

Weaving Systemic Alternatives from the Global South GTA/EDGE Webinar

Call to action (Marta Music)

What can funders do to better support systemic alternatives from the Global South and movement building processes?

This ties into two major questions: *who/what* are we funding and *how* are we funding it?

According to the poll, **the majority of respondents already fund systemic alternatives from the Global South.**

However, instead of thinking of the Global South only in geographical terms, let us try to think about the Global South as the subaltern segments in all societies. In other words, I would be curious to know, amongst the systemic alternatives from the geographical Global South that you are funding, **how much money actually goes into supporting young feminists, indigenous communities, people of colour, trans and intersex folks or sex workers?**

A report recently published by AWID called “Where is the Money for Feminist Organizing?” (<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/where-money-feminist-organising-new-analysis-finds-answer-alarming>) shows that in 2017-18, 99% of development aid and foundation grants still do not directly reach women’s rights and feminist organizations. And **only 0.42% of foundation grants are allocated towards women’s rights.**

We need to do better. Especially considering the billions of dollars that far-right, anti-gender groups are receiving each year.

Looking more at what we are funding, **72% of respondents support processes of movement building and not just projects, and 64 % of the partners you support are connected to a broader movement.**

However, there is still a long way to go. What about the rest of philanthropic organizations that are not present in this webinar?

We have to remember that alternatives emerging from the struggles of marginalized groups from the Global South are being **actively silenced and invilized** by the system’s mechanisms of erasure. Which is why we have to **invest more time, energy and resources into our outreach work.** We have to be more **intentional about how we prioritize more marginalized and less-funded groups from the Global South.**

Supporting movement building processes does not necessarily mean funding more processes of articulation of alternatives like the GTA, it means **allocating funding to groups that do not have the opportunities of being connected to a broader movement** and cannot afford to participate in spaces of mutual exchange, learning and collaboration that we are organizing, because they are busy surviving in their territories.

Our outreach work is tied to the issue of accessibility (of our language and our funding). Grassroots organizers taking part in building systemic alternatives don't speak the development and philanthropic jargons we do (they might not even describe themselves as working on systemic alternatives). So we have to **adapt our language** as much as possible to be more accessible.

Regarding funding, the **bureaucratic restrictions imposed by donors is a huge challenge in accessing funding** (such requirements on being officially registered and having multi-year experience on project and budget management - which marginalized and less funded groups in the Global South often do not have the conditions to meet).

Those requirements from donors **reinforce processes of NGO-ization** and they **fuel competition over funding** and division among social justice movement actors (both of which are detrimental to movement building purposes).

However, these are things that we can change very easily. It doesn't take much to **simplify the application requirements and reporting forms and decrease bureaucratic processes to a minimum.**

Better supporting systemic alternatives from the Global South also means **reflecting on our grantmaking practices**, and making them **more flexible, more responsive, and above all, more participatory.** You can **invest in participatory grant-making models**, whereby applicants themselves make decisions on where and to whom the money will go. **Giving up that decision-making power enables grantmaking to be more relevant to ongoing movement needs**, and it's a great exercise of sharing power in the redistribution of resources.

Since we are on the topic of funding, only **38 % of respondents said that they fund multi-year/ long term funding for radical transformation.**

Movement building requires core, flexible and unrestricted funding. We need to build multi-year partnerships that allow long-term planning and strategic work to be done.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also shown that **better money means less rigidity** in grantmaking, as we have seen movement priorities shift very fast to respond to the crisis.

While all of those changes seem a bit daunting, remember that we don't have to reinvent the wheel and that many organizations are already functioning in a supportive, flexible, participatory accessible way.

This is the case for example of **FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund** which is funding young women, girls, trans and intersex youth in the Global South. **They have a participatory grant-making process, they do community consultations on important organizational processes, they operate in 7 different languages, they offer core flexible funding to grantee partners who don't need to be legally registered in the country where they operate.** This is why we need to explore, listen, learn from and support those alternatives within philanthropy itself.

And we have to simultaneously advocate in less progressive philanthropic spaces for more funding to be re-directed towards systemic alternatives from the Global South.

In this webinar, we are supposed to call for increased support for movement building, systemic alternatives in the Global South and the work of processes articulating them like the GTA.

However, **this goes hand in hand with an invitation to also look inward**, because who and what we fund and how we are funding is intrinsically related to the **internal practices, organizational cultures and the structures under which we operate in organizations of the progressive philanthropic and development sectors.**

We all **reproduce internally (whether unconsciously or unwillingly) the same dynamics and structures of oppressions that we are trying to fight against externally.** We all struggle with issues related to productivism, racism, exploitation, hierarchy, ableism, sexism amongst others, in the workplace.

But how can we fund systemic alternatives and not centre labour rights, collective well-being and care in our own workplaces? How can we fund systemic alternatives without systems and structures in place that strive to be intersectional, feminist and decolonial?

These are contradictions we have to keep on addressing.

Yes, foundations are formally registered institutions under some Not-For-Profits Laws, and you probably operate within legal structures that force you to have certain by-laws, a Board of Directors and other non-feminist, non-systemic alternatives things.

But **this does not mean we cannot navigate the frameworks of capitalist institutional**ity, and strive to become more politically coherent between our values and our practices, between what we preach and what we actually do, between the external images we are projecting and the internal state of our organizations.

And this matters not just for the **political legitimacy of our work**, it also matters if we want to ensure the long-term sustainability of our organizations and the people within them - and all the while safeguarding the radical ideal that we can indeed prefigure the alternative worlds we are fighting for.

And you can't get better than that in terms of systemic alternatives.

Thank you.