



Grant-Making For Women's Rights Lesson Learnt

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AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
SUMMARY	3
1 ABOUT AWDF	5
2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION.....	5
3 WHAT WE FOUND OUT	6
3.1 The Devolved Grantmaking Model (DGM) is very effective	6
3.2 AWDF's ability to support women's organisations and initiatives in a cost-effective manner	7
3.3 AWDF's capacity to provide non-financial support.....	7
3.4 Funding and Philanthropy	9
3.5 Strengthening Advocacy and Movement Building in Africa	9
3.6 Changes in capacity of AWDF as an Institution	10
3.7 AWDF – What do the grantees say?	14
3.8 Differences made with the work of project participants	15
4. CONCLUSION	17
4.1 Success Factors.....	17
4.2 Challenges.....	17
5 WHAT NEXT?	18

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Our sincere gratitude goes to Comic Relief for believing in our work and providing funding to enable AWDF to support many women rights organisations in Africa. As the report confirms, this contribution has made a positive difference in addressing issues that affect African women. We would also like to say a big thank you to our grantee partners for their invaluable inputs.

Finally, we say thank you to Shampa Nath, David J N Musendo, Jane Wanjira and Josephine Uwumukiza of Lifetime Consulting & Partners Ltd who conducted the evaluation and Eibhlín Johanna Ní Chléirigh for producing this abridged version.

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Summary

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a grantmaking organisation that supports women's organisations in Africa towards the empowerment of African women and the promotion and attainment of women's human rights.

In 2011 AWDF formulated a new five-year Strategic Plan to cover the years 2011-2015.

In the same year Comic Relief (CR) supported AWDF with a devolved grant to the tune of £2,000,000 in April 2011 with an additional £1,000,000 supplemental support in November 2012.

A devolved grant is one that funds a multi-year strategic plan instead of the more traditional support given to specific project activities. It maintains the autonomy of grantee organisations and allows for faster and more innovative responses to events and changes in programme emphasis, where necessary.

The CR devolved grant demonstrates the trust that Comic Relief has in AWDF's priorities and fund management capabilities. It enabled grant-making, capacity building support and technical assistance to organisations across the continent, 60% of which were first time recipients of AWDF funding.

An end of project evaluation was conducted between July and August 2014 with the aim to assess the performance of AWDF's Phase II Project which was part of Comic Relief's (CR) Devolved Grant Making Programme.

The evaluation concluded that the devolved grant and

the AWDF Strategic Plan had been highly effective and good value for money. It supported significant positive changes to AWDF itself, the grantee organisations, women across the continent (directly and indirectly), and amplified the profile of women's rights issues as integral to the development process and of African philanthropy.

The Comic Relief devolved grant enabled AWDF to:

- ◇ Support 269 small to medium sized women's and through them the delivery of 278 projects. The fund, through its grantees was able to reach previously unreached women. 60% of grantees had never been funded by AWDF previously.
- ◇ Provide grants which supported 268,243 women directly and over 1,000,000 women indirectly.
- ◇ Build its own capacity to support women and women's organisations to effect positive change in their communities by improving Communications, Information Systems and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes within AWDF itself.
- ◇ Provide extensive non-grant related, capacity building and organisational development, support to the grantee organisations in the form of training, coaching, mentorship and networking. This improved Strategic Planning, Project Implementation, Financial Management, Communication, Resource Mobilisation and Monitoring and Evaluation activities. This support was rated highly effective by grantees.

- ◇ Raise the profiles of grantee organisations in a way that enabled them to gain respect, expand their activities and access other sources of funding.
- ◇ Enhance the sustainability of projects with more than 79% of grantees saying their projects will carry on after their AWDF funding has stopped.
- ◇ Consolidate a position as leader in the women's movement and social justice philanthropy in Africa. AWDF helped grow the movement, increased visibility for women-centred programmes and put women's human rights and economic empowerment to the top of local, regional and national agendas.
- ◇ Increase support to Francophone countries and organisations; 20% of all grantees are Francophone. Just above half of these Francophone organisations received AWDF funding for the first time through this grant.

A number of clear lessons were drawn from the evaluation

- ◇ The Devolved Grant Making Model is very effective, it ensures flexibility, innovation and responsiveness to the needs of the project participants and grantee organisations. In many cases AWDF was able to identify fledgling community-based or non-governmental organisations for funding, which enabled them to deliver effective outcomes and grow in a sustainable way.
- ◇ The provision of multiyear funding encourages organisations to focus on their core work of supporting women's empowerment rather than fund-raising and is to be encouraged.
- ◇ The strength and clarity of the AWDF Vision and Strategy, and its dissemination throughout the AWDF organisation and stakeholder networks, contributed significantly to the success of the programme.
- ◇ Small grants are effective in reaching underserved communities, marginalised and vulnerable groups,

when the right support is given. AWDF extended its reach during the programme cycle and as a result the average size of grant was USD12,370 – yet most partner organisations stated that their grant allowed them to achieve positive results in very challenging economic environments.

- ◇ AWDF's focus on organisational and capacity development to support the grantees improves effectiveness considerably and encourages reflection and learning at all levels.
- ◇ Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) processes can be made more effective by assisting grantee organisations to conduct baseline surveys prior to strategy implementation and through the enhancement of Information Systems.
- ◇ By supporting grantmaking and capacity building, AWDF builds leadership, sustainability, relationships, ownership and the ability to raise their own profile and confidence in grantee organisations. This is a unique model for building women's rights and economic empowerment.

Next Steps

AWDF will continue to expand its rights-based funding to organisations promoting women's rights and economic empowerment throughout the continent.

The fund will continue to promote African Philanthropy as well as the Devolved Grant Making model to encourage funding that reflects the needs and context of women in Africa. It will advance women's leadership through policy advocacy and supporting the women's movement.

Additionally, AWDF will continue to strengthen its own and its grantees effectiveness through organisational development and in MEL processes, in particular.

This booklet presents an abridged version of the major evaluation findings report as a strategy to disseminate the learning of what worked well and what might be improved for the benefit of AWDF partners and other organisations working for transformational change.

I. About AWDF

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is building a world where there is social justice, equality and respect for women's human rights.

The mission of AWDF is to mobilise financial, human and material resources to support African women and the work of the African women's movement to advance women's rights and gender equality in Africa. Behind this grantmaking model is the understanding that if women and women's organisations are empowered with skills, information, sustainable livelihoods, opportunities to fulfil their potential, plus the capacity and space to make transformatory choices, then vibrant, healthy and inclusive communities will result.

In the last 15 years, AWDF has provided more than USD26 million dollars to 1,235 women-led organisations in 42 African countries.

Grantmaking for women's human rights is core to the work of AWDF. To achieve its goals AWDF provides funding, capacity-building, organisational development and networking support to women's organisations working towards the achievement of women's equality, respect and social justice on the continent. Through the advancement of women's human rights AWDF contributes directly to the advancement of the continent.

“Through the proceeds of some of the gari sold, we have been able to procure and fix burglar proof doors and window railings to protect the factory from intruders. We have also been able, through the proceeds, to pay school fees for all our wards this season and they are happy in school. Each member has an average of three children.”

- Manchie Women's Cassava Food Processing Group

AWDF provides much more than just funding for projects and organisations. While it funds initiatives it also provides capacity support and training in a manner that helps ensure both effectiveness and sustainability and, most importantly, opens a dialogue with the communities and organisations involved in a way that ensures the learning is a continuous two way process.

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

An end of project evaluation was conducted for AWDF between July and August 2014. The evaluation focused on the performance of AWDF's Phase II Project which was supported by Comic Relief with grants totaling £3,000,000.

The project focused on four areas, namely:

- ◇ Grantmaking in each of AWDF's six thematic areas;
- ◇ Capacity and Movement Building;
- ◇ Strengthening AWDF's Communications; and
- ◇ Partnership Development.

The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate the project performance, identify good practices and draw out lessons that can be applied in future interventions.

As the Comic Relief grant supported AWDF's Strategic Plan, the evaluation looked at AWDF's main areas of work and assessed the role of the Comic Relief grant within which the AWDF initiatives were conducted. The evaluation coincided with AWDF's Strategic Plan midway point. Findings from the evaluation were also used to inform AWDF's subsequent decision-making processes.

3. What we found out

3.1 The Devolved Grantmaking Model (DGM) is very effective

The primary purpose of the Devolved Grant was to enable AWDF to implement a Strategic Plan for the period 2011-2015. The Devolved Grant was a departure in a number of ways in that it supported both strategic and programme goals. AWDF's activities were supported to allow for more flexibility and innovation while also bolstering the organisation's ability to manage funds and projects effectively, draw lessons from those activities and share the knowledge gleaned throughout its network. AWDF advocates for the use of the Devolved Grantmaking (DGM) model as it enables AWDF to reach people that otherwise would not be reached and gives decision-making power to a broader group at the country and community levels.

Comic Relief's grant was used over a period of three years (2011-2013). The framework for the delivery of this project was defined in AWDF's 2011-15 Strategic Plan (SPIII), implemented throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and was not tied to a specific project or set of activities.

This type of support led to a number of very positive outcomes in AWDF's ability to support organisations effectively, expand funding opportunities and promote women's rights at all levels of society.

The funding model provides support to the strategic plan, in effect, a bold statement of determination and trust in AWDF which enables a freedom to implement initiative, build capacity and learn systematically from the work. It allowed AWDF to respond to the changing needs of its network of women's organisations throughout the continent. This meant that during the grant period, AWDF was able to provide more multi-year funding while also changing focus from one thematic area to another when the environment changed and the shift became necessary.

The range of organisations and projects that AWDF supports were enlarged considerably during the period from small to medium sized organisations with activities across all six thematic areas. Importantly, AWDF responded rapidly when the need arose. In Nigeria, for example, grants were generated through AWDF to

“

We managed to reach more than 2,000 people with PMT CT messages and we ignited a lot of interest going by the numerous questions and testimonies we had at the end of every session. The PMTCT messages were well received by our audiences with requests to have more of such activities... 120 girls registered with Taonga HBC as they wanted to learn more on safe motherhood and just other issues related to their health. They come to meet at Taonga HBC premises twice in a month ”

Taonga Community Home Based Care Project, Zambia

mobilise women to and respond with global-reaching campaigns (#BringBackOurGirls) following the kidnapping of school girls in the northern region. This increased the level of advocacy for the organisations as well as awareness about girls' rights in conflict zones.

Importantly, the devolved grant model encourages continuous reflection and learning. The model recognises that the development context in Africa is in constant change and allows for more extended funding and, significantly, a shift in thematic focus, geographic or programme area when the need arise.

Furthermore, it allowed AWDF to improve its own organisational capacity to administer and evaluate the grant. AWDF adopted the IPSAS accounting guidelines for all funds which ensured comprehensive and timely reporting to donors. AWDF's communications and outreach work has also become more central to its activities, in particular the use of new technology and social media. The fund enabled this new focus which has proved a very effective conduit for communication and information-sharing between Africa's young women.

3.2 AWDF's ability to support women's organisations and initiatives in a cost-effective manner

The Devolved Grant was found to be not only effective but good value for money. This is an important finding as devolved grants can sometimes be seen as a risk – since it is not tied to specific programme activities – but rather to support a strategy.

As can be seen from the table below, AWDF awarded 278 grants to a continent-wide network of 269 national, regional and community organisations. Donors and grantees have commended AWDF for how the grants were allocated and managed. This proved highly cost effective in terms of the reach and scope of the activities – and the number of women reached – for the amount of funding granted with 75% of grantees exceed their targets.



We have learnt how very important it is to involve women in such projects that concern them from planning to implementation stages and the importance of considering their concerns, as their inputs helped them own it and it led to the success of the project. We also learnt to patiently work with government for proper collaboration and utilization of medical officers for the success of the project.



- ICEHD, Nigeria

Total amount and value of grants per year

	2011	2012	2013	Total
Total amount granted in USD	\$968,180	\$1,242,500	\$1,228,050	\$3,438,730
Total grants awarded	69	127	82	278
Average grant size	\$14,032	\$9,783	\$14,976	\$12,370

3.3 AWDF's capacity to provide non-financial support

As stated earlier, the Comic Relief devolved grant supported AWDF to develop an organisational capacity to strategise, manage, review, evaluate and communicate. This organisational development allowed AWDF to support a network of project participants in a significantly enhanced manner. Importantly, the fund also gave AWDF backing to provide institutional strengthening and other non-financial support to grantees; allowing many to provide better support and services to women within their remit.

Capacity building support and technical assistance was a significant driver of the success of the AWDF Strategic Plan 2011-2015. Many grantee organisations stated that, through the support of AWDF, their reputations, visibility and recognition improved.

The major organisational development support areas were:

a. Strategy and Planning

AWDF provided capacity building support on Resource Mobilisation and Results-Based Programming which assisted organisations to think and strategically for their future. Out of 20 women's organisations that received grants for capacity building in 2012, 7 were to develop reviews, strategic plans and organisational systems and structures; 3 grants were awarded for research and publication dissemination, 6 went to salaries and operational costs while 4 grants funded training.

b. Project Implementation

Having provided funds to grantee organisations, AWDF gave support in managing activities and budgets in a timely manner. As a result of improved project implementation, grantees reported increased recognition for their work and more beneficial collaborations. One grantee in Uganda specifically mentioned that right from the start of the grant they prepared themselves to conduct operations more efficiently because they would have to account for their work to AWDF.

c. Financial Management

AWDF developed accounting procedures and financial guidelines to assist grantees to create and manage their annual plans and demonstrate due diligence and accountability in managing funds from various sources. All the grantees were expected to have bank accounts and were encouraged to conduct external audits. Overall, AWDF's grantees appreciate the support given by AWDF, highlighting that the reporting formats were user-friendly and the reporting frequencies (twice in a year) were appropriate.

d. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Monitoring and Evaluation is often difficult for small organisations. AWDF provided Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) reporting tools and training to its grantees and provided assistance during the reporting process. However, M&E is an area that still requires strengthening (see recommendations section). Although reporting is bi-annual, the evaluation participants compiled quarterly reports and they were pleased to communicate with AWDF "almost on a monthly basis".

e. Resource Mobilisation or Fundraising

AWDF has also supported some grantees to attend trainings such as resource mobilisation or business management skills, which has since benefitted the organisations, helping them to operate more effectively and in a professional manner. AWDF has provided their grantees with reading materials and manuals on aspects such as resource mobilisation. In Zambia and Cameroon for example, all the grantees who received these booklets agreed that the resources were of good quality and that they have been a constant reference.

f. Policy Influence

AWDF works to inform and shape policies at local, regional, and national levels to address opportunities and challenges women face in asserting and attaining their

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The grant from AWDF enabled CDR to win another grant from Youth to Youth Replication fund courtesy of International Labour Organization. This was a result of the lessons learnt, trust and competence demonstrated through the projects funded by AWDF. CDR also gained trust because AWDF entrusted them with a grant; CDR was entrusted by Rotary Club to fabricate 78 chairs and 3200 foot abduction braces (for correction of clubfoot) which was distributed to 41 hospitals in Uganda. ”

Programme Manager, CDR, Uganda

rights and gaining economic empowerment. AWDF plays a key role in shaping the policy agenda, and therefore, invests in policy development and advocacy work. AWDF's overall grantmaking agenda now aims to strengthen women's leadership, visibility, and influence at all levels in which they operate.

A huge barrier to women's economic empowerment is the lack of access to land and property, often caused by unjust inheritance laws. AWDF has worked with women's organisations to lobby for change - organisations, such as LADA Zambia, JWOP Zambia, Chameg Cameroon and AROWA Ghana had been supported to engage with key decision makers and politicians. In Zambia for instance, JWOP stated that the support from AWDF enhanced members' ability to engage with the Zambia Law Development Commission which led to the release of a draft amended Intestate Succession Act to the media.

AWDF advocates for women and women's organisations to become leaders in the policy and decision-making fields as well as service delivery. To this end, AWDF convenes a biannual CEO forum for women's organisations.



3.4 Funding and Philanthropy

The positive impact of AWDF's work demonstrated to other donors the value of funding women's organisations and the effectiveness of their work in bringing about positive change. With the CR funding, AWDF has been able to establish, strengthen and participate in networks and partnerships such as The African Feminist Forum, The African Grantmakers Network, The Women's Funding Network (WFN), International Network of Women's Fund (INWF) and the Association of Women in Development (AWID).

As the Comic Relief funding was not restricted to any specific African country as many other grants are, AWDF was free and able to scale up its operations and, where appropriate, bring in other donors in order to expand its coverage to more countries and grantees.

In addition, AWDF has raised the profile of philanthropy in Africa. AWDF plays a key role in strengthening African Grantmakers Network (AGN). Thus, the CR grant has assisted to change the nature of support from the

'traditional' model of external donors funding African organisations to a situation where Africa supports Africans and the grantmaker understands the context and issues better.

3.5 Strengthening Advocacy and Movement building in Africa

AWDF consolidated its position as a leader in the women's movement and social justice philanthropy in Africa. The CR grant enabled AWDF to support national chapters in their work to strengthen women's movements. For example, between 2011 and 2014, a number of countries were able to continue with their national feminist forums (Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa) or hold their first feminist forum (Liberia and Mali) which grew the movement, increased visibility for women-centred programmes, put women's human rights on the top of national agendas and provided a framework for grantee organisations to communicate better and share.

3.6 Changes in the Capacity of AWDF as an Institution



With the support of the CR funding, AWDF improved its capacity to support women and women's organisations effect positive change in their communities through organisational development by improving Communications, Policies and Procedures, Information Systems and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes.

a. AWDF Communication, Feedback & Follow up Mechanisms

15% of the survey respondents stated that, on average, they interacted with other AWDF grantees at least once every month.

The grant has been used towards AWDF's outreach work, which has become more central and critical to AWDF's activities. Investment has also been made in social media, which enables AWDF to set up new programmes to harness the organisation's ability to connect with new constituents, especially young people.

The grant has enabled AWDF to leverage new funds from other donors for such programmes. An example of this is the funding obtained from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Through AWDF's outreach communication work, they convinced the Foundation to invest in women's rights organisations supported by AWDF.

Interaction with other grantees

	In my country	In my region	Across Africa
English	53%	15%	32%
French	67%	13%	20%
Overall	55%	15%	30%

Through training, conferences, exchange visits and other online activities, AWDF has taken an active role in creating spaces for its grantees to interact, share and learn from each other. This management of the knowledge generated through activity and reflection is an important component of strengthening the capacity of fund-project participants to become learning organisations – thus improving strategy and performance. AWDF supported grantees throughout the programme cycle and was commended for the frequency of communication. Though the fund has grantees in more than 35 countries, AWDF maintained contact with all of them on a regular basis.

More than 70% of grantees who took part in the evaluation survey indicated that they had interacted with other AWDF grantees in the past three years. This interaction took place at country, regional and inter-regional levels. Evaluation informants indicated that such exchanges helped information sharing, learning and capacity strengthening.

b. Policy and Procedures

The grant allowed AWDF to review a number of its policies including training and development. This led directly

to a revision of procedures within the organisation and the development of a sabbatical policy. The changes in staff training and development led directly to improved staff retention and consequently improved continuity in programme management and support.

AWDF has adopted International Public Service Accounting Standards (IPSAS) as the main financial management guidelines. This has enabled AWDF to report appropriately to donors. This has also ensured that work is done efficiently and that proper records are maintained.

c. Effectiveness and efficiency of AWDF in its grantmaking and non-grantmaking work

AWDF was able to scale up operations and distribute a total 278 devolved grants to 269 organisations across 35 African countries, with a value of USD3,438,730.

Though the size of grants was small - on average each grant was USD12,370 - the provision of these grants and the associated support resulted in major changes for the grantees. The responses from grassroots, small and medium sized organisations from across Africa was positive, recognising how the support enabled them to achieve valuable results in very challenging economic environments.

More than 90% of the grantee organisations that were interviewed during the evaluation confirmed that they were supported to effectively reach a large proportion of marginalized and vulnerable groups of people, particularly women and girls from underserved areas.

Importantly, the changes that have been brought about through AWDF's use of the Devolved Grant are sustainable - 79% of grantees interviews stated that their activities will continue beyond the current project funding period.

Through non-grantmaking support and training in areas such as MEL, Strategic Planning, Management Practice, Resource Mobilisation and Communication, AWDF supported grantee organisations in developing and delivering their plans, managing the funds and communicating their successes or lessons learnt, thus helping them to operate more effectively and professionally. This in turn led directly to improved profiles at national and regional levels.

By raising the profile of grantees through AWDF's support, these organisations were able to get the attention of new donors and influence such donors to consider the quality and effectiveness of funding women's rights work. This has been critical to the development of grantees and their ability to sustain their work through accessing alternative funding sources.

d. AWDF's grant making and management policies and processes

In addition to funding, AWDF has also provided non-financial support to strengthen grantees so that they may, in turn, be able to provide improved services to their project participants. This support has led to a greater reach at community level, more effective programmes, improved autonomy, strategic planning and fundraising capacity across the network of AWDF supported organisations.

The general perceptions of the grantees of AWDF were remarkably positive. Grantees' rating of AWDF support showed that the fund's communication, feedback and follow up mechanisms were rated very highly (95% 'Excellent') while AWDF's financial management and disbursement were also rated highly (84% 'Excellent' or 'Good').

Organisations felt that with the support of AWDF, they now enjoyed increased recognition and visibility.

Furthermore, AWDF has improved the Grant Information Management system which is used by staff to manage the grant making portfolio. This improvement in the grant management process has helped AWDF to improve its working relations with many donors and leverage funds from additional sources.

e. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Systems

The overhauling of the internal information management system has helped AWDF to measure quantitative information and assess the impact of programmes more effectively as they are now able to manage their programme data better. This was developed to strengthen its information management and its leadership on knowledge management and learning, thus supporting the institutional development of the organisation and project participants alike.

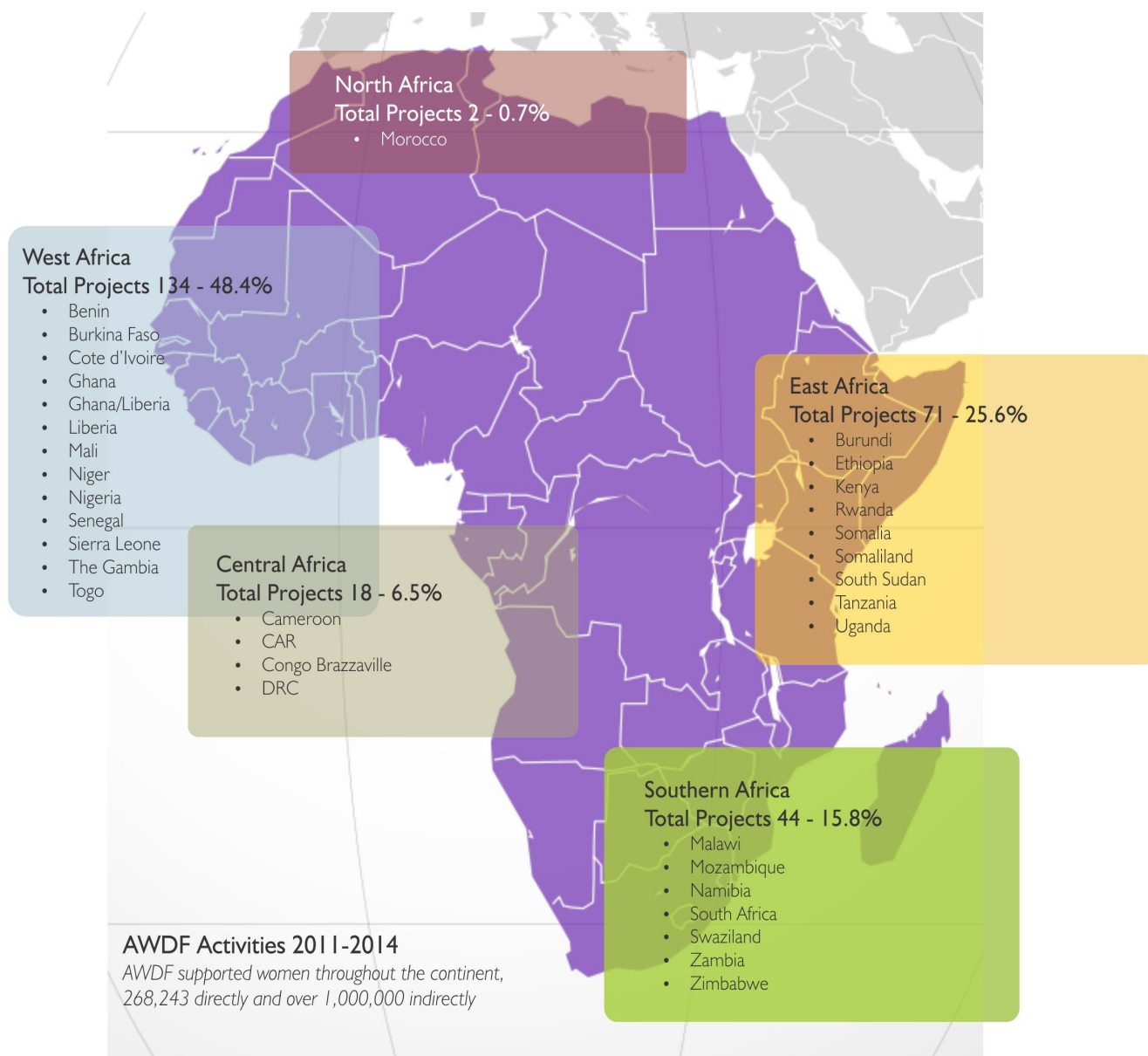
However, Monitoring and Evaluation was also identified as a key challenge during the strategy period – both for AWDF and its grantee partners. While the quantitative information is strong, reporting on the outcome of activities in terms of people reached and resultant changes observed is relatively weak. In this regard, it was recommended that AWDF provide additional M&E training and guidelines and work with partners to develop qualitative methodologies for evaluating social justice activities.

f. Expanded AWDF's Grantmaking activities encompass a wider geographic spread

The Comic Relief grant enabled the scaling up of AWDF's ability to reach more grantees. During the assessment period, AWDF provided funds to new grantees they had never funded before. Almost 60% of organisations had never been funded by AWDF prior to 2011. The fund made a deliberate effort to allocate resources beyond West Africa and Kenya (countries with a

large number of grant recipients) – cognizant of its continent-wide remit. An analysis of grantees over time shows that in each year, the number of grants awarded to other sub-regions increased gradually.

Significantly, AWDF increased support to Francophone countries and organisations; 20% of all grantees were Francophone. Just above half of these Francophone organisations received AWDF funding for the first time through this grant.



g. Reaching previously unreached women

The grants provided by AWDF to small and medium sized organisations have in turn been dispersed by national and local organisations to reach more girls and women in both rural and urban areas – some in remote and previously neglected areas. According to the evaluation, in some cases, this support has been transformational for the project participants through improved livelihoods, increased self-confidence and self-esteem and elevated status of women in their households and communities.

For example, a number of organisations, including CAFENEC, FEPEM and CAEPA in Cameroon and LADA in Zambia implemented projects in very remote areas where there were no other governmental or non-governmental organisations working.

h. Sustainability

The evaluation concluded that changes brought about through the use of the Devolved Grant are sustainable. Even though only 32% of the organisations who participated in the online survey had already secured further funding for AWDF's funded projects, up to 79% agreed that their activities were to continue beyond the current project funding period. While 10% were unsure of the continuity of these projects, about 11% reported that their projects were unlikely to continue.

AWDF has successfully sustained relationships with partners for extended periods: 29% of the organisations that participated in the survey had received their very first

“ We initially started with supporting 100 girls and through the multiplier effect have now spread to a much wider group. Also because of the success of this project, we have been invited by other organisations to do similar work in other areas. At the national level, lobbying by some project participants who have been victims of child marriage has also raised the profile of the organisation. They are also lobbying against harmful practices. The focus is, therefore, not only on economic empowerment but also other social empowerment issues as well. ”

*Girls Empowerment Network,
Malawi*

grant from AWDF at least five years before this evaluation was conducted. While almost 10% of organisations had relationships with AWDF that span over a period of ten years or more.

Number of grants per thematic areas of focus by year

Year	2011	2012	2013	Total	Percent
Art, Culture and Sports	4	3	6	13	5%
Economic Empowerment	18	34	26	78	28%
Governance, Peace and Security	6	8	11	25	9%
Health and Reproductive Rights	14	28	14	56	20%
HIV & AIDS	6	5	7	18	6%
Women's Human Rights	23	49	16	88	32%
Total	71	127	80	278	100%
Percent	26%	46%	29%	100%	

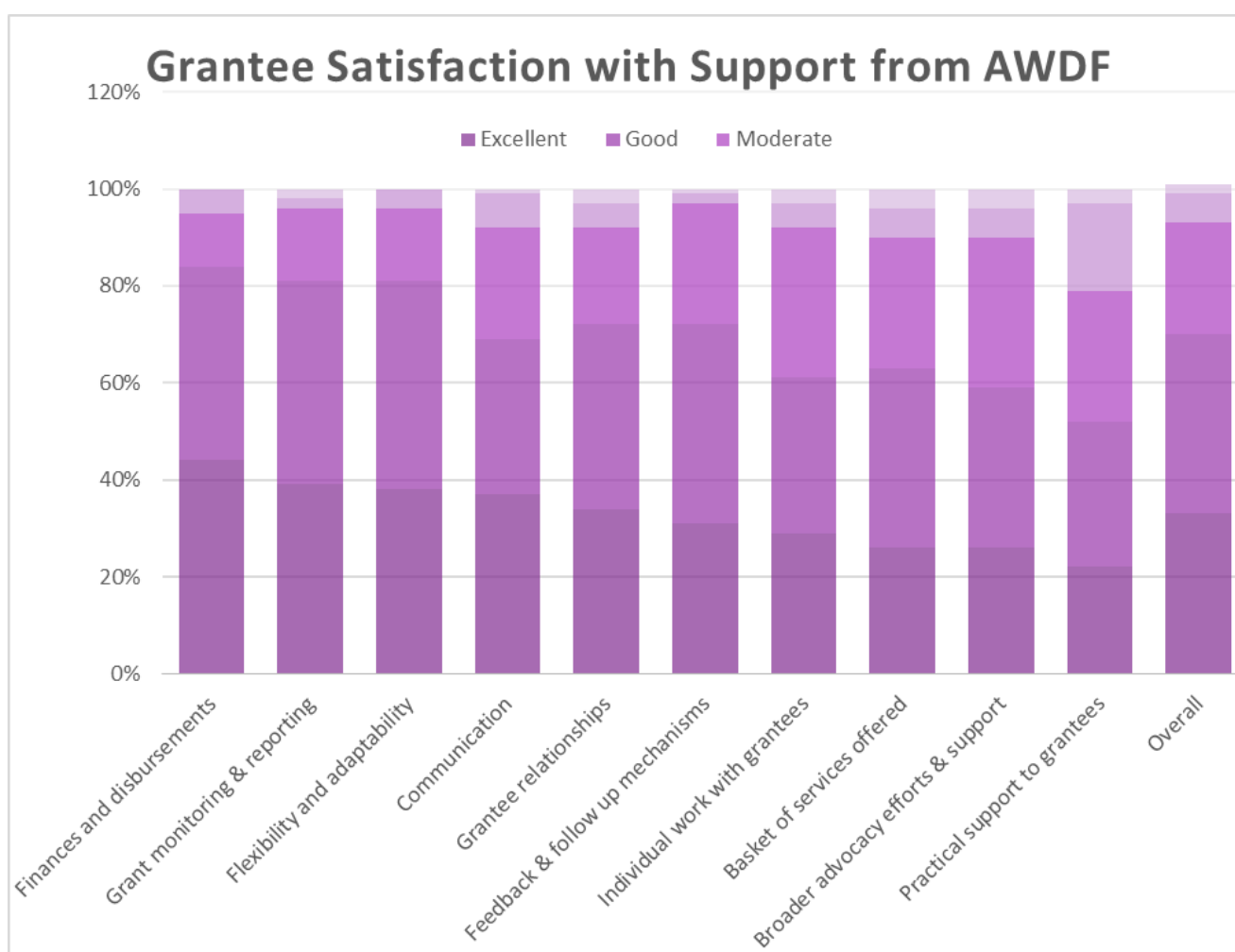
3.7 AWDF – What do the grantees say?

As the chart below illustrates, the grantees were very positive about the support and assistance received from AWDF and its grant management policies and processes. Overall 70% rated AWDF either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. 84% rated Finances and Disbursements to be 'Good' or 'Excellent'. AWDF's flexibility and adaptability to grantees' needs and abilities also rated well.

According to the grantees, AWDF's biggest (70%) non-financial influence on their work and effectiveness was project implementation support and training. For example, Better Hag Uganda states that as a result of AWDF training, they were able to identify and address their weaknesses in organisational and Programme management. This led directly to increased recognition, responsibility and funding opportunities.

“ For two years, AWDF funded two members of our staff to attend a resource mobilisation and strategic planning conference. Without them we were not going to be where we are. We have developed our strategic plan which is currently running. We also helped Kabwe District AIDS Task Force to formulate theirs. ”

Taonga HBC, Grantee, Zambia






3.8 Differences made in the work of the project participants

Significant changes were brought about through AWDF support to grantee programmes. The key changes are summarised in the following section, under the different thematic areas supported by the Strategic Plan.

“ The project brought together women leaders, chiefs and other traditional rulers to sit and talk together. This is something that had never happened before. This has brought change in the minds of the populace. ”

FIDA, Cameroon

	<p>Art Culture and Sports</p> <p>17,207 women and 25,612 indirect project participants in five countries benefitted from AWDF grants of USD257,000 in Arts, Culture and Sport.</p> <p>The activities led to an increase in knowledge and skills, enabled women to be published in previously male-dominated environments and raised the profiles of women artists. In Ghana, the project promoted new thinking on ways of visual expressions about women's contributions to development. This has led to the development of projects such as the ‘<i>Final Big Six</i>’, a sculpture of women who contributed to the independence struggles of Ghana.</p>
	<p>Economic Empowerment and Livelihood</p> <p>AWDF increased the number of countries receiving grants for Economic Empowerment and Livelihood activities from 3 to 15 during the grant period. These activities have made significant changes to 8,294 project participants' lives as well as having an impact upon 17,074 people indirectly through grants totaling USD661,000.</p> <p>Economic empowerment has led to increased self-confidence leading to more women being able to demand their rights and changed community perceptions towards women. Through business-related skills training project participants reported an increase in income which has had the knock-on effect of improved health, nutrition and children's education.</p> <p>A grant to an organisation in Uganda, for instance, was meant to cover 30 women through loans and training in trade and business skills. Many of these women had dropped out of school. When loans were returned, the money was provided to a wider group of women. As a result, the grantee organisation was actually able to support over 250 women rather than just the initial 30. Once such women become successful, they are able to support others in their communities.</p>
	<p>Governance, Peace and Security</p> <p>Grantees, with the aid of funding provided by AWDF (USD471,750), have supported and enabled 33,259 women in 8 countries to be heard in political, administrative and leadership settings where this did not exist before. In Cameroon, for example, CHAMEG succeeded in getting the government to implement the policy of 30% female representation in municipal and legislative elections. While in Zimbabwe, The Women's Trust supported Ward 8 GWG members in Zvishavane to engage their local authorities to allocate spaces where they can undertake income generating activities in a safe and clean environment.</p>

	<h3>Health and Reproductive Rights</h3> <p>The Health and Reproductive Rights thematic area seeks to support activities which focus on providing wellness support and dispelling stigma from women's mental, maternal, and reproductive health. A grant of USD405,000 in 8 countries has resulted in 36,862 women benefitting directly. A further 88,826 persons are estimated to have been indirect project participants of initiatives which address issues affecting the health of girls and women, including harmful traditional practices, many of which are due to the vulnerable position of women in society.</p> <p>Project participants reported an improved capacity to stand-up to abuse and to seek assistance where necessary in order to improve their health and achieve their rights. In Sudan, for example, some community members in targeted villages formed a committee to monitor and control the practice of FGM within their locality. They managed to confiscate/nullify the qualifications of the midwife who practices FGM.</p>
	<h3>HIV & AIDS</h3> <p>49,534 girls and women benefitted directly and 209,455 indirectly in nineteen African countries from \$534,180 grants. This started with support to nine countries in 2011, spreading to a further eleven in 2013.</p> <p>These grant-funded HIV/AIDS projects have strengthened their HIV prevention, care and support services. In Cameroon, Rwanda and Zambia, grantees reported an increased uptake of voluntary counseling and testing services.</p> <p>In Zimbabwe, The Web for Life Safety Net supports of female students who are pregnant and those living with HIV through financial, psychosocial and mentorship support. The Safety Net has helped to build positive attitudes and positive steps by young women in protecting themselves and their rights. This opportunity has been strengthened through the support of AWDF by creating safety hubs where female students can access information and support on positive living and address stigma and discrimination.</p>
	<h3>Women's Human Rights</h3> <p>Grants for organisations working for Women's Human Rights were awarded to 32 of the total 35 grant countries. A total of 144,674 women and girls benefitted from the AWDF grant of USD1,109,800 directly and a further 1,113,168 people benefitted indirectly through the grantee projects.</p> <p>Activities focused on developing capacity through awareness creation and contributed to measurable behavioural change. There was significant improvement in women's legal literacy and knowledge about their human rights; positive changes in the perception of holders of customary law (traditional and clan leaders) of women's human rights; improved perception and attitudes of men and boys towards women and girls' rights; increased community engagement in addressing violence against women.</p>

4 Conclusion

The Comic Relief evaluation of AWDF's activities between 2011 and 2013 concluded that the fund made significant contributions to changing the lives of women and the work of grantee organisations across the continent; supported grantees to improve the delivery of their services and strengthen the sustainability of their projects; contributed to strengthening women's movement and influenced other funders through its funding practices and strategic priorities. Some processes require strengthening such as MEL and the diversification of the funding base.

4.1 Success Factors

- ◇ AWDF has a clear strategy that has been communicated and socialised with its staff, partners and networks. This encouraged funding and provided the coherent framework to support grantee organisations.
- ◇ The nature of the DGM grant ensured flexibility, innovation and responsiveness to the needs of the project participants and of the grantees over a multi-year period.
- ◇ AWDF's focus on organisational and capacity development to support the grantees has improved effectiveness, sustainability and encourages reflection and learning at all levels.
- ◇ Accessing support is a key driver of success: AWDF's staff have shown commitment, passion and professionalism in their work and in the way they support their grantee organisations. The grantee organisations were able to access consistent and continuous support throughout the programme cycle from AWDF itself and other grantees.
- ◇ The use of communication and knowledge management tools (including social media) has enabled continuous communication, support, monitoring and feedback to and from the grantees. This in turn has led to improved outcomes and delivery of results by the

grantees. AWDF's communication, feedback and follow up mechanisms were rated very highly by most grantees (95%). AWDF has built networks and provided spaces for grantees to interact, share and learn from each other.

- ◇ AWDF is committed to continuous learning from its work, through strategic planning, project management, evaluation, analysis and revision.
- ◇ AWDF's leadership in the women's movement in Africa and in women's rights advocacy has led to significant changes in the legislative framework – especially around inheritance rights – and has increased the profile of women in leadership roles in society and well as ensuring women's human rights are top of government agendas.

4.2 Challenges

Measuring and Assessing Change: The evaluation identified the lack of quantitative data as a significant impediment to assess effectiveness, in particular the lack of baseline data prior to project implementation. As part of its ongoing organisational development process AWDF is strengthening the MEL systems. In an effort to support the work of its project participants, AWDF has commissioned an Information Management System as well as engaged the services of an experienced evaluation consultant to assist with result and impact measurements.

Increasing our Reach: The evaluation identified the rapid expansion of AWDF funding as a risk to programme quality and sustainability. Indeed, reaching 269 grantees in 35 countries within three years was a huge expansion for AWDF. However, overall the expansion was positive and effective despite the reduced grant size. This has led to the organisation to reflect on new ways of supporting more women across the continent especially those previously unreachable.

5 What Next?

AWDF will continue to expand its rights-based funding to organisations promoting women's rights and economic empowerment throughout the continent. It will promote African Philanthropy as well as the Devolved Grant Making model to encourage funding that reflects the needs and context of women in Africa. It will advance women's leadership through policy advocacy and supporting the women's movement. Furthermore, it will continue to strengthen internal and grantees' effectiveness through organisational development and its MEL processes, in particular.

AWDF will work with its funding partners and African Philanthropists to develop grant models best suited for the every changing African social, environmental and political environment.

Specifically:

- ◇ AWDF will continue a rights based approach to funding that combines a balance of demand driven, responsive and pro-active approaches - conscious of the need to support organisations in diverse geographical locations that are often underserved.
- ◇ AWDF will continue to support African women's organisations with both grantmaking, capacity building and technical assistance. This is a model for building women's rights organisations. It enables grantees to build leadership skills, sustainability, relationships, ownership and the ability to raise their profile and thus enhance the confidence in grantee organisations.
- ◇ Encourage Multi-year funding for AWDF Strategic Work and Grantee Organisations funding as it allows for greater flexibility and longer-term planning. planning. This lessens the burden for AWDF and project staff.
- ◇ AWDF will continue to raise the profile of philanthropy in Africa and will invest resources in strengthening African philanthropic organisations to increase their potential to fund organisations, groups and individuals on the continent. A key part of this will be the strengthening African Grant Makers Network (AGN).
- ◇ Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is a core part of AWDF capacity-building activities with grantees, in particular, results-based planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Baseline studies will be encouraged to ensure quantitative measures of progress are possible.

“The project has greatly influenced changes...the skill of staff in developing action and communication plans have been strengthened, the management of funds has improved in that Chameg has instituted the policy of calling for bids for purchases above 200,000frs and selection carried out by a selection committee taking into consideration quality and price. Establishing a gender task force in councils by mayors has given birth to a new principle enforcing 30% of female representation and participation in the design and implementation of council programs.”

CHAMEG, Grantee, Cameroon

For donor organisation the evaluation recommends:

- ◇ Comic Relief and other funding partners, through the funding of AWDF, give context-specific support to small and medium sized organisations who are making an impact at community level. The evaluation has found this to be an effective way of reaching women previously unreachable.
- ◇ Funding for non-livelihood thematic areas such as Women's Human Rights or Arts, Culture and Sports is often problematic as outcomes are qualitative in nature and often less understood. Yet there is a clear link between rights attainment and economic empowerment. The CR funding of all AWDF thematic areas is to be encouraged.
- ◇ Given the complexities of social justice and behavioural change interventions and the gradual process of change involved, medium and long-term support for strategies is recommended rather than short-term project support.

