

Where To From Here?

Taking Stock: Trends, Takeaways, & Actions Impacting Funding Sources for Gender Justice

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Overview

The first half of 2026 has been characterized by numerous events of differing scope and size, with one key recurrent theme - what comes next for the feminist funding ecosystem in the face of shifting geopolitical and financing trends. Following events such as the [Commission on the Status of Women](#), the [Wilton Park Forum on Financing and Inequality](#), the [Skoll World Forum, Women Deliver](#), the [Fifth Feminist Foreign Policy Ministerial](#), the [Global Partnerships Conference](#), and many others, the Alliance for Feminist Movements (AFM) hosted a webinar asking panelists to make sense of these conversations, draw out key threads woven across these events, and chart a way forward. Through a series of introspective and reflective dyads our panelists explored the overarching trends across the feminist funding ecosystem, what these shifts mean for what can and should be salvaged, and what needs to be built as we imagine new futures.

The conversation explored four key topics through a series of engaging and provocative dyads:

1. Big Picture: Shifting Geopolitics, Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Opportunities for the Future

*Speakers: **Maliha Khan** (President & CEO, Women Deliver) and **Benjamin Overton** (Senior Project Manager, SEEK Development)*

2. Movement Consolidation: Autonomous and Alternative Resourcing

*Speakers: **Gopika Bashi** (Director of Programs, AWID) and **Tenzin Dolker** (Program Manager, Open Society Foundations)*

3. Innovative and Public Finance

*Speakers: **Roopa Hinton** (Senior Social Development Advisor, UK FCDO) and **Sandra Macias del Villar** (Co-Director, Alliance for Feminist Movements)*

4. Networks, Evidence, and Collective Response

*Speakers: **Katrina Anderson** (Director of Philanthropic Field Engagement, Global Philanthropic Project) and **Nyasha Musandu** (Communication Lead, Alliance for Feminist Movements)*

KEY THEMES

Treat the current funding changes as a systemic rupture, not just a budget shortfall. It requires us to let go of the old system, instead of salvaging it, and to build something new in its place.

Maliha Khan emphasised the importance of reframing the crisis, and fully understanding that the prevailing funding drop cannot be isolated from the larger collapse in democracy, public trust, and geopolitical stability happening around the funding crisis. We need to confront the fact that public trust in movements and institutions alike has eroded, and build strategies that account for this reality rather than ignoring it. She urged the sector to stop "romanticizing the past" and to let go of the post-colonial-era institutions that defined the last 60–70 years of aid, instead she encouraged us to move quickly from grief and querying to alignment and action. The newly launched [Melbourne Declaration](#) provides an example of an early attempt to set a political agenda for what comes next.



"Part of that alignment in action is to really ask ourselves the hard questions of what are we willing to let go of? Which institutions, which organizations, which processes? We cannot hold on to everything. Because without letting go of something, we will never be able to create the next thing."

- Maliha Khan
President & CEO, Women Deliver

Manage a just transition instead of simply reacting to the shock. Focus on redirecting ODA rather than abandoning it.

Benjamin Overton called for applying the climate movement's "just transition" framework to financing by protecting the most vulnerable groups deliberately during the shift, rather than letting the burden fall on those least equipped to absorb it. He also asked the audience to recognize that although ODA has dropped sharply in the past few years, it still sits near pre-COVID levels suggesting that we are still engaging in a prolonged "messy middle," rather than a post-ODA world. He urged the audience to consider how we navigate the "messy middle" while looking to a better future.

Even as ODA falls, it remains vital for country-level financing and must be protected in the short term while movements build medium- and long-term alternatives such as blended finance and regional funding. Ben suggested that ODA should be pushed toward what it does best: funding civil society, movements, debt relief, and climate loss-and-damage, while citizens need to shift accountability and hold their own governments responsible for services, instead of crediting distant donors. ODA should not substitute for private capital mobilization. Multiple panelists echoed the sentiment that ODA should not be abandoned but reformed: redirected toward debt relief, climate loss and damage, and reparative justice rather than the past model of donor-driven service delivery.



"You kind of need to think about the short, medium, and long all at once. It's messy, it's difficult, but we need to keep our eyes on all of them at the same time."

- Ben Overton
Senior Project Manager, SEEK Development

Use innovative finance to complement, not replace, public money.

Roopa Hinton described the Wilton Park *Catalysing Sustainable Finance for Gender and Equalities* convening's push to mobilize private capital (blended finance, gender bonds, outcome-based instruments), but framed this as fixing a systems failure in where money flows to, not a capital shortage. She described the FCDO's multi-year effort to mobilize private capital funding and high-net-worth individual giving toward gender equality, culminating in the Wilton Park convening co-hosted with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation.

Her central message was that innovative finance is not a panacea and should not substitute for ODA, which remains best suited to funding movements and civil society directly. The real opportunity lies in reframing gender inequality and shrinking civic space as material risks to finance and predictors of instability, and in building the bridging and buffering infrastructure, such as women's funds, that connect private capital to grassroots movements. Sandra Macías del Villar insisted that funders build complementarity across ODA, philanthropy, and private finance, and invest in translation and infrastructure so movements can actually use these tools, not just discuss them.



"[Our journey] started from the premise that there's plenty of money in the world, but it's not allocated to gender equality, or it's not reaching the groups that need it most and who are really driving change. The finance system is not set up to allocate finance to these issues. Essentially, this is a system failure."

- Roopa Hinton
Senior Social Development Advisor, UK FCDO

Protect movement autonomy before chasing new resourcing models.

Gopika Bashi and Tenzin Dolker warned against turning "autonomous resourcing" into a buzzword or a new funding condition. They cautioned that we should be mindful of not pressuring already-stretched movements to invent new income streams but rather, safeguard their ability to make independent political choices about money. Both panelists argued that the responsibility to preserve movement autonomy, share risk, invest in infrastructure, and resist the creeping financialization of civil society should shift back toward funders rather than expecting grassroots groups to independently invent new income-generation models.



"Funding is not the only thing that can change the world, but it shouldn't be complicit in reinforcing harmful power structures."

- Gopika Bashi
Director of Programs, AWID



"There are particular types of conversations that are happening in the funder space, and it's all about innovation and innovative financing and gender investments etc. And then on the other side, movements are having a different conversation, and so we really need to figure out a way to bridge these conversations together."

- Tenzin Dolker
Program Manager, Open Society Foundations

Confront the scale of anti-rights mobilization directly.

Katrina Anderson grounded the conversation in new data: [GPP's Global Resources Report](#) found that funding to LGBTI movements in the Global South and East fell 5% even before the 2025 funding crisis fully hit, and that just three anti-gender organizations now command a combined budget larger than all global LGBTI movement funding combined. Drawing on GPP's Mexico City convening and and Melbourne donor pre-conference co-organized with the AFM, she outlined four emerging directions:

1. Alternative/innovative resourcing,
2. Divesting from harmful technology toward regenerative infrastructure,
3. Horizon-scanning to monitor and counter coordinated anti-rights opposition.
4. Building a new media ecosystem that can respond effectively to countering disinformation.

She invoked the Greek myth of Typhon, a threat so dangerous it forced warring gods to unite, as the model for cross-movement funder solidarity now required.

Three concrete outcomes emerged from Melbourne:

1. Updating the evidence base on movement impact,
2. Shifting institutions and systems to embed feminist and LGBTI expertise in decision-making, and
3. Rebuilding a shared information ecosystem to counter disinformation.

Katrina called on us to redesign the system; not just reform it which can be done through redistributing risk toward those most targeted, and invest in shared infrastructure to track opposition and counter disinformation.



"We need to fund the connective tissue and the infrastructure that holds this whole ecosystem together."

- Katrina Anderson
Director of Philanthropic Field Engagement, Global Philanthropic Project

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-Sector Recommendations

1. **Break out of the single-issue echo chamber.** Gender-equality movements need to connect explicitly with labor, macroeconomic justice, debt, trade, and democracy movements rather than talking only to each other.
2. **Get comfortable with financial and technical language** (e.g., blended finance, gender bonds, outcome-based financing) to engage critically, without feeling obligated to fully adopt it.
3. **Build the evidence base showing cross-sector value** demonstrating how feminist and LGBTI movement work is already central to other outcomes such as climate, health, and democracy, and cultivate "credible messengers" to communicate this evidence base.

For Donors

1. **Redistribute and take on more risk, especially easing the burden of risk from the most targeted movements and communities,** including funding movement infrastructure that protects criminalized groups, rather than defaulting to risk-averse postures.
2. **Fund the "connective tissue," not just individual organizations.** Use the connective tissue to coordinate across institutions and agree collectively on strategies to reach the most marginalized groups.
3. **Redirect ODA to what it does best:** financing civil society and movement funding, debt relief, and climate loss-and-damage, rather than trying to make it substitute for private capital mobilization.

4. **Invest in evidence, narrative, and information infrastructure.** Updating the evidence base on movement impact and investing in shared anti-disinformation and media infrastructure across movements.
5. **Resource movements to lead their own transformation rather than prescribing solutions.** Allowing movements to define their own strategies instead of letting new ideas become new conditionalities for funding.
6. **Support translation and bridging capacity.** Invest in the intermediaries, especially women's and feminist funds, that can "bridge and buffer" between complex financial instruments and grassroots movements.
7. **Be willing to test, pilot, and fail** as part of building new resourcing models.

For Movement Actors

1. **Get strategic, not exhaustive.** Movements should deliberately decide who to approach, for what, and through which mechanism, without being pressured into trying to secure funding "from as many modalities as possible", even when they are not aligned with their work.
2. **Start with one manageable step, not an overhaul.** Figure out the single best-fit modality for your organization rather than trying to master the entire finance landscape at once.
3. **Ask existing funders direct questions** about how they can keep supporting you, even if their own resources are shrinking, rather than assuming you must find entirely new funders.
4. **Treat resourcing as a core strategy**, not an afterthought. Tie funding decisions to your organizing mission.
5. **Document and learn from what already exists** rather than reinventing resourcing models from scratch.¹
6. **Be clear-eyed about red lines.** Decide collectively which institutions, funding sources, or partnerships are acceptable and which are not, especially as private capital becomes more embedded in the sector.

The Alliance for Feminist Movements (AFM) is a collaborative effort between governments, private philanthropy, women's and feminist funds, civil society organizations, and other allies working together to ensure that feminist movements thrive and are abundantly resourced. We simplify and make more accessible how funding systems work for those working toward gender equality and social justice. Together with movements and funders, we explore where resources come from, how they flow, and what opportunities exist to better support this transformative work.

¹ Some resources include: [Fòs Feminista: Building Feminist Financial Infrastructure](#) and [A Blueprint for Women's Funds Using Finance as a Tool for Social Change](#)