

The Architecture of Change

Feminist Pathways to Financing Gender Equality

**Walking
the
Talk**



Feminist movements are driving change, advancing democracy, peace, climate justice, and human rights. Yet they remain underfunded, sidelined, or defunded altogether.

Now, global funding cuts are escalating the threat, putting feminist movements under growing pressure and risking the reversal of hard-won gains on gender equality. UN Women [warns that half of women's rights and women-led organisations in crisis settings may be forced to shut down within six months](#), cutting off vital, life-saving support for millions.

With the [4th International Conference on Financing for Development \(FFD4\)](#) taking place in Seville at the end of the month, this is a critical moment to defend progress and build a sustainable financial architecture that supports gender equality, rather than undermining it.

For this reason, Walking the Talk commissioned 13 bold research projects to explore and offer tangible solutions to today's financing challenges. These projects span more than 30 countries and reimagine how feminist work is funded, highlighting the feminist-led approaches that can help reshape global systems for equity and justice.

The Research

Reimagining global financial architecture has never been more urgent. Debt burdens are soaring, fiscal space is shrinking, and the global economic model continues to extract from the Majority World. These 13 research papers examine the issues most pressing to feminist actors, including fiscal and care policies, the intersections of climate justice, gender, and public finance, as well as new financing models that prioritise life over profit. What sets this collection apart is not only analytical rigour, but the lived commitments of its authors—activists, community organisers, and members of grassroots organisations deeply embedded in the daily struggles they analyse.

39 authors write from the ground, focusing on more than 30 countries: from Dalit feminist collectives reclaiming health rights to African coalitions challenging debt colonialism, to queer organisers demanding bodily autonomy in hostile political climates. Their knowledge is forged in struggle, sharpened by urgency, and infused with a fierce determination to reimagine a more just world.

Findings

There are many rich findings within this collection of research papers. These include:

→ **Feminist organisations worldwide face a complex and often hostile funding environment**, characterised by chronic underfunding and a misalignment with donor priorities. These organisations disproportionately rely on international donors whose agendas frequently shift in response to political changes and economic uncertainty. This dependence leaves feminist movements particularly vulnerable, as seen in countries such as Turkey, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua, where reductions in gender equality funding have coincided with increased political repression and shrinking civic spaces.

→ In response to perceived risks and mounting scrutiny, **donors often impose heavier administrative burdens and emphasise efficiency**. These measures, while intended to safeguard funds, frequently result in diminished support for community-based and feminist organisations, ironically undercutting the very democratic values these organisations have historically championed.

→ **Compounding these challenges are enduring colonial legacies embedded in many funding frameworks**. The dominance of English in institutional forums further alienates feminist voices from Francophone, Lusophone, and indigenous communities, particularly in regions such as Central Africa, where linguistic exclusion limits participation and access to resources.

→ **Significant inequities persist within the climate finance and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spheres**. Although climate-responsive financing is expanding, only a negligible portion reaches women's rights organisations and feminist movements. CSR initiatives, which could serve as powerful vehicles for equitable funding, largely fail to integrate gender perspectives or include community-based actors. In India, for instance, while the CSR mandate requiring 2% of corporate profits to be invested in social good presents a potential model, these funds rarely

prioritise gender-based initiatives. Nonetheless, this framework could inspire regional replication, particularly by creating local funding pools that governments, corporations, and international donors jointly support.

→ **Economic austerity and debt servicing further exacerbate gender inequalities, particularly in Latin America and parts of Africa**. The burden of debt repayment often results in reduced public investment in essential sectors, such as health, education, and care services, upon which women heavily depend. Feminist economists and activists have proposed gender-responsive alternatives to conventional debt relief, advocating for restructuring processes that tie debt forgiveness to increased investment in social infrastructure and grassroots feminist efforts.

→ **Amid these structural challenges, alternative funding pathways are emerging**. Family philanthropy is gaining momentum in India and across South Asia as a credible alternative to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Official Development Assistance (ODA). While historically focused on education and healthcare, a new generation of philanthropists is embracing gender-intentional strategies. Tools such as the GEDI (Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) framework provide promising models for guiding such investments, with potential for adaptation in African and other regional contexts.

The funding ecosystem for feminist movements is fragile, fragmented, and frequently shaped by global inequalities. Yet, these movements remain at the forefront of democratic resilience, economic inclusion, and climate justice. A recalibration of funding models is not only necessary but urgent. Feminist funding must be reimagined as a strategic investment in more just, democratic, and sustainable futures.

Now is the time to invest in what works.



Walking the Talk advocates for inclusive foreign policies, practices, and funding that champion gender equality in the European Union, reflecting the voices of women and LGBTIQ+ communities from the Majority World. The consortium is comprised of Equipop, Hivos and Restless Development and partners with ODI Europe.



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Walking the Talk

Financing for Feminist Futures

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