

How Women's Funds strengthen environmental justice

Women's Funds are in a distinctive and strategic position to get money to the ground, especially to women otherwise overlooked. They are addressing both the climate crisis and women's rights around the world.

Women's Funds are foundations that raise money, provide flexible funding, and apply inclusive practices to support the collective and organised power of grassroots women, girls, and trans and intersex people around the world. The following table highlights learning from a series of interviews commissioned by Mama Cash on the environmental funding strategies of Women's Funds. Through the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) programme, women's funds have been building and adapting their portfolios and funding approaches, and developing new partnerships to address the climate crisis.

Around the globe women are at the forefront of addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation - designing, implementing, and scaling up their own solutions and holding authorities to account.
Photo courtesy of Both ENDS



How Women's Funds operate

They operate knowing that there is **no single solution to the climate crisis** in the diverse geographies and contexts in which they work. Therefore they directly find and **fund a diversity of women environmental defenders**, guided by their vision, values, mandate, and political analyses.

Why this is relevant to the climate crisis

Women's Funds can address the **differentiated impacts of the climate crisis** on women and other groups marginalised by gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation, etc. Given the scope, scale, and geographic specificity of the climate crisis, this is crucial.

What these solutions look like in practice

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) provides financial support and training to strengthen the capacities of more than 100 groups and organisations of women and LGBTI people annually.

Together with other women's funds in the region, FMS launched a World Water Day awareness campaign in 2017 called #LasMujeresSomosAgua (We Women Are Water) focused on raising awareness about women's role in searching for and distributing water in their communities across Latin America. This annual campaign is ongoing.

How Women's Funds operate

They focus on **power distribution**, particularly when it comes to land and natural resources.

They provide support and care with a **deep understanding** of the unique experiences of women, girls, and trans and intersex people's lived realities in the face of climate change.

They offer spaces for learning exchanges, fora, or convenings for grassroots women's **groups to come together** to learn from one another and join forces.

They broker connections to **promote women's visibility**, to ensure local partners are linked with needed resources.

Despite these powerful and effective examples, less than 1% of all international philanthropic funding goes to women's environmental action.*

Why this is relevant to the climate crisis

Women's Funds find and fund those whose lives and livelihoods are **directly threatened by extractive industries**, such as mining.

Women's Funds support **highly relevant interventions** (i.e. doing what is needed) by responding to the voices, needs, and priorities of those most affected by the climate crisis.

Women's Funds enable **collective action**, the only way to address the profound inequality at the root of the climate crisis and its varied impacts on different groups of women.

Women's Funds address underlying, systemic issues (patriarchy, racism, imperialism), which require **lobbying and advocacy** to shift policies, practices, and narratives.

* Source: Global Greengrants Fund and Prospera - International Network of Women's Funds' 2018 report titled, "Our Voices, Our Environment: The State of Funding for Women's Environmental Action."

What these solutions look like in practice

Fonds Pour les Femmes Congolaises (FFC), the Fund for Congolese Women, co-funded a national workshop held in Matadi, Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2017 for women living in communities adversely affected by the Inga Dam Hydropower projects. The workshop, organised by International Rivers, WoMin and the DRC-based Femmes Solidaires (FESO) and Solidarité Des Femmes Sur Le Fleuve Congo (SOFFLECO), initiated a women-led campaign to fight for these communities' social, economic, environmental and cultural rights.

FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund believes that young feminists are the experts in their own realities. Back in 2017, FRIDA launched a grant cycle to bring more dedicated resources to groups working on climate and environmental justice, and since then has continued to support groups doing this work. In 2018, FRIDA and the Young Feminists for Climate Justice Network produced the zine 'Rooted in Care: Sustaining Movements'. Activists targeted with repression have high rates of stress and burnout; the zine harnesses storytelling by young feminist climate activists to build resistance and resilient care practices by and for communities.

Save Lamu is a community-based umbrella organisation that brings together over 35 groups from across Lamu County, a small island off the northern coast of Kenya, to oppose the construction of a port and coal power plant. Supported by Urgent Action Fund-Africa and GAGGA partners WoMiN and Global Greengrants Fund, members of Save Lamu participated in exchange visits with women in Kitui, Kenya and in South Africa to learn about the implications of coal power plants, as well as joint advocacy for renewable energy.

Tewa, a women's community foundation in Nepal, supports women to organise, raise their voices collectively, and transform discriminatory policies, systems, norms and practices. For example, Tewa supports a network of nine of their grantee partner organisations in Dhanusha, called Janaki Mahila Sanjal. In addition to peer learning, Tewa connects them to different national level networks working on disaster preparedness in relation to climate change in the Terai region.