by Batliwala (2012) are as follows.[45]

- **Consciousness-raising and awareness-building:** Raising the consciousness of women and girls about their oppression and exploitation is a critical first step in feminist movement-building. Feminist popular education is often used in this step by incorporating gender and class analyses of oppression and using the personal dimension as a starting point for consciousness-raising and change. Through this, movements seek to develop an understanding of and capacities to influence how power operates in the private realm: families, sexual partnerships and marriage. Feminist popular education acknowledges how socialization impacts women's sense of self, self-confidence, health, body image, psychology, and ability to seek fulfilment and pleasure in all areas of life.[46] In the context of EVAWG, this involves raising the consciousness of survivors of VAWG and at-risk women and girls first and foremost using popular education[47] tools that enable them to recognize the systemic inequities that affect their lives.

- **Building a mass base:** This involves mobilizing (often using community-organizing approaches) those whose consciousness is raised into different groups and collectives that can link up to amplify their own voices, visions and struggles. Feminist movement-building prioritizes constituency-building, which includes activities aimed at strengthening the involvement of those most affected by an issue in the design and leadership of advocacy.[48] Building a constituency base is hard work but essential and is what gives feminist movements their legitimacy and political power. In the context of EVAWG, base-building focuses on survivors to enable constituent-led advocacy, but for broader social change should include wider constituencies who can shift the existing victim-blaming narratives and inequitable institutional policies and procedures.

- **Numbers:** Although there is no requirement for how big a movement should be, numbers do count, in terms of being able to demonstrate an organized constituency base that has engaged in some collective action. So whether the movement involves 100 or 100,000 people,

it is the level of organization and cohesion, a shared political agenda, and exercising collective power and action in pursuit of that agenda that matter.

- **Clearly crafted political agendas:** These should be generated through bottom-up processes that use agenda-building as a consciousness-raising tool. These agendas are informed and framed by theories of change that incorporate both gender and social transformation and arise through debate and democratic discussion in which constituents have a large and even defining role.

- **A cycle of mobilizing, organizing, building a theory of change, a common political agenda, action strategies, assessment and evaluation, critical reflection and regrouping:** Feminist movements should be dynamic, learning movements, not static ones, with spaces for critical reflection and regrouping and efforts to expand their constituency base with each round of the cycle, to increase their collective power and political clout.

- **Building a new kind of knowledge and a new politics:** Feminist movements should challenge the monopoly of knowledge professionals (academics, researchers, development and gender "experts", etc.), by democratizing the processes of learning and knowledge generation within and by their movements. They should create space, respect and concrete mechanisms for their members to participate in theorizing, analysing, and monitoring and evaluating their experiences and enable knowledge to be created in multiple forms that do not privilege the written word and patronize others forms of expression, such as oral traditions, street plays, art and music.

- **Being concerned with changes at the formal institutional level and the informal level or within the actual contexts and communities in which their constituents live:** Consider not only changes in legislation or policy but also changes in the culture of patriarchy, manifested in the attitudes and practices of families and communities.

- **Focusing on transforming their own practices of power and building new models of power and leadership within their own structures and processes:** Breakaway from patriarchal models of power and create more shared models of leadership, authority and decision-making, for example through overtly "flat" structures.

- **Virtual organizing:** Erase space–time barriers and many of the other constraints that make it hard to mobilize certain constituencies. Through social networks and new communication technologies such as mobile phones and instant messaging, virtual organizing allows even highly isolated and excluded women to come together to build their collective power in ways that were impossible even a decade ago.

Conclusion 3: In summary, there are movements that identify as feminist and also many women's movements that do not or cannot embrace the feminist label; in the context of EVAWG, the principles and actions of the movements are more important than the label they use to describe themselves. The political ideologies, key characteristics and movement-building processes highlighted here provide a framework through which funders can understand if the movements they seek to support are feminist in principle, even if not by name.

5. MOVEMENTS AND EVAWG

A critical nuance of the research findings from Htun and Weldon's 2012 analysis is that feminist movements, as opposed to movements of women organized for other purposes, are the critical actors. This is especially true when they are autonomous and not part of organizations that do not have gender equality as their primary goal, such as political parties and unions. In addition, they found that autonomous feminist movements have an enduring effect on VAWG policy because they institutionalize feminist ideas into international norms. This nuanced distinction in the findings of their analysis with regard to the relationship between movements and EVAWG highlights the importance of feminist ideas and principles, which movements need to embody to sustainably prevent VAWG.

A 2016 analysis by Starfield found that countries with both gender quotas and feminist activism are significantly more likely to adopt legislation against gender-based violence.[50] A 2020 review by Mama Cash of the literature on the impact of feminist activism on VAW, economic rights, reproductive rights and political representation[51] covers two more studies linking feminist movements to laws combating VAW in Brazil,[52] and China, India and Indonesia.[53] A more recent 2020 review by Htun and Jensenius moves the discourse forward in some ways by summarizing the extent to which the majority of countries worldwide now have more laws and policies related to domestic violence and sexual harassment. The review also highlights how the "letter of the law in many places is far more progressive than social norms and individual attitudes, which implies that behavioral alignment with the law is a primary challenge facing VAW activists today".[54]

A **strong, autonomous feminist movement** is both substantively and statistically significant as **a predictor of government action to redress violence against women**. Countries with the strongest feminist movements tend, other things being equal, to have more comprehensive policies on violence against women than those with weaker or non-existent movements.[49]

(Htun, M., and Weldon, S. L. (2012), "The civic origins of progressive policy change: combating violence against women in global perspective")

There is also a growing body of literature providing more implicit linkages through the knowledge that is being generated on programming approaches that work in preventing VAWG being implemented by public health and mainstream development entities. Although in many contexts, the work of WROs and feminist movements on EVAWG versus public health approaches and the programming of broader international development organizations has complicated relationships and in many cases has been linked to the "NGO-ization" of WROs and feminist movement-building work,[55] there is, in many contexts, quite a bit of overlap in the efforts towards EVAWG in terms of the actors at work. In addition, in many cases, mainstream development and/or public health programming have drawn on approaches such as conscientization on gender and power, community mobilization and efforts to shift social norms that were historically rooted in social movements.

For example, in a 2015 review by Michau et al. of practice-based knowledge, the programming principles presented as core in contributing to meaningful change for EVAWG were:

- programme and policy designs grounded in a gender–power analysis

- shifting of violence-supporting attitudes and norms to ones that reject violence and promote gender equality

- programming that ensures multisectoral, coordinated efforts that promote personal and collective reflection and activism on women's and girls' rights to live free of violence.

The review highlights the need to transform power relations across the ecological model and emphasizes the importance of community mobilization and shifting existing narratives.[56]

The linkage to feminist movements is thus operationalized a little further through this review, as it articulates the specific types of activities that feminist movements are often engaged in that are linked to EVAWG. The following examples are provided in the review.

- Achieving sustainable change through self-organizing processes that compel community members to take coordinated action to bring about the desired change. An example of this is Tostan's organized diffusion strategy.

- Reformation of parallel customary legal systems (while recourse to civil or national law is maintained), designed and implemented with the active participation and leadership of local women's rights activists. For example, in Ecuador indigenous women's organizations collaborated to affect the 2008 national constitution, affirming both gender equality and indigenous rights, and women activists from the Kichwa indigenous community worked locally to complement this progressive national legislation with a set of principles called the Regulations for Good Living (*Reglamentos de Buena Convivencia*), which built protections for women into their indigenous justice system.

Building on practice-based evidence, a 2017 review by Womankind[57] includes rich examples of the ways in which their and others support of WROs and women's movements has played a key role in EVAWG. Some of the approaches and tactics that are commonly used by women's movements and WROs highlighted with references to examples where they had impacts specifically on EVAWG include the following.

- **Triangles of empowerment** are built when there are feminist advocates in elected office, state bureaucracy and autonomous feminist movements, which helps in developing policies

grounded in local women's needs. Having feminist advocates in all three spaces also significantly improves the chances of laws and policies combating VAWG being monitored and enforced.

- **Strategic litigation** by WROs can help them to mobilize around specific events of VAWG towards developing national policies.

- **Tackling social norms** that enable VAWG is vital. WROs and women's movements have historically tackled social norms head-on and challenged patriarchy where women are most likely to encounter it: in relationships at household and community levels.[58]

In addition, in a 2015 review, Heise and Kotsadam found that VAW can be reduced *"by eliminating gender bias in ownership rights and addressing norms that justify wife beating and male control of female behaviour"*.[59] This illustrates the critical role that shifting social norms play in combating VAW. Since the core work of feminist movements is to change social norms, beliefs, and practices, the role of feminist movement-building in sustainable EVAWG is further validated by the findings of this review.

In addition, several evaluations of EVAW programming to prevent intimate partner violence through the What Works initiative have illustrated the efficacy of approaches that include community mobilization and conscious-ness raising activities, such as the community-based action teams (COMBAT) in Ghana[60] and the community action groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[61] An earlier evaluation of the Raising Voices community mobilization approach was shown to be effective in Uganda.[62]

Although these findings highlight the **efficacy for EVAWG of approaches involving conscientization on gender and power and community mobilization**, which are **also key components of feminist movement-building**, some critical aspects of movement-building approaches are not seen in these programmes. A movement-building approach while using similar strategies, also has a focus on women's and feminist organizations, supporting the linkages between them and their links to national networks, and centring and supporting women, especially survivors, can lead to longer-term politicization around EVAWG and gender equity. Alternatively, while the projects described earlier have been shown to be effective, there is little evidence available of what happens when these projects end and the NGOs running them leave the communities or lose their resources to operate.

This is further emphasized by the following **critical elements** proposed by the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change. They are based on practitioner experiences, and are specifically **for feminist movements seeking to increase gender equality and address gender-based violence**.

- **Grounded in local knowledge:** Feminist movements that use and promote local expertise, knowledge and solutions through local women's organizations can support the development of services and advocacy that are most appropriate, relevant and safe.

- **Led by feminist women:** Movements are made up of individuals with vision, insights and courage, and supporting diverse groups of feminist women to mobilize together enables the formation of an inclusive movement.

- **Working to strengthen civil society and feminist networks:** Creating new and supporting existing organizations helps to build a stronger feminist grass-roots ecology, and networking and alliance-building across the women's organizations and other groups enables holistic

collective action.

- **Sharing knowledge:** Making knowledge accessible across levels and actors to inform movement strategies is essential for strong movements.

- **Aligning goals:** Uniting many different actors and organizations through a common goal and collective strategy helps movements to achieve their goals and maximize their resources.

- **Setting the policy agenda:** By mobilizing mass public support for advocacy and activism, movements can shape public agendas and demand institutional reforms.[63]

Finally, it is important to understand the status and maturity of feminist and women's movements to end VAWG in specific countries and regions to grasp the current and potential future relationships between funding WROs and VAWG. For example, through a 2015 study that sought to understand movements to end VAWG in the Global South, Raising Voices found substantial differences across countries and regions. For instance, they found "*that the regional and national strength of movements and conversation around what constitutes a movement are very different, for example, in Latin America, than in sub-Saharan Africa. The formation of movements in each region has been highly influenced by unique histories and contexts as well as country and region-specific issues such as language barriers, technology, and political hostilities*".[64] **Therefore, when considering what supporting movement-building for EVAWG entails, it is critical to understand the country-specific and regional contexts of movements to find out what WROs will need and what kinds of strategies and changes are most relevant.**

Conclusion 4: In summary, the literature linking WROs and their efforts to build and/or support feminist movements to EVAWG provides some foundational evidence but continues to be an important area for further exploration and learning. The broader literature on what works in EVAWG strengthens the argument for supporting WROs for feminist movement-building as a critical ingredient in EVAWG. The observations made here can be used by funders to nuance the support they provide to WROs and CSOs for EVAWG and to initiatives on practice-based learning that can support further evidence generation.
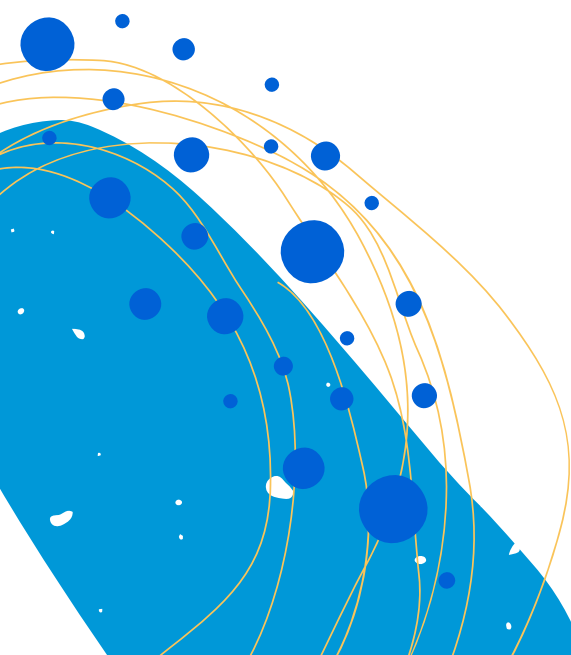
6. FUNDING WOMEN'S AND FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

In the last decade, funding progressive social movements has become somewhat trendy in that many funders are expressing an interest and/or starting to try to fund progressive movements. However, funders are often conflating funding movements with other change efforts[66] and are not necessarily cognizant of the fundamental shifts that need to take place when grant-making to support movement building and movement sustenance. In the feminist movements funding ecosystem, as a result of advocacy by women's funds and their allies, there have been some major shifts in the last decade as more funders, including bilaterals and multilaterals, have become clear on why funding feminist movements is critical. **However, most are still struggling to understand and operationalize the design of funding modalities that can provide sustained direct funding that can reach the movements.[67]**

Funding modalities "encompass the multiple practices, systems, and processes for structuring resources. They are the mechanics of funding, where strategy is operationalised, but modalities are more than (just) technical. Indeed, the modality of the funding can determine whether, and to which extent, the funding will successfully make its desired impact."[68]

(Staszewska, K., Miller, K., and Lever, E. (2020), Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders can Resource Feminist Movements)

In the struggle to defend women's rights, we often focus on showcasing women's activism … However, the architecture of activism and the organizational underpinnings of activist leadership – is also a critical factor in the success of change efforts. For donors, the value of investing in both the architecture and the leadership of women's rights organizations is, or should be, evident; yet these investments remain the subject of fierce debate.[65]

(Staszewska, K., Miller, K., and Lever, E. (2020))

The relevant discourse on funding WROs and CSOs supporting women's and feminist movements to end VAWG is situated in feminist funding modalities and modalities for funding social justice movements. The requests from progressive movement spaces, including women's and feminist movements, on important aspects to consider when funding them have some key similarities despite the movements' differing contexts and ecologies. The following is a summary of the most relevant requests from across several resources (the Association for Women's Rights in Development, Mama Cash and Count Me In![69]; the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice;[70] and the Trust-Based Philanthropy Project[71]).

- **Fund organizations that are building and supporting movements with core and flexible long-term funding:** Across the board, this is the most consistent ask from progressive women's and feminist movements. Core and flexible funding is not tied to a project but is for general organizational support, and does not have a long list of restrictions on how the funding can be used. Long-term funding at the very minimum lasts three years and ideally lasts five or more years. This provides the stability, infrastructure and flexibility that organizations need to focus their energy on activities and pursuits that are most important in their specific contexts and movements. In the absence of long-term, flexible, core funding, WROs end up having to contort their work to fit project-based funding mandates and have little room to shift their directions based on emerging needs, which is critical for movement-building activities.

- **Create deliberate spaces, avenues and processes to hear from movements and share learnings from working with movements:** Funders should embrace participatory grant-making approaches by creating spaces to involve feminist movement actors in the design of funding portfolios and in grant-making decisions. Funders should also invest in broadly sharing the lessons emerging from different ways of working with movements.

- **Integrate movement-building into grant-making guidelines and processes:** This can be done using an issue as an entry point (for the UN Trust Fund this is VAWG) and by funding movement-building capacities and programmes (e.g. leadership training, media training, community organization and advocacy training), and funding networks and/or broader campaigns that connect organizations in a specific community to build their power and overcome geographical limitations. Funders should prioritize supporting leadership models that centre intergenerational and collective leadership and resource grantees' efforts to train the next generation of activist leaders through political practice and education. It is also critical to support organizations that are nurturing leadership from the most affected communities in terms of gender, racial, economic, ability and other barriers. The work of Akina Mama wa Afrika is a great model for supporting feminist leadership.[72] This is not the same as funding traditional projects for VAWG prevention (e.g. awareness-raising and service provision) and requires funders to understand that the metrics for success and the pathways for change look very different.

- **Resource formal movement-building and movement-supporting organizations to be fiscal sponsors for and/or to transfer funding to informal organizations, groups and individual activists:** Key constituents of movement ecologies are both informal and formal groups at the grass-roots level and individual activists and leaders, but these constituents are the hardest to reach through formal funding modalities. Large institutional funders can get funds to these constituents through formal movement-building organizations who are in close relationships with these groups and individuals. However, this requires funders to use funding modalities that do not place accountability and reporting burdens on the organizations, as these would prevent them from accessing the funds without taking on unmanageable administrative burdens.
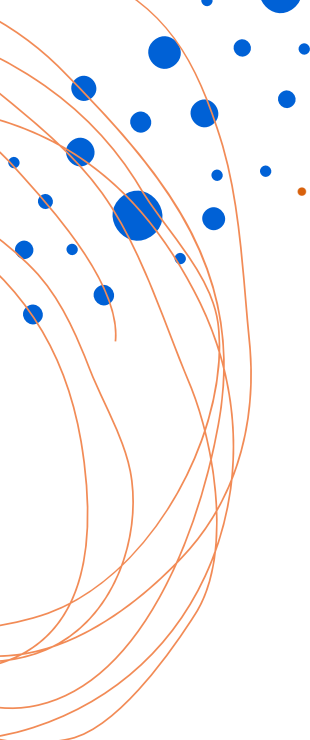
- **Prioritize the support of constituent-led organizations and groups:** A core characteristic of building feminist movements is a focus on strengthening the involvement of those most affected by an issue in the design and leadership of advocacy. In the case of EVAWG, this is broadly survivors of VAWG and those most vulnerable to VAWG (which could be considered all women and girls). However, using an intersectional lens and by considering the particular groups of women and girls that are served by an organization, funders should prioritize organizations that are either constituent-led or conduct specific activities to support the leadership of constituents. For example, if an organization serves sex workers, to support the building of feminist movements, it should be led by sex workers and/or have activities that build the power and support the leadership of sex workers to drive the design and prioritization of advocacy issues. The organization should also aim to have sex workers in their own organizational leadership in the long term. The Collective Future Fund,[73] which brings together social justice movements, survivors of gender-based violence, and donors in a process of collective healing, and works to mobilize those actors in shaping a collective future free from all forms of patriarchal violence, is a great example of a funding model that centres constituent-led groups and organizations.

- **Partner with and learn from women's and activist-led funds:** Women's funds and other activist-led funds play a vital role in making resources directly accessible to local organizations and movements. These funds have expertise in making small, flexible grants; accompanying groups with meaningful capacity-building support; and supporting movement-building through convenings and other strategies. Collectively, they have a wide reach. They can reach movements in ways most bilateral and multilateral funds cannot, and they have a long history of funding feminist movements that other funders can learn from.

- **Go beyond grant-making by accompanying activists and supporting capacity-building:** Organizations, especially those led by under-resourced and the most affected communities, require more than money to be sustainable. Funders need to work to ensure that grantee partners have what they need to heal, survive, thrive and build power. Accompaniment includes providing moral and emotional support, political solidarity in moments of crisis and struggle, hands-on advice, assistance with legal and fiscal needs, and resources to support learning, growth and sustainability. It is critical that learning and capacity-building needs are defined by activists and the movements they are part of, and that effective and sustainable capacity-building is led by peers and movement actors themselves.[74]

- **Invest in healing justice and holistic security:** Feminist activists on the front lines face safety and security threats because their activism confronts power structures. Marginalization and oppression make some groups more vulnerable than others to burnout and violence. Therefore, this is particularly important when working with groups that are at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression, for example women with disabilities; sex workers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning people; indigenous women; and Dalit women, among others. Funders should support healing justice and holistic security as two strategies that can bolster the well-being, sustainability and resilience of organizers and their communities. Healing justice promotes resiliency and survival practices that centre the collective safety and well-being of communities by identifying ways to respond to and intervene in generational trauma and violence. Holistic security is an approach that integrates physical and digital security with self-care and collective care and well-being. Funders should support/fund access to tools, resources,

Protest event to demand quick trial of rapists.
Credit: Mamun Ur Rashid/Badabon Sangho

skills-building and strategy spaces that directly enable groups to build their holistic security capacities and access healing justice practices. Funders should assume that this support is needed, especially for grantees facing multiple forms of oppression and/or working in hostile contexts, and make it available.

- **Invest in internal reflection and change processes as funders:** It is common for funders to embrace the words and values that align with funding feminist movements but not make the associated institutional changes. Funder/donor institutions need to do internal reflective and learning work to decolonize institutional practices and change their institutions to address contradictory programming, restrictive requirements and barriers to accountability for movements.

Conclusion 5: Funding WROs and CSOs that are supporting and/or building women's and feminist movements is an area in which women's funds and some foundations rooted in feminist funding principles have a long history, and all other funders have much to learn from them. Resourcing movement-building and support for movements with a specific focus on EVAWG is less well understood and documented, and there is room for further exploration and learning. The information presented above on what to prioritize when funding feminist movements provides a great roadmap for funders to build on, as it is based on the experiences of feminist movement actors and those who have funded them in responsive ways.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND GRANT MAKERS

Conclusion 1: There are many theories around social movements and movement-building. The literature highlighted provides some key conceptualizations and emphasizes the importance of distinguishing movement-building elements from the other work that groups and organizations are engaged in.

Conclusion 2: The types of organizations that are movement constituents and the relationship between these organizations and social movements are multifaceted and dynamic and vary considerably across contexts and time. The frameworks presented here give funders a few different ways of considering the typology of these organizations and their roles as builders, supporters and/or constituents of movements.

Conclusion 3: There are movements that identify as feminist and also many women's movements that do not or cannot embrace the feminist label; in the context of EVAWG, the principles and actions of the movements are more important than the label they use to describe themselves. The political ideologies, key characteristics and movement-building processes highlighted here provide a framework through which funders can understand if the movements they seek to support are feminist in principle, even if not by name.

Conclusion 4: The literature linking WROs and their efforts to build and/or support feminist movements to EVAWG provides some foundational evidence but continues to be an important area for further exploration and learning. The broader literature on what works in EVAWG strengthens the argument for supporting WROs for feminist movement-building as a critical ingredient in EVAWG. The observations made here can be used by funders to nuance the support they provide to WROs and CSOs for EVAWG and to practice-based learning initiatives that can support further evidence generation.

Conclusion 5: Funding WROs and CSOs that are supporting and/or building women's and feminist movements is an area in which women's funds and some foundations rooted in feminist funding principles have a long history, and all other funders have much to learn from them. **Resourcing movement-building and support for movements with a specific focus on EVAWG is less well**

understood and documented, and there is room for further exploration and learning. The summary provided here on what to prioritize when funding feminist movements provides a great roadmap for funders to build on, as it is based on the experiences of feminist movement actors and those who have funded them in responsive ways.

Recommendation 1: Funders and grant makers should carefully consider the different theories around social movements and movement-building to hone their perspectives and inform decision-making on what and how to fund when seeking to support movement-building. Likewise, funders should carefully consider **the types of organizations to fund**, based on their roles as builders, supporters and/or constituents of movements. This should take into account the challenges of labels in some contexts (e.g. feminist versus women's movements) and **the principles and actions** of organizations involved in movement-building. **Through this understanding, funders can better perceive how the organizations they are supporting are linked to movements and the types of changes to look for.**

Recommendation 2: Funders and grant makers should invest in generating and disseminating practice-based evidence on how investment in CSOs and WROs builds and/or supports feminist movements to end VAWG, to support the global VAWG ecosystem in their decision making and collective learning. This should include funding CSOs/WROs and feminist movement actors to identify and engage in learning and knowledge building activities that are most useful and relevant to them, and to host cross-learning convenings.

Women's Rights Education Program workshop in rural Patzún, Guatemala. Credit: Robin Schmid/ Women's Justice Initiative.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

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About the UN Trust Fund: The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) is the only global grant-making mechanism dedicated to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. Managed by UN Women on behalf of the United Nations system since its establishment in 1996 by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/166, the UN Trust Fund has awarded almost $198 million to 609 initiatives in 140 countries and territories.

ENDNOTES

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Asia and Southern Africa. As such, while these are two of many definitions of the concepts, given the collective nature of how these were generated, they are quite well regarded.

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39   Horn, J. (2013), *Gender and Social Movements – Overview Report* (Brighton, Institute of Development Studies), p. 15.

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