



**LEARNING INSTITUTE:  
GENDER JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTMAKING  
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*Sponsors:* International Human Rights Funders Group, Grantmakers Without Borders

**Institute Goal:** To deepen human rights grantmaking using a gender justice perspective.

**Objectives:** to explore and assess key challenges to integrating a gender justice perspective in grantmaking.

- To develop potential strategies to address these challenges.
- To discuss and establish next steps to continuing work on gender justice.

**Jane Barry** and **Jelena Djordjevic** welcomed the group to the institute, discussed expectations and ground rules for discussion, and had everyone in the group introduce themselves. Some expectations mentioned included:

- How to look at programs from a feminist point of view
- How to address hostility to women's rights
- How to explain that using a gender justice perspective doesn't negate other perspectives
- How to measure success in gender justice programs
- How to address men and masculinities, and how to work with mixed gender and transgender organizations and communities
- Strategies to support women organizing, and young women organizing for peace
- How to address intersectionality and multiple discriminations, such as indigenous and LBT
- How to address backlash
- Considering the failures of "gender mainstreaming" and ways it may actually promote marginalization, and how to create more successful strategies and raise awareness in future
- Discussing the new UN agency combining all women's programs/issues



## Introduction to gender justice:

The group reviewed several handouts on terminology and defining gender justice. Themes included:

- **Justice, fairness, and respect:** recognition that gender justice is an essential, core value of *human rights*; understanding gender dynamics within legal systems; redress and reparations for injustices; addressing impunity for gender-based violence and crimes
- **Equal Access** for people of all genders to justice, to power and participation, and to services, resources, health, and education
- **Understanding and responding to** social conditioning and recognizing power and privilege in relationships between groups; realizing that “gender neutral” perspective ignores existing gendered inequalities and therefore reinforces gender injustices
- **Transformation of systems** at all levels (families, communities, societies, governments); directly addressing power and privilege in social and societal relations
- **Rejecting reductionism:** “gender” is not only about women and girls – also men, boys, people of all gender orientations and expressions; questioning simplistic gender perspectives that view all men as perpetrators and all women as victims; considering gender issues in all programs, not only within certain programs (e.g., reproductive rights, violence against women) – rejecting “gender ghettos” or silos
- **Challenging cultural relativism** as an excuse to ignore unequal power dynamics and the normalization of oppression, discrimination, and violence
- **Incorporating intersectionality** with other forms of oppression, including class, disability, race, age, caste, nationality – and incorporating a gender perspective into every sector



## Role-plays:

The group performed two role plays exploring issues of gender injustice that grantmakers might encounter in their work. The first scenario was of a grantmaker on a site-visit to a grantee in Sierra Leone, who realizes that all of the girls in the village are away at an FGM ceremony. The second was of a grantmaker on a site visit to a long-time grantee group in the Amazon, who found that all of the women in the grantee’s office were being marginalized, excluded from decision making, and harassed. Themes in the discussion following these role-plays included:

- The need for due diligence as a donor to ensure that they are aware of problematic situations; the more one gets to know people in organizations, the more these problems become clear
- The importance of asserting that gender justice values are legitimate and universal in the face of relativist arguments – and that grantmakers have the right to insist that their partners and projects operate in a way that is consistent with these values; also ways of speaking to concepts which are universally accepted/international laws, instead of flatly imposing values.
- Considering the line between being an accomplice and respecting culture
- Being very explicit about your social and political values from the outset, incorporating this discussion into all steps of process with new grantees

- Recognizing that even feminist organizations and individuals (both grantmakers and grantees) can be very exclusive toward sex workers, LGBT, transgendered persons, etc
- Understanding that issues such as LGBT/trans rights and reproductive health and rights involve pushing for a major cultural shift and behavioral changes, and are less clear cut under a human rights framework than issues such as trafficking, rape, etc – and therefore require a different approach
- The importance of understanding the cultural and political context of the areas in which your organizations work, including the dynamics of conflict and post-conflict zones
- The difficulty of deciding when problems are sufficient to justify dropping a grantee; analogy of problems such as finding corruption; dilemma when groups have influence in community and do not follow values; potential need for independent investigations and strict stipulations for reform for future grants
- Reaching out to local activists and to other grantmaking organizations with experience in the region and on gender issues for help in challenging situations; asking women in grantee organizations or other local activists what would be most helpful to them
  - Since they are staying and you will be leaving, important not to be too aggressive and leave them to face the backlash
- The importance of protecting women in grantee organizations and communities from violence
- Investigating whether lack of female leadership is because of discrimination or lack of qualified candidates – and if capacity-building programs for women have been in place in the region or



- organization, following up to ensure women are actually advancing
  - Recognizing advancement of women and cultural change may create uneasiness among men and responding – e.g., organizing workshop for men and women to discuss these issues
  - Taking care that grantees may cater responses to satisfy what grantmakers want to hear.

### **Challenges to Integrating Gender Justice into Grantmaking:**

The group broke into smaller groups to address internal, external, and structural challenges to integrating gender justice into grantmaking:

- Lack of understanding among donors that changing social attitudes takes a long time, impossible to deliver measurable results every 6-12 months – demand for this can impede long term vision
  - Need for donor and grantee to trust each other, work together to achieve goal
  - Need to push for more long term giving, going slow: 7-10 year instead of 1-3 year grants
  - People without as much experience in gender work (board members, people in M&E, trustees) may not understand longer time frame
- Packages of grants may be a better strategy to achieve change/prevent reductionist programs – e.g., not only funding legal cases but ensuring that court rulings and laws are enforced, services are provided
  - And security for grantees should be a part of these packages
- Funding to support women taking cases on UN Resolution 1325 to obtain political inclusion

- Need to provide security to women activists and organizations – we ask them to take risks
- Need for donor presence on the ground
- Grantee groups may only be looking for the money and not be committed to change, or may be committed but not have adequate resources
  - Or may be good group but led by “diva” – try to push to make more democratic environment, second-line leadership
- Disagreement/lack of knowledge within donor communities
  - Controversial issues may create rifts, e.g. abolitionist vs. engagement approach for sex workers; different ideas of what gender justice looks like
  - Addressing issues like transphobia or inclusion of LBT groups; recognizing that the same attitude is at work in excluding T or LBG persons or women
  - Questioning assumption that just because are a woman/LGBT person, doesn’t mean you have no prejudices or are always open and democratic – need to examine ourselves
  - Need for foundational value statement – important to institutionalize gender justice principles, otherwise haphazard, left to program officers
  - Ensuring that values are not only on paper but in practice throughout organization – and doing staff/board trainings if necessary to remedy
    - Addressing board/staff dynamic – inviting board members to trainings, conferences etc
  - Question of why gender justice should be “privileged” over other concerns (e.g., environmentalism) – potential answer: not privileging, but it’s about power relations, must always be taken into account in any project
  - Challenge to persuade non-feminist leadership used to thinking of women as victims only to make grants that seem explicitly “feminist”/empowering
  - Need to constantly find time to educate self/colleagues/board on new thinking
  - Reluctance of people without gender background to appear ignorant/too much jargon; need to create space for open conversations
    - Those who don’t see themselves as feminists may feel pressured/silenced

#### **Learning from Our Successes/Strategies Part I:**

- Need to explicitly articulate gender justice goals, put in mission statement, internal documentation, hiring practices, policies etc – and into grantee communications (RFPs, reporting formats, evaluation requirements, etc).
- Working with board and advisors – both who you select and how you educate them
- Assessing grantee partner’s commitment to gender justice – close relationships, being on the ground, reviewing their budgets and pay structures, working environments
  - Leveraging with other groups to help increase influence



- Don't want to micromanage grantees – having conversations about these issues may be less burdensome than constant formal reports
- Asking organizations to consider how gender justice may apply to their existing program areas – e.g., if they work on extrajudicial killings, do they work on trans issues and trans people who are killed? Do they consider other forms of oppression/power dynamics also (caste, age, race, disability)? If they say they are an LGBTI organization, which of those groups do they actually support? Whose human rights do they protect?
- Considering funding female-led groups even if already funding a male-led group
- Offering “gender carrots” – trainings, conference invitations, etc
- Considering men and masculinities – not just reducing to potential aggressors
- Security – funds and awareness for protection
  - Importance of preventing violence – making use of 1325 to put progressive women into positions of power to prevent armed violence; educating grantees about 1325
  - During conflicts, women's/LGBT organizations end up responding even though not formed to do so (sheltering people in their offices etc) – meet their needs in these crises but also recognize as opportunities to build bridges between groups
- Looking at gender not just in 1325 and CEDAW, but other treaties like ICCPR, CIRD

### Strategies Part II (small group discussion):

Participants broke up into small groups and discussed an issue of their choosing. Issues and strategies included:

- **Security** and protection of advocates in hostile environments
  - Grants (for specific security requests; emergency, medical, legal funds); reserving funds for security; security/self-defense trainings; legal advice and resources; advocacy and networking – grantmakers need to hold networks grantees don't have (e.g., HRW); sharing knowledge and building internal security capacity
- **1325:** Implementing at a local level in situations of disaster and conflict:
  - International framework on how to incorporate women post-disaster, switch to humanitarian instead of military response
  - Integrate with other issues
  - Can adapt to local governments – all levels
  - 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaching – effort to find new ways to implement, create new standard to achieve
  - Use donor agency to change dynamics of donor/grantee community – e.g., allow younger, less established feminist groups to host convenings
  - [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org) (site on 1325)



### Next Steps and Closing:

- **IHRFG “working group”:** potentially...
  - List-serv (articles, information); teleconferences; gender reading group
  - Check in periodically with Gw/oB working group
  - IHRFG will provide staff support with logistics, marketing, etc
- Other ideas
  - Establish legal defense fund to implement 1325
  - Add news re: gender justice in newsletter
  - Core values with gender-lens to help grantmakers talk to their directors
  - Primer for grantmakers on including gender justice lens (Grant Craft has one)
  - Each staff member bring a board member if this conversation happens again

*Photos: Rob Klein*