

Reimagining Feminist Funding in Africa: Beyond Survival, Towards Sustainable Movements

Resource Mobilization Webinar

Feminist Funding - Securing the Next Generation's Rights



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Across Africa, feminist organizations are doing some of the continent's most transformative work. They are supporting survivors of violence, defending sexual and reproductive health rights, amplifying marginalized voices, and challenging systems that continue to exclude women and girls and reimagining alternative, sustainable solidarity economies that honor ecological integrity and dignity. Yet despite their impact, many of these organizations operate on fragile budgets, uncertain donor cycles, and shrinking civic spaces. Holding societies through unpaid care labour and as first responders in conflict or disasters.

The ongoing realities shaped two recent webinars convened by FEMNET, bringing together feminist leaders, activists, and funders from across the continent to reflect on resource mobilization, sustainability, and the future of feminist funding in Africa. At the center of the conversations was one urgent question: How can feminist movements sustain themselves in increasingly resource-scarce environments?

For many organizations, funding uncertainty is not abstract; it is deeply personal. A grassroots women-led organization in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo supporting survivors of conflict-related violence may not know whether it can continue operating beyond the next few months. Across the continent, many organizations are constantly balancing urgent community needs with limited financial support. As Memory Kachambwa, FEMNET's Executive Director, argues, feminist organizations are not merely stretching scarce resources—they are holding communities together. They turn their homes into shelters, absorb the cost of essential services, and provide countless hours of counselling and care, all while doing work that states and institutions routinely fail to fund, recognize, or even see.

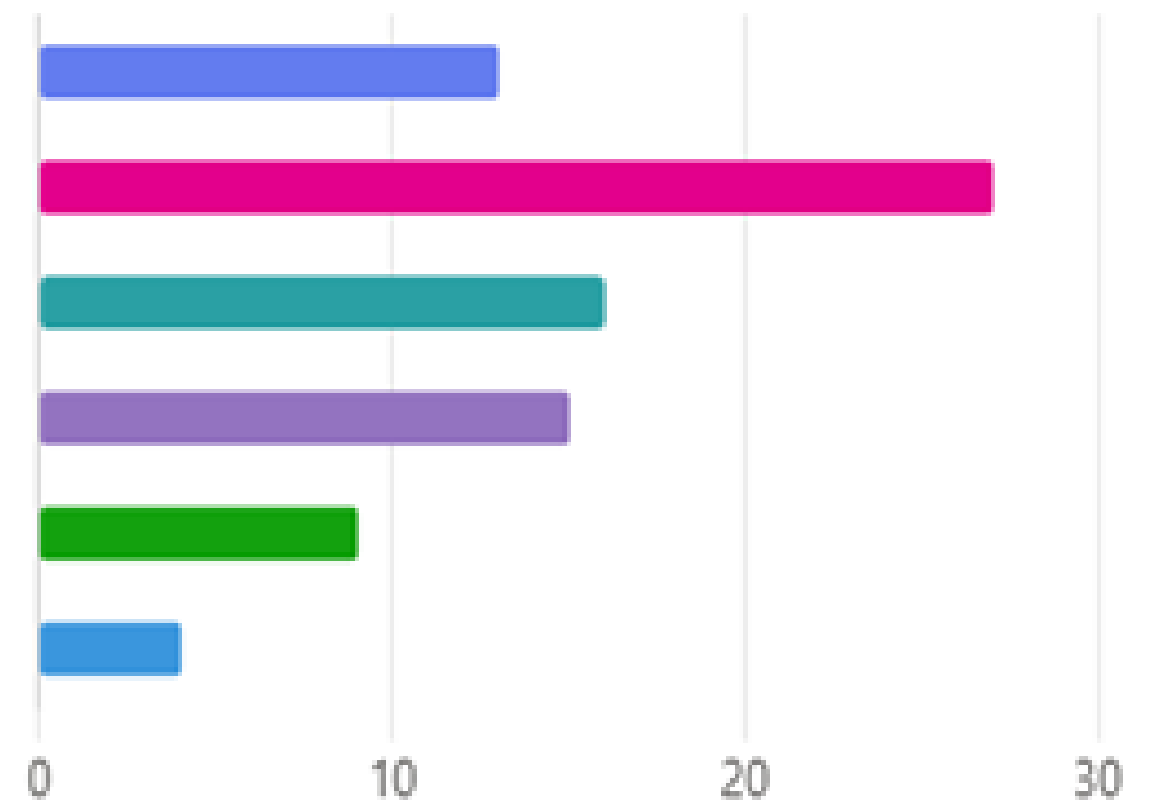
During the webinars, FEMNET's Resource Mobilization Lead, Mary Mwangi, emphasized that relying solely on traditional donor funding is no longer enough. She encouraged organizations to diversify their approaches by exploring community philanthropy, local giving, responsible private sector partnerships, crowdfunding, payroll giving, and other creative fundraising models.

This shift is already happening in different ways across Africa. In Kenya, some feminist organizations are building stronger local donor communities through monthly giving initiatives. In Nigeria, activists are increasingly using digital fundraising during emergencies and civic protests. In South Africa, feminist collectives are experimenting with shared working spaces and collaborative fundraising to reduce costs while strengthening solidarity.

A rapid FEMNET survey of feminist organizations, movements, and networks across Africa's five regions found that 55% had no financial reserves. Only 16% reported having enough reserves to sustain their work for one year, while the remainder said their reserves would last less than six months. Indicating the fragility of funding in the feminist movement. However, despite the funding, the participants noted that work will continue with advocacy leading, followed by training, documentation, and policy influencing.

3. Which core elements of your work will continue? (Tick as many as possible)

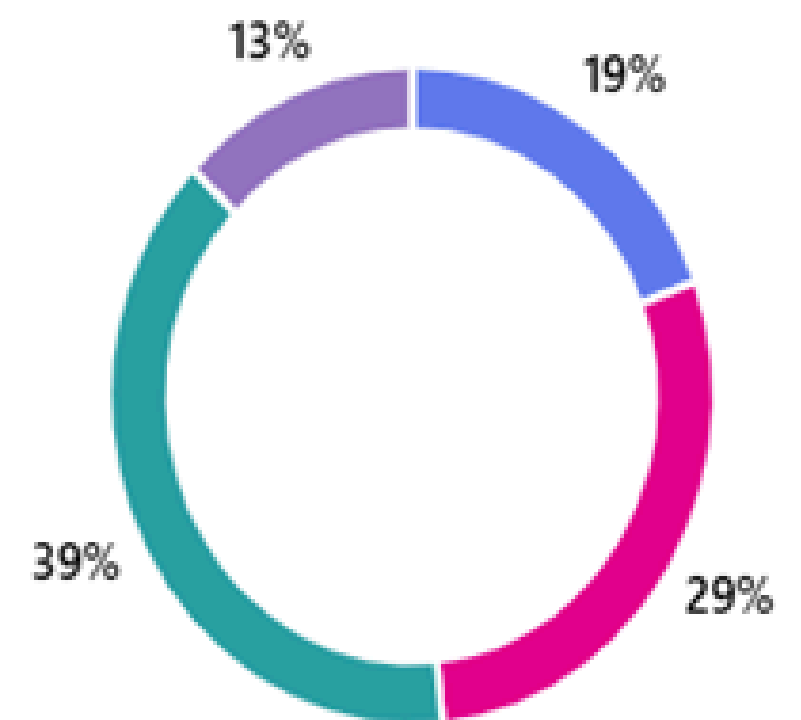
● Policy Influencing	13
● Advocacy	27
● Training	16
● Documentation	15
● Research	9
● Others	4



The message was clear: sustainability cannot only mean surviving the next grant cycle. It must also mean building resilient movements that can withstand political and economic shocks. Despite the funding coming to an end, organizations would still sustain the work by providing technical services, training, and consultancy.

4. How will one sustain the work when funding comes to an end?

● Self Sponsorship	6
● Consultancy	9
● Training Capacity	12
● Others	4



A major highlight of the webinars was the presentation by Kasia Staszweska from the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), who shared findings from AWID's "Where's the Money for Women's Rights?" research. The findings reveal a sobering picture of feminist funding globally. According to the research, the median annual budget for feminist organizations worldwide is just USD 22,000, while African feminist organizations average approximately USD 23,000 annually. For organizations protecting rights, responding to crises, and influencing policy, these figures are alarmingly low.

The research also found that 81% of organizations rely on autonomous resourcing such as membership contributions, local fundraising, and community support. While this reflects the resilience of feminist movements, it also exposes the significant gaps left by traditional donor systems.

Across the webinars, participants highlighted the frustrations many organizations face with rigid donor requirements, short-term project grants, and burdensome reporting structures. Small organizations often spend more time proving impact than implementing programs. For newer grassroots groups, especially francophone organizations in Central Africa, accessing funding can feel even more difficult due to language barriers, limited networks, and donor preferences.

Participants from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo shared how many organizations miss funding opportunities simply because calls for proposals are not translated or circulated widely within francophone spaces. These discussions reinforced the need for feminist funding models that intentionally include marginalized and underrepresented movements.

The conversations also highlighted organizations actively challenging traditional donor systems. [Urgent Action Fund-Africa \(UAF-Africa\)](#) shared how they are redefining feminist funding through rapid-response grants tailored to women human rights defenders facing crises across Africa. Unlike conventional funding models that can take months to process grants, UAF-Africa provides flexible support before, during, and after emergencies. Applications can even be submitted through platforms like WhatsApp and Signal, making funding more accessible for grassroots activists.

Their approach recognizes that something many traditional systems overlook, feminist movements need more than project funding. They also need collective care, well-being support, and protection for activists working under difficult conditions.

Another important perspective came from Wanjiru Kroeger of [Womankind Worldwide](#), who emphasized the importance of flexible, trust-based funding models that allow organizations to adapt to changing realities instead of being constrained by rigid donor priorities.

These conversations are urgent at a time when anti-rights and anti-gender movements are increasingly shaping political and funding environments globally. Across several African countries, organizations working on gender equality and reproductive justice rights are facing growing hostility while funding spaces become more competitive.

Yet despite these challenges, the webinars also revealed the extraordinary resilience of feminist organizing across the continent. Participants exchanged strategies on strengthening donor relationships, improving visibility through storytelling, and building stronger networks of solidarity.

The role of storytelling emerged strongly throughout the discussions because behind every funding conversation is a human reality. It is the adolescent girl in northern Uganda who stays in school because a local feminist organization provided menstrual health support. It is the survivor in Sudan accessing trauma counseling through a women-led emergency response network. It is the young activist finding legal support and safety through feminist solidarity spaces. Funding feminist organizations is not charity. It is an investment in justice, dignity, and collective futures.

Ultimately, the webinars reinforced one important message: the future of feminist funding cannot rely solely on traditional donor systems. Sustainable movements require diversified funding, stronger collaboration, autonomous resourcing, pooled feminist funds, and funding relationships rooted in trust rather than control.

For organizations seeking funding opportunities, AWID's "Who Can Fund Me" database offers access to over 200 funders supporting gender equality and feminist movements: [Who Can Fund Me Database](#). Individuals and organizations can also engage with feminist movement-building efforts through [FEMNET Membership and Programs](#). Because ultimately, resource mobilization is not just about money. It is about sustaining resistance, protecting hard-won gains, sharing knowledge, and ensuring feminist movements across Africa have the resources to continue doing their work with feminist joy and continue imagining and building more just and dignified futures.