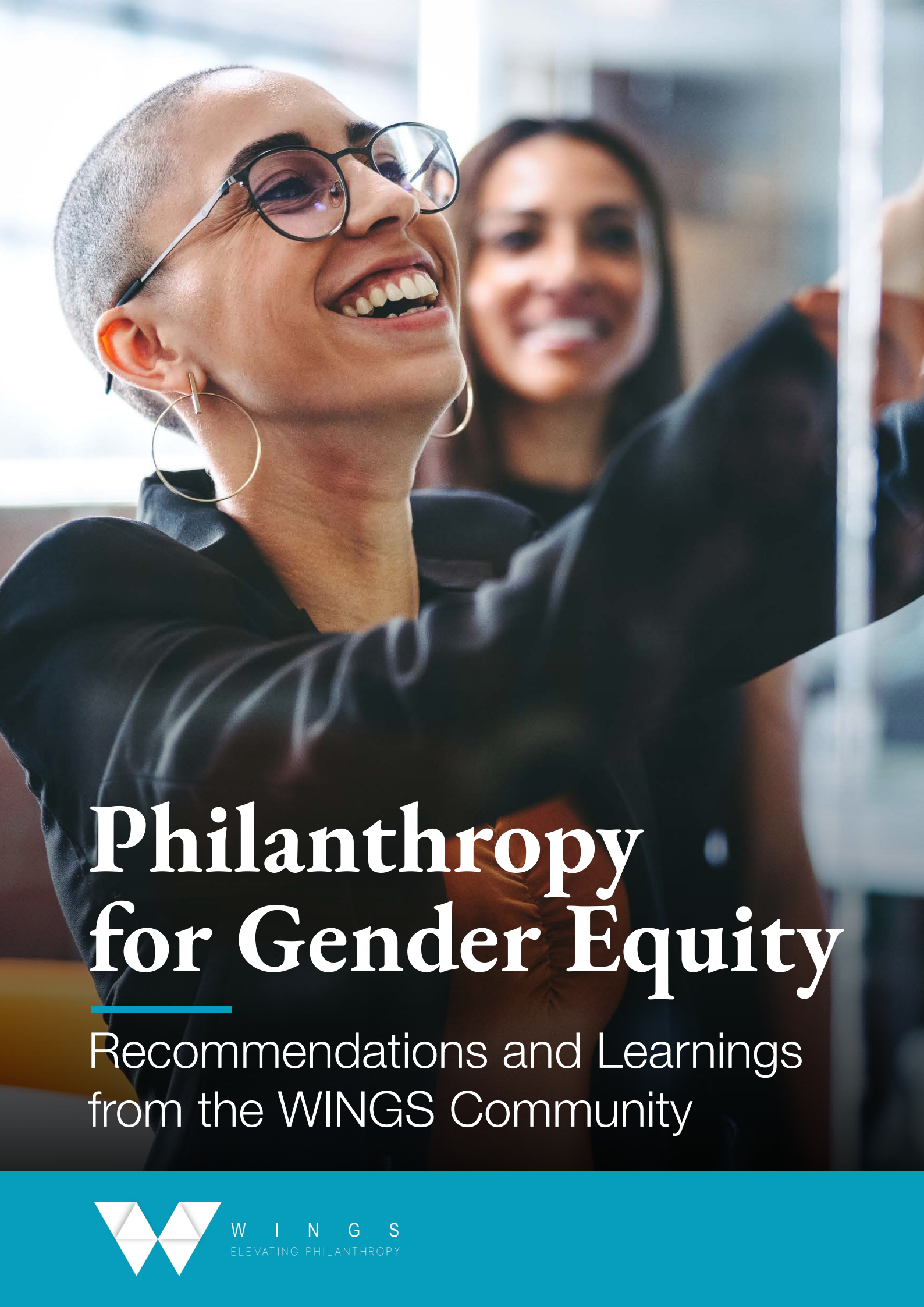




Philanthropy for Gender Equity

Recommendations and Learnings
from the WINGS Community



W I N G S
ELEVATING PHILANTHROPY



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WINGS is the only global network of philanthropy support and development organisations. We are a community of over 200 philanthropy associations, networks, academic institutions, support organisations, and funders, in 58 countries who are committed to growing and strengthening philanthropy to ensure that it reaches its fullest potential as a catalyst for social progress. We are committed to ending inertia, breaking down silos, challenging conventional wisdom and creating an enabling environment for philanthropy to flourish.

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A photograph of a woman with short, vibrant red hair hugging a young child from behind. The woman has her eyes closed and a gentle smile, while the child, with dark curly hair, also has their eyes closed and a happy expression. They are both wearing dark-colored t-shirts. The background is a textured wall of brown and tan stones. A large, white, stylized letter 'T' is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially framing the couple. The text 'About this paper' is written in a large, white, serif font at the bottom left, with 'About' on one line and 'this paper' on the line below it.

About this paper



Context and objective

WINGS is a network of philanthropy development and support organisations committed to ensuring philanthropy reaches its fullest potential as a catalyst for social progress. WINGS' goal is to encourage collaboration and ignite potential — to rally philanthropic actors everywhere to build a more just, equitable, and sustainable world and support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WINGS recognises that gender equity is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Therefore, WINGS aims to raise awareness and develop concrete action for gender equity in the philanthropic sector. In this sense, WINGS has commissioned preliminary research to collect data and propose actions to foster philanthropy for gender equity within our community. The objective was to map learnings and best practices toward gender equity among WINGS members.

Methodology

To carry out this first dive into the topic, the research has taken the following steps:

1. Elaborate and organise key elements and principles that contribute to advancing gender equity in the sector, through a review of current international literature on philanthropy for gender equity and the systematisation of trends in the field.
2. Validate and discuss the proposed elements and principles in a focus group with WINGS members and partners who demonstrate interest and expertise in the topic¹.
3. Interview a portion of WINGS members that have been working with and discussing gender equity, to document their best practices, challenges and lessons learned².
4. Prepare a final paper documenting the findings and proposing a road map with key recommendations and potential partnerships for concrete action for gender equity in the philanthropic sector in the future.

Throughout the research process, the initial scope was reframed: originally the focus of the research was on “women-led philanthropy”. The desk research and the focus group confirmed the necessity of reorganising the terminologies used in the research. The research focus was updated to focus on philanthropy for gender equity for two reasons:

Gender equity is about people, but mostly about processes

Our interest is to focus not on “who”, but on “how” we can advance gender equity in the philanthropic sector. While the representation of women and other gender minorities is part of the process of promoting equity, it does not in itself guarantee it.

Gender equity is the process of being fair and compensating historical and social disadvantages and injustices that prevent women and other gender minorities³ from accessing full rights, resources, and opportunities.

“Gender” is not just about women

Talking about gender equity instead of “women-led” is also important to acknowledge that gender relates to everyone. All our relationships, projects, and people are identified and characterised in terms of gender. It’s a debate that involves every person, despite their gender identity. Men, women and all people deal with social expectations around what is understood as masculine and feminine. As we will see in the next section, gender structures society, generates inequalities, and is transversal.

Gender equity brings up the process of recognising inequalities based on gender, and of transforming processes and redistributing resources so that gender is not a barrier for people and communities to reach their full potential.



In this sense, gender equity guarantees the fairness of treatment for people of all genders, according to their respective needs. “This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” ([ILO](#)).

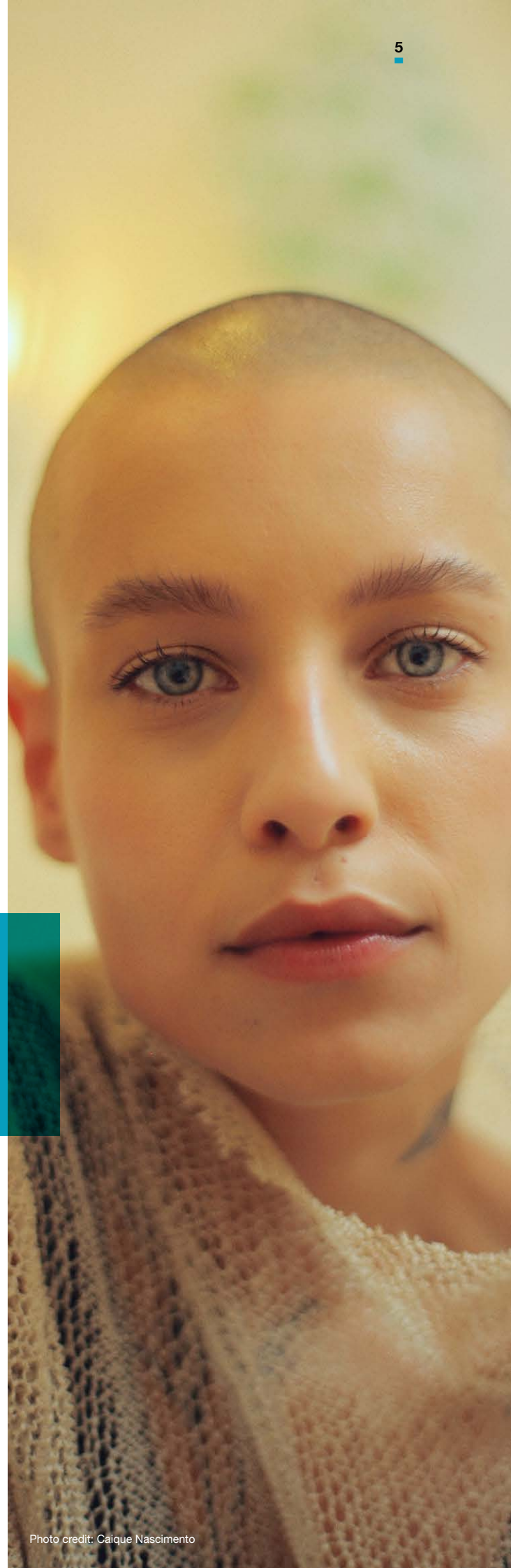
WINGS’ growing community includes more than 200 members across 58 countries. WINGS members operate in very diverse contexts, and this introductory paper does not have the ambition to cover all their realities or to propose ready-made practices, from the outside-in or top down. What this paper proposes is a first step into the conversation, a roadmap and a source of learnings and best practices.

The discussions about gender and sexuality vary widely globally – homosexuality is still a crime in 69 countries ([ILGA](#)), and in many contexts, there is no space to talk about gender identity and gender expression. Some interlocutors shared that people often want to talk about women’s leadership, participation in the workforce, how to support women entrepreneurs, etc., instead of “gender” because it’s a lot less controversial.

It is not a simple conversation, but it is a conversation that belongs to all players in the philanthropic field, each in their own way.

By exchanging information and learnings, the different players in the philanthropic sector can, together, expand the possibilities of action for gender equity.

WINGS’ invitation is to exchange lessons learned and reflect together on the subject and on how we can build the next steps – as organisations and as a network committed to building a more just, equitable and sustainable world.





why

do we talk
about this?

Why is it crucial to talk about gender and philanthropy?

First, we must recognise that it is not necessarily obvious that gender is an essential and central issue for everyone working in philanthropy.

Why is gender an essential issue?

Gender structures society, generates inequalities, and is transversal

According to the [World Health Organisation](#),

“Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality.

Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth.”

This means that gender is a structuring social marker and regulates/limits access to rights and the possibility of people fully living their lives and developing their entire potential. As a result, women, girls, trans and non-binary people and people who do not conform to gender norms – socially and historically constructed – commonly have less access to rights, resources and opportunities.

This also means that gender has to do with everyone, with all our relationships and all our projects, as all people are identified and characterised in terms of gender. And gender acts transversally, mediating our realities and lives. All people are affected by gender roles, pressures and expectations.

“There are some really important issues that need to be addressed globally. In particular, issues relating to social justice, some are transversal and cannot be taken alone. We are convinced that questions relating to gender equality and diversity are not just about dealing with that as a subject matter but rather much more cross-sectorial because they pertain to all spheres of society”.

– Maja Spanu, Fondation de France

“Gender-focused causes and movements are a vibrant sector of development, and that can contribute to enabling changing how systems work”.

– Eme Iniekung, Philanthropy Circuit, Nigeria

There is no development without reducing inequalities

Philanthropists seek, in different ways, to promote the well-being of people and the improvement of society, investing in solutions that generate lasting positive social impact.

For this work to be effective, the inequalities that structure society cannot be ignored, including gender inequalities – and they must be addressed in a way that not only repairs its effects but also transforms its causes, generating sustainable change. It means going beyond equality and promoting equity and justice.

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. Justice requires us to remove the barriers that cause inequity.

Gender-focused projects, causes, organisations, and movements have fewer resources

Ninety-nine percent of development aid and foundation grants still do not directly reach women's rights and feminist organisations that work directly for gender equity. Those groups working at intersecting forms of marginalisation (LGBTIQ+, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, young feminists, and sex workers) are funded even less. Only 0.42% of foundation grants are allocated toward women's rights. This data is monitored by [AWID](#).

"We need to be realistic and mindful of the funding gaps that exist in philanthropy. A lot of us know that only a small fragment of philanthropic giving goes to women-led organisations, and that fragment

gets smaller when we talk about women of colour and the LGBTQ+ community. (...) I believe we are at a great time to change the script and make philanthropy more feminist". [Kirsten Marek at Philanthropy Women](#)

Gender-blind practices tend to reproduce inequalities

[According to the UN](#), "gender-blindness refers to the failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programmes, policies and attitudes which are gender-blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs. They maintain the status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations".

Even if your organisation is not focused on women's rights, sexual diversity, or the promotion of gender equity, considering gender issues is essential for your projects, programmes and/or grant-making to have good results, since gender is transversal and must be considered if you work for education, health, economic development, climate justice, or any other development issue.

That's why we need a gender lense: as glasses that allow us to see how gender affects the processes and results of the actions, projects and programmes that we develop.

"Gender lens investing, described by the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) as "a strategy or approach to investing that takes into consideration gender-based factors across the investment process to advance gender equality and better inform investment decisions," is gathering pace but there is still room for progress". [Karolina Adamkiewicz at Impact Investor](#)

“We recognize the role that women have historically played in social change, in relation not only to gender inequality but to all other inequities - racial issues, issues relating to economic inequality, poverty, etc. Women are made vulnerable by a structure, both to violence and poverty, and the lack of opportunities. At the same time, they are the ones with the least access to resources. They are the most vulnerable ones, they are the ones that work the most for the transformation, and they are the ones that have the least access to resources. Women and LGBTQIA+ people need access to resources to be able to continue their transformation actions for gender equity and others that are related”.

– Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil

Photo credit: Shardar Tarikul Islam

Covid-19 has further highlighted the urgency of adopting a gender-lens approach and putting women and other gender minorities at the centre of responses

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women - either because they are the majority among caregivers in the health system or in the families; because they have been more subject to domestic violence; or because they are the majority among informal workers, among other factors.

The leading role of women in responding to the crises generated by the pandemic was also evident, by supporting their communities and articulating local networks and donating work, time and other resources.

“All organisations, regardless of their sector, must think about a gender-lens approach. An example: in the pandemic, when they gave some boxes of food to different low-income areas, they forgot about hygienic towels. If you have an organisation that is working on climate change or on other causes, it should also bring this gender-lens approach to all its problems and solutions. This is a thing I’ve been impulsing in different fora, how to bring this gender lens to our programmes and interventions - definitely it is not so obvious to do it right.”.

Rosa Madera, Empathy, Chile



Gender equity and philanthropy

A broad and diverse debate

The debate on gender in the field of philanthropy is diverse, rich, and has advanced a lot in recent years – although it still needs to go further and be more transversal to the philanthropic ecosystem. It includes interlocking aspects and different perspectives, depending on the context, focus and understanding of each person and organisation.

When talking about gender and philanthropy, we can think of gender-lens philanthropy and investing (regardless of the organisation's area of work), but also of the growing role of women as philanthropists and philanthropy professionals, or philanthropy's focus on women's rights and gender equity, or the support for women's rights organisations, for example.

The growing role of women donors

As for the role of women as givers, you can explore the *"Women Give" series*, produced by the Women's Philanthropy Institute, as well as:

Role of Women in Developing the Landscape of Philanthropy, by Henry Thacker: "As the wealth of women increases so does their participation in the philanthropic community. And with increasing participation in philanthropic activities, women are changing the landscape of giving in innovative ways."

The crucial, growing role of women in philanthropy, by Mark Greer

Do women give more to charity? It depends how you look at it, by Caroline Dobuzinkis

The conversation about gender and philanthropy is related to philanthropic giving and funding for women's and girls' rights and gender equity but goes much further, also including the practices, principles, and processes of players in the philanthropic field.

These practices include mobilising funders, practitioners, and individuals to accelerate progress toward gender equity; implementing, supporting, or funding projects that share knowledge, deepen networks, and/or leverage resources for women and girls; adopting gender-lens grant-making; increasing the number of women in leadership positions and diversifying team and board composition, among others.

Discussions about gender and philanthropy have taken place from different approaches, for example: gender-lens philanthropy, gender transformative philanthropy, gender-wise philanthropy, and feminist philanthropy.

- **Gender-lens philanthropy** is an approach to giving, programmes and development strategies that consider gender-based factors to meet the needs of different people. It acknowledges that men, women, and gender-diverse people have different needs and opportunities, and consequently, programmes and policies can impact them in different ways. It's like wearing glasses that enable a more accurate vision of reality, showing the role gender plays in shaping our lives and realities, and consequently informing better investment decisions and impact analyses toward gender equity. See, for example, [Gender-Lens Philanthropy](#), by Philanthropic Foundations Canada, and [A New Approach to Gender-Lens Grantmaking](#), by Emily Nielsen Jones, Musimbi Kanyoro & Neera Nundy.
- **Gender transformative** programmes and policies highlight, challenge and ultimately change harmful norms of femininity and masculinity. It goes beyond applying a gender lens, addressing the systemic or structural causes of gender-based inequality, discrimination and exclusion. According to the UN Gender Results Effectiveness Framework (GRES), a gender transformative approach is effective when the results of the intervention or project “contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations”. See [Gender Transformative Giving](#), by the Women's Funding Network, True Child, and Public Interest Projects.

The [UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale](#) shows how sharpening gender lenses takes us from a gender-blind to a gender-transformative approach, which contributes to changing the root causes, norms and beliefs that produce and maintain gender inequities:

The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

 Gender Negative	Result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms
 Gender Blind	Result gave no attention to gender, and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys, and other marginalised populations
 Gender Targeted	Result focused on the number of women, men, or marginalised populations that were targeted (e.g. 50/50 representation)
 Gender Responsive	Result addressed the differential needs of men, women, or marginalised populations and focused on the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, etc. but did not address root causes of inequalities
 Gender Transformative	Result contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations



Photo credit: iStock

- **Gender-wise giving** is a term coined by [Australians Investing In Women](#) (AIIW) to describe women-focused philanthropy. AIIW develops resources to support grantmakers and not-for-profits to maximise their positive impact by successfully applying a gender lens and catalysing investing in women and girls.
- **Feminist philanthropy** is more than funding women's and girls' rights – it refers to practising feminist principles and values throughout the entire process. According to Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, a women's fund in Nicaragua: "Feminist philanthropy is not a

charitable act or an act of power. It is an act of solidarity and mutual empowerment, in which the solutions to the problems that women face are seen as a matter of mutual responsibility". Nor is it just financial giving, Global Fund for Women's founder, Anne Firth Murray, writes, "It is the 'how' that has the power to transform systems, structures, attitudes, and behaviours of both the people who give and their recipients, not the 'how much'". See [the Principles for Feminist Funding from Equality Fund](#) and [the Feminist Funding Principles from Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice](#).

Intersectionality

Regardless of the approach used in conversations about gender and philanthropy, it is critical that they include an intersectional perspective. It means to acknowledge that gender cannot be considered in an isolated way but in a constant relationship with other markers of difference. The term intersectionality refers to how different social markers of difference – gender, race, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, territory, age, among others – interact with each other, influencing the way we experience life in society.

Funding for intersectional organising

A [recent report launched by the Human Rights Funders Network](#) shows that a resoundingly small fraction of human rights funding supports activism that cuts across multiple communities or issues.

Most 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. 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 colour who identify as LBTQI+. Grants for LGBTQI+ people and persons with disabilities are among the most siloed funding streams within human rights philanthropy.

Wording and dialogue challenges that philanthropy can overcome together

Social knowledge and society are dynamic and constantly changing, as are language and the way of understanding and naming phenomena, processes, and relationships. The diversity of approaches shows the fruitfulness and complexity of the topic, and it should not be a factor to prevent dialogue, exchanges and constant learning.

However, gender is often seen as something controversial or difficult to understand, which generates taboos, fear of making mistakes and a lack of interest or engagement in the subject. The representatives of WINGS members interviewed for this research shared their different visions about the

best way of naming and addressing the subject, and the challenges to creating more dialogue on gender and diversity. They agree that some terms still “scare” some audiences.

The most used expressions are women’s rights, women’s leadership, or women’s empowerment. Most philanthropic organisations that discuss gender equity do it from a binary gender perspective, without mentioning issues of gender identity, gender expression, or including trans people and other gender minorities. In cases where the importance of deepening and broadening the gender debate is recognised, it is also noticed that this is a slow process that needs to be done carefully and with a lot of pedagogy.

Although WINGS members interviewed use different terminologies, they converge on the importance of broadening the conversations on the subject, breaking silos, and creating opportunities to build a common narrative.

WINGS embraces “philanthropy for gender equity” in this same sense of building a common narrative. Philanthropy for gender equity is a more comprehensive expression, a potential meeting point for the different approaches mentioned above. These approaches share similarities and differences, but all refer to philanthropic practices aimed at promoting gender equity. This is where WINGS is situated: drawing on cross-countries and cross-sector references and the diversity of the WINGS’ community, building spaces for dialogue and exchange of learning.

"We have a moment to emphasise, in this new philanthropy that is changing after Covid-19, more trust-based, more collaborative, more bottom-up, more open, more empathetic – women have an important role to do. So I don't speak so much if I am gender-lens or a feminist, I am just a social entrepreneur, I created my Venture Philanthropy foundation and my SPO, I have been working in the philanthropy and the social investment sector more than 15 years and I see right now, as a mother, as a woman, that we have a very important role to change how the things happen – in many ways, such as leadership, about how to do philanthropy, how to bring women's issues to the table."

Rosa Madera, Empatthy, Chile

"We use 'women's rights movement', women-centred movements and organisations. It doesn't put context on who is in leadership or what they are doing, but it puts context on the cause itself if this organisation advocates for women's rights. It helps to delineate exactly what we are trying to speak to".

Eme Iniekung, Philanthropy Circuit, Nigeria

"We were founded by people who come from the field of feminist action and since the foundation, we see ourselves as a feminist philanthropy fund, which works under a lens that feminism is plural: they are feminisms. It is not a single and limited view of feminism, but the understanding that it is plural and that it is renewed as time goes by".

Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil

"We are working toward gender-lens philanthropy and that's how we have labelled what we're doing. We're working with ELLAS on the research on gender-lens philanthropy and women-led philanthropy and what we are hoping to get from there is a guide for philanthropists and specifically, a toolkit for community foundations to implement a gender lens in their philanthropic decisions and their operational makeup".

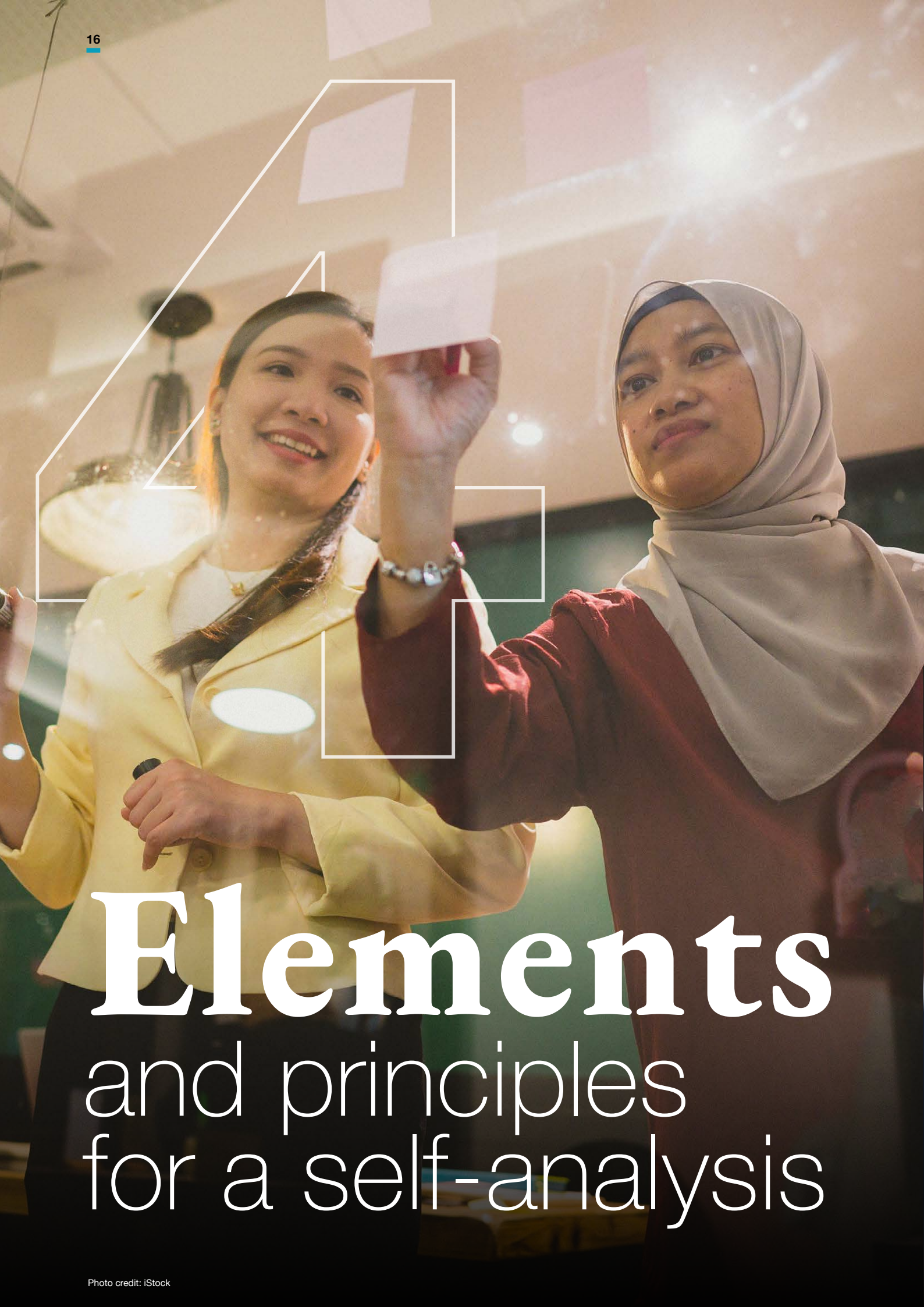
Tatiana Fraga, Comunalía, Mexico

"I think it's important to establish why we need to have a gender approach and that's the conversation, in my case, I take into the places I must lead. We can use the name you want, perhaps lens, but the first thing is to understand 'why'".

Ana Alvarez, Fundación Avon, GDFE member, Argentina

"Philanthropists are very powerful actors, and we know that in some countries philanthropy has more trust than other sectors, like the business sector and sometimes the public sector. This is not the case everywhere, but in some countries, philanthropy has a strong legitimacy, precisely because it builds the bridge between citizens and groups, between civil society and grassroots organisations, and between public authorities and academia. Therefore, it needs to take advantage of that position to put forward that conversation and speak widely to create a common dialogue".

Maja Spanu, Fondation de France



Elements and principles for a self-analysis

Considering the recent debates on philanthropy for gender equity, this paper gathers a list of elements, principles and practices that can contribute to advancing gender equity in the sector.

WINGS and its members form a very diverse community. The objective of this list is not to create a recipe or checklist, but rather to propose reflections for member organisations to suggest paths for a critical evaluation of philanthropic practices.

Do any of these questions fit your organisation? Do they make sense to you? Do any of them help you to rethink some practice?

1. Gender in the mission and/or organisational guidelines

- Does your organisation acknowledge and commit to promoting gender equity in its institutional mission? It might be explicit or implicit within terms like “human rights”, “social justice”, and “inclusive sustainable development”.
- Are women and other gender minorities visible and/or named in your strategy, plans, and/or programmes?

2. Practised Values

- Does your organisation address power issues transversally in its work, from the inside out? This means a practical commitment to shift the power and to understand and address biases and assumptions.

“When we talk about values and value alignment, as a network we have a certain number of values that we share and there are two that I find important here which is equity and subsidiarity, which is the idea that we all have strengths and weaknesses, but together we can share those strengths and weaknesses and have a greater impact”.

Tatiana Fraga, Comunalia, Mexico



“The term coherence needs to be pronounced there: coherence means that if you support some values externally, these need to be reflected deeply inside. Coherence for the foundation links to questions of legitimacy too. If you want to have greater legitimacy then you need to make sure that coherence and transparency are respected”.

Maja Spanu, Fondation de France

3. Diverse leadership

- Does your organisation have women and/or other gender minorities in leadership positions?
- Are at least 50% of the board of directors composed of women and/or other gender minorities?
- Are at least 50% of the management/coordinator positions composed of women and/or other gender minorities?
- Besides a diverse leadership composition, does your organisation practice feminist leadership principles⁴?

“When we talk about representation, it’s not just about having women in leadership positions - we need to include indigenous people and black women in all their diversity as well, lesbian and bisexual women, and non-binary transgender people and other gender identities. That needs to get stronger, more evident because it’s something that’s quite difficult to see in the sector”.

Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil.



“Not just on Women’s Day, show your support. We try to ensure that the resources, the access, the opportunities, the events that we share reflect gender balance, reflect women’s rights movements, even in the events that we do, information that we share, promote or amplify”.

Eme Iniekung, Philanthropy Circuit, Nigeria

Photo credit: iStock

4. Gender-lens approach on programmes and projects

- When designing your programmes and projects, regardless of their focus (health, education, technology, human rights, employment, entrepreneurship, food security, clean energy, climate action, etc.) do you apply a gender lens?
- Does the organisation take an intersectional approach, articulating gender to race, sexuality, disability, territory, age, etc.?
- When monitoring and evaluating your projects, do you apply a gender lens and analyse gender issues?
- Does your organisation engage in projects, initiatives and movements that promote SDG #5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls?
- Are these programmes and projects led and implemented by women?

5. Empowering women and other gender minorities

- When selecting your partners and/or grantees, do you consider gender diversity? Depending on your context, this may also mean working with women-led partners, particularly those led by racial or ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, rural women, migrants, refugees, disabled people, people affected by the climate crisis, and other impacted groups that have less access to funding.
- If your organisation engages in funding, does it practice a trust-based approach, offering flexible funding and simplifying and reducing bureaucracy in paperwork? Does the organisation implement participatory grant-making methods?

6. Networking and collective conversations and actions

- If your organisation is a network, does it promote and foster dialogues and events on gender issues and the promotion of gender equity?
- If your organisation is engaged in networks, does it participate in dialogues and events on gender issues and the promotion of gender equity?
- Does your organisation promote or participate in collective actions to strengthen gender equity in the philanthropic sector or exchange knowledge on the subject?

“There is also an interesting role that foundations can play within the life of a state. What is the relationship that philanthropy has with other stakeholders, the NGO and non-profit sector, but also public policy authorities, research, and academia? What is the dialogue and how can they open discussions on issues of social justice, gender justice or racial justice? It can be a way forward both to bring about what we do but also to inspire ourselves on what is done, to enrich and make sure we are always up-to-date with what happens in society”.

Maja Spanu, Fondation de France





Main

challenges
and barriers

When asked about the main challenges and barriers to philanthropic work regarding gender equity, the interviewees highlighted the following:

Discussions on gender are only beginning, there is still a lack of cross-sectional and transversal gender-lens approaches

Gender issues are commonly seen as the responsibility of organisations that work specifically with the agenda of women's rights and/or other gender minorities' rights.

Although the debate around gender is growing in the philanthropic field, few organisations adopt a gender lens in a transversal way. It is common for gender to be understood as a specific theme, a "cut" or "part" that fits a specific project or area.

Interviewees also highlighted the difficulty for organisations to rethink themselves internally, and to develop a process (which must be ongoing) to rebalance gender issues in teams and boards and in leadership positions.

"In Chile, for example, this is just starting. You can see small organisations working on gender, and some women's funds, but I would like to see it more transversal, in all the projects, with investors encouraging this perspective and that more social organisations and foundations have this gender-lens focus in their strategy and in their projects."

Rosa Madera, Empatthy

Legal and fiscal barriers, as well as lack of resources, affect especially smaller organisations that are tackling gender issues

In different countries, WINGS members report excessive bureaucracy, legal limitations and fiscal restrictions that mainly harm small organisations. Many of these are women's and gender minorities grassroots groups, which work towards gender equity in their communities and territories.

In Mexico, for example, a foundation with charity status cannot give money to organisations that are not registered as charities. As Tatiana Fraga from Comunalía explains: "That means that a lot of the work of grassroots movements has been limited because they only give support in kind. You must have an array of authorizations to help grassroots movements, which means a lot of bureaucracy. That's a significant restriction for feminist movements and groups because a lot of them are not registered charities, they are set up by activists and volunteers. A lot of them are set up by activists and volunteers; these restrictions pose a challenge to their development."

In France, where 8 different legal statuses exist for foundations, Maja Spanu from Fondation de France also points out that "there is a complexity of the legal scene that needs to be simplified".

In Nigeria, Eme Iniekung from Philanthropy Circuit highlights that scarce funding for gender-focused organisations tends to be directed towards larger, more structured organisations with well-established connections and partnerships, without reaching smaller organisations that are at the forefront of work in territories and communities.

“We have a burden of information we must file and present. We invest a lot of money in many procedures. To establish a foundation you need 500 thousand pesos nowadays in the City of Buenos Aires, it’s a lot of money if you think of small organisations. Thus, I don’t believe we will have many foundations being created to work on this behalf in the short term. Foundations must also present triennial plans. You have to explain this to the state, and what you’re going to do in the following three years with budget and action preparations. It is a burden, many times, and in most organisations, you need to hire an accountant, a lawyer, and someone to help you file and present this information accordingly”.

Debora Telles, GDPE, Argentina.

Growing conservative movements and rights setbacks

Globally, women and other gender minorities have faced conservative reactions and rights setbacks, which bring specific challenges to philanthropic organisations that support gender equity.

One recent example is the repeal of the federal constitutional right to abortion by the Supreme Court of the United States, along with the call to roll back further protections, including contraception access and LGBTQ+ rights. In this sense, [Women Moving Millions](#) has released some calls to action. Recommendations include providing sustainable funding to the ecosystem of reproductive justice and rights organisations, along with “political and cultural movement organisations working to increase women’s political power and representation and expand voting rights”, and reviewing “your investment portfolio to ensure value alignment and other opportunities to flex your power as a shareholder.”

WINGS members also highlight that, despite a growing interest in funding gender initiatives, some types of issues and projects remain underfunded.





Photo credit: Max Panama

“We have seen the growth of the feminist movement in the last few years, which has been challenged by a growing conservative movement in a lot of our countries, Mexico included, where certain laws have been limiting the rights of women and girls. There are more and more restrictions in the right to decide, the right for an identity, etc”.

Tatiana Fraga, Comunalia, México.

“Some issues are more difficult than others to mobilise resources. There is conservative fundamentalist pressure to hinder the advance of some rights. Issues like firearms lack of regulation, the legalisation of land grabbing, the conflicts over land being aggravated, indigenous issues, and the genocide of the black population, all of this greatly affects the work carried out by our grantees. This causes the demands and the context to change very quickly, bringing risks to our work and the work of social movements”.

Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil



Good

practices,
learnings
and inspirations

Initiatives that may inspire other organisations

WINGS members are developing different initiatives to promote gender equity in their organisations and in the contexts in which they operate, facing challenges and proposing solutions according to their realities and possibilities. Here are some of their experiences:

ELAS+ Giving for change | Flexible funding for women's rights organisations

Organisation: ELAS+ Giving for change

Type of organisation: Intermediary, joint and community funds

Country: Brazil

Description of the action:

ELAS+ Giving for change (or ELAS+) is the first Brazilian women's fund, supporting women's rights organisations since 2000. Since 2020, ELAS+ has given flexible funds to organisations led by women and trans people, aimed at institutional strengthening, through the "Women in Movement" call for proposals. The programme has an intersectional approach, supporting formal and informal organisations, groups and collectives led by people who are indigenous, trans and *travestis*, quilombola (from traditional Afro-descendant communities), lesbian and bisexual, rural, HIV-positive, and other women.

The programme has supported 244 initiatives in the 5 regions of Brazil, totalling more than BRL 11 million (USD 2 million) invested.

The initiative was stimulated by the response of grassroots organisations led by women and trans people to the Covid-19 crisis. According to a report by ELAS+, "[Activism and Pandemic in Brazil](#)" which presents a portrait of 953 formal and informal civil society organisations led by women and trans people from all over Brazil, these grassroots organisations "were fast, creative and resilient. With little or no resources, they have made a positive impact in their territories and communities." The research showed that in Brazil,

the organisations hit by the pandemic invested in qualifications, equipment, and infrastructure, establishing connections and transitioning their businesses online.

"The institutional flexible grants were already our interest and what we sought to implement, but especially from 2020 onwards with the pandemic, ELAS+ had the need and the opportunity to negotiate this with its donors, with its partners. Since then, we have made the majority of our grant-making focused on flexible funding, aimed at institutional strengthening. We encourage and try hard to influence philanthropy to exercise this trust-based approach in the relationship with grassroots organisations. And then this trust is what also gave us the possibility of offering flexible support, which allows these organisations to make decisions about the best way to use the resources so that they can strengthen themselves, their leadership, their organisation, to sustain itself". – Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil

Current state: In progress

More information: <http://fundosocialelas.org/mulheres-em-movimento/index-en.html>; <http://www.fundosocialelas.org/ativismo-e-pandemia-no-brasil/uploads/activism-and-pandemic-in-brazil.pdf>

Comunalia | Being “neutral” or “objective” helps unequal power structures

Organisation: Comunalia – Alliance of Community Foundations of Mexico

Type of organisation: Geographic networks and associations

Country: Mexico

Description of the action:

Comunalia is the Alliance of Community Foundations of Mexico, a non-profit organisation that focuses on local development and strategic social investment. They aim to boost the collective work of Mexican community foundations to help them have a greater impact, reach, and transcendence in their programmes. In the sense of seeking greater coherence and internally practising values such as equity, Comunalia adopted principles of human rights as organisational guidelines.

Aligned with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Comunalia and its community foundations endorsed their commitment to the full exercise of human rights and freedoms through the “Declaration of Principles, Responsibilities and Commitments on Human Rights” at their Annual Assembly 2021. Those who collaborate with Comunalia and the associated community foundations have also adhered to the [Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles](#), among other commitments to incorporate gender equity and equality while promoting the rights of women and girls. Comunalia plans to work with its members so that each one can adopt and fully implement and practice the same principles, providing specific tools to support them.

“The conversation started around neutrality in community foundations. We sometimes think because community foundations are conveners

and articulate groups of people, that they must stay objective. And objectivity sometimes helps power. A discussion that we have had around the values of the network was on neutrality and objectivity. Does Comunalia have to stay neutral on issues because we are not working on direct programmes? Does Comunalia have to stay neutral because we work on strengthening other institutions? That conversation started a couple of years back, and it started regarding gender and also regarding the LGBTIQ+ movement and how we were reflecting on those issues. And how we were being complicit to power because we are objective, or we are neutral”. – Tatiana Fraga, Comunalia, México

Together with ELLAS and WINGS, Comunalia has developed a [guide on gender-lens philanthropy](#), launched in September 2022. Based on this work Comunalia will create a toolkit for 16 members of its network, or for community foundations that are part of its network, to enable them to use a gender lens in their philanthropic activities. Comunalia also collaborated in the preparation of a [report on philanthropy for gender justice in Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

Current state: In progress

More information: <https://comunalia.org.mx/comunalia-reafirma-su-compromiso-por-respetar-y-defender-los-derechos-humanos/>; https://comunalia.org.mx/portfolio_page/filantropia-con-perspectiva-de-genero/



“If you want to advance certain issues, if we are in an environment that is a little bit more mainstream, we need to be careful. We must name the issues, but we need to explain a lot, and this is a very time-consuming exercise, but we need to have patience. For me the lesson learned is: have that patience but speak about the issues, don’t pretend they’re not there and don’t pretend they have other names. They have certain names, but they need to be fully explained and understood by everyone”.

Maja Spanu, Fondation de France

AVPN | Connecting people and powering networks to channel funds for gender equity

Organisation: AVPN

Type of organisation: Geographic networks and associations

Country: Singapore

Description of the action:

AVPN is a network of more than 600 members across 33 countries that aims to increase the flow of financial, human, and intellectual capital from around the world into the social sector in Asia. AVPN created the [Asia Gender Network](#), in 2020, the first pan-Asian network dedicated to funding the advancement of women and girls. The network's mission is to mobilise financial, intellectual and human capital to improve outcomes for women and girls in Asia. The initiative is part of AVPN's Gender Platform.

The Asia Gender Network works through driving new and incremental capital towards programmes that enable gender equality, empowering network members to be champions for women and girls, creating engagement between members in the form of knowledge sharing and collective action and amplifying a uniquely Asian perspective, rooted in regional expertise and locally relevant solutions.

“Our position is that if someone is interested in an aspect of funding in gender, we will help them think it through. What does that look like and who should they talk to, share with them best practices, and the ways in which they can get involved. Finding opportunities for them within their strategic goals which helps move funding toward gender equality or gender equity issues is the first step. We believe in encouraging collaborative philanthropy, encouraging the idea that if we continue to maintain silos it is going to be difficult to advance gender equality”.

Together with the Asia Gender Network and other foundations, AVPN launched the Asia Gender Equality Fund to support the economic empowerment of women in Asia. “It's trust-based philanthropy, we give them operating grants to build the capacity of their organisation to deliver gender equality”. – Caroline McLaughlin, AVPN, Singapore

Current state: In progress

More information: <https://asiagendernetwork.avpn.asia/>



Photo credit: iStock

Fondation de France | Analysing the gender balance on foundations' boards

Organisation: Fondation de France

Type of organisation: Private institutional funder

Country: France

Description of the action:

Founded in 1969, Fondation de France is a philanthropy network in France that brings together donors, founders, volunteers and project leaders across the country. Fondation de France is an umbrella foundation that hosts more than 900 donor-advised funds, and it seeks to produce and share knowledge on philanthropy, bring together philanthropy stakeholders and promote a culture of philanthropy.

Fondation de France has developed a [new study on gender equity](#) and philanthropy in France. The gender equity study is the first of a new collection of annual studies analysing the way philanthropy relates to the issues it is embedded in. Other topics will include democracy and philanthropy, diversity and philanthropy and related topics.

The study addresses gender balance within foundations' boards, focusing on how foundations work internally in France. Maja Spanu shared about the study methodology: "It was developed with quantitative and qualitative methodology. Anne Cornilleau, Head of Studies of the Philanthropy

Observatory at Fondation de France, was responsible for the quantitative part. She looked at boards of foundations specifically to measure female and male participation, according to information available on their websites. The qualitative part of the study was led by Anne and Hazal Atay a gender specialist, who conducted qualitative interviews with foundations asking them about their strategy, how they saw the question of gender balance, gender as being important to their strategic development, internally and externally. At the end, we all together developed a set of recommendations for foundations and philanthropic networks in France for best practices".

The main goal is that French philanthropists can have the study as a tool to promote better practices. The report is available in [French](#) and [English](#).

Current state: Published

More information:

<https://www.fondationdefrance.org/en/>

Some lessons learned

Maintain coherence when amplifying gender issues and campaigns

One organisation shared that it announced the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign – but when they received emails asking for more information, asking how to engage, they didn't have enough information to share at that moment. "If organisations want to position themselves when it comes to advancing gender equity, it would be great to have a toolkit for the team, or resources that can help explain, to those who might be interested, the realities and ideas behind what they are promoting".

Align well with partners

Organisations that have had the experience of realising that some partners are not so aligned with their values and mission call attention to the importance of being clear on what you do or do not negotiate. When positioning yourself in defence of gender equity, take care to align this with your partners.

Be patient, but don't avoid difficult conversations

All the interlocutors of this research agree on one point: we are dealing with changes that take time and involve conversations with different people who are not always aware of the importance of the subject. Your expectations should consider these different timings. Be sure to communicate the reasons for each action when building consensus, especially for concrete gender equity actions.

"When we designed a programme on governance and leadership we started asking our members questions about the needs and issues they had to work on. In the process, we learned that only 30% of board members in our community foundations are women and assumed diversity would be a priority, but we didn't really understand the context for each one of them. When looking at the results of our mapping, the gender issue was not an issue for them and we didn't want to impose it. So, we're still working on how we might get them to identify the area of opportunity and reflect on it. This was a hard thing for us because we were expecting to increase diversity in our boards but we didn't realise that it is a long-term process that starts with dialogue".

Tatiana Fraga, Comunalia, México

"The lesson learned is that it is always slower to encourage people to give, but it's worth the education process, and it's worth the struggle because once they get the issue, and once they understand how they can make an impact on an issue if they have the money then they will give bigger".

Caroline McLaughlin – AVPN

References and inspirations on philanthropy for gender equity

When asked about their references and inspirations on philanthropy for gender equity, the interviewees shared different organisations, people and practices that have been influencing and energising the philanthropy sector regarding the promotion of gender equity.

In different ways, these players have been recognising and making visible the inequalities based on gender, and they are advancing the transformation of processes and redistribution of resources so that gender is not a barrier for people and communities to reach their full potential.

Here are some of these references:

“[Africa No Filter](#), because they are using the language and the giving practices focused on women and [the African Women’s Development Fund](#), that not only funds women’s movements but amplifies their work. [Ford Foundation](#) is also a reference for me”. – Eme Iniekung, Philanthropy Circuit, Nigeria

“Women’s funds, giving circles, Mackenzie Scott and Melinda Gates and many other ones in different countries. [Fondo Calala](#), in Spain, [Semillas](#), in Mexico. For many years a lot of people have been working for changes in philanthropy, for more funding for women and girls, but now this movement is more visible”. – Rosa Madera, Empatthy, Chile

“We were inspired by [Mama Cash](#) and [Semillas](#). [Prospera](#), a global network of women’s funds, is a great inspiration - at the moment there are about 40 funds that are part of this network, in which we are inspired, strengthened and build processes of collective learning”. – Savana Brito, ELAS+ Giving for change, Brazil

“Someone who has brought a big change to how philanthropy works is [Mackenzie Scott](#), I do think we have centred the discussion on core and general support granting and multi-year support that Mackenzie Scot has brought forward, but there is still a very top-down approach in the way that she selects the organisations. But I do think that what inspires me the most is the women who are being generous with their time and their knowledge and their abilities in an everyday basis and not necessarily have a lot of financial resources but are helping women in a certain way”. – Tatiana Fraga, Comunalía, México

“Personally, I would say that the practises that I find most inspiring for us are those based on participatory philanthropy and intersectionality, so there are the two approaches that can contribute us most”. – Maja Spanu, Fondation de France

“The [Gates Foundation](#) has done an amazing job in thinking about gender equality and what that means across Asia. And [Co-Impact](#) with their work bringing collaborative philanthropy together around gender. And also the people – who usually remain nameless - funding the number of women who work with difficult issues in Asia, such as single mothers who have no benefits from the government”. – Caroline McLaughlin, AVPN, Singapore

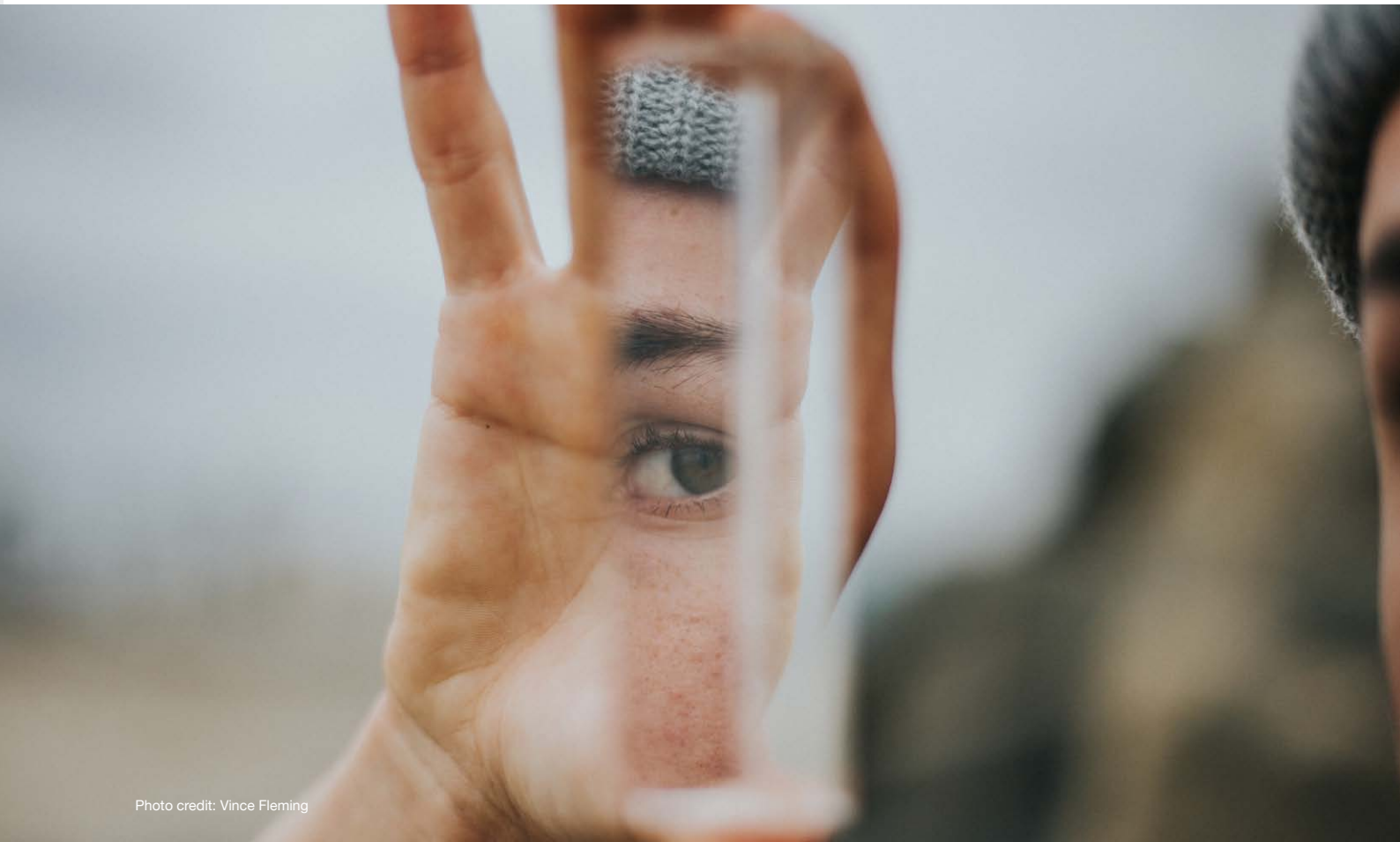


Recommendations for next steps

This paper is an initial step: from here, WINGS aims to raise awareness and develop concrete action for gender equity in our community and in the philanthropic sector. As we have seen, this requires reflecting not only on external actions and programmes, but on internal practices and policies, seeking coherence and opening space for deep, true and transformative reflections.

In this sense, WINGS' potential next steps are:

- Promote an internal workshop to present and discuss this paper with the whole team.
- Conduct an internal participatory analysis using the “list of elements and principles for a self-analysis” available in this paper.
- Deepen research on philanthropy for gender equity, mapping other experiences and learnings from the WINGS community.
- Systematically collect data on gender and other markers of difference about the WINGS team and the community of members.
- Gather data on actions, projects, programmes and funding for gender equity in the WINGS community.
- Organise a training on gender-lens philanthropy for WINGS members.
- Provide space for exchanging experiences and learning among WINGS members on philanthropy for gender equity (through virtual forums, webinars, thematic meetings and similar). It may include an online repository of guides, protocols and publications on gender-lens philanthropy and philanthropy for gender equity.
- Amplify best practices by members who are working with and advocating for philanthropy for gender equity, supporting and promoting access to international events and initiatives and partnerships, highlighting their messages and recommendations.



We invite the entire WINGS community to join us in this direction.

There is no single way to start the conversation about gender equity: start from where you are and with the resources you already have, taking small steps, one at a time.

Find your way to approach the topic:

- Regardless of your focus, **make an internal reflection**. Reflect how gender issues appear within your organisation and in your work. Use existing resources – for example the list of elements and principles for a self-analysis or guides listed in the suggested reading section of this paper. Can any of the proposed questions trigger internal conversation or reflection in your organisation?
- Once you read this paper and/or use the list of elements and principles for a self-analysis, it would be great to hear your feedback. Send us an email or invite us to have a virtual meeting to discover your impressions.
- **Adopt a gender-lens approach**. Look at your projects, programmes and partnerships considering gender. How do your current priority issues areas interact with gender? The gender-lens and gender-wise philanthropy guides and toolkits that we link throughout the paper and include in the references can be useful tools.
- Are you developing a study or new project or programme focused on gender equity? **Let us know** and we can include it in an upcoming paper.
- **Research, access or gather evidence and data on gender – and share it**. Access existing research on gender and philanthropy in your context. And if you've developed something specific to your area of expertise, share it with other organisations. It can be useful for other players in the philanthropic ecosystem.
- **Practice active listening and experiment with participatory processes**. Don't just count on numbers or reports, listen to your team, your field, the people you want to support, and consider using participatory processes (for example, participatory grant-making, and monitoring, evaluation and learning methodologies focused on mutual learning).
- **Regardless of your focus, amplify initiatives led by women and other gender minorities**. Check if there is room to increase recognition of the work of women and of groups and organisations led by women and other gender minorities. Do the events you promote have women speakers? Among the consultants and service providers that your organisation hires, are these people present? Amplify the voices and the work of experts and connectors for gender equity. Amplify the work for gender equity that is being done by local players from your context.
- **Practice and/or advocate for trust-based, flexible, multi-year and more funding for gender equity**. The need for channeling more funds to gender causes is evident, as well as for strengthening grassroots organisations led by women and other gender minorities. Talk about it, learn about it, take a stand.
- **Generate conversations with other players and sectors, as well as network actions**. Speak about your commitment to gender equity as widely as possible. Position yourself and your organisation in this sense. By not keeping silent, you can influence others.



Photo credit: iStock

End notes

- 1 The participants were Julie Reilly (Australian Communities Foundation Representative), Ana Inés Alvarez (Avon Foundation), Débora Telles (GDPE), Gracia Goya (Hispanics in Philanthropy), Rosalea Hamilton (Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance), Eme Iniekung (Philanthropy Circuit), Francesca Mereta (Assifero), Ruth Shapiro (Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society), and Florencia Roitstein (ELLAS Mujeres y Filantropía). The focus group was held on April 12, 2022. We are grateful for the contributions of all participants.
- 2 We conducted 7 interviews in May and June 2022, with Caroline McLaughlin (Asian Venture Philanthropy Network), Debora Telles (Grupo de Fundaciones y Empresas) and Ana Alvarez (Fundación Avon), Eme Iniekung (Philanthropy Circuit), Maja Spanu (Fondation de France), Rosa Madera (Empatthy), Savana Brito (ELAS+ Giving for change), and Tatiana Fraga (Comunalía). We deeply appreciate the collaboration of the interviewees who generously shared their visions and experiences with us.
- 3 For the purpose of this document, we refer to “women and other gender minorities” considering minorities not in the numerical sense in terms of population representation, but in the sense of political representation, access to spaces of power and decision-making and access to rights, resources and opportunities. Some social movements, mainly Black movements, have referred to groups that are the majority of the population but social “minorities” as “minorised majorities”. In the same sense, women are the majority of society, but they are politically minorised because of gender inequities.
- 4 Feminist leadership is not just about women playing leadership roles - it is about capacitating women and other people to lead differently, with feminist values and ideology, to advance social justice for all, according to [CREA](#). Feminist leadership is a concept developed and practised mainly by women’s movements in the Global South. At its most basic, it is a commitment to creating alternatives to traditional, hierarchical leadership and organisational cultures. This can take many different forms, and it is an ongoing process of learning and unlearning, both individually and together with others. Besides CREA, also check the [Fair Share of Women Leaders](#). Everybody can learn and practice feminist leadership principles, regardless of gender.



A call to action

There is no development without gender equity, and philanthropy has a key role in promoting more equitable and just societies for all, including women and other gender minorities.

This is a call for you to show your commitment to this transformation: it is an urgent change for everyone, which requires everyone's involvement.

It is a call for us to adopt an intersectional gender lens together, one that broadens our vision and allows us to make better decisions in our work and in our lives. Seeing the world through a gender lens is irreversible: once we see it, we cannot unsee it. Let's expand our visions collectively, as a community.

Let's take the next steps together toward a philanthropy committed to promoting gender equity and true and lasting social change.



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