




# Catalyzing sustainable and just change through funding

**Overview and key recommendations from Climate Justice and Women's Rights: A Guide to Supporting Grassroots Women's Action**

 By responding to the climate solutions proposed by local women around the world, funders can catalyze long-term change that benefits the environment and entire communities.

## Key messages

- Small- and medium-sized investments in women-led efforts can have a sizeable impact on mitigating climate change and promoting women's rights, environmental justice and indigenous rights.
- Fostering collaboration among funders is critical to ensuring funding is efficient, timely and appropriate.
- Silos between environment, climate and women's rights funding should be broken down: approach issues from a community perspective instead.
- Supporting grassroots involvement in climate consultations on various levels is crucial to ensuring that their needs and preferences are reflected in climate policy and programming.
- Women face considerable risks in addressing climate change: adopt measures to ensure their security.

## The problem

Efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change that exclude women's input and perspectives are unsustainable and often detrimental to the environment, women's rights and entire communities. It is particularly unfortunate, then, that women are less likely than men to receive funding for climate-related initiatives. Compounding the problem is that most funders do not have adequate programs or systems in place to support women and their solutions for climate change at the grassroots. *That less than 1% of all worldwide grants go to projects at the intersection of women and climate is a clear reflection of this critical funding gap.*<sup>1</sup> By responding to the climate solutions proposed by local women around the world, funders can catalyze long-term change that benefits the environment and entire communities. For funding to realize these synergies, careful gender-responsive planning and implementation is needed.

<sup>1</sup> Data analyzed and provided by the Foundation Center July 2014 in conjunction with the International Network of Women's Funds and Global Greengrants Fund.

Historically, many environmental funders have not considered human rights to be within their grant-making scope. Similarly, many human rights funders have not considered the environment or climate change impacts to be within their grant making scope. However, Global Greengrants recognizes that the two areas are increasingly linked. For example, the more directly women are involved in climate change responses, the more likely they are to be targeted and subjected to human rights violations.

In many parts of the world, those involved in initiatives against environmental degradation, unsustainable development and related human rights violations are increasingly being harassed, targeted as criminals and/or killed. Women resource-rights defenders face greater risks than men because they may also be subjected to sexual assault and violence within their families and communities. This challenge is compounded by the fundamental lack of resources available from funders for addressing the human rights violations caused by climate change and defending the rights of the activists involved.

## **Evidence and experience**

Nearly 100 leaders and representatives from women's rights and environmental funds in 37 countries gathered at the Summit on Women and Climate in Bali, held in August 2014, by the Global Greengrants Fund, the International Network of Women's Funds and the Alliance of Funds (collectively representing \$30 million distributed across 3000 grants in 125 countries annually). Participants included both indigenous and non-indigenous women leaders from Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, North and South Americas, and Eastern Europe.

The gathering was an opportunity for fostering cross-collaboration and communication between the traditionally siloed women's rights and environmental movements. It was the first time that environmental and women's funding networks came together with women leaders, working at the grassroots, from around the world to gain a comprehensive understanding of women's contributions to climate change solutions and how to better support them.

*Climate Justice and Women's Rights: A Guide to Supporting Grassroots Women's Action* is a compilation of that sharing and deliberation, and includes key principles and lessons for grant makers that emerged at the summit. The eight case studies included in the publication reflect geographic and cultural diversity, and provide a range of approaches to addressing climate change, from community to engagement in local and national policy, to influencing industry, government and international bodies. Stories from projects in which women took leadership roles are emphasized in order to help inform grant-making strategies, techniques, and best practices for fostering women's leadership.

All of the case studies provide examples of how women are defending and advancing their land, resource and consultative rights with respect to climate change policies and programs. Each of the stories also clearly reflects the impact that small grants have made and lessons learned about small grant efficacy.

Using the lessons learned from the case studies, the publication provides concrete solutions to help funders ensure that the climate change work they support promotes women's agency, equality, physical security and well-being. It also offers guidance for funders supporting women's rights work in recognizing the impact climate change might have on women's rights activities.

## Recommendations

### **Break down silos between environment, climate and women's rights funding by approaching issues from a community perspective.**

- Bridge intersecting issue areas by supporting local causes and voices.
- Honor the expertise and struggles of local people by directly funding their work.
- Uncover potential donor alliances and better coordinate funding.
- Identify common values that inform effective collaboration.

### **Give small grants to catalyze action that will significantly impact women's rights and climate justice.**

- Be a flexible funder by developing a portfolio of new and emerging groups.
- Get critical, timely resources to nascent groups, with nominal application and reporting requirements.
- Minimize transaction costs by identifying and coordinating with funders and intermediaries that are specifically structured to work at the local level.
- Increase small funding incrementally as grantees grow in strength.

### **Support networking and information sharing between women at the grassroots.**

- Be aware that women often share knowledge, debate ideas or even mobilize action through informal associations and channels. Provide funding that gives them flexibility to propose and design their own mechanisms for exchange.

- Support gatherings by covering food, transportation and childcare costs.
- Put funding decisions in the hands of people who intimately understand local gender dynamics and networks.

### **Fund grassroots involvement in local, regional and national consultations on environmental and climate policy.**

- Support organizations with the capacity to connect grassroots leaders with policy makers and networks in which local voices are under-represented.
- Support training for local groups and organizations on national policy and its implications. Provide strategic analysis of key players and policy spaces.
- Fund follow up and monitoring after a policy decision.

### **Understand the considerable risks women face in addressing climate change and support actions to ensure their security.**

- Analyze the level of risk to activists in the groups you fund.
- Ensure your own organization has ethics protocols around the use of grantees' names and images.
- Help grantees develop security plans, media strategy, an urgent alert system and access to safe houses.
- Respond quickly and flexibly, funding both the work and the activists themselves (salaries, transportation and other expenses).

*Climate Justice and Women's Rights* is the first publication of its kind to feature case studies and practical steps for funders and policy makers to:

1. fund work at the intersection of climate justice and women's rights, and identify areas in which that funding is currently taking place;
2. honor how women's experiences influence grassroots climate justice funding;
3. deepen philanthropic practice and foster collaboration to get timely and appropriate funding to women and their communities;
4. bring women's voices into climate change policy discussions;
5. advocate for the strong impact small- and medium-sized grants can make in women-organized efforts to address climate change at the community level.

**Download the full report at**

WomenAndClimate.org or contact Global Greengrants at +303-939-9866 or [gender@greengrants.org](mailto:gender@greengrants.org).

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Terry Sunderland for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)  
Children in Cameroon de-shelling food.

This brief is number 6 in a set of Gender Climate Briefs.  
See the full set here: [CIFOR.org/gender-climate](http://CIFOR.org/gender-climate)



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