

ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS

FUNDING FOR INTERSECTIONAL ORGANIZING:

A CALL TO ACTION FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS PHILANTHROPY

June 2022



HRFN

Human Rights
Funders Network

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INTERSECTIONALITY: KEY FINDINGS

Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) offers this analysis as a call to action to the field to bring our practices into alignment with our promises and meet the creativity, vitality, and reality of social justice organizing today.

Within the field of human rights philanthropy, we have spent much of the last decade asking how we can break down silos and move money to movements organizing in powerful, intersectional ways. This report offers a baseline of where the field is today.

Our research suggests that a resoundingly small fraction of human rights funding supports activism that cuts across multiple communities or issues.

We found:

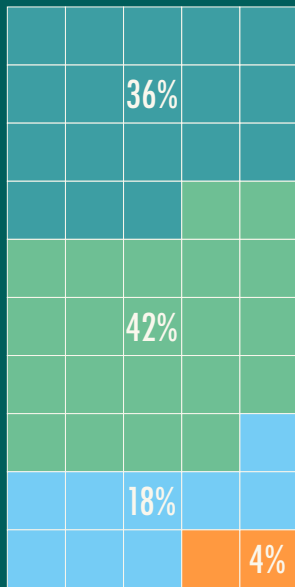
- 1 The majority of human rights grants address one issue and focus on one population.** Of more than 27,000 human rights grants, only 22% were intended to benefit more than one population and 21% addressed more than one issue.
- 2 Funding plummets when we look at more nuanced identities.** Fewer than 5% of human rights grants reference three or more identities – for example women of color who identify as LGBTQI.
- 3 Grants for LGBTQI people and persons with disabilities are among the most siloed funding streams within human rights philanthropy.** 77% of LGBTQI grants and 73% of grants for persons with disabilities do not reference any other populations.
- 4 Few human rights issues are systematically addressed together.** For example, of grants to advance environmental and resource rights, just 22% also include a health focus, and 5% intersect with migration, despite well-established links to both issues.^{AB}
- 5 There are glimmers of hope.** Funders recognize the ways issues and identities intersect. When asked which of eight major human rights issues could be tackled at the same time, nearly half of the funders we surveyed said all could be addressed together. What's more, a number of committed funders are showing us a way forward by modeling intersectional funding in practice, as highlighted in this report.

THE MAJORITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS ADDRESS ONE ISSUE AND FOCUS ON ONE POPULATION

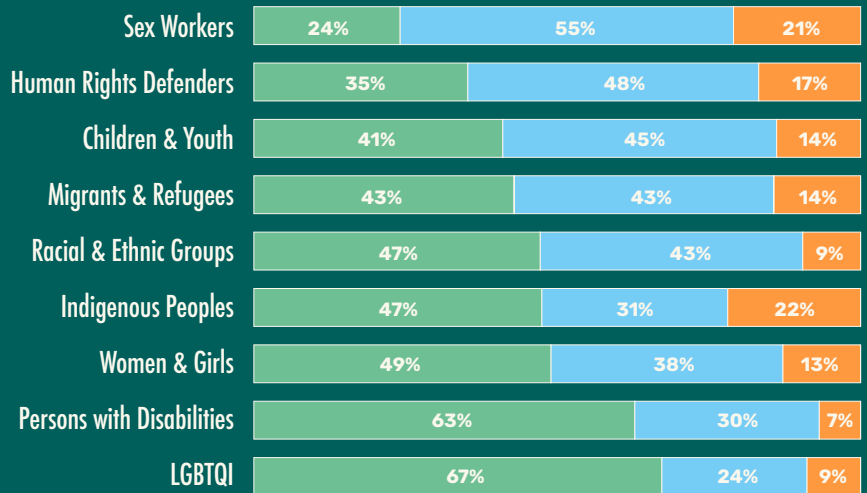
POPULATIONS:



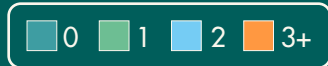
Of all human rights grants, the # of populations specified (out of 9)



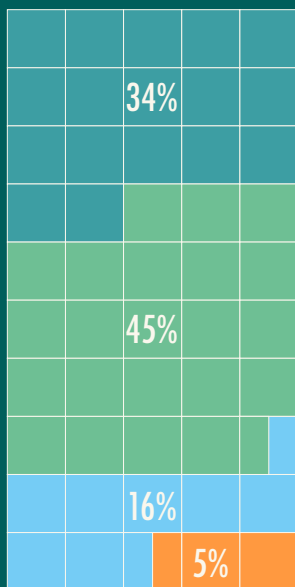
Of grants for each population, the # of populations specified



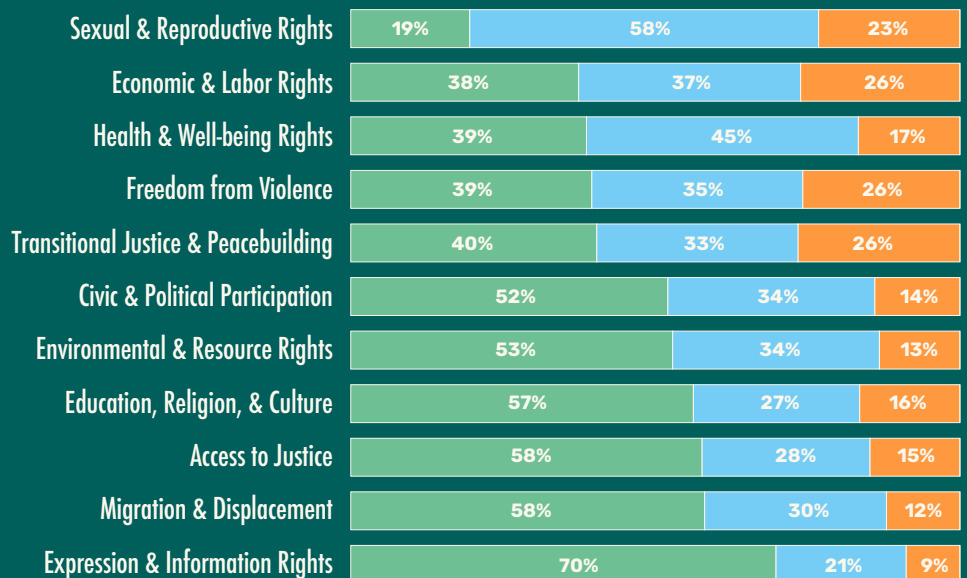
ISSUES:



Of all human rights grants, the # of issues addressed (out of 11)



Of grants for each issue, the # of issues addressed



INTRODUCTION



Within the field of human rights philanthropy, we have spent much of the last decade talking about intersectionality. In strategies and conferences and board rooms, we have asked how we can break down silos and move money to movements organizing in powerful, intersectional ways.

Without an intersectional approach to funding:

- ☉ We miss the complex forces that shape inequality and oppression.
- ☉ We reinforce false divisions among human rights issues and movements.
- ☉ We are dividing the pool of funding, slicing the pie into smaller and smaller pieces.
- ☉ We are not living up to our promise to meet the boldness, creativity, and reality of social justice organizing today.

We know the stakes. And yet, as this report demonstrates, the data resoundingly show that just a small fraction of human rights funding supports activism that cuts across multiple communities or issues.

“[T]he struggle taught us a lot. It taught us that the struggle for housing is not just to block the street and say that we want houses. It taught us that the struggle for housing is to say that we want houses, we want employment, we want education, we want women’s rights.”

– Ana Christina da Silva Caminha, President of the Amigos de Gegê Association from the Residents of Gamboa de Baixo^c

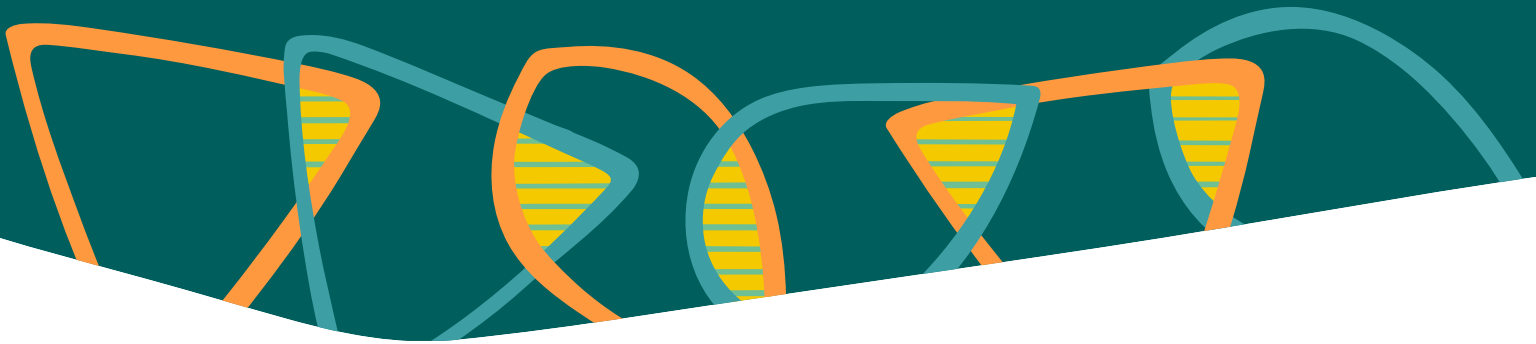
“Diversity is what happens when you have representation of various groups in one place. Representation is what happens when groups that haven’t previously been included, are included. Intersectionality is what happens when we do everything through the lens of making sure that no one is left behind. More than surface-level inclusion, or merely making sure everyone is represented, intersectionality is the practice of interrogating the power dynamics and rationales of how we can be together.”

– Alicia Garza, Cofounder of #BlackLivesMatter

INTERSECTIONALITY:

“A term coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, building on a history of Black feminist thought, to describe the combined oppressions experienced in particular by Black women. Crenshaw argued that looking at sexism and racism as completely separate issues distorts our understanding of both, and does not give us the tools to accurately describe the specific manifestations of oppression resulting from the intersection of racism and sexism. Intersectionality is now used to describe the ways that multiple systems of oppression (including and beyond racism and sexism) inform each other in the experiences of those impacted by them.”

– Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA)



At Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN), we bring analysis and advocacy together on the most pressing issues in human rights philanthropy. For us, intersectional funding is one of these areas. With this report, we hope to set a baseline (how are we doing today?) and raise a flag of caution (not well, we find). We explore fundamental questions about how we can both more accurately measure and, more importantly, *enact* funding for intersectionality.

This report is motivated by the work of many funders and advocates who have pointed to the lack of intersectional support.^{DEF} Indeed, an increasing and heartening number of foundations, funder networks, and development agencies affirm the importance of intersectional approaches.^G However, as we will show, this advocacy has not yet translated into a large shift in funding flows.

This is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive and global analysis of when and if grants to support human rights reach beyond a single issue or community. Drawing on our [Advancing Human Rights](#) research and answering the call from many in our field, we add evidence to existing debates about the ethical and practical imperative to support intersectional organizing. Using grants data, we map the number of grants that support organizing across more than one human rights issue or population group. The results present a rather distressing window into the continued prevalence of siloed funding that is narrowly focused on single issues or communities: Of more than 27,000 human rights grants made in 2018, approximately 6,000 (22%) were intended to benefit two or more populations and 5,700 (21%)

addressed two or more of 11 human rights issues. Fewer than 5% of grants explicitly supported three or more populations.

It is important to recognize from the outset that our findings show where funding is and isn't reaching across issues and communities. This is *not* a perfect measure of funding for *intersectionality*, which is a much more complex confluence of forms of identity and power. To understand if funding is reaching movements where activism is led and enacted intersectionally is vital – and beyond what our present data can show. What we *can* show on this global scale is an indication of where we see funding approaches that begin to cut across communities and issues. We see this as an important bellwether of where funding for intersectionality may truly exist.

These are not idle questions. They get to the very core of human rights funding: liberation. As Aditi Mayer, a sustainable fashion blogger, photojournalist, and labor rights activist writes, "Understanding the interconnected nature of oppression will help us realize the interconnected nature of liberation."

“Understanding the interconnected nature of oppression will help us realize **the interconnected nature of liberation.**”

- Aditi Mayer, photojournalist and blogger

OF THE MORE THAN 27,000 HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS MADE IN 2018:

22%

are meant to benefit two or more of nine populations.

The other 78% either don't specify any of these populations or name just one.



21%

address two or more of 11 human rights issues.

The other 79% either don't mention any of these issues or name just one.



DEFINING INTERSECTIONAL GRANTMAKING

Applying an intersectional lens in philanthropy means being intentional about reaching people as they live. It means recognizing that our multiple identities and characteristics combine in ways that can elevate privilege or compound injustice.¹ For example, Black women may encounter discrimination and oppression in ways that Black men or white women don't. LGBTQI people may experience gender bias differently than cisgender people and uniquely based on their many other individual identities. Many modern movements themselves are powerfully, beautifully intersectional. When we look at today's most pressing issues – such as climate justice, racial justice, or women's rights – women, LGBTQI people, people of color, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and many others are among those at the forefront of these struggles.

As feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins writes, "Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice."⁴ She presents a "matrix of domination" to describe the way power is organized within societies through four interrelated domains – structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal – that interact to engender varying levels of penalty and privilege for every person.¹ She lays bare the significant implications for social change work: "Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression...they typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else's subordination."³ Philanthropy has an important role to play in supporting social justice organizing that addresses the interconnected nature of all forms of oppression and seeks systemic change.

PHILANTHROPY HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZING THAT ADDRESSES THE INTERCONNECTED NATURE OF ALL FORMS OF OPPRESSION AND SEEKS SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

Applying an intersectional approach in philanthropy recognizes how human rights are interdependent and interrelated. For example, the ability to cast a vote or demand justice is closely tied to the freedom to assemble, access to information, and opportunities to meet basic needs like adequate food and housing. The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the way rights and related inequalities are inherently intertwined. Around the world, communities that already face discrimination based on factors like race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status have borne the brunt of lost wages, interrupted education, and vaccine scarcity as the pandemic erodes an array of economic and social rights. In many contexts, government measures to protect public health through restricted movement or increased surveillance have led to discriminatory implementation and unnecessary force, often aimed at these same historically marginalized communities.^{KL}

1. Identities and characteristics include, but are not limited to, race, caste, age, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, class, culture, and ability status.

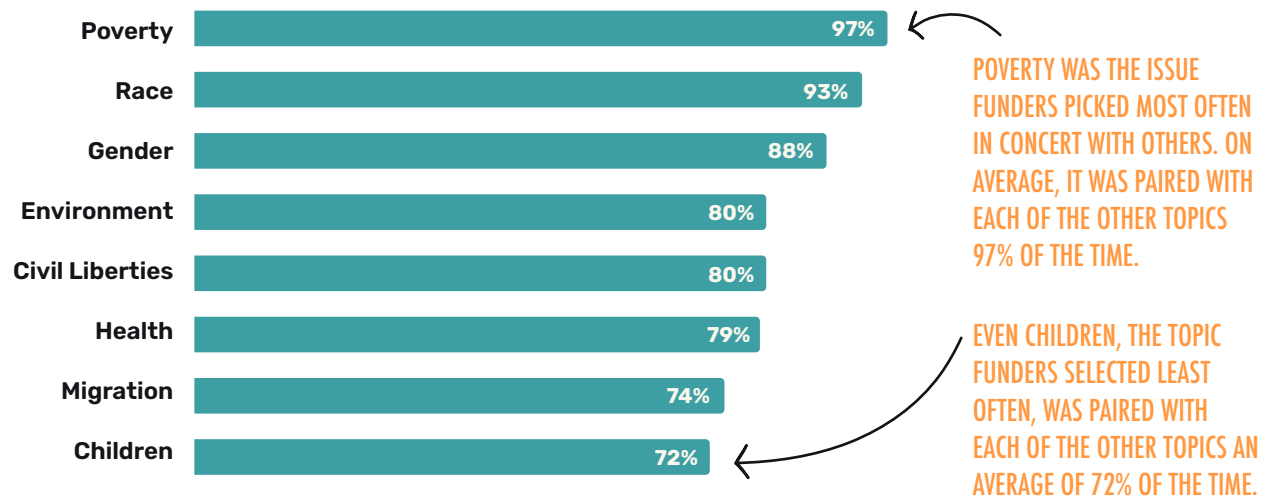
INTERSECTIONAL GRANTMAKING: FUNDER INTENTIONS



Funders *know* we need intersectional approaches to grantmaking. In a 2021 survey of approximately 200 funders from 26 countries, Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) asked which issues could be addressed at the same time.² Of eight topics – poverty, race, gender, environment, civil liberties, health, migration, and children – funders chose an average of 6.13 options that could be tackled *together*. Nearly half of respondents said it was possible to address all eight issues concurrently.

The areas of overlap are illustrative. Poverty was the issue picked most often in concert with others and was selected by 94% of funders. It was followed by race and gender, selected by 89% and 84% of funders, respectively. In fact, on average, these three topics were paired with each of the other options at least 88% of the time. For instance, of the 144 funders who selected the environment, 97% saw intersections with poverty, 90% with race, and 88% with gender. In comparison, 81% saw an intersection between the environment and health, and 76% saw an intersection between the environment and migration. Even children, the topic funders selected least often, was chosen in combination with each of the other issues on average 72% of the time. These findings underscore the high level of interconnection that funders perceive among issues and point to some of the areas in our field where we would expect to see a strong overlap in funding.

HOW FUNDERS SEE ISSUES INTERSECTING WITH OTHER AREAS (% OVERLAP)



2. In 2021, HRFN conducted audience research with support from our partners at [Bridges-Puentes](#) and [Sensata UX Research](#). The survey was public and invited input from funders and civil society. The findings illuminated a range of values and approaches related to the field of philanthropy. The data from the more than 200 civil society responses also point to strong theoretical support for intersectional funding approaches.

INTERSECTIONAL GRANTMAKING: FUNDING IN PRACTICE

METHODOLOGY

In our latest [Advancing Human Rights](#) research, we tracked over 27,000 human rights grants made in 2018, totalling \$3.7 billion.³ The grants were awarded by 826 foundations based in 44 countries.⁴

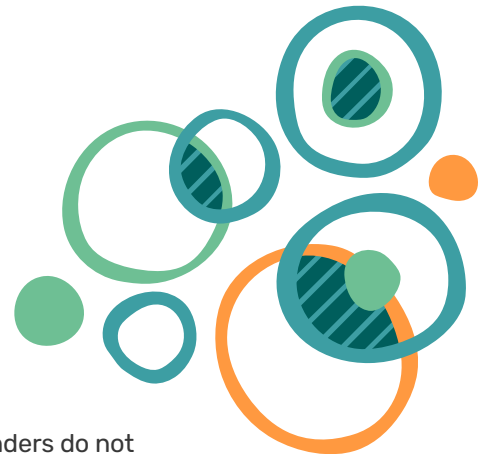
We use a combination of grant descriptions, funders' own coding, and knowledge of funders or grantees to help us determine the groups of people and issues each grant is meant to support.⁵ We know that just because a grant mentions multiple groups of people (termed "populations" in our analysis) or issues does not guarantee that the funding approach is intersectional. Likewise, a grant may not mention specific populations or issues by name but still support intersectional work. This is a limitation of the data currently, and one we address in our findings and recommendations. Still, looking for patterns gives us a sense of when different groups and issues are considered together. The results are troublingly at odds with the desire for intersectional grantmaking we see in our field.

FUNDING ACROSS POPULATIONS

“If we aren't intersectional, some of us, the most vulnerable, are going to fall through the cracks.”

– Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law,
UCLA and Columbia University

To understand who funding reaches, our research maps support for nine populations that are often the focus of human rights movements and funders.⁶ At first glance, we see two camps emerging. First, many funders do not report at all on which populations they support, the case in over a third of the grants in our analysis. Second, when they do, 66% of the grants only name one population. The first group points to a matter of data: Despite our best efforts, getting accurate data on who and what is funded in philanthropy remains a challenge. However, the second group – those who identify populations – hints at something more dire: While little activism focuses on a single identity, much of the funding still does.



3. With support from our partners at Ariadne and Prospera, each year HRFN and Candid collect and analyze grants data from foundations around the world working to protect and promote human rights.

4. You can learn more about our methodology in our [annual report](#) on global foundation grantmaking, pages 21-22.

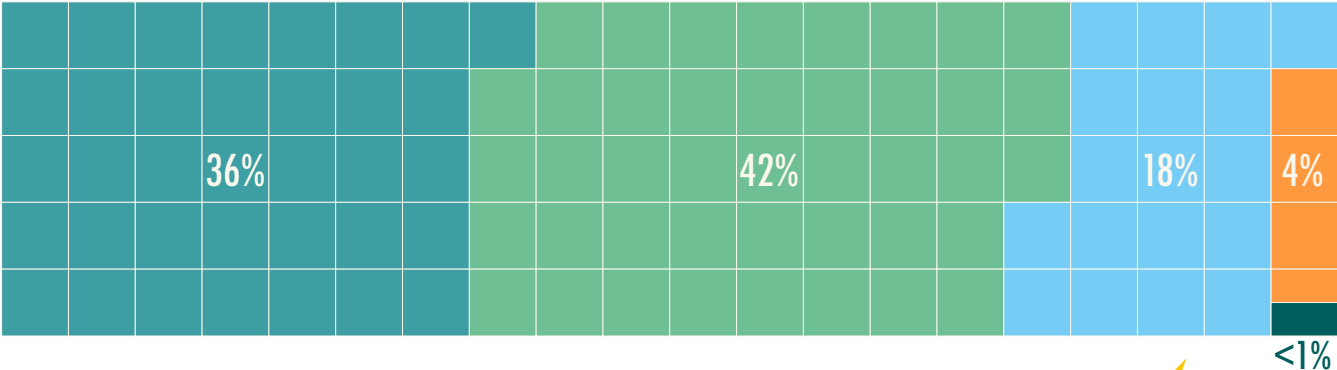
5. We recognize the need to differentiate between the grants meant to benefit a specific population and grants that are made to organizations led by those populations. Candid's Jacob Harold points to the complexity of tracking this difference given current funder reporting in his article "[What can data tell us about racial equity in philanthropy?](#)" We hope to shed more light on this distinction in the future.

6. We added "ethnic and racial groups" as a population in our most recent analysis. We relied on grant descriptions and knowledge of funders or grantees to identify relevant grants since we only recently began asking funders to code grants to this category.

Only 22% of all human rights grants reference two or more populations. In our most recent analysis, that accounted for almost 6,000 grants. In the rest of this section, we dive deeper into the approximately 17,500 grants that specify at least one population to see which identities are considered in combination and which appear most frequently on their own.

% OF HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS BY THE NUMBER OF POPULATIONS SPECIFIED (OUT OF 9 POPULATIONS)

78% of all human rights grants either do not specify a population (36%) or list only one (42%).












Only 22% of all human rights grants reference two or more populations. Less than 5% reference three or more.





Here, we see three rough groupings: populations with high overlap with other populations (sex workers, human rights defenders), medium overlap (children and youth, migrants and refugees, racial and ethnic groups,⁷ Indigenous Peoples,⁸ and women and girls), and low overlap (persons with disabilities, LGBTQI people).

NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS FOR EACH POPULATION AND THE % THAT OVERLAP WITH OTHER POPULATIONS

POPULATIONS	TOTAL GRANTS	1 POPULATION	2+ POPULATIONS	
 Sex Workers	153	24%	76%	HIGH OVERLAP
 Human Rights Defenders	574	35%	65%	
 Children & Youth	4,971	41%	59%	MEDIUM OVERLAP
 Migrants & Refugees	3,293	43%	57%	
 Racial & Ethnic Groups	4,911	47%	53%	
 Indigenous Peoples	1,702	47%	53%	
 Women & Girls	6,439	49%	51%	
 Persons with Disabilities	934	63%	37%	LOW OVERLAP
 LGBTQI	1,625	67%	33%	

Grants for sex workers and human rights defenders are most likely to overlap with other populations.

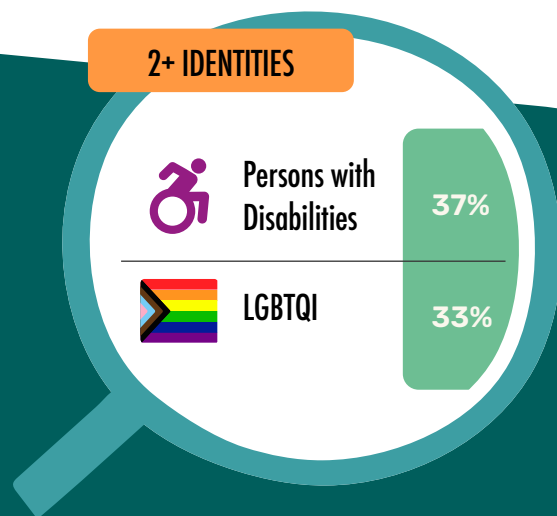
Grants for persons with disabilities and LGBTQI people are least likely to overlap with other populations.

7. This includes people of African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern descent. In our research, we make an effort to address the complexity of mapping data related to race and ethnicity, especially in a global context. For example, while the majority of grants meant to benefit Sub-Saharan Africa would benefit people of African descent, we do not include all of them as supporting “racial and ethnic groups.” Rather, we include grants where race or ethnicity, or racial or ethnic identity, are an explicit focus of the funding.

8. Indigenous Peoples are represented in a separate category from racial and ethnic groups, and reflect grants in which funders identify the population as Indigenous, or the funders or recipients have a specific focus on Indigenous communities.

The data suggest that grants for LGBTQI people and persons with disabilities are among the most siloed funding streams within human rights philanthropy, with just 33% of LGBTQI grants and 37% of grants for persons with disabilities mentioning additional identities. These findings echo concerns raised by the Disability Rights Fund about [funders consistently overlooking persons with disabilities](#) in their grantmaking, despite the well-documented ways disability increases the risk of abuse for women and girls,^M racial and ethnic groups,^N and other historically oppressed communities. We see a small, concentrated pool of funders focusing here. In 2018, just 17 funders supporting disability rights and 29 funders supporting LGBTQI rights gave 10 or more grants, and the majority of those grants (80% and 70%, respectively) did not mention any other populations. Of the 934 grants to support the rights of persons with disabilities, just 28 named racial and ethnic groups, 15 specified Indigenous Peoples, and 11 referenced LGBTQI communities. None mentioned sex workers. This suggests that either these funders are not including information about other identities in their grants data, or they are overlooking more nuanced identities, too.

GRANTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND LGBTQI COMMUNITIES ARE AMONG THE MOST SILOED FUNDING STREAMS IN PHILANTHROPY. JUST 37% OF GRANTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND 33% OF LGBTQI GRANTS MENTION ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES.



THESE GRANTS ARE EXCEPTIONS:



“To organize training courses, seminars, and awareness campaigns on women’s rights to empower women workers of African descent, including those with disabilities, from low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro, and to foster racial and gender equality.”

- Ford Foundation

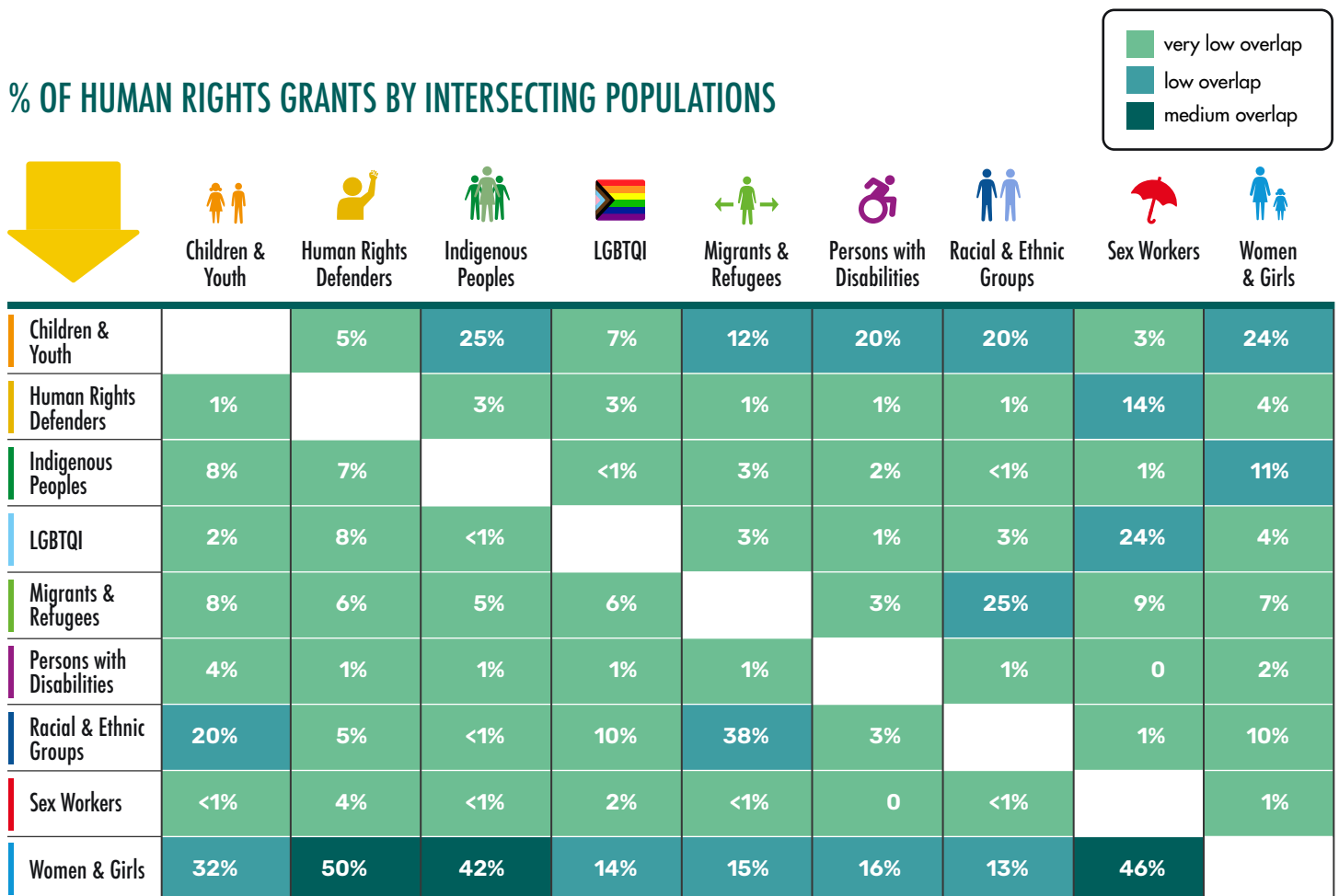


“Nine month leadership training programme for women, non-binary and trans activists of colour in Europe, aiming to contribute to the preconditions of an effective and flourishing movement for systems change, in which womxn of colour lead social change organising.”

- Mama Cash

On the opposite side of the spectrum, grants for sex workers and human rights defenders are significantly more likely to be intersectional, with 76% and 65% of the grants, respectively, specifying at least one additional identity. For human rights defenders, the intersection is mostly with women and girls and reflects the way many women’s funds, most notably the Urgent Action Funds, conceptualize their work. For sex workers, the primary overlap is with women and girls and, to a lesser extent, LGBTQI people. Because the level of support in both categories is so small, a handful of intersectional grants for sex workers or human rights defenders has a considerable impact on these percentages and may paint too rosy a picture about the volume of intersectional support across the field.

To go deeper, we look at how the different populations interact. The category Indigenous Peoples, for example, has medium overlap in general with other populations: 53% of the grants to support Indigenous Peoples consider at least one additional identity. However, we see considerable disparities in *which identities* are mentioned in the same grants with Indigenous Peoples, from the 42% of grants that also name women and girls and 25% that name children and youth, to just 5% naming migrants and refugees and less than 1% naming LGBTQI people. We suspect that even fewer grants support work at the intersection of multiple identities (i.e. funding for Indigenous Peoples who identify as LGBTQI). The gaps highlighted here – and throughout the table – suggest opportunities for more deliberate investment.



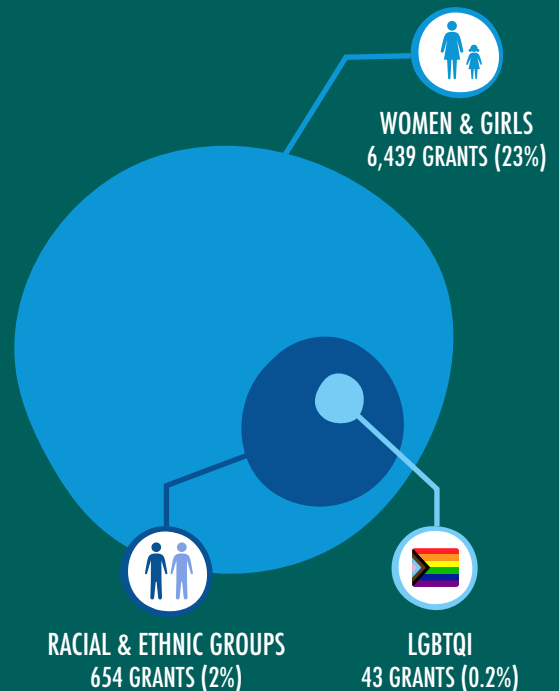
When we go a step further to look at funding that is inclusive of at least three identities, the grant numbers plummet to less than 5% of the total grant pool. While a tenth of the 6,400+ human rights grants meant to benefit women and girls reference racial and ethnic groups, just 43 grants at this intersection also mention LGBTQI people. We expect to see a smaller number of grants as we get more specific, but the dramatic decline when we move even to three groups raises red flags that some identities may be falling through the cracks.

JUST 5% OF THE GRANTS IN OUR ANALYSIS NAME THREE OR MORE POPULATIONS. THESE ARE SOME EXAMPLES.

43 GRANTS TOTTALLING \$14 MILLION ARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF WOMEN & GIRLS + RACIAL & ETHNIC GROUPS + LGBTQI.

“This grant is made to support [the organization’s] work to leverage movement building, power building, and culture shift strategies to strengthen the cross-sector alliances of groups led by women and gender non-conforming people of color in the Southeast US.”

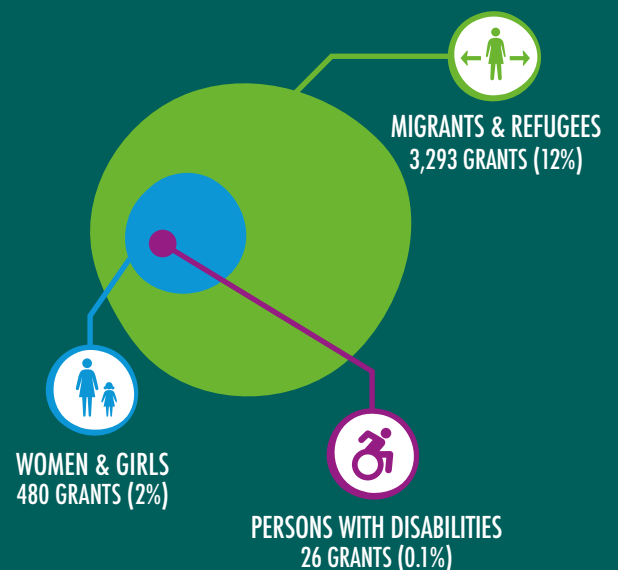
– Foundation for a Just Society



26 GRANTS TOTTALLING \$3 MILLION ARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF MIGRANTS & REFUGEES + WOMEN & GIRLS + PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

“This grant will support a research study in char land, in the Kustia district. The research will explore the impacts of climate change – in this instance, drought and poor soil conditions which make the land infertile – and how the resultant migration and displacement impacts women with disabilities.”

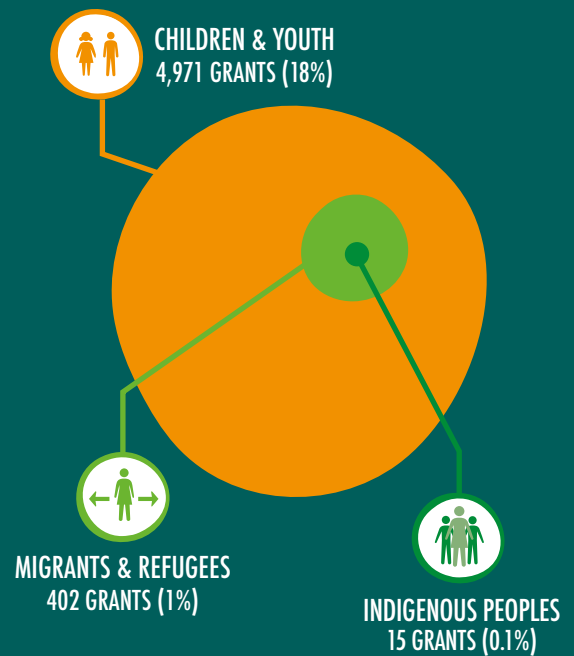
– Women’s Fund Asia



15 GRANTS TOTALLING \$720,000 ARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF CHILDREN & YOUTH + MIGRANTS & REFUGEES + INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

“General support grant for a global movement that works on bringing together millions of peasants, small and medium size farmers, landless people, rural women and youth, Indigenous Peoples, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. [The recipient] is an international movement comprised of 182 member organizations in 81 countries, and works to defend peasant agriculture for food sovereignty as a way to promote social and economic justice, a dignified life for rural peoples, and to cool the planet. [It] opposes corporate large-scale industrial agriculture that destroys both people and the earth, and actively promotes and defends the protection of eco-resources and biodiversity, elimination of violence against women, and rights of international migrants and agricultural workers.”

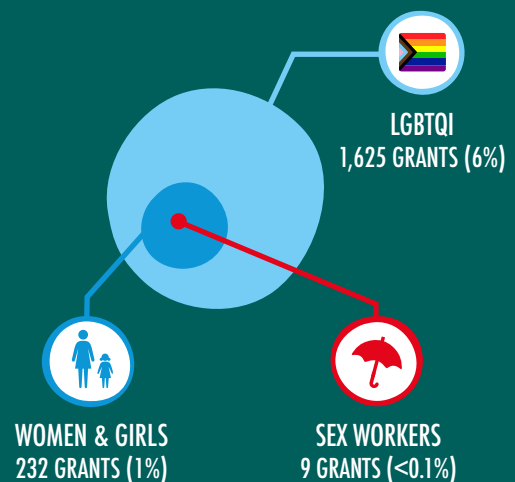
- Thousand Currents



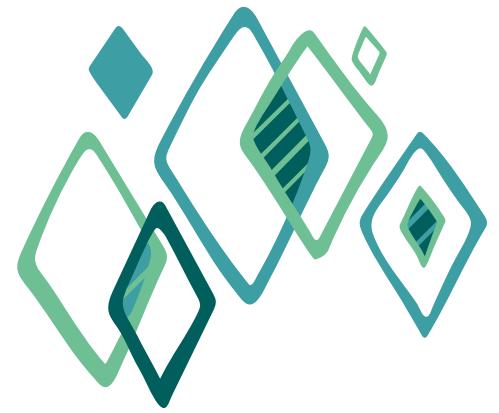
9 GRANTS TOTALLING \$130,000 ARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF LGBTQI + WOMEN & GIRLS + SEX WORKERS.

“Conduct a study on the experiences of Transwomen in the sex work sector in Harare, Zimbabwe.”

- The Other Foundation



FUNDING ACROSS ISSUES



“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

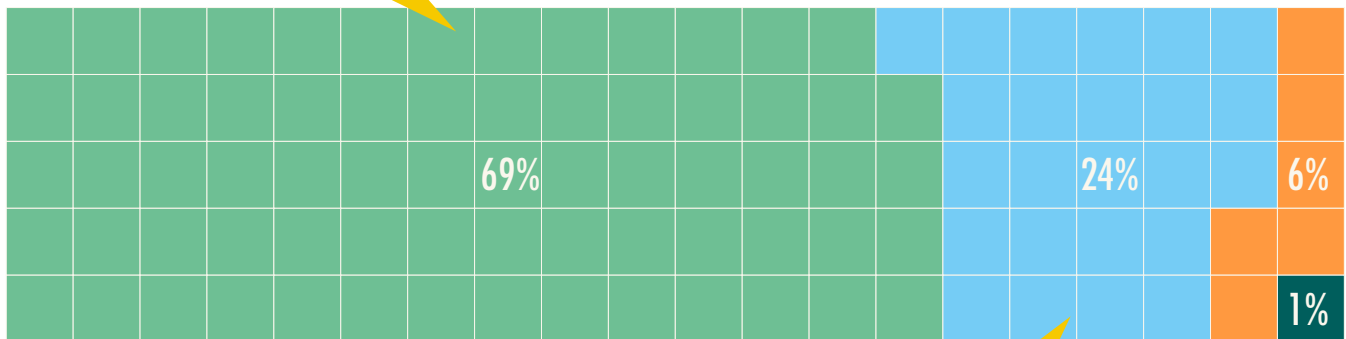
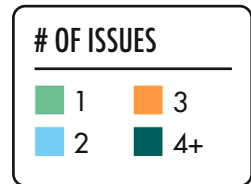
– Audre Lorde, professor and poet

Who a grant aims to support is just one aspect of its purpose. We also look at what issues the funding aims to address. In our analysis, we assign grants to a variety of human rights categories, ranging from access to justice, to freedom from violence, to environmental and resource rights.

Unlike with populations, all grants are assigned at least one issue.⁹ However, when we remove grants that are too broad to be attributed more specifically (i.e. coded “human rights in general” or “equality rights and freedom from discrimination”), we are left with just over 18,000 grants that focus on one or more of the 11 issues below.¹⁰ Of these, 31% (approximately 5,700 grants) focus on two or more issues.

% OF HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS BY THE NUMBER OF ISSUES ADDRESSED (OUT OF 11 ISSUES)

69% of these human rights grants address just one of 11 issues.














Only 31% of these human rights grants address two or more of 11 issues.

9. In our annual analysis we assign each grant to a single “primary” human rights issue that the grant addresses to help us conceptualize how the funding is divided among human rights needs. In this report, we include every human rights issue a grant addresses, based on grant descriptions and knowledge of grantee priorities, to help us better understand cross-cutting work.

10. We have omitted the categories “human rights general” and “equality rights and freedom from discrimination” from our analysis of cross-issue funding since both are very broad and, without them, we can better hone in on the relationships among the other issues. Nearly half of all human rights grants in our research address inequality and discrimination.

NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTS THAT ADDRESS EACH ISSUE AND THE % THAT OVERLAP WITH OTHER ISSUES

ISSUES	TOTAL GRANTS	1 ISSUE	2+ ISSUES	
 Sexual & Reproductive Rights	1,254	19%	81%	HIGH OVERLAP
 Economic & Labor Rights	1,013	38%	62%	MEDIUM OVERLAP
 Health & Well-being Rights	3,901	39%	61%	
 Freedom from Violence	2,781	39%	61%	
 Transitional Justice & Peacebuilding	1,115	40%	60%	
 Civic & Political Participation	2,394	52%	48%	
 Environmental & Resource Rights	3,327	53%	47%	
 Education, Religion, & Culture	2,850	57%	43%	
 Access to Justice	2,196	58%	42%	
 Migration & Displacement	3,346	58%	42%	
 Expression & Information Rights	1,276	70%	30%	LOW OVERLAP

The proportion of grants that are cross-cutting varies considerably by issue. Grants to support expression and information rights – including concepts like privacy, free speech, freedom of the press, and access to information – are most often funded in isolation, overlapping with other issues just 30% of the time. In comparison, 81% of grants to support sexual and reproductive rights incorporate other themes. One reason for these differences among categories may be the construction of the categories themselves: Some lend themselves more naturally to pairing, like sexual and reproductive rights and health and well-being rights, or freedom from violence and transitional justice and peacebuilding.¹¹











11. Visit our [research hub](#) to further explore these issues and see how the categories are defined.



However, some findings are surprising. Recall that in our survey, funders who selected the environment indicated that it could be tackled in conjunction with a variety of other issues – including health and migration, which 81% and 76% of funders who chose the environment also selected. Yet, when we look at the 3,300+ grants made to support environmental and resource rights, only 47% focus on more than one issue. Just 22% of environmental grants also include a health focus, and 5% intersect with migration.

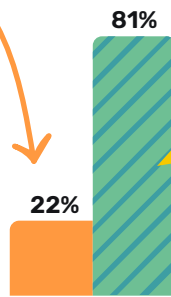


OF THE GRANTS THAT ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE RIGHTS

FUNDER INTENTIONS VS. FUNDER PRACTICES

-  22% also support Health & Well-being Rights
-  13% also support Education, Religion, & Culture
-  8% also support Civic & Political Participation
-  5% also support Access to Justice/Equality Before the Law
-  5% also support Freedom from Violence
-  5% also support Migration & Displacement
-  3% also support Transitional Justice & Peacebuilding
-  3% also support Economic & Labor Rights
-  1% also support Sexual & Reproductive Rights
-  1% also support Expression & Information Rights

 % of grants that address both issues
 % of funders that perceive an overlap



There's a 59% disparity between the funders that perceive an overlap between the environment and health and the percentage of grants that address both issues.



There's a 71% disparity between the funders that perceive an overlap between the environment and migration and the percentage of grants that address both issues.

While we can see the extent that issues overlap on page 18, we also want to understand which issues appear most and least often together. To explore this, we look at every issue to see how likely it is to be addressed in combination with each of the other 10 issues. We find that issue pairs are addressed together, on average, just 8% of the time. Of the 110 possible combinations, only six are addressed together at least 20% of the time, meaning at least one in five grants overlap.

What's particularly striking is all of the issue combinations where we *don't* see significant overlap. For example, we don't see much overlap in grants related to the environment that address migration (5%), or access to justice (5%) despite the deepening climate crisis. In the face of growing concern over closing civic space, we don't see significant funding at the intersection of civic and political participation and expression and information rights (3%), or freedom from violence (8%). Though significant rhetoric points to these intersections as critical for human rights, the funding doesn't appear to adequately mirror the concerns.

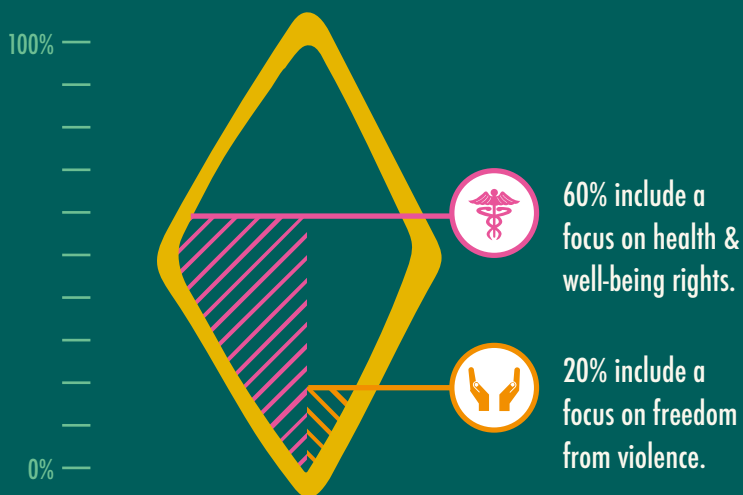
ONLY 6 ISSUE COMBINATIONS ARE ADDRESSED TOGETHER AT LEAST 20% OF THE TIME.



OF GRANTS FOR SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS:



OF GRANTS FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING:

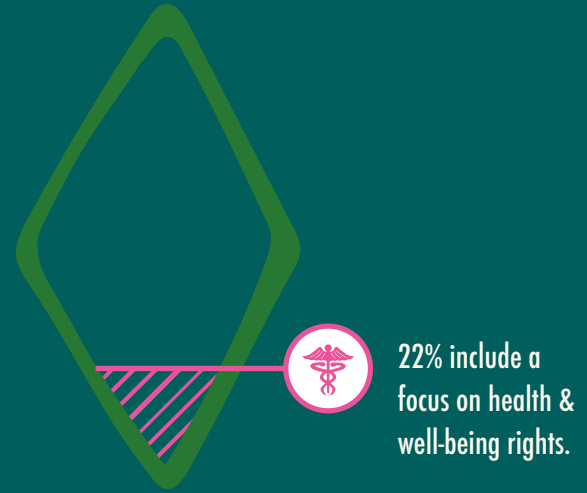
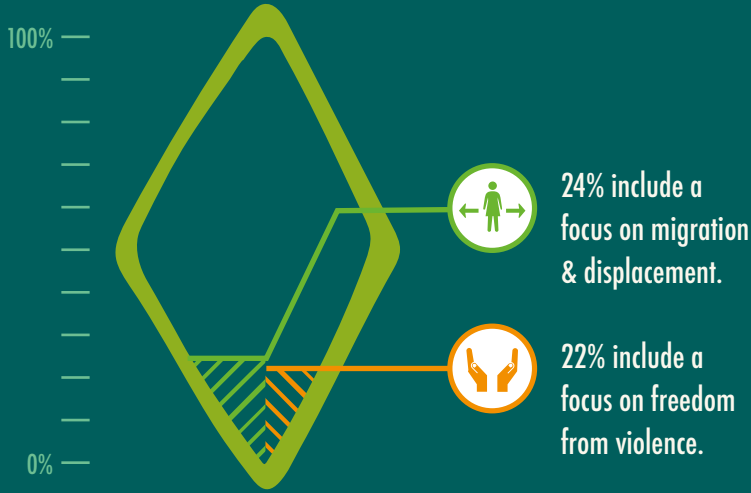




OF GRANTS FOR ECONOMIC & LABOR RIGHTS:



OF GRANTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL & RESOURCE RIGHTS:

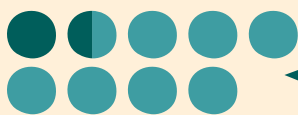


WHAT'S PARTICULARLY STRIKING IS ALL OF THE ISSUE COMBINATIONS WHERE WE DON'T SEE SIGNIFICANT OVERLAP.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

We looked at a subset of grants made by members of Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) to better understand the extent to which our community is practicing intersectional grantmaking. The grants data indicate that HRFN members explicitly support an average of 1.5 populations per grant, out of the nine populations we track in our research.¹² Grants from our members address an average of 1.8 human rights issues per grant, out of all 13 possible human rights categories. Though HRFN members score slightly higher, their scores do not differ substantially from human rights funders in general.

ON AVERAGE, HRFN MEMBERS SUPPORT...



1.5 POPULATIONS
PER GRANT (OUT OF 9)



1.8 ISSUES
PER GRANT (OUT OF 13)

12. These figures are based on grants that name at least one of the nine populations we track in our analysis. Almost a third of member grants name no populations or only mention identities that we do not analyze separately, like funding for men or people who use drugs.

Thousand Currents has the highest populations score, averaging 2.7 populations per grant across 35 grants. It most frequently names women and girls, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples, and migrants and refugees as target communities. It also names a number of identities we don't map – like agricultural workers, people living with HIV, and rural communities – to drill even deeper into the nuanced recipients its funding supports.



“From climate change to extreme inequality, the complex and interconnected systemic challenges we face today require an equally interconnected and systemic response. Our partners – frontline communities organized as grassroots groups and movements – apply interdependence as part of their principles, processes, and practices. They understand that feminist solutions are food solutions. They know we cannot disentangle the legacies of colonialism and capitalism from the present day realities of extreme inequality and the climate crisis. They recognize that in order to build a more just and equitable world, we must dismantle silos. Because our partners make these connections, Thousand Currents applies those same principles to how we fund, who we fund, and where we fund.”

– Solomé Lemma, Executive Director, Thousand Currents

Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), the Central American Women's Fund, has the highest issue score, with an average of 3.0 issues per grant across 124 grants. Its work touches on all human rights categories woven together in various combinations. For example, one grant furthers advocacy at the nexus of labor rights, migration, and trafficking, while another supports civic and political participation related to climate change and economic empowerment.



“FCAM's work is primarily oriented toward the sustainability of feminist and women's movements in Central America. To that end, we operate with an intersectional approach that allows us to comprehend and holistically support the work of our grantee partners, their agendas, priorities, and strategies, to address the interlocking systems that weave together and impact the realities of girls, women, trans, and non-binary people.”

– Carla López, Executive Director, Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres

A CALL TO ACTION: WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

The findings in this report offer insights about identities and issues that are being overlooked and under-resourced in human rights philanthropy. Are grantmakers who support LGBTQI rights considering how their goals intersect with racial justice? Are funders who focus on human rights defenders actively engaging individuals on the frontlines of disability rights and ensuring their resources and processes are accessible? Most importantly, are those who take a universal approach to human rights funding, without regard for race, ethnicity, ability status, or other factors, actually reaching communities most impacted by oppression?

All movements need more funding to do the critical work of social change. The goal is not for every grant to tackle the needs of every population or issue. However, there is a need for funding that acknowledges and addresses the complex ways we live. In making truly intersectional grants, existing resources can be used more effectively and in alignment with collective organizing. As disability rights advocate Helen Keller said so succinctly, “Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.”

Much more can be done to increase the reach of human rights funding by supporting cross-movement and cross-sector initiatives that respond to intersecting forms of injustice. This report offers a baseline of where the field of human rights philanthropy is now. The recommendations below move us toward that goal and our vision of open philanthropy.¹³

**MUCH MORE CAN BE
DONE TO INCREASE THE REACH
OF HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDING BY
SUPPORTING CROSS-MOVEMENT AND
CROSS-SECTOR INITIATIVES THAT
RESPOND TO INTERSECTING
FORMS OF INJUSTICE.**

**“Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much.”**

– Helen Keller, author and
disability rights advocate

¹³. The goal of [open philanthropy](#) is a funding field that is actively open to sharing power, justice oriented, accountable to those affected by funding decisions, and responsive to intersecting forms of injustice.

A CALL TO ACTION: RETHINKING GRANTMAKING SCOPE AND PRACTICE

Funders for a Just Economy, a program of the Neighborhood Funders Group, has developed helpful guidance on [Best Practices in Intersectional Grantmaking](#). We have drawn on those recommendations and adapted them with permission.

Funders should:

- ② Have a historical frame – particularly regarding how the legacy of slavery, genocide, the settler state, imperialism, and heteropatriarchy shape our economy and the broader structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power.¹⁴
- ② Establish funding practices that center Black people, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, LGBTQI people, women of color (especially trans and queer women of color), persons with disabilities, and other historically marginalized communities.
- ② Seek guidance from frontline community leaders and activists and invest in their priorities and strategies.
- ② Understand people’s experiences holistically (not through identity or issue silos) and develop strategies accordingly.
- ② Support solutions that address root causes and seek systemic change.
- ② Take honest stock of your grantmaking practices and divisions. Review grant portfolios with an eye to who the funding supports and who is being left out.
- ② Consider how the rights issues you work on are linked to other rights issues and engage with partners working in those areas to explore how your work could be mutually reinforcing.

14. You can read more on the “matrix of domination” and four domains of power here: [“Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions,”](#) pages 7-9.

A CALL TO ACTION:

IMPROVING GRANTS DATA REPORTING

The grants data from approximately 60% of the foundations in our most recent analysis is from public sources, including 990 tax forms, which all U.S. foundations are required to complete annually. While these forms are a critical resource in broadening our understanding of human rights philanthropy, we strongly encourage funders to share their grants data with us or Candid directly so that we can attain a more nuanced understanding of their grantmaking.

We appreciate the grants data that foundations share with us directly – and many submissions are clear and comprehensive – but there is room for improvement here, too. Grant descriptions, for instance, are one of our best tools for understanding the purpose of each grant, but they are sometimes missing, vague, or so long we have trouble deciphering them. Some funders take the extra step of coding their grants themselves, which we encourage, but occasionally this turns into rote lists of populations or issues that are not very meaningful.

As a network of human rights funders, we need to commit to prioritizing and improving grants data as a step toward increasing transparency in philanthropy and a means for strengthening human rights work. More funders need to share their grants data and ensure its quality: Where and how funders talk about their grantmaking matters. And we, the researchers, must continue to systematize and strengthen grant tracking and coding to build a more comprehensive picture of funding for our field.

Funders should:

- 🌀 Prioritize data tracking as good grantmaking practice.
- 🌀 Share timely, good quality grants data with HRFN, or our research partners Candid, Ariadne, or Prospera, so that we can include your work in our analysis.
- 🌀 Provide clear, concise grant descriptions that describe the issues addressed, populations supported, and geography reached through the funding. For general support grants, include a brief description of the recipient's scope of work. (e.g. "This general support grants furthers [the organization's] mission to...")
- 🌀 Submit your data in a spreadsheet ([like this example](#)) and format it so that it is easy to upload. List individual facets in separate columns (e.g. grant start and end dates). Avoid carriage returns, bullet points, or other symbols. Leave cells blank when there is no information to add.

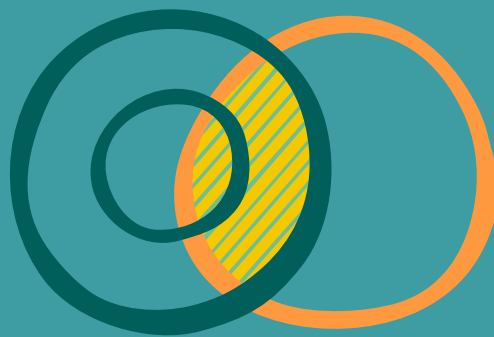
A CALL TO ACTION: TRANSFORMING PHILANTHROPY

Transforming grantmaking so that it is truly intersectional, so that it reaches across issues and movements, is an ongoing imperative for the field. It is also a central priority for HRFN. As we continue to imagine a just and open funding ecosystem, we invite our partners and members to join us in reconceptualizing philanthropy's responsibility and unleashing its potential.

These findings are a start. This evidence is a first pass – and one that raises both hope and caution.

Join us as we continue to explore what intersectional grantmaking means in practice. Help us strengthen the funding data and our understanding of what it means.

To access more information about the human rights funding landscape, visit humanrightsfunding.org. To learn more about HRFN, or explore becoming a member, visit our website at hrfn.org.



Strategize with us at hrfn.org.

SHARE YOUR GRANTS DATA!

Our research relies on you. Foundations can submit their grants data safely and securely using this [template](#).

Or, if you use software from any of [these providers](#) to manage your grants, you can simply export your data to the template. To be included, grants data is due by June 30 each year for the previous fiscal year. If you are interested in contributing to this research or have any questions, please email us at AHR@hrfn.org.

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Funding for **Intersectional** Organizing: A Call to Action for **Human Rights** Philanthropy

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About Human Rights Funders Network

Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) is a network of funders from the Global South, East, and North dedicated to resourcing human rights actions around the world. For nearly 30 years, HRFN has brought funders together to collaborate, strategize, and strengthen the field of human rights philanthropy. Since our inception, our community has grown into a global network of almost 450 institutions across 70 countries. We are committed to advancing human rights through open philanthropy through which resources are distributed ethically in a way that is abundant, justice-centered, open in knowledge and power, and informed by movements. Learn more at hrfn.org.

Designed by [Chelsea Very](#)

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