

Strategic Funding Trends for Women's Rights

Notes Meeting 27 June 2017

Amsterdam, hosted by Mama Cash

Chaired by Edith van der Spruit, WO=MEN

Co-chaired by Ireen Dubel, Mama Cash

Notes by Sascha Gabizon, WECF

SUMMARY

Negative trends: unfortunately other ministries (OC&W, Justice) and private donors (NPL) are adopting similar problematic criteria as used by BuZa for FLOW II, with e.g. no distinction between large and smaller applicants, high minimum amounts, fewer and fewer beneficiaries with women's organisation pushed into "**forced marriages**" often as sub-contractor, unable to set the agenda. See **shrinking space for women and feminist orgs**, but space is not shrinking for all, for some its increasing.

Access to Ministers: so far Minister Ploumen - despite her CSO background - has refused to meet with women's organisations regarding lessons from FLOW II (a meeting with staff at directors level was held instead). Similar situation with Minister Bussemaker.

Lack of solidarity: in lobby groups such as PARTOS women's and feminist organisations are a minority and their voice has too little impact, there has been little solidarity. For FLOW II some applications that were honoured did sign the complaint letter, which has been appreciated.

Conclusions

- Women's and feminist organisations deliver quality
- They are and have been a main motor for transformation
- Getting funding for advocacy in NL (and int'l) is increasingly difficult (except for Dialogue & Dissent, although the emphasis in D&D is on local capacity building and strengthening of lobby and advocacy)
- Tender criteria used for selection reflect double standards and a non-level playing field
- Threshold criteria are too high, with result exclusion of most women's and feminist orgs
- Women's orgs are not being taken serious as an equal partner
- Emphasis on consortia results in donor-driven forced-marriage coalitions with women's/feminist organisations as sub-contractors
- Being a subcontractor is not in favour of leadership by women led social movements
- Need to counter the argument of civil servants that they lack capacity to handle smaller applicants
- Need to create broad solidarity for which the current funding regime is not favourable
- Need for **earmarked funding for a diversity of women's organisations** in NL and globally

ACTION POINTS

Need Public Debate: with women's and feminist organisations, public, policy makers, media, e.g. in September 2017 possibly in the Balie to discuss this negative trend, guiding principles about a diverse and critical civil society, women's and feminist organisations in leadership and discuss solutions. = Outside strategy

Publish a pamphlet/statement: publish analysis of barriers to strategic funding for women's and feminist movements, - counter arguments that the ministry has no capacity, that quality of women orgs is not good - and come with **recommendations for criteria** (for

instance from FLOW II analysis) and need for change in funding, and ask other NGOs and sectors to support this **position in solidarity**.

Proposal for new funds: propose new earmarked funds for diversity of women's and feminist organisations, e.g. flexible and small-scale for NL and for diversity of women's organisation who fell out of OC&W funding scheme, also from BuZa for development awareness raising on gender equality and women's rights in NL (similar to what EU fund DEAR fund does).

Litigation and Parliamentary Enquete: option for parliamentary enquete on FLOW II still exists (add to the pamphlet). And what options for court case class action - not to win, but to get high level engagement with a critical analysis, and how best to support the OC&W partners with their appeal. Share the appeal analysis from FLOW II process.

Link to global process: feed in to recommendations being worked on, e.g. by OECD DAC Gendernet on support to Southern women's rights organisations. Role for Count Me In! and Mama Cash.

Working Groups: possibly organise into working groups to take on next steps

- **Pamphlet** volunteers: Isabel, Laila, Ghada, Anne (4Femall), Sascha and as "co-readers" Rita, Shirin and Joke
- **Public Debate:** Volunteers: Isabel can maybe link it to another event, Emma can help with de Balie
- **Proposal for new funds:** to be developed in the pamphlet, and next steps via WO=MEN?
- **Litigation and/or Parliamentary Enquete:** Volunteers: Lessons from Flow II to be shared by WO=MEN (Laila) with whole group, and next steps via WO=MEN?

1. Welcome by Zohra Moosa, Mama Cash

Wishing the participants fruitful deliberations and possibly identification of a joint plan vis a vis the competitive funding landscape of the different ministries in the Netherlands. Mama Cash welcomes the participants to use its meeting space, also in future.

2. Participants

CEDAW Netwerk, WPP, Tiye International, Alliantie Vrouwen & Recht, VVR, Mama Cash, Hivos, WfWP, Foundation Fem4All, WO=MEN, INLW, VU / Nisa for Nisa, St VOND, Palestine Link, FFF, WECF

All participants shared their experiences with predominantly unsuccessful fundraising activities. Full list of participants in **annex 1** including those unable to join.

3. Funding trends, barriers and opportunities

Lessons were drawn from the last 5 years of funding rounds to which women's rights and feminist civil society organisations could apply from the Dutch Government as well as funding from private funds such as Post Code Loterij and Adesium.

Ministry BuZa (Foreign Affairs – including Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation)

- 1) **Strategic Partnerships (successor to MFS II)** - Dialogue and Dissent : only one coalition existing only of women's rights organisations (Count Me In!).
- 2) **FLOW II** : a reduction from 45 predominantly women's rights CSO beneficiaries mostly mid-size from global South (*MDG3*), to 34 CSOs with a majority of women's rights CSOs (*FLOW I*) to only 2 women's organisations led beneficiaries out of nine beneficiaries (Anglophone, Northern, none from the global South).
- 3) **NAP III** : the women's and feminist movement advocated for Resolution 1325 and a specific fund, yet large mainstream organisations have now taken over, the only NL women's org is forced to become a subcontractor, and might soon no longer be there.

Ministry of OC&W (Education, Culture and Science, which incl. gender equality and LGBT rights in NL)

- 1) new extended call for core support for Dutch gender equality and women's rights organisations and LGBT rights - the call used similar criteria as the Ministry of BuZa, with result that volunteer organisations did not get any funding

Private funds: the criteria of having to have minimum turn-over of 1 million Euro (NPL) is a barrier for the more specialised women's and feminist organisations such as migrant women organisations.

The criteria set for applications **exclude many** women's rights feminist organisations and movements which have been the backbone for real change for women's rights

- **Volunteer organisations and movements** who need little, flexible, resources for staff and activities in the Netherlands (annual budget needs range from ca. €50.000 - 100.000) for example CEDAW Network, Alliantie Vrouwen & Recht;
- **Black and migrant women organisations** and networks based in Suriname, Dutch Antilles and the Netherlands (budget needs range from ca. €50.000 - 500.000) for example Tiye International, Palestine Link;
- **Thematic (umbrella) networks** focussing on advocacy activities in the Netherlands (ca. €500.000 - 2.000.000) for example WO=MEN, NVR (although these networks stand

a chance of joining larger alliances of women's organisations as has been the case for WO=MEN towards both MinBuZa and MinOC&W);

- NL-based **international thematic networks, movements and funds** with partners globally which work across regions, transfer funds to local partners and work on advocacy including in the Netherlands (ca. €500.000 - 10.000.000) for example WPP, WfWP, WECF, Mama Cash (Mama Cash has been able to be the lead of a consortium towards MinBuZa and join another consortium as a partner, also towards MinBuZa).

The trend of providing funding through **increasingly complicated tender procedures** (theories of change etc.) has lately been nicknamed as "tenderitus"

Yet at same time, a organisations have been given **multi-million grants** without any tender such as Civicus. Transparency with regard to this waver seems absent.

The tenders have led to a situation that some of larger NGOs that previously also received substantial funding, received even more funding and expanded staff and portfolio wise, including undertaking some of the **activities that were previously done by women's and feminist organisations**. The latter had to lay off staff, close activities and faced the threat of closing their office and having to rely fully on voluntary workers, with the risk of loss of on the ground knowledge and capacity.

For funding by MinBuZa, **anglophone organisations and Netherlands based organisations** with a longer experience with Theory of Change frameworks were in an advantaged position compare to organisations rooted elsewhere. There was no level playing field from the start.

As a result it is observed:

- Some funding, like FLOW II, perceived as a funding mechanism for **women's rights organisations** given the history of the MDG3 Fund and FLOW I, became a general funding mechanism for a wide range of INGOs, including Netherlands based INGOs;
- In the case of the institutional funding scheme from Min OC&W, even a larger % compared to before, will be channelled to LGBT organisations, making the total amount of funding available for women's rights organisations even smaller;
- Funding for **political sensitive** regions/countries and themes has become more and more difficult if not impossible;
- **Loss of knowledge and capacity** of locally rooted women's / feminist organisations and movements;
- **Loss of diversity**;
- **Concentration of power and money** in the hands of fewer organisations, and division between organisations with paid staff and those fully dependent on voluntary labour;
- **Black/migrant/refugee women's rights organisations** face even greater difficulty to access financial support, beyond short-term project funding, for their work;
- Undermining **solidarity and collaboration** which is indispensable for lobby & advocacy work in support of women's rights and gender equality.

4.Conclusion

There is a problem with criteria and civil servants not willing to stick out their neck, unwilling to make commitments, have own ambitious agenda's and taking risks, sticking to executing the government/Minister's agenda.

Civil servants present their criteria as being optimal and necessary given the demand for "**quality**".

Civil servants argue that organisations that fail to pass the tender, are turned down given their inability to **deliver quality**. "If we want quality, it is necessary to work through the bigger INGOs who can deliver on what the tender procedures require. In turn they will subcontract women's and feminist organisations to do the real work on the ground."

The need for lower transaction costs at the Ministries, thus fewer and larger consortia and project proposals, has been a major reason for the **reduction of the number of awarded partners**, in the case of FLOW II from 45, 34 to 9. Issues of transaction costs and lack of capacity at the Ministries are rarely mentioned as justifications for funding decisions made.

Conclusion by Edith, WO=MEN

- Women and feminist organisations deliver quality and are and continue to be a main motor for transformation
- Being subcontractor limits the autonomy and space for social movements
- Funding for advocacy work in NL (and int) is difficult
- Tender criteria reflect double standards
- Threshold criteria are too high
- Women's orgs are not taken serious as equal partners
- Emphasis on donor driven forced marriage coalitions

5. POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Working groups can be set up to take next steps:

- **Pamphlet / solidarity statement:** publish analysis of barriers and **recommendations** and ask other NGOs to sign on in solidarity
Volunteers: *Isabel, Laila, Ghada, Anne (4Femall), Sascha, with "co-readers" Rita, Shirin and Joke*
- **Organised a Public Debate:** e.g. in September 2017 in the Balie, Rode Hoed or Pakhuis de Zwijger similar to discuss this negative trend and propose solutions = Outside strategy
Volunteers: *Isabel can maybe link it to other event, Emma can help with de Balie*
- **Proposal for new funds:** propose new funds including maybe urgent support for those who fell out of OC&W funding. To be developed in the **pamphlet**
- **Litigation and/or Parliamentary Enquete:** support hearings by sharing lessons and look into parliamentary enquete into FLOW II
Volunteers: *Laila to share lessons from Flow II with whole group*

ANNEX !

List of Participants

Meeting Funding Trends for Women's Rights - Amsterdam Mama Cash - 27 June 9.30 - 12.00

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