Human Rights Funders Network

2018 Mexico City Conference Evaluation for Grantmakers
Oct 15-18, 2018

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Summary of findings:

- Overall, 93% of respondents gave positive ratings for the conference, with 36% of respondents rating the conference as "Excellent" and 57% rating it as "Good."
- Overwhelmingly, respondents thought that the conference was a space for them and that it achieved its goals.
  - The vast majority of respondents (97%) said that the conference was a space for them. (51% agreed and 46% strongly agreed).
  - The vast majority (90%) of respondents said that the conference achieved its goal. (52% agreed and 38% strongly agreed).
  - This was true across respondents from the Global South/East and Global North, as well as among attendees who were newcomers, regulars or veterans.
- 91% of respondents built stronger and more trusted relationships at the conference.
- 74% of respondents left the conference with concrete plans to make some funding decisions in coordination and/ or collaboration with other funders.
- 63% of respondents left the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders have learned to their future funding decisions.
- 45% of respondents changed their perspective on whether and/or how human rights movements should influence grantmaking.
- Global South/East respondents were more likely to leave the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders had learned to their future funding decisions than Global North funders.
- Respondents reported learning more about key human rights issues and grantmaking practice. A number of respondents said they learned more about the human rights realities and local context in Mexico and Nicaragua as well as the importance of partnering with community/grassroots organizations and participatory grantmaking practice.
- While respondents agreed that the plenaries delivered on diverse and relevant topics, they desired more audience participation, more visual aids and better timekeeping.
- Other areas for improvement identified by multiple respondents included better communication around the conference tracks as well as reducing the number of sessions in the overall agenda to create more space for networking and self-care practices.

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Section I: Respondent Profiles

Conference Attendance

103 grantmakers completed the 2018 Mexico City Conference Evaluation for Grantmakers. Respondents comprised:

- 56% newcomers
- 35% regulars (attended 2-3 HRFN conferences)
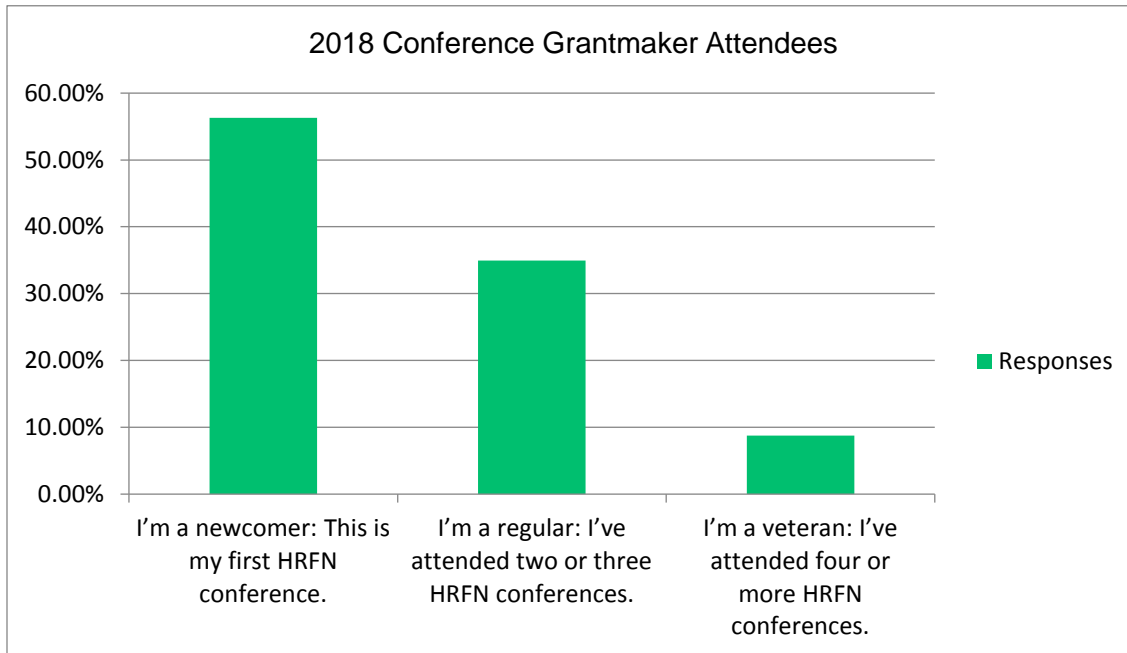- 9% veterans (attended 4 or more HRFN conferences)

Figure 1; Survey Respondents by Past Attendance

Was the conference a space for you?

The vast majority of respondents (97%) said that the conference was a space for them. (51% agreed and 46% strongly agreed).

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
2%	1%	51%	46%

Geographical Representation

- 41% of respondents are based in the Global South/East
- 59% of respondents are based in the Global North.
- American and Canadian grantmakers were the most represented, accounting for 47% of respondents. Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 24% of respondents, with more than half of these individuals based in Mexico (11%).
- Significantly, there was no representation from the Middle East and North Africa.

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Which region are you based in?	Raw Score	Percentage
Asia and the Pacific	6	6%
Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Russia	6	6%
Latin America and the Caribbean (not Mexico)	11	11%
Mexico	13	13%
Middle East and North Africa	0	0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	6	6%
United States and Canada	47	46%
Western Europe	14	14%

Section II: Conference Impact

Q6: "What was the single most valuable thing you learned at this conference?"

86 out of 103 respondents

Key highlights:

- 24% said that the most valuable learning was understanding the human rights realities and local context in Mexico and Nicaragua, especially as a result of the plenary on impunity.
- 17% cited the importance of meeting with other funders to share resources and strategize.
- 15% cited the importance of partnering with community/grassroots organizations (8%) and understanding participatory grantmaking practice (7%). One respondent said the most valuable thing they learned was: "The multiple ways funders can be in partnership with communities - both in terms of participatory grantmaking, as well as including the voices of those directly affected in funder spaces."
- 14% said understanding the landscape of girl-led organizing and "the power of investing in girl led movements."

Notes:

- Two of the five most commonly mentioned learnings (Mexico/Nicaragua context and girl-led organizing) connected to conference plenaries.
- The fifth most commonly mentioned learning mapped onto one of the conference tracks (Recapturing the Narrative: track 4).

Table 2; Q6 themes and trends analysis

Q6: Theme	Raw Score	Percentage
The human rights realities and local context in Mexico and Nicaragua	21	24%
How to share resources, strategize with peers, and meet funders working on similar issues and regions.	15	17%
The landscape of girl-led organizing	12	14%
Narrative Change and strategic communication	8	9%
Funder and community/grassroots organization partnerships	7	8%
Participatory Grantmaking Practice	6	7%
Importance of understanding local context in grantmaking	3	3%
Politics of care/ self-care	3	3%

Q7: When asked, "What is one thing that "worked" for you at this conference?"
86 out of 103 respondents

Key highlights:
- Respondents valued the opportunities to meet face to face with different funders and collaborate on diverse issues (21%). They appreciated structured networking activities such as breakout sessions (6%) and small group conversations (3%).
- Respondents said that the conference schedule included a diverse and relevant range of topics and themes that they enjoyed learning more about (12%).

Table 3; Q7 themes and trends analysis

Q7: Theme	Raw Score	Percentage
Networking (opportunities to connect)	18	21%
Schedule (including session themes and topics)	10	12%
Plenaries	10	12%
Tracks	7	8%
Representation of women's and girls' funds	6	7%
Community events	6	7%
Inclusion of new voices (especially human rights defenders and activists)	5	6%
Breakout sessions	5	6%
Conference App	4	5%
Geographic location	4	5%
Participatory Grantmaking Institute	4	5%
Small group conversations	3	3%
Hotel (one location and hotel rooms)	3	3%
Logistics coordination	3	3%

Notable respondent comments:

- "It was more international and more activist (more progressive/radical conversations and more communities engaged/ directly speaking/participating) than I had ever experienced it before."
- "Opportunities to connect on the sidelines in multi-lateral and bilateral meetings with like-minded funders working on HR in the global economy."
- "I liked the diversity of voices. Especially that most of the panelists were HRD and not donors "highlighting" their own work."
- "The breakout sessions were geared to what I really wanted to learn more about from other Grantmakers"

Q8: "What is one thing that we could do differently that would improve the conference?"
86 out of a possible 103 responses.

Key highlights:
- Respondents wished the conference plenaries had been more interactive (12%). They disliked the participation methodologies used for the plenaries and wanted session moderators to keep sessions to time and guide speaker's questions. 2% of respondents asked for more visual aids during long plenary sessions, such as the use of PowerPoint presentations.
- Respondents thought HRFN should have modelled tracks more clearly and provided clearer expectations about how to engage with the tracks (12%). Respondents disliked the eight concurrent sessions across the tracks as it forced them to miss meaningful content (10%).
- Respondents said that there were too many sessions in the overall agenda (9%) and wished there was more time for networking or self-care (see below).
- Respondents shared concerns that the conference did not prioritize self-care practices enough. They said that encouraging working group meetings over lunch created the expectation to be constantly "on" (3%). 2% of respondents explicitly called for the incorporation of feminist self-care practices at future HRFN convenings.

Table 4; Q8 themes and trends analysis

Q8: Theme	Raw Score	Percentage
Make plenaries more interactive (improve participation methodologies)	10	12%
Communicate track expectations and model tracks more clearly	10	12%
Reduce number of concurrent sessions	9	10%
Reduce number of sessions in the overall agenda	8	9%
Improve representation; there are still absent voices	7	8%
Communicate changes to the agenda and timing more clearly	6	7%
Communicate/ distribute agenda and schedule earlier	5	6%
More next steps and follow up after sessions	5	6%
Connect conference sessions to overall conference theme	4	5%
More light in meeting rooms	4	5%
Reformat working group lunches	3	3%
Improve venue and digital security	3	3%
Change the conference app	3	3%

Notable respondent comments:

- "Make plenaries more interactive. I know timing is always a struggle with these events, but there were certainly many questions from the audience that there wasn't an opportunity to raise."
- "I believe we need to integrate more self-care practices and do not have meetings during meals."
- "There are so many interesting session but the fact that they are happening simultaneously means that one cannot benefit from them all."

Q9: "To what extent do you agree that the conference achieved its goal?"

86 out of 103 respondents offered quantitative feedback (table 5).

The goal of the conference was the following: *Grounded in the context of Mexico and the Latin America region, the conference will profile efforts that are succeeding and challenge our community to fundamentally rethink how we make change in these times.*

In their qualitative comments, respondents generally broke down and rearticulated the goal as follows:
1. To center the local (Latin and Central America) context.
2. To highlight and challenge global trends in grantmaking practice
3. To deliver on the conference theme *Reimagining Human Rights: New Energy for a New Era.*

Key highlights:
- The vast majority (90%) of respondents said that the conference achieved its goal, as they defined it. 52% agreed and 38% strongly agreed that the conference achieved its goals.
- A smaller number of respondents (27 out of 86) offered additional feedback. Of these 27 respondents, 26% said the conference did not highlight global trends enough and another 26% said the conference could have gone further in challenging grantmaker practice.

Table 5; Q9 quantitative responses

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Weighted average
2%	7%	52%	38%	**3.27**

27 out of 86 respondents provided additional information (table 6).

Table 6; Q9 Additional qualitative feedback

Q9: Additional feedback on whether the conference achieved its goal	Raw Score	Percentage
The conference did not highlight global trends in human rights grantmaking enough (including enough emphasis on Latin and Central America)	7	26%
The conference did not challenge current grantmaking practices enough	7	26%
The conference succeeded in centering the Latin and Central America context	5	19%
The conference failed to deliver on the "rethinking" part of the conference goal	5	19%

Notable respondent comments:

- "I think this conference felt very different from last year. It seemed to really seize the changing landscape in the world and identify key challenges that need to be addressed across all issues and context in which HRFN members work."
- "There were good/interesting examples shared, but the link between activists' presentations and what it means for funder strategies in the bigger picture is not always made as strongly as possible, I think."
- "At this particular moment, I felt the conference provide a space to reaffirm our alliances, pause and recharge to continue working in such a difficult context. Solidarity was really present."

- "I think it takes concerted effort to actually process change practically. I am not sure that HRFN or any of the members have figure out how to sustain conversations towards change in practice beyond the conference."

Section III: Building Relationships

Key highlights:

- 91% of respondents built stronger and more trusted relationships at the conference.
- 51% of respondents built stronger and more trusted relationships with human rights activists and practitioners (figure 2).
- Respondents who commented on how they built stronger and more trusted relationships with human rights activists and practitioners noted that they accomplished this through the community events, by speaking directly with activists at the conference and by hearing activists' perspectives in conference sessions.
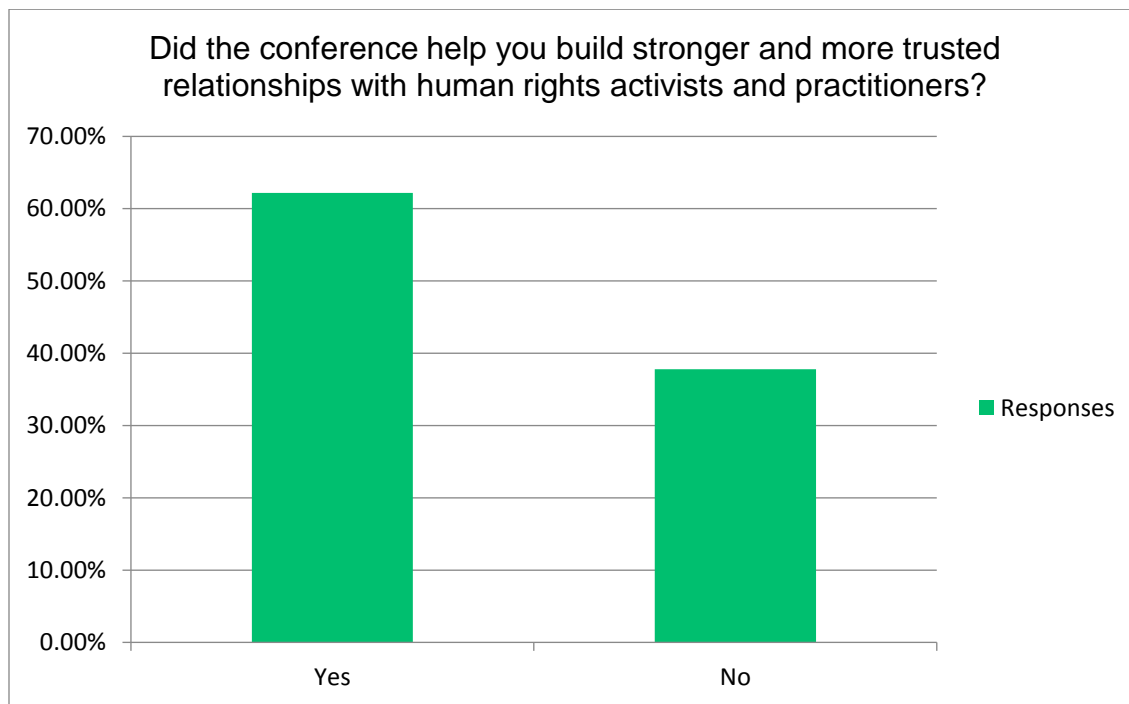

Figure 2; did you build stronger and more trusted relationships?

Section IV: Changing Grantmaking Practice (Q12-14)

- 45% of respondents changed their perspective on whether and/or how grantmaking should be influenced by human rights movements.
  - In the qualitative comments, respondents who answered "yes" said they were thinking more seriously about participatory grantmaking practice and girl-led funding. Notable comments included:
    - "I am thinking more about how to incorporate participatory grantmaking."
    - "Fund initiatives that are already on the ground as that is what is important to the community, not the funder's view of what is important to create change."

- "I honestly hadn't thought about the role of girls in many issues, except as victims who need to be advocated for. I learned how wonderful it is when they have a seat at the table."
- One reason for the majority (55%) answering "no" could be related to the fact that these grantmakers already believed grantmaking should be influenced by human rights movements. 92% of the "no" respondents who provided comments said that the conference "confirmed" their conviction that grantmaking should be influenced by human rights movements.
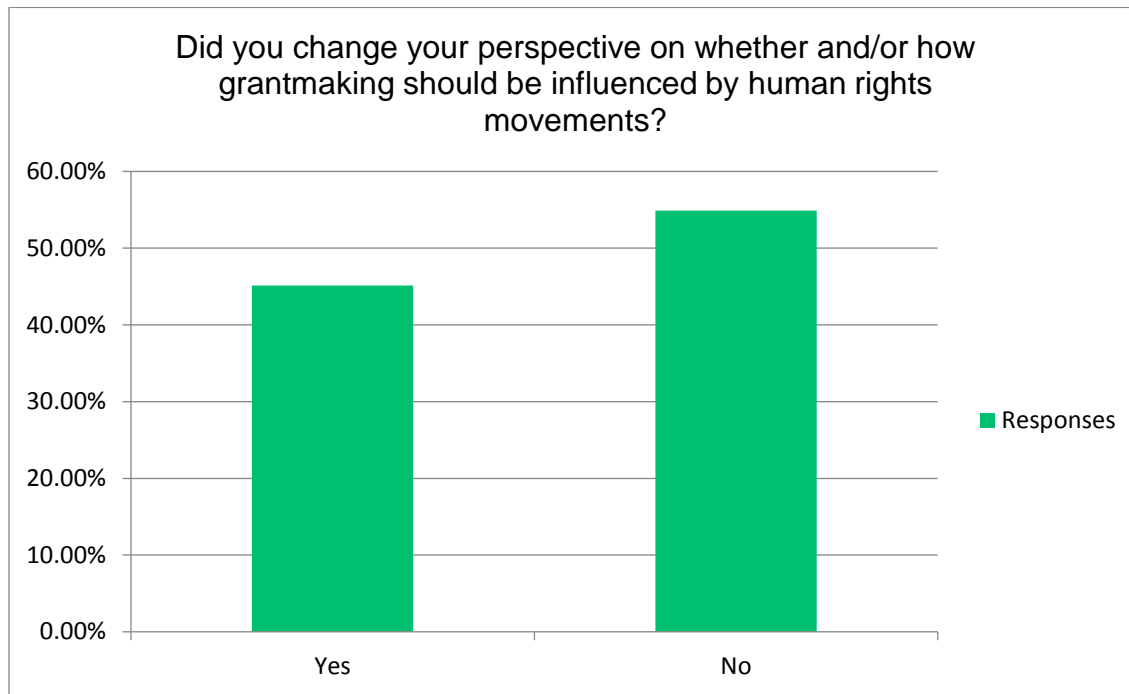

Figure 3; Q12 Did you change your perspective on whether and/or how grantmaking should be influenced by human rights movements.

In addition,

- **63% of respondents left the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders have learned to their future funding decisions.**
  - Respondents listed the following themes and topics:
    - "I will take back specific ideas on participatory grantmaking. I will also broach the subject of emergency funds to help us better support grantees in crisis."
    - "Changing narratives"
    - "How to fund participation with our existing group of grantees that work directly with communities. To incorporate a security line item in grantee budgets due to changing political climate and closing of civil society space."
    - "Particularly with regards to digital security and digital landscapes."
- **74% of respondents left the conference with concrete plans to make some funding decisions in coordination and/ or collaboration with other funders.**
  - Respondents shared the following:
    - "I connected with another funder who operates in Myanmar and we are looking for ways to collaborate."

- ▪ Follow up in the narrative track group. Leading to a new working group.
- ▪ "Especially within the Latin American Alliance of women's Funds."
- ▪ "Renew support for anti-oppression via artistic and cultural expression."
- ▪ "We strengthened a donor network for migration."

Section V: Statistically Significant Data Group Differences

Global South/East and Global North Respondents

For certain responses, there were statistically significant differences between Global South/East respondents and Global North respondents. Statistically significant differences were calculated at the 95% confidence interval (p=0.05).

- Global South/East respondents were significantly more likely to be newcomers to the conference than Global North attendees (Figure 3).
- Global South/East respondents were significantly more likely to leave the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders had learned to their future funding decisions than Global North respondents (Figure 4).
- Global South/East respondents were equally likely as Global North funders to state that the conference was a space (or was not a space) for them.
- Global South/East respondents were statistically more likely to report that the conference venue was "excellent" than Global North funders. Global North funders were more likely to report that the venue was "fair."

	I'M A NEWCOMER: THIS IS MY FIRST HRFN CONFERENCE.	I'M A REGULAR: I'VE ATTENDED TWO OR THREE HRFN CONFERENCES.	I'M A VETERAN: I'VE ATTENDED FOUR OR MORE HRFN CONFERENCES.	TOTAL
Q3: Yes (A)	73.81% 31 B	23.81% 10 B	2.38% 1	40.78% 42
Q3: No (B)	44.26% 27 A	42.62% 26 A	13.11% 8	59.22% 61
Total Respondents	58	36	9	103

Figure 4; Q3: Are you based in the Global South/East? (Yes/No)

	YES	NO	TOTAL
Q3: Yes (A)	85.29% 29 B	14.71% 5 B	41.46% 34
Q3: No (B)	47.92% 23 A	52.08% 25 A	58.54% 48
Total Respondents	52	30	82
	TELL US MORE…		**TOTAL**
Q3: Yes (A)		8	8
Q3: No (B)		14	14

Figure 5; Q13: Did you leave the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders have learned to your future funding decisions? (Yes/No)

Conference Newcomers

For certain responses, there were statistically significant differences between respondents who had attended an HRFN conference 2-3 times before and those respondents who were newcomers. Statistically significant differences were calculated at the 95% confidence interval (p=0.05).

- As previously stated, Global South/East respondents were significantly more likely to be newcomers to the conference than Global North attendees.
- Respondents from the US and Canada were statistically more likely to be "regulars" than any other region. They represented 56% of regulars and 78% of veterans.
- There was no significant statistical difference between how likely newcomers, regulars and veterans were to walk away from the conference with concrete plans to apply what peer funders have learned to their future funding decisions. However, 80% of newcomers said they had concrete plans compared with regulars (72%) and veterans (56%).

Section VI: Recommendations for Future Conferences

Here are a few key learnings that stood out to us from the evaluation and that we aim to incorporate in future conferences.

1. Conduct targeted outreach to HRFN members in the Middle East and North Africa to increase participation. Allocate funds to offer scholarships to these members.
2. Improve participation methodologies with particular focus on audience participation during plenaries. Create more robust moderator expectations and support session facilitator and/or moderator on ways to foster interaction. Audiences want to interact and discuss more during these sessions so proactively allocate time for questions.
3. The most common lessons learned occurred in the plenaries and the institute – make sure the focus of future conference planning and learning opportunities includes these aspects.
4. Reduce the number of sessions included in the overall agenda and try to avoid scheduling too many/competing concurrent sessions. (Note that this will result in HRFN accepting fewer session proposals should we hold a call for proposals.)

5. Build into the agenda more space for attendees to exercise self-care practices, network with other funders and better understand and pay attention to indigenous protocol.
6. Preserve space for community events and recognize these spaces as explicit ways for funders to build connections with activists and human rights defenders, as well as partner with local communities.
7. Connect the conference theme to the plenary sessions in a more concrete and explicit way. Use the opening plenary to situate and ground the theme and consider concrete ways to reconnect the sessions throughout the day to the theme.
8. If we use tracks at future conferences, be more explicit about track expectations and how they should work from the start.