[Webinar Series] Stronger Together: New Frontiers in Funders Supporting Social Movements

Measuring the capacity of social movements: lessons learned from the pilot experience in Ukraine

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Takeaways

Global Fund for Women's Movement Capacity Assessment Tool assesses seven key characteristics of strong social movements:
1. Grassroots base
2. Leadership
3. Collaboration
4. Shared Agenda
5. Use of multiple strategies
6. Support infrastructure
7. Safety and security

Lessons Learned / Recommendations:

- Assessment must be initiated and led by local partners who are respected within movement. Invitations to participate are best when personal and made through strong relationships.
- Assessment is the beginning of a longer-term process. At the outset, you should plan for support and allocate resources to enable movement actors to implement any action plan that results from the assessment. In the Ukraine, for example, the results and discussions have informed the strategic planning of the Ukrainian Women's Fund and are being shared with other donors to guide how they can best support women's movements in the country.
  - Donors should listen to the movements, those who are in the field and do not have access to strategic planning processes of donors.
  - The online survey provides useful data points but the roundtable meetings where people discuss the results are even more illuminating. For example, regional roundtables held in the Ukraine highlighted surprises and disagreements as well as provided important nuance regarding the concept of leadership.
  - Begin with a transparent process and share data with all organizations participating.
  - Given security concerns it's important that the assessment is only conducted when benefits outweigh risks and that data is shared only in aggregate.

Global Fund for Women's updated Movement Capacity Assessment Tool will be released by the end of April on their website.

Are we making smart investments in social movements for transformative change?

- Irit Houvras, Director for Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation, AJWS, ihouvras@ajws.org
- Amy Bisno, Program Officer, Civil and Political Rights and Humanitarian Response, AJWS, abisno@ajws.org

Takeaways:
Definition of social movement:
- Outlined characteristics of an effective movement
    - Articulated what a movement is not:
        - o NOT one organization no matter how large base of support
        - o NOT a civil society sector with common concerns that haven't taken action
    - Strong movements are always connected to key affected populations, for example how are some of the most marginalized populations able to participate in the women's movement?
    - Timeline – Movements are working for long-term social change so funding strategies are long term

AJWS Movement Assessment Tool - needed to make the tool as simple as possible
- Focused on three broad domains:
    - BASE – diversity, critical mass, credibility
    - STRUCTURE – multiple channels of participation, leadership opportunities, democratic communication & coordination, second-tier leadership
    - STRATEGY – collective and coherent agenda, actions taken, diverse strategy, collaboration, perceived as legitimate
- Tool gave us a lens to look at through grantmaking, what it gave staff was a perspective of what a movement building lens would bring. For example institution-building vs. movement-building – this informed who we gave funds to in the context of different organizations, some who were collaborating better, bringing others along. Some institutions that were effective but were divisive within movement.

Key to consider how to engage with movement actors without getting in the way of their autonomy/doing harm?
Identified area for learning: Literature and resource review on the "structure" domain to assess/identify tactics for strengthening structure where successful.

Recommendation: To be a movement minded funder, take some risk, dedicate resources over long term to something that might not show impact soon. When funding nascent movements focus more on space to come together, create a shared analysis.

The role of social movements in influencing public policy (new research)

- Professor Laurel Weldon, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Director, Purdue Policy Research Institute - weldons@purdue.edu
- Jacqueline Hart, Vice President for Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation, AJWS - jhart@ajws.org

Takeaways

Weldon's thesis on how movements shape policy with lessons learned from Global Feminist Politics:

- Feminist movements drive change in law and policy on women's rights
- Women's rights are multidimensional with political dynamics varying across issue areas
- Institutions matter with context extending beyond women's rights movements to include influence of religious institutions, women's policy machineries, and regional and global agreements

New work focuses on how best to build and support organized feminism as a route to change including transnational connections, opposition and regression to women's movements, and informal/cultural/attitudinal change (i.e. *Movements, Markets and Transnational Feminism Project*, *Collaborative Work on Norms, BLM*).

Key Findings from "The Logics of Gender Justice":
- Gender justice is multidimensional with political dynamics varying across issues and ranging across a number of sex equality issues
- Covering 70 countries from 1975-2005 across 7 issue-areas, the study offers a framework for why and how dynamics like status, class and religion vary across issue. *For each type of issue, the set of political actors and institutions that shape outcomes differ*
- Note that governments progressive in one area not always progressive in others. (i.e. US and Canada stances on violence against women (VAW) but have some of the weakest parental leave policies in the world)
- Richer countries not always more progressive than poorer countries (i.e. In the 1990s, Brazil and Argentina adopted innovative policies on VAW; Finland, Italy and Spain didn't)
- Variations within region, religion and "family of nations" (i.e. Italy and Ireland stances on abortion and VAW)
- Over time, the study demonstrates there are cross-issue differences in a single country and no single feature of polity (Not modernization, democracy, percentage of women in government, patriarchy or male dominance, not just feminist movements)
  - One way to get a handle on this finding is fact that gender politics is multidimensional with respect to dimensions of sex, gender and sexuality. Sex equality itself is multidimensional with considerations of class, nation and religion. These dimensions may not be related to each other in a simple fashion and through study, viewed as axes that structure society
- Typology of Women's Rights Issues - Does this issue challenge institutional doctrine, how is class involved?
- Some developments to explain change include:
  - Organized feminism and subsequent efforts to highlight "new" issues with support and opposition varying

- Gender issues inflected with notions of class (the pattern of state-market relations matters, influence of left parties and labor mobilization)
- State-church relationship institutionalizing religion (Influences of nation-making i.e. communism and colonialism as well as constitutionally established religion)
- International norms with strategic considerations and regional effects

- Feminist movements are important in every area (except family leave) but in different way articulating women's distinctive concerns and emphasizing women's rights are multi-dimensional
- When an end goal calls for dramatic governmental/societal change, you need mass mobilization; (i.e. US expanding parental leave overall vs. Scandinavian countries expanding parental leave by a week is significantly harder to achieve)
- Institutions Matter: Where reform of well-established legal frames is necessary, and where there is opposition to overcome (e.g. religious opposition), even strong movements may take longer to have an impact (lagged variable). This includes international norms and activism
- When feminist movements don't matter: Feminist movements have had limited impact on some kinds of parental leave with some "women's rights" policies not necessarily or primarily feminist

Conclusions and Implications:
- Multidimensional approach to women's rights fits with emerging understanding of gender identity and intersectionality
- Disaggregation in relation to key institutions and identities illustrates different political processes
- Class and religion define distinct dimensions of gender

- Infusing human rights perspective with transnational elements – Study found that CEDAW and other international norms mattered for more issues than initially thought. Transnational elements strengthen movements to be more diverse (i.e. racial diversity) with more diverse movements actually leading to more efficiency and concrete policy
- How "autonomous" social movement is defined - Autonomy as it relates to the women's rights movement is the ability to be autonomous of a larger organization that doesn't have women's issues as priority
- Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name and Policy Shifts – Research questioned whether a social movement is strengthened or weakened when a disadvantaged group becomes the primary focus. Analysis demonstrated greater inclusivity strengthened networks. Next step in research is looking at whether greater inclusivity of movement (ex. Black Lives Matter movement) impacts policy shifts
- How inclusivity is defined – How diverse is leadership and/or membership, whether concerns of marginalized groups are on the agenda, opportunities and support to organize independently, descriptive opportunites for leadership, formal outlets for dissent. Inclusive movements bring in new ideas that make them more effective. Diverse groups always outperform homogenous groups in terms of creativity and innovation

Suggestions for measuring grantee impact – Social movements are diverse and conventional yet also diffuse so look for traces (i.e. language from policy proposals often originate from protocol used by social movements). It's okay to request that grantees document successes but avoid creating rubrics that are labor intensive.