



Feminist Funding in a Post-ODA Era

Reimagining Aid's Architecture

By Beth Woroniuk, FFPC Senior Fellow

Introduction

2025 saw a [massive drop](#) in Official Development Assistance (ODA) of almost a quarter and the [OECD](#) projects a further drop of 6.9% in 2026. This will mark the third consecutive year of decline, bringing ODA to its lowest level since 2014.

Yet more challenges plague the ODA system than just declining investments. The whole system faces critiques from multiple sides. Some say it is an outdated colonial legacy that serves few in the Global Majority World. Many in Global Minority countries say funds could be better spent at home.

It is a moment of disruption, change, and uncertainty prompting discussions around what many are calling the 'post-ODA world.' The assumption underlying the '[post-ODA world](#)' descriptor is that the old model is dead or dying and there is a need to rethink, renegotiate, and rebuild a new infrastructure and decision-making process. Multiple global discussions exploring what comes next with governments, think tanks, UN entities, and academics all contributing are happening simultaneously and, at times, independently.



The discussions and forums looking at where next for ODA include ODI's [Donors in a Post-ODA World](#) initiative, the [Future of Development Cooperation Coalition](#) (launched at the 2025 Financing for Development IV conference and scheduled to deliver a report by the end of 2026), the World Economic Forum's Global Council on [Re-imagining Aid](#), reform of the [Development Assistance Committee](#), and the [Accra Reset](#) (a Head-of-State-anchored platform working to retool how development co-operation functions). As well, there is a Coalition to build new approaches to [financing global challenges](#), a new German-led [South-North Commission](#), and groupings of UN Member States considering development [effectiveness](#) and country-led development. In May the UK government hosted, along with South Africa, a [Global Partnerships Conference](#), which also addressed many of these issues. Think tanks, like the [Centre for Global Development](#), are also contributing to the debate. And private philanthropy is also engaging through initiatives such as the [Funders' Roundtable on the Future of Development](#).

Some of the themes of these discussions include:

- What would a system that is more democratic, more equal, and more effective look like (with Global Majority governments setting the agenda)?
- How can those affected by core challenges drive the implementation of solutions?
- How do we engage multiple instruments beyond ODA, including trade, investment, private finance, to achieve a more coherent system?
- How can the multilateral system be rebuilt for our current era?
- How can new forms of financing be mobilized?

What would a more coherent and efficient system look like, including better tracking systems?

Feminist advocates and feminist analysis have been missing from these discussions even though feminists have longstanding comprehensive and nuanced [critiques](#) of the global economic system and its failure to deliver peace, justice, and a liveable planet.

In order to bring these critical feminist analyses to the ‘post-ODA world’ discussions and spark discussions on where next for ODA, the [Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative](#) (FFPC), the [Alliance for Feminist Movements](#) (AFM), [Prospera – International Network of Women’s and Feminist Funds](#), and [Walking the Talk](#)/Hivos sponsored a panel discussion at the AFM’s Resourcing Hub at Women Deliver.¹

The moderator, **Beth Woroniuk** (FFPC Senior Fellow and Prospera Advisor), was joined by [Benjamin Overton](#) ([SEEK Development](#)), [Fadekemi Akinfaderin](#) ([Fòs Feminista](#)) and **Alison McLachlan**, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch, [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#), Government of Australia.

KEY THEMES

ODA isn’t dead yet and – among other things – it still plays an important role in resourcing feminist movements.

Panelists agreed that we’re not yet in a post-ODA world and there are many strands of ODA that are worth fighting for and defending.

- Alison provided an example of how ODA is being mobilized to resource women’s movements through Accelerating Investments in Women’s Rights, an Australian initiative to increase funding for a group of women’s funds in Asia and the Pacific.
- Going forward, ODA funding for advocacy will be crucial in order to support feminist efforts to strengthen accountability as new structures are built.
- The panelists noted the challenges of defending ODA (and investments for feminist programming) in the current moment, given the growing critiques of ODA in global minority countries.

¹ The AFM’s Resourcing Hub created a space within the Women Deliver conference to explore and debate issues related to financing feminist movements and resourcing gender equality more generally.



"I don't think ODA is dead, but I do think we need to continue to do advocacy - not just in terms of the quantity of funding going to feminist movements, but also the quality. I also think it's extremely important for us to look at how we are building people power to be able to ensure accountability for ODA, especially in the Global Minority World."

- Kemi Akinfaderin



"ODA is still a very important piece of the fiscal space of financing, development, and feminist work, especially in many lower and middle income countries."

- Ben Overton

Yet there are many feminist critiques of the current ODA structure.

Panelists noted worrying trends, including new proposed [MOUs between the US government and specific countries](#) that are entrenching colonial structures. Kemi argued that it is time to move to a focus on ODA as reparations. Ben noted that there are challenges in how gender equality ODA is classified and reported, urging an upgrading of the official definitions and practices.

Advocacy to build a system that better supports feminist movements and goals is both necessary and challenging.

Panelists noted numerous discussions that are important in the current moment: reform of the multilateral development banks, global tax discussions, etc.

They noted various success factors:

- Coalitions are required, both cross-movement and cross-actor solidarity. Feminist advocates can work in conjunction with allies in philanthropy and in governments.
- There were calls for more engagement by feminist activists, across the full range of financing for development issues: trade, tax, reform of the global financial architecture, mobilizing private sector financing, etc.

“There are amazing feminists working on trade issues... but there needs to be more of us engaging in these conversations, especially those of us working on social issues.”

–Kemi

- It will be important to tap into new forms of expertise. Some of these are not traditional feminist strengths, however there is a long history of feminist economic analysis that can be used.
- We need to pay particular attention to language and narratives. The panelists spoke of ‘code switching’ or using the language, vocabulary, and key words that dominate specific organizations. Allies can play the role of interpreter, helping to bridge gaps.



“Stories on what feminist funding achieves (including funding through women’s funds) are important to translate into the current goals of organizations (like local development, reaching the most marginalized, etc.)”

- Alison McLachlan

- Efforts to strengthen reporting and accountability for gender equality ODA are important.



“It’s an opportune time to rethink some of the rules around how gender equality ODA is classified and targeted.”

– Ben

- Will governments and philanthropy be willing to fund both advocacy work and pilots that explore new ways of working (and resourcing feminist movements) in this time of disruption?

“I have to use the language that my organization understands to help them buy into the importance of the work that women’s funds are doing.”

– Alison

Going forward, it’s crucial to remember that ODA is just one piece of the international financial system and one possibility to finance feminist movements.

In addition to the traditional advocacy around ‘more and better’ funding for feminist movements, there was a call for advocates to expand their focus and explore new ways of resourcing feminist activists.



We’ve faced a major shock to development assistance. That’s led us to realize that ODA is an important piece of the puzzle for financing feminist movements and overall development work. However it’s just one piece in the puzzle. It’s just one tool, among many other tools we can use.”

- Ben



"There is still ODA. It has such an important role, but it needs to catalyze other funding that is less constrained than what a government donor can provide."

- Alison



"Where are the opportunities to come together and start to build that in-house capacity... so that we can really have enough promising examples that when things turn around, we can really take off, go flying, and take things to scale?"

- Kemi

WHERE NEXT?

Panelists pointed out that there is much to build on when bringing feminist perspectives to the ODA discussions. Feminist economists have been working through critiques of mainstream [economics](#) for decades, highlighting biases in basic assumptions, failures to measure and account for key elements like unpaid care work and clean water, and the inadequacies of many [economic measures](#) including GDP. [Activists](#) point to the failure of current systems to deliver peace, equality, justice, and a sustainable planet.

As well, [ODA](#) has played an important role in financing gender equality more broadly as well as resourcing women's and feminist movements. It is important to bring these insights into any restructuring debates. As long as the 'post-ODA discussions' are seen primarily as state-to-state conversations, feminist voices will be pushed to the sidelines. It's time to bring them to the front.

The FFPC, Prospera, and the AFM will be exploring these issues in the months ahead. This panel was just one step in ensuring that voices that value gender justice are not invisible in these key discussions.