



**COMMUNITY-CENTRIC RESOURCING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE**

*Moving Towards Power With, To, And Within Communities*

# Gratitude and Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful for all of the wisdom, experiences, and resources that contributed – directly and indirectly – to the insights gathered here. This report seeks to contribute to the transformation of the philanthropic sector, so that it prioritizes and amplifies the power, leadership, and efforts of the communities that are most affected by climate injustices and are at the forefront of critical climate justice efforts.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS / QUOTES

We limit edits to the reflections and contributions that nourished this research. Even with translations, we strive to maintain the authenticity of the words in order to honor the wisdom and experiences shared. It's important to note that the majority of the contributions featured in this publication have been translated from Spanish to English.

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**THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT**, we will use Climate Justice to refer to the political, social, and ethical framework that recognizes the climate crisis is a result of compounding and intersecting systemic injustice. And, to address it, we must take an intersectional social justice approach that centers and supports the leadership, solutions, and needs of those most impacted and affected by climate injustice.

Largely sparked and led by Black, Indigenous, and Brown people across the world, Climate Justice, and its movements, is described, named, and pushed forward in diverse ways across each territory. It is important to recognize it as it honors the people, context, and realities within each community.

“ Capitalism and colonization shows up in philanthropy in more ways that we would like to admit. From top-down, bureaucratic and hierarchical decision-making that lacks true perspective and experience in leadership that is reflected in the communities served, to annual giving that is determined in advance and aligned with the money market, to operating in silos and understanding social issues as linear... the list goes on and on. Colonization and capitalism remain the founding pillars of modern philanthropy and are reinforced by the wealthy individuals, families, and corporations that develop and manage philanthropic institutions like foundations. Recognizing that all colonial currencies and the abundance of wealth that exists in this world today are tied to capitalism with direct historical roots to the theft of Indigenous lands, displacement of Indigenous Peoples and forced, free labor of Black people. Even newer tech companies that date only a few decades back or less, too, can trace the money that seeded their work to the origin of stolen land and forced, free labor. Philanthropy needs to acknowledge this painful history and let its origin of wealth guide it towards transformation. ”

Galina Angarova and Daisee Francou, [‘Indigenizing Philanthropy: Shifting Grantmaking Practices from Extractive to Reciprocal’](#)



# SUMMARY

The climate crisis is not only an environmental issue, but a [key driver of some of the most pressing human rights violations of our time](#). It is a [human-made phenomenon](#), largely fueled by extractive [countries](#)<sup>1</sup>, that compounds systemic injustices and creates or exacerbates crises in various dimensions – including social, political, and economic. As the impact of climate change intensifies, communities facing the most marginalization and systemic injustices, such as [Indigenous, Black, Brown, Queer, women, girls, refugee](#) and [immigrant](#) communities, as well as [communities with disabilities](#),<sup>2</sup> are [disproportionately impacted](#) and at risk of even more danger. Yet, these communities, at the frontlines of the climate crisis, while being the least responsible for fueling it, are also at the forefront of vital climate justice efforts to mitigate, address, and stop the climate crisis.

It is imperative to recognize and support the leadership, strategies, and efforts of those most impacted by the climate crisis. By centering their wisdom, solutions, and lived experiences, we are better positioned to address not only the immediate impacts of climate change but also the systemic injustices that have contributed to its emergence. The philanthropic sector must undergo a significant shift to recognize and support these efforts, as currently only a [fraction of funding](#) for climate change supports climate justice and equity efforts, and an even smaller portion of those led by Black, Indigenous, Brown, and disabled people. Participatory grantmaking has emerged as a powerful mechanism to bring about much needed transformation in philanthropy and has been used widely to support climate justice efforts.

<sup>1</sup> Extractive countries are referred to in this article as Industrialized countries. [The term extractive has been used to intentionally highlight the role that these countries had in extracting resources through colonial and imperialist practices.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Disabled - people with disabilities have different preferences in the way they would like to be recognized, some prefer person-first language and other prefer prioritizing their disability. Disabled person/community or person/community with disabilities will be used interchangeably to recognize and honor this diversity.](#)

In this report, we provide an overview of the background, model, elements, approaches, and impacts of participatory grantmaking. We also expand on the global and Latin American ecosystem of participatory grantmakers – prioritizing Latin America due to the lack of documentation of participatory grantmaking in the region – and use Global Greengrants Fund’s model as an illustrative case study of their achievements, lessons and opportunities. We close the report with accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations to move towards resourcing and supporting climate justice efforts through a community-centric participatory approach. To ground and seed the knowledge that supported the development of this report, we drew from reports, articles, thought-pieces, as well as conducted surveys, in-depth interviews, and facilitated a Latin American focus group with Global Greengrants Fund’s advisors.

An important finding of our analysis is the lack of publicly available data on participatory grantmaking models, such as when funders began adopting the practice; how much funding is allocated towards it; lessons learned, etc. Nonetheless, the research and analysis we undertook as part of this process demonstrates that community-led solutions, which are the efforts resourced through participatory grantmaking, are more effective than top-down models.

Through our mapping of participatory grantmakers globally and in Latin America, we found that they are naturally diverse, but share a set of core elements. We also found that a significant majority prioritize funding for communities disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Additionally, our analysis revealed a strong link between the use of participatory grantmaking practices and the identification of funders as feminist. We also found that grantmakers in Latin America demonstrate greater utilization of participatory grantmaking models from the outset, in comparison to the global grantmaking ecosystem.

Whilst not exhaustive, this report provides significant insights into the key achievements, challenges, and lessons of participatory grantmaking. Participatory grantmaking has achieved important shifts in power by centering the communities who are experts in their realities; built relationships of trust and proximity through the inclusion of grantee partners, advisory committees or mentors; widened the perspective and moved attention toward systemic issues; and has pushed funders to be increasingly flexible. On the other hand, there is a need for more transparency and clarity on participatory models, and for more data collection and spaces for shared learning. There is also only a limited number of funders currently supporting participatory grantmaking mechanisms, which constrains the growth of such an important model. Our key recommendations to support community-centric participatory grantmaking for climate justice include:

- Recognize that Climate Justice is defined in different ways across the world, that multiple movements and communities are supporting it, and that it must

include critical approaches from linguistic justice, intersectionality, post-coloniality, etc.

- Support data collection and analysis of participatory grantmaking models to increase transparency and accountability.
- Promote learning resources and networking spaces, particularly for the Latin American philanthropic community and social movements.
- Review participatory models to support anti-colonial processes and practices to reject white supremacy, with responses to racism, misogyny and classism from a community perspective.
- Analyze power relations within grassroots organizations and movements, in order to consider all actors and their differences.
- Strengthen the skills and critical capacities of advisors with respect to anti-colonial philanthropy, in addition to recognizing that participatory boards or committees are only the first step of many to follow in engaging participation.
- Allocate specific additional money for salaries and social security in organizations and movements, in addition to investing in infrastructure, spaces and future sustainability strategies.
- Recognize participatory grant-making as a first step and adopt a community-centric analysis of the model, which would be a continuous reflection exercise to critically examine colonial power dynamics within the ecosystem and geo-political context.



# CLIMATE CRISIS: Compounding Injustices And Crises



The climate crisis is not only an environmental issue, but a [key driver](#) of some of the most pressing human rights violations of our time. It is a [human-made crisis](#), largely fueled by extractive [countries](#)<sup>3</sup>, that compounds systemic injustices and creates or exacerbates crises in various dimensions - including social, political, and economic. As the impact of climate change intensifies, communities facing the most marginalization



and systemic injustices – such as [Indigenous, Black, Brown, queer, women, girls](#),<sup>4</sup> [refugee](#) and [immigrant](#) communities, as well as [communities with disabilities](#) – are [disproportionately impacted](#) and at risk of even more danger. Yet, these communities, facing the most impact of the climate crisis, while being the least responsible for fueling it, are at the forefront of vital climate justice efforts to mitigate, address, and stop the impact of the climate crisis.

It is imperative to recognize and support the leadership, strategies, and efforts of those most impacted by the climate crisis. By centering their wisdom, solutions, and lived experiences, we are better positioned to address not only the immediate impacts of climate change but also the systemic injustices that have contributed to its emergence. The philanthropic sector must undergo a significant shift in recognizing and supporting these efforts, as currently only a [fraction of funding](#) for climate change efforts supports climate justice and equity, and an even smaller portion of efforts led by Black, Indigenous, Brown, and disabled people. Carla Lopez, Executive Director of the Central American Women’s Funds, echos: “to achieve the structural changes we want, power relations must be transformed, power must be placed in the movements.” Participatory grantmaking, a philanthropic practice that cedes grantmaking power to the communities that have the best understanding of their own contexts, has emerged as a powerful mechanism to bring about much needed transformation in philanthropy and has been used widely to support climate justice efforts.

To gain deeper insight into the role of participatory grantmaking in supporting climate justice efforts, we documented global participatory grantmakers that are resourcing activists, civil society organizations, and social movements advancing climate justice efforts, with a focus on Latin America. In this report, we provide an overview of the background, model, elements, approaches, and impacts of participatory grantmaking. We also expand on the global and Latin American ecosystem of participatory grantmakers, provide a case study on Global Greengrants Fund’s model. And, close with accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations to move towards supporting climate justice efforts through a community-centric resourcing approach. To ground and seed the knowledge that supported the development of this report, we drew from reports, articles, thought-pieces, as well as conducted surveys and in-depth interviews and facilitated a Latin American focus group with Global Greengrants Fund’s advisors.

<sup>3</sup>Extractive countries are referred to in this article as industrialized countries. The term ‘extractive’ [has been used](#) to intentionally highlight the role that these countries had in extracting resources through colonial and imperialist practices.

<sup>4</sup>Disabled – people with disabilities have [different preferences](#) in the way they would like to be recognized, some prefer person-first language and others prefer prioritizing their disability. Disabled person/community or person/community with disabilities will be used interchangeably to recognize and honor this diversity.

# Participatory Grantmaking



## BACKGROUND

Community-centric resourcing has always existed across communities around the world: where communities have supported their well-being, resistance, and resilience. Many of the early examples of community-centric resourcing come from Indigenous communities that used community-driven practices to make decisions around every aspect that impacted their lives. Some of these approaches include assemblies, repre-

sentatives' by-elections and communal consensus, traced back to [pre-colonial Americas, Africa, and India](#). As Fern Naomi Renville [highlights](#), Indigenous communities have been an inspiration and the basis for democratic and participatory approaches to decision-making.

Community-centric decision-making practices, which include resourcing, were targeted during colonization as it depended on exploitative, oppressive, and undemocratic practices that sought domination to accumulate wealth and power. The impact of colonialism and its legacy, capitalism, is visible across the world. When we look at the philanthropic sector, we can directly connect the founding of the philanthropic sector to colonization and, its growth, to capitalism. And identify the ways in which its practices show up in the sector. As Galina Angarova and Daisee Francou emphasize:

“ Capitalism and colonization shows up in philanthropy in more ways that we would like to admit. From top-down, bureaucratic and hierarchical decision-making that lacks true perspective and experience in leadership that is reflected in the communities served, to annual giving that is determined in advance and aligned with the money market, to operating in silos and understanding social issues as linear... the list goes on and on. Colonization and capitalism remain the founding pillars of modern philanthropy and are reinforced by the wealthy individuals, families, and corporations that develop and manage philanthropic institutions like foundations. Recognizing that all colonial currencies and the abundance of wealth that exists in this world today are tied to capitalism with direct historical roots to the theft of Indigenous lands, displacement of Indigenous Peoples and forced, free labor of Black people. Even newer tech companies that date only a few decades back or less, too, can trace the money that seeded their work to the origin of stolen land and forced, free labor. Philanthropy needs to acknowledge this painful history and let its origin of wealth guide it towards transformation. ”

## MODEL

The participatory grantmaking model [has been described as](#) “ceding of decision-making power about funding – including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions – to the communities that funders aim to serve.” As previously shared, the concept of resourcing through community-centric approaches is not new. The specific practice of participatory grantmaking in the philanthropic sector began a few decades ago as an approach to democratizing decision-making processes. The social justice movements of the 1960s and 70s can be largely attributed to pushing for this shift as their advocacy and organizing highlighted the need for more equitable distribution of resources and decision-making power, including philanthropic practices. This is especially relevant with feminist movements – specifically the second wave – which pushed forward intersectional and inclusive principles to challenge traditional power dynamics, structures, and hierarchies, highlighting the importance of centering those facing the most marginalization, oppression and violence.

The earliest documented example of a participatory grantmaking funder at a national, regional, or global level thus far is the [Funding Exchange](#) – established in 1979 “by young activists with inherited wealth who had a “change, not charity” vision of how they felt their money could make a difference.” Since the 80s, more participatory grantmakers have been established, such as [Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres](#) (Central American Women’s Fund); [FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund](#); [Disability Rights Fund](#); [Vida Afrolatina](#); [Pawanka Fund](#); and the [Black Feminist Fund](#). Several have transitioned to participatory grantmaking practices, such as [Mama Cash](#); [Global Fund for Children](#); and [Fondo Semillas](#).

## ELEMENTS

The core elements of participatory grantmaking practice, as highlighted in the report *Deciding Together*, include that grantmaking:

- is values-based;
- is about more than money;
- involves the community in all parts of the process, drawing on a wide range of other participatory practices;
- application and reporting processes are simple and flexible;
- is transparent;
- builds and strengthens larger social movements
- and that the participatory grantmaking process itself is an important outcome.

## APPROACHES

There is a lot of diversity in participatory grantmaking approaches due to its aim of ceding funding decision-making power to those closest to the solutions. Critical elements that influence these approaches and practices include:

- **Context:** Cultural norms, historical conditions, systemic barriers and injustices (including threats), and the political landscape of a specific community influence the design and implementation of the model. What may work for a specific community fighting for land protection while facing an authoritarian government may be very different from other communities.
- **Values and principles:** Approaches are guided by specific values and principles that ground the model, including its design, implementation, and constant transformation. Feminist, anti-racist, and anti-ableist values and principles tend to guide most of the participatory grantmaking models that currently support social justice movements across the world.
- **Organizational capacity:** Different organizations may have varying levels of experience, expertise, and resources to engage in participatory grantmaking. This can impact the scope, scale, and depth of the participatory model used to engage communities.
- **Goal(s):** For instance, if the primary goal is to provide quick responses to emergency funding needs, the decision-making body may be smaller to facilitate prompt decision-making. However, expert advisors are still crucial to guide the allocation of resources effectively.

The diversity in participatory grantmaking models is a core strength to ensure that the support required for specific needs in each community is met in relevant and effective ways. Diversity also reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of participatory grantmaking as an approach that is adaptable and responsive, meeting the reality of our rapidly and constantly changing world.

## IMPACT

Albeit a lack of global documentation and the nuance of its practice within the philanthropic sector, participatory grantmaking has had a significant positive impact on social justice efforts across the world. Unlike traditional grantmaking, which is typically top-down and donor-driven, participatory grantmaking has shifted power dynamics by centering the needs of communities. This shift has allowed for more effective funding models, as Myram Bérubé [describes](#), it “...honors the unique cultural, economic, and so-

cial conditions of a specific place and allows solutions to emerge that are grounded in the needs and perspectives of that community. This not only promotes greater community engagement but is also more likely to result in stronger alignment between grants allocations and community priorities.”

In the report [Deciding Together](#), Katy Love echos: “By democratizing decision-making and allowing people with the most expertise and experience on an issue to dictate investments, it can lead to more mindful and impactful giving.” And, multiple research and analysis continue to demonstrate that community-led solutions, which are the efforts resourced through participatory grantmaking, are more effective. Even institutions such as the [World Bank](#) recognize the power of community-led solutions. As they described: “The approach of partnering with communities and local units of government, including putting resources under the direct control of community groups, has led to the efficient and inclusive delivery of basic services, and, when sustained over time, measurable reductions in poverty, particularly among the poorest populations and communities.”

When ceding power by centering the communities who are experts in their realities, there is also an increase in diversity and inclusion which has been proven to be a more effective strategy for decision-making. As the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors’ [research](#) on diversity, inclusion and effective philanthropy highlights: “by bringing more voices to the decision-making table, donors can glean vital information and create ongoing relationships which can reduce the risk of making costly mistakes. Of course, nothing can entirely eliminate risk in either the for-profit or the philanthropic worlds. But wise donors often test the markets for their programs by listening to diverse stakeholders from all levels of society.”

Participatory grantmaking has also promoted innovation, collaboration, and relationship-building, which strengthens collective systemic change efforts. It also encourages partnerships that promote resource and information sharing and increases communication, which is especially important in times of crisis. This is evident when we look at the ways in which participatory grantmakers collaborate on several efforts, whether through networks such as the [Participatory Grantmakers Network](#), or how many participatory grantmakers have supported the creation of new participatory grantmaking funds, such as the Central American Womens’ Fund role in creating FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund.

Additional examples that demonstrate the effectiveness and innovation of participatory grantmaking include:

- The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative (UHAI EASHRI) – As [described](#) in the report ‘How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power’, UHAI was established by a group of activists from the region to provide a better funding mechanism to meet their needs since the funding sources were not being effective, they did not



understand the root issues, had unintended negative consequences, exacerbated the problems, and fragmented the community.

- Women’s Funding Network – Sure Impact provides a [case study](#) on women’s funds in the network by highlighting: “As COVID-19 erupted in 2020, these women’s funds [part of the network] were able to shift their grantmaking focus to meet more immediate operational needs of the organizations they support, so that their grantees could attend to the most urgent community needs as quickly as possible. These rapid response funds helped grantees address the critical needs voiced by those most impacted by systemic inequities and racial injustice, while empowering the community through these participatory decision-making practices.”
- [Global Resilience Fund](#) – The Global Resilience Fund, a participatory and collaborative Fund that was co-created to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights the innovative and collaborative power of funders to move resources through a participatory and collaborative way at the speed needed while building deeper relationships with each other and the activists’ advisory, and gathering key lessons to push for better emergency funding practices.
- With and For Girls Fund and Collective – the Fund and Collective have been utilizing participatory grantmaking practices since their inception. In addition to its role as a grantmaker, the Collective serves as a donor learning space for grantmakers focused on supporting girls. Through the donor learning spaces, Global Fund for Children was able to deepen its understanding of participatory grantmaking and launch its first participatory grantmaking [fund](#).

This overview of participatory grantmaking’s impact is not comprehensive. Reports such as [Participatory Grantmaking](#), [Deciding Together](#), [How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power](#), [Candid’s special collection on participatory grantmaking](#) as well as their [expanded library](#) provide further insights. However, there is a lack of global documentation on impact, and most documentation is published in English and led by organizations or consultants from or based in the United States and Western Europe. This reality is due to the current lack of funding to support participatory grantmaking, including its research, analysis, and documentation. As Rose Longhurst [describes](#): “unlike many funders, we don’t have the funds to undertake formal evaluations. Major funders who call for evidence on the benefits of participatory grantmaking should fund some learning infrastructure such as impact evaluations.” Additionally, the analysis of systemic change – [which tends to be the main focus of participatory grantmakers](#) – requires a commitment to and resourcing for long-term and community-centered research and learning.



## THE GLOBAL PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING ECOSYSTEM

The global philanthropic ecosystem<sup>5</sup> holds a staggering [\\$1.5 trillion in assets, predominantly concentrated in extractive countries](#). Annually, over [\\$68 billion](#) in funds flow across the world, which equates to the GDP of at least 70% of the countries in the world. However, a mere 2% of these funds are directed toward communities most impacted by the climate crises and who are at the forefront of climate justice efforts. Due to the absence of adequate data tracking in participatory grantmaking, it is difficult to accurately determine the exact amount of philanthropic funding allocated to this approach across the global philanthropic sector. Nevertheless, an analysis of the [human rights funders](#) who make up 6% of the global philanthropic sector, reveals that only 3% adopt participatory grantmaking models. Notably, numerous networks, organizations, researchers, and collectives (such as [Participatory Grantmakers](#)) acknowledge the lack of documentation around participatory grantmaking and are working, albeit with limited resources, to address this gap.

To contribute towards addressing the gap of information and support, in our analysis of the global participatory grantmaking ecosystem, we developed a chart (*see Table 1*) that highlights global participatory grantmakers focused on supporting activists, civil society organizations, and social movement efforts.<sup>6</sup> The chart was developed through review of publicly available information around the grantmaking models of each grantmaker, as well as interviews with strategic stakeholders.

As highlighted earlier, it is important to acknowledge the diverse range of approaches that funders adopt when implementing participatory grantmaking models. Through our mapping we identified that a significant majority prioritize funding for communities that are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Additionally, our analysis revealed a notable correlation between the use of participatory grantmaking practices and the identification of funders as feminist: meaning that when we reviewed global funders using participatory models, the vast majority identified as feminist funders and/or aligned with feminist principles/values.

<sup>5</sup> The global philanthropic ecosystem in this report includes philanthropic outflows and excludes governmental development funds and private capital investments.

<sup>6</sup> This list is not exhaustive and excludes the Latin American region since it has a dedicated section. It also only lists funders that identify, through publicly available information, as a participatory grantmaker. Moreover, it is also important to recognize that some funders that are not listed on this chart are, or may be in the near future, moving toward participatory practices.

**TABLE 1: PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKERS GLOBALLY**

FUNDER	PGM <sup>7</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>8</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
<a href="#">GLOBAL GREENGRANTS FUND</a>	1993	1993	Regional advisory boards, comprised of environmental and social justice activists, develop their own policies, budget, and make funding decisions.	Global	Climate justice
<a href="#">WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION</a>	2003	2003	Community representatives review the applications and make funding decisions.	Global	Social justice efforts
<a href="#">UHAI EASHRI</a>	2009	2009	The Grant Making Committee, comprised of activists from East Africa, makes the funding decisions.	East Africa	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) and sex workers' organizations
<a href="#">EDGE FUND</a>	2009	2009	Edge Fund members make funding decisions.	Global	Grassroot efforts, funding areas such as gender justice, climate justice, and racial justice.
<a href="#">AWESOME FOUNDATION</a>	2009	2009	Community members make the funding decisions.	Global	Social projects
<a href="#">FRIDA   YOUNG FEMINIST FUND</a>	2011	2011	Applicants review applications and, through a voting system, make funding decisions.	Global	Young feminist movements
<a href="#">RED UMBRELLA FUND</a>	2012	2012	The <a href="#">Programme Advisory Committee and International Steering Committee</a> , comprised of sex workers from across the world, make funding decisions.	Global	Sex worker-led groups and networks

<sup>7</sup> This row denotes the year when the funder began to use a participatory grantmaking model (PGM).

<sup>8</sup> The participatory approach is listed here only if the organization made this information publicly available as we recognize that this is a critical component of participatory approaches.

FUNDER	PGM <sup>7</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>8</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
<a href="#">DISABILITY RIGHTS FUND</a>	2012	2012	Disability rights leaders and activists develop the funding strategy and grantmaking decisions. Additionally, persons with disabilities are involved at all levels, from advisory to staffing to governance.	Global	Organizations of persons with disabilities working to build diverse movements, ensure inclusive development agendas, and achieve equal rights and opportunity for all.
<a href="#">ROBERT CARR FUND</a>	2012	2012	Advisors provide funding recommendations for the pooled funds.	Global	Regional and global networks led by and involving and serving inadequately served populations.
<a href="#">THE POLLINATION PROJECT</a>	2013	2013	Community members make funding decisions, awarding a grant each day.	Global	Social projects
<a href="#">PAWANKA FUND</a>	2014	2014	<a href="#">The Guiding Committee</a> , comprised of Indigenous representatives, works closely with local indigenous organizations and institutions to support their initiatives in the spirit of partnership and solidarity.	Global	Indigenous-led efforts focused on recovery and revitalization of indigenous knowledge and learning systems.
<a href="#">WITH AND FOR GIRLS FUND</a>	2014	2014	Youth activists advisory reviews applications and makes funding decisions.	Global	Girl and youth-led social justice efforts
<a href="#">AMPLIFYCHANGE</a>	Not publicly available	2014	Community members make funding recommendations and the grantee reference group provides grantmaking strategy advice and input.	Global	Sexual health and reproductive rights
<a href="#">FUNDACTION</a>	2016	2016	Activist members, who also lead the volunteer Fund, make funding decisions.	Europe	Grassroot efforts

FUNDER	PGM <sup>7</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>8</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
<a href="#">INTERNATIONAL TRANS FUND</a>	2016	2016	<a href="#">The Grant Making Panel</a> , comprised of Trans activists from across the world, makes the funding decisions.	Global	Trans-led groups working to benefit the trans community and contributing to trans movement building.
<a href="#">GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN</a>	2016	1987	The <a href="#">Movement Committees</a> make the funding decisions.	Global	Gender justice efforts
<a href="#">KINDLE PROJECT</a>	2018	2003	Steering committee members, donors, and broader community make funding decisions.	Global	Social justice efforts
<a href="#">RAWA</a>	2019	2019	The <a href="#">Advisory Committee and Community Clusters members</a> , comprised of Palestinian community representatives, make funding strategy and decisions.	Palestine	Palestine community led efforts
<a href="#">FENOMENAL FUNDS</a>	2019	2019	Advisory and Steering Committee, comprised of private philanthropy and women's Funds, make the funding decisions	Global	Feminist movements
<a href="#">GLOBAL RESILIENCE FUND</a>	2020	2020	Activists Panel, comprised of youth activists from across the world, makes the funding decisions.	Global	Feminist youth movements, with a focus on humanitarian crises
<a href="#">NUMUN FUND</a>	2020	2020	The Selection Committee, comprised of activists and practitioners from the Global Majority, review the application and make funding decisions.	Global	Feminist tech
<a href="#">MAMACASH</a>	2021	1983	The <a href="#">Community Committee</a> , comprised of activists with experience and who are part of feminist movements, makes the funding decisions.	Global	Feminist movements, includes, but is not limited to: girls, women, trans, and intersex human rights; climate justice efforts; and social justice efforts.

FUNDER	PGM <sup>7</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>8</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
<a href="#">INROADS</a>	2021	2014	Applicants review and vote on the applications. The Community Advisory, comprised of abortion stigma-busting members, make funding decisions.	Global	Global Abortion justice efforts
<a href="#">BLACK FEMINIST FUND</a>	2021	2021	The <a href="#">Grant Review Committee</a> , comprised of Black Feminist activists from across the world, make funding decisions.	Global	Black feminist movements
<a href="#">CHILDREN RIGHTS INNOVATION FUND</a>	2021	2021	Youth activists develop the grantmaking strategy and make funding decisions.	Global	Children's rights, through a focus on addressing colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and anti-Blackness.
<a href="#">GLOBAL FUND FOR CHILDREN</a>	2023	2023	Youth activists develop the grantmaking strategy and make funding decisions for the <a href="#">Spark Fund</a> .	Global and Regional	Youth rights and youth movement building.

## LATIN AMERICAN PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING ECOSYSTEM

Latin America continues to grapple with the enduring effects of colonialism, the pervasive influence of capitalism, and political interference and economic exploitation, particularly from the United States. These factors have shaped a context marked by stark inequalities, discrimination, and social injustices in the region. Latin America is plagued by some of the highest levels of inequality and extreme violence globally, with a history of forceful war processes and systemic violence, including drug trafficking, forced migration, femicides, and widespread poverty and exclusion that are pervasive aspects of daily life.

Despite the complex context, Latin America is also a region that boasts a vibrant tapestry of social movements, civil society organizations, and grassroots initiatives that powerfully advocate for social justice, human rights, and inclusive governance. The region has contributed to a global legacy of organizing, resistance, and collective care, especially in the areas of climate justice. Over the decades, Latin American communities and social movements have displayed remarkable resilience and determination to resist oppression, assert their rights, and work towards a more just and equitable society.

However, it is important to acknowledge that social movements in Latin America face very challenging conditions, including lack of security, safety, and resourcing. In many instances, the movements have to shift their financing strategies due to criminalization, persecution and oppression that civil society organizations encounter across the region.

According to the most recent Global Philanthropy Report (2018), the philanthropic sector in Latin America holds approximately [\\$14 billion in assets, and distributes around 14% of these assets each year](#). Mirroring the sharp inequalities in the region, the sector is divided into two distinct categories: charity-model philanthropy and social movement-driven philanthropy.

The charity-model philanthropy, which holds the majority of these resources, moves funding from an approach that lacks an understanding of systemic injustices and seeks to mostly benefit from tax-incentives. Elite families and corporations manage most of these foundations. As Amalia Souza, founder of Fundo Casa Socioambiental, [notes](#): “the philanthropic sector in our countries is experiencing unprecedented growth, and that local elite families and businesspeople creating new foundations are, unfortunately and unsurprisingly, mostly reproducing models from the global North.”

Social movement-driven philanthropy is characterized by efforts that aim to address the root causes of social issues and advocate for systemic change. This approach focuses on supporting social movements, civil society organizations, and grassroots initiatives that work toward social justice. [Most of the funding](#) for social movement-driven philanthropy comes from outside the region.

Similar to the global participatory grantmaking ecosystem, there is a lack of data that track participatory grantmaking models in Latin America. To contribute towards addressing the gap of information and support, in our analysis of the Latin American participatory grantmaking ecosystem, we developed a chart (*see Table 2*) that highlights Latin American participatory grantmakers focused on supporting activists, civil society organizations, and social movement efforts<sup>9</sup>. This chart was developed through a review of the [Latin American philanthropic ecosystem](#), analysis of the funders supporting activists, civil society organizations, and social movement efforts, publicly available information on the grantmaking model of each grantmaker, and interviews with strategic stakeholders. Through our mapping, we can highlight the long trajectory of participatory grantmaking in the region, and note that the model has been mainly pushed by feminist and/or environmental focused funders.

It is also important to note that, when compared to the global grantmaking ecosystem, Latin American social movement-driven philanthropy has had greater utilization of participatory grantmaking models from the outset. We believe that this trend is due to the region's rich history of social movements and activism, which has cultivated a culture of community engagement and participation. Additionally, human rights and social movement funders in Latin America have long recognized the importance of centering the leadership and voices of communities and grassroots organizations in decision-making process, and participatory grantmaking has been a natural extension of this philosophy. Thus, it is a critical recognition that communities are political agents of change rather than passive recipients of aid.

<sup>9</sup> This list is not exhaustive and it is important to recognize that some funders that are not listed on this chart are, or may be in the near future, moving toward participatory practices.



**TABLE 2: PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKERS IN LATIN AMERICA**

FUNDER	PGM <sup>10</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>11</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
FUNDACIÓN TIERRA VIVA	1999	1999	Funding decisions are made by a network of advisors for each country.	Central America	Environmental justice
<a href="#">FONDO ELAS</a>	Not publicly available	2000	Funding decisions are made by a network of grantee partners with strategic topics.	Brazil	Women's and feminist movements
<a href="#">FONDO CENTRO-AMERICANO DE MUJERES</a>	2003	2003	Applicants, through a voting mechanism, make funding decisions.	Central America	Women's and feminist movements
<a href="#">FUNDO CASA SOCIOAMBIENTAL</a>	2005	2005	Funding decisions are made by a network of partners and advisors.	South America	Environmental justice
<a href="#">FUNDO BRASIL</a>	2005	2005	The participatory grant-making model is led by an independent committee, made up of field activists with extensive knowledge of their agendas and key players in their areas of work.	Brazil	Defense of human rights
<a href="#">FONDO ACCIÓN SOLIDARIA (FASOL)</a>	Not publicly available	2007	Mentors, comprised of activists, support funding decisions.	Mexico	Socio-environmental efforts
<a href="#">FONDOS DE MUJERES DEL SUR</a>	2008	2008	Funding decisions are made by a network of advisors for each country or partner.	Latin America	Movement building, feminist

<sup>10</sup> This row denotes the year when the funder began to use a participatory grantmaking model (PGM).

<sup>11</sup> The participatory approach is listed here only if the organization made this information publicly available as we recognize transparency is a critical component of participatory approaches.

FUNDER	PGM <sup>10</sup> DATE	FOUNDED	PARTICIPATORY APPROACH <sup>11</sup>	GEOGRAPHY	FOCUS
<a href="#">FONDO ALQUIMIA</a>	Not publicly available	2012	Funding decisions are made by a network of advisors for each territory of the country.	Chile	Movement building, feminist
<a href="#">SEMILLAS</a>	2016	1990	The model is a forum, comprised of diverse Mexican feminist activists. Applicants make the funding decisions and this also includes the grantee selection process.	Mexico	Women's and feminist movements
<a href="#">VIDAAFROLATINA</a>	2018	2018	Applicants, through a voting mechanism, make funding decisions.	Latin America	Black and Afro-descendant women-led organizations in Latin America that address sexual violence

**CASE  
STUDY:**

# Global Greengrants Fund's Participatory Grantmaking in Latin America



[Global Greengrants Fund](#) (GGF), established in 1993 by a passionate group of environmental activists and philanthropists, is dedicated to supporting grassroots-led efforts aimed at protecting the planet and advocating for the rights of people. Over the years, GGF has leveraged over \$100 million in funds to support grassroots initiatives in 168 countries worldwide. Central to its approach is the participatory grantmaking model, which involves collaboration with approximately 200 volunteer advisors globally, through four decentralized processes: partner networks; regional advisory boards; thematic advisors; and independent funds. On average, each of GGF's grants is around \$5,000.

To serve as a case study for participatory grantmakers, we focused on analyzing the achievements, lessons, and opportunities of GGF's participatory model in Latin America. To develop the case study, we led a participatory analysis process consisting of a survey, in-depth interviews, and a focus group. GGF's participatory grantmaking model in Latin America includes independent funds and regional advisory committees. The independent funds that participated in this process were Fondo Casa, Fondo Acción Solidaria - FASOL, Fundación Tierra Viva, and an advisor from the Andes Advisory Board.

By employing a combination of surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, we gathered insights, which we organized around three central enquiries:

1. Identifying the valuable elements of the GGF model and areas that may require adjustments.
2. Uncovering the key challenges and lessons from the GGF model.
3. Exploring the future possibilities for GGF's participatory model.

## VALUABLE ELEMENTS

The partnership between Independent Funds and GGF in the grantmaking model has demonstrated remarkable success in supporting critical climate justice initiatives. Essential components that contribute to this success, include the incorporation of regional perspectives and the fostering of strategic relationships with local organizations and communities. Additionally, the model's capacity to adapt to contextual needs and utilize trust-based approaches was emphasized. Another significant advantage is its ability to efficiently provide support to remote and isolated communities without imposing excessive bureaucratic requirements. This section expands on each element.

The collaborative grantmaking models established by the Independent Funds in partnership with GGF highlight the significance of incorporating regional perspectives and fostering strategic relationships with local organizations and communities. Often, this process begins with regional initiatives or actions that enable the identification of indi-

viduals and communities in need of funding within their territories, including grassroots organizations. A group participant described: “we begin to have a relationship with the communities or with the people and this is how some processes are triggered in which we identify/determine projects, actions, ventures or initiatives that we understand and seek a way to link them into the processes that we accompany.”

In the case of Fondo Casa, their approach exemplifies how the financing model can be adapted to contextual needs, emphasizing trust as a valuable component and further bolstered by an advisory council. This is complemented by on-the-ground practices such as widespread dissemination of calls, preparation of talks, workshops, and participatory consultations, which have proven to be pivotal for Fondo Casa’s success. As a representative in the group discussion shared: “[we] build the calls so that they take into account the interests of the donor, but the most important thing is that the interests of the community are considered.”

The **core principles of horizontal relationships, trust, and proximity emerge as pivotal pillars** in constructing participatory grantmaking models that are adaptable to different contexts and circumstances. It is imperative to understand, listen to, and engage with people, communities, and grassroots organizations in order to determine how to best contribute, taking into account their existing efforts and pathways towards socio-environmental justice. This approach entails acknowledging and strengthening their perspectives, while actively collaborating with them to build upon their own initiatives.

Another valuable aspect of this model is its ability to **swiftly and efficiently provide support to remote and isolated communities or groups with limited access to resources**. This is achieved without burdensome bureaucratic requirements or excessive controls, and extends to supporting organizations and groups that may not be formally registered. Moreover, the model emphasizes and amplifies the impact of territorial processes and local actions, ensuring that resources are directed towards communities and grassroots organizations. The autonomy of the advisory committee in its discussions and decision-making processes was also highlighted as a significant factor.

## KEY CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

Through the insight and reflections shared by the participants, we gathered key challenges and lessons that can support GGF as well as other funders in adjusting and improving their grantmaking models and practices to better support grassroots activists and organizations. These include: clarifying their models and the roles that support it; prioritizing the needs, agendas, and efforts of grassroots organizations; streamlining process; and providing flexible and long-term support, especially for those working in high-risks contexts.

A key challenge highlighted across the reflections was the **need for role clarity within the grantmaking model**. In their context, most of the advisors committees do not identify as a part of the funder strategy, but rather as facilitators and allies of grassroots organizations. Thus, GGF's model supports, through the advice of advisors, mechanisms that are part of a larger ecosystem that moves resources directly to grassroots leaders. One of the discussion participants describes:

“...we are strategic allies for grassroots organizations because the grants are small [...] they are grassroots organizations that are peasant women, Indigenous women's collectives, collectives, youth groups, etc., all with environmental issues [...] and what we do is seeing in each country the possibility of supporting an initiative that ranges from garbage collection, training, strengthening, mining issues, oil issues, NGOs, all this wide range of environmental issues that may need support that does not go for formal financing that forces them to issue invoices, all the tax credit that takes a large part of this money. Since they are microprojects, the idea is to make it easier for the funds to reach the organizations directly, for this we contact several NGOs in the country that can legally receive these funds, pass them on to the organizations and reach a series of agreements for their operation.”

A significant lesson that emerged is **to avoid imposing thematic agendas or focuses that are driven by funders**. It is crucial to prioritize the leadership and needs of the grassroots organizations through trust and flexibility. While progress has been made in this area, it was noted that this is still a challenge as there are differences in every part of the region. This underscores the importance of encouraging flexible funding that is not imposing a thematic agenda. A FASOL representative shared: “it is complex to adjust the agendas of donors, suddenly they only want to talk about water, gender only, forest only. So, the work that FASOL has to do is not to download these agendas from the donors to the groups, but to find the scheme in which the agendas of the groups enter into those big issues.”

Another challenge that was identified is the emergence of **new funds or organizations that claim to represent specific communities, especially Indigenous communities, but are diverting funding from reaching grassroots-led efforts directly.** As a recommendation, funders need to recognize the importance of reaching the grassroots to prevent perpetuating the ‘trickle-down’ economics effect, and ensure that resources are channelled *directly* to the communities. A participant expressed: “we can organize and mobilize these resources, not only in terms of funding, but in terms of rights because it is money that is meant to support these urgent problems in the communities. So it is important that it does indeed reach our communities.”

The **timing and role of mentoring or accompaniment through the different stages, also emerged as a challenge.** It has been observed that administrative and logistical processes can often delay access to funding for grassroots organizations and communities, and there is a need to improve and streamline these processes to ensure timely support, from calls to disbursement of funds. However, it was also noted that issues may arise even after receiving the donations, which underscores the need for ongoing support beyond just the initial funding stage. A participant described: “sometimes it happens that when money arrives, some difficulties begin to appear that weren’t there before or if the resources are not very clear about how they are going to be managed or how the progress of the projects is going to be reviewed. On some occasions, it begins to generate complications that we do not want. Instead of strengthening the process, the resources may weaken the trust that is gradually being built.”

## CONTEXT-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

An important lesson learned in contexts where controls and fiscal pressures are on the rise due to increasing criminalization and oppressive contexts, is the importance of **building trust networks and alliances to facilitate resource mobilization** for groups that may not be legally recognized or are in the early stages of the legal recognition process. This approach helps overcome bureaucratic hurdles and enables more streamlined access to resources for grassroots organizations that may face challenges in obtaining formal registrations. By leveraging trust-based networks and alliances, grassroots groups can access the necessary support and resources to advance their initiatives, even in situations where legal registration may be pending or not sought as a safety measure. A participant shares: “a great lesson has been the idea of strengthening grassroots groups without promoting legal figures that can get them into a dynamic of [external forced] agendas, also getting these funds by minimizing bureaucracy, paperwork, this has been something that the groups have valued a lot and they trust this model because it does make a difference.”



The expansion of drug trafficking and the insecurity it produces has been pointed out as a permanent challenge in the region, since many of the processes that are carried out in the territory are now crossed by various forms of violence that forcefully permeate the contexts. This affects the work and financing processes in the territory, but strategies have been developed to strengthen care and security in the work of the Funds and organizations.

Several participants highlighted how financing can serve as a critical movement-building tool, strengthening resistance, resilience, and care. In the face of challenging contexts, flexible and autonomous funds are essential. Although, questions remain regarding the levels of impact and scope of mini grants. A participant expands: “the amounts are small and that continues to be a challenge for each group that is a beneficiary of the fund. I think that a great learning for me as an adviser to the fund is that we can reach communities and groups that need it and we can transfer capacities to others so that they can learn and we also achieve more awareness about the real problems that the communities are experiencing.”

## FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The vision for the future entails building frameworks, strategies, and methodologies that enable philanthropy to operate from the bottom up, where Global Majority is the lead. This approach emphasizes that movements, communities, and grassroots organizations should set the agenda and determine the funding priorities based on their own perspectives and lived experiences. It is recognized that **funding should not initiate or create, but rather strengthen what already exists** and build upon previous resources. This perspective emphasizes the importance of local ownership and agency in driving philanthropic efforts, where funding is seen as a tool to amplify and enhance existing initiatives rather than imposing external priorities.

When it comes to proposed adjustments, it is important to recognize that families, communities, and organizations often already have ideas and proposals to address socio-environmental challenges in their territories. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on strengthening their capacities, skills, and knowledge by providing resources that support and consolidate their initiatives. This approach entails **maintaining a territorial, community, and grassroots perspective**, where funding amounts are expanded and increased (moving away from annual towards at least 3-year periods), while also considering the effectiveness of small donations. By empowering local actors and in-

creasing the availability of resources, we are better equipped to support sustainable solutions that respond to the needs and priorities of the communities.

Supporting **in-person connection spaces and more discussion spaces** is another future possibility and opportunity. In-person connection spaces were highlighted as a priority: advisors expressed the need to connect in-person with other advisors for reflection, connection, trust-building, learning, and resource sharing. Additionally, setting ongoing periodic meetings for discussion and reflection which can help in preventing delay in approval and disbursement of funds.

**Enhancing clarity in GGF's processes** can lead to better understanding of its model. One particular area that needs attention is the final report process, where important information may be lost due to lack of systematization and information sharing. This issue may stem from unclear roles, functions, and processes assigned to advisors. It is crucial for GGF to ensure that participants in the model have a clear understanding of their roles and the overall process. Additionally, considering compensation for advisors, who bring valuable insights and experience, could be worth exploring. By addressing these areas, GGF can enhance its model and ensure that valuable information is effectively captured and utilized in the reporting process.

In expanding further on the future possibilities, it is crucial to **explore financing strategies with regional and international approaches** to further the efforts to address and resolve the multifaceted challenges faced by Latin America. This entails strengthening and amplifying the leadership of grassroots groups to enhance their advocacy processes, which will support them to engage more actively and meaningfully in strategic international spaces. Emphasizing the importance of this need is essential to drive forward progress in this direction. By empowering grassroots groups and facilitating their participation at the international level, we can foster more robust and impactful solutions to the issues faced by the territories. A participant shared: “follow the convictions of the communities since they are the authors of their reality and the work begins from their territories and that is where the funds have their reason for being.” And, promoting language justice to ensure that the wisdom, experiences, and leadership of grassroots groups are recognized and supported. The advisors shared that their work is not made visible or recognized in the ways that it should be. GGF can be a strategic partner in developing strategies towards language justice and amplification efforts.

# CONCLUSION



Participatory grantmaking has undergone significant changes over the years, evolving from a niche practice to a widespread and growing grantmaking approach. Initially, participatory grantmaking – largely driven and demanded by activists and community leaders – was seen as an experimental and alternative approach to managing the power imbalances in philanthropy.

In the past decade, however, participatory grantmaking has gained attention, momentum, and mainstream acceptance as an effective philanthropic tool. This momentum and attention to participatory grantmaking can be largely attributed to the advocacy work of social justice movements across philanthropy and popular culture. And the recognition that community-led solutions are essential to address the root causes fueling the compounding, interconnected crises the world faces, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grounded and seeded through a high level review of philanthropy and climate justice funding; documentation of the global and Latin American participatory grantmaking models and funders; as well as in-depth interviews, surveys, and group discussions with key participatory grantmaking representatives and GGF partners, this research has revealed significant insights into the key achievements, challenges, and lessons of participatory grantmaking.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Shifting power:** Traditionally, philanthropy has been dominated by a small group of wealthy donors and foundation leaders who have wielded significant power and influence over funding decisions. As a result, decisions have often disregarded the needs and priorities of communities most impacted by social injustices. Participatory grantmaking has achieved important shifts in power by centering the communities who are experts in their realities. This transformative approach has resulted in more effective funding models, as the grant allocation process is better aligned with the actual needs of communities, leading to more meaningful and sustainable changes.
- **Global-regional impact:** In the realm of philanthropy, participatory grantmaking was originally documented in the global North. However, it is noteworthy that in the Latin American region, there has been a greater utilization of participatory grantmaking by human rights and social movement funders from the outset. This reflects a regional trend where participatory grantmaking has been integrated into the fabric of philanthropic practices, within the sector supporting social movements, emphasizing the intrinsic value of community engagement and inclusion in decision-making processes.

- **Trust and proximity:** Through the inclusion of grantee partners, advisory committees or mentors, participatory models build relationships of trust and proximity. This happens because these actors – to whom community representation power is delegated – are closer to communities at a local level and have first-hand knowledge of the issues and movements.
- **Moving attention toward systemic issues:** The participation of community groups, local activists or diverse community representatives helps to have a broader and more strategic view of philanthropic priorities, opens the perspective and makes visible the relationship with structural and systemic problems.
- **Increasing flexibility and improvement in the type of funding:** Involving community groups in decision-making has pushed funders to have increasingly flexible mechanisms, reducing bureaucracy and creating other grantmaking strategies – such as specific funds for strengthening, accompaniment, knowledge sharing or emergencies.
- **Diversity of perspectives and approaches:** Participatory grantmaking models allow for the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, not just the institutional approaches of foundations or the philanthropic ecosystem, or those who are considered “experts”.
- **Innovation and collaboration:** Participatory grantmaking has promoted innovation, collaboration, and relationship-building, which strengthens collective systemic change efforts. It also encourages partnerships that promote resource and information sharing and increases communication, which is especially important in times of crisis.

## CHALLENGES

- **Lack of data:** The lack of data on participatory grantmaking models and funders at global and regional levels is a big challenge. There is limited public data on elements that would help the ecosystem, such as: when they started their approach, what types of learnings and challenges have been faced (especially recent information), what is the total amount of funding going to participatory models, etc.
- **Need for more transparency and clarity on models:** Participatory grantmaking models lack mechanisms for public accountability and transparency, in some cases, even members of committees and advisory boards may not understand or be aware of the details of the model. This underscores the need for increased transparency and clarity in decision-making roles, timelines, processes of each model and, where possible, making these publicly available or developing a safe mechanism to share these.

- **Limited number of funders supporting participatory grantmaking mechanisms:** Our research has revealed that only a small number of funders provide support for participatory grantmaking mechanisms, and often the same donors fund such models at both global and regional levels. This constrains the expansion and potential of participatory grantmaking approaches. Therefore, it is crucial to develop collective strategic advocacy efforts that emphasize the impact of participatory grantmaking, as well as fund initiatives for learning and data collection at both regional and global levels. By doing so, we can amplify the importance of participatory grantmaking, promote its effectiveness and increase its adoption across the sector.
- **Power dynamics impact the agenda and efforts of communities:** One of the most important limitations is to recognize the power imbalances and dynamics at play. It is important for boards, advisors, committees, foundations, and grantmaking teams to reflect on and actively avoid the abuse or concentration of power. This includes identifying and addressing practices that perpetuate racism, white supremacy, “machismo,” ableism, and other forms of oppression. One complex aspect is that these practices may not be recognized as an abuse of power by the actors involved, but they are often experienced as such by the communities. For example: prioritizing communication only in English; increasing bureaucratic requirements in participatory models such as multiple reports; providing small and annual funding amounts through participatory mechanisms that are meant to be grounded in trust; advisors/mentors do not receive compensation for their time and labor; and lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities as advisors.
- **The wisdom of the Global Majority has been ignored:** Due the wealth of resources in the United States and Western Europe, the philanthropic community in the global North has made significant progress in documenting and discussing participatory grantmaking. However, there is often a tense relationship between the North-colonial-top-down power dynamics and the funders in the Global Majority. This tension arises from the lack of recognition and support of the wisdom, experiences, and contributions of the Global Majority around participatory grantmaking. The lack of resourcing and dominance of English has made it extremely difficult to increase awareness and recognition.
- **Absence of collective learning spaces:** Especially in the Latin American region, there is a shortage of opportunities for articulation or reflection within the philanthropic ecosystem regarding the significance, impact, lessons, opportunities, and efforts of participatory grantmaking models. These spaces and opportunities are crucial, especially in languages of the region.

## LESSONS

Participatory grantmaking processes, involving committees, advisors, activists, or strategic alliances, represent an initial step towards transforming the philanthropic sector. However, it is important to note that participatory grantmaking is not the only approach needed to transform power relations. There are other priorities that may require greater attention, such as empowering grassroots communities to define funding amounts, implementing longer funding processes beyond annual cycles (5-10 years), and eliminating unnecessary administrative bureaucracy.

In our analysis, we identified that building participatory grantmaking models is a crucial first step in the transformation of the philanthropic community. However, these models need to expand towards community-centered participatory approaches at multiple levels of philanthropy, including internal teams, strategic plans, boards, evaluations, and more. Additionally, it is important to emphasize that participatory processes alone do not automatically equate to fairer approaches. Transparency, trust, and a genuine commitment to dismantling oppressions are critical elements that must be integrated into participatory grantmaking efforts to create meaningful and sustainable change in the philanthropic sector.

### **Key lessons:**

- Accessibility and inclusion should be prioritized in participatory processes and mechanisms.
- Value the importance of having learning models and continuous evaluation of participatory models.
- Importance of opportunities to share lessons, tools and build connections across regions, not just globally.
- Flexibility and long-term commitments, of at least five or more years, are necessary for sustainable and meaningful change.
- Philanthropic advocacy must be a central component of changing the entire sector.



# Recommendations To Support Community-Centric Resourcing For Climate Justice

Finally, we suggest the following recommendations to support community-centric resourcing for climate justice, in Latin America and beyond. We invite funders to reflect on each of these recommendations and identify their role in how to support and/or learn more about it.

- Recognize that Climate Justice is defined in different ways across the world, that multiple movements and communities are supporting it, and that it must include critical approaches from language justice, intersectionality, post-coloniality, etc.
- Support data collection and analysis of participatory grantmaking models to increase transparency, accountability, and learning.
- Promote learning resources and networking spaces
- Review participatory models to support anti-colonial processes and practices to reject white supremacy, with responses to racism, misogyny and classism from a community perspective.
- Analyze power relations within grassroots organizations and movements, in order to consider all actors and their differences in the territory.
- Strengthen the skills and critical capacities of advisors with respect to anti-colonial philanthropy, in addition to recognizing that participatory boards or committees are only the first step of many to follow in engaging participation.
- Allocate specific funds to support the salaries and safety needs of organizations and movements, in addition to investing in infrastructure, spaces and future sustainability strategies for the movements and organizations. This also includes compensation for all labor, including volunteer roles, to prevent perpetrating extractive practices.
- Establish an advisory board comprised of activists who are actively engaged in reshaping the philanthropy sector. Such an advisory board can provide timely and per-

inent guidance to inform funding strategies and advocacy efforts. In a constantly and rapidly changing context, an advisory board can offer up-to-date insights that may not be readily available through reports. By tapping into the expertise of activists, funders can gain valuable perspectives that can shape their approaches, avoid missing critical opportunities, and enable them to respond effectively to changing contexts.

- Move towards a community-centric participatory grantmaking model. In reflecting on participatory grantmaking and community ownership, Perla Vazquez and Laura Vergara from Sukuamis describe: “A reparative approach that prioritizes full community ownership is not an option, but a requirement. This means that the community is leading, envisioning, strategizing, represented, and deciding on all aspects of the grantmaking process. Participatory grantmaking potentially helps social movements gain more power because they get closer to controlling the money that goes to them. It is therefore a valuable movement building tool. However, there are different levels of participation and deliberation in grantmaking models, [...] A recommendation to participatory grantmakers who are interested in movement building is to critically evaluate if their models allow for the two-way flow of ideas between movements and their participatory grantmaking spaces.” In this sense, we encourage funders to take on a community-centric analysis of participatory grantmaking (see Table 3). This analysis would be a continuous reflection exercise that recognizes participatory grantmaking as a first step in constructing a philanthropic structure that critically examines its colonial power dynamics within the ecosystem and geopolitical context. And, raises awareness around the opportunities to continue truly centering communities in every part of the funding process.

**TABLE 3: COMMUNITY-CENTRIC ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING**

STRATEGY	APPROACH
INTERNAL REPRESENTATION	<b>The Staff</b> is representative of the communities and social movements it is serving
	<b>The Board</b> is representative of the communities and social movements it is serving
ACCESS	<b>Application process</b> (Type- open, invitation-only, recommendations from grantee partners)
	<b>Filtering of applicants</b> (who is revising the information and what is the approach to do this)
COMMUNITIES/MOVEMENTS AS THE DECISION MAKERS	<b>Communities/Movements</b> (Applicants participate in the selection process)
	<b>Community/Movement representative</b> (how is this person nominated, selected, are there term limitations, is there compensation for their time and labor)
RESOURCING MOVEMENTS	<b>Terms of funding</b> (<1 year, 1-2 years, 2+ years)
	<b>Type of funding</b> (General/flexible, project)
	Emergency
	<b>Non-financial support</b> (accompaniment, advocacy, and such)
CO-STRATEGIZING WITH THE MOVEMENTS	Co-construction of strategic plans
	Co-construction of participatory grantmaking model
	Mutual accountability practices and collective impact analysis

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# APPENDIX I. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

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## In-depth interview<sup>12</sup>

1. Claudia Sancam, Partnership and Alliances Coordinator at the Central American Women's Funds, 2022
2. Elizabeth López Canelas, Global Greengrants Fund Advisor, Andes, 2023
3. Jovana Djordjevic, former Senior Grantmaking officer at FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund and one of the lead researchers of the FRIDA report [Resourcing Connections: Reflecting on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice](#).
4. Laura Vergara, consultant co-leading the storytelling and advocacy of the Global Resilience Fund, advocacy consultant of the With and For Girls Collective, Board member of FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund, advisory group member of the Racial Equity Index, and former documenter for Fenomenal Funds.
5. Paige Andrew, Programs Co-Manager at FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund
6. Perla Vázquez, consultant leading the Latin American portfolio of the With and For Girls Fund, advisor to the Children's Rights Innovation Fund, and former advisory of MAMA CASH, founding member of the Global Resilience Fund, and co-founder of FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund.

## Focus group participants

1. Ada Osorio, Fondo Tierra Viva, grupo focal, México, 2023.
2. Carmen Genis, Fondo Acción Solidaria (FASOL), México, 2023.
3. Citlali Quintana Zapien, FASOL, México, 2023.
4. Cristina Orfeo, Fondo Casa, Brasil, 2023.
5. Jessica Florian, Derecho Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Perú, 2023.
6. Federico Trombetti, Administración Cono Sur, Argentina, 2023.
7. Saúl Fuentes Olivares, Ideas Comunitarias, México, 2023.
8. Yadira Trejo, Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias, México, 2023.
9. Mario Jo, Derecho Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Peru, 2023.
10. Albert Chan, organización local de la península de Yucatán, México. 2023.
11. Zulma Larin, Fondo Tierra Viva, El Salvador, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Laura and Perla are part of the researcher team of this report. However, due to the depth and breath of their experience on the topic, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with them to ensure their insights were incorporated into the findings of the report.





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