



AFRICAN WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT FUND

Women's Human Rights: A Look at AWDF Grant Best Practices

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BACKGROUND: A Closer Look at Women's Human Rights Philanthropy

The African Women's Development Fund is the first and largest grant making foundation to support the work of women's organisations promoting women's rights in Africa.

Since the start of operations in 2001, the organisation has succeeded in providing USD 28 million dollars in grants to over 1200 women's organisations in 42 African countries. AWDF's key thematic areas are focused on **Women's Human Rights (WHR), Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods (EE&L), Governance, Peace and Security (GPS), Health and Reproductive Rights (HHR), HIV/AIDS and Arts Culture and Sports (AC&S)**. In 2010, AWDF conducted an external review of work on various women's rights issues over a ten year period. As a result of the review, the 2011-2015 strategic plan was developed.

Within the strategic plan, AWDF prioritised issues under the WHR thematic area which included **Violence against women: ending impunity, practical support to survivors of violence, Fundamentalisms: religious, cultural, political, economic, legal and social, Property rights: ownership, inheritance, access, control of assets and Citizenship**. The grantee portfolio at the time included initiatives that addressed the following issues including: legal, policy development and reform, movement building using The Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, awareness raising through campaigns, events, media outreach on issues listed above, research and documentation, practical support to women affected by the thematic issues, training and capacity building. The purpose of the evaluation

was to increase organisational learning by assessing AWDF and grantee partners. It was designed to understand AWDF and performance between 2009-2011. The evaluation used relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability as an overarching framework. The analysis of the report was guided by the social change matrix, a tool utilised by the Global Fund for Women for internal reflection practices.

It is our hope that the findings over that period of time will only continue to strengthen the work of AWDF as well as deeper understandings and practices in women's human rights.

THE CONTEXT: Why Women's Human Rights?

With the recent anti rape protests in April at Rhodes University in South Africa, the rejection of the Safe Abortion Bill in Sierra Leone and the death of Monique Koumante who was denied healthcare for a twin delivery in Cameroon, women's issues are even more of a priority now and cannot be swept under a rug. The issues prevalent during the time of undertaking this evaluation are still relevant today. Over the past decade, there have been critical global events (food crisis, financial crisis, land grabbing etc.) which necessitate the importance of women's human rights. AWDF made intentional efforts in providing funding for the livelihoods of women on the African continent during those times. Some of these events included the global food crisis which impacted small scale farmers and land purchasing by hedge funds who control a vast majority of the economy and have further pushed women into more poverty on the African continent.

The global financial crisis, unfortunately still an ongoing issue, is a direct contributor to the injustices that women experience on the continent. Financial cuts in some parts of the continent have contributed to spaces for women losing funding and being shut down. The Saartje Baartman Centre and Rape Crisis Centers in South Africa are examples of these spaces. Due to the patriarchal environment that many African governments are

positioned, women's rights issues are always at the lower end of the priority list. Therefore, such issues always forfeit funding during financial cuts.

The reduction of funding for women led initiatives is directly linked to the patriarchal stance of most African governments¹. This decrease in funding streams to specific government segments including health and education, has directly impacted the work in unimaginable ways. Reduced funding streams, particularly by external funders, has threatened the sustainability of grant funding, forcing organisations to look towards home grown philanthropy solutions for WHR issues. In general, the shrinking funding environment from international partners has provided the urgency for AWDF to focus on African philanthropists and local giving on the continent. However, local giving comes with its own challenges. With the work of AWDF focused on transformational change, outcomes occur over a period of time, and because most funders look for immediate and concrete results, this mandate causes a challenge in resource mobilisation. This presents a more critical need for AWDF to think of innovative ways to fund work on Women's Human Rights.

FIGURE 1. WHR KEY ISSUES

Some key issues addressed under the WHR theme:

- *Protecting and promoting women's human rights*
- *Mobilisation of support for women's rights at the grassroots level through networking and empowerment of community based organisations*
- *Research on harmful traditional practices and forms of violence against women which infringe on their basic human rights*

¹ AWDF Full Evaluation Report

ADOPTING A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH:

Evaluation Findings

This section focuses on the importance of the WHR theme.

It also summarises the key indicators which are aligned to the theme.

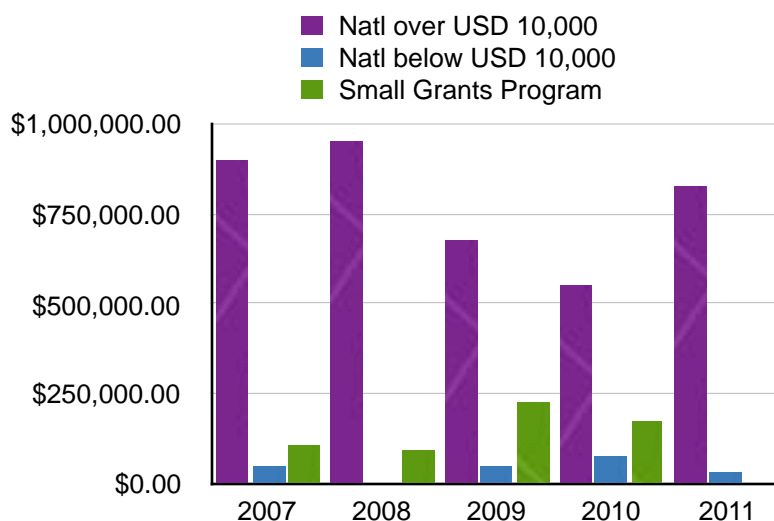


I. AWARDED GRANTS TO SUPPORT AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

The relevance of the WHR theme is first measured against the vast amount of resources that have been allocated to various organisations in different countries across regions. The key measure of success of the WHR theme is that of the six thematic areas of the organisation, it remains the highest subscribed thematic area drawing more resources due to grantee demands. Other measures of success of this thematic area have been attributed to: less cumbersome ways of applying for grants, friendly relationships between AWDF and those who receive funding from other sources and the support grantees receive from staff in completing the application. Due to various challenges, mainly historical colonial dynamics that have shaped the areas where resources are sought by particular countries, Francophone countries have received limited funding in the WHR category. However, AWDF has made tremendous efforts to change this. From 2001-2011, Francophone countries account for 28 percent of the WHR grants awarded. This growing uptake of Francophone African countries on WHR related issues proves once again that these issues find resonance with women across Africa. AWDF has been reaching organisations who otherwise can't secure funding. This is demonstrated in Figure 2 and it covers 2007-2011, depicting the distribution of grants between small, medium and large organisations.

AWDF has been effective in reaching organisations working at the margins who would otherwise not secure funding from mainstream funding agencies. (Full AWDF evaluation report)

Figure 2. Distribution of Grants between small, medium size and large organisations



II. IMPROVED GRANT PROCESSES

Grant making is a huge component of AWDF's work, therefore, grant management processes are essential for the organisation to track and measure the impact of grant making at AWDF. The key management components that were identified for this include data collection, collation and distribution processes of grantee information, proposal submission, application assessment and decision, grant disbursement, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building support and accountability. It was evident that the grant management system that existed at the time of the evaluation no longer met the demands of the organisation. Therefore, there needed to be an improvement in processes.

III. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

According to Joanna Foster, a Co-Founder of AWDF, one of the key reasons for establishing AWDF was because there was sheer evidence that women's rights organisations could mobilise funding with minimal resources in order to build strong and accountable women led organisations. This contributed to the focus on institutional strengthening, administrative and capital support as a key area of grant making. Within the time period of 2001-2011, sixty organisations in 12 countries in three subregions have benefitted from institutional strengthening support. Grants that support institutional strengthening are under the Capacity Building Unit which has three components: Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Management. It is evident that AWDF's contribution towards institutional strengthening has led to a number of significant results, including supporting core costs of organisations (rent, salaries) and in other organisations, funds were directed towards specific capital projects or development of institutional systems.

FIGURE 3. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT GRANTS FINDINGS

Institutional Grant Lessons Include:

1. ***Strengthened Institutions, Strengthened Livelihoods:*** The grants strengthened institutions and supported the management of leadership transitions, instituting accountability frameworks and offering critical support for the sustainability of various grantee partners.
2. ***Sustainable long term partnerships:*** The ability of AWDF to access other resources through new and expanded partnerships was demonstrated in the evaluation. There is a difference between established and newer institutions. More established institutions may find it harder to attribute their partnership building endeavours to AWDF's support. With smaller institutions who receive seed funding, they were able to develop new funding partnerships as a result of AWDF's initial investment. There is a need to look at areas where AWDF has provided seed funding for an initiative to see whether this has sparked interest from other funders.
3. ***Stronger Monitoring systems:*** It was observed that there needs to be stronger monitoring of funds disbursed by AWDF. In certain situations, monitoring parameters are needed when programs are not necessarily triggered by specific needs.
4. ***Focusing on the most needy organisations:*** A key observation made was that some organisations who were in need of capacity building only sent one staff member to attend all of AWDF's convenings. Some organisations, on the other hand, attended only one capacity building activity despite a greater need within their organisation. This calls for a more intentional mapping process within the organisation to ensure that those who are in dire need of support are receiving this support.

OUR LESSONS LEARNT

This section focuses on lessons documented from the work of women's organisations across the regions.

It outlines the key lessons gathered around the WHR Thematic area.

1. STRENGTHENING OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS



There is a clear indication that WHR grant making strengthens the women's movement. This was evident in the 100 percent endorsement by grantees who testified to the filling of a critical gap by AWDF.

2. INCLUSIVITY

The WHR theme is extremely effective because it covers the core issues that a majority of women's rights organisations face. Grant recipients have proven to be stable and consistent partners in our work and 100 percent of those interviewed in various regions attested

that the patriarchal terrain has shifted. However, mechanisms still continue to exist that counter the work of women's rights activists. Such funds from AWDF are even more critical and needed.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

70 percent of AWDF grantees reported that capacity building initiatives by AWDF are highly effective. This is seen in particular organisations whose systems of leadership, accountability and resource mobilisation have grown tremendously since beginning their partnerships with AWDF.

4. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

AWDF has made key strides in partnering with women's funds in order to be able to support constituents who are difficult to reach. These partners include The Mediterranean Women's Trust Fund and Pitsengtrust South Africa. Additionally, the organisation continues to make intentional strides into both Francophone and Lusophone countries including LGBTIQ and sex worker movements.

There is a clear indication that WHR grant making strengthens the women's movement. (Full AWDF Evaluation Report)

FIGURE 4. LESSONS FROM GRANTEES

WHR LESSONS LEARNT INCLUDE:

- African women's solidarity is critical to WHR issues
- The global financial crisis showed the importance of women's rights actors in every level of society including: local, national and the subregional levels
- Women's Rights Organisations play a huge role during times of crisis

5. LIVELIHOODS

There has been visible shifts in the quality of women's lives both economically and psychologically due to interventions by grantee partners in communities they operate within. These specific grants have targeted direct services such as food sovereignty and providing safe spaces for women to regroup after experiencing violence amongst other issues.

6. LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

The implementation of the Maputo Protocol regionally has allowed for tremendous strides to be made for women. However, there is a need for institutions to develop systematic monitoring and documentation for advocacy.

7. MOVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP CULTIVATION

AWDF is taking the lead in developing the next generation of African women leaders through a cadre of organisations who continue to take on questions of bodily integrity, autonomy and choice as key Feminist concerns. This is displayed in the national Feminist forums which have been beneficial spaces to advance discussions on issues relating to rights and gender related issues. There seems to be a lack of consistent focus on the key relevant issues, and organisations focus efforts in areas that may not be all that beneficial for transformative movement building.

8. INCLUSIVITY

All of the grantees implement some form of capacity building work across the continent. Most of these organisations limit such activities to the grassroots level and focus their efforts on helping actors to strengthen their networks for income generation. However, this work does escalate to building the capacity of those organisations to advocate for themselves and is critical for transformational movement building. While 40 percent of the organisations surveyed for this evaluation all highlight economic empowerment as central to the rights conversation, there is no evidence that such conversation occurs in practicality, particularly, dialogue on the nature of patriarchy and the rights of women.

9. DOCUMENTATION PRACTICES

There is a lack of documentation by grantees which impedes the sustainability of institutional memory. The evaluation found that 50 percent of the grantees do not conduct any form of internal reflection and documentation practices on the work they have done.

10. CROSS ISSUE AWARENESS RAISING

Due to conversations with various stakeholders in the AWDF network, it was revealed that there is a lack of the

intersectional WHR lens on issues which organizations focus.

One example of this was seen in the issue of land ownership. One cannot discuss land rights without assessing the political elite and global corporations and their impact on food sovereignty. There is a need for disaggregated data to monitor issues and trends and their uptake under the WHR theme.

11. SUSTAINABILITY

Unfortunately, the sustainability of organisations remains a problem in the region. There is a need for more reflection on the nature of institutional frameworks required to facilitate solidarity work.



12. IMPACT OF POLICY ENVIRONMENT

There are four key ways of categorising the sort of change that women's human rights movements seek to bring about:

- Individual and Informal Change,
- Individual and Formal Change,
- Systemic and Formal Change and
- Systematic and Informal Change.

It is important to note that 60 percent of grantees are involved within the political terrain of their societies. This can be seen much more in large and medium sized organisations than smaller ones. There are dynamic challenges that occur across various countries but what remains constant is the presence of religious fundamentalist organisations, conservative forces and ideologies. Grantees have, therefore, utilised various spaces, tools and networks to navigate the political terrain in their respective communities. Firstly, all grantees demonstrate the use of service provision to gather both statistical and anecdotal data that enables them to make arguments for transformative, social and cultural change. Grantees also utilise capacity building as a core strategy. This primarily involves building the capacity of others to advocate for themselves, strengthen their own networks and become activists for others.

POLICY ENVIRONMENT

WAYS OF CHANGE FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS


	
INDIVIDUAL AND INFORMAL	RAISING AWARENESS OF AN ISSUE FOR WOMEN
INDIVIDUAL AND FORMAL	LEADS TO INCREASED ACCESS TO RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUALS
SYSTEMATIC AND FORMAL	MANIFESTS IN LAWS, POLICIES AND NEW INSTITUTIONS
SYSTEMATIC AND INFORMAL	SUSTAINABLY TRANSFORMED SOCIAL VALUES, PRACTICES, NORMS AND BELIEFS

FIGURE 6. CASE STUDIES NIGERIA AND GHANA

ALLIANCES FOR AFRICA'S (AFA) MOBILISATION AROUND THE INDECENT DRESSING BILL

AFA ENGAGED IN A SERIES OF EFFORTS AGAINST THE BILL. THESE INCLUDED AWARENESS RAISING, LEGAL REVIEW OF THE BILL DEEMING IT UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE FEDERATION OF NIGERIAN LAWYERS. THROUGH ENGAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC, AFA SPREAD AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENED THE CIVIL SOCIETY VOICE AGAINST THE OPPOSITION OF THE BILL. A PARTICULAR ACT THAT CALLED FOR THE BILL TO "PROHIBIT AND PUNISH PUBLIC NUDITY, SEXUAL INTIMIDATION AND OTHER RELATED OFFENCES IN NIGERIA", DID NOT PROGRESS AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING. THIS WAS DUE TO THE OVERWHELMING EFFORTS BY CIVIL SOCIETY.

WILDAF GHANA THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

WILDAF HAS BEEN VERY INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING POLICIES RELATING TO THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT. WILDAF SITS ON THE COMMITTEE DRAFTING INTER- AGENCY PROTOCOLS REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACT, AS WELL AS MODEL REGULATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENT FOR THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT. WILDAF HAS ALSO BEEN APPOINTED BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE AS ONE OF THE FEW CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ON THE COMMITTEE PLANNING A PILOT FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER IN GHANA.

GRANTEE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT:
NIGERIA

GRANTEE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT:
GHANA

RECOMMENDATIONS

The key outcome of this evaluation is that the WHR theme is a very strong and relevant part of AWDF's work and it continues to make an impact on the lives of women. Additionally, the WHR theme captures the broad issues that continue to affect women across the continent. It also provides a cross analysis approach to create a more dynamic look at issues, instead of having a singular approach. One of the key missing components of the WHR theme is "evidence of a robust cross-issue analysis and power mapping by grantees and the absence of policy level work on particular issues". This section will outline a summary of the general recommendations moving forward.

1. GRANT INFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

a. Online grants management portal:

To address delays in communication to grantees, it is suggested that an online grants management system is employed and the email and postal system is phased out of the organisation.

b. Data Management:

Due to the fact that AWDF collects both quantitative and qualitative data, it is recommended that the organisation upgrade the grants data management software to allow for expanded and disaggregated data collection and tagging. The outcome of this is more timely and accurate data.

2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

a. Revision of Site Visit reports:

Although reports gather good information, a critical missing component is the activism that is so embedded in AWDF's framework. Therefore, there is a need to revise the current format to reflect the political, social and economic environment for the monitoring team to be able to clearly define a success story.

b. Grants Reporting Format:

The reporting format must be revised to cater to the diversity of the grantee portfolio. Since some grantees are small organisations and some are larger and potentially receive multi year grants, AWDF must take this into consideration.

3. MOVEMENT TRACKING

It is important to track the Feminist movement and AWDF's influence on the Feminist movement. This would be a joint initiative led by the M & E Specialist as well as the Knowledge Management Specialist.

4. GRANTEE EVALUATIONS

Grantees receiving USD 20,000 should conduct an evaluation process that documents the work and best practices. This will enable grantees to move beyond anecdotal evidence and provide intentional tracking of their work.

5. CAPACITY BUILDING

It is important to track capacity building activities that the organisation provides and more coherent data tracking on this is needed. This information should be part of the data management strategy being recommended. Additionally where there is technical expertise from other organisations, AWDF's Capacity Building desk should support women in executing activities that could generate income for their organisations. Last but not least, the Capacity Building should conduct a needs assessment to ensure that all grantees benefit equally.

6. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

One of the key ways to bring visibility to the work of AWDF is to profile grantees and not enough of this was being done at the time of this report. This method enhances internal and external learning for both AWDF and grantee partners.

7. STRATEGIC POLICY PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure that AWDF's grant portfolio continues to grow, AWDF should utilise various convenings to identify policy areas, dedicate a fixed annual budget and work with specific organisations to address policy related issues on the continent that are relevant to the work.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AWDF would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who took part in the evaluation that formed the basis for the development of this abridged version. The document provides insights to the work done by AWDF and grantee partners and contributes to evolving knowledge on the intersections of women's rights and development in Africa.

Special appreciation goes to all our donors for providing funding to enable AWDF to support the work of many women's 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 Dr. Awino Okech who conducted the thematic evaluation and Moiyattu Banya for producing this abridged version.

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