

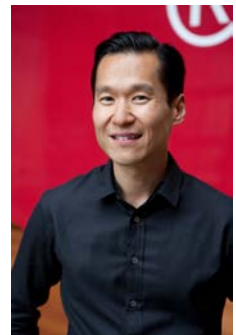
Human Rights Funders, Rejoice – We’re On the Map:
Three Views on IHRFG’s New Research

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Now That We’re “Canon”: Three Ways to Advance Human Rights Philanthropy

By Daniel Jae-Won Lee
Executive Director, Levi Strauss Foundation

For better or worse, the field of philanthropy is inundated with reports. My swelling “to-read” pile is the root cause of seemingly intractable clutter in my office. Amid this cacophony, [*Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking*](#) warrants our attention. On its part, the International Human Rights Funders Group deserves kudos for culling rich insights from wide-ranging interviews with members from nine countries.



It’s significant, as well, that the Foundation Center co-authored the report, its first-ever in-depth look at the topic of global human rights. As the go-to clearinghouse for information about philanthropy, the Foundation Center tracks trends and makes new knowledge visible, literally and figuratively putting grants data on the map. You might even say that funders look to the Foundation Center to discern what’s “canon” in institutional philanthropic funding flows.

Human rights funders, rejoice – we’re on the map.

Some of you will recall the Foundation Center’s groundbreaking survey [*Social Justice Grantmaking: A Report on Foundation Trends*](#), released eight years ago (not to mention the incisive second edition in 2009). Whether by coincidence or correlation, its publication heralded a period of substantial growth for the field of social justice philanthropy, climbing to nearly 15 percent of all institutional giving. More important, it served as a touchstone for vigorous dialogue and nimble collaboration among foundations – even luring new players to the table.

As the ink dries on *Advancing Human Rights*, how can we spur a similar ripple effect for the field of human rights philanthropy? Here are my initial thoughts – and let’s borrow from the metaphorical trove of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights movement:

1. Help peers out of the closet. *Advancing Human Rights* identifies a swath of funders making grants that fall within the report’s definition of human rights but do not categorize their work as human rights philanthropy (many explicitly embrace “access to” approaches that go far beyond service delivery in

such realms as health and education). Curiously, this includes six of the top fifteen funders – all based in the United States – that are featured in the survey.

It is time for more seasoned funders to share lessons from their institutions on “making the case” for a rights-based approach. What arguments or illustrations can convince trustees, donors, executives, and fellow staff members? What tools can we share to make human rights funding accessible — and not the hallowed (and isolated) terrain of experts?

2. Let’s be “out, loud, and proud” on impact. *Advancing Human Rights* underscores the need for bold grantmaking that bolsters local advocacy and organizing – and, moreover, for broadened general operating and multiyear support. This echoes the call to action of the U.S.-based National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy, a sector “watchdog” that aims to represent the best thinking of the nonprofit sector and social justice leaders.

Stark fault lines separate those funders who do and do not embrace these perspectives. Vigorous action to demonstrate the value proposition of investing in advocacy – and illuminate its “life cycle” of impact over time – is sorely needed. Within our grant portfolios and databases resides a wealth of data and narratives that will help cement this case. What are the big wins, the intermediate wins – and, for that matter, the setbacks and upshots? How do strategies like policy advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement collude to foster “perfect storms” of social change?

Many of us know instinctively that investing in the grassroots is a powerful and durable strategy. If we’d like to see more flows of general and multiyear support for advocacy, it is incumbent upon us to provide convincing evidence. In a provocative report, *Leveraging Limited Dollars*, NCRP calculated a \$115 return in community benefit for every \$1 invested in policy and civic engagement in the United States. Let’s join this conversation with examples from the global front.

3. Convey “positive” human rights stories. As *Advancing Human Rights* notes, clear public messaging is critical to build a moral and political consensus for human rights on the grassroots, national, regional and global levels. But this field faces a vexing challenge: people tend to notice human rights only in their absence. In other words, communicating about human rights can seem a rather morbid affair – as appealing as chasing ambulances.

Shedding light on egregious abuses will always remain a crux part of the human rights agenda. On the other hand, narratives of human possibility and courage – whether of affected communities or defenders – can powerfully influence hearts and minds. What’s the positive value to society of human rights movements, mechanisms, and wins? How can we use new tools of technology and media to “color in the faces” of those bearing the brunt of stigma and discrimination? How can we make winning cases for values like participation, non-discrimination and access to justice?

No doubt, the global human rights movement is a powerful shaper of the energy and events of our time. *Advancing Human Rights* sets the stage for funders to deepen our commitment to bolster

pioneering advocacy – and cues the spotlight for the sector of human rights philanthropy to take center stage.

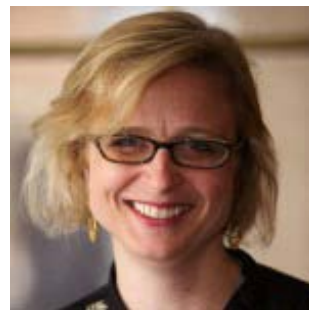
Daniel Jae-Won Lee is the executive director of the Levi Strauss Foundation, an independent private foundation that conveys the pioneering spirit and enduring values of Levi Strauss & Co.: originality, empathy, integrity and courage. He leads the foundation's international grantmaking in four areas: confronting HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination, advancing worker rights in the apparel industry, helping low-income people save and invest in their futures, and advancing social justice.

IHRFG Holds Up a Map That Is a Mirror

By Kate Kroeger

Executive Director, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

I have always loved maps. As a young girl, I would spend hours staring at the maps of the world hanging on the walls of my classrooms, absorbing the contours of each continent and the oceans in between. The obsession has been a lasting one, staying with me as I have traveled to places near and far. So when the [Foundation Center](#) and the [International Human Rights Funders Group](#) published [Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking](#), I was immediately drawn to it: opening it right up to the map at its center.



What I found was a fascinating snapshot of the ways in which, as funders, we are spending our resources around the world. Marking the continents is a total of \$1.2 billion in foundation grants to advance human rights globally. Maps tell us stories as much as they tell us longitudes and latitudes. Often, stories about power and politics: whose place names get used, which way is “up”, which towns and cities get listed and which do not, how the borders get drawn. Whenever we see a map, its helpful to ask what is included and what is not. Beyond the numbers, what does this map show us? And what can't it show us? First, it shows us:

- **We're thinking globally.**

This map paints a global picture. Despite interviewing funders primarily based in one country, the United States, we learn that 31% of grant recipients are based outside the United States and 46% of grants supported international work.

- **We see a role for human rights foundations in shaping policy solutions.**

The report notes that advocacy has become a greater part of several funders' work. This is an important development. As funders we can use our voices and our collective weight to shape the policy priorities of our own governments, who in turn play a significant role in being able to influence the governments where our grantees live and work.

- **We're connecting to the right people.**

We cannot do our work well without the participation, indeed the leadership, of the activists our funding supports. The report tells us that funders are working with indigenous people, sex workers, ethnic and racial minorities, the poor, migrants, people with disabilities, LGBT people, victims of violence, women and girls. These are the communities most affected by structural inequality and restrictions on human rights.

So, what stories don't we hear? For one, this map cannot show us whether the data it provides is an accurate reflection of the human rights challenges facing the world. In other words, it shows us the landscape of (proposed) solutions but not necessarily the problems.

If someone with no knowledge of human rights were to look at this report, and assume that donors must be directing the greatest share of funding to the most important problems, they could reasonably conclude that the personal liberty and security of individuals in the United States is the most important human rights issue of our time. If we think that it is not, then it might be time to listen more closely to what we are hearing from the grassroots, and to think again about where, and how, we direct our dollars.

Recently, in Tunisia, I had the chance to reflect on the value of listening. The value of a funder listening to grantees. The value of human rights activists listening to one another. Feminists from across North Africa and the Middle East gathered for a day to share their experiences of participating in the revolutions of their countries and to assess the impact of political change on women's rights. Activists from Syria listened to the counsel of their sisters in Tunisia that the call for change should not come at the expense of their freedom and that they must choose their alliances carefully. Older women in the movement heard from their younger counterparts that priorities are changing for young feminists. Through the act of listening, they made space for the greater inclusion of new voices. And straight women heard from LGBT activists in the room about the indivisibility of the struggle for equal rights. As [Urgent Action Fund](#) supported this convening, I listened in order to learn and to identify the strategic opportunities where our grants could make a difference. The eight hours I spent with those activists changed in fundamental and profound ways the map of Urgent Action Fund's own priorities in the region and brought it into better alignment with the voices of the women's human rights defenders we support.

The IHRFG map is a mirror that reflects back to us the form and content of our collective work. Let's look closely and honestly into that mirror and use it as a starting point for moving in a direction that represents the collective aspirations of funders and activists working for a better world, around the world.

Kate began her work with Urgent Action Fund in August of 2012, after admiring the organization from afar for many years. Her experience with grassroots grantmaking at American Jewish World Service and NetAid, combined with her knowledge of human rights and passion for feminism have made UAF the perfect home for Kate's ongoing activism.

Ants in the Kitchen: The Role of Data in Human Rights Funding

By Caitlin Stanton

Director of Learning & Partnerships, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

A professor at Vanderbilt University, Brooke Ackerly, once told me, “Numbers matter. If someone tells you there are ants in your kitchen, you will want to know whether there are two ants in your kitchen or whether there are TWO MILLION ANTS IN YOUR KITCHEN.” And if there are anywhere near two million ants in your kitchen, then your neighbors will also want to know about it. Transparently sharing quantitative data helps us understand the scope of a problem, decide how to gauge the scale of our response, and allows others to learn from our efforts.



In [*Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking*](#), the Foundation Center and the International Human Rights Funder’s Group collect, analyze, and publicly share quantitative data that tell us about the scale of our response to human rights violations. The report finds that foundation grantmaking to address these issues occurs on a global scale and is a widespread practice, with 703 foundations giving a total of \$1.2 billion in grants for human rights causes in 2010.

For many of us in the field of human rights grantmaking, and particularly within foundations that work to advance the rights of women and girls, the startlingly low amount of funding going to address the issue of freedom from violence stands out as an important finding from the report.

Funding to secure freedom from violence accounts for just 4 percent of the total grantmaking by human rights funders included in the study. Even within that issue, the largest chunk of grant money goes to addressing freedom from torture, a significant issue to be sure, but one that impacts a relatively small number of individuals compared to the one billion women and girls who face violence based on their gender. In fact, the report finds that in 2010, just \$5.3 million was directed to the issue of domestic violence and another \$8.6 million to the issue of gender or identity-based violence. Combined, these would account for only about 1 percent of all of the \$1.2 billion in grants included in the study.

This data helps us identify issues, like that of gender-based violence, where the scope of the problem may not align with the scale of the response. In terms of the scope of the problem, we know that approximately one out of every three women and girls around the world have their right to freedom from violence violated because of their gender – they experience assault, rape, abuse, and even murder. We know that beyond being a human rights violation, this violence costs societies billions (\$5.8 billion annually in the US alone, according to the CDC) in lost worker productivity, public health implications, and costs associated with legal and social services.

Any way you look at it, violence against women is a major roadblock to economic and social progress *and* a human rights violation. When we compare the scope of the problem to the scale of the response, this data is telling us that we are responding to a two million ant problem with a two ant solution. However, where grantmaking on freedom from violence is happening, there are innovative efforts to integrate grantmaking, field-building and advocacy strategies for greater impact. Recently, three examples stood out to me:

In the city of Chicago, one-third of all crimes reported are domestic violence related. The [Chicago Foundation for Women's](#) Freedom from Violence initiative includes grantmaking, policy advocacy and capacity building strategies. An Advocacy Academy and Executive Directors Roundtable also support local nonprofits working for the right to live free from violence.

[Global Fund for Women](#) has funded organizations that helped to achieve stronger legislation on violence against women and girls in 25 countries, including the Philippines, Bulgaria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mongolia, and Georgia among others. Last fall it looked for ways to raise its own voice on this issue, and worked with a coalition of 17 other women's funds to [bring a petition to the Council of Europe](#) in support of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention - a framework to prevent, stop, and sanction the crime of violence against women.

The Open Society Foundations have directed grantmaking toward freedom from violence but also used their website as a platform to share grantee's stories and to raise awareness of campaigns on this issue. Most recently, the OSF Moving Walls exhibit has included the [stories of domestic violence survivors from South Africa](#).

Data can tell us a lot; revealing challenges and the action we've taken -- or failed to take -- to solve those problems. Stories from funders that work to secure freedom from violence adds another layer. A sense of what might be possible. Hopefully, these examples are just a beginning. A beginning of a wave of grantmakers, ready not only to fund but to raise our own voices on this issue.

Caitlin Stanton is the Director of Learning & Partnerships at Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights. Previously, she was the Senior Program Officer for Learning & Evaluation at the Global Fund for Women.