

[DRAFT] HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDING PRINCIPLES

PREAMBLE

These principles were developed by Ariadne, Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN), and Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights (PAWHR) in consultation with our members. They reflect the core values and approaches of our members, but are not intended to merely affirm current practice. Rather, they are intended to support funders in reflecting on and strengthening their own practices.

Funders will take different journeys towards realizing these principles. For some funders, there will be principles that are already core to their existing practices while other principles will be aspirational. Funders will also apply these principles differently. To help guide funders along this journey, we will work with our members on companion resources showcasing the principles in practice.

Our aim is for the principles to be digestible, actionable, memorable and—when applied in concert with each other—transformational. These tenets run through all of the principles:

- Human rights are grounded in the **inherent dignity** of every human being. Every person is entitled to their human rights simply by virtue of being human.
- Human rights are **inalienable** and should never be taken away. The enjoyment of one right is **indivisibly intertwined** with the enjoyment of other rights.
- Human rights grantmaking **addresses the root causes of injustice and inequality** and has a special focus on disadvantaged or marginalized groups. This includes applying an **intersectional lens** to understand how a person's multiple identities—including but not limited to race, caste, gender, sexuality, class, and disability—can compound discrimination and oppression.
- Human rights grantmaking is about transforming power. It is **inherently political** and transcends partisanship. Its focus on **systemic change** requires a long-term commitment and an understanding that holding one's ground and preventing changes that erode human rights will be necessary in some contexts.
- Human rights grantmaking has a responsibility to **do no harm**.

Our community believes in the power of the human rights framework. At the same time, we recognize that human rights movements share values with and mutually reinforce other movements. These principles are informed by those held by feminist, social justice, and environmental justice movements, and by indigenous peoples' traditions and value systems, among others.

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Our community is global. The terminology we use is vast and nuanced. While we have aimed for clarity and simplicity in naming the principles, we recognize that funders will use different terms in describing their work. Our intention is to define specific concepts and articulate their underlying values as a starting point to our work together.

Accountability

Human rights funders recognize our own institutions and selves as accountable to the movements, organizations, and individual rights-holders we profess to support. In practice, however, foundations are most commonly accountable to their donors rather than their grantees. This power dynamic will persist until we bring new constituencies to all levels of leadership and staffing within foundations, and establish clear mechanisms for redress in cases when our institutions betray trust. In ensuring that they are accountable, human rights funders should be open and transparent about our goals and approach, including our context analysis, priorities, how decisions are made within our institutions, and the sources of our funding. Recognizing that power differentials can be an obstacle to demanding transparency, we will be proactive in sharing information with our grantees and the constituencies we aim to serve.

Community-Led

Human rights funders recognize that individuals and communities experiencing injustice should lead in articulating the change they wish to see and the paths taken towards its realization. In addition to providing long-term general support funding to enable organizations to implement their own visions and adapt to changing circumstances, we will place communities and populations served by our funding at the center of any grantmaking process, including decision-making and strategy-setting. Our efforts to foster participation and inclusion will prioritize those groups who lack power and are being systematically excluded from decision-making processes.

Care

Confronting powerful forces in pursuit of social transformation requires courage and brings with it a high level of risk. Trauma, violence, burnout, and other safety and security threats take a toll on the well-being of human rights defenders. Human rights funders should demonstrate care for the people enabling change and help build strong and resilient communities. We will support grantees' holistic security, including physical and mental health. Funder actions can put grantees and communities at risk; potential risks should be evaluated in collaboration with those affected and held above all other concerns.

Boldness

Human rights funders recognize the importance of risk-taking, innovation, and experimentation in driving social change. Taking risks entails being brave in the way we do our work, including funding new or untried solutions, moving beyond our own comfort zones, ceding power, and taking a chance on emerging groups and evolving strategies. We will foster a culture of learning and speak honestly about failures, unexpected outcomes, and mistakes in order to build our collective knowledge. Mindful that structural change takes time, we will complement our openness to new approaches with ongoing commitment to tried and true strategies.

Partnership and Diversity

Human rights funders understand that achieving structural change requires groups—both funding and activist organizations—to operate in partnership. This includes forming strategic alliances, establishing coalitions, and initiating collaborations that foster trust and leverage diverse strengths and strategies. We will seek out a diversity of perspectives through our partnerships. We will work to address the ways in which our own institutions are falling short with respect to being diverse, equitable, and representative.