



REIMAGINING HUMAN RIGHTS: NEW ENERGY FOR A NEW ERA

2018 CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS

Our 2018 annual conference, hosted in Mexico City, was the first held outside of the United States in HRFN’s almost 25-year history. Attended by over 300 people representing 50 countries, this was our most global gathering, with more than 20 community events fostering relationships between funders, activists, and advocates.

On the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we face a dramatically shifting world order that poses profound challenges for human rights. This conference aimed to motivate and inspire our community by sharing how human rights movements and funders are responding to this new reality. Led by an Advisory Committee based predominantly in the Global South and East, the conference theme was grounded in Mexico and the region, including timely conversations on Nicaragua and Brazil.

Below are the key takeaways from our three-day conference, which featured three plenaries and four conference tracks on grantmaking practice.



“Mexico is always shaking. We have a saying here that earthquakes push humanity and social movements to get stronger.”

– Laura Garcia Semillas

Conference Advisory Co-Chair



Anna Striethorst
@AnnaStriethorst

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@hrfn co-chair @mariamaliasouza at opening of #hrfn2018 in Mexico City: As funders from the global south we have built up a new field, based on the need to overcome the gap of resources for the most vulnerable. This way, we bring an important message to global #philanthropy.



Lucía Dahl
@LuciaDahl

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. @hrfunders has never been so diverse with panels entirely dedicated to women’s rights, girl-led organizations, latinamerican, global south, and race-related issues. Amazing co-chairs @lauragarcia from @FondoSemillas and @sandra_mdv from @mamacash #HRFN2018



TAKEAWAYS BY PLENARY

Countering Impunity for Grave Human Rights Violations and Corruption in Latin America - Lessons from the Field

"Mothers and fathers of the disappeared become the best investigators. That's why we need to accompany them."

- Carlos Martín Beristain, Physician, Plenary Planelist

Latin America is notorious for corruption scandals, grave human rights violations like executions, torture, and forced disappearances, overwhelming power of organized crime groups and networks, and high levels of migration. At the same time, a vibrant civil society, a strong human rights movement, and initiatives that focus on victims, use forensics, and link national and international efforts can offer new models for the protection of human rights. This plenary engaged human rights defenders and experts in a conversation to reflect on how funders can support these strategies.

An evening screening of the documentary "Ayotzinapa, El paso de la Tortuga" recounted the efforts of family members and human rights advocates to get justice following the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa. Following the screening, an emotional talk-back with mothers of two of the students reminded us of the intimate ties that unite us all.

Transforming Social Protests into Political Influence and Power: What Lessons from Africa to the Diaspora?

"A movement is not built from the top down. It's built on the concrete conditions and realities that communities are faced with."

- Briggs Bomba, Project Director Zim Alliance, TrustAfrica

This session explored the roles of funders in supporting social movements through dialogue between movement leaders from Haiti, Senegal, the United States, and Zimbabwe.

The Time is Now to Fund Girl-Led Movements for Radical Change

"How many of you involve the girls you seek to help in your decision-making? We come together to solve problems, not compete for funds. Instead of fighting for funding, we should be fighting to end poverty!"

This girl-led plenary session challenged funders with the question: "How many of you involve the girls you seek to help in your decision-making?"

Join us in taking the pledge to fund girl-led movements

1. I pledge to fund capacity building, networking, and mentoring opportunities for girl-led organizations.
2. I pledge to fund informal, non-established groups.
3. I pledge to make grant processes more accessible.
4. I pledge to increase core and long-term funding to girl-led and girl-centered groups.
5. I pledge to include girls in strategic decision making.
6. I pledge to acknowledge the intersectionality of girls' issues.
7. I pledge to enforce protocols so girls are given platforms to speak candidly about issues, beyond the confines of organizational alignment.
8. I pledge to not see girls as trends or gimmicks, but as real change makers.
9. I pledge to collaborate with girls at the board level.
10. I pledge to actively seek out diverse, marginalized, and hard-to-reach groups.



Jenna Capeci
@jennacapeci

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Ana Lorena Delgadillo: we saw that we wouldn't change public prosecution on a case by case basis... so came together to change the prosecution methodology through the collective FiscalíaQueSirva. #hrfn2018 @FundHumanRights



"The fight ... against impunity cannot be done without ... a collective process to preserve the resilience of victimized families. Many times, there were strategies to divide the parents of the 43 disappeared [students in Ayotzinapa] but their strong unity resisted that."

- Katherine Zavala

Thousand Currents
Conference Participant



Mandy Van Deven
@mandyvanden

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"Our work is about building collective power... We cannot just reform our world, we must transform it." @opalayo #HRFN2018



Funder Relevancy in Advancing Movements

- Funding mechanisms are not changing as rapidly as social movement strategies. It is important to invest in institutions as a way to build sustainable capacity and longevity of movements, which provides a legitimacy minority movements have not historically enjoyed.
- Funders must consider new patterns with respect to technology; cyber harassment takes a different shape than interpersonal harassment.
- Catharsis, psychosocial support, political education with victims and families of the disappeared lead to strong movements.

Recapturing the Narrative

- Images and other audio/visual content are shaping the way we perceive and operate in reality and are being manipulated to undermine human rights, attack human rights defenders, and influence behavior.
- We often get hung up on the idea that our interventions must have scale, but we should be thinking about intensity of experience – not just size.
- Artists and activists are employing creative, effective ways to fight back and reclaim the narrative that can serve as a model and inspiration to human rights funders.

Beyond Grantmaking

- Activists continue to challenge funders to invest in digital strategies and communications. Youth organizations and LGBTQI activists have led in digital movement building but funders still need to catch up. “How do we hack philanthropy so that we invest in technology for movements?”
- Sharing data shows a commitment to transparency, informing the public, and countering the closing space for civil society.

Shifting the Power

- The benefits of community driven philanthropy in using matching funds to support community-based organizations include increased community participation, fundraising skill acquisition, and less reliance on donor funding.
- Introducing new schemes to promote community driven philanthropy for human rights and social justice still has its challenges whether that be compliance with funder requirements, lack of trust between community organizations and foundations, and reluctance by community-based organizations to participate in funder incentives.



Mandy Van Deven
@mandyvandeven

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“There is an expectation that women’s labor should be free; the way philanthropy funds women-led organizations reflects that exploitation of women’s labor.” @TheoSowa #HRFN2018



Urgent Action Fund
@UrgentAct

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”Being an urgent action fund is just as much about a calm rhythm as it is urgency. We must respect our bodies, bodies of our colleagues + the time & energy of our defenders.” Tatiana Cordero of @FAU_LAC referencing what we have learned/ #BertaCaceres’ daughter @hrfunders #hrfn2018



Participatory Grantmaking Institute

"We have direct accountability to the movement—they know where to find us and how to reach us if we do something wrong, and we are always learning."

– Nadia van der Linde, Red Umbrella Fund

Led by GrantCraft, our half-day pre-conference Institute built funders' understanding of the critical elements of participatory grantmaking: sharing power and voice, collaboration, and transparency. Learn more about why participatory grantmaking is an effective approach through the new guide [Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking](#).

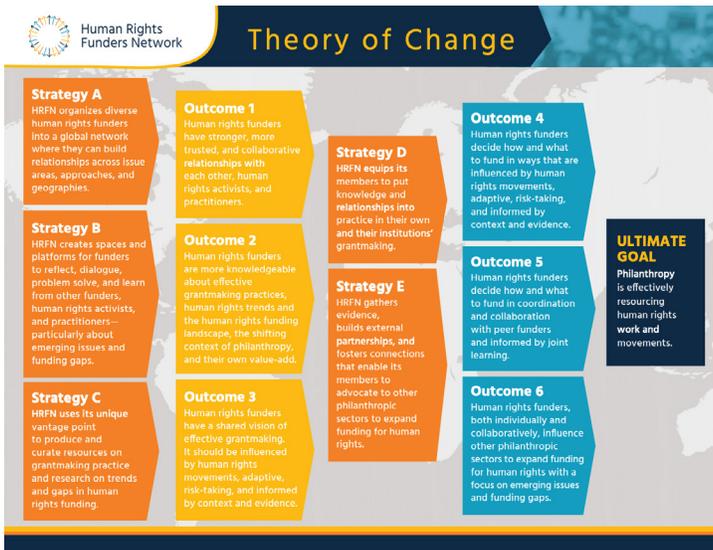
Our HRFN Community

In this session, we reflected on our network's growth and new opportunities to engage, shared key findings from our [research evaluation](#), and launched our new [Theory of Change](#).



'Participatory grantmaking cases decision-making power about funding- including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions- to the very communities that funders aim to serve'

At the Institute on Participatory Grant-making with @GrantCraft #ShiftThePower #hrfn2018



Learn more [here](#).



Read the report [here](#).

What Participants Said

“This conference in particular was really special. It had a different feeling, it was more political, more deep, and the guiding thread was clear.”

“It felt much more equitable and grounded in a local context, which was extremely useful, particularly for those of us funding in Mexico and Latin America.”

“It was more international and more activist. More progressive and radical conversations and more communities engaged, directly speaking, participating than I had ever experienced it before.”

Our full conference evaluation report is available [here](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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