

INTERNATIONAL **HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDERS** GROUP



NEW YORK CONVENING KEY TAKEAWAYS

NEW YORK CONFERENCE
July 12-14, 2016

NEW YORK INSTITUTE
July 11, 2016

HOSTED BY:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

IHRFG’s 2016 New York Convening	3
New York Conference	4-12
Opening Plenary: <i>Sustaining Human Rights—What, Why, and How</i>	4
Plenary: <i>Pieces of the Sustainability Puzzle: A Look at Support for Human Rights</i>	5
Member-Led Sessions: Key Takeaways	6-7
Lightning Talks Takeaways	8-9
Plenary Mock Debate: <i>Long-Term General Support Grants—Fortifying the Human Rights Movement or Perpetuating the Status Quo?</i>	10
Closing Plenary: <i>Bingo! Philanthropy Buzzwords</i>	11
New York Institute: <i>The Sustainable Development Goals: Why They Matter for Human Rights and How Funders Can Engage</i>	12
Acknowledgements	13

Notes from IHRFG’s New York 2016 Convening can be found on our [resource archive](#)!

Reflections from Members

- [IHRFG Shows Funders Aren't Sitting on the SDG Sidelines](#), by Don Cipriani, Elevate Children Funders Group
- ["Are You Okay?" Embracing Vulnerability to Sustain the Human Rights Movement](#), by Luis Vivaldi, Foundation for a Just Society
- [Universal Human Rights: What are We Sharing Across Borders?](#) by Natalie Ross, Council on Foundations
- [Moving Beyond a Movement Moment](#), by Radha Friedman, World Justice Project

IHRFG'S 2016 NEW YORK CONVENING

From July 11-14, over 200 funders from 26 countries gathered in New York for IHRFG's convening, **Seizing Opportunities: Sustaining the Human Rights Movement**, to strategize how human rights funders can shake up conventional ways and means of supporting the movement, and bolster its health and well-being. Through sessions, lightning talks, a debate, a performance, a game of Bingo, and more, participants at the conference explored strategies to help funders and activists recognize, adapt to, and take risks on opportunities to strengthen the human rights field.

The convening kicked off with the one-day institute, [The Sustainable Development Goals: Why They Matter for Human Rights and How Funders Can Engage](#), in which participants discussed philanthropy's role in ensuring that SDG implementation leads to the realization of human rights.

What follows are the key takeaways from IHRFG's New York Convening, as framed by the peer-organized sessions and lively interactions.



Mandy Van Deven

@mandyvandeven

Follow

Panelists at #hrfg2016ny are lifting up how -- from Brooklyn to Brazil -- anti-Black violence is a global injustice.

11:09 AM - 12 Jul 2016 · Manhattan, NY, United States

6 7



annie hillar

@anniehillar

Follow

Women's funds in Asia talk about situation for women's human rights in Asia #hrfg2016ny @SAWFund @TewaNepal #MONES

1:01 AM - 17 Jul 2016

1 3



Ruby Johnson

@RubyAmeliaJ

Follow

And day 1 #hrfg2016ny comes to an end. Thanks 2 @mamacash for bringing @lasreinaschulas 2 NYC!

12:35 AM - 13 Jul 2016

5 12



Rachel Humphrey

@rachelzh

Follow

Wellbeing is an issue that funders and activists overlook. Movements can't be resilient if individuals are not well.

@FAU_LAC #hrfg2016ny

9:43 AM - 14 Jul 2016

2

Get a snapshot of the conversations and activities that took place through a recap of tweets on [Storify!](#)

OPENING PLENARY:
SUSTAINING HUMAN RIGHTS—WHAT, WHY, AND HOW

Through interviews with funders and practitioners, the opening plenary examined what “sustainability” means in the context of human rights work. Mona Chun, Executive Director, IHRFG, explained the rationale behind the session: “Rather than a theoretical look at the human rights field, let’s take a moment to be real, think about why we’re here, and remind us of our purpose and why we do what we do.” In order to sustain the human rights movement, actors from within the movement must also sustain themselves. Participants and speakers shared stories and anecdotes about the reasons for their engagement in the human rights movement, and in light of these personal experiences, discussed ways to sustain human rights work.

Below are key quotes from the discussion leaders:

“Sustaining human rights work is not about perpetuating human rights work as it is today. It is about **perpetuating human rights values and principles and finding ways to allow organizations, including funders, to adapt and do what they have to do to change peoples’ lives**. It is important to understand the context, not be afraid of specificities, and avoid dichotomies.”



—Lucia Nader, Fellow, Open Society Foundations

“**It’s not enough to create norms if what we are seeking to do is to change injustice in socioeconomic systems**. In the human rights movement, we have been struggling with this over the past 20-30 years as we move from standard-setting to enforcement. Part of the problem is that we think about enforcement in isolation. What you need to enforce a right is a different approach, and that is why we are integrating rights across our programs.”



—Martín Abregú, Vice President, Democracy, Rights, and Justice, Ford Foundation

“When I think of [what is needed to sustain human rights movements], I think of **not divorcing service delivery from movement building**. With advocacy and any type of organizing and systemic change, **people are coming to the work because they are the work**. If they are coming to end poverty, they are likely poor, or hungry, or in need of resources in a way that we have to respond to in real time and not see it as a different type of work and programming to fund. I would be concerned if people are organizing and have no relation to the problem.”



—Joanne Smith, Executive Director, Girls for Gender Equity

View the [video](#)

PLENARY:
PIECES OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PUZZLE:
A LOOK AT SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

How do different funding streams converge to support a sustainable human rights movement? In this plenary session, representatives from a private foundation, a public charity and a government agency offered their thoughts on IHRFG's latest [research](#) on global human rights grantmaking. For the first time, the research includes a breakdown of strategies supported and an analysis of human rights funding by bilateral and multilateral donors.

Key comments from speakers include:

- In the funding world, there is a need to explore new and different strategies, as **the historic methods that built standards and institutions have not changed the underlying structures of inequality** that lead to human rights violations.
- **It will take far greater resources than exist in the private funding sector** to meaningfully improve human rights conditions, therefore **it is critical to also examine the role of governments in the human rights funding arena.**
- **Information-sharing and transparency** enable funders with different mandates to develop complementary approaches.
- Although governments offer major resources, **those funds are by definition politicized: even if officials seek to be nonpolitical, the reality is that government funds come with political agendas and power dynamics.**
- While many human rights funders are careful to separate their work from government funders, **a complementary approach can be useful**, particularly when focusing on civic participation, free elections, and expression.

Explore global human rights funding through our latest [analysis](#) and our [interactive website](#). Survey the field by issue area, population, strategy, and region; view sample grants and case studies; and use this data to be more strategic.

View the [video](#).



MEMBER-LED SESSIONS: KEY TAKEAWAYS



Below are the main points, including some recommendations, from the organizers of each of the concurrent, member-led sessions. Follow the links for complete notes and the full list of organizers and speakers.

Public-Private Partnerships: Risks and Opportunities for the Human Rights Movement

When considering engaging in a public-private partnership, funders must:

- **Understand the motivations** of each set of stakeholders, recognizing that commercial motivations, and particularly financial return, bring with them a particular set of risks as well as potential opportunities that need to be fully understood and assessed;
- **Interrogate the negotiating capacity** and power of stakeholders, including the private foundations, civil society, national governments, bilateral agencies, corporate actors;
- Be clear about funder capacity to **manage expectations and relationships** with other stakeholders within those partnerships, and;
- **Consider where partnerships can advance human rights**, and where they may endanger human rights outcomes, rather than simply looking at the potential new funding that can be secured.

Read the [full notes](#).

Sustaining Movements in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings: Examples from the Women's Movements in Iraq and Bosnia & Herzegovina

Navigating the complexities of supporting civil society organizations in conflict and post-conflict settings remains challenging, but there are lessons to be learned from women's movements in Iraq and Bosnia & Herzegovina over the past twenty years: **provide general operating support and flexible grants; create strong relationships with effective local organizations; and support peer to peer learning**, which is crucial to creating lasting social change.

Read the [full notes](#).



Natalie Ross
@nataliejoross



Lessons from Iraq: [#philanthropy](#) must trust local voices+embrace social movts (not just ask for policy change) [#ihfg2016ny](#)
[@Yanar_Mohammed](#)

MEMBER-LED SESSIONS: KEY TAKEAWAYS (Continued)

Turning Lemons into Lemonade: Developing Local Fundraising Mechanisms in Responding to the Crackdown on Foreign Funding

Human rights organizations in the Global South and East facing restricted foreign funding can work to **develop alternative local fundraising approaches**, which can also help build local support for rights issues. **Grantmakers can fund experimentation, provide seed-funding for the requisite fundraising infrastructure, and offer technical support.**

Developing local fundraising strategies is labor intensive, long-term work and groups have to be comfortable with taking risks, living with uncertainty, and experiencing failure. To be eventually successful, the work has to be fully embraced by everyone in the organization and integrated into all of the group's ongoing campaigning, communication, and advocacy efforts.

Read the [full notes](#).

Intergenerational Leadership and Movement Sustainability: Lessons from the Women's Movement

An effective strategy to ensure sustainability of human rights movements is to support increased dialogue and collaboration between actors across generations. Funders interested in this strategy are encouraged to **work with grantee partners to address age-related tensions existing in their organizations and movements**. Supporting young activists in order to develop a pipeline of leadership is increasingly prioritized by funders, and there is an opportunity to amplify this work by focusing on intergenerational leadership and engagement. Be mindful of the consequences of "ageing out" of groups and leaders, and seek ways to build in transition and succession planning, to ensure knowledge is not lost and there is space for people from diverse age groups to contribute.

Read the [full notes](#).



Jocelyn Berger-IWHC
@FeministJMB



What do we stand to lose as a movement if we're not building intergenerational leadership? @felogene #ihrfg2016ny

2:27 PM - 12 Jul 2016

LIGHTNING TALKS: KEY TAKEAWAYS



A Corporate Approach to Disruptive Conversations

Public relations, media agents, marketing experts and brand builders care about social causes and can relish in opportunities to use their powers for good. They can help us find **clear ways to communicate messages and tap into new markets.**

View the [video](#).

Communicating Human Rights in Latin America: Strengthening Grassroots Capacity in Strategic Communications

Investing in strategic communications for human rights organizations based in the Global South must **rely on Global South expertise.** Experts from the Global South are better able to connect with local human rights organizations and “decolonize” the language used.

View the [video](#).



Data-Driven Fundraising: Evidence from Mexico and Nigeria

Human rights groups can **draw on public opinion polls to craft messages, identify supporters, and target potential donors.** Political campaigns and NGOs in other sectors have long used these tools to bolster their constituency engagement, and human rights groups can do the same.

View the [video](#).

Online/Offline Engagement: The Warp and Weft of Movements for Human Rights

Creative use of inexpensive and accessible online activism and fundraising tools is critical for individual human rights campaigns, and **holds the potential to be the connective tissue between campaigns.** These tools provide the opportunity to **amplify local efforts and can weave together and unify the movement.**

View the [video](#).



LIGHTNING TALKS: KEY TAKEAWAYS (Continued)



Market-Based Approaches to Human Rights

Impact investing can expand the work of funders by aligning incentives for profit and impact. It allows funders to recycle their capital and create sustainable and scalable solutions to major challenges. There are four main ways that it can be used: **seeding** social enterprises so that they can test their models; **scaling** the work that social enterprises do; **bridging** grant timelines by providing capital more quickly; and **creating access** to capital that allow social enterprises to lead with their dollars.

View the [video](#).

Movement Moments: Advancing Human Rights Through the UNFCCC Paris Agreement

Funders working on a rights-based approach to climate philanthropy can try to **influence new multilateral and bilateral climate financing mechanisms** as a way to protect and advance the rights of marginalized communities on the frontlines of climate change.

View the [video](#).



What's the Point of Revolution If We Still Can't Dance? Why Funders Should Care About Well-Being

Human rights movements, NGOs, and foundations **can only be sustainable if people who compose them are well**. Efforts to promote well-being must be **multi-dimensional and collective approaches, providing physical, emotional and material security**. Funders should not reinforce the victim, the hero and the superwoman discourses.

View the [video](#).

From Urgent Action to Long-Term Success: Developing Holistic Systems of Support for Human Rights Defenders at Risk

Human rights defenders around the world experience a complex range of needs, including emergency financial assistance, international advocacy, legal aid, training in personal and digital security, psychosocial rehabilitation, family support, relocation, fellowships, and capacity building. Funders must work together to develop holistic, integrated, and efficient systems of support, **driven by the aspirations and needs expressed by human rights defenders themselves**

View the [video](#).



"Our impact is greater when we work together." - Zerxes Spencer, Program Manager, International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

PLENARY MOCK DEBATE:
LONG-TERM GENERAL SUPPORT GRANTS—
FORTIFYING THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT
OR PERPETUATING THE STATUS QUO

Is unrestricted multi-year grantmaking the best approach for building resilience in the human rights movement? Or do donors' conditions on multi-year support create insurmountable obstacles for smaller organizations that lack the infrastructure, resources, and capacity that many regional or international players have? The panelists in this mock debate were asked to take positions that do not necessarily reflect their own opinions, or their institutions' stances on this issue. Through the representation of two strongly opposing sides, the audience gained a more nuanced understanding of the issue.

The motion up for debate was: “**Multi-year general support grants are the optimal way to fortify the human rights movement.**” Read the key arguments below!

In favor of the motion:

- **General support grants provide human rights groups with stability**, allowing them to identify the goals that are most relevant and important. Without general support grants, groups are left chasing funding, making it more difficult to focus on the issues that matter.
- With project-based funding, **movements become piecemeal**. Groups run the risk of working on separate projects without developing a coherent strategy. The funding community has too large a role in defining the priorities of the projects they fund.
- **General support grants allow for deeper and greater impact**. They allow organizations to engage in deep context analysis and plan the best strategies for short- and long-term impact. Otherwise, how can organizations think long term if they are focused on short term project grants?

Opposing the Motion

- **Small grassroots organizations may be passed over for multi-year funding**. Funders often prefer to provide this type of support to larger and more established NGOs, thereby missing opportunities to support new and innovative work.
- **Smaller, short-term grants allow donors to be more flexible and respond to specific needs** without being encumbered by long-term plans.
- **Short-term support can be more suited to supporting local causes and unconventionally structured organizations** while long-term funding may result in supporting organizations that are largely self-serving. It becomes all about writing good proposals and good reports, rather than asking the people on the ground whether they have benefited.

View the [video!](#)



CLOSING PLENARY: BINGO! PHILANTHROPY BUZZWORDS

The conference closed with a game of Buzzword Bingo, which challenged funders to decipher the meanings, assumptions and motivations underlying the jargon we use. (The game also generated much laughter as Bingo winners were called on to display their skills in employing as much jargon as possible). Overuse of jargon and buzzwords can exclude, obfuscate, or intimidate. Yet, this same practice also creates useful shorthand for communicating with one another, at times evokes powerful imagery and can subtly enrich connections within the field or inspire others. Becoming more mindful of the words we use to share our work with others can help us to communicate more clearly and inclusively.

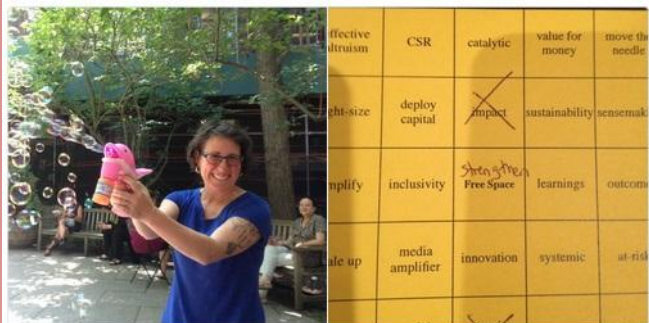
View the [presentation](#) from this session.



Rachel Humphrey
@rachelzh



Hilarious to watch a room of funders trying to talk without jargon during a session on #jargon #buzzwordbingo #ihfrg2016ny
12:36 PM - 14 Jul 2016



annie hillar
@anniehillar



A winner of #ihfrg2016ny philanthropy buzzword bingo shows off her prize @rachelzh
3:02 PM - 14 Jul 2016



Bingo Card Generator

Philanthropy Buzzword Bingo

operationalize	low-hanging fruit	sustainability	market power	systemic
holistic solution	catalytic	bandwidth	CSR	media amplifier
right-size	iterate	Free Space	languageing	data-driven
empower	ecosystems	move the needle	equilibrium change	movement moment
evidence-based	gender-responsive	ideate	fail forward	deep dive



IHRFG
@IHRFG



Language is constantly evolving but new words can get in the way of real action. #buzzwordbingo #ihfrg2016ny

11:33 AM - 14 Jul 2016

**NEW YORK INSTITUTE:
THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS—
WHY THEY MATTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HOW FUNDERS CAN ENGAGE**

IHRFG's New York Institute, facilitated by the [Center for Economic and Social Rights](#), brought together a group of 40 funders to assess the gains made by the human rights community in advocacy during the development phase of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), and to chart possible philanthropic pathways forward for building on these successes as the goals are implemented.

The SDGs are a set of **17 political commitments** adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, which aim to address the economic, social, and environmental impact of development. Importantly, the SDGs incorporate human rights principles that were absent from their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals. Human rights funders have played an important role in supporting successful civil society efforts to align the SDGs with human rights.

From 2010 to 2013 private philanthropy provided **\$97 billion in funding aligning with SDGs**. It is estimated that **\$300 billion or more will go towards SDG implementation from 2015 to 2030**. From 2010 to 2014, IHRFG, Ariadne and Prospera members provided **\$29.5 billion in funding aligned with the SDGs**. Goal 16 (peace, justice and equality) received the most funding (\$6.4 billion). Goal 4 (education) received the second highest amount of funding (\$4.6 billion). Goal 17 (partnerships) had the least funding.

Why should human rights funders engage?

- As universally adopted political commitments, **the SDGs can reinforce compliance with existing human rights obligations**, and boost their realization through development policy and practice.
- The SDGs will **dictate government priorities and funding streams for 15 years**, and almost certainly will have an impact on human rights work.
- Some human rights foundations have already played an important role in supporting successful civil society efforts to align the SDGs with human rights, and continued engagement will be necessary to realize this.
- More collective efforts to strategize around the role of philanthropy in SDG implementation have been emerging recently, including the [SDG Philanthropy Platform](#), which maps SDG grant-making and incentivizes engagement.

Funders can **build the SDGs into their funding strategies and encourage grantees to align their program objectives with the Goals**.

Read case-studies on how funders are engaging with the SDGs around children's rights, access to justice, climate change, and economic and social rights, and disability rights [here](#). View a video created by CESR on the SDGs and human rights [here](#). View the [full notes](#).

Participants in the Institute created a listserv for human rights funders interested in sharing resources around the SDGs. Contact [Yumi Sera](#), Director of Partnerships & Communication, Disability Rights Fund, to join the listserv.

THANK YOU TO

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...who generously underwrite and coordinate most IHRFG convenings

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...who generously contribute their time and thought

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