

# 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**