Human Rights Funders Network is a home for diverse human rights donors to learn, collaborate, and innovate together. In 2019, our network reached over 1,900 grantmakers from approximately 470 institutions across 70 countries. Almost a quarter of our members are based in the Global South and East.

**Fostering Learning and Collaboration**

In these tumultuous times, information sharing and joint action to promote and defend human rights are increasingly important. In 2019, HRFN facilitated this by organizing or co-sponsoring 15 virtual dialogues focused on urgent issues, including how donors can support social movements, how to leverage shareholder power for human rights, and how to respond to the crisis in the Amazon. Building on conversations from our 2018 conference in Mexico City, we also launched a series of webinars on narrative change in collaboration with our Communicating Human Rights and Social Change community, co-sponsored by Ariadne. The community enables funders to strategize and share resources, approaches, learning, and best practices about effective messaging and strategic human rights narratives.

To bolster our efforts to connect human rights funders with the latest values-based funding approaches and developments in the field, we joined forces with sister networks Ariadne and Philanthropy Advancing Women’s Human Rights (PAWHR) to launch the Principles Project. Through this project, we seek to harness the rich experiences of our collective memberships and build shared understanding about what constitutes a human rights approach to grantmaking.

After gathering and analyzing survey responses from our members about their varied approaches, we worked closely with an Advisory Committee to draft a set of aspirational grantmaking principles to support and challenge our networks to live up to a higher standard. In 2020, we will collect and incorporate feedback from our members and civil society organizations on the principles, then jointly explore how funders can apply them in practice.
Expanding Evidence and Mapping the Field

In collaboration with Candid, Ariadne, and Prospera, in July we released our latest report on the evolving human rights funding landscape. By offering a map of the field, we hope to equip organizations to make smarter, more strategic decisions about their work.

In response to feedback from our 2018 research evaluation, the report takes a deeper look at the funding practices of our members as compared to other funders, and highlights funders from the Global South and East. Presented in a new, more engaging format, it also offers greater context and insight into our methodology. Following the report’s release, we published a blog emphasizing reflections and recommendations from human rights funders in the Global South and East, reinforced by the data.

Rethinking Funder Approaches to Civic Space

As human rights philanthropy expands and transforms, so do the challenges it faces. Governments and media often portray international funders as foreign agents, and use counterterrorism to justify imposing burdensome administrative requirements — or outright bans on foreign funding. Closing civic space, coupled with threats to cross-border philanthropy, create especially serious obstacles for our members and their work. As the field develops new approaches, works to ensure the efficient use of limited resources, and assesses needs and gaps, effective coordination is essential.

In this context, the Funders’ Initiative for Civil Society (FICS) — a partnership supported by HRFN, Ariadne and Global Dialogue — has a vital role to play, developing critical resources for funders seeking to respond to the closing space for civil society. HRFN’s leadership in FICS, which includes serving on its Management Board, gives us an opportunity to inform its theory of change and contribute to a shared vision and goals for collaborative work.

Human Rights Funders Network Staff

Fatou Bah, Administrative Assistant
Rebecca Landy, Director of Engagement
Camille Serrano, Membership and Operations Associate
Rachel Thomas, Director of Research Initiatives
Catherine Townsend, Transition Director

As we bid farewell to these colleagues, we are grateful for their hard work and dedication.

Jenna Capeci, Deputy Director
Mona Chun, Executive Director
Rebekah Cockram, Program Associate
Xin Xin, Communications and Development Manager
Our Leadership Transition

A Fond Farewell

After 10 years of leadership, which saw her amplify the participation of Global South and East donors, explore new models of grantmaking, and pioneer research into global funding trends, in June Mona Chun stepped down as Executive Director of HRFN. Mona’s contributions laid the bedrock for our development as a network and we could not be more grateful for her vision and steady hand.

Interim Leadership

During the latter half of 2019, Catherine Hyde Townsend supported HRFN as Transition Director, providing program and operations oversight and coordinating the search for a new Executive Director. Having joined HRFN as its first paid staff member in 2004, and serving as an engaged member ever since, Catherine’s seasoned leadership and intimate knowledge of the network and human rights philanthropy were integral to shepherding us through this transition.

A Robust Search

In June, we launched a search for our new Executive Director, partnering with the Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group to conduct a thorough search guided by a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to broad consultation. The process engaged more than 100 stakeholders, and included a member survey to solicit suggestions for candidates and leadership priorities. We are thrilled that this search yielded an exceptional new leader for the network: Ana María Enríquez, who begins her tenure in 2020.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In 2019, Human Rights Funders Network’s operating expenses totaled $867,278. Our income included approximately 78 percent grants and 22 percent membership dues, the latter contributed by 87 funding institutions.
Thank you to our members! Your generous dues support makes our work possible.

$20,000+
Ford Foundation
Foundation for a Just Society
NoVo Foundation
W. K. Kellogg Foundation

$15,000
Libra Foundation
Porticus

$10,000
11th Hour Project
American Jewish World Service
Arcus Foundation

$7,500
Christensen Fund
Global Fund for Women
Humanity United
Wallace Global Fund

$5,000
Freedom Fund
FRIDA – The Young Feminist Fund
Front Line Defenders
Global Greengrants Fund
Harry L. and Eleanor A. Schick Philanthropic Fund
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Levi Strauss Foundation
Mama Cash

$2,500-$3,000
Semillas – Sociedad Mexicana pro Derechos de la Mujer
Sigrid Rausing Trust
TrustAfrica

$2,000-$2,500
Channel Foundation
Chino Cienega Foundation
Disability Rights Fund
EMpower – The Emerging Markets Foundation
Equality Fund
Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to Support Human Rights Defenders
Firelight Foundation
Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
Fund for Global Human Rights
Global Dialogue
Global Fund for Children
Horizons Foundation
Instituto Betty e Jacob Lafer
MADRE
Media Democracy Fund
New Israel Fund
Overbrook Foundation
Partners Asia
Seattle International Foundation

$1,000-$2,000
Access Now
African Women’s Development Fund
Appleton Foundation
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
CarEth Foundation

$200-$750
As You Sow
Brazil Human Rights Fund
CASA Socio-Environmental Fund
Dorothea Haas Ross Foundation
Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises
HER Fund
Hivos
HOW Fund
International Center on Nonviolent Conflict
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
Jonathan S. Lee
Mize Family Foundation
Mongolian Women’s Fund
Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust
Peace Direct
Sum of Us
TCC Group
United Methodist Women
Until There’s a Cure Foundation
Urgent Action Fund – Asia and Pacific
Women’s Fund in Georgia