



# RIGHTS, SHARES AND CLAIMS : REALISING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA

---

*A RESOURCE MAPPING INITIATIVE BY SOUTH ASIA WOMEN'S FUND*

**Summary and key findings presented on 16th July,  
India Habitat Center, New Delhi**

## INTROCUPTION AND KEY OBJECTIVES

Women's human rights have been historically under-resourced and unsupported sites of work in the social justice sector. This trend of limited support to women's rights is reflected in South Asia, in terms of indigenous giving as well as in giving by traditional donors. Issues in each country range from poverty, violation of human rights by the state, lack of effective support mechanisms to address issues around culture, minority identity and internal armed conflicts. Though these concerns, when coupled with variations in cultural and religious practices, play differently for women in these five countries, the larger narrative of culture, religion and patriarchal ideology that perpetuates gender based discrimination and inequalities, remains the same across the region.

A few years ago, AWID had undertaken pioneering work in tracking the access to resources for women's groups and organisation working on women's human rights, and sharing it through its *Funder* reports as well as its "Where is the Money for Women's Work" project. While the broad trends have been mapped by reports such as AWID, much more work is required to surface a detailed profile of the South Asian region, in terms of availability of resources- especially fiscal and track their movement, in terms of groups and beneficiaries.

- To assess and identify the resources pledged and available for social justice work and allocation for women's human rights work within that
- To highlight accessibility of women's groups and organizations to these resources.
- To track in kind resources that can be used for social justice work, and that are made available to women's groups and organizations.
- To advocate and follow through the mandate of the women's movements in the region particularly through grant-making, advocacy and networking activities in and outside the region

## KEY QUESTIONS

It is in this context that SAWF decided to undertake a research to identify and map:

1. The availability of resources for social justice work
2. The allocation for women's human rights work within that, and
3. The access of women's groups and organisations to these resources

The baseline was to attempt to track in kind, resources that can be used for social justice work and may be made available to women's groups and organisations.

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

In order to ensure proper coverage and representation of the region, the mapping exercise covered all the five SA countries i.e. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The exercise was carried out by a team of researchers comprising of one national researcher for each country: Anuradha Rajan (India), Paro Chaujar (Nepal), Sarah Javeed (Pakistan), Asma Alam (Bangladesh) and Deepthy Menon (Sri Lanka); led by the regional consultant/facilitator (Niti Saxena), who in turn was guided by the study advisor (Vimala Ramachandran).

*The resource mapping exercise was carried out in two phases:*

### Phase I:

#### *Sampling:*

The country consultants with the support from the SAWF team identified and contacted various women groups, activists, academicians, alliance partners about different types of women groups/groups working on women issues, particularly those groups that are difficult to reach out to. A short questionnaire was developed (translated into various local languages) and sent to shortlisted organisations spread across the countries; the questionnaire focused on the nature of work, strategies and, approach being undertaken by the groups, spending on women issues, women in their governance structure and most critically difficulties in resource mobilisation. A typology with clear categories of groups was developed simultaneously- out of the profile received through the survey;

### Phase II:

Methodologies used for collection of information were:

- Individual interviews and Focussed Discussion Groups with shortlisted organisations from Phase I survey
- Key Informant Interviews: The primary purpose of key informant interviews with leading women's rights activists/academicians across the region was to gain background insights into processes of change in funding pattern, critical issues that are needed in terms of movement building and strategies for resource mobilisation for the same.
- Semi-structured Interviews with selected representatives from the donor community
- Data Consolidation, secondary literature review Report writing and analysis

## Study Sample

<b>Survey nos. of final respondents</b>	<b>338</b>
In-depth Interviews with selected Organisations (surveyed)	65
Donor Interviews	28
Interviews with Key Informants (Champions of women issues in respective countries)	46

## Country-wise sample

	Bangladesh	Nepal	India	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Total
<b>Phase I survey</b>	56	41	114	73	54	338
<b>Phase II indepth interviews</b>						
<b>NGOs</b>	10	10	21	14	10	65
<b>KIs</b>	7	5	16	13	5	46
<b>Donors</b>	3	5	12	5	3	28

## LIMITATION AND CHALLENGES

There were several limitations and constraints faced during the study that ranged from simple logistical coordination issues, methodological challenges, following up with respondents to capturing the scope of givings in the region.

One major constraint in this exercise was the low response rate for both sampling and survey where contacts were made primarily through emails/phone and in some cases through post (where groups did not have access to mails). Several rounds of follow ups were attempted by the team, which not only took a lot time but also affected the envisaged sample size of the study.

Given the varied socio-political situations on the ground, while majority of NGOs that responded to the initial survey were forthcoming in terms of sharing information, some articulated their discomfort in sharing their responses- particularly on right based approaches, strategies and difficulties in fund raising.

For the interviews with donor community, access to the `right` person in the organisation was a time consuming task. Majority of the information presented in the study on philanthropic organisations, individuals and corporate companies is based on secondary literature available on the internet.

There is also a distinct lack of region-specific secondary data available in the public domain. Given the vast and diverse landscape of philanthropy, it was a daunting task to map and put together a composite picture of the givings targeting at social justice for women.

## **THE LANDSCAPE OF GIVING**

The giving framework for resourcing social justice work for women include a range of resources and commitments at the bilateral and multilateral levels as well as other funding sources – philanthropic foundations, women’s funds, Diaspora philanthropy, corporate sectors, individual givers etc. `Investing` in women and girls- in focus for over a decade, is now moving beyond MDG developmental discourses to be part of human rights agenda.

Despite the increasing attention towards resourcing work on women issues, there is consistent need and demand for more dedicated share of resources for the realisation of human rights for women, more so in the present socio-political and economic situation. Advancement of social justice becomes even more critical at a time when the world is bracing with the fallout of the financial and economic crisis that has pushed millions more into poverty and is being seen fundamentally as Amnesty International aptly calls it, a `human rights crisis`.

The following are some of the critical emerging trends in the sphere of international aid in the region:

### **1. The Aid Effectiveness Reforms in the past decade, such as the High Level Forums**

- 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness established global commitments from donors and partner countries to support more effective aid in a context of a significant scaling up of aid. Key Principles: Ownership; Alignment; Harmonisation; Mutual Accountability and Managing for Results (between donors and between donors and partner countries)
- 2008 Accra Agenda for Action: was negotiated between donors, multilateral organisations, and developing country governments and is critical in bringing some progress in terms of its recognition of gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability –
- 2011 Busan: made further progress as Thematic groups included discussion on right based approach, south south cooperation, fragile states – special session on gender equality. For the first time this HLF included Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as a formal stakeholder group.

- The Aid reforms are extremely limited to technical issues of aid management rather than successful policy making. For example, PD mentions gender equality in only one out of 50 paragraphs (para.42), with very weak language.; Of the 32 paragraphs contained in the AAA, only three include commitments that might contribute to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## **2. Commitment to gender equality, women rights and empowerment**

In the present aid paradigm, there is increased commitment towards gender equality. Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as the global strategy for ensuring effective translation of this commitment, wherein programmes in all sectors have to address how the interventions affect men and women across all developmental spheres. The focus on gender equality as an outcome has also resulted in growing recognition for increased resource allocation for the same in international aid assistance, cooperation and domestically within State policies, finance and budgetary allocations. An analysis of gender equality focussed aid for the said five countries highlights a steady increase in aid activity in this category (for details please refer to Table 5 of the study). While there could be downward trends in funding, aid focusing on gender equality shows an increase after 2007 for countries in the region

At a glance, the trend might reflect an affirmative picture of funding for gender equality and its impact on women rights; however the link between the two is not organic on the ground, as multilayered complexities of gender dynamics and structural inequalities influence the effectiveness of gender equality aid. Despite the increase in commitment towards gender equality by the global community, donors and recipient countries, the operationalisation of the commitment remains a key concern and roadblock to social justice. For instance, on one hand - donors themselves report very limited progress on gender issues (as highlighted in Reality of Aid report, 2010), on the other hand, similar concerns have been raised about ineffectual mainstreaming and 'policy evaporation' in recipient countries. there are concerns about the way gender mainstreaming has been undertaken by governments in the region.

## **3. The role of CSOs**

CSO's, globally and regionally have been advocating consistently for more effective development cooperation - with visibilisation of lobbying by women's groups and network. Their role in the aid architecture has been recognized; for example at the AAA in 2008, CSOs were recognized "as independent development actors in their own right whose efforts complement those of governments and private sector". However as aid recipients they have been sidelined in the process.

## **4. Shift in gears in Aid management**

The ongoing reform process encompasses newer aid modalities and strategies which have brought about various changes, such as Increased co-operation of donors with

Governments and NGOs and government to government co-operation; and increasing ownership by recipient governments (inversely sidelining the role of CSOs). Focus on reducing tide grants and increasing budget support with preference for investing resources in the most cost-effective way. Linking aid more closely to performance has been in existence for a long time, but there has been a renewed focus on the same within the given aid paradigm. Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid (GPOBA), a World Bank initiative focussed on payment of aid to the delivery of specific services or 'outputs'; (iii) Results-Based Funding (RBF), an approach to contracting service providers beyond central government, or incentivising beneficiaries to use services. These approaches have certainly increased private sector's role in aid programme as contractual agents for monitoring and implementation of public infrastructure and service delivery.

## **5. Changing Nature, Role and Scope of INGOs**

This change in aid landscape has significantly affected the scope, nature and role of INGOs operational in the global South. For instance, with shrinking of resources, INGOs have been under pressure to demonstrate their contribution beyond the channelling of funds, for example in terms of their professional expertise<sup>1</sup>. Responding to shifting paradigms, many INGOs have localised themselves by legally incorporating themselves as a domestic NGO. This has brought them into competition with existing domestic NGOs which do not have the resources, outreach and expertise of the former. This has also led to funding insecurities among small NGOs forcing them to focus on tradition "outcome/output" rather than the process; also more funding is being focused on advocacy and policy influencing rather than on implementation and mobilisation<sup>2</sup>. Evidently the current aid architecture has been a mixed bag for INGOs and has drastically altered their equations with donor countries, recipient governments and local NGOs/CSO particularly women's groups – the resonance of which is felt very strongly at the local level.

## **PHILANTHROPY IN SOUTH ASIA**

Though philanthropy has a limited role in the overall non-profit sector, it remains the primary source of revenue for two non-profit fields - religion and international assistance. According to the study, while government resources for international assistance are decreasing there is increase in share of philanthropy as revenue source for the non-profit sector. There are several private philanthropic foundations working in the South Asia region supporting range of developmental issues, either directly through local partners or via grant making institutions. Foundations have also

---

<sup>1</sup> NGOs and Partnership, NGO Policy Briefing Paper No.4, NGO Sector Analysis Programme April 2001 INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre)

<sup>2</sup> Civil Society, NGOs and Social Development: Changing the Rules of the Game, by Alan Fowler, Occasional Paper No. 1, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, January 2000

contributed to the philanthropic landscape of the region by fostering new grant-making organisations/mechanisms that have supported the struggle for just and sustained social development.

- 1. Growth recorded in philanthropy in the region**, in terms of concept and approach towards social issues. While donations to religious charities still dominate individual givings – understanding has moved beyond simple charity.
- 2. Philanthropic foundations could play a critical role** in the changing aid landscape. While overall funding from the foundations is decreasing, globally funding for specific benefits of women and girls is on the rise. Though aligned with current social realities, they need to recalibrate strategic focus and priorities to engage more rigorously with resourcing social justice work in the region.
- 3. Diaspora givings** and remittances are emerging as significant components of resource pool /power of individual giving - however, they are primarily driven by altruistic purposes and are yet to include gender and social justice perspective in their giving framework
- 4. Strategic engagement with the corporate world** to ensure enhanced knowledge sharing particularly with regards to sharing the mission and vision of social justice for women
- 5. Emergence of non-traditional philanthropic giving** in the SA region such as giving circles, social ventures. These are yet to be explored by fundraisers/grant-makers operational in the said five countries
- 6. Potential of social media** to reach out to a larger world of givers, donors, grant makers, grantees yet to be exploited by grant-makers and fundraisers in the region – critical need for a platform to bring together various philanthropists (foundations, corporate, diaspora)

## **ROLE OF STATE**

State plays a critical role in social justice by establishing and maintaining just and inclusive socio-economic situations. The State has been a key player in supporting social justice philanthropy. Besides its multi-sectoral interventions, it is also a direct donor and supporter of civil society's work related to entitlements, rights and social justice. All five countries covered in the study follow a welfare state model with 'transformative' and inclusive State policies. They also design multi-year development plans that define socio-economic priorities and provide a roadmap for government's developmental programmes, schemes and enumerate fiscal investments. These plans are now 'merging with the World Bank-led Poverty Reduction Strategies, and also increasingly building on the MDG methodology.



1. Increased focus on women, gender and gender mainstreaming in State policies, programmes and financial allocations. However, there is a disconnect between ground realities and the instrumentalist and piecemeal approach adopted.
2. The state's increased control over foreign funds in the newer aid disbursement and management systems. The five principles of aid delivery (Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Mutual Accountability and Managing for results) allow for recipient countries to exercise effective authority over their development policies, strategies and national systems, while relying on external resources.
3. The role of NGOs are shadowed in ambiguity – while there is more space for NGOs in newer policy provisions (both for advocacy and service delivery), the state has also discouragingly increased the control over NGOs by tightening of rules and norms related to their registration, governance and resource mobilisation. For example, the amendment to the FCRA regulations in India; separate NGO secretariat in Sri Lanka and the Presidential Task Force which oversees funding to organisations working in the North and with Tamil communities receiving aid
4. Relationship between civil society actors and the state is becoming complicated, as the role of the former moves from service delivery into that of a watch dog of the state as well as whistle blower in the event of violations. The role of the state as an overseer of legal obligations as well as a donor of social justice puts it in a unique position of power vis-à-vis the civil society. It moves from being a facilitator to a controller of civil society action, and therein it also adds to the gaps in realization and advancement of gender equality and women's rights

## **THE REGIONAL MOSAIC**

### **Area of Operation**

Organisations covered in the survey were extremely varied. In terms of their annual budgetary size, most of the organisations (84%) had an annual budget which fell in the slab of between 0 and 500,000 USD, which includes about 93% of the groups focussing on women only. Of the total respondents (regionally), 39.94% organisations operate at the community/local level, while 5.62% and 2.66% respectively work at the regional and global level. 22.5% respondents operate at the national level while about 53.25% work at the sub-national, provincial and/or district level. (Since there were organisations operating at more than one level, the total percentage of responses was more than 100 percent)

## Focus

While all the final respondents of the survey (total 338 organisations) work on women issues, 30.18% organisations work exclusively on women. The rest engage with issues that affect women, children, youth, men, families and other community groups.

## Other findings:

In terms of governance, organisations focussing solely on women showed a marked difference from others -47% of such groups had only women members on their governing body consisting only of women members and 56% had only women executives on their employee rosters. Amongst the other categories of respondents, these figures were 20% (women in governance) and 27% (women in executive). Work being undertaken by respondents

Women are seen as the direct beneficiaries for similar set of interventions. Lesser percentage of respondents are involved in research, social mobilisation, leadership development and service delivery as strategic interventions to address women's concerns.

These findings, in conjunction with the in-depth interviews of organisational heads and key informants, reveal that while there are funds available for women groups for interventions aimed at economic empowerment, VAW (particularly awareness generation, networking), maternal health and advocacy, it is difficult for them to raise funds for the laborious work of mobilising women for their empowerment.

There are lesser funds for critical components of certain issues, for instance, within VAW there are very limited resources available for providing safe shelter to the survivors, legal and medical assistance, case work, follow up etc.

While issues like VAW and economic empowerment are undertaken by a large number of organisations, majority of work undertaken are on a project basis, aimed at advocacy and alliance building. Similarly, a larger section of work on economic empowerment of women falls within the SHG framework with the focus on quantifiable evidences of empowerment and not on the process of empowerment. Deflection of focus from long term process-oriented work is also a visible trend, with fewer groups engaging with formation of community based groups (even fewer women groups) and leadership development/cadre building interventions.

## APPROACH

The mapping exercise also assessed the kind of approaches adopted by these organisations. Their objectives, strategies, interventions undertaken and significant changes brought in the lives of women with their efforts were carefully analysed. As reflected in the graph (Fig. 6), the respondents were categorised into five categories-

**Category 1:***Explicitly rights based (with principles of equality including gender equality):* it brings together gender, participation, and empowerment into a coherent framework which is rooted in the norms and principles of international human rights standards and values. Focuses on, (i) Participation – inclusive, people-centred; (ii) Empowerment – leading to social transformation, for the marginalised and oppressed communities; (iii) Accountability: Identification of claim-holders and corresponding duty-holders (state and non-state); (iv) Equality and Non-discrimination- as defined by international human rights law; and (v) Justice - based on universal standards and norms; just distribution of resources and power, ensuring claims of violations.

**Category 2:***Explicitly rights based (with feminist principles):* Along with elements of category 1, clear articulation of feminist principles – critiquing unequal power relations, analysing gender inequality and protecting and promoting women’s rights and issues

**Category 3:***Strongly rights based:* Groups that reflect a rights based approach in their praxis- which means their activities, demonstrate adoption of a rights based approach even while the articulation may be missing (responses on objectives, strategies, activities and changes in women lives include elements of RBA – participation, empowerment etc. but not seen within the framework on equality and non-discrimination. No direct reference to human rights standards, inclusion or social transformation)

**Category 4:** *Some elements of rights based:* Groups that refer to rights based approach, and there is some level of understanding within the organisations, however, the activities or strategies do not reflect the same.

**Category 5:***RBA not clearly articulated/welfarist:* Focusing on the needs and not on rights of the communities; addressing immediate causes of problems. Programmes are entirely around the needs of the community, and there is little or no linkage between one programme line and another, as no attempt has been made to synchronise programme plan or strategic understanding. No reference to elements of RBA.

Almost 3/4th of the surveyed organisations were those that used the right- based approach though with varying degree of understanding and engagement. This could also be due to the emphasis placed on RBA as a ‘buzz word’ at the global level. Regionally, while 37 % of the respondents were found to be working with some elements of RBA, 22 % had strong understanding of rights based approach. At least 14% of the organisations surveyed work explicitly within rights framework and 10% were explicitly rights based with feminist principles.<sup>3</sup>

There has been increased engagement of both funders and NGOs with rights based approach to development. Findings of survey and interviews reveal that there are

---

<sup>3</sup>Please refer to study overview for categorisation criteria for approach being used by the respondents

different levels of understanding and interpretation of RBA among key actors. At times, the vagueness around the approach gets interplayed with the context and are used according to the agencies' priorities and preferences – whether it is bilateral agencies supporting NGOs working with RBA within a 'limited' empowerment framework and a 'softer' approach/language towards demanding state accountability or a local NGO that negotiates with local social, cultural realities and mends strategies, articulation of the demand for social justice that might not confirm with the rhetoric of RBA or feminist theory. One critical point that was raised by regional key informants was the absence of critique for the structural problems like using advocacy as strategy and/or RBA as an approach for addressing social injustice.

### **Reasons for difficulty in fundraising**

The survey explored the challenges faced by the organisations in resource mobilisation- the reasons for hurdles faced in fund raising efforts as well as areas, which posed the biggest challenge for fund raising.

In a nutshell, the reasons that emerged were–

- a) 27.81% - Issues taken up by the organisation are considered not important or are not on the priority list of donors (issue related)- situations where donors' own priorities override ground realities: For example, in Sri Lanka majority of the aid is concentrated on democracy and peace building and post-tsunami rehabilitation.
- b) 20.58% - Organisational issues - (language/technical limitations, inability to get information about available funding, funders etc.) – cited most small and grass-roots organisations. In fact in Nepal, this was expressed very strongly by organisations based outside of Kathmandu where access to resources overlapped with caste and class.
- c) 3.84% - Politics of State/restrictive policies: FCRA amendments in India
- d) 1.3% - Local socio-political environment : For example in Pakistan, in some areas of the country, like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, working on women issues is still considered socially unacceptable, which was mentioned by organisations working in these regions.
- e) 8.37% - Quantum and nature of funding (limited/decreasing funds, small size )
- f) 8.95% - No funding for organisational/administrative expenses: This highlights of the most difficult issues mentioned by the respondents, pertain to the physical sustenance and viability of organisations. Among the overhead costs mentioned most often by the respondents, infrastructure and salaries are the top two. Several groups said that paying competitive salaries and honorarium is becoming increasingly difficult as donors insist that most of the funding be spent directly on project beneficiaries. In such situation the organisations have to opt for more part time staff and consultants.
- g) 20.64% - Donor-related reasons that include –
  - a. Too much focus on evidences to show result/quantification of results

- b. Lack of support for process based interventions/programmes
- c. Preferences for specific kinds of NGO partners (bigger, with better infrastructure and systems)
- d. Preference of INGO for partnerships with the State
- e. Roll back from developed states/shifting focus away from the country: fear expressed both by organisations in India and Sri Lanka
- f. Definitions of issues, approaches, framework used by donors and NGOs' are not in sync; also grant design not matching community needs/demands

## **MAKING THE CONNECTIONS – KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **a) Women issues, gender equality and mainstreaming – Defocussing the focus?**

This shift from feminist visions of gender mainstreaming that was transformative in approach (for changing power relations between women and men) to efficiency approach is evident from the fact that while work around women human rights has remained under-resourced, programmatic, financial `commitments' for gender equality and mainstreaming have been increasing. Though mainstreaming was introduced as a strategy to advance women's rights by integrating gender perspective and gender equality into policies, programmes and institutional systems and processes, it has led to the dilution of women-focussed interventions. Usually gender is seen as an `add-on' to programmes and budgetary planning processes, where the inputs provided to women are numbered and subsequently, count women as `beneficiaries' integrating gender in implementation phase. Despite continued focus on women, their status and condition have changed partially. As highlighted by women activists during in-depth interviews, making gender `cross-cutting' has instead taken away the focus from gender specific work – in fact piecemeal approach has led to “male-streaming” of gender in certain cases!

Findings from the regional mapping survey also reflect this situation where approximately 70% of the organisations working on a range of developmental issues, targeted women as the direct beneficiaries along with other community groups. On one hand, while this indicates women issues are increasingly being taken up at a larger and broader scale, some women groups/informants interviewed in the study also argue that this trend has led to weakening of women's groups- given their human, technical and financial resources limitations, these groups were found unable to negotiate for their spaces within developmental and political discourses with the State, networks and other CSOs. There has also been a growing debate around the increased involvement of men in combating violence against women; an area where the tremendous efforts of women groups' have yielded remarkable results. During the mapping exercise, women groups/activists also flagged this concern and said that the role of men has to be of the supportive kinds while the struggles around VAW need to be led by women themselves.

**b) Resources for work on women issues and their human rights: availability, accessibility and usability**

One of the critical changes mentioned by the surveyed organisations is the proliferation of grants leading to smaller grants for limited time period. The support is restricted to either a particular component of an issue that could be part of the larger state led initiatives. Operationalisation of these initiatives is often marred by lack of accountability, allegations of misappropriation and poor utilisation of funds. Extremely narrow and predefined scope is being pushed in this process through short term projects.

An observation shared by organisations working on women issues as well as key informants is that **in these changing times, raising funds for long term process based interventions is increasingly becoming a major challenge. This particularly concerns empowerment focussed interventions that are time-consuming and require sustained, intensive inputs to bring about the envisioned transformation in the society.**

The latest trend of bidding for projects (e.g. by multilateral such as UN, EU or AusAid) was also highlighted during the mapping study. Such processes are (a) highly technical in terms of proposal that needs to be submitted (language, frameworks etc.) and (b) funding amounts offered by such projects are beyond the absorption capacities of most of organisations working on the ground. Clearly such 'technical' processes give an advantage to bigger NGOs, INGOs, professional and management companies, over smaller groups working on the ground.

Within a certain issue there are a range of components that are critical yet unaddressed due to the lack of resources.- For instance, health has been included in priority sectors in country plans with large resources allocated to health (in form of foreign aid, state funding, philanthropic contribution). However, within health, issues like mental health, sexual health are struggling for funds. Similarly, while much emphasis is placed on reproductive and maternal health of women, funds to secure general health for women are hard to come by. Disability rights, sexuality, protection and promotion of human rights particularly in conflict situations, gender justice, defending human rights defenders are issues that remain severely under resourced.

**c) Strengthening work on women issues and their human rights - building capacity and capabilities of organisations**

There are several issues that were flagged during the mapping study; however, two points were identified as the critical challenges to resource mobilisation - (a) Increasing control of State over governance and resource mobilisation by local NGOs and (b) emergence of larger management agencies competing with local NGOs.

Both issues appear to be larger strategic advocacy issues, but they also indicate the need for capacity and capabilities building of organisations working on women and gender issues. Organisations and donors unanimously agree that there is a conspicuous lack of

funds for organisational/institutional costs that pose serious concerns for sustenance of local groups, particularly women groups that are already under-resourced.

## **THE WAY FORWARD – GRANTMAKERS AND FUNDRAISERS**

Resource generation and mobilisation for the struggle to achieve human rights for women have never been more complex than it is in the present day due to changes in development aid and difficulties to finance it. Donors and recipients generally pre-decide where and how the funds would go. The process is not ‘civil society dictated’ wherein women groups could have the space to decide what money to put where’. Despite the many gains made with regards to claiming women’s rights in South Asia, women remain largely marginalised when it comes to their claim and share in the realm of resources for supporting their struggle. Findings of the mapping study also point towards the need for intensive advocacy and in-depth research interventions in this direction.

- Increased participation in ongoing global dialogues on aid architecture and encouraging women oriented philanthropy to ensure a visible regional presence that strengthens regional funding networks. More rigorous evidence based advocacy and dialogue is required with the corporate sector on the impact of women focused resourcing on the entire social justice paradigm.
- Focus on individual givings, including Diaspora givings, is another area where increased dialogue is required which needs to be led by regional/national chapters of funds and groups involved in fund raising and resource mobilisation. There should also be increased engagement with donors at diverse levels of giving – institutional, organisational to individuals to bring about a transformative change in their philanthropic venture.
- Engaging with newer modes of social interactions and e-forums to ensure broader outreach to both funders and grantees. Creating an information exchange platform for like-minded CSR groups and private philanthropists could also be a crucial step; therefore what is required is investing in their coming together at regional/national level.
- Increased women focussed grant-making with an approach that takes the support beyond funding like ensuring direct and specific handholding support to local women’s groups.
- Grant-making strategies for the funders also have to be realigned with local realities and the status of women groups. This would also include relooking at the nature of the grant, quantum and support period.
- System and processes like **M&E** also need to be revisited to ensure that beyond evaluating and reporting, they also contribute to experience sharing and learning for both funders and grantees. Call for proposals should also be made in a manner that reaches out to smaller groups in distant areas (reaching out through national networks, issue based national groups); also the practice of accepting of proposals and other documentation in local language needs to be promoted.

- Knowledge development and knowledge exchange amongst women groups needs to be supported financially as it would add to asset building of local groups
- Refocus on support for developing local community based women groups and their leadership development as a strategy for women's empowerment. There is also the need for re-investment in capacity development and perspective building of women groups including gender equality and women rights.
- Expansion of scope particularly by women funds, both in terms of geographical coverage as well as thematic issues must be supported to ensure reaching out to women at the periphery.

## **WAY FORWARD – WOMEN'S GROUPS**

- NGOs including women groups need to be more strategic, given the implications of the changed aid system. More open discussions are required on changes in government- donor partnerships; impact of the same on local groups; and on the rhetoric of increased participation of NGOs in the process, especially when the State is 'tightening the noose' around national, local NGOs in the name of transparency and accountability.
- The state, multilateral and bilateral donors, INGOs and NGO networks need to engage more rigorously with the demands and needs of women at the grassroots levels. Collective voices need to emerge at national and regional levels, calling for the rightful increase of resources for women rights work in the region. In the same vein there has be focussed efforts by the women groups towards their capacity, skills development and perspective building on issues ranging from knowledge development, resource mobilisation and management, programme processes and management, governance, institutional building.
- Introspection is needed within a larger section of women groups that appear to be caught in a time warp to help reinvigorate and reinvent them. They also need to re-look the trajectory of their own struggles, principles and value that founded their commitment to social justice for women and assess gains and losses given the internal and external challenges.
- NGOs themselves need to strategically and systematically integrate gender at organisational policy, programme planning, budgeting, management, implementation and monitoring level in order to strengthen their demand for state accountability and commitment towards gender mainstreaming at diverse levels. Women groups also need to build better understanding on evidence based advocacy to strengthen their claims for advancement of women rights.