

OCTOBER 2024



Is Global Funding Reaching Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Local Community Women?



Introduction

Current [global-level analyses](#) quantifying and describing international donor trends show an increase in funding across geographies and [donor types](#) in support of IP, ADP, and LCs' forest and land tenure rights. However, these rightsholders' organizations received the equivalent of [less than one percent](#) of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for climate change and adaptation between 2011 and 2020. Moreover, the lack of gender-disaggregated data on international donor trends blurs information on the level of funding dedicated to gender equality and women's tenure rights.

Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women's organizations in the Global South require timely and consistent financial commitments to create transformative change. Yet, these groups remain severely underfunded. Data on [women's access to funding](#) is insufficient and inadequate, and it is virtually non-existent for Indigenous Peoples (IP), Afro-descendant Peoples (ADP), and local communities (LC) women's groups, organizations, and associations in the Global South. The lack of direct funding to women's organizations working at the community level is a barrier to ensuring women's roles as land and forest managers and defenders, food providers, and leaders of rural enterprises get the necessary support they need. Direct funding can help positively transform the gender-based and economic inequalities that constrain women's tenure rights and lock them out of decision-making processes at all levels.

In response to the dearth of data on funding for women and the need to support international advocacy for direct funding to IP, ADP, and LC women's organizations, the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) initiated a bottom-up research effort to build a baseline for measuring funding levels reaching community women on the ground and assess the extent to which existing grants and funding mechanisms are considered [fit-for-purpose](#) by recipient organizations. For the exploratory phase of this research, RRI invited the [Women in Global South Alliance \(WiGSA\)](#) to contribute and a total of 17 national and regional-level WiGSA member organizations participated. The research consisted of a literature review of over 40 online publications from ODA and philanthropic organizations on funding for climate change, gender equality, and sustainable development from 2016 to 2023; 8 in-depth interviews; a survey of 13 organizations; and a discussion session with 15 WiGSA members in 2024.

This brief presents the preliminary results of our research on this subject. It includes an exploratory analysis of the current state of global data on funding for IP, ADP, and LC women's groups and organizations and an examination of their strategies and journeys to acquire funding. The quantitative data presented here is indicative of the trends and key issues needing consideration in a future larger-scale study. The exploratory research phase will be complemented by an in-depth pilot analysis with three WiGSA organizations in 2025.

Current state of data on global funding for women

This section presents information from the literature review of over 40 online publications from ODA and philanthropic organizations.

Overall, investments in gender equality are on the decline and Indigenous and Black women's rights organizations are particularly marginalized. We found that the average ODA to women's rights organizations (WROs), women's movements, non-governmental organizations working on gender-related issues, and gender initiatives at the governmental level dropped by 2 percent from US\$891 million in 2019–2020 to US\$631 million in 2021–2022. When funding is reaching IP and Black women and rural communities, it is largely being channeled through the gender equality, human rights, and environmental program portfolios within donor agencies.

IFIP and FIMI (2024) report that between 2016 and 2020, around US\$28.5 billion was provided in grants to support women and girls. However, only 1.4 percent of this funding went to organizations working with Indigenous women. Not only is there a significant disparity in funding, but the grants awarded to these organizations were also relatively small; more than half of them received grants ranging from US\$25,000 to US\$75,000.

Black Feminist Fund (2023) reports that in 2018–2019, Black women, girls, and trans people received less than 0.5 percent of global foundation funding. There is very limited data on resources specifically aimed at Afro-descendant women. The report found that 53 percent of Black feminist groups globally lack funding for the next fiscal year, and 59 percent have never received core funding. Of the US\$511 billion allocated to Black communities worldwide, only 32.7 percent was directed toward Black women and girls.

In 2019–2020, ODA funding for gender equality reached US\$34 billion globally, but significant gaps remain: the overlap between ODA funding for gender equality and climate-related ODA was US\$18 billion, while the overlap between ODA funding for gender equality and biodiversity was just US\$491 million. Only US\$3.9 billion was allocated to addressing climate change, biodiversity, and gender equality together.

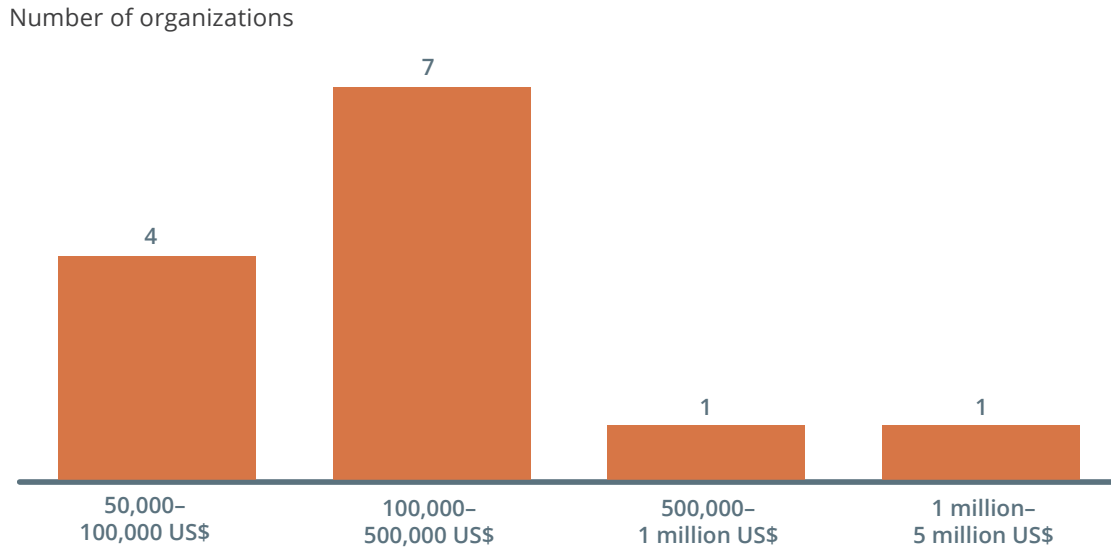
Funding reaching women in the Global South

In this section, you will find the results of an online survey in which 13 WiGSA organizations took part. Additionally, it includes the perspectives and experiences of 8 WiGSA organizations that were interviewed in 2024, reflecting on 2023 funding levels.

WiGSA is currently composed of 19 national and regional-level organizations: 8 are mixed organizations and 11 are women's organizations. Each WiGSA member represents a vast number of IP, ADP, and LC women's organizations, groups, and associations working at the regional, national, or local levels. Regional WiGSA members, although counted as a single member, are networks representing a range of 6–30 countries. National WiGSA members similarly represent dozens of local women's organizations or chapters. The 13 WiGSA members surveyed shows

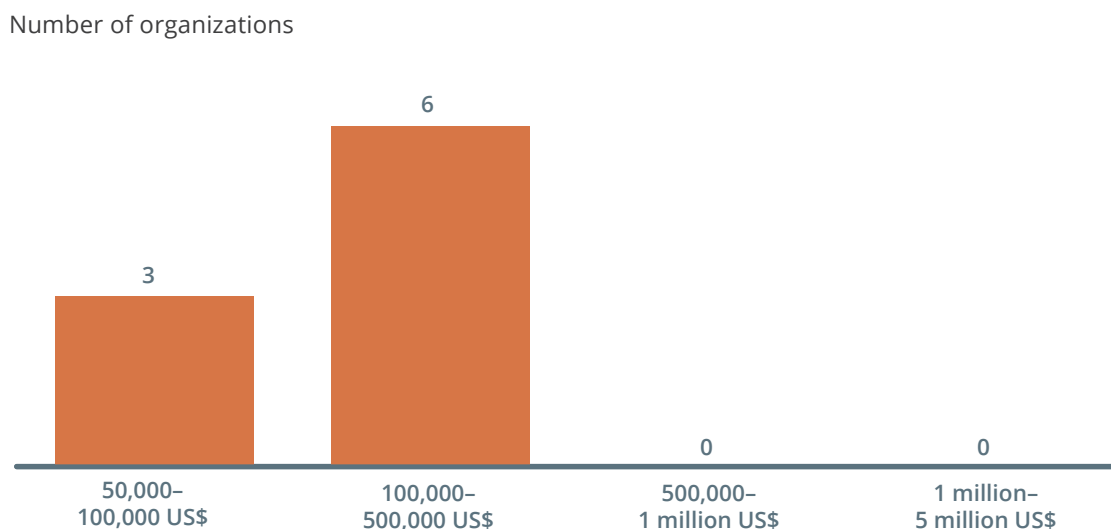
that seven (53.8 percent) had a 2023 annual budget of US\$100,000–US\$500,000, and very few reported budgets greater than US\$500,000 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual 2023 Budget for WiGSA Organizations



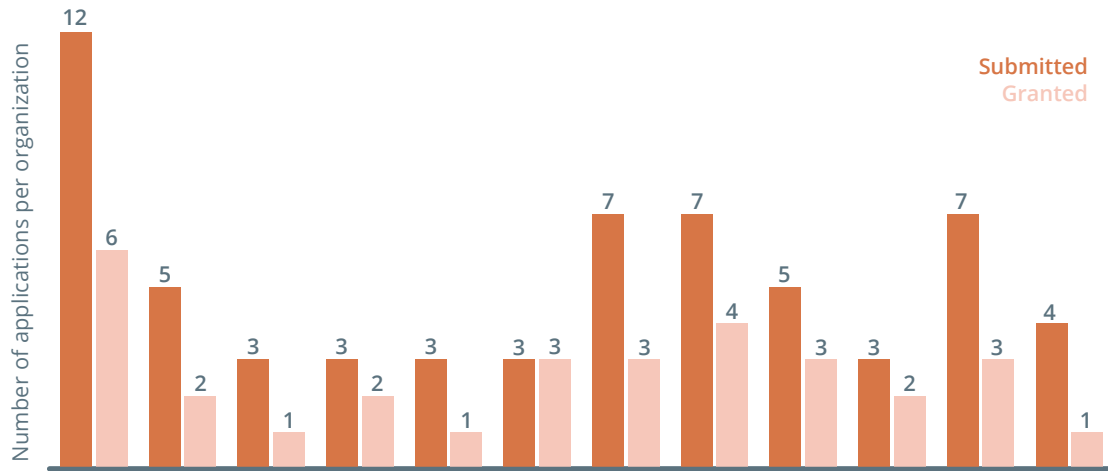
However, since some organizations surveyed were mixed organizations, further data analysis was developed to identify the level of funding allocated solely to women’s organizations. When mixed organizations are removed from the data, a closer look at the 2023 annual budgets shows that none of the women’s organizations surveyed reached a budget above US\$500,000 (Figure 2). Of note, these WROs include both national and regional-level women’s networks, showcasing that this budget range is the same even for women’s organizations working in several countries.

Figure 2. Annual 2023 Budget for WiGSA WROs



When looking at the amount of funding applications each individual organization submitted in 2023 (Figure 3), on average, the organizations surveyed submitted five applications and were granted three. Collectively, only 51.3 percent of the funding applications submitted by all organizations surveyed were granted.

Figure 3. Funding Applications Submitted and Granted in 2023

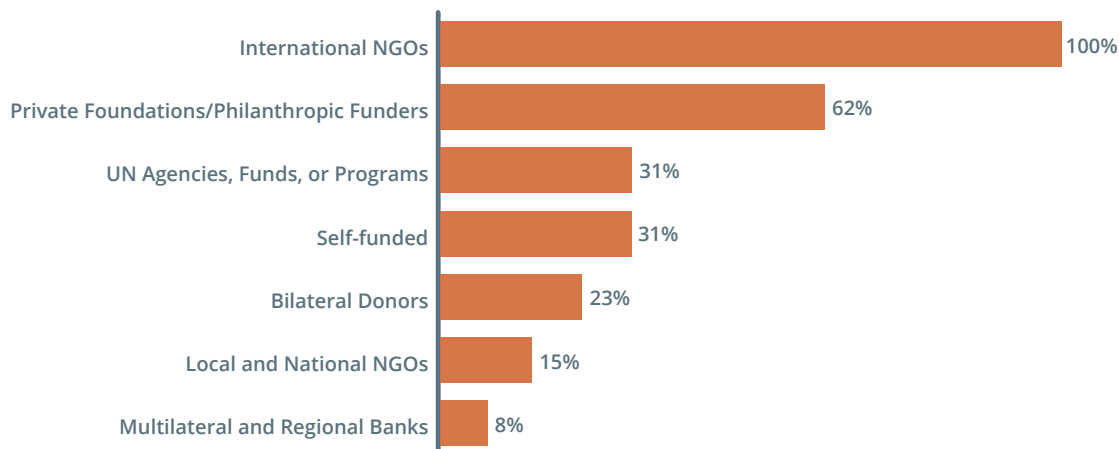


Note: Although 13 organizations were surveyed, one is removed from the data in Figure 3 as it did not specify the total number of applications submitted.

Those interviewed highlighted that advocacy, supported by organizational documentation and the publication of their work and data, were major components of their strategies to access funding. By advocating in different spaces, they become visible, allowing donors to know who they are, recognize their work and expertise, and increase the chances of establishing partnerships. Importantly, being part of networks and partnerships with allies was highlighted by all organizations as a way to strengthen access to funding. These partnerships help them become more visible to donors, build organizational capacity and relationships, and provide technical support in fulfilling strict donor requirements.

As of 2023, all organizations surveyed received funding from international NGOs, and a majority received funding from private foundations or philanthropic funders (Figure 4). None of the organizations reported receiving national-level government funding.

Figure 4. Funding Sources in 2023



Challenges

Some of the organizational challenges noted by the interviewees include i) the lack of staff needed to dedicate time to identifying fundraising opportunities; ii) organizational capacity; and iii) the availability of matching funds requested by some donors. Most of the WIGSA organizations are members of communities with invaluable knowledge of the key issues women and their communities face, but many lack the time and capacity needed to develop grant proposals and comply with bureaucratic requirements to meet funding criteria.

The lack of public and adequate information regarding calls for proposals from donors, short time frames given to fill out long or complex applications, and platforms available only in English were all described as external barriers to accessing funding. Funding applications that require a lot of time management or administrative capacity and have complex requirements (**commonly seen with bilateral donors**) limits the capacity of women's organizations working at the ground level to respond to the calls for proposals directly; instead, they must submit applications alongside other, larger NGOs that often take the bulk of the funding.

One structural barrier shared is the lack of knowledge on the part of donors of the contexts women's organizations work, such as members' lack of security in conflict areas; environmental changes; and the absence of land ownership leading to uncertain hectare figures, among others. In general, donors funding work in the climate change and conservation sectors tend to request hectare figures as an outcome in applications. However, this negates the structural barriers women often face accessing land and resources and is often not possible.

Stereotypes and biases against women still apply in the field of funding and in relationships with donors. It was reported that women also often face higher scrutiny and lower expectations in outcomes when compared with men-led organizations.

Recommendations to donors

- Adapt systems for calls for proposals to include different languages and adjust the timing of deadlines to ensure IP, ADP, and LC women's organizations have sufficient time to prepare.
- Create comprehensive strategic plans for developing trust and long-term relationships with women's organizations. Donors often employ a generalized approach to women in their calls for proposals, limiting IP, ADP, and LC women's opportunities to receive funding that responds to their unique circumstances.
- Focus on women-led organizations that are conducting work on the ground, not just those that already have the capacity to meet and respond to complex requirements.
- Provide funding support for proposal development to enable compliance with application formats and requirements.
- Permit the inclusion of administrative costs in grants and allow the allocation of funds to strengthen institutional capacity, including the cost of projects and/or institutional audit reports.
- Create more funding opportunities to address gender-based violence and protection, security, and safeguarding, particularly as they relate to IP, ADP, and LC women living in regions with internal conflict.
- Provide multi-year funding to women's organizations. Current trends in small-scale, short-term funding make it impossible for women to achieve the "big changes" expected by donors or to transform structural gender-based inequalities.
- Make direct funding more flexible. Some examples of what is meant by flexible funding include:
 - Adapts to the local contexts and particular needs and strategies that women's organizations develop at the ground level (not solely on donor priorities or themes);
 - Has alternative methods and timing of reporting, such as videos or meetings, if the administrative burden of submitting multiple written reports per year is too high; and
 - Funding that can be allocated to organizational processes, human resources, or administrative functions, such as audits.

Acknowledgments

This brief was authored by Omaira Bolaños and Lorene Moran-Valenzuela. It is a preliminary analysis of data collected during the first phase of ongoing scoping research by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) aimed at identifying the level of funding reaching Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women’s organizations in the Global South.

The following WiGSA organizations provided valuable knowledge and perspectives:

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP); La Asociación de Mujeres Afrodescendientes del Norte del Cauca (ASOM); Coalition des Femmes Leaders pour l’Environnement et le Développement Durable (CFLEDD); Coordinadora de Mujeres Líderes Territoriales de Mesoamérica (CMLTM); Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Bolivia (CNAMIB); Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas (CONAQ); Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA); Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN); Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI); Fundación Azúcar; National Indigenous Women’s Federation (NIWF); Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP); Association of Indigenous Women of the Archipelago (PEREMPUAN AMAN); La Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (Red MADD); Le Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour la Gestion Communautaire des Forêts (REFACOF); Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SESDev); Women Rights and Resource Network (WRRN).

Literature review, data collection, and analysis of qualitative data: Lizzette Soria and Militza Martinez

Survey analysis and compilation of sources and recommendations: Omaira Bolaños and Lorene Moran-Valenzuela

Brief editors: Nicole Harris and Madiha Waris

Design: Ashley Young for Publications Professionals

