### Our Voices, Our Environment

THE STATE OF FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Made possible with generous support from the Wallace Global Fund

Women are at the frontlines of action to address climate change, and their critical contributions need to be supported. Climate action and funding can also exacerbate the challenges women face and undermine their rights if [solutions] are not responsive to women.

**MARY ROBINSON,** THE MARY ROBINSON FOUNDATION - CLIMATE JUSTICE

Women around the globe are at the forefront of addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation<sup>1</sup>, designing, implementing, and scaling up their own solutions. Socially defined gender roles often position women and girls as stewards of the physical, economic, and cultural well-being of their communities. As a result, they are disproportionately impacted by climate change and the subsequent damage to water, land, and clean air. This dynamic places the responsibility for natural resource management and use squarely on women and girls.<sup>2</sup>



The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are not gender neutral and, thus, funding cannot be either. Yet only 0.2 percent of all foundation funding focuses explicitly

on women and the environment<sup>3</sup>—a missed opportunity for funders committed to ensuring a healthy environment and equitable world. *Our Voices, Our Environment: The State of Funding for Women's Environmental Action* represents the first-ever benchmarking of philanthropic funding in support of women and the environment. Produced by Global Greengrants Fund and Prospera International Network of Women's Funds, in partnership with the Wallace Global Fund and the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), *Our Community, Our Environment* offers:

- Mapping of funding levels and existing initiatives in support of women and the environment
- Case studies illustrating the impact of women-led strategies to address environmental challenges, from protecting ancestral lands against gold-mining contamination in Indonesia to reforestation in Kenya's Rift Valley
- » Lessons learned and funding strategies from peer grantmakers active at this nexus
- » Issue-specific entry points for funders already engaged in environmental grantmaking
- >> Opportunities and guidance from women's rights activists for funders that want to strengthen their existing grantmaking and take further action

GLOBAL GREENGRANTS FUND Where change takes root



With support from the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action



## Landscape

An analysis of grantmaking by foundations, women's funds, and other institutional donors,<sup>4</sup> and interviews with 34 funders, grassroots women leaders, and international advocates revealed that:

- Most funders currently supporting women and the environment show limited engagement. In 2014, 269 funders provided 825 grants focused on women and the environment, totaling \$110.2 million. However, less than one-third of these funders awarded more than one grant and only eight of these funders gave more than \$1 million for work at this intersection. The median grant amount was just \$7,000.
- Funders share similar challenges when considering whether and how to fund women's environmental action, including where limited resources can make the greatest impact.
- Women's funds, environmental funds, and other local funds connect peers to grassroots groups focused on women and the environment. More than half of all grants awarded for women and the environment in 2014 were provided by Global Greengrants Fund, Prospera members, and other local funds. These organizations both receive funding from other donors and make grants to support community-led efforts. In addition, they serve as knowledge resources for other grantmakers.
- Among the 12 environmental issues tracked, agriculture and food security received the most funding. In 2014, agriculture and food security received \$64.9 million from 33 funders, or 59 percent of all of the support to women and the environment. This funding supported a range of entities, from grassroots women-led groups to agricultural research centers to international organizations focused on ending hunger.



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# The Call to Action

Funding that supports women's rights to make decisions in their everyday lives, and efforts to implement solutions at the local, national, and global levels, has the greatest potential for making lasting progress in addressing environmental challenges. There are numerous ways funders can engage or strengthen their current grantmaking for the environment and/or women's rights without having to develop new funding areas:

- Listen to women most affected by environmental challenges, and support their participation in decision-making. Grantmakers can start by considering the extent to which grassroots women's voices are included in the decision-making and implementation of both their own grantmaking practices and those of the organizations and projects they already support.
- Fund training and capacity building for women regarding technical environmental information and processes. Training enables women to be more effective and compelling advocates for environmental protection. A related opportunity is providing resources for technical and scientific support to groups working on environmental defense that cannot afford to hire an external expert.

Donors investing in women to create their own solutions to the daily challenges they identify will support both positive environmental outcomes and women's rights.

TULIKA SRIVASTAVA, SOUTH ASIA WOMEN'S FUND

- Facilitate women's organizations' engagement with national and global climate policy and finance architecture. Given the central role of women in agricultural production and natural resource management, it is critical that their perspectives be represented in national and global climate policy decision-making.
- Support exchanges between environmental groups and women's groups, and strengthen cross-movement sharing. Creating opportunities for shared learning between women's groups and environmental organizations will strengthen expertise on both sides and increase impact.
- Fund women's human rights organizations. Environmental sustainability and women's rights are interdependent. To confront the most pressing environmental challenges, from climate change to water pollution, ensuring women have adequate access to resources, opportunities, and decisionmaking power is critical.

The call for more investment in women and the environment is about supporting the people most affected by environmental damage and those on the frontlines of environmental protection. Yet, philanthropic funding in support of women and the environment represented only 0.2 percent of all foundation funding in 2014, and even a smaller percentage went to grassroots groups, indicating a critical gap in support.

A healthy environment cannot be achieved without women's leadership, and women's rights cannot be fully respected without a healthy environment. Adapting funding strategies in recognition of this interconnectedness—and increasing support at this nexus—will increase the impact of both environmental and women's rights funders, help prevent unintended harms, and drive progress to a more sustainable, healthy, and equitable future for all.

Rucha Chitnis

#### NOTES

- "Environmental degradation is the deterioration in environmental quality from ambient concentrations of pollutants and other activities and processes, such as improper land use and natural disasters." OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms. https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=821
- Women, Gender Equality, and Climate Change Fact Sheet, Women Watch. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ climate\_change/downloads/Women\_and\_Climate\_Change\_ Factsheet.pdf
- 3. The use of the term "funding for women and the environment" refers to supporting a broad range of work at that nexus, including funding women-led actions to protect the environment, supporting the inclusion of women's voices and participation in environmental initiatives, and addressing the differential impacts of environmental interventions on women due to their gender.
- 4. This analysis is based on 2014 grantmaking data, the most current year available at the time of the analysis. The data set is comprised of 269 institutional donors, including private foundations, public foundations, women's funds, and other grantmaking organizations. It does not include organizations that may provide funds but for whom grantmaking is not a primary focus.

For more information about this report or to learn more about grantmaking for women and the environment, contact:

> Global Greengrants Fund gender@greengrants.org

Prospera International Network of Women's Funds info@prospera-inwf.org



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Prospera-inwf.org
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Prospera\_INWF

Authors: Christen Dobson, Independent Consultant, and Steven Lawrence, Senior Research Affiliate, TCC Group