



**SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NEW YORK CITY
JULY 17-18, 2012**

ASIA AND PACIFIC FUNDERS WORKING GROUP

Wednesday, July 18, 2012
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Session Organizers:

- Billie Goodman, Program Officer, American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
- Javid Syed, Senior Program Officer, American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

Guest Speakers:

- Ramy Chan, Coordinator, Extractive Industry and Climate Change Unit, Youth Resource Development Program (Cambodia)
- Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, Executive Director, Equal Ground (Sri Lanka)

This meeting explored the question “Does supporting direct service work fit within your strategies as a human rights funder?”

Participants differentiated between direct service work that contributes to structural change and direct service work that only addresses urgent needs.

The Global Fund for Women thinks considers the long-term intent of the group. They have funded organizations whose work starts as entirely direct service, with the intent of gaining the skills necessary to engage in advocacy. Direct service can be an entry point for organizing and advocacy.

Participants discussed what questions funders can ask that get at whether a group’s long-term vision includes strategies aimed at structural change.

- What other groups does the organization collaborate with?

One participant questioned whether self-help groups could be considered human rights work and stated that they could be, as they can create a safe space for convening where there are no other safe spaces available.

Direct service work can be:

- A starting point for an organization to later engage in advocacy and organizing
- A cover for riskier or more political work
- A means to collect critical data that can later support advocacy efforts by another organization

One strategy if your foundation doesn’t support service is not to directly fund the service-oriented group that is collecting data, but find another funder to support that group so that the groups you do fund can utilize that data within their advocacy efforts.

One challenge that one funder mentioned is that almost all of the funding it receives for Asia and the Pacific is restricted to specific issues, such as civic and political participation, ending violence against

women, and resource rights. It is more difficult to obtain funds to support reproductive rights, sexual minorities, and disability rights.

Another challenge mentioned was that of public charities having to report to their donors, who are increasingly focused on impact measurement.

One challenge for organizations in Sri Lanka is that the International Monetary Fund reclassified Sri Lanka as middle income country, which caused development aid to shift to other countries. This categorization does not reflect the reality on the ground. Rosanna Flamer-Caldera shared that this is a challenge for LGBT groups in Sri Lanka, as much of the funding seems to go to Africa. She hasn't seen many foreign funders visit Sri Lanka, which she encouraged.

Ramy Chan emphasized the need for funding outside of specific issue areas, as too much funding occurs in silos. The many problems that people face do not exist in silos. A funder's core strategy should be giving communities tools and skills so that they can advocate on behalf of themselves with their governments.

AJWS shared that they have been supporting peer trainings and coalition building in India amongst several social movements. AJWS also co-funded peasant movements in Sri Lanka with Grassroots International.

Q: Has anyone provided small loans as part of their human rights funding?

A: No. But there is an interesting report that looks at income generation projects that incorporate human rights training

Q: Has anyone created a process where NGOs can apply for funding from more than one funder in the same application?

A: Grassroots International has done this with International Development Exchange and two NGOs.

Next Steps for the Working Group

- There is interest in scheduling discussion calls on funding in Sri Lanka and in Nepal. IHRFG will coordinate with working group members to organize these calls to take place within the next few months
- Working group members agreed to continue with a few discussion calls and then think about long-term goals for the group. Christen will send out the goals that group members decided upon in June 2011 on the listserv to spark a conversation about goals for the coming year.
- Participants mentioned donor advocacy and would like to continue a conversation about encouraging peers to fund within the region
- There was interest expressed in better understanding the landscape of funding in Asia and the Pacific
- IHRFG staff will reach out to all working group members over the next two months to collect information on where members fund, the issues and populations they support, and areas in which they would be interested in collaborating.
- The next in person working group meeting will take place at the EDGE Funders Alliance conference in San Francisco, California in September 2012.