

Through the Lens of Brazil: The Changing Dynamics of Human Rights and Global Philanthropy in Emerging Powers

Funder Learning Visit to Rio de Janeiro
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Women's Human Rights

An in focus discussion circle

Speakers: **Amalia E. Fischer Pfaeffle**, General Coordinator, ELAS Social Investment Fund

Shalini Nataraj, Director, Advocacy and Partnerships, Global Fund for Women

- Amalia began the discussion by saying that she had been provoked to think a lot about women's rights over the past two days of the learning visit, and wanted to share her reflections on this:
 - These issues are complex, and force us to think beyond dichotomies. Usually, we do not know how to deal with paradoxes. If we try to fully understand the complex context of human rights in Brazil, we will find paradoxes everywhere. Issues are not black and white; they are both at the same time. When it is difficult to understand causes, and when context and reality are constructed by interdependent factors, it is easy to dichotomize, and hard to think outside of the box.
 - She sensed an impatient energy among a number of the participants, and the grantmaking community as a whole, as we didn't understand all movements across globe.
 - Representation is a big issue, which postmodernity began to address in the 1980s. We are now living the apex of it. There is a problem with the equation of identity, sameness, and equality. When we try to dig deeply into these issues, we find a crisis of identity and representation.
 - Forty years ago, the Brazilian feminist movement was one of the most important movements in Latin America.
 - It was the most revolutionary; it dialogued with everyone; and it always maintained autonomy from state, political parties, and trade unions, even though there are feminists in all of the spheres of society.
 - It is important to think of feminist movements in Latin America as different from those in the North.
 - Another movement that strengthened the feminist movement is the LGBT movement, which led feminists to see the body as an opportunity for not just one identity but many subjectivities.
 - Can the human rights movement deal with all these subjectivities?
 - The language of women's rights is very important, and has to form part of our thinking. However, at some point, we must consider how to deal with a system of representation that doesn't represent anyone.
 - The change we want has to do with more than human rights.
 - We need to think beyond representation and identity.
 - What are some strategies for working on the criminalization of abortion? How about the implementation of laws? Funders withdrawing?

- Women's organizations in Brazil are closing because they lack funding.
 - International donors must continue to give to women's rights in Brazil. If a country has good laws, it also needs a lot of social control, and to ensure that women have the information they need about their rights.
- Favela Point, an ELAS project, is an example of funding while capacity building, and also participates to discussions about urban violence, domestic violence, structural violence - racism. This process started with dialogue.
 - 1 in every 5 women have reported suffering violence
- Shalini said that the Global Fund for Women's vision is full gender equality. The way to achieve gender equality is to focus on women, the 51% excluded from power and agency.
 - Their strategy is to analyze power relations, and study how women can access power.
 - To do this, they must address patriarchy.
 - They focus on women-led and women-focused orgs, though there are some exceptions to this.
 - In Afghanistan, e.g., they work with some men in positions of power but do analysis of women's involvement in decision making.
 - GFW also looks for organizations that work at intersections and foster linkages among them. A lot of violations to women are invisible and happen in so-called "private spaces," which makes it hard to access the women facing these abuses.
 - The violations women face across counties are similar, but how to address them varies
 - There is a continuum of violence—from the home to the violations that occur during conflict.
 - There is almost always backlash that happens when women become more vocal and visible in the public sphere. As donors, we need to devise ways beyond funding to stand in solidarity with them.
 - A lot of work needs to be done not just in the law enforcement and legal spheres, but mostly in the social, cultural, and religious areas, to challenge belief systems, and change behaviours to elevate the status of women.
 - On the positive side, women are organizing and strategizing together, so they can address these issues collectively.
 - In countries like Brazil and India, there needs to be attention paid to funding women's rights organizations as the human rights issues women face don't go away when a country becomes more developed economically.

Discussion and Q&A

- A participant pointed out that there are many parallels between Bolivia and Brazil, especially in the case of violence against women. In Bolivia, there are some good women's rights laws, but application isn't happening.
- Another participant raised the case of Sri Lanka, which has a male minister of Women's Affairs. Because of rise of gender-based violence, he said that "we should punish rapists by marrying them off to the victim."
- How are sex workers viewed in Brazil?
 - Amalia said that ELAS supports sex workers rights, and also those ex-sex workers who want to engage themselves in a different type of work. ELAS respects their decisions and autonomy.

- GFW does fund sex worker rights because they focus on the lived reality of women. No matter what they choose, they should have full agency and voice, and live a life free from exploitation.
- There's a great divide among women's rights activists now:
 - "If you give support to sex workers, you perpetuate patriarchy and oppression of women."
 - "Some people may choose this work and no matter what, they have human rights that must be protected."
 - "If you don't abolish sex work, you are supporting trafficking of women."
 - The abolitionist framing of the argument takes all agency away from women.

Panelist Biographies:



Amalia E. Fischer Pfaeffle
General Coordinator, ELAS Social Investment Fund

Amalia E. Fischer Pfaeffle is the conceiver, co-founder and executive coordinator of ELAS Social Investment Fund, and is currently an Ashoka Social Entrepreneur and Synergos Fellow. She was a professor at the School of Political and Social Science, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico for 20 years, and a consultant on gender equity for the Centro Mexicano de Filantropia (CEMEFI) from 1992 to 1993. In Mexico she also collaborated with a few newspapers, such as *Universal*, *La Jornada*, and *Uno Más Uno*. She serves as the co-chair of the board for Urgent Action Fund-USA, and co-founder and chair of the board for Fondo de Acción Urgente Latinoamerica. She is a board member of the Baobá Fund for Racial Equity and is a co-founder of both the Brazilian Network of Independent Funds for Social Justice and the International Network of Women's Funds. She also volunteers as an advisor for Global Fund for Women and Mama Cash. She holds a doctorate in communication and culture from the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, a master's in communication science from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and a Bachelor's degree in sociology from Université Paris VIII.



Shalini Nataraj
Director, Advocacy and Partnerships, Global Fund for Women

As Director of Advocacy and Partnerships with the Global Fund for Women, Shalini works on grantmaking partnerships to further women's rights and advocates within philanthropy for resources to be directed to women's human rights. Prior to this, Shalini was Vice President of Programs at the Global Fund. Before that, she was Associate Director of the Human Rights Award Program, and prior to that she worked for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee as acting director of international programs supporting social movements to promote human rights in Asia, Africa and the Americas. She is co-Chair of the board of the EDGE Funders Alliance and serves on the board of the Women's Funding Network.