

Funding Feminism: Accountability, NGOization, and the Politics of Grantmaking in  
International Institutions

By

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation addresses the paradox that increased transnational investments in women's rights may lead to NGOization, or the narrowing, professionalization, and deradicalization of women's movements. I follow UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, one of the world's largest pools of money for gender equality actors, across three grant cycles between 2009 and 2015. Combining an institutional ethnographic approach with quantitative analysis of 3,600+ grant applications from women's NGOs, governments, and mainstream organizations, I shed light on notoriously opaque processes that determine the allocation of millions of dollars in development funding for gender equality and women's rights.

First, I theorize "dual accountabilities" to understand how individuals within bureaucracies manage competing constituencies in ongoing, daily ways. I find that the Fund's increasing attention to bureaucratic requirements and politics – its *institutional accountability* – eclipses its more outward-facing *movement accountability* – a focus on serving women's movements. Under mounting internal pressures, feminist funding experts on staff are replaced with development experts, and avenues for women's movement actors to advise the Fund dissolve entirely. Next, I develop a methodology to understand grantmaking *as a social process* in which power is negotiated and contested in each grant review stage. I show how the Fund's shifting accountabilities become embedded in its eligibility requirements, explicit priorities, and implicit ideals about gender equality. Finally, I explore how the Fund's institutional location shapes which groups are most likely to progress through its grant review. The Fund rewards characteristics related to NGOization, promoting well-established women's NGOs and advancing more moderate activities over radical social change strategies. This narrowing happens through deliberate choices, such as prioritizing policy advocacy and endorsing NGO-government partnerships, but also through relatively small requirements and often invisible assumptions entrenched in grant review.

My study adds to a growing field of research on the internal workings of international institutions. I also provide a rare window into philanthropic processes. My methodology is a promising new approach to understand how power shapes grant decisions. Finally, I make a small but valuable addition to resource mobilization research by showing how funders' processes contribute to the phenomena of NGOization even before grants are made.

To the feminist activists within institutions and without, who prove that radical change can take many forms. I hope this project can, in some small way, do justice to your movements and break down power too often held behind closed doors.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

## Introduction

In 2009, the UN Development Agency for Women (UNIFEM) partnered with the Government of Spain to launch the Fund for Gender Equality, one of the world's largest pools of money available for gender equality actors. The Fund focuses on women's economic and political empowerment and addresses the fact that, despite a global proliferation of laws for gender equality – a success hailed and promoted by development agencies – legal gains have not led to meaningful implementation improving women's rights in practice. The Fund's broad mandate and its open calls for proposals make it one of the few grant competitions in which women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mainstream NGOs, and governments can compete for development resources. In its first six years, the Fund delivered \$64 million to 120 programs in 80 countries.

The Fund for Gender Equality is not neatly defined. It is technically a multi-donor trust fund, a development-financing model that has burgeoned in the past fifteen years as an efficient way for development agencies to raise and disburse substantial funds to governments, other agencies, and civil society organizations. Multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) aim to produce cohesive action around issues such as conflict, the environment, and HIV/AIDS (Bakarat, 2009). At the same time, the Fund draws on principles from the field of women's funds, a philanthropic approach in which grants to women's movements serve as a vehicle for feminist social change (e.g. Rose, 2005). The Fund is also nested within the UN's larger development practices and strategies and is part of the legacy of gender-related programming at one of the world's foremost international institutions. These different monetary channels and development goals often contradict or exist in

friction with one another, from efficiency and cohesion to feminist social change to gender and development mandates. The Fund's priorities and vision determine to what extent these approaches will drive these tens of millions of dollars in grants for gender equality to particular countries, recipients and programs.

Empirical study of the Fund for Gender Equality provides insight into the growing theoretical understandings of two related trends: first, the institutionalization of gender into development policies; and second, "investing in women," or the use of philanthropic and development funding for women's rights and gender equality. Development agencies and funders powerfully participate in defining what constitutes gender equality and women's rights around the world. In the field of international women's rights, \$25.3 billion of development funding focused on gender equality in 2009-2010 alone (OECD, 2012). Every year, hundreds of foundations make the grants that sustain women's NGOs around the world. Together, these resources effect which ideas, approaches, and actors lead actions for women's rights.

For development agencies, the call to incorporate women and gender into their development practices has been shaped by women's movements, individual feminists inside and outside of international institutions, and changing global norms over the past forty years (Jaquette and Staudt, 2006). However, scholars and activists alike bemoan the impenetrability of these bureaucratic institutions, where women themselves have limited opportunities to influence the programs likely to affect their lives and few mechanisms hold institutions accountable for the ideas, practices, and resources they disseminate around the world (e.g. Fierlbeck, 1995). Even as gender equality is hailed as an indispensable condition for economic and social development, research suggests that the

programs and policies aimed at improving the lives of women and girls tends to reinforce preexisting development logics, including neoliberal, heteronormative, and Western norms about economic productivity, the family and the role of the state (e.g. Bedford, 2009; de la Rocha, 2008). More controversial issues, such as advancing reproductive and sexual rights and addressing global economic inequalities, are often excluded from gender equality interventions, while issues like empowerment, leadership, or ending violence against women, which do not threaten agencies' broader mandates or embedded assumptions about development are named as broad goals (see Cornwall, Harrison, Whitehead, & Malden, eds., 2008).

Similarly, social movement scholars argue that funders, even those explicitly committed to progressive social change, ultimately narrow and depoliticize the movements they support (Jenkins, 1998; Silver, 1997). Within women's movements, donors often emphasize policy advocacy over more radical activism, hierarchical organizations over informal collectives, and narrower policy shifts over more encompassing structural changes, such as anti-capitalist or anti-globalization mobilizations (e.g. Bagić, 2006; Eisenstein, 2009).

Additionally, like international institutions, transnational foundations and donors have long faced criticism for forming their funding strategies without sufficiently understanding local contexts or engaging the people whose needs they seek to address (Heydemann and Toepler, 2006). Seeking to understand the effects of women's movements' interactions with donors, international institutions, and each other, feminist researchers have coined the term "*NGOization*," which they understand to mean the simultaneous institutionalization, deradicalization, and professionalization of women's

movements (Lang, 1997; Alvarez, 1998). NGOization theory posits that through strategies adopted to mobilize resources, as well as through increasing engagement of feminists with the state and international institutions, the internal structures and the external goals of women's movement organizations become both more formalized and less radical (Lang, 1997; Alvarez, 1998; Hemment, 2004). The NGOization literature also brings together the often-disconnected literatures on resource mobilization and international institutions, which together point to the neglected costs and unforeseen consequences behind mobilizing transnational resources for women's rights.

My study examines the paradox that increased transnational investments in women's rights goals might have narrowing, professionalizing, and deradicalizing effects on women's movements. These effects are made manifest in encounters between and within formal institutions and the movements they serve. Within development agencies, women's rights are defined and enacted in accordance with bureaucratic structures and development logics. Among non-governmental organizations and women's movements, strategies, funding efforts, and partnership choices can determine how organizations articulate their goals and formalize their structures. And between NGOs and funders, the allocation of scarce resources elevates particular approaches to gender equality and women's rights.

I take the Fund for Gender Equality as a case study of development-led funding and look behind the curtain at the processes, assumptions, and forms of power that underpin its allocation of millions of dollars in development resources for gender equality. In this dissertation, I address the question: *How do the Fund for Gender Equality's institutional location and grant review processes shape women's movements' access to development*

*financing?* In my first empirical chapter (chapter 3), I ask: *How does the Fund's institutional location in the United Nations shape its priorities, requirements, and practices for financing women's rights? How do UN Women's bureaucratic structures and organizational goals affect the Fund's early feminist funding model?* In this chapter, I develop an understanding of “dual accountability” to theorize the tensions and negotiations of serving both an international institution and providing resources directly to women’s movement organizations. In chapters 4 and 5, I ask: *How does the Fund's grant review process constrict which kinds of actors, actions, and regions are considered strategic for and capable of receiving development funding for gender equality?* In chapter 4, I focus this question on the Fund itself as a grantmaker, specifically examining the Fund’s grant review stages, and develop a methodology to analyze grantmaking as a social process. In chapter 5, I look at the experience of applicants themselves. Examining the applicant pool as a whole, I add the question: *To what extent does grant selection reinforce the characteristics of NGOization, including professionalization and collaboration with state actors, among the women’s movement NGOs that apply to the Fund?*

## **I. Empirical Case**

On the one hand, it can be no surprise that the Fund became more bureaucratic or accountable to UN Women over time. It was founded within the UN, formalized through agreements between Spain’s development agency and UNIFEM (later integrated in UN Women), and accountable to the UN’s gender policy apparatus. On the other hand, several factors combine to make this an excellent case to trace a process by which women’s

movement funding, feminist expertise, and divergent program approaches have been institutionalized to an exceptional degree.

First, several unpredictable conditions made the Fund possible and created a unique opening for feminist activism from within and outside of the institution. The Fund is rooted in Spain, where feminist-socialists in government gained political leverage when the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party came to power in 2004. In the wake of this election, feminists gained key roles within the Spanish government, particularly within the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the *Dirección General de Planificación y Evaluación de Políticas* (DGPOLDE) within Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among them, several key leaders envisioned the Fund as a part of their mission to increase official development assistance (ODA) overall and to advance gender equality in particular (San Miguel, 2009). Under the new government, they had the resources and mandate to enact their vision. AECID and DGPOLDE originally planned to make all grants in Africa, in line with their regional strategies, but after consultation with – and outrage from – other regional women's movements, the Fund was made into a global grants initiative. These consultations solidified the Fund's emphasis on directly supporting civil society organizations and built buzz among women's organizations. Several of the women's movement leaders who provided their input and concern at that early stage would later serve on the Fund's steering committee.

Meanwhile, UNIFEM and Spanish representatives sketched out initial arrangements for a UNIFEM-managed grant program. In 2008, after many contractual negotiations, Spain donated 50 million Euros, nearly \$65 million, to UNIFEM to launch the Fund for Gender Equality (originally called the "Gender Equality Fund"). Second in size only to the Dutch

Government's MDG3 Fund, the Fund for Gender Equality became one of the world's largest grantmaking initiatives for gender equality and women's rights. Dreaming big, UNIFEM and AECID foresaw the Fund as an experiment to test whether long-term multi-million-dollar grants to women's organizations could transform laws and policies into real changes in the lives of women and girls.

The Fund immediately entered a changing landscape of gender equality at the United Nations. Organized advocacy by hundreds of women's organizations and feminists inside the United Nations over decades led to the establishment of UN Women, which consolidated UNIFEM and three other gender-related agencies into a single entity and was formalized in 2010. Starting in earnest in 2009, the Fund was initially staffed by feminist philanthropic professionals from outside the UN. From the outset, feminist Fund staff undertook an active and at-times contested role in the process of defining gender equality and establishing new practices to deliver grants. In both its founding inside UNIFEM and its integration with its parent group into the new UN Women structure, the Fund's procedures and goals had to be aligned with those of the institution. Looking at the Fund over time provides a window into how a relatively new modality, nested in feminist movements and led by feminist experts, becomes institutionalized, mobilizing prevailing ideas about gender equality and practices characteristic of the institution at large.

In addition to this history serving as a critical background for understanding the meaning and mechanisms of funding, the applicants to the Fund provide an unprecedentedly broad sample of international women's rights and development actors. Although not random or representative, the applicants form a very broad slice of transnational feminism. Collected over three grant cycles, the breadth of information about

women's movement organizations, governments, and mainstream NGOs and the Fund's assessment of them sheds light on how grantmakers define gender equality in practice and how "development" shapes the funding of women's movements more broadly.

The Fund each year has issued calls for proposals that are sufficiently open to encompass substantial range in the kinds of actors and actions that make up the applicant pool. The sheer volume of organizations (3,000+ applications from over 120 countries in three grant cycles) offers variety in both the form and context of applicants. My dataset includes the complete application database, with the proposal text, applicant characteristics, and the Fund's scoring in each stage of grant review. Tracing applications through the full grant review process, from eligibility to scoring to final selection, and across three grant cycles with somewhat modified rules in each enables me to chart whether and how Fund rewards certain actors, including emphasizing professionalization and centering collaboration between governments and NGOs.

Comparing the Fund's three grant cycles (2009-2010, 2011-2012, and 2015), I am also able to observe changing development discourses related to women's rights and development funding in this UN framework. My study embraces the premise that language matters, that *discourse*, or the systems of knowledge and ideas that make sense of the world, organize and justify interventions into social issues (Johnstone, 2002; Smith, 2005). These discursive spaces serve as battlegrounds with material implications for women around the world. This is directly evident within the field of international funding for women's rights, where organizations present their ideas to funders who in turn winnow, cut, and select actors and issues according to their own ideas of inequality, gender, and social action. Drawing on Smith (1990, 2005), I explore the ways that key texts, particularly

the Fund's call for proposals, mediate social relations – among Fund staff, within UN agencies, and between the Fund and its applicants. I examine how different actors make meaning of the Fund's framings of women's rights and gender equality that were presented in these calls for proposals, and how they frame their efforts as meeting these implicit goals. In doing so, I link discursive power – the power to define important categories and ideas – with the material consequences of grant decisions.

Finally, my own access to the Fund and experience in women's rights philanthropy and development provided me a rare window into the internal processes and changing power that shape the Fund's grantmaking over time. Insider accounts of international institutions are rare in general, not just for the Fund, and I am able to advance the sparse institutional ethnographic literature on these influential institutions by virtue of my position as an insider. From 2009 to 2011, I served as the Fund for Gender Equality's second staff member and have worked in transnational feminist philanthropy for more than a decade. I take my positionality seriously. Drawing on feminist research methodologies, I endeavor to identify how my perspective, my closeness to the case, informs my research (Sprague, 2005). In my methodological choices, I aim to ensure that rigor and validity underpin my analysis. At the same time, I enter with the strong conviction that it is important for political analysts to pry open the notoriously impermeable and undeniably powerful worlds of philanthropy and development funding. And, as someone who has worked in these fields, I see my "insider/outsider" role as a resource and responsibility in addition to a methodological consideration. As I discuss in chapter 2, I leverage my position to access key people, such as UN leadership, Fund staff, and technical committee members, while ensuring representation from broad and diverse

actors. Using the institutional ethnographic approach associated with Dorothy Smith, I combine interviews, observations, and documentary analysis to examine how different actors within and around the Fund interpret and enact the Fund's goals. My primary goal is to look beneath the public face of the Fund and its institutional home to examine how funding, framing, and power happen in practice.

## II. Analytic Framework

In this study, I bring together two related analytic frameworks: the fundraising dimension of *resource mobilization*, in which social movements seek and donors award money for addressing social issues; and a neoinstitutional approach to understanding large-scale *international institutions* as powerful bureaucracies that coordinate global action, adjudicate international conflict, and organize governmental and civil society actors. Connecting these concerns, I develop an integrated perspective on four major key concepts: *women's movements, gender equality, NGOization, and accountability*.

### Key Concepts

By *women's movements*, I mean the mobilization of women *as women* (Ferree, 2006). Women's movements contain a variety of social change goals and tactics, which may or may not directly challenge gender-based oppression, and are collectively organized (Ferree and Ewig, 2013). I refer to women's NGOs, women's movement organizations, and feminist organizations key units of my inquiry. I group these all within Ferree and Martin's description of feminist organizations: not as "...organizational subtypes or as ideal types"

but “*as the places in which and the means through which the work of the women’s movement is done*” (1995, 13, italics in original).

I regularly use the word *feminism*, by which I mean the combined beliefs that: a) gender is a persistent and major axis of oppression and intersects with other social hierarchies; and b) oppression can and should be challenged and upended. Throughout this dissertation, I rely on authors’ and activists’ original language to describe themselves and their work, and thus also find many cases where the phrases “women’s” and “feminist” movements or organizations are used interchangeably. I also use the term *radical* to indicate actions or goals based on fundamental transformations to existing social structures. In this formulation, radical is one end of a spectrum with the status quo on the other. Feminism is, by my definition, a call for radical change and at times requires radical action, such as actively refusing to abide by oppressive laws or cultural norms. More moderate strategies, such as working with governments to mainstream gender equality in laws, also contribute to achieving long-term feminist goals. I see radical actions as pushing back *against* what exists, while moderate action works *with*. The balance between the two is the subject of much debate within feminist movements and the focus of NGOization literature described below.

In contrast to “women’s rights” or “feminism,” the term *gender equality* has been especially activated within global norms and institutions (Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo, eds., 2009). For gender equality, I use a common and broad definition of parity between women and men.<sup>1</sup> It is this very breadth that makes gender equality a mercurial principle and one that has been alternately hailed as the key for economic development (e.g. Snyder,

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<sup>1</sup> Bedford (2009) and other critique this binary approach to gender in many development programs and logics. I retain the definition to reflect a commonly-used concept of the term.

2006) and women's political representation (e.g. Bacchi, 1999), bemoaned as an empty "buzzword and fuzzword" in international agencies (Cornwall, 2007), and leveraged in feminist advocacy to compel international institutions and governments to uphold women's rights. Poguntke writes, "There can be little doubt that gender equality has been one of the dominant themes of the politics of the past decades... Gender equality is still a hotly contested concept and the precise meaning of it remains subject to continuous change and, as a result, political struggle" (2009, p. xiv). As it travels between women's movements, political institutions, and development agencies, "gender equality" carries with it different prescriptions for addressing the inequalities that women face around the world. The political struggle over its meaning materializes in my research with applicants to the Fund for Gender Equality simultaneously presenting their own ideas of gender equality and angling to fit within articulations by the United Nations broadly and the Fund for Gender Equality specifically.

In this paper, I also focus on *NGOization*, which cuts across women's movements' engagement with international institutions and resource mobilization efforts. Alvarez's (1998) pioneering study of the Latin American NGO "boom" of the 1980s and 1990s defines NGOization as a proliferation of professionalized feminist NGOs whose engagement with the state, donors, and inter-governmental organizations, particularly the UN, privileges policy-focused changes over more radical feminist goals or oppositional tactics. Though important for achieving incremental, institutional changes, such as for women's suffrage and reproductive rights, NGOs' collaboration with governments has been widely contested among feminist movements for privileging professionalized gender-focused NGOs that are dependent on the very states they might critique (Lang, 1997) and whose spread has

“dulled feminisms’ more radical edge” (Alvarez, 2009, p. 78). As Lang (1997) influentially theorizes, NGOization occurs on a movement scale, with many organizations shifting as they respond to donor demands and orient their activities toward the state.

Professionalization is not, on its face, antithetical to feminist goals. Professionalized organizations can offer stability to social movements and enhanced potential for accessing more significant resources and having a broader impact (see Jenkins, 1998). However, NGOization is about the proliferation of professionalized NGOs *as a dominant mode of organizing*. The NGOization critique posits that there are costs to a movement when *so many* NGOs associated with it choose to engage with governments, advocate in spaces that compel moderation, and/or take donations with requirements around the structure and substance of their organizations. That cost includes giving more priority to organizational strategies that are state- or donor-driven rather than movement-driven, spending an inordinate amount of time and attention on documenting how they are meeting donors’ requirements, and favoring slower, more moderate activist strategies. Such compromises may weaken demands for feminist change in authority structures and distributive processes that would dislodge current power-holders.

Recent NGOization theory argues for a more nuanced understanding of the different forms and formulations of NGOization, including greater attention to the varieties of NGOs and their (shifting) particularities based on local context and the changing nature of the state (e.g. Bernal and Grewal, eds. 2014; Choudry and Kapoor 2013). Hodžić (2014) critiques the idea of NGOization entirely, arguing that the “NGOization paradigm” has become unquestioned and normative within feminist scholarship and relies on a false valorization of past women’s movements. Alvarez (2009) finds a middle ground when she

revisits her earlier foundational work in the field. Turning back to Latin America, she finds that even as feminist organizations professionalize within what can be read as “NGOization,” most of them retain ties and commitments to their feminist social movements.

Heeding recent scholarship, I maintain a critical eye on what I define as NGOization even as consider it a useful starting point through which to view specific organizational bids for development financing and one that *likely but not necessarily* tempers feminist social change. I am interested in how, among the thousands of applicants the Fund reviews, characteristics related to NGOization of the field at large might be rewarded. In chapter 5, I show that the ideal grantee is, indeed, a professionalized, advocacy-focused, women-led NGO, but that these features affect applicants of different kinds and from different regions unequally. By outlining how NGOization may be fostered by this development-led grantmaking program, I expand existing theory by asking precisely *how* funders and international institutions contribute to the phenomena. The size and scope of my dataset, paired with my approach, enable me to respond directly to the call for deeper contextual nuance in how, where, and in what forms NGOization occurs.

Finally, to pinpoint the interactions between international institutions, resource mobilization, and women’s movements, I develop an understanding of *accountability*, differentiating between what I call “movement” and “institutional” accountability. As a concept, accountability enables me to theorize the relationship between individual actors, institutional structures, and larger social fields such as philanthropy, development, and women’s rights.

Accountability has become prominent in debates about human rights and development, in which governments may be held accountable by their citizens (e.g. Goetz and Jenkins, 2005) and development agencies accountable to the people whose lives they affect (e.g. Easterly, 2002; Clark, Fox, & Treakle, eds., 2003). A small body of work, primarily in industry publications and conferences, addresses accountability within philanthropy, looking both at financial and legal requirements mandated for funders and at the bi-directional relationship between donors and grantees (Council on Foundations, 2007; Heydemann and Toepler, 2006; Johnson, 2008). Thayer (2010a, 2010b) describes the shifting nature of accountability for feminist organizations involved in national activism and transnational resource mobilization. In the wake of Brazil's democratization in the mid-1980s, the term "referred to the accountability of ruling political institutions to their newly empowered constituents" (Thayer, 2010a, p. 220). However, the same organizations that mobilized around the concept politically found themselves beholden to a different kind of accountability as they sought and secured funding from international donor agencies.

Thayer writes:

...in the hands of donor agencies, [accountability] acquired a different set of meanings. Agencies sometimes pressed their grantees to demonstrate responsiveness to the communities they claimed to serve, but they were, above all, concerned to guarantee that the organizations that received funding were responsive to their own requirements as donors. The lines of accountability, in other words, more often ran upward, rather than downward, in terms of relations of power (2010a, p. 220-221).

Thayer's study illustrates the link between accountability as a political act and an administrative requirement – both nested within complex power relations. Across these varied cases, accountability is the means through which a person or institution may be held responsible for its actions, often through formal measures (like organizational policies or

legal requirements) or in public fora (such as demonstrations for greater transparency or more participatory governance).

Using a feminist institutional ethnographic approach, I expand current theory to examine how accountability occurs in *daily ways* through meaning-making and even small operational decisions. I define *accountability* as being subject to a constituency, *either explicitly or implicitly*, and facing potential rewards or sanctions for a given approach, action, or decision. In short form, *accountability is being aware of and taking into account to whom you might need justify your actions – there is both a potential audience and a threat of reprisal*. Accountability implies power and is defined by its directionality (for whom? to whom?), and can operate across multiple levels, for example within and between institutions or through interpersonal interactions. My definition encompasses formal accountability mechanisms, such as reporting requirements and governance structures, as well as the daily enactments and implicit ideas that inform how actors weigh their actions.

The bigger, more visible forms of accountability are achieved or belied by daily accountability. I argue that it is the accumulation of daily actions, the small and sometimes imperceptible focus of attention and weighing of consequences that determines what ideas and individuals hold sway, is what shapes accountability in practice. This is not to discount the “new accountability agenda” in democracy and human rights (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005) or the efforts to make development agencies more transparent (Clark et al., 2003). Rather, even these accountability “achievements” have roots in much more diffuse and humble forms. Seeing accountability as institutionally-situated and enacted daily through informal and formal means extends our understanding of whether, when, *how*, and to whom institutions, governments, or individuals are answerable.

I distinguish between two types of accountability to understand the conditions that determine who has the power and access to influence the Fund's direction. In *institutional accountability*, the dominant audience is internal and attention centers on the dynamics of the donor institution itself. In *movement accountability*, actors reference real or imagined women's movements with feminist commitments as their audience and key constituency. Both accountabilities can travel through interpersonal relationships, embedded within personal networks or organizational hierarchies; may be formalized, such as through reporting requirements or grant review protocols; and often carry broader ideas connected to development logics, feminist social change discourses, and other assumptions about how women's rights can and should be enacted.

Moreover, as my case shows, accountabilities often come into conflict. I am interested in how contradictions between movement and institutional accountability are managed and resolved (or not). Observing accountability in overt decisions and strategies *and* in subtle, taken-for-granted moments, I ask how individuals within grantmaking organizations and international institutions negotiate multifaceted allegiances and ideals. I argue that the complex tensions between movements and institutions make for an uneven fight, in which bureaucratic pressures largely define accountability for the Fund.

### Frameworks:

As I my conceptual framework denotes, international institutions and resource mobilization share important characteristics, particularly with respect to women's movements and NGOs. Both international institutions and funding organizations are well-known as impenetrable "black boxes" in which decisions are made, funds are allocated, and

agendas are set without transparency. In the field of women's rights, they powerfully influence which ideas, actors, and strategies garner vital resources and support around the world. And, as I show, their internal processes and daily operations may, in effect, narrow and deradicalize action around women's rights.

### *Resource Mobilization*

As organizations and movements seek to mobilize funds and further their causes, donors allocate grants in line with themes or priorities and through predominantly private assessment of grant applicants. Funders range in form from private and corporate foundations to public, activist-founded foundations to development agencies' multi-donor trust funds. Among the different categories, the Fund for Gender Equality combines *social movement philanthropy*, funding designed to promote institutional change through support of collective action (Jenkins, 1998), and *development funding*. Though social movement philanthropy comprises only a small percentage of overall foundation giving, it is one most reliable income sources for women's movements, and lessons from within the field are often pertinent for philanthropy more generally. Development funding, described below, has received considerably less attention as a source of funding and support for women's movements.

The relationship between women's movements and funders is not a neat equation. Well-founded fears of cooptation lead some women's organizations to forgo foundation monies entirely. Feminist activists have deliberately worked for funding agencies or served on grant review committees, infusing grant decisions with movement-based priorities. As they seek funding, women's movement actors find strategic ways to refute donor

narratives or redefine what feminist social change means in a particular setting. In what Thayer (2010) calls “resignification,” feminist organizations both adapt to and push back on donor demands as they participate in transnational flows of ideas, advocacy, and resources. Despite these attempts to influence the funding landscape, the dearth of national resources for women’s rights leaves organizations and governments highly dependent on funding from international agencies. In this asymmetrical relationship, donors set the agenda and hold the purse strings.

Bagić’s review of women’s mobilizations in the post-Yugoslav countries reveals donors’ direct impact on the activities and goals of women’s rights organizations (2006, p. 141). Jenkins (1998) argues that social movement philanthropy often privileges political participation above substantive representation or oppositional advocacy, in effect deradicalizing emerging social movements. He further states, “professionalization has been the most direct impact of movement philanthropy” (p. 213). Jenkins’s claims are echoed across social movement scholarship that shows that funding tends to shift social movement organizations from radical to moderate goals (Bartley, 2007). This spectrum reappears in my analysis, in which I distinguish mainstream or moderate actions from radical social change strategies or goals.

Examination of how this narrowing happens within donor organizations is confined to a few empirical studies, and methodologies to follow applicants through the funnel of grant review are limited. Empirical evidence suggests the strong link between internal practices, like staffing, decision-making processes, and levels of formalization, and the particular – and narrow – interpretation of social issues (Ostrander, 1995; Rose, 2005; Delfin and Tang, 2008). Looking at funder composition, Ostrander’s (1995) ethnography of

the Haymarket Fund shows that even the most “democratic” or “community-based” funders eventually move toward greater formalization and hierarchy. Ostrander posits, “...the likelihood of social movement funders moderating movement activity depends on the degree and kind of power that different people in the funding organization have over grantmaking and fundraising, on who those people are, and on the relationship between them. It depends, in other words, on the *social relations of philanthropy*” (1995, p. 6, italics in original).

Women’s movements have aimed to transform these social relations through the establishment of “women’s funds,” foundations led for and by feminist activists. A “counter to mainstream foundations,” women’s funds seek to “support women’s own articulations of their struggle for justice and equality by working at various levels and within all the structures where women and girls are systematically disempowered” (Ramdas, 2011, p. 396). Women’s funds’ grantmaking encompasses both a goal of feminist social change and a set of values-driven practices. In an article for the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, my coauthors and I detail best practices in feminist philanthropy, such as ensuring accessibility for potential applicants, respecting applicants’ time and effort when applying for grants, providing flexible and long-term funding, supporting networks and women’s movements, and jointly setting and evaluating goals with grantees (Miller, Stanton, & Lever, 2012). Nonetheless, despite such efforts to align internal practices with feminist values, women’s funds still struggle with the power inequalities inherent in grantmaking and their own donors’ demands for professionalization (Rose, 2005). Even at its most activist-led, funding for women is subject to institutional constraints and external pressures, which in turn shape the funding it delivers.

Development funding has received less attention than other areas of philanthropy, despite the staggering dollar amounts held within development agencies' local or global "basket funds," "trust funds," and other grants programs. Studies of development-led financing by-and-large focus on mechanisms such as microcredit, joint implementation of development programs, and large-scale official development assistance (ODA) to governments. However, an increasing pool of development funding is funneled through *multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs)*, for which applicants – from civil society organizations to UN country offices to governments – submit proposals that undergo a review process more akin to philanthropic practices than traditional development financing. Many MDTFs contain provisions to address gender equality: as of 2012, the UN's three women's-rights-focused MDTFs totaled \$158 million, and nearly all of its 45 MDTFs (totaling \$5.5 billion) included gender equality provisions and targets (Miller, 2012). Despite their size and growing prominence over the last decade, few scholars have critically studied MDTFs, and no academic work has looked at the specific implications for funding women. Bakarar's standout analysis of post-conflict MDTFs extends the flags raised by resource mobilization literature. He concludes, "the theoretical benefits of MDTFs have been lost during implementation as donors bent the model to their standard operating procedures" (2009, p. 110). Even as trust funds infuse much-needed resources into women's rights and gender equality, they also bring new concerns about the degree to which donor agendas will shape and coopt the issues and organizations.

Looking at the Fund as a grantmaker and a development-funding mechanism, I aim to strengthen current understandings about how women's movements access funding. I present and apply a methodology to explore how funders' practices throughout the whole

grant cycle shape grant allocation. And I expressly consider whether and how fund-seeking, one aspect of broader resource mobilization, contributes to the NGOization of women's movements.

### *International Institutions*

While funders social issues through grant programs, international institutions play a central role defining those issues and organizing actors *on a global scale*. I use "international institutions" to mean the formal organizations created by states for political or economic coordination (Simmons & Martin, 2001). I use the terms "international institutions" and "development agencies" interchangeably, though others may refer to them as international organizations, inter-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, international financial institutions, and more.

Theories of bureaucracy provide a foundational framework to understand the nature of international institutions, including the United Nations agencies I investigate.

Weber (1978) classically delineates six principles of bureaucracy:

1. Hierarchical structure of offices and authority;
2. Job specialization, with clear division of labor;
3. Formalized selection/recruitment based on technical competence and expertise;
4. Career orientation, incentivized by advancement opportunities and long-term employment;
5. Rule-based guidelines that regulate employee activities and are enforced through management; and
6. Impersonality of authority and tasks, based on position rather than a particular person and following uniform organizational rules.

Barnett and Finnemore (2004) consolidate Weber's principles into four features: 1) hierarchy; 2) continuity (the same as Weber's career orientation); 3) impersonality; and 4) expertise. Bureaucratization, they argue, undergirds international institutions' authority

and power to define, coordinate, and compel action by governments, civil society actors, and other international institutions around the world. Diverging from rational, economic explanations for the emergence and power of international institutions, Barnett and Finnemore join Reus-Smith (2004) and other constructivist accounts, theorizing these institutions as active participants in shaping the world around them. I adhere to this perspective, interrogating the UNIFEM and UN Women as dynamic sites replete with constraints and imbued with authority to act in the area of women's rights.

Across these sites, I employ a *neoinstitutional approach* to structure my analysis of the Fund, its staff's decision-making, and its location within UN Women. Developed over the last thirty years, neoinstitutionalism emphasizes the social and political environments that shape organizational culture, constitutes both institutions and actors within them, and creates "frames of meaning" that define and confine action (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Meyer, 2008; Alasuutari, 2015). Meyer and Rowan's (1997) early work in the field shows that "organizations align their structures with the institutional context, and in so doing gain legitimacy, resources, stability, and better survival chances" (Lawrence & Shadnam, 2008, p. 2290). DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) further theorize *institutional isomorphism*, the processes by which organizations within a shared social field will adopt similar structures and norms.

I find these theories directly applicable to the Fund's case, in which a new feminist funding model begins to mimic organizational norms over time in order to survive within UN Women. The Fund, in turn, participates in promoting forms of organizing and approaches to gender equality that cohere to its own "frames of meaning" (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Through their proposals, applicants to the Fund engage in what Scandinavian

institutionalists such as Sahlin-Anderson (1996) describe as discursive “translations” between the local and global – a close fit with Thayer’s (2010a, 2010b) description of resource mobilization above. Moreover, both neoinstitutional and NGOization literature suggest that grantmaking might promote isomorphism as women’s organizations professionalize and adjust their strategies to suit donors’ preferences. Lastly, I admit to entering my study with what describes Alasuutari (2015) calls neoinstitutionalism’s “ironic attitude” toward “the paradox between high-minded expectations or expressed principles and actual practices” (p. 164).

Neoinstitutionalism connects with wider conversations about *legitimacy* within and among international institutions. Buchanan and Keohane (2006) describe legitimacy in both normative and sociological terms: Legitimacy is whether an institution has a “right to rule” (normative) and is broadly believed to have that right (sociological). Conti (2011) further explains development agencies’ cultivation of legitimacy through his concept of legitimacy chains. Through these chains, individuals within international institutions gain authority to secure desired outcomes by referencing legitimacy claims from larger social fields and to suit different audiences.

The concept of legitimacy links with my definition of accountability, which might reference various legitimacy claims. However, my concept of accountability is narrower than legitimacy, which secures an institution’s or program’s overall authority or right to operate. Rather than a normative or sociological question, accountability is an incentive structure, in which sanctions and rewards – informal or formal, interpersonal or institutional – are weighed and enacted. Success or failure at accountability does not by itself implicate legitimacy. As I detail in chapter 3, even as the Fund “succeeds” in being

accountable to UN Women, its legitimacy – or its right to operate and, especially, garner donor resources – is subtly called into question. At the same time, the movement accountability brought in by external feminist funding experts erodes almost entirely over time. This accountability “failure” has only an indirect legitimacy effect: The Fund loses an external constituency that *might* have vouched for its legitimacy during periods when the Fund’s value and importance in the world of gender equality funding have been under threat.

Whereas legitimacy and authority designate international institutions’ external role in shaping global issues, the Fund’s changing position within UNIFEM/UN Women provides insight into the mechanisms by which international institutions generate compliance and coordination internally. A growing body of research combines ethnographic and textual analysis to get beneath institutions’ rational and bureaucratic surfaces and reveals the impact of emergent politics and interpersonal interaction (e.g. Babb, 2009; Bedford, 2009; Conti, 2011). This research shines light onto the opaque internal workings of international institutions and reveal the at-times messy processes through which new ideas, approaches, and people are fit into existing frameworks or rules.

Here the concept of *institutionalization*, by which I mean the routinization and regularization of practices and norms, is especially useful. I separate this definition from the meaning of “institutionalization” commonly used in NGOization and women’s movement literature, which describes the proliferation and mainstreaming of women’s rights ideas and organizations. Institutionalization is a means by which international institutions generate compliance and coordination internally. It can entail discursive practices, such as fitting new ideas into an agency’s language and framework.

Institutionalization also often manifests in the development of operational procedures, staffing structures, and policies which incorporate a new or different program or idea into part of the larger organization. Analysis of the Fund for Gender Equality, a relatively new modality for UNIFEM and initially staffed by feminist outsiders, sheds light on the ways in which bureaucratic institutions slowly but persistently generate compliance and conformity.

Where institutionalization aims to align agencies internally, the effort to engage with these institutions from the outside also promotes particular kinds of approaches. In her institutional ethnography of the UN's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), Eastwood (2013) argues that NGOs choosing to engage in the IFF are forced to follow the UN's structural and ideological constraints. Martens (2006) further shows that NGO advocacy at international institutions leads NGOs to professionalize and, at the same time, forces these institutions to define and formalize venues for NGO involvement. Those NGOs that get through agencies' gates – receiving funding, joining a consultative committee, or implementing a program – are then harnessed to rules that often result from complex internal structures and the organization's cultivation of authority.

Over the past fifty years, women's movements have worked transnationally to influence global norms related to women's rights. UNIFEM's founding director, Margaret Snyder (2006) describes the agency as the "unlikely godmother" of women's movements, and UN Women's creation is owed in large part to a campaign organized by over 300 women's rights and social justice organizations under the tagline, "Building a United Nations That Really Works for All Women" (GEAR, 2010). Starting with the United Nations' "decade for women" in the 1970s, feminist insiders have played an important role trying to provide avenues for women's movements and women's rights organizations to inform

agencies' strategies and programs (Sandler and Rao, 2012). Nonetheless, feminist critiques note international institutions' long-lasting lack of accountability to women's movements and scarcity of avenues for outsiders to affect development practices (Clark, Fox, & Treakle, eds., 2003; Fierlbeck, 1995; Goetz, 1995; Martens, 2006). They tie failures of development efforts to agencies' constricted ideas of gender equality, which "are inadequate to match the complexity of gender relations and women's and men's lives" (Cornwall, 2008, p. 17).

In addition, pressures from within create bureaucratic hurdles to reforming development practices. A number of scholars have specifically tracked the fate of feminist discourse and expertise within the bureaucracies of international institutions (see Jaquette and Summerfield, eds., 2006). For example, Bedford (2009) follows gender experts at the World Bank as they deliberately depoliticize feminist critiques and tie gender reform to other organizational aims, such as poverty reduction and economic development. In this setting, feminist staff members are "neither insiders nor outsiders, occupying a liminal space that renders their activities marginal and institutionally vulnerable" (p. 65). Bedford argues that the World Bank's persistent assumptions about gender and its bureaucratic structure constrain feminist critiques of gender and limit reform efforts from within. Though international institutions serve as a central locus for global norms, funding, and programing for gender equality, their responsiveness to feminist social change and women's movements' involvement remains limited. In neoinstitutional terms, feminist social change might fail to conform with the field's norms and processes. As such, it is likely to incur social controls such as an "increase in risk, greater cognitive demands, or a reduction in legitimacy and the resources that accompany it" (Lawrence & Shadnam, 2008, p. 2289).

Bringing together insights from the resource mobilization tradition and neoinstitutional analysis, my study sheds light on the institutionalization of women's rights and gender equality within the UN from the inside and offers a window into the grantmaking effects on women's movements. I build on the scarce work on multi-donor trust funds and the internal workings of grantmakers to shed light on the specific encounters that occur within development-led funding for gender equality.

### **III. Looking Ahead**

This dissertation ties together the small, daily actions of institutionally-situated individuals and the allocation of millions of dollars in grant money for gender equality and women's rights. In chapter 3, my institutional ethnography reveals the competing pressures that Fund staff members face as they attempt to bridge feminist funding values with UN rules and politics. I unpack the Fund's dual – and often dueling – accountabilities to women's movements and the institution. In the next chapter, I build on this foundation to understand how different forms of power structure the Fund's grantmaking stages, from application to review to final grant selection. I find that, hidden beneath seemingly consistent grant review processes, the forms of power and who enacts them change as the Fund's institutional accountability increases and its movement accountability diminishes. In my final empirical chapter, I apply quantitative methods (descriptive statistics and regression analysis) to explore the consequences of the Fund's grant review for different kinds of applicants and regions. I link indicators of NGOization to outcomes in the grant process, finding that both the expressed priorities and embedded ideals constrain women's movements access to development resources. In my conclusion, I explore the implications

for how we understand the relationships between funders and movements, institutions and individuals, and feminist social change and development.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methods**

## Methods

I find a mixed methods approach most effective for addressing my research questions. First, I look inside the Fund and ask how its institutional location within UN Women shapes the Fund's grantmaking processes and priorities over time. I then ask how different kinds of actors, from women's movement organizations to governments, fare in the Fund's grant review and what characteristics shape their likelihood to succeed in this high-stakes competition for development financing. Guided by feminist research methodologies and committed to iterating between "numbers" and "stories," I combine qualitative methods (interviews, observation, and documentary analysis) with quantitative analysis (analysis of frequencies, means tests, and ordinal regression analysis) of grants data.

First, I employ an institutional ethnographic approach to look inside the Fund, its institutionalization into UN Women, and its grantmaking practices. Institutional ethnography relies on texts and accounts of people's experiences to explore "the social relations organizing institutions as people participate in them and from their perspectives" (Smith, 2005, p. 225). This approach is highly appropriate for the Fund, where a call for proposals and application form mediate the relationship between the Fund and its applicants, and where technical committees follow written guidance to coordinate their global review of grant applications. Institutional ethnography bridges these core texts with the "social relations of philanthropy" (Ostrander, 1995), in this case the activities related to soliciting, submitting, interpreting, and awarding bids for grant funding. I am particularly attracted to this as a feminist methodology that takes seriously people's different

standpoints, relations to power, and experiences within the bureaucratic structures of the UN.

Like Eastwood's (2013) institutional ethnography of NGOs within UN forestry deliberations, I combine analysis of key texts with interviews. I analyze the Fund's three calls for proposals, through which people around the world interpret the Fund's priorities and requirements. I supplement these texts with internal guidance provided to grant reviewers, as well as relevant FGE and UN Women documents to locate discourses of gender equality and women's rights in which the Fund operates. Next, to understand how text is *activated*, I will use a combination of interviews with people close to and within the Fund and observations from my time at the UN.

Observing the Fund from the inside enables me to uncover the steady bureaucratizing force of policies and practices within the UN; the power of (some) individual actors to shape institutional practices at key moments of organizational change; and forms of resistance, including the Fund's strategic compliance, that both constrain and open possibilities for feminist funding within the UN system.

Second, I use quantitative analysis of grants data to examine to what extent the Fund's grant review process constricts which kinds of actors, actions, and regions are considered strategic for and capable of receiving development funding for gender equality. My data allow me to see beyond funded organizations to which groups the Fund deemed *could* receive funding (i.e. received high scores). As I result, I move beyond the limited scope of resource mobilization research, which focuses only on grant recipients, and explore the characteristics most likely to explain broader trends in who is most likely to access development funding and gender equality grants. I also have data on which groups

were ineligible and for what reason (i.e. which explicit funding criterion they did not meet). This rare vantage point stands to offer significant empirical evidence to the literature about how and which women's rights NGOs access development financing.

Throughout my dissertation, I draw on grants data to illustrate the scope and range of actors present in the grant pool. Then, in chapter 5, I use descriptive statistics, means tests, and ordinal regression analysis to examine the factors that affect actors' success through the grantmaking process. I look at the constellations of factors – such as region, organizational type, level of professionalization, and degree of partnership with state actors – that explain applicants' success through the Fund's grant review. This analysis reveals both how the Fund's requirements and priorities promote characteristics of NGOization and how certain types of applicants are more likely to be anointed (and funded) as gender equality actors within development funding.

a. Feminist Research Methodologies

From my research questions to methods selection to analysis, my work is guided by feminist research methodologies that address the power researchers hold when defining, interpreting, and presenting social issues (Sprague, 2005). I aim to situate my own involvement, both as a researcher and a former staff member of the Fund for Gender Equality. Researching a subject in which I have been involved, I feel a tug of responsibility to those people I know personally and have worried about fairly representing "their" Fund. This concern has led me to intentionally broaden my net of input, detailed in my interview methods below.

I have also engaged in a process of iteration and feedback to refine my analysis and findings. In June 2016, I presented preliminary findings to the Fund for Gender Equality staff, focusing primarily on the effects of the Fund's eligibility requirements (developed in chapters 4 and 5). My goal was to create room for reflection and provide evidence-based and actionable recommendations to align the Fund's goals with its grantmaking process. I also wanted my researcher's distance and insights to contribute back to the participants in my study. Just a day after my presentation, the Fund included my findings in a presentation of their own within UN Women and again in August at a global women's rights conference. The session gave me a sense of where my research resonated and where I need to better develop my analysis. In particular, I took note of contestations among staff, which furthered my analysis about the range of actors engaged in different stages of grant review. I also presented a portion of my discourse analysis at the American Sociological Association (September 2016) and shared my framework for chapter 4's staged model of grantmaking at a workshop with the Bay Area Justice Funders Network (November 2016). Finally, I have maintained ongoing conversations with interview subjects, including to confirm or refine my analysis, and expanded my interview pool as needed to ensure broad representation. The feedback I have gathered through these steps has substantially enriched my project and enabled me to see beyond my own experiences and perspectives.

Finally, my project and methods are shaped by my previous research. In 2010, I completed my master's thesis using grants data from the Fund's 2009-2010 Implementation sub-cycle. Through quantitative analysis - primarily frequencies and other descriptive statistics - I found unintentional consequences of the Fund's requirements and priorities: UN-mandated requirements that NGOs are legally registered differentially

affected groups in Africa, where legal registration might lead to monitoring by hostile governments; and the Fund's "priority review" scoring reflected a significant preference for NGO-government partnerships, a hallmark of NGOization. My thesis provoked many of the questions in my dissertation and pointed toward the potential for more rigorous quantitative analysis. It also raised issues that I was not able to address with the skills or data I had at the time. Reinvigorating my research several years later, I saw the vital need to bring in more of the human side and thus moved from a primarily quantitative study to a mixed methods approach that blended analysis of grants data with an institutional ethnography.

b. Data Overview

As I have described, I entered this project with substantial background and access. In the two years when I worked at the Fund (2009-2011), I led the design and execution of the grantmaking process. During that time, I took extensive field notes, collected founding documents, and gathered grantmaking data. Between 2009 and 2016, I collected an unprecedented dataset of grants data, comprised of:

1. all 3629 grant applications, with organizational budgets, program descriptions, and proposed activities *and* the Fund's scoring of applicants in each stage of grant review for the three grant cycles to date (2009-2010, 2011-2012, and 2015). Applications, which can include formal "lead and colead" partnerships, represent 4289 women's NGOs, mixed-purpose NGOs, and government agencies in more than 120 countries.
2. all of the Fund's public documentation (calls for proposals, application forms, guidance for grant applicants) and the majority of the Fund's internal written grant review guidance.

In addition to the grants data:

3. I conducted 14 in-depth interviews between January and November 2016 with individuals within or close to the Fund; and
4. collected written comments on the Fund's grantmaking from an additional 11 technical committee members.

All data collection adhered to the University of Wisconsin - Madison's Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols. I received approval for my interviews, and the IRB deemed the grants data exempt.

## **I. Data Collection and Analysis**

### **a. Interviews**

Interviews, core to an institutional ethnographic approach, proved fundamental to understanding the actors involved in crafting and implementing the Fund for Gender Equality's grantmaking. I gathered input from a total of 27 individuals through 16 interviews (10 with staff, advisors, or other decision-makers close to the Fund and 6 with technical committee members) and 11 written responses from technical committee. Subjects were based around the world, from New York to Zimbabwe to Serbia, and interviews were primarily conducted in English, with one in Spanish.

Due to the global nature of my interview pool, most interviews (n = 14) took place via Skype calls and two were in-person. Two interviewees consented to our conversations but did not want to be recorded. In these cases I wrote analytic memos following the calls and did not include direct quotes in my findings. I also had informal in-person meetings with four of my interviewees to establish a relationship prior to our calls and/or follow-up on our interviews. Later meetings were made possible by research funding procured after

my initial interview cycle. I did not record these conversations, but took field notes that informed my analysis.

All recorded interviews were transcribed. For my analysis, I reviewed each transcript and/or analytic memo and developed documents for emerging themes based on the text. For example, my review of these transcripts generated my concepts of the “the middle” (chapter 5) and “ownership” (chapter 3). In addition to grouping specific quotes by themes, I tracked *who* spoke and how, to identify trends among the different groups of interview subjects (such as early versus later Fund staff) and ensure that my findings were affirmed by at least two sources.

#### *“Core” Interviews*

First, I employed *purposive sampling* as the most effective way to identify the small and elite group of “core” individuals directly involved with managing grant review and framing the Fund’s vision over time. After reviewing the Fund’s staff lists and speaking with individuals close to the Fund, I reached out to the most relevant current and former members of the Fund’s staff, UNIFEM/UN Women (including leadership), and the Fund’s steering committee. My role as the Fund’s second staff member from 2009 to 2011 gave me essential access to and credibility with several key individuals, including among current and former staff. Both the prior and current Fund managers endorsed my research and, in some instances, provided introductions. All the individuals I contacted agreed to participate, though scheduling proved challenging with several of high-powered public or agency officials.

In all, I conducted *ten unstructured “core interviews”* of 45 and 90 minutes. My sample covered all timeframes of the Fund, from its inception to contemporary operations. The only exception in my coverage was in current UN Women management. Based on interviews and input from insiders at UN Women, I deemed that reaching out to current management could raise questions at an institutional level that might pose threats to the ongoing data and access provided by the Fund. Nonetheless, my core interview subjects provided diverse and well-informed input on management changes and perspectives, supported by public documentation that I have gathered.

After completing and transcribing the bulk of my interviews, I determined that my initial pool did not sufficiently represent UN Women’s fundraising team, which many actors referenced as an important factor in the Fund’s trajectory. I was able to secure an additional unrecorded interview with a former fundraising team member. She had initially agreed to be recorded, but was told by colleagues that she could not because she was not the official point of contact for the Fund internally. We spoke for 30 minutes, and I verified her answers later by email.

Through these core interviews, I mapped the complete grantmaking process, with a focus on which actors participated in *meaning-making* and *decision-making* at different stages. I drew expressly on Smith’s institutional ethnographic approach, looking at how power embeds in the everyday and the ways that text mediates social relations. I aimed to understand how different people within and outside of the Fund and larger institution made meaning of and participated in shaping key documents (such as the call for proposals) and processes (such as the eligibility requirements and grant review) over time. Interview subjects provided diverse and at-times conflicting accounts, and I analyzed both

*what* was said (and not said) and *who* was saying it, i.e. how different actors interpreted and presented the Fund. I built out increasingly well-defined picture of the Fund, its role within UN Women, and the relationship between key texts and practices.

The elite nature of most of my interview subjects influenced my outreach, scheduling, and interview approach (Mikecz, 2012). I accommodated busy and often-changing schedules and even unexpectedly “accompanied” two subjects by phone as they traveled by train and taxi between work obligations. Another interview was interrupted by periodic “urgent” messages from colleagues. These moments tended to throw the conversations off track, but the casualness also led to several off-hand comments that moved us past polished responses.

I was especially attentive to the potential status imbalance and the threat that people so well-versed in political conversations would not provide authentic or deep answers. To address these challenges, I designed my interview introduction to quickly assert my knowledge of the field and the Fund and establish my current positionality as an independent academic researcher with a commitment to rigorous analysis. For those people who I knew only in a professional context or had not previously met, rapport was easily and quickly established through my shared experience with the Fund. However, I found that as I emphasized my methods and launched into questions, the dynamic soon took on more of a researcher-interviewee exchange than a collegial one. Subjects appeared comfortable sharing negative or potentially controversial viewpoints or disapproval for elements of the Fund, even from the early days in which I was involved. In cases where I had pre-existing relationships, I explicitly asked that people describe processes, events, or ideas even if they thought I already knew “the answer,” and I tried to maintain vigilance

where I might assume or take for granted the meaning of a response. I also incorporated “theorizing” questions – “Why do you think that happened?” “Why was that important” – to move beyond familiar discussions and conversations. This approach led to deeper conversations and was especially elucidating with regard to understanding the Fund’s transformations beyond the first two years that I personally observed.

With over half of my core interviewees, I maintained periodic contact and discussed elements of my emerging perspectives after the interviews. Through emails, phone calls, and in-person follow-up meetings, their input enabled me to test and refine my thinking. This was especially case when it came to understanding the Fund’s evolving relationship with UN Women and the different factors that influenced the Fund over time. In these conversations, I made a concerted effort to maintain an analytical and critical approach and sought out different vantage points to inform my analysis.

Confidentiality was a concern for several subjects, particularly around sensitive institutional issues. I have attempted to take this into account in my analysis and writing and have chosen not to describe individual respondents or use pseudonyms. Instead, I rely on the following broad categories to describe core interviewees:

1. Fund staff member;
2. UNIFEM/UN Women management;
3. UNIFEM/UN Women staff member; and
4. Advisor to the Fund.

In cases where confidentiality would not be broached and timing is relevant to my analysis, I note if an individual is an “early” or “later” staff member/advisor. I describe the division in these categories in detail in chapter 3.

### *Technical Committee Interviews*

In addition to my core interviews, I gathered input from *17 technical committee (TC) members*, the external grant reviewers who scored the Fund's eligible proposals in all three grant cycles. Of these TC members, *11 provided written input* and *6 participated in semi-structured interviews* of 35 minutes to an hour via Skype.

I aimed to use a *maximum variability* approach for my sample of technical committee members, seeking diversity in regions, grant cycles, and areas of expertise. After directed outreach to a diverse pool yielded no responses, I emailed *all* TC members for whom I had valid contact information and sent two targeted questions along with an invitation to interview. The Fund for Gender Equality staff provided a supplementary letter that I attached stating that my research was confidential, independent from the Fund, and would have no bearing on current or future engagement with the Fund.

My emails reached 62 total TC members, roughly two-thirds of all the Fund's TC members since 2009, of which 45% responded (including declines to participate) and 27% participated by interview or in writing. My final pool of participants captured the following variation:

- **Regions:** All five grantmaking regions are represented. Three regions were included in interviews: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.
- **Cycles:** All three grant cycles were covered (in both interviews and writing), with at least two TC members who participated in multiple cycles.
- **Expertise:** TC members' backgrounds ranged with respect to thematic focus (economic versus political empowerment), prior grantmaking experience, and grounding in feminist movements and/or development agencies.

A number of TC members participated only once they were assured of their confidentiality, both from the Fund and in my writing. Some TC members noted that they would not want

women's organizations in their countries or regions to know who they were. (The Fund protects TC members' identities in order to avoid external influence or pressure.) Given the large size of the full technical committee across the three grant cycles and the breadth of my outreach, I feel confident that my presentation of interview data does not compromise confidentiality, even when I attribute quotes to TC members from a given region and grant cycle. Where relevant, I include areas of expertise, but omit either region or grant cycle if it is likely to be identifying.

Many TC members had well-established backgrounds international grantmaking or a specific thematic area of women's rights. Indeed, my respondents included some of the world's foremost women's movement leaders, feminist academics, and gender-equality development professionals. Briefly in written responses and more extensively in interviews, they provided expert insight into how the Fund fit within the larger field of funding for women's rights, in addition to their perspectives on the specific grant review.

For written input, I asked the TC members to: 1) identify the Fund's peers; and 2) describe the types of organizations the Fund was best suited to support. While seemingly simple, these questions generated responses that strongly pointed toward two distinct understandings of the Fund's role vis-à-vis women's movements. I explored this dichotomy further in interviews and, from it, generated a schema of the different frames that individuals brought to bear in their grant review (see chapter 3).

For interviews, I focused primarily on how the TC members interpreted and applied the Fund's guidelines. I developed a semi-structured interview guide that enabled me to look for comparisons between respondents from different backgrounds, regions, and cycles. Building off the written responses, I also explored the link between individuals'

expertise and their approaches to the Fund's grantmaking. Several TC members had previously worked for UNIFEM or UN Women and could directly address the Fund's work within larger institutional priorities and changes. These interviews brought to life a central grant review stage, in which the individuals around the world were tasked with scoring and ranking grant proposals according to explicit parameters and, as I discovered, many implicit ideas about grantmaking and gender equality.

The TC members displayed varying degrees of engagement with and knowledge about the Fund. Several TC members had participated in grant review over six years ago, while others had been very recently and actively involved. Among TC members from the first two cycles (2009-2010 and 2011-2012), some people have remained more aware of the Fund than others, either through their own work in women's rights or connections with UN Women. As a result, responses related to the Fund's grantmaking processes ranged in specificity. I took this into account when analyzing responses.

b. Mapping Expertise

To foreground my interviews, I developed a complete picture of who had worked for the Fund since its inception. Staffing offered a vital window into the kinds of skills and backgrounds that informed the Fund's grantmaking over time. To track different forms of expertise, I first created a database of the all staff members from the Fund's founding in 2009. To capture for the full staff pool, I relied on input from current and past staff, Fund publications that listed staff members, and my own knowledge from hiring many of the initial staff members. I generated a list of 24 people who had worked *full-time* for the Fund and either held a permanent position or served as a consultant for a year or more. These

parameters eliminated consultants who provide ancillary support services, but retained those with core functions regardless of their contract type.

Next, I gathered work history information: I reviewed all available LinkedIn profiles (n = 16), referred to interview data that described individuals' background where available, and confirmed cases with two FGE staff members (one current and one former) who were involved in hiring. I then developed five mutually-exclusive categories of expertise which I used to code 24 staff members' work histories:

1. **Feminist Funding:** Three staff members had work histories within international women's-rights and feminist philanthropic organizations. While some of these actors had experience in non-grantmaking organizations, the preponderance of their jobs focused on grants in some capacity. These individuals had no development agency experience prior to joining the Fund.
2. **Women's Organizations (not grants):** This category included three people with work histories in local, national, or international non-governmental or civil-society organizations that specifically addressed women's rights issues but did not focus on grantmaking.
3. **Mixed Women's Rights and Development:** Three individuals had worked both in women's rights organizations *and* in development agencies in some capacity. At the time of this study, no staff member had both feminist funding and development experience.
4. **Development (gender):** Among the Fund, nine staff members had exclusively worked within development agencies, from the UN to bilateral development agencies such as the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation to intergovernmental groups such as the Inter-American Development Bank. To be classified as having a gender component, these staff members had either worked in an agency with a specific gender focus, such as UNIFEM, or held a position that focused on gender.
5. **Development (not gender):** This category refers to the six people who had worked exclusively in development agencies that did not have a gender focus and whose past positions did not appear to have a gender focus.

Overall, the Fund's complete staff includes the expertise areas below:

**Table 2.1. Fund Staff Expertise 2009-2017**

<b>Expertise Category</b>	<b>N</b>
Feminist Funding	3
Women's Organizations (not grants)	3
Mixed Women's Rights and Development	3
Development (gender)	9
Development (not gender)	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

These categories are not static. After working at the Fund, all staff members would have both feminist funding and development experience. However, my interviews affirmed distinct approaches to the Fund's grantmaking based on individuals' prior exposure to feminist principles in philanthropy, women's rights organizing, or development practices. Of note, I did not find substantial differences between those with gender and non-gender development experience. This overlap appeared to be a product of the Fund's gender focus: The Fund managed to attract and hire people with development expertise who believed strongly in advancing gender equality, even if that has not been a central part of their resume prior to joining the Fund.

In my chapter on accountability (chapter 3), I create composite categories based on findings that point to the following relevant divisions among staff perspectives:

1. Women's Rights/Feminist Funding (categories 1 and 2 above);
2. Mixed Women's Rights and Development (category 3); and
3. Development (including gender) (categories 4 and 5).

In that chapter, I explore how these different forms of expertise shape the Fund's accountability to the institution and to women's movements.

c. Documentary Analysis

Following an institutional ethnographic approach, I conducted my interviews and observations in tandem with documentary analysis of the Fund's key texts, primarily the call for proposals and application form. In my interviews, I specifically ask how the different documents were developed: Who was involved? What was contested or assumed? How did different actors understand and act based on the text? Just as I asked these questions with a fresh eye, I aimed to read the calls for proposals and application form as an outsider, to see what they would convey to potential applicants. This gave me a new and important perspective on Fund's discourse, or the ideas and framings underneath the text, and its relationship to the larger fields of gender equality, development, and grantmaking.

First, I placed the documents in context, reading related texts, such as the foundational "project documents" or "ProDocs." ProDocs serve as a sort of internal contract for major UN Women projects and programs. They undergo an internal "PAC" (Project Approval Committee), which reviews and comments on a given project's scope, mandate, and budget. The Fund has undertaken this process twice: initially in 2009, and in a major revision in 2014. I also looked at the Fund's public documents, including brochures, online grantee profiles, and a 2016 meta-analysis of impact to date. I reviewed internal documents provided by the Fund, including agency memos related to grant review and grants "dockets" with recommendations and rationale for semifinalist and grantee selection. Finally, I briefly looked at application guidelines, formats, and grant review process documents from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, the Fund's most immediate peer at UN Women, to generate a clear comparison where relevant.

Next, I did a close read of the three calls for proposals. I compared requirements and priorities, looking at the text on its face and considering the requirements in the context of the overall call. As I went, I applied emergent coding to identify themes in the documents. These coalesced around several areas: grantmaking (the Fund as a grantmaker, grantmaking processes); the institutional relationship with UNIFEM/UN Women; “impact” and “results”; policy implementation; and women’s rights frames (including “gender equality,” “activism,” “structural change,” and global norms/commitments). My findings form the basis of chapter 4’s analysis of framing power in the application stage.

In addition to the calls, I analyzed two formative texts: 1) application forms for each sub-cycle; and 2) guidance provided to the technical committee for their grant review and scoring. In both cases, I once again tried to see the wording as either as a grantee or as a TC member might. My readings were not in isolation. For applications, I bounced between the forms and the grants data, comparing categories, understanding how the Fund tracked particular items, and examining how applicants themselves interpreted the different questions. For the TC guidance, my interviews directly informed how I analyzed the text and the varied meanings it could convey.

#### d. Grants Data

Grants data are critical to my methodology. Even where I am not conducting quantitative analysis explicitly, many of my ideas and questions have grown out of looking at the numbers: Who applies? What are the different stages? How are requirements enforced – or not – each cycle? For example, when I ran the numbers and saw such varied rates of declines in each cycle, my surprise at this observation inspired my exploration of

the forms of power that drive eligibility review (chapter 4). Similar “aha” moments have informed my interview questions and shaped how I have understood the implications of the Fund’s priorities.

Through quantitative analysis, the centerpiece of chapter 5, I attempt to explain how different *kinds* of applicants (e.g. the types of organizations, their regions and countries, and their sizes) are likely to fare in this development funding initiative. I am interested in how far each group gets, what causes their ineligibility, and how they are scored. In “Who Applied?” and “Unequal Eligibility” sections, I look at the distribution of different kinds of applicants (e.g. formal lead and colead partnerships) and organizations across cycles and regions. In “Who Applied?” I focus on the different sizes of organizations, including women-led, which I gauge through income and staff-size variables. In “Unequal Eligibility,” I examine how the eligibility stage affects different applicant types and regions, overall and by cycle. I disaggregate by the specific decline types and construct “requirement categories” that group eligibility criteria into three categories that shed light on NGOization in this formidable cut to the applicant pool.

In “The Whole Picture,” I track overall progress through grant review, from submitting a proposal to receiving a grant, and examine the role the technical committee members play as gatekeepers in this process. I first present frequencies to identify trends in the applicant types, organization characteristics, and regions at each stage and in each grant cycle. I then home in on the technical committee stage, using means tests to explore how different regional technical committees score applicants in each cycle. Finally, I bring together my findings through ordinal logistic regression analysis. To triangulate the constellation of factors that affect grant progress, I develop models using the dependent

variable, *stage* - the final grant stage reached by an applicant. For my independent variables, I have attempted to identify likely factors, based on theory and my institutional ethnographic research, that help explain differential access to development resources for gender equality. In the rest of this section, I describe my data and explain how I have coded and indexed the key variables in my descriptive statistics, means tests, and regression analysis.

### *Data Collection*

My task has been to bring together three differently-formatted grant cycle databases, each comprised of up to five different Excel sheets, to create a single unified database that I could then analyze in SPSS. The cleanliness of the charts and tables in this dissertation obscures the many months that went into collecting, cleaning, coding, and cajoling data provided in pieces and over six years from the Fund for Gender Equality. As I have already discussed, access to funders' databases is highly unusual and entirely thanks to a few key individuals within the Fund. I suspect that I would not have been granted later databases, especially for Cycle 3 when I was no longer as personally close to staff at the Fund, without the approval I received in 2010 when both working at the Fund and writing my Master's thesis. In the end, I received the available raw data for all the grant cycles based on the Fund's exports of the grantmaking database. For Cycle 3, the data were more constrained: the Fund's new database allowed for only limited "exports," and though the Fund staff generously discussed working with their database consultants to expand the capabilities, a complete export was not possible at the time of this writing. For that cycle, I have information about the kinds of applicants, their budgets, regions, grant requests, etc.,

as well as the Fund's scoring (including reasons for decline and TC scores), but I lack more detailed narrative information or programmatic details that I have for Cycles 1 and 2.

In addition to the data, I have had innumerable exchanges with two Fund staff members (one past and one current), who have charitably spent many hours answering my questions (such as what particular fields mean or how they were collected or coded by the Fund) and supplying additional documentation for me to ground, extend, or correct my interpretation of these data.

### *Key Variables*

In this section, I explain the key variables that feature throughout my dissertation and feature in chapter 5's quantitative analysis. In Table 2.2, I use \* to denote those variables that apply to both lead and coleads (where applicable) and identify variables for which I only have data on one or two cycles.

**Table 2.2 Key Variables**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>VARIABLE(S)</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>VALUES/DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Grant Stages</b>	Stage	Ordinal	1 = Ineligible 2 = Eligible but no TC 3 = TC Review 4 = Semifinalist 5 = Grantee
	Stage_NEW	Ordinal	1 = Ineligible or No TC 2 = TC Review 3 = Semifinalist or Grantee
<b>TC Scores</b>	TCM_Reviewed	Dummy	1 = Reached TC review
	TCM_Round1_Average	Numeric	Average TC score (0-100)
<b>Region</b>	Region_Coded	Categorical	Africa Arab States Asia & the Pacific Europe & Central Asia Latin America & the Caribbean
	Region_[REGION]	Dummy	Dummy variable for each region

<b>Applicants &amp; Organizations</b>	Led_By	Categorical	Single NGO NGO-NGO Partnership NGO-Gov't Partnership Single Gov't Gov't-Gov't Partnership
	Colead_Has <sup>i ii</sup>	Dummy	1 = Formal lead/colead partnership
	Led_By_DegreesNGO	Ordinal	1= Gov't-Gov't or Single Gov't 2 =NGO-Gov't 3 = NGO-NGO or Single NGO
	Partners_Has <sup>ii</sup>	Dummy	Proposal identifies additional non-colead partners
	*Org_Type	Categorical	[See categories in narrative below]
	*NGO	Dummy	1 = Is an NGO
	*Womens_NGO_NEW	Categorical	Women-Led NGO Unclear (NGO) Not Women-Led NGO Government
	*Womens_NGO_DUMMY	Dummy	1 = Is a women-led NGO 0 = NGO unclear or not-women; or gov't
	*Staff_Size_C1 <sup>i</sup>	Numeric	Total organizational staff size
	*Staff_Size_C1_GROUPED <sup>i</sup>	Categorical	[See categories in narrative]
Lead_Women_Staff_C3 <sup>iii</sup> Lead_Women_Board_C3 <sup>iii</sup>	Numeric	% of staff/board that is women	
<b>Income</b>	*Average_Income	Numeric	Average yearly income based on 3 years of budgets
	*Income_Categories	Categorical	Small: ≤\$50,000 Medium/Small: \$50K-100K Midsize: \$100K-\$500K Medium/Large: \$500K to \$1M Large: \$1M to \$2M Very Large: \$2M to \$10M (gov't only)
<b>NGOization Requirements</b>	Formalization Institutionalism Opportunism	Dummy	Ineligible for reason(s) in given NGOization requirement category [see categories in narrative]
<b>Other</b>	*UN_Partnership <sup>i</sup> *UN_Funding <sup>i</sup>	Dummy	Has partnered with/received funds from UNIFEM in the past
	Language_NOT_English	Dummy	Application submitted in Arabic, French, Spanish, or Russian
	Repeat_C1andC2 <sup>ii</sup>	Dummy	Cycle 2 applicant previously applied in Cycle 1
	Repeat_Combined <sup>iii</sup>	Dummy	Cycle 3 applicant previously applied in Cycle 1 and/or 2
	Country_Granted_C1 <sup>ii iii</sup> Country_Granted_C2 <sup>iii</sup>	Dummy	1 = Applicant county granted in Cycle 1 or 2
* = Separate variables for lead and colead organizations in formal partnerships For variables not present in all three cycles: <sup>i</sup> = Cycle 1; <sup>ii</sup> = Cycle 2; <sup>iii</sup> = Cycle 3			

## Grant Stages

To map the Fund's grantmaking processes and identify the constellation of factors that explains an organization's progression toward accessing development financing, I first derived an invaluable dependent variable, "Stage," for the stage of grant review each applicant reached, i.e. the stage at which an applicant was eliminated. To generate stage, I looked at indicators in each separate database. For example, ineligible groups had a reason listed if they were declined. I inferred whether they reached TC review based on whether they had a TC score. Cycles 2 and 3 included semifinalist scores. For Cycle 1, I had to refer to the Fund's long "semifinalist" docket to generate a list. Finally, I had a separate list of grantees, which I coded by hand.

To generate the *duration* of the grant stages, helpful in understanding the pace and process of each sub-cycle, I referred first to the Fund's calls for proposals. I then filled in gaps by inquiring with Fund staff and/or reviewing subsequent documents, such as internal grant dockets or semifinalist application forms with deadlines. This iteration was necessary to understand the grants process and number of applicants eliminated. For example, I learned that for the fast-paced Arab States grant review, eligibility and TC review occurred simultaneously. For this sub-cycle, the "TC review" stage excludes those groups that were deemed ineligible, even though they technical underwent TC scoring.

Out of these steps, I generated dummy variables for each stage (e.g. Ineligible, TC\_Reviewed, Semifinalist, Grantee) as well as an ordinal variable for "Stage" (1 = Ineligible; 2 = Eligible but no TC; 3 = TC; 4 = Semifinalist; 5 = Grantee). Collating the number of applicants eliminated in each stage required several stages of data compilation. First, I generated cumulative values for each stage. (E.g. Stage = Semifinalist for Cycle 3 =

38, while Grantee = 24. This means there were a total of 62 semifinalists, but only 24 of those were awarded grants.) The cumulative numbers were necessary to show the change in the distribution of each cycle's grant pool by stage.

In addition, I generated "Stage\_NEW," a consolidated variable that grouped stages into three categories: those that never made TC review, those that were eliminated during TC review, and those that moved forward to the semifinalist or grantee stage. Returning to my research questions, this new variable provides less detail than Stage, but is a useful marker of those groups who are most likely to access development funding. With a value of 1, groups are not a match for these grants. Those with a value of 2 (TC review), have been reviewed for quality of fit, but not scored highly enough to advance. Those in the final category all *could* have received a grant – i.e. have sufficient scores of quality and meet all requirements – though final determination of awards includes additional considerations, including internal institutional politics. As described below, I ultimately decided to use Stage\_NEW as the dependent variable for my regression analysis.

## **TC Scores**

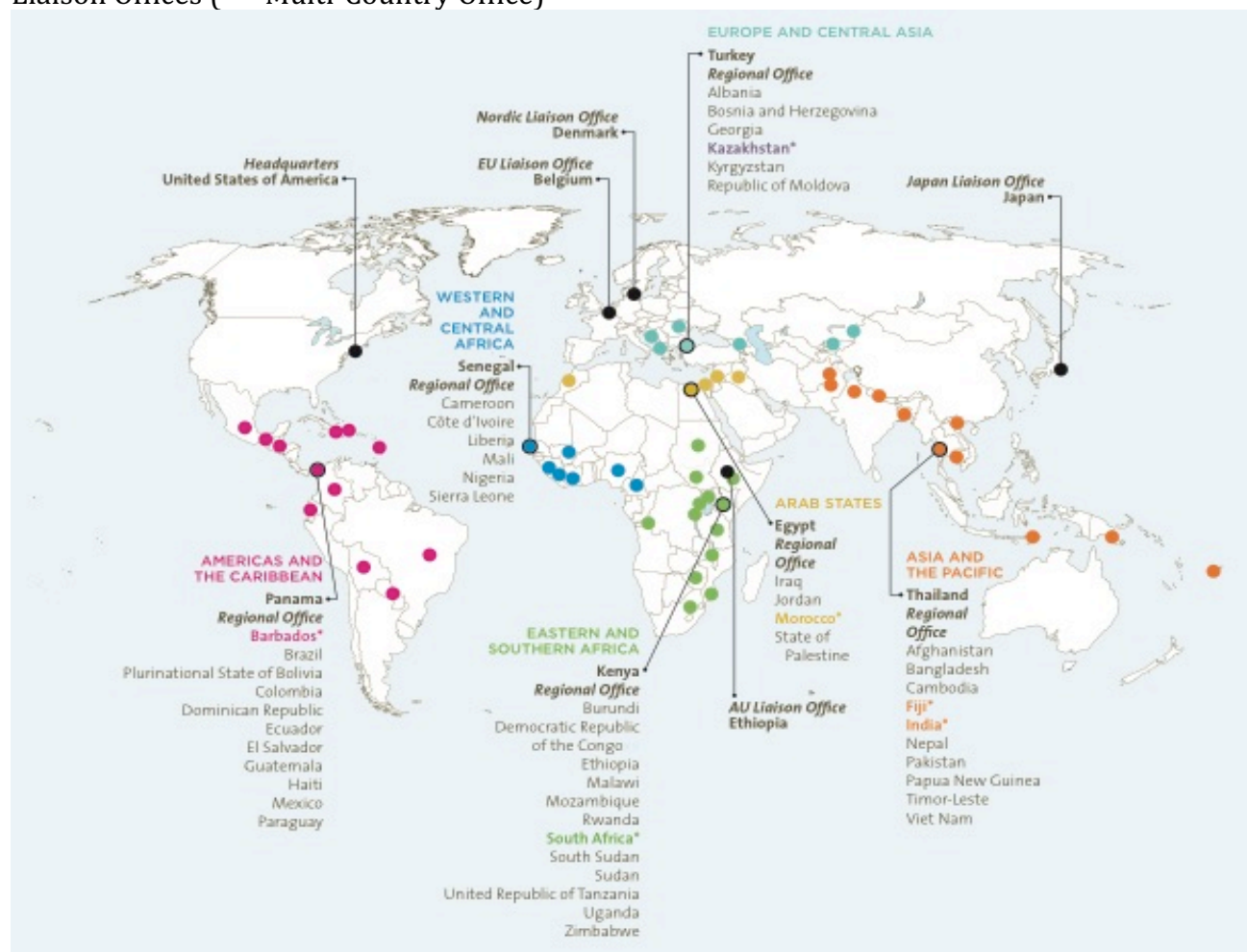
In both my quantitative analysis and my discourse analysis of the technical committee score sheets, I focus on the first round(s) of TC scoring undertaken immediately after the eligibility review. This is the single consistent point of scoring for all applicants that reach TC review. Later rounds apply to top-scored applicants. As a dependent variable, I use "TCM\_Round1\_Average," the average of the two to four TC scores provided in the first round of TC review. All scores are out of 100, blessedly consistent across the three cycles. These scores enable me to look at differences between technical committees by region and

cycle and to inquire more deeply into the relationship between TC scores and final grant selection. I also use the dummy variable, TCM\_Reviewed, to explore whether particular applicant characteristics explain who reaches this pivotal stage.

## Region

Region is a major component of my analysis of how the Fund's requirements and priorities differentially affect actors from distinct contexts. I follow UN Women's regional breakdown, detailed in the map below:

**Image 2.3 UN Women Regions:** Headquarters, Regional, Multi-Country, Country and Liaison Offices (\* = Multi-Country Office)



Source: UN Women Annual Report, 2016, p. 48.

I use a categorical variable, “Region\_Coded” to present distributions for each region:

1. Africa
2. Arab States
3. Asia and the Pacific
4. Europe and Central Asia (formerly called “Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States” during Cycle 1)
5. Latin America and the Caribbean

I use dummy variables for each region to isolate regional effects in my regression analysis.

### **Organizations & Applicants**

In general, my analysis is by *applicant*. This can refer to a single organization or governmental agency *or* a formal “lead” and “colead” partnership. My database consists of 3,629 applicants. I examine applicants’ composition, described below, to look at how various kinds of applicants fare in the grant review. In addition, in some instances, I discuss the discrete *organizations* that apply as either lead or a colead. (Cycles 1 and 2 capture commensurate information for leads and coleads.) Organization-level analysis enables me to identify trends, such as income levels for women-led NGOs, and expands my dataset. Across the complete applicant pool, I have complete information for 4,289 individual organizations or governments. I make it clear when and why I conduct analysis by organization, rather than by applicant.

*Applicant composition*, coded as “Led\_By,” consists of the following categories: 1) single NGO; 2) NGO-NGO partnership; 3) NGO-government partnership; 4) single government; and 5) government-government partnership. I use these categories to present frequencies of different kinds of applicants at various grant stages. For my regression

analysis, I created a new variable “Led\_By\_DegreeNGO” which measures how much applicants are NGOs versus governments: 1= Gov’t-Gov’t or Single Gov’t; 2 =NGO-Gov’t; 3 = NGO-NGO or Single NGO. This provides greater comparability across cycles than Led\_By, as Cycle 3 did not allow any partnerships, and enables me to see if increases toward NGO participation affect progress through the grant cycle. Additionally, for Cycles 1 and 2, I test whether simply having a partnership at all matters, using a dummy variable “Colead\_Has.”

Led\_By categories were provided in the raw data, self-selected by groups in the first section of the application. However, I discovered that applicants interpreted “partnership” in different ways. Many matched the Fund’s definition of applicants with formal colead partners who would also receive grant funds and with whom lead applicants would jointly implement a program. Formal partnerships include the same extensive information about organizations for both leads and coleads. Others selected partnerships when they planned to work with other organizations or governments, but had not entered into a formal agreement. In these cases, “other partners” are entered later in the application forms and tracked differently in each cycle, sometimes specifically named and sometimes just vaguely listed (e.g. “other women’s groups”), leaving a lot of room to interpret what such arrangements would mean. As a result, I choose to identify applicant configurations as formal partnerships *only* if they have lead and colead information. (I conduct separate analysis about when and if groups identify other partners at all, using dummy variable, Partners\_Has, for such non-colead partners are in my regression analysis. These data are available only for Cycles 1 and 2.)

To more precisely hone the nature of applicants, I disaggregate the *organization types* of each lead and colead (if applicable). This includes asking whether an organization

is an NGO or government (dummy variable “NGO”) and exploring the detailed list of possible organization types (“Org\_Type”), detailed below. In addition, one of the key vectors of interest for me is whether or not women’s movement organizations are among the applicant pool. Though I cannot infer movement participation from my data, I can isolate those organizations that are women-led, though with some challenges.

In each application, the Fund provides a list of organization (NGO/CSO) and government types from which applicants can select one for each lead and co-lead organization. These lists are different for each cycle. Cycles 1 and 2 have similar government types, and Cycles 2 and 3 have similar organization types. (Governments were not eligible in Cycle 3.) From these lists, I generated the unified code list in Table 2.4.

The majority of categories have very little representation. For example, except for the broad categories of “women-led NGO,” “women’s national NGO,” and “NGO (not women-specific),” no category represents more than 5% of organizations in a given cycle. As such, I conclude that the category varieties among women’s NGOs and governments are not sufficiently defined or differentiated to serve as useful breakdowns for my analysis. Moreover, they are not exhaustive, with a number of organization types not represented.

Instead, I developed a new composite variable, `Womens_NGO`, with four categories: 1) women-led NGOs; 2) NGOs that are not women-led; 3) NGOs where leadership is unclear; 4) and governments.

**Table 2.4 Organization Types**

#	Organization Type	Women-Led NGO?	Original Categories	
Organizations			Cycle 1	Cycles 2 & 3
1	Women-Led NGO	Yes	Women-led NGO	Women's Community-based organization; Other Type of Women's NGO/CSO***
2	Women's National NGO	Yes		Women's National NGO
3	Women's Regional NGO	Yes		Women's Regional NGO
4	Women's Network/Coalition	Yes	Network/Coalition*	Women's Network/Coalition
5	Women's Fund	Yes	Women's Fund/Human Rights Foundation*	Women's Fund
6	Women's Union/Cooperative	Yes	Women's Cooperative	Women's Union or Labor Association
7	Women's Agricultural Cooperative or Association	Yes		Women's Agricultural Cooperative or Association
8	NGO (not women-specific)	Varies - Coded by Hand	NGO (mixed organization), Membership Association, Union or Workers' NGO (non-union), Other (CIV SOC), Women's Fund/Human Rights Foundation,** Network/Coalition**	
9	Academic/Research Center	No	Academic/Research Center	
10	International/Regional Organization (not women-specific)	Varies - Coded by Hand	International and/or Regional Organization <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Governments</b>			<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>Cycle 2</b>
11	Secretariat for Women's Affairs	No	Secretariat for Women's Affairs	Secretariat of Women's Affairs
12	Municipal Government	No	Municipality	Municipality
13	State/Provincial Government	No	State/Provincial Government	State/Provincial Government
14	Federal Government	No	Federal Government	Federal government
15	Autonomous Government	No	Autonomous Government	Autonomous Government
16	Ministry	No	Ministry of	Ministry (Specify)
17	Other Government	No	Other (GOV'T), Regional inter-governmental organization, Parliament/Legislative Assembly, Presidential Commission, Electoral Commission	An individual government agency (not otherwise specified)
* = Women-led when hand coded as women's NGO ** = Not women-led when hand-coded as not women's NGO *** = Note: Cycle 2 reads "Other Type of Women's NGO"; Cycle 3 is "Other Type of CSO" but the database codes these as "Other Type of Women's CSO"				

For recoding, I automatically coded some cases as women-led NGOs (“yes” in the table above), and others required further digging, and each cycle required several steps to ensure accuracy of these codes. First, a number of Cycle 1 organizations categories do not clearly stipulate if a group is women-led (e.g. “Network/Coalition” or “Other (CIV SOC)”). For organizations in these categories, I reviewed the organization names by hand and was able to move approximately 50 organizations into either women-led or not women-led categories, based on my own knowledge of the organizations, organization names with references to women or women’s rights in the title, and, in some cases, review of groups’ websites. A total of 149 lead organizations and 51 co-leads remained “unclear”.

In Cycles 2 and 3, the Fund’s application format presupposes that all NGOs and CSOs are women-led. (The database export contributes to this in Cycle 3: though applicants could select “Other Type of CSO” in the application format, in the Fund’s backend database and my export, they are coded as “Other Types of Women’s CSO.”) However, in these same cycles, groups are eliminated based on being *not* women-led. I created a new variable “Womens\_NGO\_Lead\_NEW” to correct for this presumption. For Cycle 2, I code organizations as *not* women-led if: a) they are NGOs/CSOs; and b) were declined for not being a women’s organization. I moved 100 organizations from the category of women-led to not women-led as result. I conducted the same transformation for coleads. My rationale was that if an applicant was declined as not being a women-led NGO, this would definitely apply to coleads with government leads and mostly likely be the case for NGO-NGO partnerships. Namely, in NGO-NGO partnerships, having just one organization be women-led might have been enough to avoid this decline type. In all, I found just 14 cases of

coleads where, based on the decline criteria, I presumed that they were not women-led NGOs.

For Cycle 3 (only open to single NGOs/CSOs), I coded groups not women-led if they were declined for a) lack of sufficient number of women in leadership (“Decline\_WomenCount\_C3”) (148 groups); and/or for being an organization without a sufficient focus on gender or gender equality (Decline\_GenderEqualityFocus\_C3) (154 groups). My reasoning for including the gender equality focus is that it helps identify cases where groups may have a high number of women on staff, but not a gender equality focus. I considered grouping this as “unclear,” but determined that, given my analysis of whether an applicant is a women’s movement organization, this was insufficient to exclude groups entirely. The final breakdown of lead organizations is depicted in the table below.

**Table 2.5 After Recoding Womens\_NGO\_NEW (for Lead Organizations)**

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Women-Led	376	840	1084	2300
Unclear	149	0	0	149
Not Women-Led	570	103	302	975
Government	142	62	0	204
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1237</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>1386</b>	<b>3628</b>

I also found it useful to generate a dummy variable, Womens\_NGO\_Dummy, in which 0 = all NGOs that are unclear or not women-led, as well as governments.

Finally, several cycle-specific variables help me explore variation among organizations, especially women’s NGOs. Cycle 1 captured the total staff size for applying organizations and agencies. I use this numeric variable in my regression analysis for that cycle. However, to more usefully understand the distribution of staff sizes, I created a categorical variable, Staff\_Size\_C1\_GROUPED, with the following ranges (0; 1 to 10; 11 to

25; 26 to 50; 51 to 75; 76 to 100; 101 to 200; 201 to 500; 501 to 1000; 1001+). I developed these groupings based on the distribution of staff sizes, as explained in chapter 5. They prove extremely instructive for understanding how staff size and income (see below) relate and what constitutes a truly “small” organization. In Cycle 3, the Fund gathered data on the percentage of women on staff and on the board. Like staff size, I use this variable for my cycle-specific regression analysis.

### **Income**

Income is the most consistent and useful variable provided in my grants data to measure the size of an organization or agency. All three grant cycles captured applicants’ organizational budgets for the past three years. I consolidated these into Year\_1, Year\_2, and Year\_3 income variables, and generated Average\_Income, or average yearly income for all lead and colead organizations. Raw income data required extensive review and cleaning. Different formatting conventions for currency created some possible errors, most often by a magnitude of 100, and the Fund’s online application did not always automatically “force” a US standard. I found highly unlikely cases, such as a women’s NGO in Senegal with a three-year combined income of \$315 million and a Colombian women’s NGO reporting an annual budget of \$3 billion. Such cases are present in all cycles. Not wanting to compromise the integrity of my data, even where international conventions might suggest moving a decimal point, I instead created a variable, Income\_Unreliable, to identify data unlikely to be accurate. I looked at the type of organization (e.g. NGO versus government) and applied the following parameters to isolate cases that seemed improbable. In all, my income

analysis retains 79.9% of lead organizations' entered incomes (n = 2893) and 73.1% of coleads' (n = 504).

**Table 2.6 Income Exclusion Parameters**

Organization Type	Parameter (for average annual income)	Lead Budgets Excluded (n)	Colead Budgets Excluded (n)
All Applicants	No data entered or "0" entered for all years	296	111
NGOs	Unreliable: >\$5M	216	32
	Likely unreliable: \$2-5M	165	29
Governments	Unreliable: >\$50M	43	10
	Likely unreliable: \$10-50M	16	3
<b>Total Excluded</b>		<b>736</b>	<b>185</b>

For NGOs, I created a cut-off of \$2 million based on my review of staff sizes where available and referring to available data on women's organizations' budgets (see Arutyunova & Clark, 2013). Though *some* NGOs might have annual budgets exceeding \$2 million, I find it highly unlikely that nearly 20% of lead applicants, all based in the Global South, would have such robust budgets. For the remaining large budgets (i.e. over \$1 million, which could still reflect a formatting issue), I maintain some skepticism, but keep this category in my analysis to allow for the possibility of organizations with \$1-2 million budgets. For governments, I similarly observed the frequencies within my dataset, but allowed for more leeway (up to \$10 million), given the range of government agency sizes and the possibility that applicants might enter budgets for entire ministries or arms of government. I feel confident these cutoffs enable more accurate representation of the budgets across my grant pool. I use only "reliable" budgets for leads and coleads.

In order to group annual average income into useful categories, I looked at the overall distributions, then created income brackets of various sizes. The table below

presents detailed frequencies with \$50,000 categories for middle-income amounts, small increments for lower values, and larger increments at the highest levels.

**Table 2.7 Average Income % By Cycle (n = 3397)**

Average Income	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
10K & Under	6.2%	5.5%	7.6%	6.4%
10K to 25K	6.5%	5.5%	6.9%	6.3%
25-50K	9.2%	9.4%	9.4%	9.3%
50-100K	7.3%	10.6%	10.8%	9.3%
100-150K	12.0%	14.1%	13.3%	13.0%
150-200K	7.3%	7.2%	8.4%	7.6%
200-250K	6.2%	7.0%	6.6%	6.5%
250-300K	4.8%	5.8%	4.8%	5.1%
300-350K	4.0%	4.7%	4.3%	4.3%
350-400K	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
400-450K	2.7%	4.0%	2.3%	2.9%
450-500K	3.1%	2.1%	2.6%	2.7%
500-750K	9.8%	7.8%	8.8%	8.9%
750K-1M	4.5%	6.5%	4.4%	5.0%
1-2M	10.0%	6.2%	7.2%	8.0%
2-5M [Govs only]	2.4%	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%
5-10M [Govs only]	1.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

This level of detail enabled me to identify points of concentration and generate five major categories of income size:

1. Small: Incomes under \$50,000
2. Medium/Small: \$50K-100K
3. Midsize: \$100K-\$500K
4. Medium/Large: \$500K to \$1M
5. Large: \$1M to \$2M
6. Very Large: \$2M to \$10 million (gov't only)

Though the medium/small category is a very small range (\$50-100K), Arutyunova and Clark's (2013) mapping of women's movements and my own experience in feminist philanthropy indicate that \$50,000-100,000 is a threshold size for women's rights organizations. Whereas groups under \$50,000 might benefit from small grants, such as

those available from women's funds, funding at levels that would substantively support medium/small groups is less common. In conversations about building the capacity of women's organizations to receive larger monies, this category is the space that often needs to be bridged. As such, I keep it distinct from small and midsized groups. In chapter 5, I use several variables: Average\_Income; grouped frequencies, such as Table 2.6 above; and Income\_Categories, from "small" to "very large."

### **NGOization Requirements**

In addition to understanding general characteristics likely to determine an applicants' success in the Fund's grant review, I am specifically interested in how NGOization might play a part. In my overarching analysis of the grant pool, I use measures such as Led\_By, Womens\_NGO, Income, and different kinds of partnerships to approximate conditions and organizational structures associate with NGOization. I also isolate the eligibility phase, examining how the Fund's criteria might promote factors flagged in NGOization literature. In chapter 5, I develop three categories of ineligibility to disentangle NGOization within who meets the Fund's basic requirements.

1. Formalization: Requirements, such as being legally registered or regularly audited, that promote characteristics of organizational professionalization key to NGOization of women's movements;
2. Institutionalism: Decline categories that do not necessarily reflect on applicants' abilities, but are simply institutional practices or requirements, such as having all attachments in one of the approved languages.
3. Opportunism: Clearly-stated requirements, such as being one of the approved organization types, that applicants most likely *knowingly* (and optimistically) do not fit, but apply anyway.

**Table 2.8 Decline Types in Each NGOization Category**

<b>NGOization Category</b>	<b>Decline Code</b>	<b>Decline Title</b>
Formalization	Decline_EndorsementLetter_C3	Endorsement Letter
	Decline_LegalStatus	Legal Registration
	Decline_Audit	Audit
	Decline_Policy_C1	Law/Policy
Institutionalism	Decline_GrantAmt	Grant Amount
	Decline_Attachments	Attachments
	Decline_DocLang_C3	Attachments (Language)
Opportunism	Decline_Country	Country
	Decline_OrgType_Combined	Organization Type
	Decline_NotWomensOrg_C2	Women-Led
	Decline_WomenCount_C3	Women-Led
	Decline_GenderEqualityFocus_C3	Gender Equality Focus
	Decline_GovMatch	Gov't Match
	Decline_EVAW	EVAW
	Decline_RepeatApp	Repeat Application
	Decline_Grantee_C3	Grantee
Other	Decline_Other	Other
	Decline_No_ReasonGiven	Not Specified

In addition, a small number of applicants are declined for unknown or “other” reasons, according to the database. This includes all of Cycle 1’s catalytic grant applicants (62 ineligible), for which I do not have data specifying decline reasons.

As I detail in chapter 4, Cycle 3 has the greatest number of overall criteria. This carries over into the requirement categories, in which Cycle 3 has the greatest number of criteria in both formalization (3 of 4) and institutionalism (2 of 3). For opportunism, Cycle 2 enforced all of the 4 major decline reasons; Cycle 3 applies three of four only because the government match is not applicable in this cycle. As the Fund increases its number and enforcement of requirements, it does so in each of the three categories I have identified.

**Table 2.9 NGOization Requirement Categories: Criteria & Cycle<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>Cycle 2</b>	<b>Cycle 3</b>
Formalization	Endorsement Letter			X
	Legal Registration	X	X	X
	Audit		X	X
	Law/Policy	X*		
Opportunism	Organization Type	X	X	X
	Gender Focus		X	X
	EVAW	X	X	X
	Gov't Match	X	X	N/A
	<u>Minor Categories**</u>			
	Country	X		X
	Repeat Application		X	
Institutionalism	Grantee		X	X
	Grant Amount	X		
	Attachments		X	X
	Document Language			X

\* = Implementation applicants only

\*\* = Applies to 5 or fewer total declined proposals

With the possibility of multiple decline reasons, the three categories are not mutually exclusive, and an applicant's decline causes might fall into more than one category.

These NGOization categories serve as tool to consolidate the grant cycles' disparate decline types. For example, where Cycle 1 identifies if an organization not an eligible applicant type generally, Cycles 2 and 3 decline categories pinpoint non-women's organizations. Both cases represent what I call "opportunism". All three major categories include at least one decline type from each grant cycle. Table 2.7 shows all the decline types pertinent to each category. In chapter 4, I describe the basis of each decline type more thoroughly; in chapter 5, I provide more detail about the rationale for each NGOization

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<sup>2</sup> Cycle is identified only for criteria *enforced* during the Fund's eligibility review. Chapter 3 details which criteria, the Fund stated in the call for proposals but did not apply during eligibility review. For example, Cycle 1 "required" an endorsement letter and audit, but did not eliminate groups that did not meet these requirements.

category. Importantly, applicants could be declined for multiple reasons and therefore might fit into multiple NGOization categories. I find revealing trends even given the overlap, such as high rates of opportunism among governments, versus formalization, which overwhelmingly affects applicants that include at least one NGO.

### **Additional Variables**

Finally, several additional variables contribute to my evaluation of grant progress. First, I incorporate language in my regional analysis. My Masters thesis indicated different success rates for English-speaking African countries and francophone Africa, and resource mobilization literature suggests that language can serve as a barrier to seeking or securing funding. I am interested what happens when an applicant applies in a non-dominant language (e.g. Francophone Africa) and if there is a difference between English and non-English applicants in majority non-English regions (e.g. Arabic in the Arab States and Russian in Eastern and Central Asia). Rather than code for all five eligible languages and given the vast preponderance of a single non-English language in each region, I created a dummy variable, `Language_NOT_English`.

Second, Cycle 1 captured data on whether applicants had previously partnered with or received any funds from UNIFEM. In my regression analysis for this cycle, I include the dummy variables, `UN_Partnership` and `UN_Funding`, to test whether past engagement with the institution factors into grant-seeking success.

Finally, I include two different variables to look at inter-cycle effects. First, I include “Repeat” as a measure for organizations/agencies that have previously applied as a lead or colead. I use this in my regression analysis to explore whether having submitted a prior

application increases grant progress success. Second, I include *Country\_Granted* to look at any cross-cycle effects of a country have received a grant in a previous cycle. This variable is meant to test whether the Fund is seeking cross-cycle diversity in the countries it selects for its grants. In my regression analysis, this variable enables me to ask if being from a previously granted country reduces the chance of receiving a grant.

### *Means Tests*

My interviews and discourse analysis provide a foundation to understand the Fund's different technical committee compositions and scoring processes. In chapter 5, I build on these findings through means tests for the dependent variable, *TCM\_Round1\_Average*, to explore the relationship between region, cycle, and applicants' TC score. First, I compare the descriptive statistics for the mean TC scores in each cycle. I then present means tests for the five regions in each cycle and include Cohen's *d* coefficient to understand the between-group effect of being of a given category. Cohen's *d* compares two means to assess the size of an effect, in this case the effect on TC score of being in a given region (e.g. Arab States) versus all other regions. Cohen's *d* ranges from small ( $d = .2$ ) to medium (.5) to large (.8) effect sizes. In addition, I explore how eventual grantees are scored in this round, exploring the relationship between TC scores and likelihood of receiving a grant. Like region, I compare means as well as effect size (Cohen's *d*).

### *Regression Analysis*

The final method I employ is regression analysis. I tested several approaches, but settled on an ordinal logistic regression model to test the constellation of factors that

influence grant progress. My dependent variable, Stage\_NEW, tracks the three major review phases for applicants and is most appropriate for an ordinal model. I had originally planned to use the five-step variable, Stage, but found that the small and inconsistent number of semifinalists across the cycles meant the category offered little explanatory value. Even using Stage\_New has some limitations, given the small number of semifinalists and grantees. Because of this, I tested a number of probit logistic regressions using the binary variable, TCM\_Review, for if a group had or had not reached the TC review stage. The parameters were similar in direction and significance to my ordinal models. Because of this finding, I decided to stay with my ordinal test, which better fit my theoretical approach and research questions about overall grant progress.

For my analysis, I look first and foremost at confidence intervals, particularly if they are completely negative or positive. I also observe significance, though consider this a useful but not determinant factor in whether a variable is salient. In my model, I initially ran the regression models with my independent variables as factors. However, for dummy variables, SPSS automatically provides parameter estimates for the zero-value, causing my estimates to be reversed. Instead of reinterpreting the parameters or recoding all my dummy variables, I ran the regressions with variables as covariates. For those with 0, 1 values, these generated the same parameters but with the correct sign.

I developed my models through a three-step process. I first created a basic model for the two key variables of interest that I have identified as most theoretically important: region and organization type. (1) Region is a set of dummy variables for the Fund's five applicant regions: Africa, Arab States, Asia & the Pacific, Europe & Central Asia, and Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC). LAC is omitted from the model. To examine organizational

distinction that is consistent in all three cycles and a relevant division among applicants, I use (2) *Lead\_Womens\_NGO\_DUMMY*, the dummy variable for whether the lead organization is a women-led NGO.

Next, I built out models based on the factors that I expect to further explain grant progress and are consistent and traceable across all three cycles: (3) *Led\_By\_DegreesNGO* (this is omitted in Cycle 3, when all applicants are single NGOs); (4) *Lead\_Income\_Categories*; and (5) *Language\_NOT\_ENG*. These models provided a first window into cycle difference, capturing regional differences and some aspects of organization type (NGO vs. non-NGO, women-led, and organization income), but lacked key areas related to NGOization, such as partnerships.

Lastly, I developed more detailed cycle models. Here, I make use of data that are not consistent across cycles but nonetheless provide insight in my key questions of NGOization and “the middle.” For Cycles 1 and 2, I introduce variables for whether proposals come from a formal partnership (*Colead\_Has*) and if they identify additional informal partners as part of their implementation strategies (*Partners\_Has*). Formal partnerships do not pertain to Cycle 3, when only single organizations could apply, and data on informal partnerships were not available for that round. In Cycle 1, I also test the effects of leads and/or coleads having a track record of past UNIFEM funding (*UN\_Funding\_Combined*) or partnership (*UN\_Partnership\_Combined*). For Cycle 3, I add *Lead\_Women\_Staff\_C3*, the measure of 0-100 of the percentage of women on staff. For Cycles 2 and 3, I introduce variables to explore relationships between cycles: whether an applicant has applied in a previous cycle (*Repeat\_C1andC2* for Cycle 2 and *Repeat\_Combined* for Cycle 3); and if an applicant’s country received a grant in the previous cycle(s).

**Table 2.10 Regression Model Variables**

MODEL	VARIABLE	VALUES/DESCRIPTION
<b>Dependent Variable</b>	Stage_NEW	1 = Ineligible or No TC; 2 = TC Review ; 3 = Semifinalist or Grantee
<b>Basic Model</b> Independent variables for all cycles	Region_ [REGION]	Dummy for each region: Africa; Arab States; Asia & the Pacific; Europe & Central Asia; Latin America & the Caribbean
	Lead_Womens_ NGO_DUMMY	1 = Lead organization is a women-led NGO; 0 = NGO: unclear or not-women; or gov't
	Lead_Income_ Categories	1 = Small: ≤\$50,000 2 = Medium/Small: \$50K-100K 3 = Midsize: \$100K-\$500K 4 = Medium/Large: \$500K to \$1M 5 = Large: \$1M to \$2M 6 = Very Large: \$2M to \$10M (gov't only)
	Language_ NOT_English	1 = Application submitted in Arabic, French, Spanish, or Russian; 0 = English
<b>Cycle Models</b> Applies to 1 or 2 cycles only	Colead_Has <sup>i ii</sup>	1 = Formal lead/colead partnership; 0 = No colead
	Led_By_ DegreesNGO	1= Gov't-Gov't or Single Gov't; 2 =NGO-Gov't; 3 = NGO-NGO or Single NGO
	Partners_Has	Dummy: Proposal identifies additional non-colead partners
	UN_Partnership / UN_Funding	Dummy: Organization has partnered with / received funds from UNIFEM in the past
	Lead_Women_ Staff_C3	% of organizational staff that is women
	Repeat_C1andC2	Dummy: Cycle 2 applicant previously applied in Cycle 1
	Repeat_ Combined	Dummy: Cycle 3 applicant previously applied in Cycle 1 and/or 2
	Country_Granted _C[1 or2]	Dummy: Applicant county granted in Cycle 1 or 2

As with all my methods, my regression analysis directly links with my institutional ethnography. The variables I have identified and the way in which I have coded, analyzed, and interpreted my findings would not have been possible without my deeper understanding of the Fund and the grants data it generated. As a final analytic tactic, my regressions underscore the potential for a mixed methods approach for understanding how grantmakers' explicit and implicit ideals influence the allocation of vital resources.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Accountable to Whom? Liminal Feminists & the Force of Bureaucracy in Development Funding for Gender Equality**

### **Accountable to Whom? Liminal Feminists & the Force of Bureaucracy in Development Funding for Gender Equality**

This is the story of how, why, and with what fissures the Fund for Gender Equality, an audacious experiment in funding women's rights, became an integrated program of UN Women. By tracing the institutionalization of a new model of development funding, I examine how becoming part of a bureaucracy shaped the Fund's feminist aspirations and its accountability to its institution, UN Women, and to women's movements.

Accountability asks the question: To whom do you answer? In this chapter, I consider how bureaucratic processes limit avenues for external actors to hold the Fund for Gender Equality accountable. Whereas most accountability literature centers on observable outcomes and events, I define accountability as being subject to an audience or constituency, *either explicitly or implicitly*, and facing potential rewards or sanctions for a given approach, action, or decision. Using an institutional ethnographic approach, I aim to unpack how different actors within and around the Fund understand and make meaning of their audiences and potential sanctions (Smith, 2005).

I first explore the Fund's initially promising, mostly informal avenues for women's movement actors to provide input into the Fund's structure, decision-making, and goals, which I call *movement accountability*. I then show how a combination of strategic decisions and the accumulation of daily actions taken within the context of a UN bureaucracy progressively focuses the Fund's energy on internal politics and practices, which I call *institutional accountability*. The two forms of accountability at times bleed together, for instance, where social movement activists are UN Women staff or in the case of the Fund's steering committee, which is both internal and external and includes some women's

movement representatives. These accountabilities are not entirely incompatible. Certainly, many people navigate between movement and development spaces. However, the Fund exemplifies tensions between the two and shows that serving a broad external constituency proves an uneven match for ever-present institutional pressures.

A rare Institute for Development Studies (IDS) report from over twenty years ago brings women's human rights into conversations about accountability and development. One contributing author asks, "Do the institutions most influential in determining development strategies deny accountability to women?" (Fierlbeck, 1995, p. 23). In the report's introduction, Goetz answers, "The key to devising strategies to change organizations to enhance their receptivity and accountability to women whether as citizens of the state, participants in development programmes, or staff members in organizations, is to understand the gendered dynamics of decision making and of organizational functioning" (Goetz, 1995, p. 3). This accountability imagines a world in which women, those who the institution might affect directly (both as staff and as "targets" of interventions) or those who might leverage these agencies' enforcement powers for their own civic actions, have access and power to define development agendas. Moreover, the report sees women's input as the link between institutional practices and the ideals of women's rights and gender equality. I take these premises as essential in my analysis: The Fund for Gender Equality's accountability to women changes based on who has the access and power to shape the Fund's vision and internal practices.

No one person charts the Fund's path toward heightened institutional accountability, and no deliberate organizational intention causes the shift. Rather, the Fund for Gender Equality exemplifies a relentless focus on institutional requirements and

factions that erodes early feminist funding ambitions. Centering on the notion of accountability, I show how the Fund pivots its efforts and articulations almost entirely inward toward *institutional accountability* and moves away from *movement accountability*. I chart the development and effects of this consistent pattern across four areas: 1) staffing expertise; 2) UN Women’s “ownership” of the Fund; 3) the technical committee; and 4) the steering committee. The case of the Fund for Gender Equality is not a simple or linear story, but rather an example of the tensions, contentions, and compromises that define the extent to which a feminist politics of accountability is possible within development institutions.

## **I. Origin Story**

To appreciate the trajectory of the Fund for Gender Equality and its competing accountabilities, we must first understand what made it potentially unique as a resource for women’s movements and a new venture for UNIFEM. As I describe in chapter 1, the Fund for Gender Equality grew out of a combination of emergent factors: the rise of feminist-socialists in Spain’s government and, especially, within the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID); multi-donor trust-funds (MDTFs) as an up-and-coming development funding model; and UNIFEM’s eagerness to experiment with multi-million-dollar grants to generate women’s rights gains. It also fit into the field of philanthropy, in which public and private foundations define and make grants for social issues, and especially the emergence of women’s funds that directly supported feminist movements.

In the beginning, the Fund was not imagined as a feminist philanthropic mode. It was *designed to be a grantmaking mechanism of UNIFEM*, all in the context of contemporary

ideas related to gender equality and development: What does it mean to have policies in place for gender equality, but not see real changes for women and girls? How do decades of conventions – CEDAW, Beijing, the MDGs – come to bear on women’s rights? How can development agencies facilitate better coordination between aid donors, governments, and civil society? Amidst these questions, both Spain and UNIFEM saw the Fund as a political intervention that, albeit experimental, would improve, not disrupt, contemporary development cooperation and would strengthen government-civil society partnerships.

At the same time, a number of factors generated a sense that this fund was not *just* a development program. Spain’s presence in women’s movement spaces gave activists a voice in the earliest vision of the Fund. UNIFEM itself also boasted a long-time relationship with women’s movements, sometimes adversarial, sometimes collaborative, that set it apart from other UN institutions (Snyder, 2006). In addition, the Fund entered the scene shortly after the Dutch government’s MDG3 Fund granted out EUR 70 million in 2008. The MDG3 Fund grantee listed contained a majority of women’s organizations, including women’s funds, and built anticipation that development funding could become a more reliable source of large-scale resources for women’s rights and even feminist organizations.

The connection to women’s movements only grew when UNIFEM selected a manager with strong feminist funding credentials. Starting in June 2009, the first manager came from outside the development world and entered with more than fifteen years’ experience in global feminist and social change grantmaking. She was tasked with quickly creating infrastructure, hiring staff, and establishing grant review systems in order to make the first grants in just six months. This deadline was driven, in part, by UNIFEM’s “deliverability rate,” or balance of income versus expenses. The deliverability rate was

reported annually to an executive board housed at the United Nations Development Programme and could affect fundraising efforts in which donors wanted proof of the agency's needs and its ability to distribute resources efficiently. Having received Spain's monies in 2008 and wanting to get some money out the door, UNIFEM set December 31, 2009, the end of its fiscal year, as the deadline for the first grants.

Under pressure to ramp up quickly, the manager hired people from within her women's funds networks. In its first year, the Fund's staff was comprised almost entirely of people with expertise in international women's rights grantmaking and little to no experience in development agencies. Early Fund staff entered with skepticism about the institution and thought of themselves as outsiders on a mission. Set within (and often against) a system whose rules and organizational structures were foreign to them, they attempted to fit a feminist funding model into the development setting they were traversing for the first time. The Fund's well-resourced mandate and short funding deadline created a rare window in which feminist philanthropic models influenced the Fund to a much greater extent than UNIFEM's own development priorities or multi-donor trust funds. Here, as the Fund moved from idea to implementation, the first tensions between movement and institutional accountability began.

The core team did not by any means operate alone. UNIFEM's Executive Director, a Spanish academic whose arrival paralleled the establishment of the Fund, and, to a much larger extent, the Deputy Director of Programs, oversaw, approved, and shaped the workings of the Fund. The steering committee included several active members, who, along with representatives from AECID, provided input and influence, particularly around approval of the first call for proposals and requirements for applicants to be deemed

eligible. Despite this oversight, the sheer magnitude of the task – delivering millions of dollars in grants in a matter months – necessitated a substantial amount of autonomy that the Fund team used to establish a new grantmaking structure entirely.

As it prepared for the first grant cycle, the Fund expressly incorporated feminist funding practices. The core team members worked up to 80 hours a week for months on end to create a grantmaking program they – and the women’s movements they imagined as their real audience – could stand behind. Staff members extolled principles they saw as core to feminist grantmaking, including: fair and context-based grant review by regional feminist experts; direct grants to women’s movement organizations; and a non-directive approach in which applicants defined their own issues and solutions related to gender equality. To increase accessibility, the Fund produced all of its application guidance materials, including the Call for Proposals, Concept Note application, and website in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish). This level of accessibility considerably increased the diversity of the applicant pool and enabled applicants to describe their work in their own languages. In contrast, applicants to the MDG3 Fund submitted proposals in Dutch or English. The Fund’s approach followed in the footsteps of other feminist foundations and responded to critiques that language requirements and an emphasis on professionalized English created a significant barrier for women’s organizations’ access to international resources (Duschinsky, 2009).

The sense of being on the outside was exacerbated by the fact that UNIFEM generally practiced a program implementation approach. In this approach, the agency decides to embark on a project and might enlist organizations or consultants on the ground to implement a part or all of it. Though resources go to the implementing partners,

including women's NGOs, the project parameters must further UNIFEM's goals. Program implementation was therefore much more directed than feminist grantmaking and kept a much higher percentage of resources within the agency. The agency's policies were designed for program implementation and joint programming, not grants, particularly of the size of the Fund for Gender Equality's. (The Fund's most immediate peer, the interagency UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, a grant program housed at UNIFEM, had used an implementation-based contract for thirteen years.)

The combination of skepticism, outsidership, and commitment to feminist philanthropic principles became manifest in the Fund's initial systems and requirements. For example, the Fund's manager worked behind the scenes with a few close contacts within Spain's AECID and several steering committee members to establish that the Fund would not provide grants to any UN agencies. This was a major departure from all other multi-donor trust funds at the UN, which made their grants entirely or in part to UN offices. One early staff member described this decision as the "first point of contention" with UNIFEM.

The Fund staff's movement accountability showed clearly in their attempts to create a grant review process that would place decision-making power in the hands of women's movements themselves. The Fund centered a technical committee (TC) of regional experts in gender equality and women's rights, who would score eligible proposals. While the TC approach was not new – and had, in fact, been written into UNIFEM's earliest documents before the manager's arrival – Fund staff established rules that UNIFEM staff members were not allowed to serve on the committee. Agency staff would play only a peripheral role in final grant selection. This starkly diverged from the practices of the UN Trust Fund to

End Violence Against Women and other small regional “basket funds” at UNIFEM, in which agency staff played a large role selecting grants. The “rigorous and competitive assessment by an independent Technical Committee (TC)” would become one of the hallmarks of the Fund’s grantmaking process, reiterated and lauded in public and internal documents alike (FGE Brochure, 2010).

Even technology set the Fund apart within UNIFEM. Citing the need for accessibility for applicants and for global grant reviewer, the Fund’s manager contracted with a technology firm to develop a customized grants database in all five eligible languages. Three months later, the online database enabled applicants to securely submit proposals in their own languages and allowed a large number of reviewers around the world to read and score the original submissions. Feminist values infused even the minutest details of the technology: In exports of the Fund’s backend data, information that no one except a few staff members would ever see, the salutation field was set to a default title “Ms.” as opposed to Mr. or Mrs. or Miss.

The Fund staff did recognize the need to balance their sense of movement accountability, philanthropic principles and UN institutional practices. For example, in the first grant cycle, governments were eligible to apply despite the team’s preference to deliver resources to women’s organizations. However, based on informal advice from the leader of a global feminist organization and through negotiation with the steering committee and Deputy Director, the Fund managed to require that all governments commit some matching funds to their programs in order to be eligible. The Fund also conformed to UNIFEM’s requirement that applicants submit financial audits, a requirement that was not strongly enforced in the first grant cycle, but would become a major cause of elimination

for women's organizations when implemented in subsequent cycles. The Fund staff saw these requirements as a compromise, necessary to operating within the UN and accessing the tens of millions of dollars in development resources. But for UNIFEM, they were important accountability mechanisms and a positive distinction from women's funding model. Even the framing of the Fund's call for proposal read like a compromise. It started with a long preamble about development "harmonization" and "aid effectiveness," but its later definitions of gender equality and empowerment were broad and social-change-oriented.

While many of the Fund's early feminist systems remained in place over ensuing grant cycles, the outsidership of the Fund gradually and inevitably eroded. After the rush to make grants in the first six months, the Fund was no longer a mysterious, isolated project within UNIFEM. Through numerous meetings, emails, and phone calls, Fund staff had become familiar with many of the UNIFEM offices and programs, particularly in the regions or thematic areas related to its mandate, and visa versa. The first round of grants gave shape to the Fund's goals and raised agency-wide questions about how regional and country offices would be involved in managing and reporting on grant programs. Operationally, the Fund began to align itself to agency policies. In particular, developing the grant contracts (formal "agreements" between UNIFEM and each recipient) required close interactions between the Fund and UNIFEM's financial and operations teams. Some of these exchanges became combative, especially when Fund staff wanted the agency to design new policies or adjust long-standing practices (especially in a short span of time). The conflicts highlighted the Fund's departure from the agency's program implementation

model, forced Fund staff to learn the existing rules in order to make proposed changes, and sparked revisions to UNIFEM's contracts and operations guidelines.

Finally, starting in 2010, UN Women began formal institutionalization processes that required all UNIFEM staff and departments prove their value to and alignment with the agency. The Fund, like all other programs, had to make the case that it contributed to the agency's strategic plan and results. The Fund, which had by then spent out \$40 million of its \$65 million in grants, in addition to operational expenses, began to fear that it would lose support and visibility within the new agency. Fund staff, ever more familiar with institutional politics, turned their attention to building alliances, presenting their case, and documenting their impact in order to secure a place within the UN Women's emerging strategic plan, internal priorities, and fundraising strategies.

A new era of alignment and coordination was under way. What began as an experiment – enabled by Spain's political transformation, molded by women's movements, and launched with an unlikely amount of flexibility – would change. *How* it changed points to the power of bureaucratic institutions and the fluctuating locus of accountability.

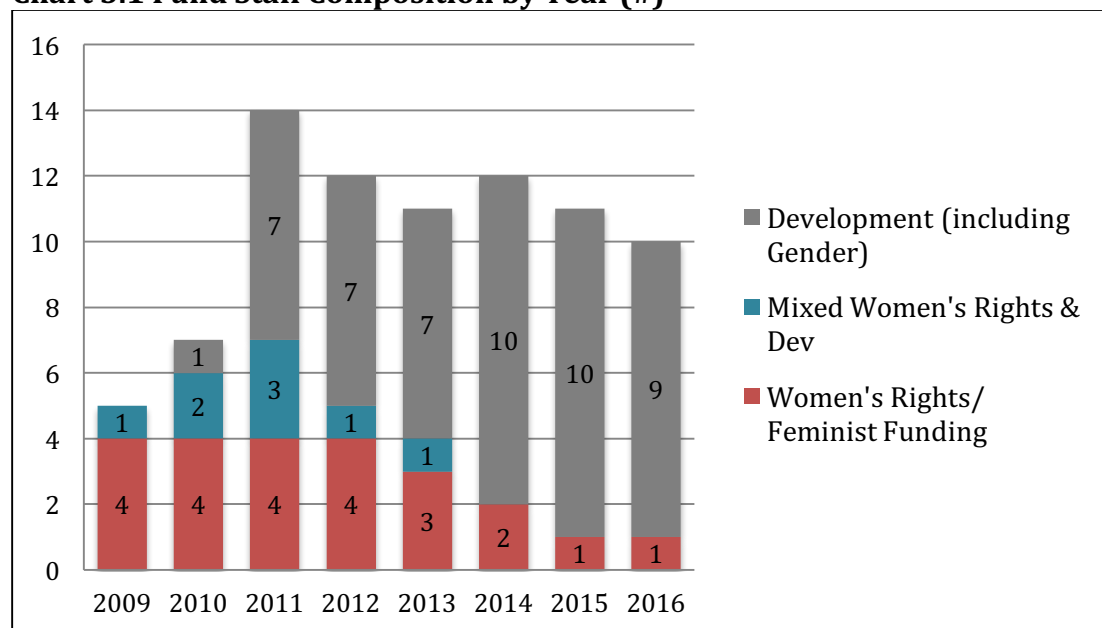
## **II. Findings I: Expertise**

One of the most telling markers of the Fund's transition from an isolated unit to a more integrated UN Women program is the composition of its staff. The people who led the Fund initially brought with them feminist funding practices, ideas, and networks, made possible in part because of the fast-paced and well-funded mandate. However, this team soon expanded and was eventually made up almost entirely of people with strong development backgrounds. Hiring practices changed during this period, from the Fund

manager typically reviewing and selecting candidates, pending final approval from the human resources (HR) department and UNIFEM's deputy director, to an agency panel in which Fund-identified candidates would be vetted by a panel, including the Fund manager or other Fund staff, HR, and at least two other agency staff members. The Fund's hiring increasingly exemplified bureaucratic expertise, with recruitment based on technical knowledge and according to uniform, agency-wide standards. The result was a team of development specialists, not women's movement activists or feminist funding experts, leading the Fund. The trend raises questions about the extent to which feminist outsiders at development agencies, Bedford's "liminal space," can shape bureaucratic institutions from within, and how individuals' personal networks and professional backgrounds influence their sense of accountability.

The chart below shows the staff composition over time, distinguishing three types of expertise:

1. **Feminist Funding and Women's Organizations:** Work histories within international women's-rights and feminist philanthropic organization or local, national, or international non-governmental or civil-society organizations that specifically addressed women's rights issues. These individuals had no development agency experience prior to joining the Fund.
2. **Development (gender and non-gender specific):** Staff members who have exclusively worked within development agencies, from the UN to bilateral development agencies such as the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation to intergovernmental groups such as the Inter-American Development Bank. To be classified as having a gender component, staff members had either worked in an agency with a specific gender focus, such as UNIFEM, or held a position that focused on gender. Non-gender-specific development expertise refers to those who have worked exclusively in development agencies that do not have a gender focus and whose past positions do not have a gender focus.
3. **Mixed Women's Rights and Development:** Individuals who have worked in women's rights organizations *and* in development agencies in some capacity.

**Chart 3.1 Fund Staff Composition by Year (#)**

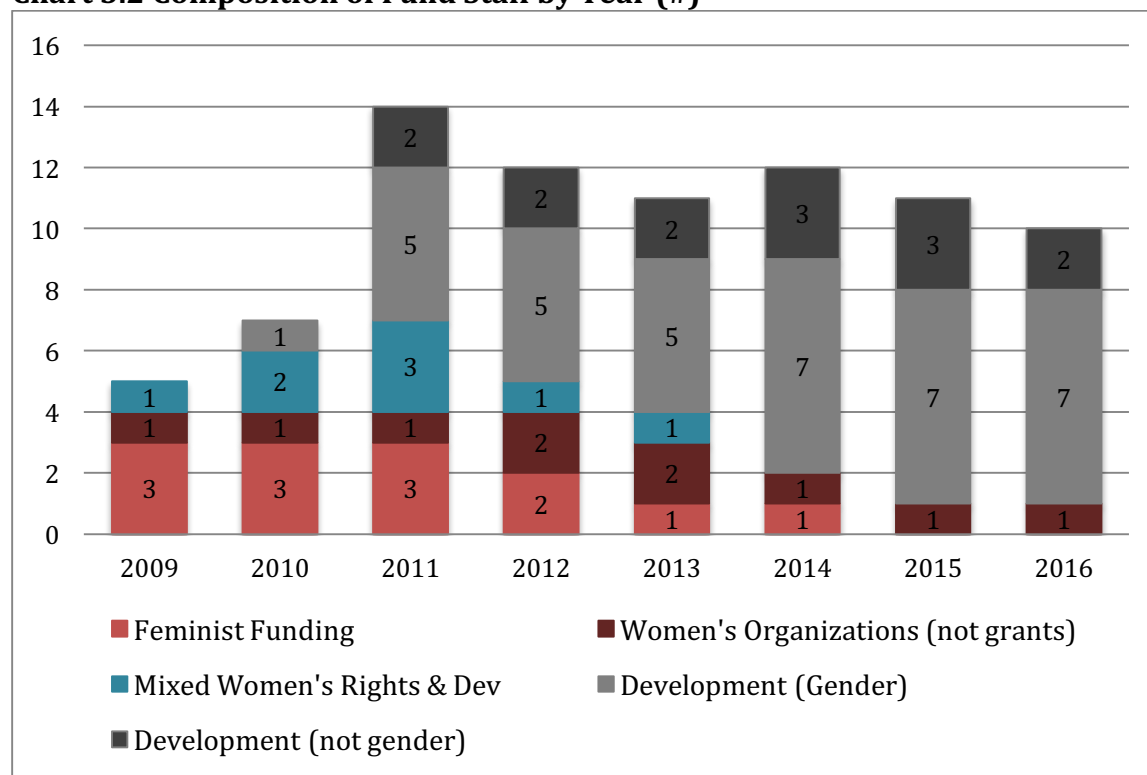
Most striking, the Fund underwent a complete reversal from the percentage of women’s rights and feminist funding staff (80% in 2009) to development staff (90% in 2016). Even under the management of a feminist funding professional from 2009 to 2012, the Fund’s *gradual attrition of people with women’s rights or feminist funding expertise was not replenished with like experience*. From 2010 onward, only two staff members with purely women’s rights backgrounds were hired. The remaining *seventeen* new staff members all had at least some concrete experience working within a development agency setting.

In the rest of this analysis, I refer to two distinct staff periods: “early staff” denotes the staff who started in 2009 and extends, roughly, to early 2011. “Later staff” is the period when development expertise overtakes women’s rights and mixed backgrounds and after the departure of the first manager. This later period is definitely under way by 2013, with some crossover among “early” and “late” staff members between 2011 and 2012.

Disaggregating the categories further, the chart below includes five areas of expertise: feminist funding; women’s organizations (not grants); mixed women’s rights and

development; development with a gender focus; development with no gender focus. Staff members with expertise specifically in feminist funding diminish to zero by the end of 2014. For a Fund touted as one of the world's largest grantmakers for gender equality, it appears that grounding itself in the rich world of women's rights philanthropy was not a hiring priority.

**Chart 3.2 Composition of Fund Staff by Year (#)**



So how did the swing from feminist funding and women's rights professionals to development experts happen? The answer lies in the Fund's competing accountabilities. In the initial urgent phase, UNIFEM managers pressed HR to quickly approve a bevy of consultants needed to get the grant program off the ground. Working with a high level of discretion, Fund staff sought recommendations and connections from within women's funding networks to vet applicants. However, as the Fund became more integrated into UN

Women and especially as it started to hire permanent staff members, its decision were shaped both by bureaucratic hiring process and the recognition that to navigate the institution it would need more development experts on staff. This is not to say Fund leadership stopped caring about women's movement experience. Across all periods, the core staff members involved in hiring easily recalled whether a staff member was a feminist or had a women's rights or philanthropy background. This mattered to them. However, they also described looking for people that could get through the hiring process and serve the Fund's need to fit into UN Women. The combination of strategic hiring choices by Fund managers and a bureaucratic process steered the Fund toward stronger fluency in development practices and away from the field of philanthropy and women's funding models.

a. Hiring in a Bureaucracy

In the Fund's first year, the staff grew from one to five full-time team members, who were supported by a cadre of consultants for short-term or discrete tasks such as translation or technology support.<sup>3</sup> All five core team members had worked primarily outside of development agency settings, and two of them came directly through the Fund manager's feminist funding networks. With the exception of the Fund manager, all full-time staff members were on consulting contracts, though two would later be granted permanent posts. Much like its grantmaking, the Fund's urgency and large pool of money created a

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<sup>3</sup> I use "staff" to denote all permanent positions as well as long-term consultants serving over one year. Despite their contract type, many long-term consultants performed core tasks for the Fund and functioned as staff members. All consultants who worked for less than a year are excluded, which covers mostly classic consultants, such as designers and short-term grant reviewers.

brief period in which UNIFEM's oversight over hiring was limited and many positions (all consultancies) were fast-tracked by the human resources department and UNIFEM management. This would not be the case as the Fund became more integrated, hired more staff into permanent posts, and had fewer unallocated resources to hire consultants.

In May 2010, the Fund hired its second permanent staff member, a deputy manager. The nearly-year-long lag in hiring for a permanent position was due in part to the UN's extensive process for permanent positions. Permanent positions adhered to classic features of bureaucratic recruitment, such as universal standards for each position level, scoring of technical skills and expertise, and efforts to avert nepotism, including cross-departmental panel interviews. UNIFEM thus joined many other UN agencies in notorious overuse of consultant contracts. A 2012 review by the UN's Joint Inspection Unit found an average of over 40% of UN positions held by consultants and cited ongoing UN institutional practices that constrained the hiring of staff:<sup>4</sup>

In most organizations, the number and level of staff posts for each department/office are approved in the programme-budget by the governing body with little flexibility for adjustment during the budget year/biennium... Subject to corporate rules and procedures, the recruitment of staff is a relatively lengthy process that includes, inter alia, advertisement, competition and interview panels. Bringing on board nonstaff personnel, on the other hand, offers more flexibility since there are less procedural requirements... (Terzi, 2012, p. 5).

Even though the Fund had a pre-approved program budget for at least seven permanent positions at headquarters in New York, the heavy requirements and time to fill these positions would have substantially delayed grant delivery. Instead, the Fund filled both core and non-core roles through consultancies in its first year. Consulting contracts

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<sup>4</sup> The report defines "staff" here as permanent, non-contractual posts, though, as the report states, "In the United Nations system, there is no clear definition of staff versus non-staff personnel from the perspective of functions performed or international labour principles" (Terzi, 2012, p. 2).

nonetheless required substantial paperwork and exaggerated vetting through human resources. For example, one world-renowned feminist economist was required to supply a scanned copy of her original college diploma just for a short-term grant reviewer post with the Fund. This was not specific to the Fund, but exemplified the challenges of hiring within a bureaucracy.

Starting in mid-2010, UNIFEM was also undergoing integration into the new consolidated gender agency of UN Women. The specific positions that came out of this period and the individuals selected to fill reflected the Fund's steady transition from an outside entity to a program of UN Women.

As part of this process, all positions were under greater scrutiny, and each program had to provide justifications for their staffing structure. For a Fund on the outside of the agency's core mode of operating, this proved problematic at times, including for hiring. One staff member closely involved with staffing described the effects on the Fund, "There was like a brief period of time when we were like somewhat properly staffed. That was like a blink. Besides that, we were always understaffed." When asked why, she explained, "A lot of times because we had a blocking hire for why they wouldn't let us hire people. [Or] we had the money but they said no because they weren't sure what they wanted to do with us. A lot of that was institutional: UN Women taking so long for the HR process." ("Blocking hire" referred to agency-wide hiring freezes that occurred especially during UN Women's formation, when budget resources and staffing were under review.) As the Fund became more integrated in UN Women, hiring took on more characteristics of bureaucratic recruitment, requiring closer coordination with human resources, greater scrutiny of posts,

and, even at times when funding was sufficient, tensions around where and how the Fund fit within the agency.

The hiring of the deputy manager in May 2010 marked a turning point in the Fund's make-up. Only the second permanent staff member, the deputy entered with a solid background in development, primarily Spain's development agency, AECID. She was assessed through a scored panel process and hired months after the position was posted. Her expertise centered on traditional monitoring and evaluation, a vaunted skill within a development industry increasingly preoccupied with tracking impact and showing results (Merry, 2011). The deputy's arrival signaled the Fund's effort to translate its program into UN Women's emerging results framework and its recognition that to do so required development expertise the staff did not yet possess. The review panel and human resources department readily endorsed the decision.

Soon after the deputy manager, two more permanent positions were filled: a finance specialist, hired from within UNIFEM, and an administrative assistant. Next, the Fund hired a team of five Monitoring and Reporting Specialists (M&Rs), a significant moment in the Fund's institutionalization into UN Women. Hired in summer and fall 2011 under permanent contracts, the M&Rs were the first staff that would be based outside of the New York headquarters. While the on-the-ground presence was meant to support Fund grantees' monitoring and reporting of results, the M&Rs also served to address a perceived lack of coordination between the Fund and UN Women's local offices. Indeed, the first duty in an M&R job posting stated, "Serve as liaison between UN Women Regional Office (RO), Multi-Country (MCO) and Country Offices (CO), thematic sections, and Fund for Gender Equality Secretariat at HQ" (UN Women, 2014). Only after this task did the description

include technical assistance to grantees and support of reporting and evaluation for the Fund.

At this moment in mid-2011, the Fund's staff doubled from seven to fourteen, including the five new regionally-based M&Rs. Through this shift, the Fund moved from a staff heavy with feminist and women's rights backgrounds but little development agency experience to a Fund made up almost entirely of development professionals. Early staff members who left were replaced, in some cases through short- or long-term consultancies, but the overall composition of the staff moved toward permanent posts that required more extensive coordination with human resources and justifications to UN Women management. Approval became more rigid, particularly as the Fund's available money was spent down in grants. The Fund's at-times tenuous position within UN Women meant that support for hiring of staff, even consultants, depended on a changing roster of managers and the agency's overall approach, including periods of hiring freezes.

The promotion of the Fund's second manager in 2012 illustrated the institutional pressures that underpinned hiring of development insiders as opposed to feminist funding experts. A staff member described the new manager: "She's been built in the UN. She knows how to navigate. She doesn't have the powerful voice I want to wish, but she knows how to navigate and she has good instincts, and I think there was no other way." The statement, "*I think there was no other way,*" echoed a prevailing sense within the Fund that survival required institutional development knowledge – even at the expense of philanthropic or women's movement expertise. Initially hired from within UN Women to replace the outgoing deputy manager in early 2012, the manager was appointed interim before finally undergoing the formal selection process for her position. Prior to the Fund, the manager

had spent five years at UN Women and eight years at the Inter-American Development Bank before that. Others in and near the Fund echoed the sentiment that the new manager brought invaluable connections, institutional knowledge, and alliances, but did not carry forward connections of women's movements, feminism, or philanthropy. Interviewees from all periods of the Fund saw the new manager as a response to the growing challenges faced by early feminist funding experts, whose values were core to the Fund's creation but whose lack of development expertise in general and institutional knowledge in particular made them less skilled at gaining support within UN Women.

The unambiguous decline in feminist funding and women's rights expertise did not mean that later staff were entirely inexperienced in grantmaking for gender equality. Several staff members with development expertise joined the Fund having had exposure to other development-led grants projects, though rarely on a large scale or as an exclusive focus. One finance specialist had invaluablely worked with other multi-donor trust funds within the UN system, and another staff member had previously supported database development for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women.

Unlike the technical committee discussed later in this chapter, the division between staff members with development versus feminist backgrounds does not cleanly divide the perspectives held by different individuals. Many of the people with a development background had proficiency specific to gender equality and some articulated a strong commitment to women's rights of feminist principles. Nonetheless, staffing trends over time reveal a steady push toward a development focus. This focus was the product both of strategic hiring choices by the Fund and bureaucratic recruitment that rewarded technical

skills legible to cross-departmental hiring panels, human resources staff, and UN Women managers.

b. Expertise-Informed Accountability

Moving from feminist funding to development expertise subtly but persistently transformed the Fund's sense of accountability, severing its fledgling ties to women's movement actors. Despite a consistent sense among staff from all periods that the Fund subverts traditional development by directly funding women's organizations, two distinct periods of accountability to women's movement actors clearly emerge.

Though almost entirely informal and outside of institutional conversations, the Fund's first year was marked by repeated outreach to, input from, and a *real and imagined* audience of women's rights actors outside the UN. While UNIFEM management and the steering committee linked the Fund's mandate to trends in "aid effectiveness" and "donor harmonization," core staff saw the Fund first and foremost as a resource for women's movements and part of the field of women's funds. The first Fund manager especially tapped into networks she brought with her from nearly two decades in feminist philanthropy. Staff members felt guided by a web of feminist advisors and organizations:

When we brought it in, I mean, our network was so expanded, a different generation... It was the AWID [the Association of Women's Rights in Development] relation, it was the Global Fund [for Women], it was the INWF [International Network of Women's Funds], the women's funds. It was a lot of people that felt so connected. I remember those emails that were so tender. I think if we could have had "GoTo meeting," it would have been so much better because we could have connected facially, but I think with words we were connected... And if you think about the opinions of the feminists, [they] were very akin. There was [sic] never contradictions that were huge. There was like a symphony. There was a wave that was clear, I think, and feminist.

I think if I were to point at what was the biggest strength of the Fund, it was that: the advisors. Right. The biggest strength. Because no person, as smart as feminists can be, can [make all the choices] for the world.

Early staff members regularly refer, unprompted, to specific meetings with women's rights activists and external advisors. Though they gathered input from and reported to UNIFEM colleagues and other trust funds, especially in creating the Fund's infrastructure, team members primarily turned to their personal networks, especially from within women's movements, to help navigate the institution and guide the Fund. One early staff member recalls:

Well, the difference [between the Fund and other UN programs] also is that, as you know, a lot of people were advising us, a lot of people. I remember [a feminist movement leader] saying, "You know, you're too much of a purist, in the sense that you want to do 100% right, and you should aim for like 50 or like even just lower, 70-30. Give...30, you know. Don't fight it all." And I think my mistake was I wanted to do it right and I wanted to do it all.

To do it "right" meant to do it in accordance with feminist philanthropic practices; to "give 30" was to "give in" to development models. The team defined itself through its outsidership and relied on external relationships rather than concentrate on building internal alliances. Several members of the Fund's steering committee played a role in this process, serving as interlocutors between women's movement organizations, the Fund, and UN Women management. Through the technical committee, the Fund staff also intentionally recruited feminist movement experts from each region to be central in selecting grants. I examine the fates of both the steering and technical committees later in this chapter as examples of decreasing external accountability.

Accountability to women's movements was both real and imagined. Fund staff and outside advisors alike felt positively about this as they recollected issues addressed in informal, often after-hours meetings, usually by Skype or phone. Fund staff sought advice

from hiring choices to grant requirements to institutional politics. The ideas generated in these sessions informed the Fund's direction, particularly around navigating the UN system while retaining key values of feminist philanthropy, and infused the team's mission. The *imagined constituency of feminist movements*, drawn from staff members' own experiences and networks and from advisors, was a positive aspect of "outsiderness" that regularly influenced Fund discussions and strategies.

This period was marked by more problematic forms of outsiderness for the staff team: a lack of institutional knowledge and networks, a need for external support-seeking efforts, and difficulties in their specific and general consideration of women's movements. While the Fund regularly referenced and even went to bat for feminist principles, the steering committee served as the only formal mechanism of accountability external to UNIFEM/UN Women. Accountability to women's movements remained informal, with input from a cadre of women's rights activists versed in international feminist philanthropy, development institutions, or particular thematic or regional areas. Though the Fund staff members wanted to do right by their contacts and serve the women's movements they regularly discussed, the only real threats poor accountability to movements posed to the team were relational, such as potential disapproval from advisors, or theoretical, such as failing to live up to their own ideals. No open but formal consultative processes engaged the rich, diverse field of women's movements in the many regions the Fund supported and no structures of reprisal or reward enabled outside actors to hold either the Fund or UNIFEM/UN Women to its promises.

Across the Fund's different teams, the staff remained committed to direct its funding to women's organizations, even in the face of prevailing program implementation models

within UN women. Later staff members regularly refer back to the Fund's initial values, its "heart," and the staff's passion as the guiding principles of the Fund's work. The later team believed genuinely in these ideals, and openly fought to maintain them. Some members of the more development-heavy staff also spoke earnestly about the learning curve of coming from a development background into a fund that they saw as different from other development programs in its dedicated focus on women's organizations.

However, consistencies in the team's values over time mask some of the troubling effects of changing staff. A long-time staff member described these subtle transformations that came with new management, "Some of the ideology remained but after [the first Fund manager] left was much less visible. [The new manager] did not have a background in feminist theory. And so while she understood that the systems had a greater purpose, she didn't feel like she was empowered to kind of keep them or what it meant for the feminist principles." The later period was characterized by this duality, in which staff members saw the Fund as unique and important, but did not have the same sense of accountability to feminist funding principles or women's movement actors.

Though later staff members sometimes invoked ideas of women's movements and, much less frequently, feminism, their actual networks with actors in these fields were limited or nonexistent. References to women's movement or women's organizations were mostly vague, except when speaking about Fund grantees. Indeed, in the later period, "grantees" and "women's movements" or "women's organizations" were often conflated, with almost no references to broader women's movements or women's funding principles and none to specific external advisors, feminist or not. Organizationally, the growing emphasis on grantees made sense; whereas they had been only theoretical in the Fund's

first months, by the third cycle, more than 120 organizations were submitting reports, generating substantive results, and providing feedback to the Fund. The Fund was no longer designing its infrastructure, but rather implementing and refining grantmaking within a highly-regulated institution, a significantly different setting than the time period of the dissolution of UNIFEM and emergence of UN Women in which the Fund was formed. More importantly, staff members had been increasingly hired precisely for their knowledge of the institution, such as the second manager's alliances and institutional savvy. These insiders sought advice from colleagues cultivated over collective decades within UN Women and other UN agencies.

In the later period, the Fund's outsidership derived less from roots in the broad field of funding for women's rights than from being marginalized and criticized within the agency. As more experienced development staff members joined the team, they became more and more attuned to the Fund's uncertain position within the institution. For example, when describing the Fund's decision-making processes, later staff members primarily considered how to communicate with UN Women offices, not women's movements or other funders. This included influential choices such as focusing the third call for proposals on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which some women's rights activists had praised and others critiqued, or the potentially positive decision to accept applications only from women-led organizations. In the next section, I examine the operation, discursive, and material effects of an almost-exclusively internal focus of the awareness of accountability that developed.

Individuals – their networks, ideas, and experiences – set within institutions unmistakably structure the two periods of accountability to women's movements. But

staffing alone does not explain the Fund's increasingly inward-facing sense of accountability and the unrealized potential of initial ties to women's movements and external funding models. For that, I turn to the Fund's institutionalization into UN Women and the powerful force of bureaucracy.

### **III. Findings II: Ownership**

The Fund for Gender Equality's institutionalization comes into sharp focus within the idea of UN Women's "ownership" of the Fund. Ownership is one of the ignominious "buzzwords and fuzzwords" of development discourse, a word readily thrown around but with many different meanings (Cornwall and Eade, eds., 2010). "Ownership" can be external, such as participant engagement in development programs, or internal, including meaningful involvement and buy-in from people within an agency. Ownership carries a sense of belonging: Does a development program *belong* to the women it supports? Does the Fund for Gender Equality *belong* to UN Women? Ownership may not be as inclusive or democratic as the term promises; rather, it is a political process through which (some) actors signal approval of or coordination with a policy or program.

As a concept and process, ownership helps shed light on the consequences of the Fund's increasing institutional accountability. I focus on *internal* ownership, or the ways that different actors within UN Women view the Fund. Fund staff members themselves enlist the term when explaining strategic decisions aimed at fitting into the institutional structure. At the same time, they express ambivalence about relinquishing autonomy and losing the Fund's feminist funding values as they attempt to build buy-in, gain support, and spur the *belief* that the Fund belongs inside UN Women.

During an interview, one former UN Women official asked, “Is [the Fund] still seen as separate from UN Women [by UN Women management]? If so, that would be such a shame.” The questions, even seven years after the Fund’s founding, remain: Does UN Women feel ownership over the Fund? To what extent do different actors in UN Women see the Fund’s grantmaking as central to their goals and practices? Does the Fund staff see its work as part of UN Women, an integration going beyond formal requirements and administrative arrangements, or still imagine itself an “outsider within”? In short: is the Fund for Gender Equality *really* part of the larger institution of UN Women?

On the broadest scale, the answer is, of course, yes. The Fund is located at UN Women headquarters, serves as an official program of the agency, and is described consistently as “*UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality*.” Accounts from within and around the Fund and UN Women suggest a persistently tenuous relationship. In particular, the Fund’s grantmaking model and initially outsider-led feminist philanthropic practices have required ongoing internal advocacy to secure interest, resources, and support. These efforts have yielded some promising signs of ownership, particularly related to the Fund’s operations and structure; these are in part belied by minimal agency support for renewed fundraising. The Fund’s internal focus and continuing effort to generate and re-generate buy-in has occupied significant staff resources and diverted energy that could have been directed externally.

a. Advocating Within

Since its founding, the Fund has contended first and foremost with internal questions about its relevance to UN Women. As one longtime staff member describes, “For

us, oftentimes that battle is internal; it's a show like, 'Look at the value of this fund.' ...We just keep going around in a cycle kind of battle, like it wanes sometimes and then it's like back up again. But it's hard because a lot of our energy is hiding internally." Another staff member states,

I would say it felt, to me, that our internal challenges were always the biggest ones and they continued to be big but they just changed... First, we had like a lot of just basic challenges like we have no computers, we have no offices, we have no staff, we have no one understand what we want to do, we have no one to support us. Then that actually changed. Okay, we have all those things, and people kind of support us but people still don't really know what we do and people want us to do what they want. People want us to give money to who they want, and then people are kind of like, okay, we have the system, but did the Fund really have to exist? Why do we even need the Fund? ...It always had to do with people not understanding the benefits of philanthropy and wanting to allocate the money in what they consider strategic ways, within the UN system.

Input from UN Women staff affirms concerns that the Fund's philanthropic model is not always welcomed by UN Women and helps explain the conditions that have moved the Fund toward internal-facing accountability. Though UN Women staff might perceive the Fund as an important resource for women's organizations, some staff members see grants as separate from UN Women's primary work of program implementation and partnership. Administering the Fund also entails cross-agency tasks that, if considered additional or ancillary, quickly become a burden rather than a regular duty. For example, the resource mobilization team notes that any new monies raised for the Fund require "extra" contract agreements and subsequent management beyond existing agreements. Moreover, as further detailed below, funds raised do not support the agency's core costs.

The relationship between the Fund and UN Women's country and regional offices also raises concerns for Fund staff members. Some offices want more involvement in grant

selection, while others bemoan the additional work that the Fund generates that the institution does not necessarily reward. One Fund staff member explains:

There were a lot of issues of lack of ownership. From [the offices'] side, it's extra work. The money is not really handed to them to manage, so there's a lot of internal politics there, which are very understandable, you know. As a country office, you are judged by your delivery, you know, the size of your budget, so if you don't get your budget to be increased but you are asked to do all this work, you know.

While the Fund provides some money to involved offices and employs its Monitoring and Reporting Specialists (M&Rs) in each region, the duties and time to monitor grant programs often extends past offices' core work. This dynamic exacerbates preexisting strains between UN Women's New York headquarters (HQ) and its increasingly decentralized operations in regional and country offices. As within many bilateral and multilateral agencies, UN Women's local offices garner resources, staff, and political power based on the results they can claim. The Fund, whose grant results are consolidated at the global level, disrupts the budget sizes and impacts that local offices can show as their own.

Finally, UN Women managers have varied in their endorsement of the Fund, from periods of support to mostly-benign neglect to skepticism. The Fund has operated under three different agency executive directors, first UNIFEM's Inés Alberdi, then UN Women's Michelle Bachelet in 2011, followed by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in 2013. Whereas the Fund was dealing directly with UNIFEM's Deputy Director of Programs and occasionally the Executive Director, each UN Women ED brought in their own staff members and, in UN Women's first years, reorganized the institution's hierarchy. Moreover, they have entered with different perspectives on women's rights and gender equality. Describing the two UN Women executive directors to date, a former UN staff member relates:

When Bachelet [the first ED] came and all those UNDP people came in, well, it's absolutely true that any link to the history of women's organizing and to feminism

and to how we understand gender equality and gender justice got broken radically and quickly, and UN Women lost a huge opportunity. And then when Bachelet left and Phumzile [the second ED] came in, Phumzile, I think, has a much more – you know, Phumzile says the word “feminism.” She says, “We have to end patriarchy,” as Bachelet wouldn’t have said that if she, you know, tied her to a bomb that’s about to explode.

Though feminism might be back in style under the current manager, top-level managers, such as the “UNDP people” described above, have been brought in from within the UN system, carrying with them a strong focus on development priorities such as “efficiency” and “transparency.” In this landscape of changing priorities, Fund team members repeatedly express the fear that, without a sense of ownership, UN Women management may not support the fundraising efforts critical to replenishing grant monies and operating expenses, described later in this section.

The cost of addressing the Fund’s belonging has manifested in an ever-increasing flurry of internal communications and ally-building efforts. As a later staff member recalls, “I was told also that we needed to increase the ownership within UN Women, of the process, because essentially we don’t have staff at country level... We had to also adapt a lot in terms of how we communicate internally.” It is hard to fully convey the amount of time and energy UN Women staff members, including at the Fund, spend reading the political winds and attempting to protect their programs. Especially in moments of heightened uncertainty or leadership transitions, a focus on the internal politics –namely, institutional accountability – becomes the abiding driving force behind much of what occurs within the agency. For the Fund, this has meant hours on end drafting memos, presentations, and other internal documents in case they *might* be used to convince a skeptical boss to support the Fund’s ideas or build a potential ally.

When asked whether the Fund has tried to communicate with women's movements and other outside actors, as opposed to internal audiences, an early staff member responds, "The communication piece failed. I mean, like in the advocacy, there was only actually few people... and our work was focused locally and we just didn't do it right. Ha, what time, right? For the advocacy work? ...How could you explain all this complexity to the GEAR [Campaign]?" She laments the time it took to manage the internal, "local" work and concedes that the team lacked the time to build a constituency to publicly advocate for the Fund. As a potential, unrealized target, she cites the GEAR Campaign, which brought together more than 300 women's organizations from around the world to advocate for the establishment of UN Women. I return to the issue of generating such an external constituency, one that might support the Fund's legitimacy, in my analysis of UN Women's resource mobilization below.

Another staffer recalls changes that started around 2012, as the Fund began to seek out allies within the agency:

...We started doing more internal marketing, definitely, like we started having brown bag lunches just for staff, to like educate them about the Fund... There definitely was a big push for internal communications... Actually I spent a ton of time doing that, really like strengthening relationships with communications, making sure the different departments had copies of our grantee descriptions, kind of making sure that the political and economic advisors knew about the grantees within their issue areas.... The more that people know about the Fund, the better it was for us, but then also the better for grantees because they had more resources to pull from.

Together, these quotes highlight the priority that Fund staffers placed on generating ownership within UN Women, even at the expense of links to outside actors such as women's movements.

One of the most resounding findings of my documentary analysis and interviews is the almost complete focus after 2012 on developing communications materials that can be used *within* UN Women and with donors. These materials range from explicitly internal, such as memos about UN Women offices' roles in grant review and confidential information about grant selection, to ostensibly external, such as annual reports, thematic brochures, and evaluation reports. Though on face value many of the Fund's public documents emphasize learning and generating knowledge about women's rights around the world, the staff give resounding precedence to two audiences when developing their "external" documents: donors or potential donors and UN Women itself. The Fund's highly professional design, strong focus on results, and clear visual branding are no accident. Staff members involved in the process are concerned, first and foremost, with proving the Fund's value to UN Women and to donors, rather than contributing knowledge or evidence that might be useful to women's movements. Even when gathering input from within UN Women, the Fund often distributes highly polished text, often complete with design elements. This is especially true when seeking approval from UN Women managers, whose opinions of the Fund can direct fundraising efforts and institutional support. Though they work with colleagues in other departments, Fund staff members are vigilant about projecting a unified image to UN Women that the Fund is important, impact-oriented, and effective. This focus is unsurprising, given the Fund's reliance on the institution for its resources and its competition with other programs to garner political support. This attention to internal dynamics exemplifies institutional accountability and underscores its influence to shape actions in even small, daily ways, such as seeking input on drafts texts.

b. Operational Integration

“I think that we are more aligned now to UN procedures. As I explained to you before, I think that's also the reason why we have been able to survive.” – Fund staff member.

Operational integration is a major component of the regularization and routinization central to institutionalization. In the face of internal pressures to prove value to and coherence with UN Women, the Fund's leaders have been strategic about documenting and formalizing systems in line with UN Women protocols. One staff member proudly described how, as UN Women established agency-wide policies, it incorporated many aspects of the Fund's already UN-compliant operations manuals. This focus on operations, or the practices and policies that guide the Fund's activities, includes areas like financial compliance, reporting, and grantmaking processes. Formal accountability mechanisms have contributed to the process, according to recent staff members: “When we were audited, things have come up that we need to kind of also follow. You are [a] UN Women fund; you have to follow these certain procedures. So those have come out of just assessments or audits.”

The pressure to *become* a UN Women program, both from within the Fund and from UN Women, underscores the fact that the Fund's legitimacy within the agency remains in question and requires active attention. The Fund's attempts at operational integration deliberately address beliefs that undermine belonging in UN Women. One long-time staff member describes:

We really aligned more of our operational and our monitoring, you know, all of those processes more to UN Women's standards... A huge thing was financial reporting. We aligned to UN Women's financial reporting. Our grantees use reports that UN Women's implementing partners use. So, that's super important, especially if the country offices are monitoring those projects, so they don't have to use the

Fund's own templates, but rather they're using the templates of UN Women. That's when they know: "This is a UN Women's project."

Using operational integration, the Fund has attempted to show that, despite using an atypical modality, it is truly part of UN Women. Still, as described above, this integration is only partially successful, and doubts about the Fund's value to the institution remain.

Institutionalization is not just about fitting within UN Women. It also serves as sleight of hand to discourage interference in the Fund's independence. One staff member points to the duality since 2012, "I think we've done a really good job in really being integrated within UN Women but also making sure that we maintain our independence, that we do a process that's transparent, that's accountable, that's a selection process based on the technical process."

Importantly, the emphasis on a "technical process" that is "transparent" and "accountable" contrasts with earlier staff members' description of the process as *feminist, accessible, and movement-led*. These discursive changes mirror changing accountabilities in the Fund's grantmaking. As Fund staff after 2012/2013 attended primarily and often exclusively to institutional dynamics, it leveraged bureaucratic rulemaking to formalize grant process according to agency values such as "transparency" and "accountability." It is not just a matter of wording; these values manifest in processes, such as technical committee recruitment, that prioritizes proving the Fund has open, transparent hiring over ensuring women's movement representation. I examine these effects below. Within the Fund, staff members refine the process and continually seek buy-in from UN Women offices, but rarely reference feminist ideals or women's movements as they articulate the values of the independent, competitive review.

The Fund achieves operational alignment through procedures such as reporting and financial compliance, but also attempts to present itself as aligned in order to protect and preserve aspects of its autonomy. In earlier phases, especially in the Fund's first year, the Fund was often unsuccessful in "real" alignment, not knowing the institution well enough to adhere to its policies and also requiring new agency rules around large-scale grantmaking. During this time, Fund staff made efforts to fit into UNIFEM's standards – or at least make the appearance of fitting – *in order to* protect the feminist funding values it held dear. For example, in meetings with UN staff, the Fund emphasized the technical aspects of its grant review and relied on rules, such as the technical committee review, to show that it followed agency criteria around open competition.

In practice, the technical committee enabled the Fund to bring women's movement actors into grant review. More veritable alignment occurred starting in mid-2010, after the first grant cycle and during UN Women's rule-setting period, as the Fund hired more development experts and began to more clearly understand agency practices. Alignment then catapulted forward with the second manager, initially hired as deputy manager in 2012 and who entered with operational acumen.

The performative aspect of alignment remained in the later period, though centered on providing enough evidence of fit with UN Women that it could retain autonomy in its grant review. *The values here shifted, from shielding feminist funding models to limiting UN Women interference in grant decisions more generally.* In both periods, the Fund spent time and energy trying to fit – and appear to fit – within the agency. Its success, marked by "real" alignment and the appearance of alignment, has shifted as institutional accountability has overtaken early movement accountability.

For example, the fact that grant selection remains centralized at the Fund's headquarters reveals both the success of feminist funders' attempt to formalize a process independent of UN Women *and* maintain at least a semblance of alignment. A former UN Women official recollects the build-up to the current structure:

What [UNIFEM leadership] envisioned was a fund where the administrative work, you know, to some extent, needed to be centralized, right, which would be in New York, and the sub-regional offices would take the lead in defining and managing the selection process and, most importantly, in the follow-up... I think what happened in practice was there was much more that the New York team got much more involved than I would have wanted or that I envisioned.

Seven years later, though some critiques arise from offices about their lack of involvement in grant selection, the Fund's centralized grantmaking process endured intact. Prior to grant cycles, the Fund engages in an informal internal communications campaign, replete with flow charts and timelines, to show UN Women's involvement at each stage. The goal is to build buy-in for the process and reiterate the "transparency" and "accountability" of the grant review. Again, relying on technical rather than political aspects of the process creates a buffer that the Fund has carefully maintained.

For the Fund, institutionalization entails operational integration that likely enabled survival with UN Women. Reflecting on the transition from feminist outsidership to integration, one longtime staff member muses, "In some ways, it didn't matter, like [feminist systems] were there, they still worked, if you're looking at it from a feminist perspective or not, you know." Looking at the technical committee at the end of this chapter, I show that the feminist perspective *does* matter, even as the systems remain in place.

c. Resource Mobilization

“The bottom line is money. I tell you, the bottom line is money.”  
– Fund staff member

While there are many operational effects of the Fund’s uneasy location within UN Women, the biggest cost of the Fund’s insider/outsider position comes down to resources. As one Fund staff member states, “I truly believe that this Fund has an important role, like I truly believe with all my heart and mind. The bottom line is if the Fund doesn't get funded, it's doomed to die.”

Spain’s initial \$65 million donation afforded the Fund its freedom to act but also gave it a fast-turn-around mandate. As a result, Fund staff did not *have to* seek UNIFEM/UN Women’s buy-in and really had little time realistically to do so. But this quick and independent launch left a legacy of isolation with long-term repercussions. After the Fund’s initial grant cycle of \$40 million (2009-2010) had been allocated, Fund staff began to seek new donors to replenish its grant pool. Their mission as they saw it was to maintain the Fund’s new-found role as one of the world’s biggest resources for women’s rights and gender equality work. It is at this point, when the large (and largely outsider) program begins seeking continuing institutional support or at least approval for its fundraising, that the real stakes of ownership became clear to both Fund and UN Women staff.

A number of Fund and UN Women staff point to indifference and at times antipathy to the Fund from UN Women’s resource mobilization (RM) arm. In a May 2009 meeting to discuss the goal and vision of the Fund, a UNIFEM staff member foreboded, “There is a fundamental challenge of sustainability within UNIFEM and in relation to this new Fund. It is clear that the Fund is a different modality, but what is the difference in terms of our own resource mobilization efforts here at UNIFEM and the RM efforts for the Fund?” (PAC Minutes, 2009, p. 4). The response was meager, “Spain is the main actor in reaching out to

other donors... We will look at the way that UNDP, UNICEF and others have managed thematic funds to raise more financial support..." (p. 4).

Especially as UN Women sought to establish its power within the UN hierarchy, the Fund was seen as competition for contributions that could support the agency's ambitious \$500 million annual "core" budget. Core costs fund the majority of UN Women salaries, office expenses, and programs. Those projects considered additional to the core mandate must raise resources above and beyond core funding.

The relationship between the RM department and the Fund has ebbed and flowed, though never flourished. After the first grant cycle, the Fund briefly engaged an outside consultant with a background in women's rights philanthropy to generate a fundraising strategy. However, the Fund's leadership soon found it impossible to implement the suggested strategy due to limited support and collaboration from UN Women leadership and the RM office. Starting around 2011, as the projects that the Fund had supported in the first grant round began to generate more concrete results, the UN Women offices responsible for RM and communications began to incorporate Fund grantees into field visits, publications, and donor outreach. As these offices recognized the Fund as having an impact in specific sites, greater integration of grantees in UN Women's reporting on thematic and regional impacts followed. Still, the Fund has mostly been left to its own devices to seek funds.

At times, the Fund's efforts were actually undermined and the antagonism between the Fund and UN Women became overt. More than one person recounted a Fund donor meeting at which a high-level UN Women official lauded the Fund's results and then promptly asked that missions, potential donors to the Fund, give to UN Women's core

*instead of to the Fund.* The tensions are more often subtle and technocratic. Former and current RM team members describe assembling its core resources as UN Women's priority and portray the lack of fundraising on behalf of the Fund as a logical and largely apolitical result of this essential focus. However, in an organizational culture where core donations will always be preferred, the lack of strategic and administrative support from the RM team reflects a political calculus. For example, the RM team "focal point," or team member responsible for managing and raising money for the Fund, has responsibility for the Fund because its current donors are already in her country portfolio. This is not a strategic choice that will either advance particular SDGs or expand the donor pool. Although the RM team might bring Fund materials to donor meetings, their presentation emphasizes core support unless the donor countries are specifically interested in some non-core program (an interest expressed, one RM expert says, as a desire to see "more concrete results"). Then the team concludes, "we have to pitch [the Fund] anyway." Targeted fundraising is still largely based on the Fund manager's own outreach, only sometimes with RM team support. This is consistent with other reports that the burden of cultivation falls on the Fund and is only belatedly aided by RM. When asked whether the lack of proactive support inevitably means extinction for the Fund, one team member replied, "I hope not," but did not express any feeling of responsibility for preventing that outcome.

Would the sense of competition over resources have persisted if UN Women had considered the Fund a part of its core programmatic area? Perhaps, but since the Fund's express purpose was to *move money outside of the UN system*, not to build up the capacity of UN Women and its offices, it was inherently in conflict with the agency's implementation model. This conflict very likely shapes UN Women's own strategic considerations about

how it can or should “own” (or not own) the Fund. Not being “owned” has left the Fund vulnerable when less supportive leadership joined UN Women.

The lack of new funding has changed the nature of the Fund from being a vibrant but tenuous experiment to becoming an integrated but often isolated UN Women program. In the absence of external input from movement leaders or connection to other women’s rights funders, this shift has largely taken place without redefining the Fund’s strategic role *within the landscape of funding for women’s movements*. Instead, almost all of the strategy changes have centered on how to locate the Fund within UN Women’s current or forthcoming priorities, a matter of survival.

#### **IV. Findings III: Technical Committee**

The technical committee is the only major form of extra-institutional involvement in the Fund’s grant review. TC members participate in the powerful act of ranking and scoring proposals, and they also provide input back to the Fund about the kinds of areas and issues that should take precedence in a theme or region. The TC is at once internal and external: Members are hired and managed by the Fund during grant review, but they bring expertise from outside of the institution. Across all cycles, the TC is confidential – never publicly stated, but also only shared with a handful of UN Women/UNIFEM staff. As a result, they are not a gateway for broader feedback or external input, nor are they answerable to UN Women offices other than the Fund. Responsible for the single largest substantive cut to the grant pool, the TC mirrors the Fund’s priorities and ideas about gender equality. In this context, the specific TC members, what they believe, and how they are recruited matter.

Like expertise within the Fund, the technical committee reveals a turn from feminist expertise to development experience, particularly under different Fund managers. In the first two grant cycles, the technical committee afforded the Fund a unique hybrid of movement and institutional accountability. On one hand, the Fund used the independence and “rigor” of the TC scoring process to justify its grantmaking process internally. Fund staff spoke repeatedly at agency meetings and presentations about the competitive external grant review and the legitimacy it provided for UNIFEM and the Fund in this new endeavor. In addition, the Fund solicited nominations from within UNIFEM for technical committee members, a means to engage in-country offices and staff at headquarters – without sacrificing the external nature of the grant review. On the other hand, movement accountability came strongly into play in how the Fund intervened in the final technical committee composition.

Having a technical committee review proposals was set long before the Fund manager joined. However, both the tight deadline and the manager’s own networks shaped the TC recruitment process. In late summer of 2009, the Fund manager and UNIFEM’s deputy director of programs gathered nominations from UNIFEM sub-regional directors and thematic advisors. At the same time, the manager also sought input from former colleagues in women’s funding. By early September 2009, the Fund had received nearly 100 names of experts in women’s economic and political empowerment, of which roughly a fifth came from three external advisors – the executive director of a global feminist foundation, a women’s rights activists in Latin America, and a US-based grantmaker with expertise in women’s rights in Africa. Additional names were added verbally in a meeting with UNIFEM leadership and geographic directors and thematic advisors, for a final list of

150 nominations. Meeting attendees discussed each person and rapidly assigned a score of 1-5, leading to 104 top-scoring names. Though no formal scoring guidelines were developed, notes from the meeting suggest a strong endorsement of two characteristics: experience leading a local, national, or regional women's movement organization; or a background in a UN field office (this could include past UNIFEM experience, but current UNIFEM staff members were not eligible to serve on the TC for what the Fund described as a conflict of interest). While many of the UNIFEM-provided nominations centered on development expertise, in the meeting, women's movement experience appears to have bolstered scores and seems to have been a sufficient qualification on its own. The highest scores went to the people who were most familiar with women's rights organizations in a country or region, whether due to development or activist experience.

The top-scored list formed the basis of the Fund's recruitment, but Fund staff observed discretion in the order and priority of their outreach to candidates. On the Fund's team, the emphasis on feminist activists was clear, as one staff member described: "...The feminist movement is so connected. Why wouldn't we leverage them? Why wouldn't we put them [on the TC]? Maybe, hopefully, I mean hopefully criteria for choosing them is like feminist activist or something like that as obvious." Where gaps remained, such as too few TC members in a region, Fund staff filled the spaces. (Though the UNIFEM-generated list was long, the short timeline and high volume of applications made joining the TC untenable for many.) In addition, Fund staff did their own vetting of potential TC members before and after the UNIFEM meeting. The same staff member recalled:

[A leader of a global women's rights group] was a key person advising [us] on all the regions. "So... who are the biggest voices in Eastern Europe?" for example. And of course, in Eastern Europe, who did we ask? We asked... the people that are in our women's funds network. Those who are the ones that led us. But [the women's

rights leader]... was the person that would say, "This is a radical voice, this is not – be careful with that."

Drawing from the UNIFEM-reviewed list, but also supplementing with their own contacts, the Fund staff members managed to hire a total of 39 regionally-based technical committee members. Under the pressure of a fast-approaching grants deadline, the final list was circulated to UNIFEM officers, but not revisited internally.

In the Fund's second grant cycle in 2011-2012, under the first Fund manager, the TC remained largely intact. The recruitment of additional TC members, for instance for the expanded and targeted call for proposals from the Arab States, underwent a similar process to Cycle 1. UN Women staff (UNIFEM was, by then, fully absorbed into the new agency) provided suggestions, which the Fund similarly vetted through their own feminist funding networks. Renewing the same TC reduced the administrative headache of gathering HR paperwork, but also enabled the Fund to maintain the centrality of women's movement actors in the grant review. The Fund's institutionalization into UN Women helped. By embedding an external, independent TC in the Fund's standard grantmaking processes, the composition was protected from scrutiny or involvement.

In 2015, under a new manager and with a staff of over 90% development expertise, the Fund majorly altered the technical committee process. A staff member involved in the new system described the change:

In the past, it was a pool of people that I think had been basically suggested from different parts of the organization, "All these are great experts in Latin America, Africa," and somehow there had been a gathering of people that were selected for this. We did a completely open recruitment process and we advertised it online. It was a consultancy. So we advertised for 50 people. We hired 50 consultants, 10 for each region, and it was an open process. We received 300 CVs.

And the selection of the CVs, what we did – because, okay, yes, it's an open process but then again internally some people might say, "How did you select these people?"

Because there were so many CVs, we had 21 people from UN Women evaluating, so we were scoring the CVs. But it was not just FGE staff. It was one FGE staff and one of the UN Women staff, and there were people from – all the regions participated, from the policy unit and from the program unit and also the civil society unit. So we made sure that basically whatever score came out and how we ranked the people selected was done literally with everyone’s contributions, so it wasn’t up to us to select.

So that pool of technical committee members, I think, has been seen now as a very unquestionable strength and independent mechanism that we’ve used.

In contrast to the haphazard scoring of TC nominations in Cycle 1, in Cycle 3, UN Women and FGE staff scored applicants 1-10 based on four areas of expertise:

1. To what extent is the candidate an expert in gender equality and women’s empowerment?
2. To what extent is the candidate an expert in one of the 5 regions of equality and women’s empowerment? [Global expertise was assessed for those with expertise in at least 3 regions]
3. To what extent is the candidate an expert in economic or political empowerment?
4. To what extent is the candidate an expert in CSO programmes and will be able to assess the quality of a CSO project proposal?
5. To what extent is the candidate an expert in CSO programmes and will be able to assess the quality of a CSO project proposal? (FGE, 2015, p. 2).

The final criterion *could* be read as expertise in women’s organizations. Indeed, a staff member who helped develop the scoring sheets described the importance of finding TC members who, “...actually knew, had worked with NGOs, knew their constraints, understands really how they go about designing a program on the ground.” However, when asked whether women’s movement participation or activism was a priority in TC selection, she answered, “It didn’t matter. I mean, we didn’t have that as criteria or something that would exclude them. But we did very clearly talk about conflict of interest with them, and very clearly they had to sign a conflict of interest disclaimer or something, that they would not evaluate any proposals that they had an affiliation with.” Cycle 1 feminist movement

experience was an “obvious” priority; in Cycle 3, it was a supplementary asset at best, a liability at worst.

The new TC recruitment process absolutely reflects changing accountabilities of the Fund. Revamped in Cycle 3 in order to increase transparency, the Fund’s open call for technical committee reviewers, selection criteria, and high attunement to UN Women’s involvement plainly draw from institutional accountability. The result is a very different TC, marked by a majority of reviewers with development agency experience and very little feminist grantmaking expertise. Only two TC members overlap between Cycles 1 and 3. Of note, the few Cycle 3 TC members with feminist movement expertise *also* have development credentials (i.e. have worked with governments or development agencies in the past). It is unclear whether their selection was predicated on these development credentials and/or bolstered by their feminist organizing experiences. Given the preponderance of development professionals in Cycle 3, either women’s movement actors without agency experience did not apply or were not prioritized.

Most poignantly, this change did not *need* to happen. The Fund’s own ideas about what constituted an open and competitive process drove the new recruitment effort. Unlike aligning the Fund with institutional policies, no formal institutionalization process such as those during the formation of UN Women provoked the revision. No specific negotiations with a UN Women office or department led to it. Whereas operational ownership and internal advocacy emerged under both fund managers, the new TC process points to a clear division in early and late Fund staffs’ movement accountability. Development experts themselves, the Fund’s grants management team in 2015 designed a bureaucratic, competitive hiring process. Though staff in both Fund periods used TC recruitments to

build ownership among UNIFEM/UN Women offices, the 2015 team did so without concurrent informal advising from women's movement networks. Cycle 3 staff sought people with "knowledge of CSOs" but lacked the earlier Fund's political investment in feminist movement participation.

a. Changing Frames

The Fund's distinct processes reverberate through the actual composition of the early and late technical committees. I find clear divisions in how TC members *frame* gender equality. Frames are discursive concepts through which individuals and movements make meaning of social issues (McCarthy, Smith, and Zald, 1996). Frames related to women's rights powerfully inform how women's movements, development agencies, and donors understand and intervene in gender equality around the world (Cornwall, Harrison, and Whitehead, eds, 2008; Ferree and Pudrovska, 2006).

Even as they adhere to guidelines and scoring sheets developed by the Fund, TC members invoke two distinct frames: *development* and *feminist funding*. Though I do not have data available to categorize *each* TC member, based on interviews and written input from 14 TC members from across cycles and regions, as well as feedback from Fund staff, the two frames concentrate heavily by cycle: feminist funding is strongly associated with TC members from Cycles 1 and 2, the development frame with Cycle 3.

These frames encompass very different prescriptions for how women's rights should be supported by the Fund for Gender Equality. Despite some diversity *within* each frame, there is little crossover or ambiguity between the two. Technical committee

members themselves may not agree with the starkness of my characterization, particularly those who work in development. Indeed, I myself was struck by the persistence and clarity of this division, which is obscured by both groups' commitment to women's rights, empowerment, and "local" or "community-based" change. However, *what they mean* by these terms and *how they see the Fund's grants contributing* is distinct.

The development camp is comprised of development professionals with ample credentials in gender-related programming, monitoring and evaluation, and consulting, often including for UN agencies. A number of these technical committee members have a strong women's rights focus and, in some cases, are highly knowledgeable about women's organizations in their thematic area and/or region. The majority of these TC members have not conducted prior grant review; those with grantmaking experience have gained it primarily in a development-agency-funding context.

The *development frame* presents women's rights and gender equality in terms of *measurable impacts and results*, emphasizes the need for strong pre-implementation program design, and encourages a high level of involvement from the Fund and/or UN Women. Within this frame, the Fund's grant review process should be directed toward identifying those projects that will have the most impact in the most women's lives. A TC member from Cycle 3 explains, "It's all about results. I'm also a fanatic... about looking at results, the results-based approached through programming, so that we are able to document what looks as results in terms of behavior change, the results in terms of significant change in people's lives."

The definition of impact varies, though consistently includes the assessment that the Fund should emphasize more local or community-based organizations, which, as one

person says, “is where the change is” and another describes as “the real need.” The Fund’s two themes, economic and political empowerment, are generally upheld as viable and important goals, even (and especially) within change on a more local scale. While larger organizations may be strategic to support, this frame separates those that are overly professional and disconnected from women’s lived experiences from those that can serve as a bridge between national policy change and local actors. As one interviewee describes, “It’s a play between making change at the local level and making change at the policy level. When you mix those two, then the fire burns.” (This characterization closely fits with the Fund’s own implicit ideal of “the middle,” explored in chapter 5.)

This frame frequently elevates the need for robust capacity-building efforts. Here, the Fund and UN Women are seen as holding tools and skills that should be used to increase grantees’ (and applicants’) abilities to articulate and track their results and seek additional funding. This capacity-building approach mirrors development agencies’ traditional program implementation/partnership model and is distinct from the feminist funding frame described below.

Some TC members using this frame critique the Fund for not sufficiently funding *women’s rights-based* organizations, as opposed to gender-related programs in more mainstream organizations. One TC questions whether mainstreaming gender into non-women’s-rights organizations is the Fund’s goal. This same person defines women’s-rights-based organizations as expressly focused on issues of gender and led by women themselves, a funding priority echoed by others. While the development frame conveys deep concern for changes in the lives of women and includes some rights-based language, it does not address power or the potential radical aspects of gender equality. This frame

makes no reference to women's rights movements, feminism, or activist organizations, even when those terms are included in written or verbal questions.

When asked to imagine changes to the Fund, the development frame is notably constrained by actors' development focus: only one individual mentions trying alternative practices from philanthropy; "new" issues to fund still fall squarely within economic and political empowerment; and the most prevalent suggestion for changing the Fund's practices is to increase technical assistance, especially through more hands-on involvement by UN Women country and regional offices.

The TC members using the *feminist funding frame* tend to have worked primarily with women's rights organizations, ranging from local to global levels, and include people with backgrounds in philanthropy, academia, and activism. Some of these TC members have worked within development agencies, but none had done so exclusively. These TC members regularly use the words "feminist" and "women's movements" and many have participated in grant review processes, including some for social justice or feminist foundations.

This frame is characterized first and foremost by an emphasis on funding *feminist social change*, with explicit discussion about the difference between supporting mainstream organizations (even within women's rights) and advancing more *political* work. Centrally, gender equality is placed within an analysis of power that cuts across social spheres, from the interpersonal to the institutional. This frame problematizes the Fund's focus on economic and political empowerment (as one person call them, "development issues *par excellence*"), though sees room to maneuver and maintain a political agenda within these themes.

TC members using this frame vary greatly in their understanding of the institutional constraints of funding from within the United Nations: some speak in generalities about funders' effects on women's movements, while others express nuance about the Fund for Gender Equality as a particular development funding model. A rare few people in this frame evince specific knowledge of the internal dynamics between the Fund and UN Women, though several speak to larger changes, such as increasing bureaucratization, as UN Women has become more established.

Even if the feminist funding frame group does not know the intricacies of the institution and its politics, they are well aware of the power dynamics between funders and grantees and attuned to the different (and at times contentious) aspects of grant review. Between the two frames, the divide between what constitutes *grantmaking* (and feminist grantmaking) at its purest form and what constitutes *development funding* (and development practice) is the most acute. The tension hits precisely on the Fund for Gender Equality's early liminality and potential: What is the Fund going to embody and for whom? The increasing preponderance of development experts on the technical committee is a revealing, but not totalizing response.

This frame invokes a call for funding smaller groups similar to the development frame, but the rationale centers on funding more political social change through support of feminist organizations. Rather than see the Fund as the key driver of capacity building, this frame imagines funding models such as smaller, less-cumbersome grants and funding to networks, as strategies to do so. Importantly, this frame is marked by skepticism about several key elements in the development frame: results tracking and indicators, policy advocacy and partnerships with governments, and the role of the funder. For example, a

rare Cycle 3 TC member using the frame critiques the Fund's "added value" points for working with governments, stating, "I think it's okay not to cooperate with the state. I think it's okay to criticize the state, and I think it's okay for UN Women to give money to the organizations to criticize the state, and not to call it advocacy and lobbying, because advocacy and lobbying is something different." In all, these two frames imagine very different roles for development agencies, women's movements, and governments in securing and support gender equality.

b. TC Reflections

Throughout this chapter, I have shown how pressures and tensions within UN Women have pushed the Fund toward greater institutional accountability. Both strategically and out of necessity, the Fund has institutionalized its grantmaking policies and procedures as early as 2010. However, even amidst a predominant internal focus, the TC remained an area of pride and movement accountability for Fund staff through Cycle 2. The erasure of this accountability was not driven by the institution, but by Fund staff members with a keen understanding of internal politics but no roots in women's movements. The TC shows the ripple effects of this change, particularly the impact of individual staff members' networks and perspectives as the Fund changes from a feminist funding team to a staff of development and gender experts. In short, *accountability is institutionally-bound, but shaped by individuals*. The extent to which people can exert power depends on many dynamic factors, which I explore in chapter 4, and can change over time. I specifically examine the power behind the TC's role in grant review and compare the scoring criteria for each cycle. In chapter 5, my quantitative analysis sheds light on the

repercussions of TC composition for which actors are most likely to access development funding grants.

## **V. Findings IV: Steering Committee**

The fate of the Steering Committee (SC) provides a final and compelling example of the Fund's shifting accountabilities. While the technical committee was the primary mode of external input during grant review, the SC served as the single formal mechanism of external accountability for the Fund writ large. Its lack of teeth and eventual dissolution underscore the challenges of holding international institutions accountable and illustrate the nearly complete erasure of links between the Fund and women's movements.

Oversight bodies are standard for multi-donor trust funds, which adhere to a general governance structure of:

- A fund administrator (secretariat), such as a United Nations agency or the World Bank, that manages all administration and coordination of the Fund;
- A policy body (steering committee) that sets the framework for the fund and, under some arrangements, ratifies grant applications. These bodies typically include donor representatives, multilateral representatives, national government authorities, and thematic experts;
- A funding decision-making body (technical review board) that reviews grant applications (Miller, 2012, p. 4).

Who serves on the steering committee and the power they hold varies greatly. For example, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women is governed by a global inter-agency

Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) made up almost entirely of UN agency representatives who play a heavy role in final grant selection.<sup>5</sup>

The Fund for Gender Equality's SC was established by UNIFEM and AECID/DGPOLDE prior to the Fund's launch or the arrival of the first manager. The committee was designed to provide strategic guidance on the overall vision and also ratify final grant decisions. It included delegates from donor countries such as Spain and the Netherlands, women's civil society actors, government officials from the Global South, and development specialists from the UN and World Bank, detailed below.

#### Steering Committee Members 2009-2010

1. Ms. Soraya Rodríguez, Secretary of State for Cooperation, SECI, Spain (co-chair)
2. Ms. Inés Alberdi, Executive Director, UNIFEM (co-chair)
3. Mr. Fredrik Arthur, Ambassador for Gender and Equality, Norway
4. Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Former Member of Parliament in Pakistan and Special Advisor to the Secretary General of UNWTO on Women in Tourism
5. Ms. Mayra Buvinic, Director for Gender and Development, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, World Bank
6. Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
7. Ms. Lucy Garrido, Member of Cotidiano Mujer, Uruguay
8. Ms. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender, Liberia
9. Ms. Otilia Lux de Cotí, Member of Parliament, Guatemala

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<sup>5</sup> The UNTF's 2016 Call for Proposals details: "In 2015, Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) members at the global and regional levels included: the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-Women), United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), regional commissions New York, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Intergovernmental organizations and other experts at the global and field levels – including representatives from the Centre for Women's Global Leadership and Equality Now – were also actively involved in the grant-making process" (p. 3).

10. Ms. Mary Rusimbi, Founder Gender Networking Program, Tanzania
11. HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador and Member of the Royal Family, Jordan
12. Mr. Maxime Verhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

Many official members held high positions in their respective agencies, though were often represented by colleagues who would attend meetings and who were included in Fund correspondence.

Early engagement with women's movements during the visioning period led to the inclusion of several women's activists on the SC, in addition to donors and government delegates from the Fund's major regions. One interviewee called the inclusion of civil society members "different for that time" and part of the Fund's innovation. She notes, "There was definitely a strategy about who would be there beyond the usual suspects." Through 2015, the overall membership never changed significantly, though specific government representatives rotated based on their national appointments and new donors gained a seat at the table.

Despite the intention that went into its membership, the SC's role was not especially well defined, and its actual authority – especially vis-à-vis UNIFEM's – was not spelled out. In theory, the SC would guide the Fund's vision and strategy. The group met once in 2009 to this end, and UNIFEM and the Fund's manager incorporated feedback into what would become the first call for proposals. Despite this engagement, in practice just a few select SC members and their representatives interacted directly with UNIFEM/UN Women leaders and the Fund. Spanish delegates were especially influential as the Fund's primary donors. In the foundation period in mid-2009, though the SC helped refine the founding vision through a formal meeting, informal conversations between Spanish delegates, UNIFEM

leaders, and the Fund's manager shaped key issues like who would be eligible to apply to the Fund and the specific framing of the call for proposals.

The Steering Committee was most deeply involved at two periods. First, in framing and visioning of 2009 described above, formal and informal input served as a sort of check and balance for UNIFEM. The Fund manager was in regular contact with a few SC members, who in turn strategically interceded in select moments, like pushing for UNIFEM management to approve the requirement that governments provide evidence of matching contributions. Many such intervention centered on ensuring that funding for women's movement and civil society remained a priority for the Fund. These negotiations were by and large outside of formal SC meetings and communications and highlight the murky lines of approval and decision-making between UNIFEM and the SC. Even with an SC in place, representatives from Spain most actively and influentially participated during this phase. A former staff member recalls, "At that moment, [Spanish government representatives] were very involved because there was a lot of money." The two SC members from civil society also played a part as some of the few members who would respond with questions or ideas to the Fund's email communications.

In addition to the vision, the SC ostensibly ratified final grants in the 2009-2010 grant cycle. This process was curtailed by the Fund's short turn-around time and the SC's lack of true authority. In both Catalytic and Implementation sub-cycles, the SC had less than a week to review the Fund's docket of recommendations and provide comments. Few people weighed in (the first respondent was personally prompted by the Fund's manager as a favor), and none issued objections.

This period reveals the SC's complex authority as an external accountability mechanism. On one hand, it had only minimal points of contact with the Fund, and neither UNIFEM nor the members themselves advocated for more genuine involvement. On the other hand, SC members were some of the few individuals to whom the Fund and UNIFEM were required to justify their decisions. In cases where the Fund staff did not agree with UNIFEM leadership or wanted a particular outcome, they saw members of the SC as allies. They coordinated with civil society members and actively strategized with Spanish representatives, who they saw as having more influence on UNIFEM's approvals than they did themselves.

The second period of involvement started in late 2010 and came to a head in 2011. Unlike the earlier focus on framing and vision, this involvement focused mostly on how the Fund would fit within the UN Women's new strategic plan. It also included debates about whether and how the Fund would fundraise, especially in light of the new agency's need to raise core resources.

The second Steering Committee meeting took place in December 2010 in New York. The agenda centered on the Fund's results to date, but also included a goal to "Reach agreement on recommendations for the Fund's future programming and operations including the next call for proposals to be launched in July 2011" (personal communication, 2010). Prior to the event, Fund staff briefed a few allied SC members privately, hoping to secure support to develop a more robust fundraising plan, reaffirm the centrality of funding to women's movements, and propose making grants to the "next in line" groups that had been highly rated in the first cycle. Some of these "allies" posed the prompted questions during the meeting, but the discussion was left unresolved. No follow-up was

provided by UN Women or the Fund, and none was demanded by the SC. The SC's ability to generate a response on substantive questions had weakened from the earlier visioning period. With fewer new dollars on the table and no urgent grant cycle on the horizon, the Fund's strategic allies were no longer an effective way to put pressure on the institution.

Still, Fund management and SC members collaborated behind the scenes into the next year as UN Women finalized its strategic plan. One SC representative in particular worked closely with the Fund's manager, who wanted to secure visibility (and, as a result, future resources) in UN Women's new results models. A former Fund staff member recalled the two exchanging texts prior to and even during meetings, lining up arguments to prove to UN Women leadership that the Fund should be considered a key strategic modality for the agency. Ultimately, the Fund appeared in UN Women's strategic plan and its results frame.

The continued relationship shows that, into 2011, select members could be activated to mediate when the Fund felt under threat. Still, the focus of the involvement is telling. Whereas early strategizing aimed to protect aspects of the grantmaking tied to supporting women's movements, the later discussions were ultimately about the Fund's fate within UN Women. This shift in part reflects the Fund's institutionalization. By late 2011, many of the grant processes and guidelines, including those related to funding civil society, were much more established. The Fund also had greater autonomy to define and manage its grant review and did not need the same kind of allied support. At the same time, it illuminates the Fund's entrenchment within the institution, however fragile. The carefully selected Steering Committee no longer served as a source of guidance or even accountability for the Fund or UN Women. Instead, the Fund enlisted the SC's foundering

authority to help it survive within the institution. Neither SC members nor the agency fought this transformation or the resulting lack of external eyes on the Fund's actions.

Starting in 2012, the period of behind-the-scenes coordination ended. The Steering Committee continued to receive updates, including grant recommendations, but did not stage any interventions between the Fund and the agency. The Fund's second manager maintained contact with SC members, but preferred operational alignment as a strategy to protect the Fund's grantmaking, as I describe above. Then, in early 2015, the Fund and UN Women management moved to replace the SC with a "Strategic Advisory Committee," focused on fundraising and visibility. The new committee would be "comprised of high profile personalities engaged with UN Women's mandate worldwide, in charge of providing high level strategic guidance, visibility and resource mobilization support to the Fund" (Fund Call for Proposals, 2015, p. 11).

The reasons for the dissolution are not entirely straightforward. Fund members present during that time suggest that the SC had been inactive for so long that it made sense to replace it with what the Fund really needed – fundraising and communications support. They contend that the SC's purpose had been to provide operational and visionary guidance during the Fund's early days, responsibilities no longer necessary once the Fund had been "aligned" with UN Women. A UN Women manager acknowledged the SC's importance, but argued that the Fund's "changing environment" called for a shift from a "governing body" to a "supportive and strategic one" (personal communication, 2016). A previous staff member speculated that changes in Spain's government might also have played a part. The conservative government that gained power in 2011 had replaced many of the feminist-socialists that help establish the Fund in the first place. Another Fund staff

member confirmed that the Fund's relationship with Spain had become less effective, as the country allocated fewer resources for gender equality. Without this core ally and advocate, the Fund's use of the SC further dwindled.

The last formal meeting was held in January 2015, when the Fund informed members that the SC would be replaced with the Strategic Advisory Committee. The lack of overall SC engagement by this time is evident in the fact that only four SC representatives attended the call, three from Spain's General Secretariat for International Cooperation for Development, and a former member of parliament from Pakistan. Still, SC members present at the meeting and not expressed surprise and dismay about the change. One member not in attendance described, "We just got an email saying that [the Steering Committee] was over. They wanted to replace it with 'high-profiles' that could bring in the money. I call it the 'List of the Famous People.'"

A Spanish delegate at the meeting endorsed the need for "prestigious level individuals to help visibility and fundraising," but raised concerns about the resulting gap in decision making, such as on the call for proposals. He went on to argue that donor countries should still retain some decision-making role. In response, UN Women managers and Fund leadership emphasized the Fund's "highly technical and independent grantmaking" and argued, "The goal of the SC is not to guide us in procedures as we are fully integrated within UN Women" (personal communication, 2015). Tensions increased, as Spanish representatives replied that, though in full agreement that the Fund was integrated into UN Women and its strategic plan, the Fund's distinct modality as a grantmaker still required oversight, stating, "We do not agree that it can be resolved as no longer needing a SC" and "...there are concerns that participation of decision-making

process – decisions will be respected.” UN Women leaders present at the meeting agreed to respond in writing, but stated that the decision needed to be made at a “higher level.” (This “higher level” was not specific. Those present at the meeting included Lakshmi Puri, UN Women Deputy Executive Director, second in command only to UN Women’s Executive Director.)

Even in this final meeting, the SC’s ideas about the Fund’s purpose and vision came to the fore. SC members questioned the Fund’s choice not to support government partnerships, reiterated the centrality of funding civil society, and asked how the Fund would continue to strengthen women’s rights, not just “gender issues.” Such substantive discussions paint a picture of an SC connected to the larger context of women’s issues and development and illuminate the SC’s potential, under different circumstances, to have provided greater guidance and vision for the Fund.

The meeting resulted in no changes to the decision, and the SC was disbanded. The 2015 call for proposals named the Strategic Advisory Committee, which would be “*informed* of the final list of grantees for comments before its announcement” (Fund Call for Proposals, 2015, p. 11, emphasis added). As of the time of this writing in 2017, the advisory committee has not been finalized.

Despite its involvement at key moments, the Steering Committee lacked veritable teeth – especially and most fundamentally to hold UN Women or even the Fund accountable. Its dissolution also suggests the Fund’s diminished importance: With fewer resources, the Fund was no longer a battleground or even a priority for donors or UN Women. It also reflects the shift from a new, experimental, high-value investment to a routinized program: What role would a steering committee play in the Fund’s inconsistent

grant cycles and increasingly institutionalized process? However, these reasons obscure the more remarkable fact that, without fanfare or resistance, *UN Women and the Fund could disband the only formal external accountability mechanism and the single site where select civil society actors could have a say in its direction.*

## **VI. Legitimacy and the Fate of Two Accountabilities**

The Fund's institutionalization, driven in part by inevitability and boosted by the Fund's institutional accountability, has meant operational alignment, greater structural integration, and closer ties between the Fund's mandate and that of UN Women.

Nonetheless, these achievements – a “success” of institutional accountability relative to the Fund's initial position – should not imply that the Fund fits neatly and unproblematically within the agency.

Fund staff still regularly struggle for visibility and, especially, fundraising support within UN Women. They express fears for the Fund's future and significant concern that new management will not consider the Fund a viable and valuable program. These fears are not unfounded. At the time of this writing, UN Women management is working to combine elements of the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women into a single trust fund unit. Though the arrangements are not yet spelled out, the focus on cost efficiency creates a new framework into which the Fund must adapt.

Anticipating this change, Fund staff have been preparing memos and making the case for its impact, trying, once again, to fit their work within the agency's goals.

Institutional accountability informs both the anxieties and the actions of the Fund staff.

Much like the operational alignment undertaken in 2011 and 2012, the Fund is exerting

much of its energy and time internally, preparing to prove its worth and assert its legitimacy within the agency's changing landscape.

The battle for legitimacy could be tied to the Fund's lackluster resource mobilization. Absent veritable support from UN Women and at times thwarted in its efforts, the Fund has been unable to secure donations anywhere near the size or significance of Spain's initial \$65 million. Then again, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women regularly meets its fundraising targets (a more modest \$10-13 million raised for each annual grant cycle), by and large through its leadership team's fundraising efforts, mostly independent of UN Women's fundraising team. Moreover, according to UN Women and UNTF staff alike, the Trust Fund is and has been much more effectively integrated into UN Women's operations, particularly through the country and regional offices' prominent role in grant selection. Finally, in addition to its reliable fundraising, the Trust Fund is protected by its unique institutional position. Though housed at UN Women, the Trust Fund is an inter-agency program, governed by representatives from a number of different agencies, with a 20-year history. Despite having the resources, aligning with UN Women's structures, and having an institutional buffer, the Trust Fund is part of UN Women's integration and efficiency plan for the Fund for Gender Equality.

This suggests a larger issue of legitimacy tied to the funds' specific grantmaking model. Under new management and with an emerging mandate on efficiency, the expense to run the funds has come under scrutiny. Importantly, it is not grantmaking per se that is being questioned; UN Women has played a leading role in establishing a new "Global Acceleration Instrument" (GAI) to make grants in the area of peace and security. The

Fund's merger appears to be a response to the cost of the specific trust funds, which UN Women management sees as out of line with the efficiency mandate.

Many of the elements that slow down or cost – the open call for proposals, an online application system, the external technical committee, the technical assistance – directly grew out of values that were core to the early Fund and remain intact today. From the public and private statements on the new management's approach, these elements are not explicitly being questioned. However, the focus on the bottom line – how much money does it take to make one grant? – is a significant departure from the Fund's current framework.

How might the Fund retain its practices and principles in the new context? The answer is not particularly hopeful. Internally, both funds might leverage their political capital and networks, as well as advocate for integration that retains the specificities and values of the funds. However, the same bureaucratic structure that protects the agency from outside scrutiny leaves little power to the funds should leaders further up in the organizational hierarchy choose to dissolve or diminish the funds. Namely, even if institutional accountability – attention to the internal pressures and priorities – succeeds in the emerging context, the Fund's legitimacy might still be called into question.

Another avenue links the Fund's accountability to its legitimacy claims. As institutional support for the Fund has dwindled, staff members have begun to see the need for a more robust constituency outside of UN Women. One staff member describes the Fund's lack of external connections as problematic: "We also have to be more visible externally as well. That's the thing: we haven't been quite good in that. But also, our staffing is limited." At another point, she lays out her perception of the stakes, "We really have to build those alliances, and not just build – I mean, we have some, but build stronger ones

with civil society, strengthen those with our donors, and make sure that people kick and scream if anything happens.” Here, the movement accountability, which went from informal and mostly potential to nearly non-existent, means that Fund staff would be mostly starting from scratch, building networks and relationships and asking for support. Asking for help might also be up against the Fund’s institutional location within the UN and its role as a grantmaker. Moreover, one interviewee with strong women’s movement ties pointed out the irony: “That’s not our job. How awful that we would also need to spend time begging for these funds.” Having operated in isolation for so long, the Fund would be asking for support *and* attempting to undo the possible perception of it as a space not particularly welcome for or open to women’s movements’ input. Even under the best case, where women’s rights activists and donors rally behind the Fund, UN Women’s formidable bureaucracy and lack of formal mechanisms for input (including the dissolution of the steering committee) leave the agency in control over the degree of external involvement.

## **VII. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I find that in the absence of enforced accountability structures, individual networks and personalities, organizational norms around decision-making, and key moments of institutional alignment come to define to whom and how the Fund for Gender Equality deems itself accountable. Whereas the fast deadlines and unusual modality enabled Fund staff to infuse movement accountability into the grant program, the Fund could not continue to operate in isolation. After its first grant cycle, the Fund moved toward a staff that could attend to institutional politics and manage operational alignment with UNIFEM and UN Women. This shift in expertise had two major ripple effects: diminished

connection to women's movement activists and organizations outside of the grantee pool; and a development-centered technical committee. Though the staff remained (and remains) marginalized within UN Women, its outsidersness was no longer defined by its connection to feminist philanthropy so much as its divergence from UN Women's financial and programmatic priorities. To bridge the modality gap, to "survive" at all, the Fund has exerted an extraordinary amount of energy writing memos, developing presentations, and building relationships to serve them within the institution.

That effort, I argue, is not an exception, but very much part of working within international institutions. More broadly, this is an issue of what it means to serve an institution *and* an external constituency. The question highlights real tensions for bureaucracies that aim or claim to provide meaningful pathways for social movements, stakeholder communities, or other external actors to participate in shaping their policies and programs. To what extent can outsiders, as well as "outsiders within," have a role in shaping development programs?

My findings support recent research that shows the most enduring frameworks and programs related to gender are those that do not contradict agencies' preexisting logics (Bedford, 2009; Cornwall, 2008). I extend this literature by examining the *daily* work needed to navigate between the UN and women's movements. Like Bedford's excellent work within the World Bank, I find that feminist "outsiders" occupy a liminal and ultimately untenable location with the institution. My study is not a comment on who is or who is not a feminist. Indeed, many people within UN Women would – and do – describe themselves as feminists. Rather, it is an examination of what happens when feminists bring into play ideas and affiliations that do not necessarily cohere with development agencies'

existing approaches to gender equality. Though “outsiders” might persist for a time, their ability to transform agency policies and practices is limited. The constraints may come in the form of explicit rejection, but often look more like implicit resistance from others within an agency.

A neoinstitutional approach supports my formulation that the resistance the Fund faces is not enforced by direct intervention, but rather a gradual build-up of organizational norms and everyday rules that regulate action. Ironically, as Fund staff become more able to navigate the institution, it becomes more enmeshed in these rules and norms. It is in this process of *becoming development professionals* that individuals are governable in these informal, cultural modes. Still, the persistence of threats to the Fund’s survival even under the leadership of development experts suggests that there are limits to how different a modality can be and still fall within the boundaries of an organization. This could be characterized as incomplete isomorphism. On the one hand, the Fund’s maturation is precisely a process *toward* the agency, including a substantive focus on results/impact and structural shifts to align its operations. On the other, its failed efforts to achieve legitimacy and secure fundraising support keep it at the outer edge of agency priorities. Money surely plays a part: those programs that can bring in resources, such as the Fund in 2009, are coveted and protected, at least temporarily. However, the Fund’s case indicates that when these programs are not sufficiently institutionalized to the point of becoming a core mode of operation for the agency, they are at risk.

The Fund was also swept up in the larger institutionalization of UN Women and illuminates what happens as an institution itself consolidates and responds to change. UN Women burst into existence amidst high hopes and many competing claims over what it

would become and who it would serve. I have described the GEAR Campaign, more than 300 women's rights and social justice organizations that advocated for the creation of the new, higher-level agency for gender equality. The success of UN Women's existence is due, in large part, to these transnational advocacy efforts. However, even with this clear external constituency, many accounts from within and around the agency suggest that UN Women is more bureaucratic and less feminist than UNIFEM. Above, I quote a former agency staff member describing the complete omission of the word "feminist" as more "UN people" (i.e. those from outside the four gender agencies) gained high positions in UN Women. A Fund TC member from Cycle 3 describes, "I have had a chance to work with UNIFEM as a consultant, and I think things changed a lot with UN Women. Now there is opportunity to have more funds and more resources, but somehow the core organization [has] become very bureaucratic." The Fund is both a response to and a window into the force of bureaucratization. Even with a strong external push from women's movements, UN Women, like the Fund, has returned to form, relying on rules, structures, and development professionals to assert its place in the world of development. The cost has been a decisive move away from feminist affiliations and discourse.

For women's movements, the implications of my findings are at once hopeful and tempered. There is strong potential to build movement accountability through strategic alliances with feminists inside development agencies. Even in the absence of formal consultations, these relationships can inform program design, including in subtle ways. This approach is far from democratic, available only to those activists with direct personal connection. Building alliances between feminist insiders and external constituencies, such as women's movements, might also serve to bolster the legitimacy of feminist ideas within

development. At the same time, this chapter suggests that even these steps will be subject to powerful internal dynamics. Outside influences will still be wedded to a program's political capital, interpersonal relationships, priority within the agency, and, of course, resources.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Grantmaking As a Social Process: Staged Model of Power in Grant Selection for Women's Rights**

### **Grantmaking As a Social Process: Staged Model of Power in Grant Selection for Women's Rights**

In my previous chapter, I argue that the Fund for Gender Equality takes an increasingly inward focus, centering on *institutional accountability* to UN Women rather than *movement accountability* to women's movements. I make the case that, from the start, feminist funding experts were in constant negotiation with bureaucratic rules and procedures. Over the next two chapters, I examine how these negotiations inform the Fund's grantmaking, from requirements for applicants to the framing of the call for proposals to grant review. As I dig deeper into the grants process, I look at how *power* manifests in each stage of grant review and changes over time. I propose a methodology that can be applied to a range of funders and has the potential to generate greater comparative analysis of philanthropy's often-hidden effects on social issues. Finally, I specifically home in on how the Fund for Gender Equality's grant review process contains embedded assumptions about gender equality and upholds certain forms of NGOization among women's movements.

#### **I. Grantmaking as a Social Process**

Most resource mobilization literature asks: What effect do funders and funding have on grant recipients? For example, studies of social change philanthropy show that, even when funders intend to support social movements, they professionalize and "defang" the organizations they support (Jenkins, 1998). Research on feminist NGOization, the professionalization, institutionalization, and proliferation of women's NGOs, affirm the

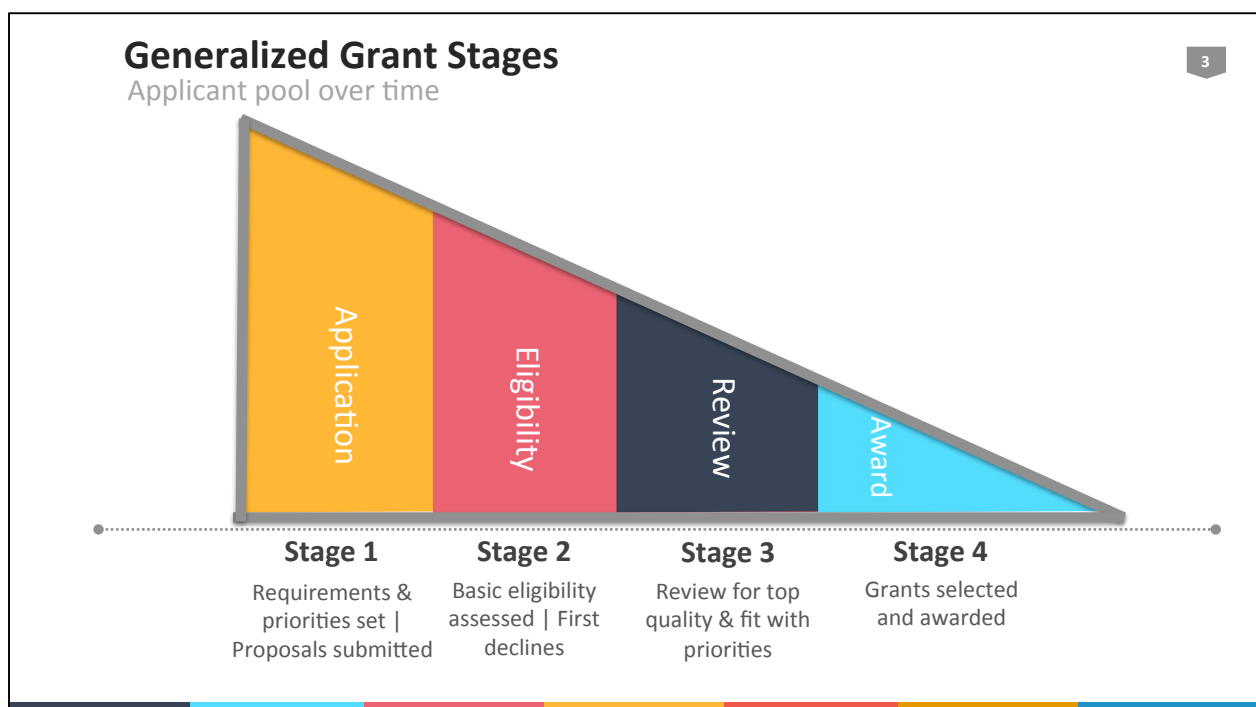
constricting and deradicalizing effects that can come from seeking and securing grants (Alvarez, 1998; Bagić 2006).

Few studies look beyond the outcomes of resource mobilization to the entirety of grantmaking processes and institutions. Those that do generally use ethnography to show the subjective, often personal, and highly interpretative nature of grant selection (Ostrander, 1995; Rose, 2005; Delfin and Tang, 2008). For instance, Ostrander's (1995) ethnography of the Haymarket Fund shows that social movement funding becomes less radical as funders themselves adopt more formal organizational structures. Thayer (2009) looks at the opposite side of the equation, asking how the process of applying for funding serves as a site of contestation and conformity for feminist organizations. These rare studies inside the funding process provide rich descriptions of the infamously opaque "black box" of grantmaking, but offer limited comparability or generalizability.

I posit that grantmaking has consistent hallmarks that can be analyzed, compared, and aggregated across sites and studies in order to place funders and grant-seekers into a larger conversation about how power operates and where resources flow. I draw on by Lukes's (1974) theories of power and define *power as the explicit and implicit ability to decide, influence, or control*. I extend current literature by understanding grantmaking as a *social process* in which different forms of power become salient at different moments in the grant cycle. I ask how power – from within and outside funding organizations – circumscribes grant decisions. My approach elevates grantmakers' contributions to movement actors, but also recognizes the constraints funders face institutionally. Centrally, I bring out of the shadows the effects of funders' implicit assumptions about how change happens and show how philanthropic power begins long before the allocation of grants.

### a. Staged Model

First, I argue that grantmaking can be depicted and analyzed in a generalizable *staged model* of: 1) **applications** solicited and submitted; 2) determination of **eligibility**; 3) **review** for quality and fit; and 4) selection of grantees and **award** of funding. The grant pool is cut down throughout these stages, as depicted in the generalized grant stage model below. These stages are intrinsic to but often invisible in analysis of how and why resource mobilization affects social issues. The staged model lays the foundation for comparing grantmakers with each other and showing changes within a single grantmaker's processes over time. My analysis of the Fund follows the latter strategy, unearthing the effects of the Fund's changing institutional context for power and decision-making in grant cycles in 2009, 2011, and 2015.



While grantmakers vary in how they enact grant review, these overarching stages are largely consistent within philanthropy. For example, a private foundation might have

an invitation-only application, which combines stages 1 and 2 (application and eligibility), grant review by a single program officer (stage 3), and final approval of grantees by a board of directors (stage 4). In another case, a development agency might run a grant program with many sub-stages that incorporate input from technical committees, country offices, and agency staff during grant review. Such variations between funders are significant; they are precisely the sites at which I posit we can most directly observe how power manifests in specific funding settings. Namely, these stages – and who undertakes them – enable interrogation into *how issues are defined and by whom, what forms of measurement are enacted, and how and when political considerations winnow grant pools.*

b. Forms of Power

After defining the formal grantmaking steps, my model next makes visible the *forms of power* that drive the grant stages. My definition of power draws from Lukes's (2005) three dimensions of power: 1) the power to explicitly control or hold power over; 2) the power to set the terms of an issue or agenda; and 3) "power by domination" in which "socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions" underlie action and non-action (p. 26). Methodologically, this definition requires examination of the decision-making processes and actions, including how political agendas are controlled, and both latent and observable interests (Lukes, 2005, p. 29).

For funders, located in the field of philanthropy and embedded in particular social issues, power can be shaped internally and externally. Internal influences flow from the ideas, policies, assumptions, and dynamics that run through a grantmaking institution and

the actors within it.<sup>6</sup> Chapter 1 examines such internal influences in detail. External influences, such as the broader funding landscape, norms or ideas around a social issue, or social movement advocacy or engagement, might also come into play. Power may be enacted formally – and so often explicitly – such as through assessing a proposals’ eligibility according to public criteria, or informally. Informal power is often the most difficult to unearth, embedded in interpersonal negotiations, organizational systems, or discursive contestations that do not directly challenge but nonetheless push back on other forms of power. Power – formal and informal, internal and external – underpins how, for what, and to whom philanthropic resources are allocated. Building on my previous chapter, I see grantmakers’ internal and external accountabilities, and the contest between the two, as central to defining the forms of power that explain the social process of grantmaking.

Based on my analysis of the Fund for Gender Equality and examination of philanthropy more broadly, I identify four general categories of power in grantmaking:

- a. Framing (issue definition – how and by whom)
- b. Ranking and Measurement (forms of measurement enacted)
- c. Institutional Implementation (internal dynamics and institutional priorities)
- d. Resignification (forms of resistance to dominant framing)

As I detail below, though the four forms of power might tend to appear in particular grant stages, they are not linear or set. Their presence, strength, and relevance change throughout a single grant cycle and may vary significantly by funder. Whether funders rely on internal ideas and analysis, engage with potential constituents or social movements, or a

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<sup>6</sup> By internal, I am referring to grantmaking organizations themselves, as well as the boards, steering committees, or additional people undertaking grant review who report to or receive direct reports from the funders as part of the grantmaking cycle. External refers to the institutions, individuals, and ideas without direct relationships of accountability to the grantmaker. Some areas may be mixed, such as a technical review committee of experts hired and managed by funders but with the goal of incorporating their outside knowledge of the issues and field.

combination of both, crucially defines who holds and enacts power in this institutional work. Pinpointing the form(s) of power present in each stage for a given funder enables us to map an overall social process of grant selection and sheds light on how funders explicitly and implicitly shape the social worlds in which they seek to intervene.

**Framing** power is based on funders' ability to set an agenda and define a given social issue, such as through the purpose, scope, and requirements of a grant program. Framing is the discursive act of defining a social problem, such as gender inequality, and mobilizing action to address it (McCarthy, Smith, and Zald 1996). Framing *power* references the classic "second face of power" in which actors constrict political process without explicit exertion of power (Lukes, 1974; Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). By framing the agenda, actors are "...creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices...." (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p. 7). For grantmakers, framing power is typically most prominent in stage 1 (application), when the terms and vision of a grant program are formally established and committed to writing. This process is based in institutional settings produced by formal constraints, like available resources, reporting structures, and tax law, and subtler, often invisible ideas about the role of grantmaking in addressing social issues.

Grantmakers' framing power manifests in key texts, such as application forms and calls for proposals, which aim to convey requirements, priorities, and timelines. Here, I follow Smith, who calls on sociologists to examine "public, textually mediated discourse as a new form of social relation" (1990, p. 167). In grantmaking, key documents are set out by funders and often serve as the only form of communication organizations can use to decide if they will apply at all and how they will present themselves in their applications if they do.

For funders and applicants, these discursive exchanges reflect both the everyday actions and institutional contexts in which they are shaped (Smith, 1990).

**Ranking and measurement** power involves “objectively” scoring and/or ranking applications to decide which should be cut or advanced. The use of ranking and measurement, as opposed to more qualitative or openly subjective assessment, varies by grantmaker. Funders might simply score compliance with requirements as yes/or no (for example, in stage 2/eligibility) or use extensive score sheets to generate comparable scores across a number of grant reviewers (such as for stage 3/review). In the context of development funding, ranking and measurement bolsters international institutions’ “rapidly multiplying” use of indicators to quantify, assess, and measure social change around the world (Merry, 2011, p. S83).

Despite the appeal of the apparent objectivity of numbers, ranking and scoring processes are far from isolated or neutral. They embed funders’ priorities, involve interpretation by grant reviewers, and can *create* rather than just convey meaning (Espelund & Sauder 2007). For example, Ginther et al. (2011) show how and that bias and impartiality readily infiltrate grant review processes, even when scoring is supposedly empirical and measurement-based. Moreover, empirical and measurement-based still necessarily implies that priorities and criteria are set in such a way that they can be (more or less transparently and reliably) assigned by the organization’s actors.

**Institutional implementation** as a form of power comes into play after the “policies” (such as framing objectives and formalized requirements) have been set. This is a necessary but also political process to turn what has been written and decreed into implementation. Actors’ interactional work and the invisibility of this power, often enacted

behind closed doors or in informal ways, contrasts with more openly contested forms like framing and measurement. For example, it is closer to the kind of policy work that judges do as than that which lawmakers do.

This can take place through well-defined internal decisions, such as dedicating more funding in areas or regions that are seen as strategic for the funder. However, it can also entail hidden agendas by different actors within an institution, as well as personal preferences or alliances. Institutional implementation – and its ultimate influence on grant selection – reflects internal actors’ differential power to approve, stall, or redefine grant decisions. Though institutional implementation might come into play in many different grant stages, it is distinct from framing power, which though calling on internal ideas, policies, and assumptions, manifests in the setting of a specific and largely articulated/written/contestable agenda. In contrast, institutional implementation primarily takes place behind closed doors (internal) and occurs after and outside official priorities and rules (informal).

**Resignification** is the power to interpret, redefine, and contest framing. Thayer (2009, 2010) depicts resignification as feminist organizations’ act of self-representation to external actors, particularly funders, in ways that can, at times, reject dominant ideas and meanings. Studying feminist organizations seeking international funding and mobilizing locally and transnationally, she argues that “translations – or refusals to translate – play a strategic role for social movements and represent a significant form of political agency, particularly in the context of cross-border relations” (2010, p. 202). In grantmaking, these figurative translations and refusals to translate occur as applicants represent themselves within and against funders’ frameworks. Resignification is not simply the act of

articulation; rather, it is redefining the meaning of dominant ideas, re-imagining, adapting, or challenging a funders' framing. This may take place in any moment of self-representation, most notably in proposals (stage 1) or subsequent narrative interactions with funders. In addition to applicants, grant reviewers might also participate in resignification. For example, as described below, a number of Fund for Gender Equality technical committee reviewers contest the Fund's framework for defining a "good" applicant, using resignification to push back against the ranking and measurement power that drives the Fund's review stage.

c. Power Matrix

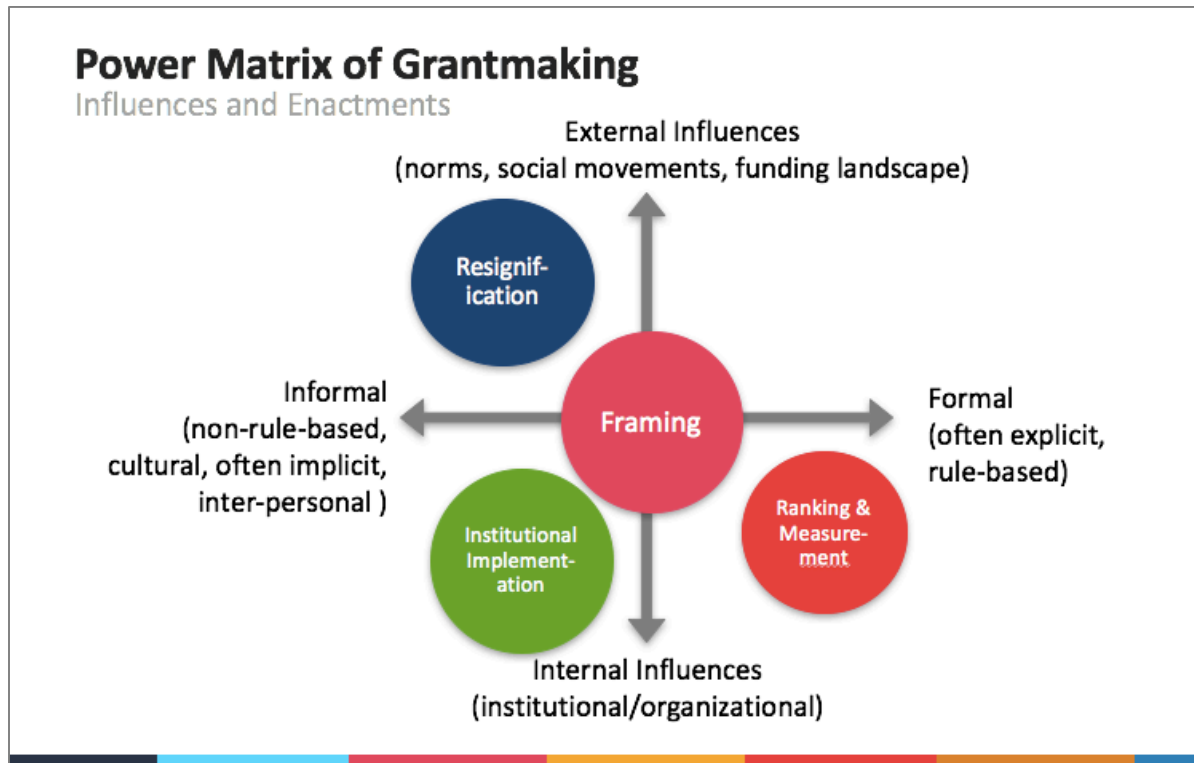
Though the degree to which influences are internal or external and enactments are formal or informal may vary by grantmaker, the forms of power can be depicted in the general Power Matrix of Grantmaking below.<sup>7</sup> Internal organizational influences strongly define three of the four power categories (framing, ranking and measurement, and resignification), unsurprising given the notoriously asymmetrical relations that concentrate philanthropic power within funding organizations (Heydemann and Toepler, 2006). In contrast, resignification is the most clearly external form of power, with external actors using interactions with grantmakers to try to redefine or reimagine the terms set by funders. The upper right quadrant of *formal*, external powers rarely directly influence

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<sup>7</sup> This matrix draws heavily on the Change Matrix developed by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher (2002) at Gender at Work. Feminist evaluation specialists and women's funds have also adapted the change matrix, such as the Global Fund for Women's evaluative tool for portfolios of grantees (Stanton, 2012). My power matrix is designed to specifically represent the influences and enactments of power in *grantmaking* and is distinct from Rao and Kelleher's broader analysis of gender inequalities. However, their pioneering work has influenced my own thinking about power and should be credited in this model.

grant decisions. Indirectly, influences in this category might include laws that govern international grantmaking or regulations surrounding the percentage of a foundation's assets that must be spent out each year. As these frame the field but do not likely influence specific funders distinctly, I do not include them in my model.

Generalizing further, formality is most often evident in ranking and measurement, which relies on and generates and justifies its power from its rule-based nature. Elements of framing power also fall into the formal realm, with the power to define and articulate the “rules of the game” to which applicants must adhere.



Variations of this model shed light on different funder priorities and practices. For example, a funder in which framing power includes extensive engagement with constituents would move up on the influence axis. Conversely, a grantmaker might rely almost entirely on internal strategies and input in defining its grant program, placing

framing power firmly internally. Moreover, the relative strength of each form of power will change throughout a grant cycle. In the model I develop for the Fund for Gender Equality, I find a single dominant power drives each stage, with sub-forces that act with or against that power.

## II. Toward A Sociological Methodology for Grantmaking

How are we to take a staged model of grantmaking and apply it specifically, accurately, and with the potential for comparability between funders? I have argued above that we must first map the funder's formal grant stages, which are generally relatively linear and often demarcated by cuts to the grant pool, and then identify the forms of power relevant in each stage. To do so, I propose a mixed methods approach that *centers grantmaking texts and application data*. First, I employ Smith's (2005) *institutional ethnographic approach* (interviews, observation, and analysis of key texts) to understand how key elements of grant review, such as the requirements, scoring, and the overall framing, are established, translated into key documents, and enacted. This methodology underscores the discursive and procedural elements of grantmaking and seeks to locate the power to define, measure, interpret, and, ultimately, to fund. I find that though the Fund's grant stages vary in only minor ways, power reveals how mounting institutional accountability manifests in an internal focus and stronger enforcement of rules. In short, understanding grantmaking as a social process underscores the importance of looking at *power* and *process* in tandem.

Next, my primary focus – and key innovation for research on grantmaking – is comprised of *in-depth quantitative analysis* of grant application data (application text,

internal rating scores, etc.). I am less interested in which groups are ultimately selected, the focus of the vast majority of empirical resource mobilization studies and, for the Fund, a narrow slice of 3% of its total applicants. Rather, I want to know which *kinds* of groups *could have been selected*. The final group of grant recipients is often highly curtailed by funders' available resources, whereas *progress through the grant cycle* shows which *types* of actors are considered viable and strategic. For example, in all of the Fund for Gender Equality's grant cycles, the Fund prepared a list of "next in line" proposals in the event that additional grant money could be raised. Including such groups gives us a much fuller picture of how funders winnow proposals and the factors that meaningfully and more generally constrict access to donor resources.

Using a carefully developed database of all 3,629 proposals submitted to the Fund across three grant cycles, I look at characteristics of the applicants themselves, the programs they propose, and the scores they receive at each grant stage. Through descriptive statistics and regression analysis, I examine how the Fund's grant review unevenly rewards certain kinds of organizations and approaches, both intentionally and inadvertently.

I am specifically interested in precisely how and to what extent the Fund's grantmaking process enforces the NGOization of women's movements, as scholarship on resource mobilization and women's movements would suggest. By breaking down the grant process, I am able to piece apart the influence of different factors, such as seemingly benign eligibility requirements or the scoring guidance given to a technical committee, on grant selection.

### III. Fund for Gender Equality's Staged Model

Across its three grant cycles (2009-2010, 2011-2012, and 2015), the Fund follows a five-stage grantmaking process: application; basic eligibility; technical committee (TC) review; semifinalists; and grantee selection, depicted in the table below.

**Table 4.1 Fund for Gender Equality Grant Stages**

General Stage	Fund Stage	Description
Application	(1) Application	Fund staff develops and releases call for proposals (CFP) in coordination with UN Women. Organizations learn of CFP, decide to apply, and prepare materials. Online application opens during this period, though after CFP is released. Organizations submit proposals.
Eligibility	(2) Eligibility	Multilingual gender specialist consultants are hired at UN Women headquarters to review proposals in their original languages and eliminate those that do not meet the basic criteria.
Review	(3) Technical Committee (TC) Review	Technical Committees (TCs) of gender equality experts based in each region score and rank proposals (most cycles include multiple rounds of scoring/ranking). All applications are reviewed by multiple TC members. Fund staff consolidates scores. UN Women country/regional offices and thematic advisors provide input as needed in areas with discrepancies or "red flags."
	(4) Semi-finalists	The Fund invites a select group of top-rated applicants to submit full-fledged proposals with a focus on expected results. Fund funds in-depth technical assistance for proposal development, especially results metrics. TC reviews, scores, and ranks final proposals.
Award	(5) Award	Fund consolidates top proposals. UN Women provides input on grant selection related to regional and programmatic priorities. Steering Committee ratifies grant awards (Cycles 1 and 2) or is informed of grantees (Cycle 3). Grantees are publicly announced.

These grant review stages involve a range of different actors, described in the

Fund's 2015 call for proposals:

1. Eligibility review team: independent group of reviewers with expertise in relevant thematic areas that will review the applications against the established eligibility criteria only. These experts are not UN Women staff.

2. Technical Committee members: independent group of 40-50 experts with expertise in relevant thematic and regional areas that will evaluate the proposals against the established evaluation criteria only. These experts are not UN Women staff and are different from the Eligibility review team. The evaluation is done in an anonymous capacity to preserve their independence and integrity. Technical Committee members are obliged to disclose any conflict of interest they may have with any of the applicants they evaluate. Each application will be reviewed by several Technical Committee members to ensure fair balanced scores.
3. UN Women staff: UN Women programme and policy staff from field offices and headquarters will be consulted at different points in the process about the quality of the proposals and their relevance for UN Women strategic priorities. These recommendations will be shared with the Technical Committee Members for consideration. The final decision on grantee selection remains a prerogative of the Fund.
4. Strategic Advisory Committee [formerly the “Steering Committee”]: comprised of high profile personalities engaged with UN Women’s mandate worldwide, in charge of providing high level strategic guidance, visibility and resource mobilization support to the Fund. The Committee will be informed of the final list of grantees for comments before its announcement (FGE Call for Proposals, 2015, p. 11).

Notably, all but the final grant review stage (award) relies heavily on external consultants and technical experts. This degree of independence sets the Fund apart from other UN Women grantmaking. For example, the UN Trust Fund (UNTF) to End Violence Against Women, the Fund’s most direct peer, describes its reviewers more loosely:

The application process will consist of two rounds. The first round will involve the submission of a Concept Note and only those successful in the first round will be invited to submit a full-fledged proposal. Full-fledged proposals will be appraised by independent experts and the UN Trust Fund’s Technical Review Group, and a subset of final applicants will be considered for grants (UNTF, 2016, p. 10).

UN Women staff plays a central role in UNTF grant review. For more than 17 years, country proposals went first to regional offices, which then sent their top 10-15 choices to the Trust Fund’s headquarters for further review. Since approximately 2015, UNTF has hired consultants to do a first pass for both quality and eligibility, then sends 20-30 proposals to

each regional office for the next cut. Only after these stages are external technical experts involved, scoring applications along with a member of the UNTF global advisory group, for final selection. These processes place much of the selection in the hands of UN Women staff, either through a first or second read of quality and fit prior to something akin to a TC review.

Though the Fund for Gender Equality's grant stages are not atypical for a grantmaker, the specific people leading each stage strongly reflect the Fund's bureaucratic setting. In many if not most philanthropic organizations, program officers primarily determine which proposals to support. Even when relying on outside input or requiring approval by boards of advisors, these staff members are considered experts in the given topic area and make grant determinations based on a range of inputs, from qualitative assessment of proposals to institutional priorities to ongoing back and forth information-sharing with applicants. In contrast, the Fund is exceptionally reliant on ranking and measurement power vested in external actors – consultants for eligibility and technical committee members for review of quality and fit.

Combining the Fund's stages with analysis of the forms of power helps elucidate such peculiarities about the Fund. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine the forms of power for each stage and then look at changes over time. While the forms of power interact throughout the grant review process, I find that each stage is defined by a single *driving power*. Additional sub-forms of power also emerge.

**Table 4.2 Fund for Gender Equality Power by Stage**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Driving Power</b>	<b>Additional Power</b>
(1) Application	Framing	Resignification
(2) Eligibility	Ranking & Measurement	Framing (cycle 1 only)
(3) TC Review	Ranking & Measurement	Framing Resignification Institutional Implementation
(4) Semifinalist	Ranking & Measurement	Framing Resignification Institutional implementation
(5) Grant Selection	Institutional Implementation	Ranking & Measurement

Together, the stages, the actors that undertake them, and the forms of power that drive them illuminate the social process of grantmaking and enable me to chart fluctuations in the Fund’s grantmaking process.

#### **IV. Changing Accountability & Shifting Power**

Comparing each cycle, I tie together the Fund’s role in shaping ideas and resources around gender equality and its own changing identity, organizational position (power and vulnerability), and resources (money and expertise). I uncover small modifications that, together, convey the complexity of the Fund’s growing institutional accountability and the nearly-invisible reduction in movement accountability.

##### **a. Overall Cycle Differences**

Since 2009, the Fund for Gender Equality has completed three grant cycles, which include two sub-cycles. In Cycle 1 (2009-2010), the Fund offered grants in two categories, “Implementation” for larger grants and “Catalytic” for smaller grants, which were launched together but reviewed on different timelines. Cycle 2 (2011-2012) had a single category,

but two review periods: Arab States launched in October 2011; remaining regions beginning in March 2012. Cycle 3 (2015) had one category and a single timeline.

As shown in Table 4.3 below, the Fund also steadily moved toward exclusive funding of women-led organizations and eliminated funding to governments by Cycle 3. Simultaneously, the grant sizes and total award amounts decreased substantially in each cycle, an abrupt departure from the Fund's original vision of multi-million experimental grants.

**Table 4.3 Grant Cycle Details**

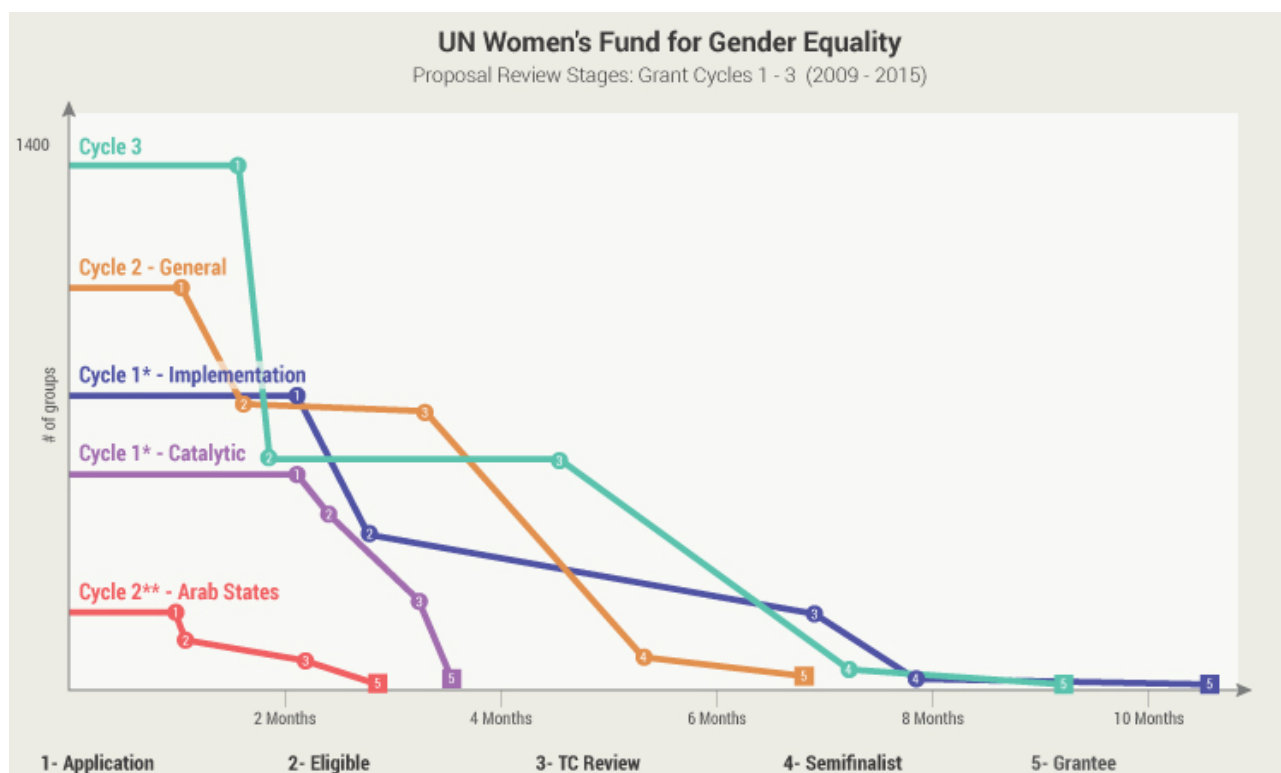
#	Sub-Cycle	Start	End	Open To	Amount \$ (Duration)	Average Grant \$	Total #	Total \$
1	Implement-ation	July 2009	July 2010	NGOs, Governments, Partnerships <sup>8</sup>	\$1-3M <sup>9</sup> (2-4 years)	\$2.2M	13	\$38.2M
	Catalytic	July 2009	Dec 2009		\$100-500K (1-3 years)	\$370K	27	
2	Arab States	Oct 2011	Dec 2011	Women's NGOs, Governments, Partnerships	\$200K-\$1M (1-3 years)	\$325K	56	\$18.2M
	GENERAL	March 2012	Oct 2012	Women-led CSOs				
3	GENERAL	Feb 2015	Dec 2015			\$200-500K (2-3 years)	\$300K	24
<b>Total</b>						<b>\$533K</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>\$64M</b>

Overall, the cycles follow similar grant review stages. However, the timelines, cuts to the applicant pool, and contexts in which the review takes place shift between cycles and even sub-cycles. Three procedural variations bear noting and are visible in the graph below. First, in Cycle 1, Fund staff reviewed eligible proposals for *quality*, sending only

<sup>8</sup> Partnerships between eligible groups types only. These could be NGO-NGO, NGO-Government, or Government-Government.

<sup>9</sup> These are the grant sizes *awarded*. The call for proposals for Cycle 1 listed Implementation grant sizes as \$2 million to \$5 million over 2 to 4 years.

medium and high quality proposals to TC review. Second, Cycle 1 Catalytic grant applications did not have a semifinalist stage. Finally, for Cycle 2's Arab States sub-cycle, eligibility and TC review overlapped due to short turn-around time. All applications went to the technical committee, though ineligible applications were removed after TC scoring. Numbers for stage 3 (TC review) reflect only *eligible* applicants, or those with the potential to move forward in the process. Additionally, even though the sub-cycle included semifinalists, these were selected on the basis of concept notes, not additional full-fledged proposals.



To make meaning of differences in who is eligible and how grant review occurs, I turn to my staged model. By comparing each stage by cycle, I uncover subtle but persistent shifts in the Fund's grant review. The Fund gains autonomy and power after Cycle 1, but does so in large part through strategic institutionalization into UN Women. The result is a

grant review process that *looks* quite independent from UN Women, but increasingly embodies many of the institution's policies and politics.

## V. Stage 1: Application

The bedrock of any grants funding is the application stage. Funders establish the parameters and vision for grant monies. Potential applicants learn about the opportunity and choose to apply. By definition, the application stage is funder-driven. Whether a new or longstanding grant program, the act of asking for and accepting applications is the moment when funders stake their place in a social issue. Their discursive framing, outreach strategies, and determination of who can apply and how set the stage for the entire grant program. This stage is also the point at which applicants respond to – and can attempt to contest or *resignify* – funders' framing. The application, with its set format and pre-determined submission rules, is the single medium of interaction. Resignification is a highly imbalanced exchange, with donors adjudicating which articulations fit their priorities. Nonetheless, the ability to determine one's own narrative, to respond and potentially contest assumptions or ideas set forth in the call for proposals, does place a modicum of resignification power in the hands of applicants themselves.

Following a typical philanthropic approach for the application stage, the Fund and UNIFEM/UN Women consistently hold almost all the framing power vis-à-vis external actors (potential and real applicants, other funders, women's movements, etc.), though external norms (especially gender equality and development conventions) and funding practices from development financing and feminist philanthropy influence this stage. The specificities of the framing process reveal different arrangements of power within UN

Women in each cycle. These changes highlight two conflicting trends over time: greater autonomy for the Fund to frame the call for proposals; and growing attention to institutional rules and priorities.

As I will show, institutionally-bound individuals framing the Fund's key documents significantly influence grant outcomes. In Cycle 1, the application stage is framed by UNIFEM's deputy director, the steering committee, and Fund staff, but managed in a day-to-day way by the Fund. In subsequent cycles, Fund staff lead almost all of this stage – i.e. hold most of the power – with some points of approval from UN Women. However, I show that the accountabilities of the individual staff members change the priorities embedded in this formative moment of the grant cycle.

a. 2009

Cycle 1's framing process was a whirl of drafts, track changes, and ideological debates. The vision for the Fund began in brainstorming between UNIFEM leadership and representatives from the government of Spain, was sketched out in a formal grant agreement (the Fund was one component of a larger MOU with Spain in 2008), and was publicly declared in a UNIFEM press release for the "Gender Equality Fund" in late 2008 (UNIFEM, 2008). In early 2009, the newly-established Steering Committee and UNIFEM leadership drafted the Fund's ProDoc, which, upon her arrival, the Fund's first manager revised prior to finalization in August 2009. The flurry of ideas and revisions, of late-night phone calls and heated conversations, belies the clarity of this timeline.

As described in chapters 1 and 3, the Fund manager entered with strong experience in international feminist philanthropy and a wealth of external networks, but little

experience in the policies and procedures of international institutions. Starting in June, she took up the mantle of the Fund, with draft documents and the Steering Committee set, but no infrastructure, staff, or precedent for grants on this scale.

The ProDoc, typically approved well before a program is underway, was finalized just as the Fund's call for proposals and application launched.<sup>10</sup> Much of the language is duplicated in both documents. However, meeting notes show that the Fund's final documents underwent some substantial revisions and contestations before finalization. For example, in minutes from a May 2009 PAC meeting, UNIFEM staff expressed unease that the original ProDoc too heavily rewarded governments over civil society:

There still seems to be a bias on funding to be allocated primarily to governments. Support towards civil society should come out more clearly. If there is an emphasis on alliances between governments and NGOs and on the development and implementation of a national plan, we need to critically think about the use of a plan in cases of corrupt governments [sic]. And if partnerships should be formed, what are the incentives for those and for outcomes that translate into real women's empowerment? (PAC Minutes, 2009, p. 3)

Concerns about the specific declarations cited in the call also emerged: "Adhering to the Paris Declaration principles could imply limitations for the Fund... We recognize the Paris Declaration but we align more with the Acra [sic] results. We need to make this clear in the document" (PAC Minutes, 2009, p. 3). Both changes were reflected in the public call.

The Fund manager's task of finalizing the Fund's ProDoc and developing the call for proposals grew out of these discussions debates, as well as the prevailing mandate set forth

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<sup>10</sup> The Fund's ProDoc is posted online. While mandated through agency policies to promote transparency, public posting of evaluations and ProDocs remains an obscure part of the process to which many people external to the UN are not privy. Moreover, the ProDoc is established through internal review, so while the output is technically of public record, the process is still restricted.

[http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Trust%20Funds/FundGenderEquality/FGE\\_ProjectDocument.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Trust%20Funds/FundGenderEquality/FGE_ProjectDocument.pdf)

by the Steering Committee and ideas from feminist philanthropy. Released less just two months after the manager was hired, the inaugural call for proposals is lengthy (nine pages) and convoluted. This is clearly a program still being defined, with input from a variety of actors (and writers).

(My own entry into the Fund introduced me to the politics underlying the drafting process. My first task was to edit the call for proposals. Not yet knowing the actors involved, I substantially revised one of the reviewers' input, visible in track changes. I was quickly told, "Her comments have to stay." It was my first taste of the hierarchy that I would come to learn so well and that would inform many of the narrative texts made public by the Fund.)

The first five-and-half pages read like a development agency script, filled with references to gender equality conventions and global declarations. Throughout the document, a single frame comes through most clearly: "policy implementation," in which governments and women's rights groups use laws and policies as the fulcrum to achieve gender equality. The policy focus is described in reference to inequalities women face globally, but also to "national ownership, harmonization and alignment" (Call for Proposals, 2009, p. 4). This heavy development jargon is part of the "aid effectiveness agenda," codified in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness & the New Aid Modalities (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), a signed addendum to the Paris Declaration. Aid effectiveness is meant to improve coordination among donor countries and encourages the distribution of development monies directly to governments, at times at the expense of funds to civil society (Steinle & Correll, 2008). For women's rights, the new agenda offers some promising in-roads, such as better tracking of development money for gender

equality, but also threatens to cut women's groups out of the increasingly technocratic and government-focused funding process (Craviotto & Schoenstein 2011; OECD, 2008).

To those fluent in development-speak, the prominence of the aid effectiveness agenda in the call signals an endorsement of government involvement in advancing gender equality. Even to people not in the know, the call repeatedly stresses the importance of working with governments to effect women's rights change. For example, the Fund is eligible to: 1) government agencies; 2) NGOs; and 3) partnerships between the two sectors. More notably, the Fund's stated priorities include "strategic partnerships" and programs in which "women's rights and mainstream actors are involved." The call explains the latter: "For example, where national mechanisms for women or women's NGOs are taking the lead in an application, the extent to which the plan involves mainstream actors – ministries, parliamentarians, etc. – will be a key criterion for determining support" (Call for Proposals, 2009, p. 4). This combination of policy focus and collaboration with governments squarely contributes to classic drivers of NGOization and suggests that the Fund's framing might promote the depoliticization and narrowing of women's movements. In the next chapter, I examine the effects of the Fund's priorities, asking how NGOization in particular might shape which groups progress through the Fund's grant review. In all, the majority of the call's framing places the Fund within mainstream development discourse and does not convey the contentions that were occurring within UNIFEM or the early Fund team's strong preference for making grants to women's organizations.

The language does take a turn in the section on "Focus Areas," starting on page five, where the tone pivots toward colloquial, and the text references activism and women's movements. Here, the definitions of economic and political empowerment link gender

equality with women's individual and collective voice and mobilizations in their homes, communities, and countries (FGE Call for Proposals, 2009, p. 5). Though policy implementation is still evident, for a page and half, the call sounds more like a treatise on women's rights across all realms of society than a vehicle for aid effectiveness. For example, the lengthy definition below uses phrases like "gender justice" and "women's voice, leadership and influence" and indicts public and private spheres in gender-based inequalities:

**Women's economic empowerment** strengthens women's voice, leadership and influence over economic policies and programmes to ensure the promotion and protection of equal opportunities and rights in both the public and private spheres. It enhances women's abilities to articulate their priorities, organize, and generate collective action to improve their livelihood options and supports asset-based community development to reduce the gender-differentiated impact of poverty. It ensures gender justice, from recognition of the value of unpaid care work to social protections for women, including those related to the current economic and financial crises and their linkages to climate change and food insecurity (p. 6)

This section stands out as the key place where the Fund team sought to infuse a degree of feminist analysis, gesturing toward structural inequalities and often-invisible issues like unpaid care work. At times using verbose descriptions, the team aimed to make the call open to a range of ideas and actions related to gender equality. Where other sections drew heavily on previous drafts and upheld the Steering Committee and UNIFEM's overarching vision, for this section, the Fund staff worked with a handful of thematic advisors within UNIFEM and gathered input from personal advisors outside of the agency to draft these definitions. Though the SC and UNIFEM leadership edited and approved this section, it had not been hammered out through the same extensive ProDoc review process that characterized the overall mandate.

In addition to the uneven framing, the first call also reveals a relationship-under-development between the Fund and its institutional home. UNIFEM is distant, alluded to in only two sentences. On the cover page, a UNIFEM logo sits above simple text with the Fund's title, visually linking the two, but not necessarily conveying ownership or formal authority through the design:



Whereas later calls describe the grantmaking body as “UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality,” in this call, responsibility is more diffuse: “A Secretariat manages the Fund’s activities at UNIFEM’s headquarters” (FGE Call for Proposals, 2009, p. 1). In the rest of the call, the Fund appears to be a stand-alone initiative, merely managed *at* UN headquarters. The first page presents the structure: a steering committee that “guides” the Fund; and a technical committee (TC) that assesses proposals. Later calls become vehement about the TC’s independence and the rigor of the grant review process, though neither are mentioned in the first call. (The TC had not been created yet, nor had the intensive scoring process detailed below).

b. 2011

The framing in the second call, launched in 2011, is a marked departure from the first. Its tone is much more coherent and the text has the least development jargon of the

three grant cycles. The writers matter: A feminist consultant contributed heavily to this call, overseen by the Fund's manager. According to staff present in this period, though the Fund did require approval for the text, UN Women oversight was minimal. Rather than squabble over the terms of the call, the Fund team imbued the document with a focus on the root causes of inequality and included priorities like a "rights-based approach" and "women in situations of marginalization" (FGE Call for Proposals, 2011, p. 4). Of note, the call also has a number of formatting or grammatical errors in the final version, suggesting it was produced with minimal internal scrutiny and less professionalism than later external communication documents.

The first paragraph reaffirms the centrality of policy implementation: "Grants are awarded directly to government agencies and women's civil society organizations so that they can turn their gender equality commitments into real gains in the lives of women and girls at local, national or regional levels" (p. 1). However, the rest of the opening section and the bulk of the narrative text locate the Fund in broader terms. For example, the first page declares, "The Fund for Gender Equality works to address the root causes of inequality, injustice, war and poverty by placing significant emphasis on the advancement of women's rights and women's political and economic empowerment." Aid effectiveness is mentioned only in the first sentence, with no further reference to the Paris Declaration, "harmonization," or aid reform. Of note, the definitions of women's economic and political empowerment themes have been pared down:

**Women's Political Empowerment Grants:** To increase women's political participation, leadership, and influence in the decisions that affect their lives, including through leadership trainings and education and with a focus on youth.

**Women’s Economic Empowerment Grants:** To increase women’s access to and control over resources and assets – including land, water, technology, and viable employment – while also addressing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and girls, with particular emphasis on holistic and environmentally sustainable development approaches.

Policy has dissolved from the descriptions. The first call’s feminist language related to structural inequalities, collective action, and women’s rights has been moved into the body of the call, and is not compressed into bulky definitions. In all, the call’s text appears more accessible to those outside of a development space and places women-led social change front and center as the primary vehicle for gender equality.

In the second call, the Fund makes a major change that mirrors the new language. Whereas NGOs of all kinds were eligible in Cycle 1, only *women-led* NGOs can apply in Cycle 2, along with government agencies. In Cycle 1, the Fund added an intermediate step, priority review (detailed in Eligibility) to ferret out groups lacking expertise in gender equality and leadership by women. In Cycle 2, this cut becomes a requirement. Staff members involved with the narrowing of eligible organization types describe the process as a relative non-issue institutionally. Asked if the Fund had to negotiate with UN Women to fund only women-led organizations, staff members seem almost surprised at the question and recount very little resistance to the change. Later, between Cycles 2 and 3, the Fund enshrined the women-led criterion in its second ProDoc. A staff member recalls why this change went so smoothly:

There’s a little trick I do... If things are coherent, you don’t get as much resistance. So when we did the [second] ProDoc, we made an effort to really justify it well, to organize it well, and at the end nobody questioned the idea that it’s women-led. That’s one reason. The other one is that we acknowledged that there’s a shrinking space for funding for women’s organizations, and if you get too generic, the funding gets diluted.

The fact that the Fund could make such a change, along with the autonomy it experienced in framing the call for proposals, exposes the changing nature of involvement by the Steering Committee and UN Women. Though the Steering Committee and Spain were still engaged in the Fund, the degree of negotiation and the stakes of the Fund dropped substantially from 2008/2009, when the Fund was a brand-new model for the agency.

At the same time, the call reverberates with the Fund team's dual preoccupations: an independent grant review process; and the program's value to UN Women. With diminishing grant monies, the Fund was uncertain about whether UN Women would continue to support the program – especially given the lack of influence afforded to the agency in the grant review process. The call strongly defends the direct independent grantmaking model, emphasizes the Fund's already "significant results." Twice, the document ties the Fund's mandate to UN Women's strategic plan, new at that time. For example, the first page proclaims, "Today, UN Women is pleased to announce the Fund for Gender Equality's Second Call for Proposals, reiterating the Fund's founding vision to help women achieve political and economic empowerment, two key priority areas outlined in UN Women's recently approved Strategic Plan (2012-2013)," followed by a link to the strategic plan website (FGE Call for Proposals, 2011, p. 1). The Fund's institutionalization is also visually presented, with a combined logo places the Fund squarely within UN Women:



Even as the Fund team tries to foreground women-led change and use more accessible language, the call is also aimed internally *at* UN Women. For example, the reference to a strategic plan would be largely irrelevant to organizations considering applying, who are presumably the key audience of a document aimed to solicit proposals. This mention would be justified if the call had requested that proposals that fit within this strategic plan, but no such request for alignment is indicated. In addition, the call provides a detailed description of existing donors and includes a call to “UN Member States, the private sector, and individuals” to contribute to the Fund. Again, these sections are not content useful for applicants, but they hint at two other audiences: donors and, possibly, UN Women, where the Fund’s external support may provide some legitimacy for the grantmaking program.

c. 2015

The third call in 2015, nearly four years after Cycle 2 and the first call released under the second Fund manager, demonstrates yet another shift. The Fund team develops this call with keen attention to the internal politics of UN Women and fewer ties to external women’s movement actors. While the framing appears to advance women-led change, the *process* for doing so further reveals an internal, institutional focus.

The third call is well-designed and sharply edited. In it, the Fund is repeatedly described as the “UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality” and, under the same logo as in the second call, is now positioned clearly as a UN Women program. The content departs significantly from the broad and open gender equality focus of the first two grant cycles. The third call centers on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the UN

launched as the Millennium Development Goals came to a close in 2015. Also known as the “post-2015 agenda,” the SDGs set global targets through 2030 around issues such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and climate change. Lauded by some women’s NGOs and questioned by others, the SDGs surely serve as a cornerstone to strategies for some members of global women’s movements. However, without accountability mechanisms for women’s movements or women’s NGOs, even of the informal and personal variety that the personal ties of the early staffers provided, the Fund’s framing derives mostly from institutional strategy.

A staff member involved in the SDG decision depicts the internal focus:

[I said,] “You know what? The SDGs are not approved yet but by the time we have these projects running, it’s going to be SDG momentum, so we have to make sure that this call is already an SDG call.” And so the name or the title of the call was Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment in the Post-2015 Agenda.

And from the start, we’ve been very strong on the messaging related to the SDGs. We used SDG terminology and everything, so we kind of built a lot of momentum around that. We have an SDG brochure where we’re like showing the link between the semi-finalists of the SDGs and it’s part of a lot of the analyses we’ve done of the select portfolio in the end. So I think that’s *given a lot of visibility to the Fund corporately and, you know, good points, let’s say, for the Fund as something relevant and that contributes to what UN Women is trying to do*. But there’s still a lot of work to do, I think, for us to be perceived maybe more part of the general programmatic work that UN Women does. [Emphasis added.]

Similarly, the Fund’s tightening of requirements to only support women’s NGOs combines a theoretical commitment to direct funding and, more prominently, attention to UN Women’s internal politics. In Cycle 3, the Fund entirely eliminates eligibility for governments, though it does endorse informal (i.e. not funded) partnerships with them. Whittled from Cycle 1, the Fund is now a grantmaker only for women-led civil society organizations (CSOs). The use of the term “CSOs” instead of “NGOs” has increased in development spheres as a broader term to describe, “voluntary organizations with governance and direction coming

from citizens or constituency members, without significant government-controlled participation or representation (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 123). Though in some settings “NGOs” is considered more contested than CSOs (Ibid.). However, for my study, I do not find any meaningful difference in which organizations applied. Moreover, in Cycle 1, the terms were used interchangeably in the call.

When asked about the change to only fund women’s organizations, Fund staff members cite several factors. First, the Fund’s resources have dropped by more than 80%. With so much less money to grant out, the need to target and limit funding has spiked. Second, holding governments accountable has proven challenging. One long-time Fund staff member describes:

It’s very hard to get governments to do things... Not because the governments are trying to be malicious, but just because it’s the way governments work. You know, you have a program who applies for this grant, a person who works for a ministry, they’re super excited, they leave, the position’s open for six months, someone finally gets hired, this is a top priority, you know, government shuts it down.

Another staff member links these challenges with greater need among women’s movements: “We had instances where governments took one year just to sign a [contract agreement], you know. So for us, that was not effective, that was not efficient, and we saw a need that women’s organizations had that was much more acute than governments.” She goes on, “...there [are] other UN mechanisms for governments to access funding. For us, we really wanted to kind of target organizations, civil society organizations that are really working with those that are most vulnerable, most marginalized, populations that are excluded.”

While the desire to more effectively, efficiently, and meaningfully support women’s organizations might, as another staff member states, preserve the Fund’s “values” and

“essence,” the funding change also serves an institutional purpose. A later staff member explains:

...Supporting government caused a little bit of noise because then it's like we got into the territory of the UN Women offices in the field. So they said, you know, like if this government is reporting to you, what is our role? You know, it caused a little bit of confusion on the accountability.

But as we redefined more our role in civil society, it's cleaned the relationship. Now our offices on the ground are the representatives of UN Women in their relationship with the government, and we have a mechanism by which we are strengthening civil society worldwide... If there is a country, for example, where there are tensions in the relationship between government and civil society, we can still support it, because we are under a global umbrella, and even that office can say, “You know what? This is a global program.” So in some way it helps in certain countries where there is tension and the relationship might be delicate.

Not funding governments is significant change from Cycle 1, when the framing and priorities placed government involvement front and center. Early ProDoc drafts and interview accounts affirm that funding governments (and, especially, government-civil society partnerships) were central tenets of the original vision. Six years later, the realities of funding governments and, especially, the challenges it posed for UN Women, led to the removal of this funding entirely.

With greater institutional savvy, Fund staff is able to leverage internal review processes (i.e. ProDoc revision) and political dynamics in the country offices to make a change that is both substantive and strategic. By Cycle 3, the Fund's staff is attuned to UN Women's structural tensions and political considerations.

d. Summarizing Framing Power in Stage 1

From the outside, the framing power that defines stage 1 (application) remains constant: impenetrable and held only by those inside the institution. From within, this

power is more complex. In Cycle 1, it is negotiated primarily internally and between at-times competing actors: the institution (UNIFEM), the formal accountability mechanism (the Steering Committee), a handful of informal external advisors, and Fund staff. In subsequent cycles, it is constituted primarily within the Fund's team, pending approval by UN Women. As the Fund is institutionalized – routinized into UN Women's emerging procedures and policies starting in 2010 – Fund leaders deliberately and strategically rely on rule-making (e.g. increased eligibility requirements, reporting, and standardized grantmaking processes) to minimize disputes with UN Women. In the process, they gain framing power over the substance of the call, but also fortify enforcement of requirements, which, as detailed in the next section, increases barriers of access for some women's organizations. While UN Women no longer plays such a strong role in shaping each call's overarching vision, institutional accountability prominently determines who can apply and the audience the Fund considers when drafting key texts.

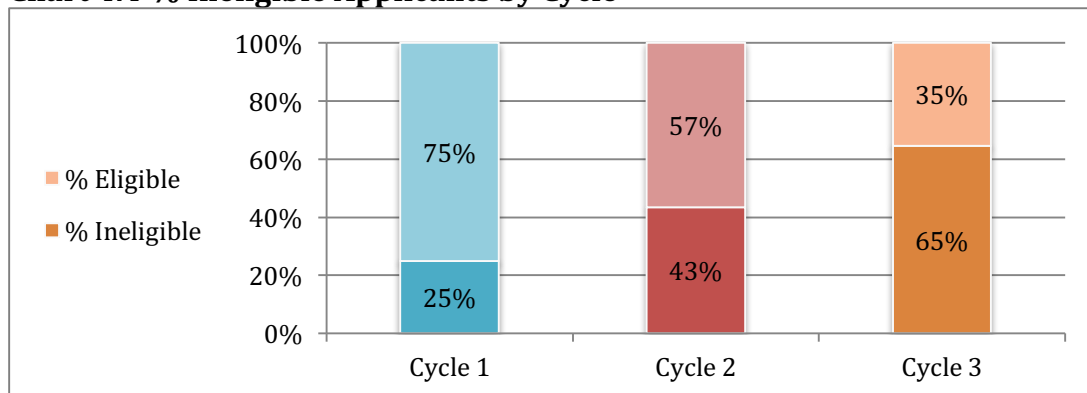
## **VI. Stage 2: Eligibility Review**

The Fund's eligibility requirements serve as the first barrier for those groups that submit applications and, as we will see over the next two chapters, prove a formidable – and unequal – hurdle for women's movement organizations from around the world. This stage introduces a new round of actors: external consultants hired to review applicants for their fit with the Fund's eligibility requirements. It also involves Fund staff members, who provide guidelines on how to apply requirements in practice and hire the consultants in the first place. *Ranking and measurement* power clearly drives this stage: applicants move forward depending on how they measure up to the stated criteria. At the same time,

operationalizing eligibility requirements involves a small amount of additional *framing power*, with the Fund defining how requirements are to be applied and reviewers interpreting this guidance. I find that these guidelines reflect changing accountabilities, with more leeway for women’s movements in Cycle 1 and increasing adherence to institutional rules in Cycles 2 and 3.

These changes manifest in rates of ineligibility. While an average of 45% (1639 of 3629) of applicants do not meet the Fund’s basic requirements overall, ineligibility rises in each cycle, from 25% to 43% to 65% in Cycles 1, 2, and 3.

**Chart 4.4 % Ineligible Applicants by Cycle**



These high rates of decline could reflect the rarity of open grant calls for gender equality work and points to the large demand for such funding. In the rest of this chapter, I examine the origin of these requirements, finding that institutional accountability shapes both what they are and how they are implemented. Despite the seemingly straightforward and neutral process – a simple “yes” or “no” to basic requirements – changing enforcement of eligibility significantly affects which groups move to the next stage of technical committee review.

a. Priority Review

The low ineligibility rate in Cycle 1 is skewed due to two important distinctions from the general grant review process. First, Cycle 1 includes two sub-cycles, Catalytic and Implementation, which differentially influence the rate. Catalytic has a mere 11% ineligibility rate, as opposed to 35% of Implementation grants. Unfortunately, Catalytic is the single sub-cycle for which I have no data on the reasons groups were declined. However, the different decline rates point to two probable factors. First, only Implementation proposals required applicants to identify a specific existing law or policy that they would target. Nearly 30% of declined Implementation applicants did not meet this requirement. Second, the kinds of applicants differed by sub-cycle. As I examine in chapter 5, the number of government applicants – which were declined at much higher rates than mid-range NGOs – were much more likely to apply in Cycle 1 when the large grant category was available.

Second, Cycle 1 included an intermediate stage in which eligible groups were reviewed for their fit with Fund priorities. The Fund's management team, with some input from eligibility reviewers, provided a preliminary rating of priority (high, medium, low, or not priority) for all eligible applications. High and medium priority applicants provided a clear and compelling strategy for advancing women's rights, including a specific gender equality law or policy for Implementation grants. Low priority applicants proposed a strategy, but lacked compelling rationale/evidence of implementability or did not have a sufficient background in women's rights and gender equality. Non-priority applications met the basic criteria, but failed to articulate a clear plan and/or had little to no track record in gender equality. All medium and high priority proposals advanced to the

Technical Committee Review, 42% total, compared to 57% reviewed by the TC in Cycle 2 and 35% in Cycle 3. (Note that, even with the intermediate review, Cycle 3 reduces the grant pool before TC review more than any other cycle. As described below and in the next chapter, this is mostly due to a strong enforcement of audit requirements rather than a notable change in the applicant pool.)

This stage grew out of a combination of time constraints. It seemed unlikely that the brand-new TC have the capacity to review so many grants in time for the December deadline. (As previously noted, the Fund anticipated a total of 500 applications, but received more than 1,200.) Plus, the Fund discovered that many eligible applicants had presented weak proposals and had little experience in women's rights or gender equality. In Cycle 1, priority review was used to cut proposals early, advance women-led projects, and not overtax the TC. In Cycles 2 and 3, the same objectives were met through more rigid eligibility requirements, detailed below.

Developed in a rush and before the grantmaking process had been solidified, the priority review was borne out of necessity, but could have become part of the formal grant review stages. Why didn't it? I posit two reasons: institutional emphasis placed on rules and policies; and agency-wide devaluation of philanthropic expertise. When asked about what the Fund's early team brought to the table, a high-level UNIFEM staff member cited "experience with grantmaking in the real world" and "ethics around how do you assess proposals," but goes on, "What would it have looked like if we had thought about it, if we had hired kind of more subject area specialists? You know, that might have changed things a little bit more. We might have had more vigor in terms of thinking through evaluation and those kinds of things. I don't know. I don't know. It's so hard to say." The early team did

have skills to manage competitive grant review, and the Fund manager especially brought over fifteen years as a program officer and program manager and had a wealth of knowledge in substantive selection of grants in Latin America and globally. Despite this, the Fund's early staff was never seen as "area specialists" in selecting women's rights programs, nor were experts of this kind brought in through hiring. Rather, to UNIFEM and later UN Women, the Fund's team made most "sense" as an administrative mechanism.

In this context, starting in Cycle 2, the Fund chose two paths in order to still: keep an open call for proposals; prioritize proposals with high potential impact for women's rights and gender equality; and send only a manageable number of applications to the technical committee. First and foremost, Fund leadership leveraged framing power to strategically embed new rules and policies into Fund requirements. For example, starting in Cycle 2, only women-led NGOs could apply. This point of learning and refinement reduced the number of non-women-led applicants and shifted the applicant pool. These changes in framing flowed into ranking and measurement power: The Fund could point to eligibility review as the gateway for applicants, rather than focus on the Fund's own assessment of organizations' gender-related expertise. Though, as I find here and in chapter 5, rates of decline remained high. As this section shows, the increasing number and enforcement of rules used to cut the applicant pool, rather than a qualitative assessment, at times contradicts the Fund's openness to women's movement actors.

In addition, the Fund centered the technical committee as the keystone of the grant review. The TC means that quality and fit are assessed by external advisors versed in applicants' contexts and issue areas. The TC's review gains power through its "empirical" scoring and ranking. However, as I foreground in chapter 3 and discuss in detail below, the

early and later staffs have very different relationships to women's movements. In the early period, the Fund used the TC's ranking and measurement power to build independence from UNIFEM and at the same time recruit women's movement members to the TC. The later staff, much more attentive to UN Women's rules and politics, undertook a "competitive" hiring process in which UN Women staff helped TC members. *These changing accountabilities transformed the TC from a stealth feminist arm of the Fund to a development-expertise-heavy review board.*

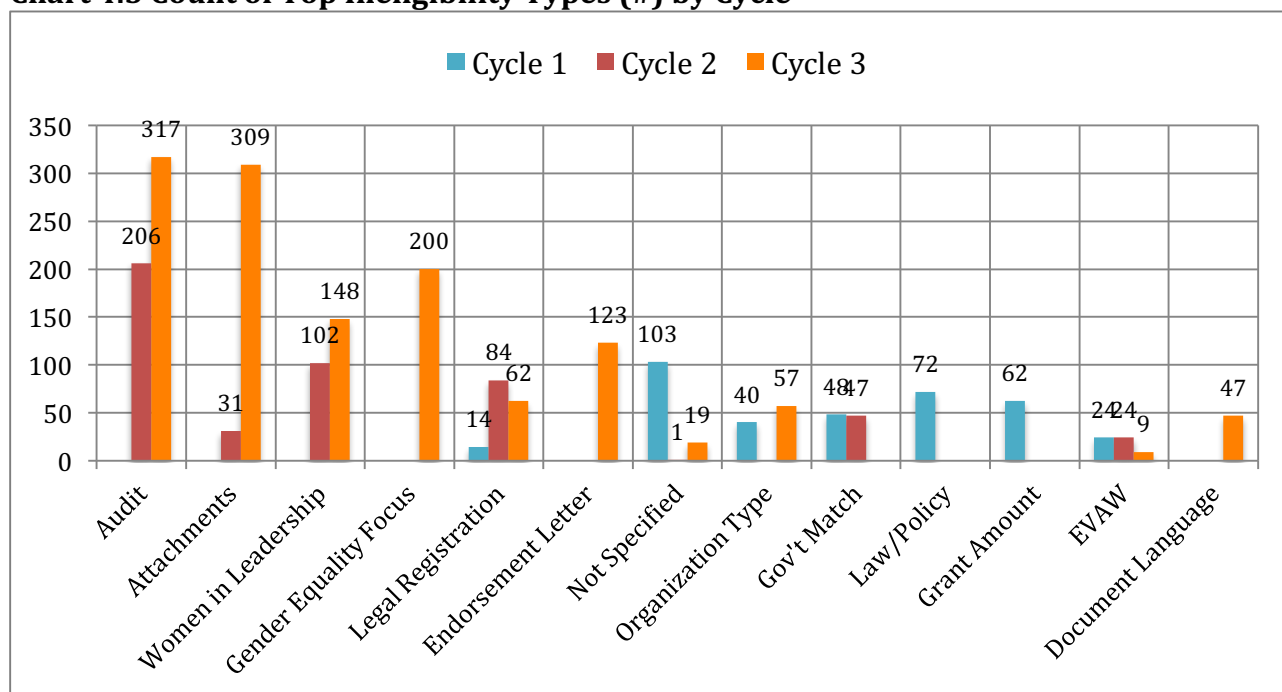
A third path, that taken by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, would have been to bring UN Women's country and regional offices into the review process early on. In chapter 3, I have described the lengths to which Fund staff went to keep review out of the hands of UN Women. This same skepticism about UN involvement curtailed a UNTF model almost immediately. Indeed, many Fund staff members continue to applaud the Fund's independent, TC-led review, even as they and UN Women staff note that this same independence poses challenges for building buy-in from country and regional offices around grant selection and management.

The removal of a priority review in Cycles 2 and 3 parallels the Fund's use of ranking and measurement to entrench its values in policies and rules. Leveraging the power most legible to its institution, the Fund leans on scoring and ranking in its two largest cuts to the grant pool, eligibility and TC review. The scores and ranks themselves serve as processes in which relations of ruling are embedded. Looking at the requirements illuminates how those relations slowly but consistently move the Fund's attention from an outward, movement focus to an inward, institutional one.

b. More Requirements, Stronger Enforcement

Looking back at the three grant cycles, we see that the number of reasons to decline a group increases over time. Accounting for those that are *not* enforced Cycle 1 (\* in the table), the total number of requirements that can render an applicant ineligible grows from 8 to 10 to 13 in Cycles 1, 2, and 3, respectively.<sup>11</sup> The changing and expanding requirements are illustrated in Chart 4.5 and Table 4.6.

**Chart 4.5 Count of Top Ineligibility Types (#) by Cycle<sup>12</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> The requirements are mutually exclusive, but applicants could be declined for multiple reasons. However, less than 20% of applicants overall are declined for two or more reasons, with 22% in Cycles 1 and 3 and 12% in Cycle 2. Of applicants with multiple declines, 75% only have two stated reasons. This has two implications. First, though some of the decline counts below are duplicative, the majority has a single reason for ineligibility. Second, there might be applicants eliminated for the first or worst decline identified, rather than for all criteria not met. This was the case Cycle 1’s Implementation sub-cycle, in which many applicants were eliminated for requirements such as lacking legal registration or not identifying a specific law or policy, but not tagged as missing a matching contribution or applying twice in the same cycle. Cycles 2 and 3 appear to have more comprehensively captured multiple decline reasons.

<sup>12</sup> Four minor categories (other, repeat application, country, and grantee) are not included. Across all cycles, these were only cited as declines 11, 5, 4, and 1 total times, respectively.

**Table 4.6 Eligibility Requirements by Cycle**

Requirement	Ineligible If	ALL CYCLES	Limited Cycles		
			Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Legal Registration	Is not legally registered	X			
Organization Type	Is not an eligible organization type <sup>b</sup>	X			
Audit	Does not have two years of audits attached <sup>a</sup>	X			
Attachments	Incorrect or missing required attachments*	X			
Women in Leadership	Staff and board are both less than 50% women; number women in leadership positions is insufficient (not applied to governments.)			X	X
Gender Equality Focus	Does not demonstrate a background of working in gender equality				X
Law/Policy	Program has not identified a specific law or policy it will advance		X <sup>c</sup>		
Government Match	Government applicant does not present a matching contribution		X	X	(N/A)
EVAW	Has an exclusive focus on Violence Against Women (supported by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women)	X			
Endorsement Letter	No letter from a gender "coordination mechanism" (governmental, non- governmental or multi-stakeholder). Letter can not come from UN Women <sup>a</sup>		X		X
Document Language	Documents are not in eligible language				X
Country	Program is in an ineligible country or region	X			
Grant Amount	Ineligible grant request amount <sup>d</sup>	X			
Repeat Application	Applied more than once in a given cycle <sup>e</sup>	X			
Grantee	Is a current Fund grantee				X

<sup>a</sup> = Cycle 1: Listed as a requirement in call for proposals, but not enforced in grant review as an automatic decline  
<sup>b</sup> = Ineligible organizations vary by cycle. C1: International NGOs only if they have a local office; no multilateral agencies, private entities, or individuals; emphasis on women's NGOs, but mainstream NGOs still eligible; C2: No global or international NGOs; no regional inter-governmental agencies; C3: Women's NGOs only, no international NGOs; no governments; no multilateral agencies, private companies, or individuals. Tracking of  
<sup>c</sup> = Implementation proposals only.  
<sup>d</sup> = Unevenly applied because applicants entry was sometimes incorrect (e.g. with different international standards).  
<sup>e</sup> = Irregularly enforced. Many repeat applications not caught during grant review.

At a glance, Chart 4.5 shows higher numbers of cuts in Cycles 2 and 3 for audits, incorrect attachments, women in leadership, and gender equality focus. In contrast, Cycle 1 is mostly “not specified” (100% of Catalytic), or lacking a law or policy, incorrect grant amount, or no government match. Only two categories, ending violence against women (EVAW) and legal registration, affect all three cycles. Of note, the Cycle 2’s lack of declines for organization type does not mean all groups that applied were of eligible forms. Rather, this requirement was enforced primarily through “women in leadership,” with ineligible groups, such as men-led NGOs, cited for not meeting the 50% staff/board/leadership requirement, rather than for their organization type. Cycle 3 appears to blend this approach, with some egregious cases, such as large international organizations, identified as incorrect organization types, but many more groups, such as smaller, men-led NGOs, listed under the women in leadership category. None of the cycles effectively catches organizations that apply multiple times in a single cycle. My review of the grants database reveals more than 50 instances of proposals that should have been removed according to this criterion, ten times the five cited for this reason.

The changing requirements reveal gradually crystalizing grantmaking priorities about *who* is best positioned to enact gender equality. As described above, the Fund steadily narrows its funding from NGOs, governments, and partnerships to only women’s organizations, a relatively smooth change. As of Cycle 2, the Fund implements clear criteria: Women must constitute at least 50% of staff and boards and be in a sufficient number of leadership positions. In Cycle 3, the Fund takes the focus even further, asking for “organizational curriculum vitae” to prove that groups have a track record of working on gender equality. A staff member describes the reasoning:

Because we have less funding – this third call is only seven million – we didn't want to have opportunistic civil society that was saying, "Okay, let's open an area of work in gender... let's try to apply for this funding." But we really wanted the women's organizations that have the expertise to apply, and so in the selection process we even asked for a CV where they can demonstrate to us that they have expertise in gender issues, that they've been working on that.

The CV requirement operationalizes the Fund's value of directly supporting women's groups and highlights Fund's changing context: an increase in mainstream applicants as the Fund becomes better known, paired with a drop in grant monies. The decision to home in on women-led organizations is both a substantive preference and a tool to cut the grant pool to a more manageable size given dwindling grant monies.

Even as the Fund prioritizes women's organizations, a number of requirements confine women's movements' access to United Nations resources. One long-time staff member acknowledges the differential effect these might have for women's organizations in certain contexts:

This is where other funds for women's organizations have a leverage: the requirement for two audits, the requirement for legal registration. Some women's organizations don't have legal registration. In Yemen - I mean, how do you get legal registration in a war-torn country? So for us, I mean, that's something that we've just had to be like, "Okay, this is the limitation that we have as a UN entity, and this is where other women's funders can come in and fill that gap."

The impact of imposing requirements such as legal registration and an audit is not a simple cut to the applicant pool. Rather, as I explore in detail in the next chapter, these application rules have differential effects for particular regions and types of organizations seeking grants and they promote a level of professionalization often at odds with feminist NGOs and women's movements.

Amidst some hopeful signs for women's movements seeking funding, the Fund's increasing institutional accountability manifests in both more diverse decline reasons and

more *rigid enforcement* of requirements. Though listed in the first call for proposals, the Fund did not actually enforce three requirements – the audit, endorsement letter, or complete roster of attachments – in Cycle 1. Rather, the Fund worked with semifinalists to retroactively gather audits or attachments required by the UN in order to make the grants they wanted to make. These very same requirements became some of the top reasons for declines in Cycles 2 and 3. Lack of an audit is the number one cause for decline in both latter cycles, cutting more than one-fifth of the applicant pool each round. Attachments have a smaller effect in Cycle 2 (3% of the pool), but are a source of ineligibility for over 20% of applicants in Cycle 3. Endorsement letters, required in Cycle 3 but not Cycle 2, are cited as decline reasons for 9% of applicants.

So how did these three requirements become leading preconditions for eligibility? I pose two hypotheses: first that the institution required more documentation, for example as UN Women established its rules and policies; and second, that Fund staff *themselves* became more invested in demanding them. The answer is a combination and reveals the degree to which staff members internalized institutional rules over time.

In Cycle 1, Fund staff were necessarily defining how requirements would be applied. The call, written in a rush of negotiations, emerged when formal financial and operational policies had not yet been set for managing the Fund's grants. Wiggle room also grew out of the short-lived period of extreme autonomy in the day-to-day workings of the Fund. Because they saw the high bar of the audit posed in particular to small women's organizations, Fund staff overseeing grant review made the call to exclude audits from consultants' eligibility checklists. The endorsement letter and long list of attachments also troubled staff members, who felt the short turn-around (less than three months) to develop

proposals meant that these “required” items could unfairly cut good women’s rights groups. In contrast, the Fund readily enforced the requirement that governments provide evidence of matching contributions to their proposed programs, even though the short deadline to submit proposals made this unfeasible for some government applicants. As staffers matched the stated requirements with the reality of the grant pool, they chose how and when to observe the Fund’s own requirements, limiting the impact of those that it saw as unduly burdensome to women’s groups when making their first cut.

After the first cycle, Fund and UN Women staff members alike almost entirely stopped questioning these requirements and their placement in eligibility. For example, when presented with data about the high rate of decline due to audits, Fund staff members first expressed surprise. Reflecting further, some saw audits as a necessary step to weed out groups without capacity to manage UN funds – in other words, as a tool to find the right kinds of groups to support, given UN rules. Others worried that strong women’s rights groups might be eliminated as a result, but saw the requirement as organizationally non-negotiable within UN Women. A later Fund staff member described requiring an audit as “the balancing act of the UN” and “the responsibility of the Fund in some way also to preserve the – I don’t know how to say it, but to preserve the safeguards also of the institution.”

While the need for an audit is now firmly established as UN Women policy for the Fund’s grants, the taken-for-grantedness of this and other UN-defined requirements after Cycle 1 may have curbed creativity about what the Fund asks of applicants. For instance, early movement accountability and a value placed on organizations’ time could have led the Fund to ask a simple question, “Do you have 2 years of audits?” and then verified for

groups that made it through TC review. Similarly, the other barriers that are more administrative than substantive, such as submitting attachments in approved languages, or those that might take an excessive amount of time, like presenting a formal endorsement letter from a gender “coordination mechanism,” could enter at later stages, rather than for a whole grant pool. Such shifts would not eliminate the need to meet these requirements to receive a grant, but could reduce the high costs of developing an application for the 45% of applicants that never got past stage 1.

Changing enforcement of formal rules and growing forms of ineligibility signal the Fund’s increasing accountability to UN Women. Cycle 1’s malleable approach to rule enforcement was untenable as the agency set ever-more formal rules to govern the Fund’s grantmaking. The Fund’s new level of institutionalization within UN Women provided openings for discretion, such as choosing to fund only women’s organizations, compatible with the agency’s mandate and structures, but closed down discretion in areas where the requirements of funding within the UN entrenched certain practices of institutional accountability. Fund staff of all periods, including the early feminist funding professionals, began to take for granted and enforce more formal eligibility requirements.

## **VII. Stage 3: TC Review**

In chapter 3, The TC is at once a means for Fund staff both to “protect” its independent review from UN Women *and* gain legitimacy within the institution. The changes in the TC composition, from mostly women’s movement actors to development experts, results directly from the individual Fund staff members’ accountabilities. Early staff members recruit from their networks and with a clear strategy to embed feminist

activist in the center of grant review. Later staff members continue to value the TC's independence and the contextual knowledge members bring to the process, but prioritize competitive and transparent recruitment over women's movement affiliation. In both periods, there are actors (Fund staff) doing work – building up, maintaining, and protecting the TC – to realize their particular objectives. This is the heart of the story of politics in any institutional context. In what follows, I examine how it manifests within this distinctive stage in the Fund's grant review.

a. Scoring Process

Like eligibility, *ranking and measurement power* drives TC review. After moving past eligibility, all proposals are scored by *at least* two TC members (as many as four in Cycle 3), to ensure consistency and identify potential divergences. The Fund gathers all scores and identifies the top-scoring proposals for each region. In this moment, a great deal of mathematical juggling occurs. For example, the Fund could take a simple average of the scores. But then how should the Fund compare a case with two medium scores versus one with a very high and very low score? And what about a TC member that consistently scores lower than others? What, if any, comparison should occur across regions, with their different TC groups? Such cases generally fall to the Fund's grantmaking specialist overseeing the grant process, who, in consultation with the manager, typically sets a strategy and develops mathematical formulae to deal with discrepancies.

These are all classic issues of measurement reliability that come into play when trying to apply quantitative techniques on data where the coding rules are unclear. The rules for handling unreliability are themselves a second layer of measurement – for

example, large discrepancies should be a signal of high unreliability of judgment. Lacking calibration to any standard outside the applications themselves, some reviewers could be systematically high or low.

Consistently, the Fund has pulled out applications with large divergences between any two TC members (e.g. 20-30 percentage points), which are then flagged for additional review by UN Women staff in the relevant country or regional office. In addition, “global reviewers” may be brought in to arbitrate or, in rare cases, Fund staff might intervene.

Top proposals then return to the regional TC to be *ranked* – numerical ordering that the Fund then compiles. The final rankings require further value judgments. For example, if one applicant is ranked as 1, 1, 2, and 10 by four TC members, does it receive the same ranking as a group ranked as 3, 3, 4, and 4? They have the same total added score, but indicate very different standing. Again, the grantmaking specialist in each cycle develops a rationale and quantitative approach that she then turns into the final ranking.

Only in cases where scores diverge above a certain threshold does the Fund examine the qualitative analyses. Otherwise, the detailed input from TC members comes to bear primarily for the final step in TC review, when the Fund is working with UN Women to decide which of the top-scored proposals should be invited to submit full-fledged proposals. Though the TC is comprised of thematic and regional experts, their quantitative scores form the foundation of the TC review stage.

b. “Empirical” Guidelines

Fund’s scoring guidelines reveal unmistakable differences in the Fund’s priorities for each cycle and give life to the numerical scoring process. The actual TC score sheets,

documents with guidance on how to score proposals, again reveal the shifting locus of power and changing accountabilities for the Fund. Like the calls for proposals, framing power, or the *who* and *how* behind the score sheets, ranges by cycle and vitally influences the final text.

For all three cycles, the Fund identified major areas of consideration and provided several guiding sub-questions or prompts for each. In Cycles 1 and 3, TC members provided a score for each sub-question. The Fund would total these scores and then weight each area for a final score out of 100%. In Cycle 2, the areas and guiding questions created a framework for TC members to assess proposals and then assign an overall total score out of 100. In all cases, the Fund provided a breakdown of the criteria for assigning a given score. Table 4.7 presents the areas, weighting, and score guidance for the three cycles.

Cycles 1 and 3 center on meeting specific criteria delineated for detailed sub-questions, then calculated into a weighted total. To receive the highest score, a proposal must be a potential “model” in a given area. In contrast, Cycle 2 places discretion for an overall assessment entirely into the hands of the TC members, who provide a single score for each proposal. Such differences highlight the impact of the individuals governing decision-making and the effects of their competing accountabilities.

**Table 4.7 Technical Committee Score Sheet Format**

Cycle	Areas (Weighting)	Questions/Format	Scoring Guidance
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall Fund Priorities (30%)</li> <li>2. Results (25%)</li> <li>3. Rationale (20%)</li> <li>4. Partnerships (15%)</li> <li>5. Sustainability &amp; capacity (10%)</li> </ol>	22 scored questions, 1-5, weighted by area, score 0-100	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 = Does not make the case</li> <li>2 = Little evidence</li> <li>3 = Mostly meets criteria</li> <li>4 = Meets criteria with significant evidence</li> <li>5 = Meets criteria and has potential to be a model</li> </ol>
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall Vision &amp; Strategic Ability to Create Structural Change in the Arena of Gender Equality</li> <li>2. Innovation, Creativity &amp; Participatory Processes</li> <li>3. Engagement of Women in Situations of Marginalization</li> <li>4. Strong Partnerships</li> </ol>	One overall score 0-100 with supporting narrative; areas not scored separately or weighted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90-100: This proposal is excellent and I would endorse funding it without any reservation. The group articulates a cogent analysis of power and demonstrates the capacity to shift gender relations and effect substantive change. The proposal goes above and beyond the criteria and demonstrates excellent promise, creativity, originality and potential impact.</li> <li>• 80-90: This proposal is very strong and this project merits funding. It meets all or most of the criteria. With additional support, it could be a “top” proposal.</li> <li>• 70-80: This proposal meets some of the criteria. With support and restructuring it might be a project that merits funding.</li> <li>• 60-70: This proposal meets a few of the criteria and/or it poses concerns for me.</li> <li>• 0-60: I would not recommend this proposal for funding.</li> </ul>
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevance of the proposal (30%)</li> <li>2. Implementation strategies (40%)</li> <li>3. Added values elements (30%)</li> </ol>	11 scored questions, 1-10, weighted by area for final score 0-100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 = Absent or inappropriate (Note the comments about in which specific cases to assign a zero.)</li> <li>• 1-4 = Weak fulfillment of the criteria</li> <li>• 5 = Average fulfillment of the criteria</li> <li>• 6-7 = Good fulfillment of the criteria</li> <li>• 8-9 = Strong fulfillment of the criteria</li> <li>• 10 = Outstanding fulfillment of the criteria (This score should be given to a criteria [sic] that is fulfilled in such a way that it could be a model of best practice for others.)</li> </ul>

Sources: TC Scoring Guidelines (personal communication, 2009; 2016).

Throughout Cycle 1, Fund staff and UNIFEM management negotiated the Fund's values and goals in every stage of the grant process. The cycle's complex and lengthy TC score sheet reflect tensions between development and feminist funding approaches, between institutional and movement accountabilities. The areas, questions, and weighting were determined entirely by Fund staff and UNIFEM management, particularly the Fund manager and UNIFEM's Deputy Director of Programs. No one from the steering committee, UNIFEM's thematic or regional offices, or technical committee provided input. Much like the call for proposals, the score sheets were developed in extreme haste – finalized just days before the TC review commenced – and provide a glimpse into the competing accountabilities present in the early days of the Fund.

Also like the call, this key text was a medley of ideas, a sort of “more is more” approach in which lengthy explanations and verbose descriptions incorporated different and at times competing priorities. For example, scoring of partnerships would warrant more points if a “Programme explicitly coordinates with an existing gender theme group (gov't, UN, etc.), women's NGOs, inter-ministerial group working on gender equality, etc.” (personal communication, 2009). Language for the “gender theme group” and inter-ministerial groups” came directly from UNIFEM management, whose ideas of partnerships included such political institutions. Fund staff saw this as a necessary concession, but also made efforts to elevate women's NGOs elsewhere in the scoring process. For a cycle without a women-led requirement, references to women's NGOs enabled the Fund to inject the emphasis into its “empirical criteria.” Staff hoped that, in the hands of a TC with prominent women's movement actors, such an emphasis might override the more traditional “development” language elsewhere.

During this round, Fund staff embraced the idea of a robust “empirical” scoring process. Driven to keep UN Women staff outside of a central decision-making role, the Fund propped up its TC as the hallmark of good grantmaking. Fund staff repeatedly emphasized the “rigor,” “independence,” and “empirical” basis for the TC process in internal documents and presentations, as well as public documentation about the Fund. Far from neutral, the score sheets were forged amid the Fund’s initial and at-times tenuous institutionalization.

By Cycle 2, the Fund was operating with less day-to-day management involvement and had convincingly used its ranking and measurement power internally to establish the credibility of the TC scoring process. For the Fund, its TC was in place (with many of the same members as Cycle 1) and while the *idea* of independent, rigorous scoring had spread through the institution, the agency was not involved in the actual scoring system. This cycle offers an important deviation and a window into the single round when feminist funding experts were in the driver’s seat. Fund staff relied more heavily on TC members’ evaluation of proposals overall, and the criteria for assessment reflected more rights-based and feminist priorities in the grantmaking.

Still operating under the first feminist “outsider” manager, the Fund’s greater autonomy had two divergent results in Cycle 2: more explicit activist and women’s movement language *and* a preoccupation with proving “alignment” with UN Women and its strategic plan. While both these paths are evident in Cycle 2’s call for proposals, the women’s movement priority clearly shines through in the score sheet. For example, though both other cycles have a sub-question related to “excluded” or “marginalized” women, this priority is one of the four overarching areas in Cycle 2. The guidance is also different. Cycle 3 allocates a high score for “Proposals that demonstrate a commitment to working with

women and girls that are economically, politically, socially, culturally, or otherwise excluded, marginalized, and/or disempowered” (personal communication, 2016). Cycle 2 describes the same priority as, “Groups that promote leadership and engage the meaningful participation of women in decision making and which promote greater voice and empowerment with an emphasis on marginalized women...” (personal communication, 2016). From “a commitment to working with” to a much more active role in promoting leadership, meaningful participation, and voice, the language and priorities in Cycle 2 are distinct from the more results-oriented score sheets in Cycles 1 and 3.

Cycle 2’s TC review stage is one of the Fund’s few moments of successful simultaneous institutional and movement accountability. By making the TC scoring a strongly quantitative and “unbiased” process, the Fund achieves institutional approval; this, in turn, creates space for feminist funding values, including placing grant decisions in the hands of in-region women’s movement actors.

In Cycle 3, though still managing grant review relatively independently, development experts on staff returned to a more rigid and detailed scoring system. Whereas early staff used lengthy score sheets to infuse their values and prop up the Fund’s ranking and measurement power within the institution, later staff describe the extensive process as a value in and of itself. While the motivations differ, both staffs generate rigid score sheets for TC members to complete. The wording and priority areas in both cycles are noticeably development-centered, with a focus on policy implementation, evidence-based interventions, and sustainable models. A Cycle 3 TC member, one of the few I encountered with a feminist funding frame, critiqued the process’s rigidity:

I don't know how the projects were marked before, how they were reviewed before in UNIFEM system, but I think with the scoring, giving marks, filling tables, that's very hard, I think. I think it's a very well-developed process, of course, which is okay. I think also somehow – because I know that the same projects had more than one reviewer, but it's very bureaucratized in a way. So really you cannot go beyond these marks, you know. And if you analyze what is valued in the project proposal – now I cannot remember these columns or rows, but there were like, you know, classical things in development agenda, like scalability or – I cannot remember right now what else, but you know, like advocacy.

She draws the connection between the bureaucracy itself and the scoring sheets. She also highlights the development focus, including strategies such as advocacy. Indeed, as with Cycle 1, Cycle 3's score sheet defined partnerships as with mainstream actors and governmental or inter-governmental institutions. (Cycle 2's partnership guidance never mentions governments, but refers to “key constituencies, communities and stakeholders.”) Of note, Cycle 3 was the first time the Fund's call for proposals listed how the TC would score proposal, broken down into areas and points. This new level of transparency meant that UN Women (and the public) could see exactly how proposals would be assessed. Such openness departs from Cycle 1, when the score sheets were not even created at the time of the call, and Cycle 2, when the score sheets were much more open-ended and seen only by Fund staff and TC members.

In addition to the priorities embedded in the score sheets, the formats marked a different relationship between the Fund and the TC. The piecemeal scoring by sub-questions in Cycles 1 and 3 broke areas – and their scores – into *the Fund's* priorities. Cycle 2's more open approach meant TC members could assess proposals with much greater liberty and based on their own expertise. The weighting further removed power from the technical committee. Though they could see raw numbers, without calculating the weights, TC members could not easily view or compare their own proposals' final scores. In

contrast, TC members in Cycle 2 might re-score proposals to more accurately reflect their assessment relative to the entire pool they reviewed.

The genesis of these score sheets reveals the important confluence of individuals' accountabilities and the Fund's institutional locations. In Cycle 1, the Deputy Director brought in institutional considerations and more political concerns, such as the role of UN gender theme groups as potential partners, and feminist outsiders added language to elevate women's movements. In Cycle 3, the Fund's development expertise on staff similarly shaped the scoring priorities. Cycle 2 was the exception, with Fund staff free to implement a more open process for technical committee members to assess and influence the final scores.

#### **VIII. Stage 4: Semifinalist**

The semifinalist stage starts when top-rated applicants are notified and invited to submit a full-fledged proposal. These proposals are lengthy, have a strong focus on projected results, and include more extensive budgeting than the original concept note. All applicants receive technical assistance (TA) over roughly two months. Prior to hiring monitoring and reporting specialists (M&Rs) in late 2011, the Fund employed monitoring and evaluation consultants for the TA work. From the second cycle onward, the M&Rs, along with country or regional office staff, have led technical assistance. Finally, a slimmed down technical committee, pulled from the full TC cohort, reviews the full-fledged proposal documents and again scores proposals per Fund-issued guidelines. The Fund compiles scores, seeks UN Women input for discrepancies, and then uses the scores to make the final grant selection in the next stage.

Several factors make the semi-finalist stage distinct from other stages. First, it is the most uneven stage between the cycles. Catalytic applicants in Cycle 1 do not have it all and the percent of semifinalists that become grantees varies greatly, from 60% in Cycle 1 (Implementation only) to 72% in Cycle 2 to under 40% in Cycle 3. The semifinalist stage also combines another iterative round of framing, with the Fund issuing guidance to: applicants (new proposal formats); technical assistance experts (written guidance and training); and TC reviewers (scoring sheets and guidelines). None of these documents is ever made public, but operates exclusively between the Fund and the people involved in the semi-finalist stage.

More importantly, this is the only stage with direct, personal contact between grant applicants and the Fund. As a result, it includes the largest degree of resignification of any grant stage. Through TA, applicants can ask questions and glean a much clearer idea of the Fund's specific priorities. The contestation that happens emerges in a more interactive context with actual people representing different points of view and priorities (including those of UN Women's country offices in later cycles) rather than these being abstracted into textual form. These interactions create space for applicants to redefine their work and exert resignification power in the final proposals.

In addition, UN Women plays a changing role over the three cycles, with increasing influence in how applications are interpreted. As I describe below, decentralized interactions between applicants and country or regional office staff add the office's own priorities and implementation politics into the mix. Unlike the other stages, the Fund's oversight is much less enforceable, creating space for political views and interpretations by

UN Women's offices to inform applicants' submissions and shaping the input UN Women provides in the final stage.

a. A Barometer for Institutionalization

In Cycle 1, the semifinalist stage was developed in motion. Though stated in the call for proposals, the details were designed very belatedly, after top-rated Implementation applicants had been notified. (Catalytic grants were awarded without this step. This decision had been made prior to launching the call for proposals, based on both the smaller size of the grants and the looming December deadline to make grants.)

Starting in early 2010, The Fund team drafted several versions of a full-fledged proposal, which was then vetted and approved by UNIFEM's deputy director. The combined outcome consisted of three components: 1) an expanded narrative building off the original concept note; 2) a budget that complied more fully with UNIFEM budgetary formats; and 3) a "logical framework," or "logframe" matrix and companion narrative to show the link between proposed activities and a program's desired results. The logframe, ubiquitous in development settings, is a results-based model of program planning and evaluation, as well as a means for tracking progress based on pre-selected indicators. In other words, it too is a set of measurement rules.

Feminist critiques of the tool point to the considerable time and energy activists must spend to complete logframes, often required by donors, and argue, "*The linearity of many tools* – especially widely used methods like the Logical Framework or "LogFrame" – *have been problematic* because they flatten change processes into cause-effect relationships that cannot capture and measure complex social changes, and may even mislead us about

how these occur” (Batliwala & Pittman, 2010, p. 10, emphasis in original). Knowing these critiques, the Fund staff had originally hoped to use alternative feminist monitoring and evaluation tools, including as part of the full-fledged proposals, and had begun to enlist support from within their own networks. However, by March of 2010, when the Fund released the full-fledged proposal template, the need to show results *in a way that fit with UNIFEM’s existing standards* was clear – and embedded in the new proposal.

This process was occurring at the exact moment the Fund was trying to articulate its overarching goals and strategies in line with UNIFEM’s two results frames: the management results frame (MRF) and the development results frame (DRF). The former was a logframe linking the activities of each program, department, or office to overall operational goals, the latter connected their substantive results to several overarching results goals. Though UNIFEM encouraged each program to clearly identify its contribution to the MRF and DRF, the pressure heightened as the agency braced for integration into the new “gender equality entity” that would become UN Women.<sup>13</sup> This period of layered institutionalization – of the Fund into UNIFEM, of UNIFEM into UN Women – brings out the interactions between power within the institution. In the MRF and DRF, the agency collated and measured its collective impact. More importantly, it institutionalized frames for its priorities (internal management and external results). Directly in conversation with these institutional shifts, the Fund implemented tools to measure applicants’ potential impact. Here, the framing power vested in the Fund intersects with ranking and

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<sup>13</sup> The United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the agency in July 2010, and complete operations launched in January 2011.

measurement (measuring impact, scoring grantees based on their results frames), which both sit against a backdrop of the political transformations underfoot.

By January 2010, the change to UN Women was announced, but no specific program areas and staffing arrangements were set. In preparation, UNIFEM was tightening its MRF and DRF and attempting to prove its value among the four gender-related agencies. The Fund, outside of the typical program implementation mold of other departments, met repeatedly with UNIFEM managers to identify where it most fit in the results frames. The team knew that being visible within the results frame could determine where and with what support the Fund would land in the new agency. Amidst these bigger conversations, having grantees articulate their results was both a UNIFEM imperative and a chance for the Fund to start tracking its contributions to larger agency goals.

The technical assistance (TA) for semifinalists reflects the Fund staff's unease and unfamiliarity with the logframe approach and language the outsider staffers had themselves found unwieldy and confusing when they joined UNIFEM. Though this stage shows the need and desire to track results per UNIFEM standards, a display of the Fund's burgeoning institutionalization, the TA process also reveals the Fund's movement accountability. Namely, outsiders themselves, the staff saw technical assistance as a means to help groups translate between feminist and social change language and development jargon. The Fund designed extensive guidance on key terms, like "outcomes" and "outputs," and developed logframe templates and examples as resources for the groups. Most importantly – and at no small cost – the Fund provided consultants to each of the 22 semifinalists to develop and submit their proposals. TA lasted two months and included

ongoing questions, mostly mediated by the consultants, between the Fund and semifinalists.

This moment is quite extraordinary. In early 2010, Fund staff sat at the edges of two worlds: a development sector into which they had recently entered, and feminist funding, which had put them in direct contacts with the kinds of groups they hoped could secure Fund grants. Had they been more versed in development or less familiar with women's movements, a semifinalist proposal might have been taken for granted as just another part of the process. Instead, the Fund staff expressly guided applicants through a process of translation, helping them fit their diverse array of strategies and goals into the language of the institution. In doing so, they began the institutionalization of potential grantees, conveying the agency's values and introducing the formats through which grantees would be measured.

Beyond the rare perspectives that made technical assistance possible, the Fund's resources again contributed enormously. Still holding most of the \$65 million from Spain, the Fund could make the case for investing tens of thousands of dollars in TA. It is unimaginable that the Fund would have such leeway in later cycles, when resources were tighter. By then, TA had been institutionalized and placed in the hands of Fund's M&Rs. Starting in Cycle 1, the support provided to develop full-fledged proposals speaks to the importance Fund staff placed on bridging the two spaces they themselves were navigating. From this vantage point, they saw fluency in development language as a vital currency for grantees and a step for the Fund to link its grants to the agency's frames.

Much like the initial framing of the call, in Cycles 2 and 3, the full-fledged proposal process reflected the tensions apparent between the Fund's institutionalization and

autonomy. The Fund staff developed the questions and format without significant oversight or intervention. However, this autonomy was possible *precisely because the staff had a much stronger understanding of what was required institutionally*. For example, the logframe was not questioned by the staffers, and the results focus was fortified in Cycles 2 and 3. By 2011, the Fund's own results frames (MRF and DRF) were much more concrete, enabling the Fund to link the full-fledged proposals to its overall contributions to UN Women. This underscores an important change for the Fund: its facility in results language and tools corresponded with a greater preoccupation with proving impact. Recall that the second call for proposals repeatedly asserted the Fund "alignment" with UN Women's new strategic plan. Internally, this meant that the Fund's activities fit into the MRF and outcomes contributed to the agency's DRF. The call's reiteration underscores the importance the Fund placed on showing its value – and the values of its grants – to the UN Women.

The format also became more robust and more in-line with UN Women criteria. By Cycle 2, two years after the first grants had begun, the Fund staff knew the kinds of indicators it would likely need to track later in the monitoring reports it gathered from grantees each six months. Likewise, the budget format was based on the realities of reviewing grantees' quarterly financial reports, again in line with UN Women financial standards. As described in chapter 3, under the Fund's second manager, the Fund had strategically matched its reporting templates to those used in UN Women's offices – a step that built ownership, but which also fed back into the full-fledged proposal format. Despite some concerns that the format would be burdensome to applicants, the Fund's attunement

to internal requirements – its institutional accountability – directly shaped the questions, length, and format of the full proposal.

In Cycle 2, the Fund issued a call for the Arab States in October 2011, citing the urgency of the Arab Spring, followed by the general call for the remaining regions in March 2012. Using the same activist-centered language as the general call, the Arab Stages sub-cycle did not include a semifinalist stage. This variation shows that, even at the Fund's grant process became institutionalized, its procedures could still be subject to internal revision. With the exception of the Arab States sub-cycle, technical assistance continued, now normalized as part of the semifinalist stage.

UN Women offices and regionally-based Fund staff participate much more significantly starting in 2011. Rather than external consultants, the Fund's regionally-based monitoring and reporting specialists led TA in Cycles 2 and 3. Where the country and regional offices had played very little role in Cycle 1, they participated in site visits and assessments of applicants during this stage in subsequent cycles. In later cycles, an additional step was added: "focal points" in UN Women's country offices completed UN Women's standard "CSO capacity assessment" form during the semifinalist stage. In these, UN Women staff evaluates applicants' organizational structures, financial management, and overall capacity to conduct the program they have designed. Even though the form is generally used to vet potential program implementation partners, this step again bridges the Fund's assessment and UN Women's standardized practices. This stage also firmly builds the relationship between applicants and UN Women's country and regional offices. As M&Rs mediate between the Fund's headquarter and UN Women local offices, the power to interpret, inform, and assess semifinalists shifts.

b. Semifinalist TC Review

In all cycles, the consolidated proposals and, later, CSO capacity assessments, go at last to a small technical committee. Though many different forms of power have intersected in the development of the proposals, once again the ranking and measurement undertaken by the technical committee most significantly affects which proposals will advance in the next stage. As a smaller subset of the same TC in the larger review process, the TCs themselves reflect all the same powers and changes as the TC review stage – composition informed by the Fund’s different periods of expertise, reliance on ranking and measurement to justify the power held by the TC, and the Fund’s consistent use of external review to “protect” grant selection from internal politics.

Two major differences distinguish TC review in stages 3 and 4. First, while some regional TC review occurs, the proposals are also all viewed as a global portfolio, bringing together new and different perspectives across regions and themes. Second, the proposal information that reaches the TC has been developed in much closer collaboration with UN Women. TC members are scoring based not only on full-fledged proposal documents, but also on UN Women’s CO’s assessments and written input from M&Rs. The Fund once again consolidates scores, but also writes up analysis of each of the groups’ based on the TC input. Here, the lowest scoring applicants are cut, but the majority moves forward in a “docket,” with detailed write-ups about each program, final consolidated TC scores, and analysis, to be reviewed by a team from within UN Women.

Like the technical committee review, the format of the semifinalist stage remained even as underlying principles shifted, particularly between the first and second manager.

As with all aspects of the Fund's grantmaking process, institutionalization into UN Women has structured relations of power that drive this stage.

#### **IX. Stage 5: Award**

As I have conceived of it, the award stage is the least numerically significant but most influential stage in process. Two-thirds of those who make it to semifinalist stage will get a grant. The applicants who do not may be numerically few, but they have invested substantially more time and effort than those eliminated at earlier stages. (And the Fund has invested more in them.) Any group that reaches this point, roughly 6% of the original grant pool on average, *could* feasibly receive a grant from the Fund. They have been scored, ranked, technically assisted, assessed, and re-scored. That is not to say they are all the same quality; in fact, the award of grants to lower-scored proposals highlights the role of implementation politics at this stage, when considerations invisible to and at the exclusion of outside determine which groups receive the coveted grants.

Grant selection is no longer about the quality of the applications, per se, but the overall portfolio and its fit with UN Women's and the Fund's strategies. The process to winnow groups combines ranking and measurement, relying on TC scores from the previous stage, and institutional implementation power, which drives deliberations. The third call for proposal is unambiguous about the inclusion of institutional implementation power in this stage: "In addition to these criteria, the Fund will also take into consideration regional and thematic balances as well as UN Women's strategic priorities at Regional level [sic] before establishing the list of successful grantees. Note that less than 5% of applicants have been successful in past cycles" (FGE Call for Proposals, 2015, p. 7). Negotiations at this

are not limited to such explicit criteria; they can also involve interpersonal conflict and draw on institutional hierarchy for final approvals. The political agendas and power struggles play out differently in each cycle, described below. The Fund's resources also matter. In every cycle, the Fund and UN Women have juggled the number and size of grants with the total resources institutionally approved to release. Each time, the Fund staff has also generated a "next in line" list and advocated to release more funds and/or fundraise to make more grants.

In Cycle 1, final grant selection was the most ad hoc. For Catalytic grants, the Fund had just two weeks to compile TC final rankings, gather input, and make grants by UNIFEM's December 31st deadline. Under the time pressure, the Fund staff developed a docket for the final grant portfolio. The docket was not apolitical. Though the Fund relied on TC scores, the Fund staff developed write-ups with their own analysis of the programs. The Fund also exerted discretion in a number of key areas, such as how many programs to recommend per region and whether to recommend more than one program in a single country.

In addition, Fund staff in this period pushed to grant out more money than planned for this cycle. The ProDoc, written just four months before, envisioned \$5 million for Catalytic grants and \$25 million for Implementation. Having just undertaken such an extensive review process, recognizing the effort applicants made to submit proposals, and heartened by the number of women's movement groups that reached the late review stages, the Fund proposed (and ultimately made) nearly \$10 million in Catalytic grants. With Implementation, Cycle 1 hit almost \$40 million. Pushing for this change in grant totals was mostly interpersonal, through discussions and debates between Fund manager and

UNIFEM leadership. The debates centered on whether retaining more money would put the Fund and UNIFEM in a stronger position later, particularly with donors who might want to contribute if there was another cycle. The financial team or other offices were not consulted. The steering committee did not decide. Ultimately, UNIFEM leadership agreed to the Fund's proposal, approval that, in the agency's hierarchy and given the Fund's lack of formal accountability mechanisms, was necessary to move forward.

After these negotiations, the Fund's recommended \$10-million, 27-grant docket that then underwent rapid-fire review by UNIFEM thematic and regional focal points (roughly 10-15 people) and the Steering Committee. In the focal point meeting, the formality of the docket, rapidity of the consultation, and pre-approval of UNIFEM leadership curtailed substantial revision. Though questions arose, almost no changes were made. The SC had just five days to lodge any objections; none came in, several members approved, and the majority of the SC remained silent. On December 31, 2009, Fund staff sent out 27 grants award letters, serving as contracts and meeting the deadline.

For Implementation grants, UNIFEM focal points were more familiar with the portfolio, having reviewed and helped finalize the semifinalist list. Nonetheless, the real moment of decision-making took place in a closed meeting between two Fund staff members and a UNIFEM manager. In that meeting, the UNIFEM manager asserted the need to make at least several grants in lower-income countries. Through the Fund and UNIFEM had internally agreed to seek relative regional balance in the grant portfolio, these criteria were new. TC scores became irrelevant, and several groups that had received lower scores from their full-fledged proposals were selected for grants. While in some cases the

selection was a matter of equally excellent groups, several grants went to groups with inferior scores but more ideal countries.

The debates during this meeting highlight the power relations driving grant selection. Fund staff did not want to make grants to the lower scored groups and advocated for using TC scores, falling back on its “rigorous” review process to determine grants. UNIFEM’s manager pushed back and asserted her rank in the agency’s hierarchy. One Fund staff member described, “It’s like 6 in the morning, or 7 in the morning, [we were] like ‘She’s just going to choose.’ I said, ‘We got our grants down from 1200 to 22. She can choose whatever else she wants.’ [Laughs].” Another staffer called that a “victory.” The final grant decisions built on the Fund’s extensive rule-based grant review in the previous stages, but also highlights the power of institutional implementation and the discretion of some staff members behind closed doors. The list generated in the closed meeting went once more to select UNIFEM staff and the Steering Committee, but again generated no changes. A final 13 grants, totaling almost \$30 million were made in July 2010.

In Cycles 2 and 3, UN Women’s role in the award stage was much more formal. Focal points would join in validation meetings to review top-scored proposals. As stated in the third call for proposals, this stage included alignment with UN Women’s regional strategies, but final selection “prerogative” remained with the Fund. TC scores guided the recommendations, but were now just one part of the input that UN Women staff and the Fund would evaluate. Like in Cycle 1, the Fund provided write-ups with analysis in a proposed docket. However, increasingly in Cycle 2 and more established in Cycle 3, UN Women staff members had already been involved, such as through the capacity

assessments. Coming into the grant award meetings, they relied on the Fund's analysis, but also entered with their own evaluation of relevant groups.

Like Cycle 1's heated Implementation grants meeting, the validation meetings produced friction between the Fund's preferred groups and those endorsed by UN Women. And, like that first meeting, these conversations showed the limitation of the Fund's power. Though it had retained substantial oversight throughout the grant review process, the Fund was just one actor in the final stage. In each round, institutional implementation came to bear, as those present debated how best to allocate grants. Although most of the grant decisions fell along unanimous lines, in every round a number of grants got through over the objection of the Fund.

One staff member described the result of these divergent groups: "The programs that we were forced to fund the second round [cycle] were the problem programs." She describes UN Women managers, as well as the Fund's focal points in thematic divisions or country offices, promoting particular groups from among the semifinalists, even when groups were not the TC's top-scored. When asked why this "forcing" happened, she reflected:

If I remember correctly, because they wanted – they needed to have a program... like there was a country that they felt [was] underrepresented, and so they wanted a program there. Other programs, they felt like that they had connections and they couldn't say no to. Other programs, they felt, again, were addressing issue areas that needed to be addressed. And since they were under-addressing [them] regionally, this was like "Oh, look, we are addressing land rights in Africa because we have this FGE program. Thank God." So it was really just that: filling the gaps of UN Women's other programming.

The fact that UN Women focal points could have such influence in the final stage shows two things. First, the Fund successfully buffers the earlier stages of grant review. As the staff members from the closed-door meeting expressed, this could be considered a victory.

Having culled nearly 95% of the applicant pool through competitive and mostly external review processes, the Fund may be resigned to this final period of institutional implementation. Second, in this final stage, the Fund's preferences do not weigh equally against those of UN Women's thematic or country experts. The Fund still has power, of course. It has curated the documents on which this final review is based and, more sweepingly, framed and overseen the entire grant review process. However, the interjection of institutional preferences shows that the Fund's power is primarily procedural. Fund staff members' substantive expertise in funding for women's rights is almost entirely elided. Instead, they have become process managers. In this position, they gain power by crafting rules and processes that are tightly bound to UN Women's operations. Into these, they infuse values, such as feminist-led grant review in early cycles and demand-driven grantmaking in later periods. However, at the point when UN Women staff enter deliberations, their considerations matter more.

Despite the parallels between early and later cycles, within this institutional implementation, the power has shifted over time. Where the Fund and UNIFEM leadership once negotiated the final docket in closed meetings, seeking only superficial input, now UN Women focal points have a real say. At the same time, UN Women management appears to be less and less present in validation meetings, delegating decisions to the Fund according to its established processes. Without substantive oversight from either a steering committee or management, the grant award stage rests on the Fund's interactions with UN Women offices.

The final stage reveals how organizational hierarchy shapes interactions and informs power negotiations. The Fund's power is exerted subtly and mostly textually,

through the documents of analysis, scoring, and proposals that it compiles for final grant selection. However, those with more clout and more perceived substantive expertise take precedence in the final grant decisions. In the first cycle, agency managers introduced new criteria over the objection of Fund staff. This power-laden exchange occurred in a private meeting – even outside the purview of other agency staff – and through mostly interpersonal interactions. In later rounds, through formal “validation” meetings, UN Women’s staff brought in their political assessments, which again took precedence. At the moment when grantmaking is moving from technical review to programmatic reality, agency hierarchy enters to shape the final allocation of grants.

## **X. Conclusion**

This chapter draws the link between power and process, bringing the staged model of grantmaking to life. The Fund’s case is an illustration of how power is mobilized, from formulating rules to implementing them, through discourse and through force. Contestation occurs in each stage, overtly in which requirements are enforced and quietly in how scoring guidelines are interpreted. These contestations shift as the Fund’s own accountabilities veer away from women’s movements and toward the institution. My study shows that even when the forms of power are consistent, the people wielding them can change the outcomes.

Over time and with steadily less involvement by UN Women leadership, the Fund has adopted more rules, formalized UN Women’s involvement in grant decisions, and framed the Fund as part of contemporary development strategies. This leads me to three conclusions. First, *the Fund’s autonomy and its institutionalization are co-constituted*. That is

to say, the Fund's institutional accountability may be the result – and cost – of its attempts to serve an external constituency, to move large-scale monies from governments to women's organizations especially. Showing alignment with UN Women's operational and programmatic goals at first built a buffer around the Fund's management of the grant review. It has also given the Fund room to make some significant changes, including only allowing women's NGOs. However, this alignment has also wedded the Fund to rigid regulations and development discourses that have become taken for granted over time.

Second, institutionalization takes place on the organizational level of the Fund, but also affects how individual staff are or are not positioned as experts. The final stages especially illuminate how expertise is understood and asserted within the agency. Despite some Fund staff members, especially the first manager, entering with a long professional history making grant decisions, the institutionalization process has required that Fund staff position themselves as and/or hire in development experts. They have carved out a niche as the executors of a complex grantmaking program, thereby protecting their autonomy over the process but limiting their express input in the final stages. As opposed to UN Women country and regional staff, Fund staffers are not considered substantive authorities. This is most acute in cases where political preferences contradict with the Fund's recommendations. Whether agency management or UN Women representatives, those outside the Fund hold sway.

Lastly, the relationship between institutional and movement accountability is not static or *necessarily* in conflict. As institutional accountability increases in Cycle 2, movement accountability remains relatively similar to Cycle 1, particularly with respect to a feminist-led technical committee. The Fund has both institutionalized the TC's scoring

process and gained the leeway to place more discretion and power in the hands of these external reviewers. This temporary period of hybrid accountabilities again underscores the importance of individuals in power to incorporate and retain external ties. Hopeful but fleeting, this dual focus soon gives way to stronger institutional accountability as the Fund builds a staff that can more effectively meet internal demands. It is this shift, foregrounded in my previous chapter and explored in my conclusion, that I consider an indelible feature of working within a bureaucracy. The Fund, understood as a *social process*, brings to life how the institutional rules, development discourses, and internal politics define the what is possible in funding for women's movements.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Rewarding “The Middle”: NGOization & Unequal Access to Development Grants**

### **Rewarding “The Middle”: NGOization & Unequal Access to Development Grants**

To this point, I have focused on the Fund for Gender Equality itself: its competing accountabilities to UN Women and women’s movements; and its grantmaking stages, shaped by visible and invisible forms of power. I have argued that institutionalization has eclipsed the Fund’s early potential movement accountability, generating an almost complete sense of institutional accountability. The Fund’s grantmaking processes reflect this expanding internal focus. Though the Fund retains a strong commitment to directly supporting women’s organizations, greater development expertise on staff and savvy political actors within the institution leads to subtle but persistent changes in the grant stages. Even as the Fund gains autonomy to frame and manage grant cycles, its efforts to survive – to retain its mission, gain resources, and sustain political support – within UN Women leads the Fund to appeal to the institution rather than to women’s movements.

In this chapter, I turn toward the applicants themselves and follow their progression through the Fund’s grant review. Looking at who and where they are, ask how different kinds of applicants fare in each stage and isolate the effects most likely to determine success. Taking the application pool as a whole, I pull out disjunctures between applicants’ expectations and the Fund’s vision. Building on my previous analysis of power in the Fund’s grant stages, I show how cuts to the grant pool reflect the Fund’s explicit and implicit ideals and differentially affect particular regions and types of organizations over time, including promoting characterizations associated with the NGOization of women’s movements.

My goal in this study is not to prove when and where NGOization exists within women's movements. Many others have done so and have explored the complex costs and rewards of professionalization, collaboration with governments, and fundraising efforts on feminist action. Rather, I examine mechanisms that help explain how, even before grants are made, donors might participate in promoting organizations that adopt strategies and structures that contribute to NGOization in the field of women's movements. These mechanisms range from the discursive, such as setting the terms in which applicants must present their work, to rules-based, embedded in requirements and grant review procedures. Understanding what drives donors' processes is one small piece of the puzzle to unpacking NGOization, but a markedly understudied and undertheorized one. As a first step, I have shown that development-led grantmakers face their own fraught processes and accountabilities. Now, in this chapter, I lay out the consequences for applicants.

## **I. Approach**

Based on my institutional ethnography and literature review, I entered this analysis expecting find several factors that explained applicants' progress through the Fund's grant review. Overall, I projected that applicants' success, measured by the final stage reached, would reflect the Fund's underlying endorsement of characteristics flagged in NGOization literature, especially professionalized women-led organizations with midsized budgets (i.e. neither grassroots nor very large) and evidence of partnerships. I imagined that the Fund's increasing requirements each cycle would have differential effects for specific kinds of applicants, especially promoting formalization among eligible applicants. Finally, I anticipated that grant progress would reveal fissures in the Fund's "open" and "global"

approach, with regional variations in rates of eligibility, TC scoring, and progress toward accessing grants. If correct, this final finding would point to differences among which regions and contexts most fit the specific ideals of the Fund's development funding initiative.

In this chapter, I analyze grant data to identify how the Fund's grant review stages affect different kinds of applicants. I use descriptive statistics and regression analysis to ask: a) who applies in the first place and to what extent women's movements are present in the application pool; b) why different kinds of applicants are cut during eligibility review; c) how TCs in different regions and cycles score proposals; and d) what explains progression through the overall grant cycle.<sup>14</sup> In each stage, I examine the link between the Fund's accountabilities, its ideals, and the consequences for which applicants move forward.

As detailed in chapter 2 (methods), I identify key variables from the grants database that operationalize influences that emerge as salient within NGOization and resource mobilization literature, including:

1. Professionalization of women's NGOs (Alvarez, 1998): organization type; legal registration status; budget size; women's leadership on staff and board
2. Relationships between NGOs and the state (Alvarez, 1998): Applicants' formal and informal partners, partnerships with governments
3. Emphasis on policy adoption and implementation (e.g. True & Mintrom, 2001): Focus on a specific law or policy
4. Region and context (e.g. Friedman, 2009; Choudry and Kapoor, 2013; Bose, 2015): Region; Language.

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<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise specified, my analysis is on an *applicant* level (total applicants = 3629), which can refer to a single organization or government agency or a partnership. I break down applicants by region and cycle and analyze "applicant composition," such as an NGO-government partnership or single government. I look at *organizations* (i.e. leads and coleads, which together total 4289 government agencies and NGOs) when I am interested in what organizational/agency characteristics. For example, in review of the applicant pool, I compare my complete *organization* data set to an existing study of women's NGOs.

In examining how applicants fare through the Fund's grant review stages, I am particularly interested in two vectors of comparison: grant cycle and region. Cycle enables me to capture how the Fund's changing institutionalization, detailed in chapters 3 and 4, affects its review of grant applicants.

Region proves an important level of analysis to understand how the Fund's ideals differentially affect applicants. Research on women's movements indicates the usefulness of region to explore differences in how women organize (Friedman, 2009; Jaquette, 2001) and mobilize resources (e.g. Bagić, 2006). Ferree and Ewig (2013) write, "[Feminist organizing] varies in timing and emphasis by region and appreciates the plurality of local feminist paths" (p. 425). NGOization literature especially highlights how distinct regional economic and political factors affect *how*, when, and why women's movements take more institutional, professionalized, and potentially less radical forms. In their foundational work on NGOization, Lang (1997) and Alvaraz (1998, 2009) each take a regional focus. Lang places East German feminism within a post-Soviet context, exploring how region-wide transformations, including political systems and an influx of international donors, have led to formalized women NGOs that serve as a proxy for civil society. Alvarez's feminist NGO "boom" is distinctly Latin American, located in the region's transition from dictatorship to democracy and a proliferation of neoliberal policies in 1980s and 1990s.

Similar discussions can be found for each region, such as critiques by Britton and Price (2014) and Tamale (2006) that development aid to Africa has fostered a reliance on donors and led to an expansion of professional gender "experts" and depoliticized women's NGOs. For Jad (2004) the NGOization of Arab women's organizations – which she distinguishes from women's social movements – is part of (and often funded by) a larger

push for democratic reform by Western nations, UN agencies, and international development organizations. These outside influences envision “Arab women’s NGOs as a vehicle for democratisation and participatory-based development” (p. 39), but often fail to see class divisions that place elite women in leadership positions and divorce favored NGOs from truly participatory action with women. Accounts of NGOization in Asia tend to be broken down by country or sub-region (e.g. Ray, 1999; Nam, 2000). For example, Rajan and Desai (2013) place NGOization in South Asia within a context of postcolonialism, globalization, and development capital. They emphasize the singular and complex national and local experiences, but also commonalities based on the sub-regions’ histories and place in global economies and politics. While I look at intraregional factors, such as language, and cross-cutting variables to describe the kinds of organizations that apply to the Fund, I consider region an important and useful grouping to compare the effects of the Fund’s grant review process.

## **II. The Middle**

To understand mismatches and alignment between applicants’ expectations and the Fund’s grant review, I activate a concept that has surfaced across the Fund’s different frames and grantmaking periods. Despite changing staff, institutional transitions, and a reconfigured technical committee, those responsible for grant review coalesce around a surprisingly consistent image of the ideal grantee. Led by women and solidly professional, the image is of “The Middle”: *intermediary non-governmental organizations that sit between communities of “real,” “local” women and national economic or political institutions.* While

the aspirations invested in this ideal shift between people and periods, “the middle” subtly but persistently informs how the grant pool is whittled down.

The middle presents an approach to gender equality that reverberates with many of the classic characteristics of NGOization. It is led by women’s organizations that are professionalized and structured; have made the strategic choice to influence powerful political or economic institutions; and leverage partnerships in which feminist or gender equality experts inform and collaborate with government actors. In this chapter, I consider the potential contradictions between the Fund’s stated vision and its reading of applicants. For example, as I examine in “Who Applied?,” the middle may preclude many feminist and women-led organizations around the world. The level of professionalization and formalization of groups in the middle also threatens to undermine women’s rights efforts in some contexts, which I explore in “Unequal Eligibility.” For example, the requirement to be legally registered might put women’s rights organizations at risk where governments are unfriendly to activism. As I discuss in my analysis of the technical committee in “The Whole Picture,” regional TC scores adhere to the Fund’s middle ideal but show distinct patterns across the five regions.

The phrase “the middle” comes from interviewees themselves, without my prompting or suggestion. An early staff member explains how the middle distinguishes the Fund from other women’s funds that practice feminist philanthropy:

Though I love the women's funds involved, I don't think they are the most representative of the way the Fund works. I think the middle ground groups are able to do strategic grassroots alliances... you have to work with community-based organizations and their communities... There's always a level of intermediaries, the people, the litigation, the trainers of trainers... The right partnerships focus at a national level that allow for spreading of the impact.

Similarly, a UN Women official present during the Fund's design ties organizations' structures with their impact:

I think our idea at the beginning was that the grantees would be kind of a partnership that would involve women's rights networks and organizations with government partners and other partners, you know, whether they are INGOs, or whatever, because the money was significant and we knew that those women's NGOs were not going to have the capacity to manage a five-million-dollar grant, or a three-million-dollar grant. And so, our vision was that this fund would also fuel partnerships.

Here, the notion of partnerships and networks are core to the Fund. Unlike the earlier interviewees' "grassroots alliances," this official's partnerships entail governments and large international NGOs.

In both cases, the Fund's grants aim to inject resources between the small/local and the national or international. It is precisely this space, where feminist organizations serve as interlocutors between "women" and institutions, that NGOization literature notes can lead organizations to professionalize and movements to deradicalize. For the Fund, supported by government donors and based in the world's premier inter-governmental institution, preference for this intermediate level of action is not unexpected. However, what I find noteworthy is that the ideal is embedded beyond the priorities and requirements. For example, though Cycle 3 eliminates formal lead/colead partnerships and grants to governments, the emphasis and priority on working with governments, institutions, and "mainstream" actors persists in all three cycles.

The quote above also reflects the experimental and large-scale nature of the Fund during its establishment. Still, as grant sizes drop, the logic about funding supporting intermediary groups remains. As recently as the 2015 grant cycle, a Fund staff member describes, "We know that we are a fund that can only specifically target a certain women's

organization. We cannot target grassroots organizations, I mean, not right now at least. For a \$200,000 grant, the organization has to show that it can manage those types of resources." A later Fund staff member similarly distinguishes grassroots groups from the "ideal":

I don't think we are supporting the grassroots organizations, but at the same time we are not supporting the international NGOs... It's because also: what is the kind of change that we want to generate on the ground? And I think the Fund has this middle ground where we want organizations that are able to connect the local with the national, with the structural – with the legislation, with the policies, to try to improve structural issues in the country – but also to be able to bring it down to interventions at units on local levels. If the organizations...are too small or too local, they will maybe remain there.

We want two things. We want the organizations to be able to really make a difference in translating the commitments to on-the-ground interventions, knowing that some way that has to move from bringing interventions from the national to the local. But at the same time we want them to influence the national level as well, sometimes bringing the local to a national, and you need capacity to do that.

This interviewee again proposes that organizations should be large enough to effect national "commitments," or laws, policies, or strategies related to women's rights and gender equality, but connected still to work "on the ground." She also reaffirms the Fund's vision for dual levels of impact, as strategic intermediaries move between national and local spheres. As with mainstream partnerships, scholars have cautioned that this translation between national and international institutions and women's lived experiences can flatten, decontextualize, and deradicalize feminist social change (e.g. Thayer, 2009; Cornwall et al., eds, 2008). While Thayer (2009) sees room for feminist resistance within translations, she also warns against reifying and glorifying "authentic" local women. When local communities become a commodity to justify an aid program or a policy or to win a grant, women may become beneficiaries rather than active agents in action for gender equality and women's rights.

The middle's version of gender equality is not just a matter of what people inside the agency believe the Fund should support. It also reflects the Fund's at-times uneasy location within UN Women as an institution. Fund staff and UN Women officials alike note that being in an international institution comes with parameters, such as funding only legal organizations and promoting the role of government. While some see such protocols as a burden and others viewed them as vital accountability mechanisms, the institutional context undoubtedly promotes a level of professionalization among grantees. When asked what factors brought the Fund to target the middle ground, a later staff member describes the Fund's desired impact, but then turns to the institution itself: "I think it has to [do with] assessing UN Women's own capacity to really manage and support these projects... If the organizations are too small, too weak, too far away, it might not work." She then notes another element, "the credibility of the Fund internally," stating, "The Fund also needs to find this balance between taking risks and opening the door for the organizations and also managing the risk for UN Women." The stability and intermediary nature of groups in the middle appeal to the Fund as it navigates its own vulnerabilities within UN Women. The middle is constructed in response to the internal pressures, not just ideals about how to achieve gender equality.

While the middle reflects diverse motivations and changing periods for the Fund, it persists as a standard against which applicants will be measured. Its consistency across all Fund periods is most remarkable for the fact that it is, by and large, taken for granted by actors within and around the Fund. Though elements show up in the Fund's criteria and priorities, the language in the calls for proposals and application forms is a far cry from the clarity and simplicity with which the people guiding the Fund describe the ideal.

Organizations interested in applying might perceive the Fund's approach, but at no point is the single, unified notion articulated in the key texts that mediate between applicants and the grant review processes. As a result, *applicants are subject to a disconnect between the Fund's underlying ideals and its stated priorities*. As they interpret and present their proposals to advance women's rights, many applicants will never fit the Fund's standards. Some knowingly apply anyway, the "opportunism" category I discuss in my section on below. Many others spend valuable days and weeks developing proposals that are unlikely to ever reach later grant stages simply due to the organization's size, grassroots nature, or approach to partnering with mainstream actors or the state. These structural disqualifications eliminate applicants that fail to match the unstated preferences for the middle. Beyond a mismatch in who applies and what grantmakers want to support, the middle also highlights ways that grantmakers themselves embed ideals in their grant processes without necessarily seeing potential conflicts with social change goals. As I explore in this chapter, easy to state, rarely spoken, the middle is deeply embedded in the grant review process, but with unequal results for applicants.

#### **IV. Who Applied?**

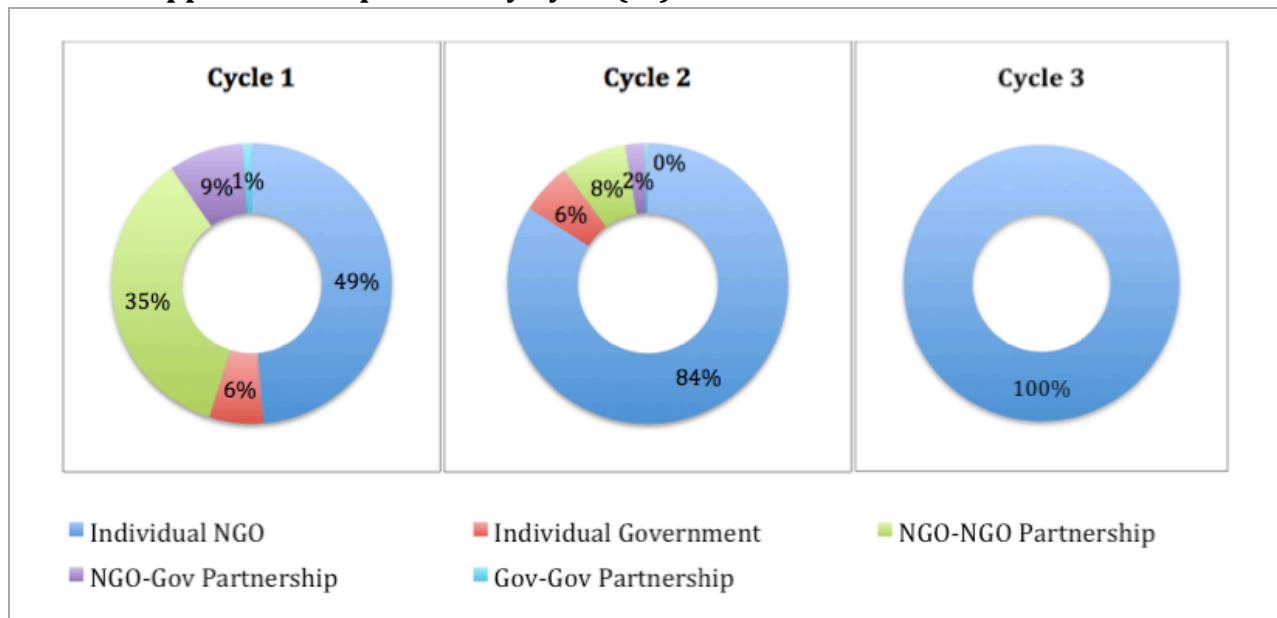
In this section, I ask who applied and in in which cycles. First, I look at applicant composition and organizational income, finding that while income remains relatively stable across cycles, applicant composition necessarily transforms as the Fund reduces who is eligible to apply. These patterns lay the foundation for my analysis of how the Fund promotes different kinds of applicants in the grant review process as a whole. Next, I home in on women-led NGOs in the Fund's applicant pool, asking to what degree it is

representative of women’s movement organizations around the world. Here, I find probable incongruities between the Fund’s desire to support groups with connections to “real women” and other facets of the middle, such as the organizational makeup required to manage grants of this size.

a. Applicant Pool

The composition of applicants to the Fund changes in response to shifting eligibility, from NGOs (women-led and mainstream) and governments in Cycle 1, to Cycle 2’s *women-led* NGOs and governments, to Cycle 3, in which only women-led NGOs/CSOs could apply. In Cycles 1 and 2, organizations and agencies could apply alone or in formal lead-colead partnerships. More noteworthy, the applicant pool adjusts to the Fund’s *framing*, with a de-emphasis on partnership in Cycle 2 even when coleads were eligible.

**Chart 5.1 Applicant Composition by Cycle (%)**



Though Cycle 3's 100% (n = 1386) representation from single NGOs is by design, several major differences between Cycle 1 (n = 1239) and Cycle 2 (n = 1006) stand out. In Cycle 2, 90% of proposals are submitted by a single organization or government, in contrast to 55% in Cycle 1. Between Cycles 1 and 2, *how groups partner* changes for both governments and NGOs. In Cycle 1, more than half of the government agencies apply with an NGO; only 37% apply alone. In Cycle 2, the proportion flips, with 67% of governments applying alone and just a quarter submitting with NGOs. Similarly, 55% of NGOs apply with other NGOs in Cycle 1, but only 15% do so in Cycle 2. The percentage of NGOs applying alone jumps from 38% in Cycle 1 to 83% in Cycle 2.

Why might NGOs and governments alike stop partnering in just two years? First, the Fund's initial call heavily emphasized formal partnerships. As part of the early, internal articulation of "the middle," the Fund envisioned supporting governments and NGOs working in tandem, as well as networks of NGOs. These ideals led to the lead/colead application option for Cycle 1. Moreover, in the 2009 call for proposals, two of the nine priority areas mentioned strategic partnerships, including spelling out the following:

Programmes in which both women's rights and mainstream actors are involved. For example, where national mechanisms for women or women's NGOs are taking the lead in an application, the extent to which the plan involves mainstream actors – ministries, parliamentarians, etc. – *will be a key criterion for determining support*. The reverse will also be true: where plans are submitted by a mainstream institution, the extent to which women's rights entities have a key role *will be a criterion for determining support* (p. 4, emphasis added).

Though Cycle 2 still allowed lead and colead partnerships, the call for proposals subsumed partnerships under the priority for innovation and creativity, described as, "Programmes that work for collective change on the grassroots, national and/or regional levels and which have the potential to foster creative models of change. These can include innovative

partnerships between governmental and non-governmental entities, as well as engagement of mainstream actors” (FGE Call for Proposals, 2012, p. 4).

By 2011-2012, Fund staff had privately started to question the lead/colead arrangement. This change grew out of operational challenges the Fund encountered when trying to manage two agreements under one grant. In addition, the role of government was no longer necessarily viewed as a positive. As I have described in chapter 4, Fund staff found government agencies less responsive and more difficult to hold responsible for implementing the programs they had proposals. Though partnerships still featured as a potential applicant type, the Fund’s call for proposals did not promote these formal arrangements or emphasize NGO-government collaboration. The drop in colead partnerships suggests that the *framing* of the call, not just kinds of partnerships allowed, shaped who applied. Though coleads were technically accepted, without the discursive endorsement present in Cycle 1, this applicant configuration dropped five-fold, from 45% of Cycle 1 to just 10% in Cycle 2.

Notably, in Cycle 3, the Fund’s four required “quality elements” included strategic partnerships, describes as “proposals that demonstrate how CSOs will develop and maintain strong working partnerships that promote sustainability with government agencies and public institutions at all levels, academic institutions, private sector actors, religious leaders, and other non-traditional partners” (FGE Call for Proposals, 2015, p. 4). Without a colead option, this element meant women’s NGOs would be judged on whether and how they would partner, especially with governments, but that the Fund would no longer be directly involved in managing those relationships. Partnerships would remain a

durable model for Fund grantees, but moved from applicant composition to a matter of fit and quality, assessed during the technical committee review.

The decrease in lead/colead partnerships in Cycle 2 also sheds light on applicants' experience of developing proposals. The cost of applying jointly – completing the extensive proposal, designing a program, and then, if granted, managing a complicated financial relationship – was likely daunting. Moreover, lower grant amounts in Cycle 2 may have made the proposition of splitting resources even less palatable. As request amounts dropped from Cycle 1 Implementation's \$5 million ceiling to Cycle 2's \$200,000 to \$1 million, spread over several years, the potential award monies may have comprised too little, given applicants' budget sizes (see discussion and Table 5.2 below), to be worth splitting.

As the Fund placed less emphasis on coleadership, NGOs and governments opted to apply alone. The lack of coleads should not imply that gender equality actors do not partner or collaborate. Indeed, I find in my regression analysis that identifying additional partners is a strong factor in applicants' progress through the grant cycle. However, the reduction in joint applications suggests that, unless compelled by wording like “partnerships will be a key criterion for determining support,” these actors most often prefer to seek resources alone. This has two contradictory indications. First, the drop in coleads in Cycle 2 shows that these coalitions, a facet of the middle, are a donor-driven strategy, not the preferred set-up of applicants. The fact that so many applicants still submitted joint proposals in Cycle 1 highlights funders' power to *manufacture partnerships* when the stakes are high enough. This finding follows objections from social movement organizations that donors' ideas push them to form coalitions and craft programs that take away from their core

strategies and missions (e.g. Jenkins, 1998). Second, early feminist funding staff members had seen the lead/colead option as a potential stepping stone for smaller women's organizations to access development money. Instead, with single applicants seeking and securing grants, the Fund is more likely to support larger, established organizations – the very groups that may eclipse more radical, less well-funded women's groups.

In addition to applicant composition, I am interested in how the size of organizations varies as the maximum grant request declines from \$5 million to \$1 million in Cycle 2 and finally to \$500,000 in Cycle 3.<sup>15</sup> Table 5.2 shows that income categories are surprisingly consistent over time, with the exception of the two highest budget categories. Half of all “large” organizations applied in Cycle 1 alone, primarily a reflection of the larger number of governments. The “very large” category pertains only to governments, which applied in much smaller numbers in Cycle 2 and were not eligible to apply in Cycle 3. The higher government representation and according presence to high-income groups in Cycle 1 affects the mean yearly income: \$412,541 for the complete grant pool; \$531,936 in Cycle 1; \$360,135 in Cycle 2; and \$308,893 in Cycle 3. Aside from the two high-income brackets, the distribution of incomes is remarkably stable in the three cycles.

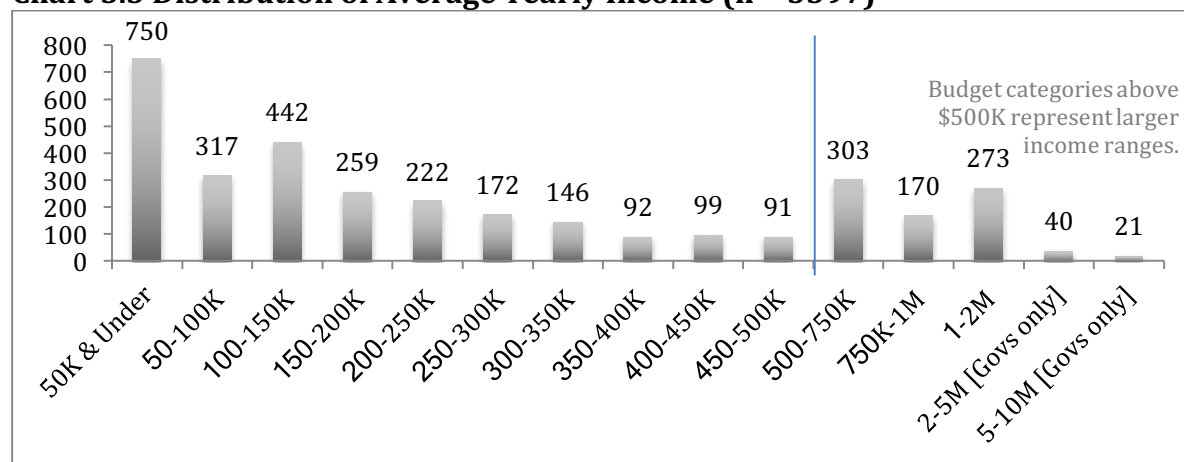
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<sup>15</sup> Accounting for Cycle 1's actual amounts awarded (up to \$3 million in Cycle 1 Implementation and up for \$500,000 for Catalytic), the average grants decrease each round, from Implementation's \$2.2 million and Catalytic's \$370,000 in Cycle 1 to \$325,000 in Cycle 2 and \$300,000 in Cycle 3.

**Table 5.2 Income Categories by Cycle<sup>16</sup>**

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Small - Under 50K	298 (22%)	190 (20%)	262 (24%)	750 (22%)
Med/Small - 50-100K	99 (7%)	99 (11%)	119 (11%)	317 (9%)
Midsized - 100-500K	585 (43%)	444 (48%)	494 (45%)	1523 (45%)
Med/Large - 500K-1M	194 (14%)	134 (14%)	145 (13%)	473 (14%)
Large - 1-2M	136 (10%)	58 (6%)	79 (7%)	273 (8%)
Very Large - 2-10M (Gov only)	52 (4%)	9 (1%)	N/A	61 (2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1364 (100%)</b>	<b>934 (100%)</b>	<b>1099 (100%)</b>	<b>3397 (100%)</b>

Chart 5.3 illustrates a more detailed picture of the complete income distribution of all organizations (lead and colead). Overall, 45% of groups are midsized, with the largest concentration between \$100,000 and \$150,000. The relatively slim subset of \$100-150K constitutes 13% of all organizations (12%, 14%, and 13% in Cycles 1, 2, and 3, respectively) and is 75% of the midsized category. The only other \$50K-increment with such high representation is \$50,000 and under, at 22% of the overall pool. Less than 10% of groups have large or very large annual incomes, though recall that I excluded NGOs with budgets over \$2 million and governments over \$10M to maintain the fidelity of my data (see chapter 2).

**Chart 5.3 Distribution of Average Yearly Income (n = 3397)**

<sup>16</sup> Data for all valid incomes for lead and colead organizations.

The consistency of incomes across cycles means that the size of applying groups remains more or less steady even as the actors themselves change.<sup>17</sup> This suggests some stability in who sees themselves as viable candidates for development funding for gender equality *despite changing framings and requirements.*

The resulting picture is of two primary factions: small and medium/small organizations under \$100,000, which most closely reflect the size of women's movement organizations described in the next section; and groups between \$100,000 and \$1M, which are much better-resourced than the average women's movement organizations. These two groups are not equally placed to fit within the Fund's ideal middle. In my analysis of grant progress, I find that small organizations (22% of the applicant pool) are significantly less likely to reach later grant stages. The 45% of organizations and agencies at the midsized level is most likely to match the Fund's internal image of an intermediate organization, one that is neither too large to be removed from "real" women nor too small or grassroots. (My analysis of grant progress later in this chapter confirms: among final grantees, nearly 60% comes from the midsized, and an outstanding 78% come from midsized and medium/large combined.) In "Women's Movement Representation," I unpack these categories, looking at how the Fund's applicants' compare with women's movements in general and asking how income varies for different kinds of applicants and across different regions.

The distribution of incomes among the Fund's applicants poignantly highlights the cost of unarticulated ideals. Though it never says as much to potential applicants, the Fund considers organizations' financial capacity a major factor in its grant assessment. Small

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<sup>17</sup> In my review of repeat applicants, I identified up to 250 groups that applied as lead or colead in multiple grant cycles. That leaves more than 3,700 organizations or agencies that applied only once.

organizations – like most women’s movement organizations described in the next section – will not stand up to this test.

b. Women’s Movement Representation

As a grantmaker and development-led funder, the Fund is part of a movement to increase resources for women’s rights and gender equality. Despite their importance for securing women’s rights gains, women’s movement organizations are grossly underfunded, especially for activities related to movement-building and long-term social change (Aruntyonova & Clark, 2013). As I have detailed, the Fund’s large-scale grants were designed, in part, to help prove that women’s NGOs could manage significant investments of development funding. Though the Fund has become less intentional about redefining the funding landscape for women’s rights, it has retained the core value of directly supporting women’s organizations.

The priority the Fund places on making grants to women’s NGOs opens questions about when and whether such groups are part of women’s movements. As I foreground in chapter 1, I define women’s movements as women mobilizing *as women* (Ferree, 2006) and refer to women’s NGOs, women’s movement organizations, and feminist organizations not as “...organizational subtypes or as ideal types” but “*as the places in which and the means through which the work of the women’s movement is done*” (Ferree and Martin, 1995, p. 13, italics in original). Even with these definitional boundaries, the relationship between women’s movements and their organizations is not without conflict or complexity. For instance, Ferree and Tripp (2006) note that “Feminism as a goal often informs all or part of the agenda of mixed gender organizations...” (p. 6). Ferree and Ewig (2013) differentiate

autonomous from embedded feminist organizations, both created to “challenge gendered power.” They write, “Their struggles highlight the question of alliances: whether feminist organizing should be primarily autonomous (that is, exclusively via women’s movements) or also should use government and other organizations” (p. 414). The Fund unambiguously promotes the latter – partnerships and collaboration between women’s organizations and governments – even when deliberately engaging with women’s movements. In this chapter, I explore the implications of that preference, including whether “using governments” is incompatible with supporting women’s movement organizations.

My data present some limitations in understanding the degree to which women’s movement organizations are represented by the Fund’s applicant pool. The Fund’s checklist of organization types in the application form changes in each cycle, with little cross-cycle consistency tracking whether an NGO is women-led. (See chapter 2 for a deeper discussion of data categories related to organization type.) However, even without perfect accuracy, the data enable me to show trends among the Fund’s women-led NGOs. In this section, I compare the Fund’s applicant pool of *women-led NGOs* to the Association for Women’s Rights in Development’s (AWID) survey of 1,000+ women’s movement organizations globally (Arutyunova & Clark, 2013). The report refers to “women’s rights organizations” and “women’s movement organizations” interchangeably, and I follow this convention below. I situate the Fund’s applicants within women’s movements broadly and generate some inference about which kinds of women’s rights groups might never have applied in the first place.

Though the Fund required that NGOs be women-led in Cycles 2 and 3, mainstream or non-gender-focused NGOs still applied and were eliminated in the eligibility stage. In

Cycle 1, mainstream NGOs were eligible, but I have identified those that are women-led. In all, I find that 60% of all applying NGOs (lead or colead) can be reliably categorized as women’s organizations, with the least representation in Cycle 1 (31%).<sup>18</sup>

**Table 5.4 Women-Led Organizations (Lead and Colead) by Cycle**

	Cycle 1				Cycle 2				Cycle 3		ALL			
	L	CL	All	% All	L	CL	All	% All	L	% All	L	CL	All	% All
Women-Led	376	170	546	<b>31%</b>	840	104	944	<b>83%</b>	1084	<b>78%</b>	2300	274	2574	<b>60%</b>
Unclear	149	51	200	<b>11%</b>	0	0	0	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>	149	51	200	<b>5%</b>
Not Women-Led	570	255	825	<b>46%</b>	103	17	120	<b>11%</b>	302	<b>22%</b>	975	272	1247	<b>29%</b>
Government	142	68	210	<b>12%</b>	62	8	70	<b>6%</b>	N/A		204	76	280	<b>7%</b>
TOTAL	1237	544	1781	<b>100%</b>	100		113				3628	673	4301	<b>100%</b>

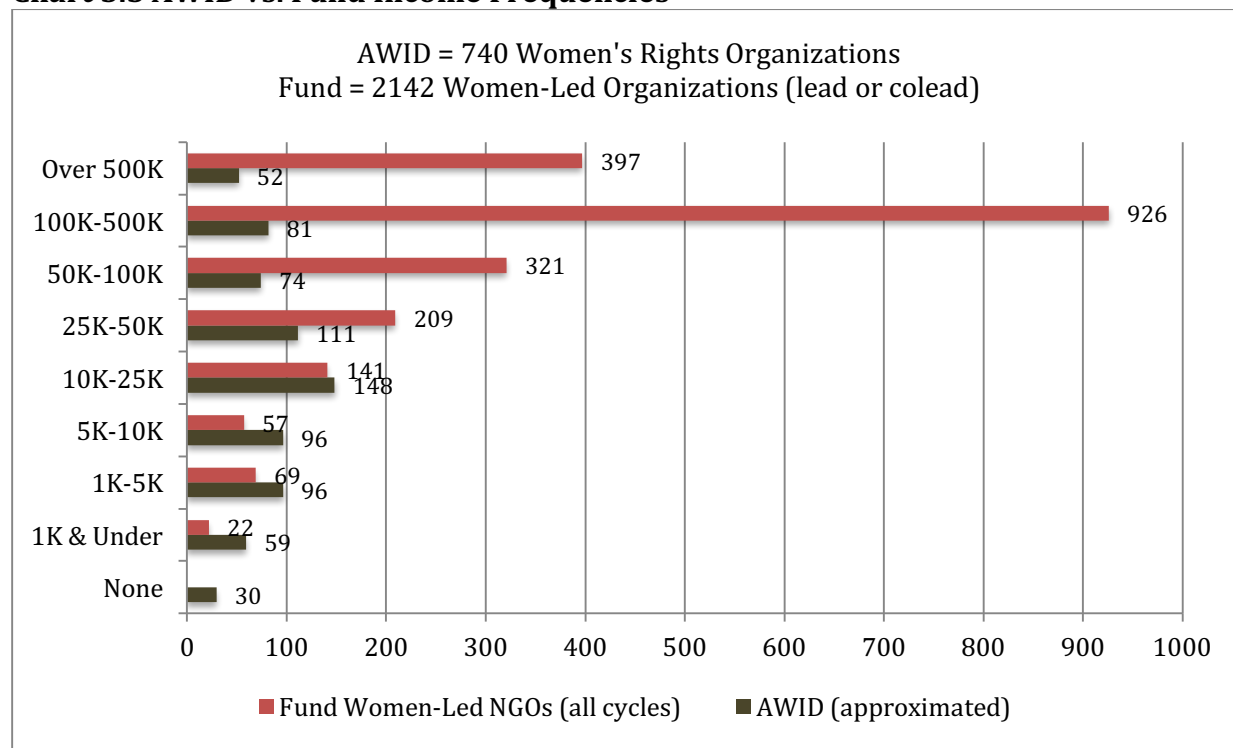
The Fund’s women-led requirement clearly changed the grant applicant pool. For instance, if all of Cycle 1’s “unclear” NGOs were in fact women-led, this category would still only represent 42% (n = 746) of the grant pool in that cycle. Nonetheless, even with the smaller percentage of women-led organizations, Cycle 1 alone provides a window into 546 individual women’s NGOs. In total, my grant pool captures data on the structures, sizes, and programmatic goals of 2,574 women-led organizations.

Isolating my analysis to the Fund’s women-led NGOs enables me to draw comparisons with AWID’s global surveys of women’s movement organizations. AWID’s reports provide the foremost data on women’s rights NGOs’ priorities, funding sources, and budgets globally. The most recent report, *Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots: The Status of Financing for Women’s Rights Organizing and Gender Equality*, draws on survey data from 2011 and provides budget information for 2010. AWID’s analysis of annual incomes provides a window into women’s movement organizations globally.

<sup>18</sup> All analysis in this section is by *organization*, using the organizational data available for leads and coleads.

I find major contrasts between the Fund’s NGOs and the women’s rights groups in AWID’s survey. Whereas AWID’s women’s rights organizations have a median income of \$20,000, the women-led NGOs in the Fund’s grant pool have a mean income of \$291,148, more than *ten times* AWID’s. Chart 5.5 points to both the sources of these differences and points of overlap between the two groups. First, income brackets between \$1K and \$25K have relatively similar frequencies, primarily due to the Fund’s large dataset. More importantly, there is likely substantial overlap between the Fund’s applicants and AWID’s respondents, as the Fund sends all calls for proposals through AWID’s distribution email list.

**Chart 5.5 AWID vs. Fund Income Frequencies<sup>19</sup>**



<sup>19</sup> These are the income categories presented in AWID’s report. I have calculated AWID’s frequencies based on the median values provided and total number of surveyed organizations (740). Because of this, values might be off by one or two groups. The total number from my chart is 747 organizations. The trends still hold and provide a useful comparison to the Fund’s numbers.

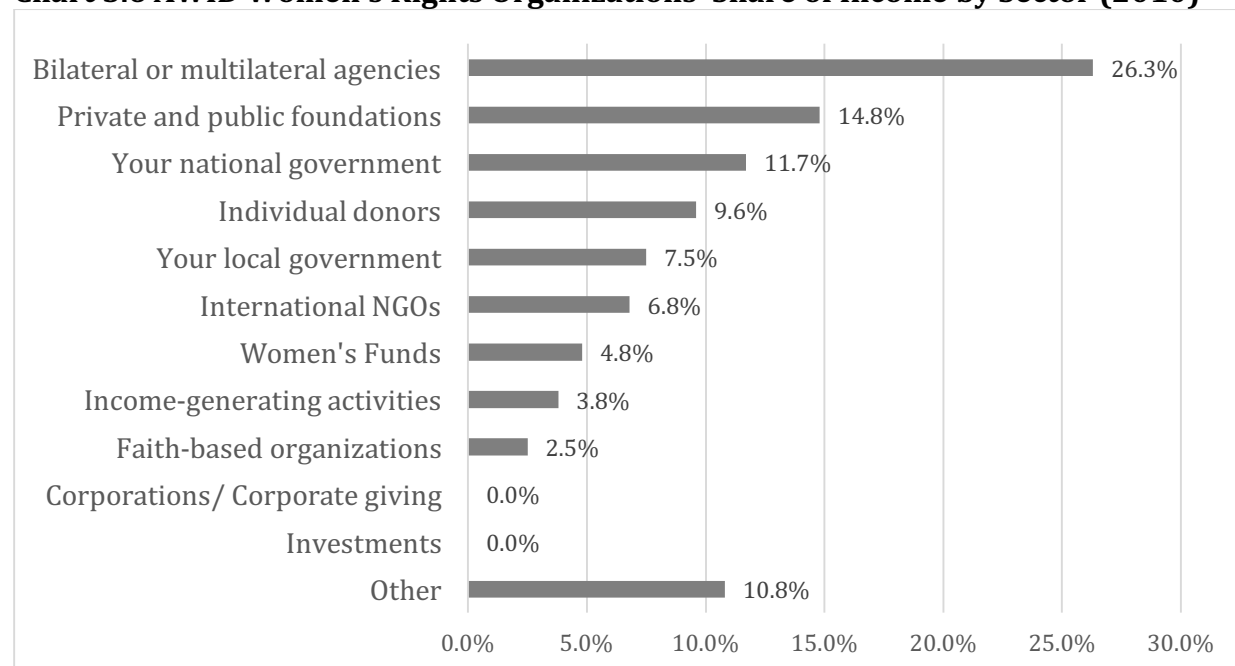
Despite some potential convergences, looking at percentages highlights substantial differences among the two samples. The Fund clearly skews toward much higher income brackets: 60% (n = 1323) of the Fund's women's NGOs have incomes of \$100,000 or more. For AWID, this same bracket makes up less than a fifth of its sample. Groups under \$50,000 make up three-quarters of AWID's pool, but just one-quarter of the Fund's. Below \$25,000 is even more extreme, nearly 60% of AWID's organizations but less than 15% of the Fund's. Even accounting for the Fund's much larger pool, AWID has 104 more groups than the Fund in the under \$10,000 budget range. Though some overlap likely exists between AWID's women's rights organizations and the Fund applicants, many women's movement groups, especially in the lowest income brackets, are *not* applying. As I consider in my grant progression analysis, small groups that do apply are much less successful. For example, organizations with incomes under \$50,000 make up almost a quarter of the Fund's applicant pool, but receive less than 5% of the grants.

Comparing the Fund to AWID raises important questions about women's movement organizations, their access to development funding, and the extent to which they are represented in the Fund's grant pool. First, which women's movement organizations can and *should* apply to the Fund for Gender Equality? What is the right balance between an organization's existing income and funders' grant sizes? Finally, how does the image of the "right" applicant shed light on the relationship between women's NGOs and women's movements in development-led funding?

One could argue that the Fund is only appropriate for larger women's organizations. This might be the case, especially given the large grant size. AWID's research provides a mixed response. First, the report underscores the importance of development resources as

a source of income across women's movement organizations. Bilateral and multilateral funding makes up the largest percentage of income for women's organizations, more than a quarter of the total resources reported by 645 women's groups in 2011. Chart 5.6 reproduces findings from AWID and illustrates the overwhelming representation of development resources. These funds, however, are concentrated, with just 11% of organizations reporting income from bilaterals and 13% from multilaterals, presumably with some overlap. In contrast, 28% of respondents mention women's funds, but with smaller grant sizes, this income source makes up just 5% of total income (Arutyunova & Clark, 2013, p. 125).

**Chart 5.6 AWID Women's Rights Organizations' Share of Income by Sector (2010)**



Source: Arutyunova & Clark, 2013, p. 92

AWID's analysis of women's rights organizations' income details a close relationship between organization size and funding sources:

Bilaterals and multilaterals were each mentioned as funding sources by 49% of organizations with budgets over USD 50,000. Foundations and women's funds are

the donors reaching smaller organizations (with budgets under USD 25,000). Organizations with budgets under USD 25,000 also seem to be relying solidly on individual donations (53%) and income-generating activities (56%). Individual donations account for 25% for organizations with budgets between USD 25,000-100,000 and 18% for organizations with budgets over USD 100,000. Income-generating activities equalled [sic] 23% for organizations between USD 25,000-100,000 and 19% for those with budgets over USD 500,000 (p. 114).

Though the Fund targets a slightly higher range (\$100K to \$500K), its funding of midsized groups corresponds to movement-wide funding trends in development funding for organizations with larger incomes (\$50K in AWID's survey). As such, I believe my findings are illustrative of the kinds of interactions and constraints facing many women's rights NGOs that seek and secure money from development sources. If so, the Fund's middle ideal would have broader implications beyond my study.

First, my project shows that donors operating within larger bureaucracies have their own constraints and frames of meaning that create dual accountabilities to external and internal constituents. The requirements and processes that affect the Fund are very likely to affect other development-led funding programs, such as those within bilateral, multilateral, and government agencies. For instance, the legal registration requirement I have discussed is a United Nations policy, and would apply even for small grants from across the UN. Moreover, as I delve into in my concluding chapter, I believe the Fund provides strong evidence that operating within international institutions curtails the potential for strong involvement by women's movements in shaping or holding funders accountable. That means that for 11 and 13% of AWID's women's organizations that receive funds through bilateral and multilateral sources, respectively, accepting money means accepting these donors' terms of operation. This money may come in grants or through program implementation contracts. In either case, the agencies require certain

organizational structures, financial management, and reporting processes, and also influences the ways that groups describe and report on their work.

Second, the different AWID groupings suggests that to understand how donors might drive NGOization among women's movements, we should be looking at *which* donors and *which* segments of the movement. My case, which applies mostly to the upper 27% of AWID's sample over \$50,000, raises a bigger question about the relationships between the diverse array of feminist activists and women's NGOs of all sizes that comprise women's movements. As I have described, NGOization is about the *proliferation* of professionalized, advocacy-focused, and donor-dependent organizations that have a potentially dulling effect to the movement as a whole. I expand this discussion in my final chapter.

Finally, the Fund's grant pool highlights the large number of women-led NGOs with incomes over \$50,000 not represented in AWID's findings. While AWID serves as an important association for many women's groups globally, its surveys do not appear to capture larger women-led organizations. Both the Fund's applicant pool and its ideal "middle" urge us to ask how larger women-led groups into broader movement efforts. When do they enable versus coopt women's movements? In her self-reflective review of earlier work on NGOization, Alvarez (2009) finds that many professionalized women's organizations have been able to keep a foot in feminist movements even as they grow, institutionalize, and employ more mainstream advocacy strategies compared to other parts of their movements. At the same time, resource mobilization literature warns that donors are most likely to allocate money to professionalized NGOs whose strategies can deradicalize whole movements over time. My comparison with AWID indicates promising research beyond the scope of my dataset, including more in-depth analysis of the strategies

and purpose of women-led NGOs at all income levels and the degree to which well-resourced organizations influence movement strategies and goals.

## **V. Unequal Eligibility**

In chapter 4, I lay out the Fund's increasingly stringent eligibility review process. Largely a product of its institutional accountability, in each cycle the Fund enforces more rules and eliminates more groups based on checklists of criteria like audits, attachment language, and endorsement letters. Over the cycles, the Fund narrows who it defines as gender equality actors, from Cycle 1's broad list of NGOs and governments to Cycle 2's women-led NGOs and governments to Cycle 3's women-led NGOs/CSOs only. Several requirements remain constant: applicants must be legally registered; not have an exclusive focus on ending violence against women; and fall within each cycle's list of acceptable organization/agency types. With each cycle, ineligibility increases: from 25% in 2009-2010 to 43% in 2011-2012 to 65% in 2015.

In this section, I explore the divergent decline rates, mapping overall ineligibility by applicant type, especially government versus NGO applicants, and region.<sup>20</sup> I examine the relationship between the Fund's specific eligibility criteria and NGOization, exploring regional variation in meeting those requirements that promote "the middle."

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<sup>20</sup> As I have discussed, the Fund cycles' distinct organization types limit comparability over time, particularly as it relates to changing eligibility criteria. For example, more than half of the NGOs that applied in Cycle 1 would be automatically as not-women-led in Cycles 2 and 3, and none of the governments could apply in Cycle 3. I revisit types of applicants, including applicant composition and women's NGOs, in "The Whole Picture" section below.

a. Rule-Setting, Enforcement, and NGOization

I distinguish criteria that promote facets of NGOization from those that are more likely a substantive mismatch between applicants and the Fund or a matter of UN institutional rules. In this section, I describe these groupings and look at their effect for each applicant type and region. I also look at the specific (ungrouped) causes of decline, highlighting differential effects of the Fund's criteria.

I use *formalization* to group those requirements that most closely promote characteristics of NGOization among women's movements. This category includes four decline areas: 1) legal registration; 2) two years of formal audits; 3) focus on a specific law or policy (for Cycle 1 implementation category only); and 4) endorsement from a "national gender institution" (enforced in Cycle 3 only). While NGOization encompasses other facets not evident in the decline types, these four requirements specifically elevate the elements of organizations' formalization, both internally (e.g. through audits) and externally (e.g. legal registration, policy advocacy, and ability mobilize an endorsement from a "national gender institution"). In contrast to the two other decline categories, formalization declines are less a reflection of specific applicants' choices and more indicative of an applicants' context. For example, the requirement of legal registration could prove a barrier to women's groups in the Arab States in Cycle 2, when many new governments were forming and processes for legal registration were nascent. In other contexts, legal registration might put feminist organizations at risk of being monitored by the state.

A number of decline types reflect applicants' optimism that the Fund will not strictly enforce its thematic focus or organizational requirements. I refer to this pool as *opportunism* to signify most likely knowingly-mismatched applications in this competition

for resources. Opportunism is made up of four major decline areas: 1) applicants without strong gender equality credentials (declines for not being a women's organization, insufficient women in leadership, or lacking a gender-equality focus); 2) an exclusive focus on violence against women (funding for this is available through a separate UN trust fund); 3) ineligible organization types, such as multilaterals, international NGOs, or current grantees; and 4) government applicants that do not commit matching funds to the project. I also include three minor areas: applicants submitting multiple proposals in a single cycle (n = 5 total across all grant cycles); current grantees (n = 1); and applicants from ineligible countries (n = 5). All of these requirements are clearly laid out in the Fund's call for proposals. By applying despite not meeting these criteria, applicants are either submitting proposals hoping to get through the review or not closely reviewing the requirements.

*Institutionalism* refers to requirements that do not necessarily reflect on the applicants' abilities or intentions. This includes: 1) incorrect or missing documents; 2) applicants that fail to submit all attachments in one of the Fund's recognized languages; and 3) the 62 Cycle 1 applicants that asked for grant amounts outside the allowable requests. While it could be seen as opportunistic to still apply, I differentiate these from those applications that do not meet more substantive requirements.

Finally, a small number of groups were declined without a specific reason. This includes all of Cycle 1's catalytic grant applicants (62 ineligible), for which I do not have data specifying decline reasons, and a select number declined as "other" according to the grants database.

**Table 5.7 NGOization Requirement Categories: Criteria & Cycle<sup>21 22</sup>**

Category	Eligibility Criteria	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Formalization	Endorsement Letter			X
	Legal Registration	X	X	X
	Audit		X	X
	Law/Policy	X*		
Opportunism	Organization Type	X	X	X
	Gender Focus		X	X
	EVAW	X	X	X
	Gov't Match	X	X	N/A
	<u>Minor Categories**</u>			
	Country	X		X
	Repeat Application		X	
Institutionalism	Grantee		X	X
	Grant Amount	X		
	Attachments		X	X
	Document Language			X

\* = Implementation applicants only

\*\* = Applies to 5 or fewer total declined proposals

The three NGOization categories are not mutually exclusive. The requirement categories nonetheless unearth clear patterns for the different kinds of applicants and regions.

b. Favored NGOs, Changing Partnerships

Measuring the cycles' effects on ineligibility for different kinds of applicants restricted due to the changing applicant pool. Given Cycle 3's exclusive acceptance of women's NGOs, I can only compare meaningfully Cycles 1 and 2, in which governments and NGOs could both apply. As I have noted, the drop in lead/colead applications changes the overall composition of the applicant pool between the first two cycles. NGOs make up 94%

<sup>21</sup> Same as Table 2.8 in methods chapter.

<sup>22</sup> Cycle is identified only for criteria *enforced* during the Fund's eligibility review. Chapter 3 details which criteria, the Fund stated in the call for proposals but did not apply during eligibility review. For example, Cycle 1 "required" an endorsement letter and audit, but did not eliminate groups that did not meet these requirements.

of all organizations (lead and colead) in Cycle 2, of which 89% are women-led, compared to Cycle 1, with 88% NGOs, of which just 35% are women-led. In short, the majority of NGOs in Cycle 1 would have been eliminated in Cycles 2 and 3 for not meeting the women-led criterion.

Even with limited comparability, the decline rates detailed in Table 5.8 underscore cyclical differences.

**Table 5.8 Applicant Type That Is Ineligible (% and N) by Cycle**

	Cycle 1 (n = 1237)	Cycle 2 (n = 1006)	Cycle 3 (n = 1386)	Total (n = 3629)
Single NGO	23% (139)	39% (331)	65% (896)	48% (1366)
NGO-NGO	21% (94)	57% (43)		27% (137)
NGO-Gov't	30% (32)	87% (20)		40% (52)
Single Gov't	51% (39)	66% (39)		57% (78)
Gov't-Gov't	23% (3)	100% (3)		38% (6)
<b>All Applicants</b>	<b>25% (307)</b>	<b>43% (436)</b>	<b>65% (896)</b>	<b>45% (1639)</b>

NGOs outshine governments in both cycles, but partnerships are much stronger in Cycle 1. For example, NGO-NGO partnerships exhibit the lowest ineligibility rate (21%) in the first cycle, but are then are *more* ineligible than single NGOs in Cycle 3. NGO-government (“NGO-GOV”) partnerships show the greatest dissimilarity, from 30% ineligibility in Cycle 1 to 87% in Cycle 2. Even accounting for the higher average decline rate in Cycle 2, this gap reveals a conspicuous difference between the cycles. Finally, excluding the very small pool of government-government partnerships, applicants with governments perform worse than any NGO category.<sup>23</sup> This elevation of NGOs and elimination of governments is more extreme in Cycle 2, in which applicants with *any* government agency are declined at a rate at least 30% above applicants with only NGOs.

<sup>23</sup> Government-government partnerships provide limited insight given their small number of total applicants: 13 in Cycle 1 and just 3 in Cycle 2.

The relatively lower NGO decline rates reflect the priority the Fund has placed on supporting civil society since the outset, including through formal coalitions and networks in Cycle 1. This emphasis crystalized in 2008 and 2009, when Spanish delegates, UNIFEM officials, and the steering committee received input from women's movements about the need for civil society funding. Early staff absolutely reinforced this focus and, as described in chapter 4, exhibited skepticism and even antipathy toward government applicants. For example, the demand that government agencies provide evidence of matching contributions eliminated 48 applicants, or 25% of all applicants with at least one government agency in Cycle 1. Later staff continued to center their efforts on civil society over governments, in part a recognition that smaller grants could have a larger impact for NGOs. The shift away from funding governments also grew out of increasing challenges managing government-led grants. Detailed in chapter 4, the Fund had less standing to hold governments accountable for reporting and had to deal with rotating points of contact following elections or political shakeups.

The higher rate of government declines affects NGO-GOV partnerships in both cycles, a potential contradiction with the Fund's own stated priorities and ideals imbedded in "the middle." Paired with the elimination of governments entirely by Cycle 3, these rates point to the tenuous role of governments: Particularly as women's NGOs take the helm, to what extent is *partnering* with governments viable? Based on the decline rates and changing eligibility for governments, the Fund signals a retreat from formal agreements between NGOs and government agencies. Instead, it encourages (and, in Cycle 3, requires) informal partnerships and describes the importance of "mainstream" institutions for securing gender equality. The moving target of partnerships becomes ever more clear in

the reasons for applicants' declines and my later analysis of overall progress through the grant cycle.

Turning to the causes for decline, I find significant contrasts in the impact of NGOization requirement categories for NGO, government, and NGO-government applicants.

**Table 5.9 % Ineligible Applicants By NGOization Requirement Category<sup>24</sup>**

	Single NGO	NGO-NGO	NGO-Gov't	Single Gov't	Gov't- Gov't	Total
Formalization	48.6%	47.5%	34.7%	8.1%	16.7%	46.2%
Institutionalism	37.3%	26.5%	6.9%	16.7%	0.0%	35.2%
Opportunism	36.4%	29.5%	65.3%	85.1%	83.3%	39.1%

Formalization almost exclusively targets NGOs, serving as the most prominent decline form for single NGOs and NGO-NGO partnerships. For example, 42% of ineligible NGO applicants, including NGO-GOV partnerships, are declined for lacking an audit, and 10% do not have legal status. Only one government-only applicant is cited for lacking an audit, and all have legal status. The single formalization criterion present for more than one government is Cycle 1's lack of a law or policy, present for 17% of declined applicants that include at least one government agency.

Institutionalism, the lowest category on average, is also higher for NGO and NGO-NGO applicants. Unsurprisingly, governments readily meet these more bureaucratic criteria, like correct attachments. Of note, only 6.9% of ineligible NGO-GOV partnerships are declined in this category. This is, in part, a reflection of the category itself, made up of grant amount (Cycle 1), required attachments (introduced in Cycle 2), and document

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<sup>24</sup> Percentage of *ineligible* applicants in a given applicant type with at least one decline reason in each requirement category.

language (only enforced in Cycle 3). Of the fewer NGO-GOV partnerships in Cycle 2, none are declined for attachments and only two fail to meet the Cycle 1's amount criteria.

Opportunism soars for governments, up from one-third of ineligible exclusively-NGO applicants to 65% of NGO-GOV partnerships, 83% of government-government (GOV-GOV) partnerships, and 85% of single governments. This is even more striking given that "gender focus," the largest cause of decline in this category, almost exclusively applies to NGOs. (Only two government applicants are declined for lacking women's leadership, a criterion introduced in Cycle 2.) Most governments fall into the opportunistic category for failing to provide matching contribution. Across Cycles 1 and 2, 88 agencies (including those in partnership with NGOs) do not meet this requirement, making up 65% of all ineligible government-involved applicants. In this category, only five government applicants are not eligible organization types and six propose programs with an exclusive focus on ending violence against women.

The sharp contrast between NGOs and governments in all three categories illuminates the ways that eligibility requirements can effectively bar those groups that do not fit the Fund's *stated or implicit* vision. For example, the government match leads to a contradiction between the call for proposals' endorsement of government involvement and its internal skepticism about these same agencies. As described in chapter 4, this requirement grew out of direct conversations with women's movement activists (movement accountability) and required strategic maneuvering between Fund staff, allies on the steering committee, and UNIFEM leaderships.

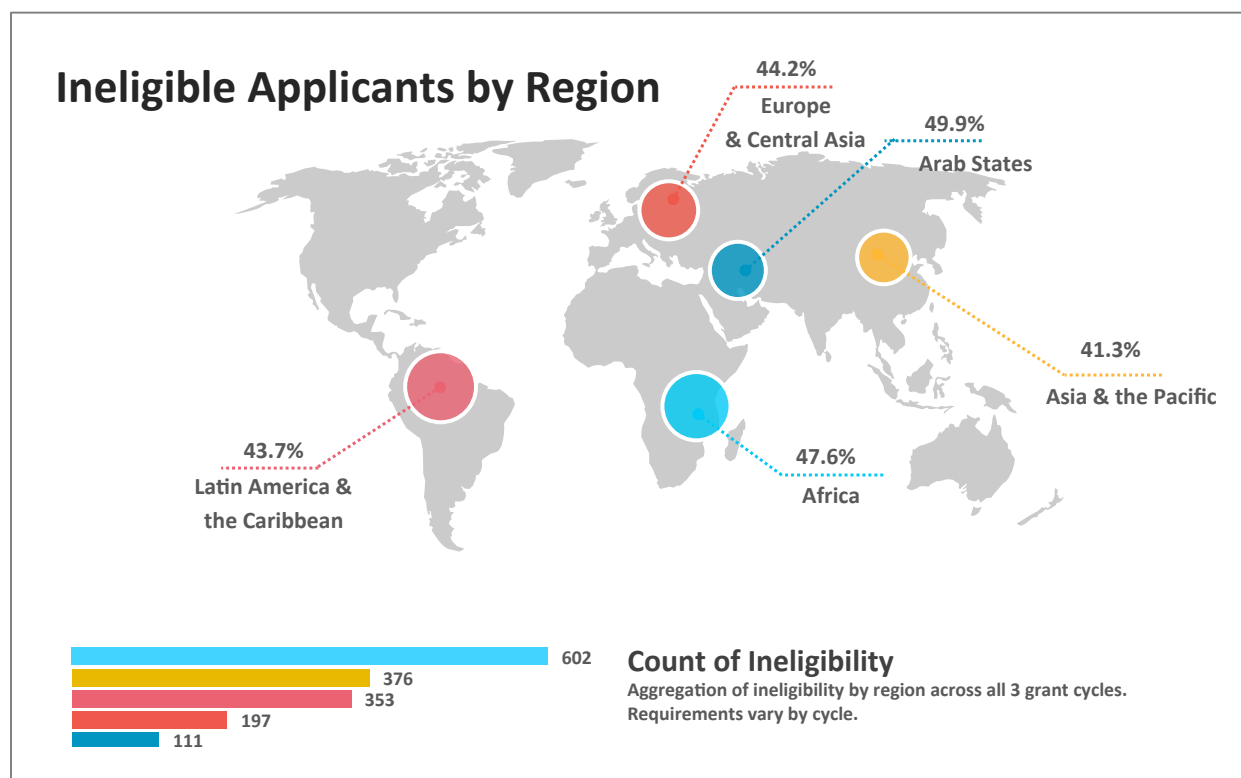
The rates of opportunism bring to the fore those organizations and agencies that throw their hats into the ring regardless of funders' requirements. This mismatch is a

reality for funders with open invitations to submit proposals. For NGOs, this includes many non-women-led applicants vying for development funding. Though the calls for proposals in Cycles 2 and 3 do limit the number of non-women's groups in the applicant phase, eligibility is a further (and necessary) gateway to adhere to the Fund's effort to directly support women's organizations.

The concentration of decline rates affirms that formalization – the category most closely linked with NGOization – cuts out those NGOs that lack hallmarks of professionalization. Government applicants easily meet these requirements, as well as those related to institutionalism. While formalization reflects some UN requirements and therefore the Fund's institutional constraints, the choice to rigorously apply criteria such as the audit at the eligibility review phase is still a *choice*. As I explore in my staged model of grantmaking in chapter 4, Cycle 1 staff elected not to apply the audit requirement until the semifinalist phase, fearing that good women's NGOs would be eliminated without an opportunity to present or gather sufficient proof of audits. In Cycles 2 and 3, this requirement was strongly enforced and became a leading cause for decline. Formalization reverberates with the Fund's increasing institutional accountability and highlights the role of eligibility review in advancing *professionalized* NGOs.

c. Differential Regional Eligibility

As with applicant types, declines rates point to regional differences that are exacerbated by the Fund's growing list of requirements over its three cycles. From Asia and the Pacific's low of 41.3% to the Arab States' high of 49.9%, overall declines are the first indication of divergences between the regions and their fit with the Fund's requirements.



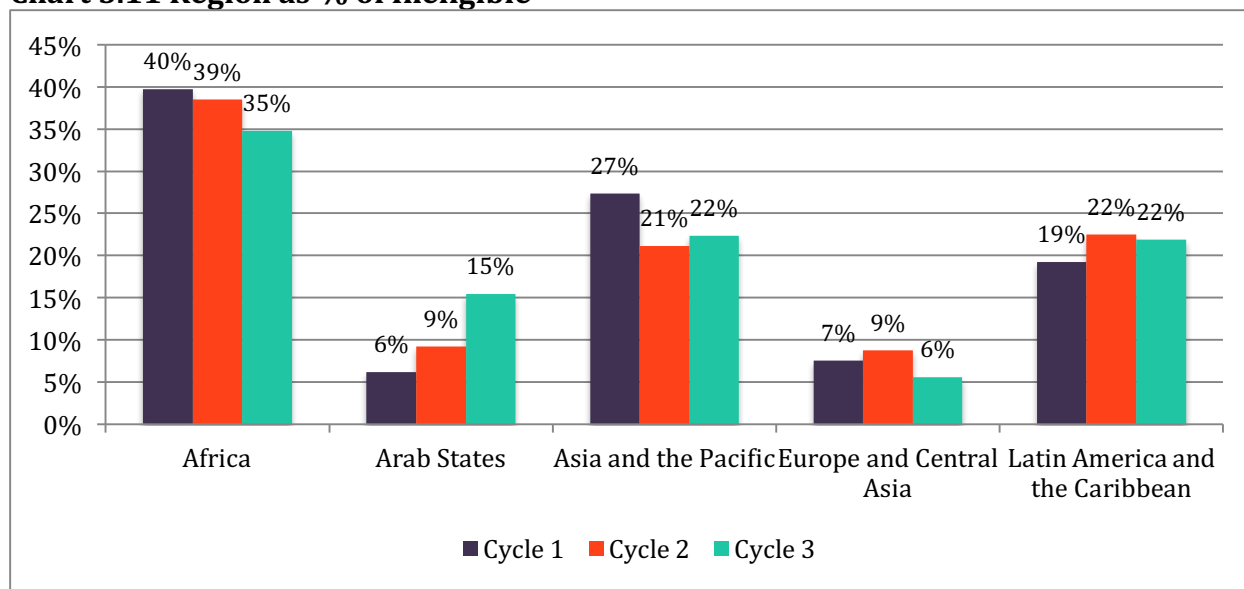
Ineligibility in Africa is consistently higher than the cycle ineligibility average, from just 1% over Cycle 3's average rate to nearly 5% over in Cycle 1. Conversely, the Asia and the Pacific region's ineligibility is less than the cycle average in every round, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is below or close to the average in all cycles. The Arab States and Europe and Central Asia show the greatest variation. The Arab States has one of the lowest decline rates in Cycles 1 and 2, but the second highest in Cycle 3. At 20.7%, Europe and Central Asia has the lowest ineligibility rate in Cycle 1, but then leaps to the highest rate in Cycles 2 and 3, beating the cycles' averages by 12% and almost 5%.

**Table 5.10 % Cycle Ineligible by Region**

	Africa	Arab States	Asia & the Pacific	Europe & Central Asia	Latin America & the Caribbean	Cycle % Declined
Cycle 1	29.5%	20.9%	24.6%	20.7%	21.1%	24.8%
Cycle 2	44.6%	38.1%	38.8%	55.9%	44.7%	43.3%
Cycle 3	65.7%	69.3%	60.4%	69.4%	63.4%	64.6%
<b>Region Average</b>	<b>47.6%</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	

Chart 5.11 displays the percentage that a region constitutes of each cycle's declined applicants, revealing a steady pattern of relatively proportions across cycles, though some notable variation in the Arab States and Europe and Central Asia.

**Chart 5.11 Region as % of Ineligible**



The variability in the two smallest regions is not surprising. As I have described, the pool for the Arab States grew in response to Cycle 2's direct outreach following the Arab Spring. The composition of the groups also necessarily changed, as only women-led NGOs could apply. However, many of these same organizations were operating in unstable political settings, and Fund's increasingly rigid requirements posed a barrier for NGOs without the means or security to meet requirements, such as audits, and match the Fund's levels of formalization. For Europe and Central Asia (ECA), language might have played a role. I have already described the smaller overall grant pool starting in Cycle 2, when Russian was not accepted. This could have changed the types of groups that applied, reducing more qualified but not English-proficient and increasing mismatched organizations. In my analysis of progression through the complete grant cycle, I consider whether language was

a factor for each region, including ECA. Overall, the regional proportion of declines is relatively stable, though different rates provide a first indication that eligibility requirements do not evenly affect each region.

NGOization requirement categories shed further light on the regional distinctions.

**Table 5.12 % Ineligible Region By NGOization Requirement Category<sup>25</sup>**

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe & Central Asia	Latin America & the Caribbean
Formalization	54%	34%	42%	68%	40%
Opportunism	40%	28%	51%	31%	37%
Institutionalism	25%	35%	41%	28%	48%

The three highest rates of any category are formalization in Europe and Central Asia (68% of declined groups) and Africa (54%), and opportunism in Asia and the Pacific (51%). ECA and Africa both exhibit large gaps of 30 to 40 percentage points between their high formalization rates and low institutionalism. The Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean exhibit less dramatic distributions across the three categories, though as I describe below, the Arab States has the most varied response to the Fund's eligibility criteria, and Asia and the Pacific has the highest rate of opportunism relative to the other regions.

The specific causes for decline help explain regional divergences in the three NGOization categories. In Chart 5.13, I have normalized each decline types for the five regions. I divide the percent of regional applicants declined for a given reason (e.g. LAC applicants without an audit) by the region's overall ineligibility rate. This approximation brings to light requirements that have greater or less impact than we would expect, given

<sup>25</sup> Percentage of *ineligible* applicants in a given applicant type with at least one decline reason in each requirement category.

the region's average decline rate. In my analysis, I link this picture directly with the three NGOization requirement categories to explain distinct regional patterns.

**Chart 5.13 Regional Ineligibility: Normalized Against Average Regional Declines**



This more detailed breakdown of criteria sheds light on each of the regions' NGOization categories above. First, Europe and Central Asia exhibits a high rate of formalization and low rates of opportunism and institutionalism. Indeed, the region has the highest normalized rates in two formalization categories: audit and legal registration. Government match (opportunism) is also above average, with government applicants

failing to submit evidence of matching contributions. Document language requirement is very high, contradicting the low institutionalism rate. However, the small size of both the ECA decline pool (50 in Cycle 3 when this requirement was implemented) and this decline category (47 total, or 5% of declined applicants) exaggerates the effect.

The most telling indicators for ECA are the criteria in which the region is *underrepresented*, especially endorsement letters (formalization) and women in leadership/gender equality focus (opportunism). The latter two explain the region's relatively low rate of opportunism-related declines. The letter points to the complexities related to isolating NGOization in this data: though the audit and legal registration declines are above average, the ability to access endorsement letters is below.

Though not by huge margins, Asia and the Pacific is overly affected by four requirements: women in leadership, organization type, endorsement letter, and document language. The two first categories measure opportunism, for which the region had the highest decline rate by more than 10% over other regions. The region's higher rate of non-eligible applicants, including non-women-led NGOs in Cycles 2 and 3, is the biggest contributor to this finding. The document language (institutionalism) could result from the fact that Fund's does not accept Chinese or other national languages from the region. This requirement highlights the effects essentially mandating applicants *in some regions* either translate extensive documents or already work in English.

In Africa, high levels of formalization are counterbalanced by low institutionalism, both weighted by a few specific criteria. In institutionalism, attachments and document language are both markedly below average. In contrast to Asia and the Pacific and ECA, the Fund's language options are a closer fit for Africa, where English or French is at least one of

the official languages in most countries. (Most Arabic-speaking African countries fall into what UN Women defines as the Arab States.) However, in “The Whole Picture,” I discover that non-English applications in most regions exhibit much lower success rates than their English counterparts in all regions except the Arab States and LAC.

Africa is overrepresented in two of the four formalization categories: having an audit and identifying a gender equality law or policy. The audit affects 221 applicants from Africa, nearly half of the region’s declined applicants in the two cycles when audits were enforced at this stage. Though not an extreme jump from the region’s overall decline rate, audits nonetheless show an above-average effect of this requirement.

The law/policy decline contrasts with Latin America’s underrepresentation in this category. (The Arab States is also under its average for this category. However, this pertains to just 14 declined Arab States applicants for Cycle 1’s Implementation grants. More importantly, many of the region’s the laws or policies are moot now, submitted nearly two years before the Arab Spring and resulting legal changes to women’s rights.) Though not an issue in subsequent cycles, this decline type affects almost a quarter of Cycle 1’s declined groups and points to regional differences in the kinds of legal frameworks for gender equality. As Bose (2015) notes, the blanket notion of “gender equality policies” obscures important regional and national differences in the kinds of law and policies that affect women’s lives. The differences between Latin America and Africa in particular warrant further investigation, such as into national-level levels and the specific kinds of policies that applicants cite for their interventions.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) only varies moderately across the three NGOization requirement categories. Its institutionalism rates, higher than any other region,

are boosted by slightly-above-average declines in the areas of proper attachments and document language. The single largest factor for LAC is an exclusive focus on ending violence against women (opportunism). Government match (also opportunism) is marginally above average. In all other criteria, the region is below average, and decidedly so for two formalization criteria: having a law or policy and providing an endorsement letter. Indeed, LAC is the single region in which all four criteria that comprise formalization declines are below average. This suggests that this region's levels of professionalization and contextual factors, such as legal frameworks and gender institutions willing to endorse applicants, most closely match the Fund's promotion of NGOization vis-à-vis eligibility.

While the Arab States has relatively low and fairly stable rates in all three NGOization categories, the normalized decline types provide a window into highly variable impact of the Fund's requirements on the region. In formalization, the audit is above average and the endorsement letter even more so, with the highest normalized rate for any region. (Law and policy is below, as described above, and legal registration is very close to average, discussed below.) The two overrepresented declines criteria fit within the shifting political climate during the latter two grant cycles when these requirements were enforced. It is no wonder that periods of conflict and revolution may not be conducive to securing and endorsement letter from a "national gender institution," or that the quickly-evolving role of civil society could undermine the Fund's mandatory audit record.

The same conditions may have come to bear on institutionalism, in which applicants from the Arab States are below average for document language, but far above for correct attachments. Opportunism does not strongly affect the region. However, in this category, gender equality focus exceeds the regional average by the highest amount for any region,

and women in leadership is rivaled only by Asia and the Pacific. Though these two areas of overrepresentation are balanced by lower rates in other opportunity categories, they suggest that women's organizing in the region might differ from other settings. As Jad (2004) describes, pre-revolutionary women's NGOs were often elite-led. In the process of revolution and the reconfiguration of civil society actors, new women's organizations have emerged. Whether or not they have the track record to submit a lengthy list of required attachments or meet requirements like the audit shapes their access to development funding.

These findings are not distinct to the Arab States per se and likely pertain to conflict and post-conflict contexts in other regions. However, the more widespread (post)conflict conditions in the Arab States make the region as a whole more vulnerable to elimination due to particular requirements. The regional view calls for deeper understanding of how NGOization and access to development funding are shaped by national and regional conflict, including for settings where women's organizing may be activated or unearthed in democratic struggles.

Overall, one criterion stands out as a surprise. I had expected to see more range in legal registration, a solid baseline of professionalization for NGOs and an indicator of willingness to be visible to the state. However, aside from slight over-representation from ECA, the regions fall very close to their average decline rate in this category. Moreover, legal registration is not a major source of declines, eliminating 160 groups overall, just under a tenth of all declines. Applicants from all regions are legal and registered, a firm fit with the Fund's expectations and the requirements of making grants from within a UN agency. This suggests that in the middle, where groups see themselves as able to apply and

Fund sees them as plausible, the NGOization effect is lower. These groups are organizationally competent and more prone to collaborate with rather than fight against the state.

Though the regions' ineligibility rates fall within a 10-percentage-point range, the precise reasons vary. Factors such as dominant language, conflict/post-conflict conditions, and the existence and strength of national institutions related to gender influence where and why applicants are declined. As a result, not all regions fare equally in the Fund's eligibility review. This is particularly true as the Fund increases its rigid enforcement at this stage. For example, the audit and attachment requirements both entered in Cycle 2. Whereas the audit, a relatively straightforward decline category, affects high rates of declined applicants in both cycles, the attachment requirement was applied much more flexibly in Cycle 2, affecting only 7% of decline applicants, as opposed to 35% in Cycle 3. Similarly, though the endorsement letter was technically required in Cycle 1, it was only enforced as an eligibility requirement in Cycle 3. For a Fund with aspirations to support women's organizations globally, the eligibility stage serves as a mounting barrier for certain actors and certain regions. As I find in the final two sections, region continues to play a role in technical committee scoring and final grant selection.

## **VI. Diverging Technical Committees**

The technical committee stage is a pivotal moment, when proposals move from a checklist of qualifications to a substantive review a fit with the Fund's priorities and goals. The Fund relies on first round of TC scores to winnow who moves forward and who does not. As I describe in chapters 3 and 4, the technical committee stage involves multiple

layers of scoring and vests regional gender equality experts heavily with ranking and measurement power that strongly influences grant outcomes. This stage's "empirical" and "independent" scoring process has buffered the technical committee from UN involvement and created a rare moment of external participation by regional gender equality experts. Nonetheless, the Fund's changing accountabilities have led to different TC compositions, framings, and scoring processes. In Cycles 1 and 2, the Fund deliberately recruited from among women's movements, often through Fund staff members' personal networks. In Cycle 3, recruitment met institutional standards for competitive hiring and prioritized development expertise. The two periods generated two dominant framings among the TCs: a feminist funding frame in Cycles 1 and 2 and a development frame in Cycle 3.

In this section, I set out to understand if technical committees from different regions and cycles scored applicants in meaningfully distinct ways, as my institutional ethnography suggests. Looking at applicants that reached TC review, I present means comparisons to explore the relationship between region, cycle, and applicants' TC score.<sup>26</sup> I use the first-round TC score (1-100), which averages each proposal's review by two to four regional TC members. Table 5.14 charts the mean TC score across these key areas. In addition, to unpack the role of institutional politics, or the intercession of internal priorities in the final stages between TC scores and grant award, I present a means test for grantees versus non-grantees.

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<sup>26</sup> I analyze all applications with a technical committee score. In Cycle 2, this includes a tenth of applications that were later deemed ineligible.

**Table 5.14 TC Scores: Descriptive Statistics (All Applicants)**

	Mean	N	Std. Dev	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All	66.97	1653	16.746	68	1	100
Cycle 1	60.73	518	15.412	61.6	20	97
Cycle 2	73.09	645	16.835	75	1	100
Cycle 3	65.49	490	15.168	65.75	17	95
Grantees	85.46	136	9.737	88	41	100
Africa	65.5	529	15.696	65	17	95
Arab States	68.42	203	19.228	70	15	100
Asia & the Pacific	68.11	415	16.901	70	20	98
Europe & Central Asia	63.27	121	16.675	65	1	95
Latin America & the Caribbean	68.15	385	16.344	70	17	99

a. Cycle

TC scores immediately highlight cycle differences. Cycle 2 boasts a mean score of 73, almost 8 points higher than Cycle 3 and more than 12 points higher than Cycle 1. The disparity between Cycles 1 and 2 is especially telling, since most TC members served in both rounds. I explore two hypotheses: that the applicant pool itself changed; or that something was different in *how* TC members scored the two cycles. The explanation lies in the relationship between the who applied, who is on the TC, and scoring procedures.

The combination of only allowing women-led NGOs to apply *and* the lower number of government applicants in Cycle 2 resulted in a grant pool dominated by women's groups. For a TC in which women's movement participation was prized, this shift more closely aligned the applicants with the feminist reviewers. In addition, the Fund's framing and application emphasized structural change and activism, as opposed to the more development-centered first cycle. As a result, the proposals that reached the TC in the latter cycle might have been a stronger fit with reviewers' own ideas for addressing gender inequality. With the same people delivering different scores across the board, we can see

that second cycle's framing and requirements favoring women's NGOs could have influenced the kinds of proposals generated each cycle and, in turn, their review by a women's movement-heavy technical committee. This interaction is not nominal; it is precisely the result of the Fund's accountabilities and reflects the brief period in which feminist funding professionals had gained sufficient freedom institutionally to set the Fund's framing, eligibility parameters, and technical committee recruitment.

Across the two cycles aspects of "the middle" come through. This is most evident in the scoring of different applicant types. In Cycle 2, the total number of lead/colead partnerships and government applicants dropped sharply, and, as detailed above, government applicants were much more likely to be declined. However, in the TC review stage, both cycles decidedly reward partnerships, especially between NGOs and governments, above all others. In Cycle 1, NGO-GOV partnerships score an average of 65 points, five points higher than the next category, NGO-NGO partnerships, and a full ten point above the lowest scoring group, GOV-GOV partnerships. In Cycle 2, the pattern holds, with NGO-GOV applicants at 83 points, 7 points higher than the closest group of NGO-NGO partnerships. Single NGOs come in last at 72 points, though no GOV-GOV applicants reached this stage. In short, even with greater leeway and less pointed language about partnerships, TC members convey the Fund's conviction that inter-sectoral collaboration is a fulcrum for social change.

From my grants data alone, I cannot say whether this is a result of actors having participated in both cycles, their interpretation of the Fund's goals, or their own ideas of how change for gender equality occurs. My interviews suggest a combination. TC members using a development frame are more likely to endorse collaboration between women's

movements and governments. Some TC members with a feminist funding frame express wariness about the effect of working with governments, as described in chapter 3, while others see potential in this approach. Still, even those with skepticism describe the Fund as aimed at this space between NGOs and governments. It appears that, much like the feminists establishing the Fund, TC members consider a more collaborative relationship with governments a condition of development-led funding. For example, one TC member with a long career in feminist philanthropy, who elsewhere discussed grassroots activism she had supported in Africa, described the Fund as fitting into the space between women's organizations and local governments, such as women's ministries. She also emphasized that, in her grant scoring, she maintained fidelity to the Fund's focus on implementation and partnerships.

Though some TC members might endorse and even prefer radical feminist action in general, their scores reflect an important compromise: that to receive the kind of large-scale grants available from development agencies, women's organizations should be willing to work with state institutions and each other. At the Fund for Gender Equality, even feminist outsiders on staff and women's movement technical committee members saw this not only as a requirement, but as the strategic role the Fund played in strengthening women's movements and securing lasting change for women's rights. This may also point to the very definition of development-led grantmaking for gender equality. Funded by government donors and delivered through bilateral and multilateral agencies, these donors' frames of reference for gender equality strategies are very likely to favor state-focused strategies and partnerships. Holding billions of dollars in grant monies and, as described above, one of the key sources of funding for women's movement organizations,

development funders' preference for partnerships could influence the facets of NGOization I am investigating, first if and when organizations reorient their activities with the hopes of securing such funds; and then, once grants are made, through the power these resources bestow on those NGOs that fit the mold. It is not just the *idea* of the middle, but the resources that it portends that may have ripple effects through women's movements.

Cycle differences also highlight that the scoring *process* itself mattered. As detailed in chapter 4, Cycles 1 and 3's score sheets provided rigid and extensive guidance, broken down into 5-point increments and multiple thematic areas. In Cycle 2, TC members had the liberty to assign an overall score from 0 to 100 and much greater discretion about what constituted a good proposal. Plus, the Fund's weighting of scores in Cycles 1 and 3 meant that TC members could see their scores by area, but could not easily see the final score for each proposal. Without weighting in Cycle 2 and given the leeway to provide a single score of quality, this cycle is likely a more accurate reflection of each TC member's assessment of applications, both on their own and relative to other proposals in a TC member's portfolio. This would speak to the nature of scoring itself, with more rigid, piecemeal review yielding lower scores on average than a single score based on a qualitative assessment of the proposal. The different ranges of TC scores support this theory. Where Cycle 2 ranges from 1 to 100, in Cycles 1 and 3 all proposals receive at least 17 points and none gets 100. When broken into smaller areas and according to the Fund's categories, scoring appears to have both more deductions and fewer applicants with very low scores.

Cycle comparisons suggest that these technical aspects are far from neutral. Like the interaction between applicant pool and TC composition, scoring reflects a unique combination of movement accountability and institutionalization for the Fund. During

Cycle 1, regular involvement from UNIFEM management brought institutional priorities and a development focus into the scoring. The Fund's staff did the same in Cycle 3. In both rounds, the Fund used question-by-question scoring to assert or attain a level of rigor that, effectively, took much of the discretion out of the hands of the TC. In Cycle 2, Fund staff had the freedom to entrust scoring to the women's movements activists they had ensconced in the technical committee. My analysis highlights that even seemingly technical aspects of grantmaking, such as the format of score sheets, can change whose priorities become embedded in scores. Ranking and measurement power, which the Fund yields to protect its TC review autonomy and which is lauded as rigorous and independent, is inextricable from its accountabilities and institutional location.

b. Region

In addition to cycle differences, I find that technical committees from each region review and score applications distinctly, with consistently higher scores from LAC and Asia and the Pacific, low scores from Africa, and mix for the Arab States and ECA. The Arab States' mean TC score steadily increases relative to the other regions, with the lowest score in Cycle 1, the middle of Cycle 2, and second highest in Cycle 3. These trends fit with my eligibility analysis above and my regression modeling below.

In addition to means, effect sizes help explain when region has a meaningful effect on TC scores. In Table 5.15, I present a comparison of regional TC score means and Cohen's *d* coefficients to understand the between-group effect of being of a given category. Cohen's *d* compares two means – e.g. being in a given region (e.g. Arab States) versus all other

regions – to assess the size of an effect, from small ( $d = .2$ ) to medium (.5) to large (.8). This measure enables me to ask to what extent TC scores from each region differ.

**Table 5.15 TC Score by Cycle: Means Comparison**

	Cycle 1			Cycle 2			Cycle 3		
	Mean	SD	Cohen's $d$	Mean	SD	Cohen's $d$	Mean	SD	Cohen's $d$
Africa	58.40	13.86	.216	72.95	15.13	.013	61.61	13.58	.398
Arab States	57.15	13.32	.267	73.09	20.80	.001	67.48	16.52	.144
Asia & the Pacific	59.47	14.98	.110	74.09	15.87	.079	69.86	16.32	.387
Europe & Central Asia	60.67	12.67	.004	69.25	23.61	.199	62.48	13.56	.218
Latin America & the Caribbean	65.73	15.41	.393	73.12	15.17	.002	65.54	14.11	.004

The effect sizes highlight periods where TC region has an impact on score. In many cases, effects are almost nonexistent, such as all of Cycle 2 except for ECA. However, the effects are small but notable in a number of cases. In Cycle 1, with a Cohen's  $d$  score of .383, the LAC TC scored applicants an average of 5 points higher than any other region and 8.5 points higher than the lowest mean (Arab States). Africa and the Arab States have Cohen's  $d$  scores over .2, also small but reflective of meaningfully lower scoring rates. In Cycle 2, effect sizes are very low, from .001 to .199, reflecting the small range (just over 4 points) between highest and lowest region averages. In Cycle 3, the two extremes of Africa and Asia vary by over 8 points and have effect sizes of nearly .4. To be from these one of these regions helps explain a higher or lower TC score. In addition, ECA has the second-lowest score and a .2 Cohen's  $d$ , again highlighting a regional tendency toward lower scores. Finally, though LAC is in the middle, its Cohen's  $d$  coefficient is almost zero, a sharp contrast to the more dramatically high and significant effect in Cycle 1. Adding effect size to means

comparisons shows that regional membership sometimes but not always influences TC scoring.

Trends such as higher scores for LAC and Asia and lower ones for Africa raise the question: is it the regions' applicants that are different or is it the technical committees? Recall that in this stage of review, TC members only ever see applications from their own regions. Scores are not absolutely measures of quality relative to the whole pool; they are only relative to their regions. This means that lower average scores in Africa may simply reflect less generous TC members than, say, the Asia region. However, my findings throughout this chapter support the idea that there is some degree of difference in the *quality* of applications. For instance, the rates of decline are highest in Africa and the Arab States and lowest in LAC and Asia and the Pacific. These findings are further bolstered by my analysis of progress through the grant cycle in the next sections. In short, the regions do not all equally fit the parameters the Fund uses to define a successful gender equality actor.

Still, I find it interesting that these distinctions hold even at the TC review stage, when up to two-thirds of applicants have already been cut. I would expect that for an ostensibly more appropriate pool of applicants, the quality would no longer vary so consistently by region. That these patterns are evident in TC scores points to some variance in how reviewers in diverse contexts award points. This argument should not be oversimplified to indicate that all reviewers in one region are more parsimonious than reviewers in another. Rather, the regional TC scores underline that reviewers' context might have some bearing on their scoring.

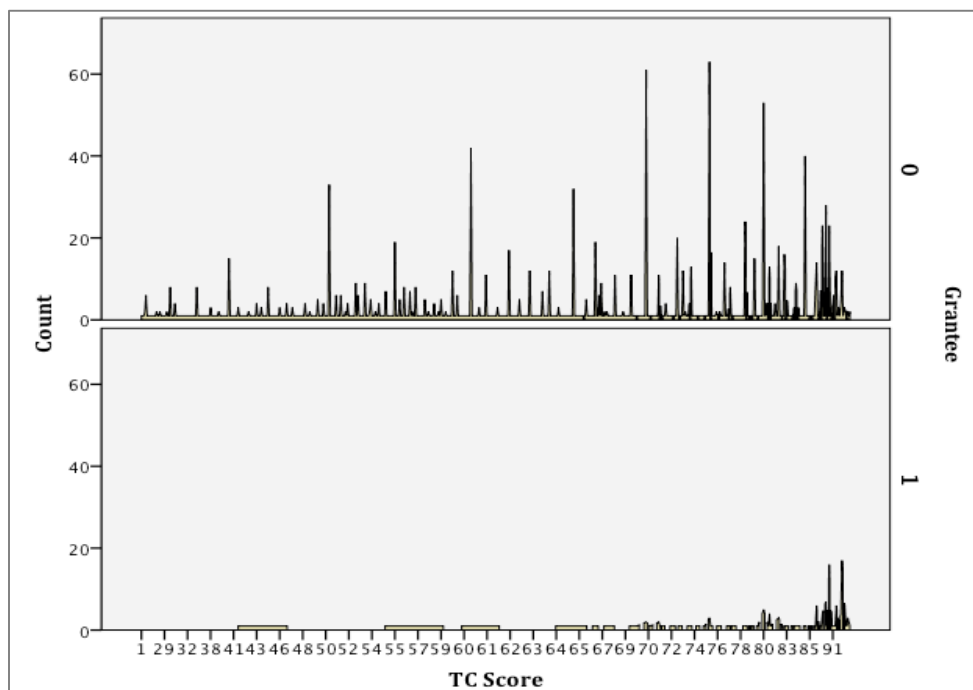
The different effect sizes and mean ranges between cycles illuminates another important factor. It is not just reviewers themselves, but how they apply *the Fund's*

priorities that accounts for regional variation. When given more leeway in Cycle 2 to provide an overall score 1-100, scoring patterns remain but their range drops considerably. It is when the Fund's more rigid scoring processes are in place that regional membership has the greatest effect. This divergence suggests that, when left to their own analysis, reviewers fall closer together across regions. *When beholden to the Fund's stricter division of its priority areas, regional effects are magnified.* This finding again draws the link between the Fund's process and grant review outcomes. More generally, it highlights the ways in which donors' ideals become entrenched in documents such as grant review guidelines.

c. Grantees

Means comparisons of TC scores for groups that received grants versus those that did not provides a final clue to locate the TC review within grant progress overall.

**Chart 5.16 Grantee vs. Non-Grantee TC Scores**



**Table 5.17 Grantee TC Scores**

	ALL	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Mean	85.46	78.65	90.87	80.79
Difference from Cycle Mean	18.49	17.92	17.78	15.30
Cohen's <i>d</i>	1.505	1.544	1.575	1.325

Predictably, the relationship between receiving a grant and TC score is large, which a Cohen's *d* over 1 in all cases. That is, the effect of being a grantee increases the average TC scores, up 15 points in Cycle 3 to almost 18 points in Cycles 1 and 2. However, higher scores do not automatically lead to receipt of a grant. The minimum TC score for grantees is just 41 points, clearly not a top-scoring proposal and one for which someone within the Fund or UN Women must have advocated. The median of 88 points means that half of the grantees fell *below* this score – again showing that high score alone is not enough to lead to a grant. TC scores play an important but not totalizing role in determining grant awards. As I detail in chapter 4, the semifinalist and award stages introduce institutional implementation of grant ideals into the mix as UN Women involvement builds and political negotiations shape final grant allocation. Still, the very large gap between TC scores on average and those of grantees shows that this stage *works*: the lauded process that places power in the hands of external regional experts is influential.

This is a significant finding. For a grantmaking program embedded in a larger institution, the TC serves the single enduring line of influence from outside UN Women. Its power comes from *institutionalization of technical committee review*, leading to the single formal mechanism by which external actors could play a role in grant review. The institutionalization shows the potential to both play by the rules of an institution *and* craft lines of accountability to an external audience. In this case, early Fund staff members successfully appealed to agency ideals of independent and rules-based review. At the same

time, their movement accountability led them away from UN-based reviewer, as with the TC for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, and toward women's movement actors. In later stages, even as UN Women offices played a larger role in later stages of grant review, the entrenched TC has continued to guide the process.

However, as I have shown, this hopeful inclusion of external review only translates into movement accountability when the individuals inside the Fund prioritize feminist affiliations. The pressure to fit within UN Women, paired with the influx of development experts on the Funds staff, has led to a TC composition with far fewer women's movement actors. While the structure remains, it is only activated as a tool for feminist grantmaking when individuals within the Fund intentionally recruit and select women's movement reviewers. As a fulcrum between the Fund's rules-based eligibility stage and its final and entirely internal grant selection, TC review is itself a barometer for the Fund's changing accountabilities. It highlights the potential for formal mechanisms of external influence to be institutionalized, but also underscores the importance of individual networks and values in activating such inroads.

## VII. The Whole Picture: Grant Progression

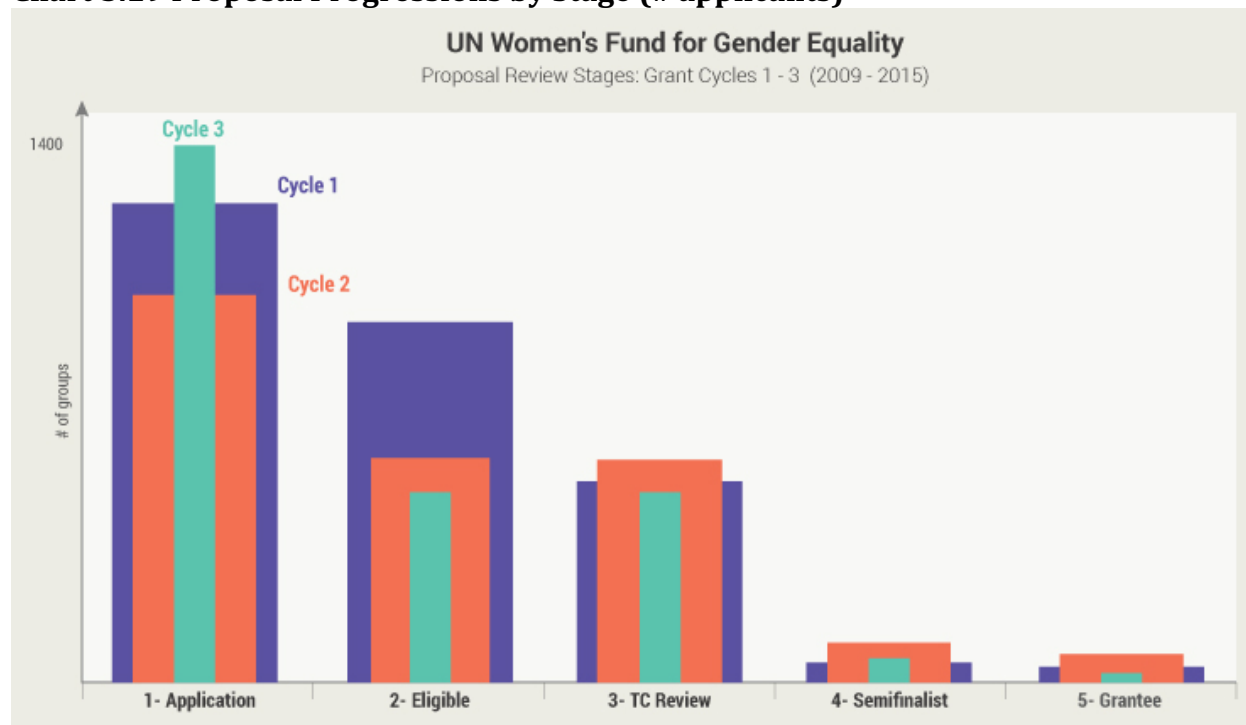
In this final section, I bring together a complete picture of applicants' progress through the Fund's grant review. To foreground my analysis, I return to the grant stages.

**Table 5.18 Proposal Progressions By Stage (# proposals, % of applicant pool)**

	ALL	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Application	3629 (100%)	1237 (100%)	1006 (100%)	1386 (100%)
Eligibility	1999 (55%)	930 (75%)	579 (58%)	490 (35%)
TC Review	1586 (44%)	519 (42%)	577 (57%)	490 (35%)
Semifinalist	213 (6%)	49 (4%)	102 (10%)	62 (4%)
Award	120 (3%)	40 (3%)	56 (5%)	24 (2%)

Cyclical differences are immediately apparent. For example, the jump between eligibility and TC review is large only in Cycle 1, when an intermediate priority review occurred. Cuts from semifinalist to award also vary, though Cycle 1's low rate is due to the fact that Catalytic Grants (27 of the final 40 grantees) did not have a full-fledged proposal and therefore no applicants were cut at this stage. The cycles' percentages of grantees also range, from 3% to 5% to 2%, though the actual total grant amounts drop significantly in each round, from \$38M in 2009-2010 to \$18M in 2012 to \$7M in 2015. In chapter 4, I explain these cycle changes and their different review stages in detail.

**Chart 5.19 Proposal Progressions by Stage (# applicants)**



Beneath these cyclical variations lays an evolving context in which the Fund's increasing institutional accountability had kindled both more rigid rules and generated some areas of greater autonomy for the Fund, such as framing the calls for proposals and choosing to make grants only to women's organizations. In this chapter, I place these

changes in conversation with “the middle,” probing the Fund’s implicit vision of promoting women-led NGOs that act in partnership (though differently defined in each cycle) and are large enough to manage substantial grants but not so big that they are disconnected from “real” women. I extend my analysis from throughout this chapter and show how the middle informs overall grant progress for applicants, based on their composition (governments versus NGOs; partnerships versus single applicants), size (e.g. income and staff size), and region.

a. Regression Models

To combine factors likely to affect grant review, I have conducted ordinal logistic regressions of applicants’ progress through the each of the Fund’s grant cycles. I use the dependent variable “*Stage\_NEW*” (1 = ineligible/did not reach TC; 2 = TC review; 3 = semifinalist or grantee). This composite variable combines the Fund’s five stages into three groups of applicants: those that never reached the technical committee, either because they were ineligible or did not pass the Fund’s internal screening; those that the TC scored, but did not advance; and the semifinalists and grantees that passed the TC review stage. Though the distinction between grantee and semifinalist is extremely important for those receiving funds, I have argued in chapter 4 that the division between these two stages is more a matter of institutional politics than an applicant’s capacity to undertake gender equality programming. Moreover, the semifinalist stage is inconsistent across cycles, making the category nominal for some cycles and larger in others. Combining these two stages generates a single category for those most poised to access development funding.

My independent variables center on factors that I have previously identified as likely contributors to grant progress and for which I have data in all cycles: 1) region; 2) whether an applicant is led by a women's NGO; 3) organizational income; and 4) whether an application was submitted in English. I also include cycle-specific variables in each model to capture factors that might further explain the vaunted middle but are not available for all cycles. For Cycles 1 and 2, I include: 1) if applicants have a colead; 2) if they identify additional non-lead partners; 3) "Degrees NGO" which measures how much an applicant is comprised of governments versus NGOs (1= Gov't-Gov't or Single Gov't; 2 = NGO-Gov't; 3 = NGO-NGO or Single NGO). For Cycle 1, I also test whether 4) having previously partnered with or 5) received funds from UNIFEM has an effect. In Cycles 2 and 3, I include variables to test inter-cycle effects: 6) if applicants that have applied in past Fund cycles have better success rates; and 7) if the Fund is less likely to make a grant in a country where it has granted in the past cycle(s). Finally, for Cycle 3, I include a variable for 8) the percent of women on an organization's staff. This variable provides a deeper look into what it means to be women-led.

Based on "the middle" ideal, I entered this analysis with the hypothesis that, overall, the Fund would most reward women's NGOs with midsized to larger incomes. I anticipated that partnership measures would be positive, with endorsement of formal (lead/colead) and informal ("additional") partnerships. I also expected that regions would not fare equally, suggesting that Fund's the explicit requirements and priorities and the implicit ideals have distinctive effects for different regional contexts. Based on my master's thesis and analysis up to this point, I envisioned the largest gap between Africa on the lower end and Latin America and the Caribbean on the higher side.

Across the applicants' characteristics and regions, I projected I would find cycle differences based on the distinct accountabilities and stages I have presented in this paper. For example, I expected a smaller effect for partnerships of both kinds in Cycle 2, when the Fund's framing deemphasized them, as opposed to Cycles 1 and 3, which explicitly awarded points for partnerships.

I also hoped to observe a relationship among the cycles, both for applicants and the Fund. As I have argued, the cycles each builds on what has come before and responds to the Fund's shifting location within the institution. For applicants, I expected that having applied in a previous cycle would increase the chances of good progress through grant review. For the Fund, I wondered if the Fund's aspiration to have a global distribution of grants extended over time: Would the Fund be less likely to make a grant in a country in which it has previously granted?

The answers to these questions meet many but not all my expectations and paint a picture of complex and at-times competing factors that help explain progress through the Fund's three grant cycles. Table 5.20 below presents my final models for each cycle and overall. I use bold text to identify parameters with confidence intervals that are entirely negative or entirely positive and \* to indicate significance at the .005 level. Though I take note of significance, I am aware of its limitations given some segments of my sample that are very small. Instead, I look most at consistency in confidence intervals (95% and patterns across the cycles.

**Table 5.20 Grant Progress (Stage\_NEW): Ordinal Logistic Regression Model**

	All Applicants		Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Cycle 3	
	Estimate	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
<b>Region<sup>a</sup></b>								
Africa	<b>-.42*</b>	.13	<b>-.80*</b>	.23	-.37	.26	-.10	.22
Arab States	-.02	.16	-.35	.31	<b>2.10*</b>	.42	-.19	.23
Asia & the Pacific	-.17	.15	<b>-.85*</b>	.26	-.03	.30	.27	.25
Europe & Central Asia	.01	.18	.31	.28	-.43	.39	-.44	.34
<b>Organization</b>								
Lead Women's NGO	<b>1.56*</b>	.09	<b>.35</b>	.15	<b>3.86*</b>	.41		
Lead Income	<b>.29*</b>	.03	<b>.27*</b>	.06	<b>.47*</b>	.07	<b>.18*</b>	.06
Not English	<b>-.32*</b>	.11	<b>-.48</b>	.20	<b>-.49</b>	.23	-.30	.18
<b>Cycle Variables</b>								
Degrees NGO			<b>.34</b>	.14	-.35	.25		
Colead			.09	.14	<b>-1.18*</b>	.23		
Partners			<b>1.08*</b>	.18	<b>.31</b>	.15		
Staff % Women							<b>.03*</b>	.00
Repeat Applicant					.13	.27	<b>.49</b>	.20
Country Granted C1					.15	.16	<b>.61*</b>	.14
Country Granted C2							.06	.15
<sup>a</sup> = Latin America & the Caribbean omitted as reference category * = Significant at .005 <b>Bold</b> = Confidence Interval is either all negative or all positive								

Starting with the all-applications basic model, I find that region is mixed, with mostly small and insignificant parameters. The three variables related to applicants are all significant. Women-led NGOs have the highest parameter estimate in the model, 1.56. Lead income categories are also positive, at .29, and applications *not* in English are negative at -.32. These trends foreshadow findings in the cycle models.

a. Region

In the basic model, Africa is the single region for which the CI parameter estimate is within a single sign (negative); it is also significant. All other regions have CIs that span negative and positive estimates. This initial picture casts doubts on whether region is as

salient as I had predicted. Indeed, in combination with other factors, region does not have the main effects across the board. However, the cycle models show that region does come into play in specific instances and with consequences for expected progress. Most conspicuously, the Arab States in Cycle 2 has the largest parameter of any region in any cycle. Exponentiating the estimate, I find that the odds of an applicant from the Arab States advancing to further stages is 8.2 (95% CI of 3.5 to 18.2, p-value = .000). This is a very large effect, by far the most substantial of any region. With the single region-specific call for proposals and run through a separate sub-cycle, the Arab States is clearly favored to progress at a higher rate than other regions in this round.

In Cycle 1, both Africa and Asia and the Pacific have completely negative CIs and are significant. For Africa, the odds of moving forward to the further stages compared to LAC are just .45 (95% CI .28 to .70, p-value = .000). For Asia, the odds are slightly smaller, at .43 (95% CI .23 to .71, p-value = .001). This shows that, relative to Latin America, applicants from the two regions are less likely to progress through grant review. Below, examine at what points in the cycle these differences emerge. The less conclusive results for the smaller regions are in part reflective of Cycle 1's smaller samples, with just 7% from applicants from the Arab States (n = 91) and 9% from ECA (n = 111).

Though the significance and effect of region varies for overall grant progress, frequency analysis shows that the Fund deliberately intervenes in reportioning the regions prior to grant award. Table 5.21 provides a window into three grant review stages: application (as a baseline); TC review; and grant award. The ratio of "Grant to All" is particularly telling. This shows whether a category is over- or under-represented in the

final grant award, proportional to its baseline of applicants. For example, we can see in Cycle 1 that ECA moved from 9% of applicants to 15% of the grant pool, for a ratio of 1.67.

**Table 5.21 Progress Distribution by Stage & Region**

	All Applicants		TC Review		Grantee		Ratio % Grant: % All Apps
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>1237</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Africa	413	33%	145	28%	9	23%	0.67
Arab States	91	7%	38	7%	5	13%	1.70
Asia & the Pacific	342	28%	132	25%	10	25%	0.90
Europe & Central Asia	111	9%	67	13%	6	15%	1.67
Latin America & the Caribbean	280	23%	137	26%	10	25%	1.10
<b>Cycle 2</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Africa	377	37%	208	36%	16	29%	0.76
Arab States	105	10%	68	12%	14	25%	2.40
Asia & the Pacific	237	24%	147	25%	14	25%	1.06
Europe & Central Asia	68	7%	31	5%	2	4%	0.53
Latin America & the Caribbean	219	22%	123	21%	11	20%	0.90
<b>Cycle 3</b>	<b>1386</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Africa	475	34%	163	33%	6	25%	0.73
Arab States	199	14%	61	12%	5	21%	1.45
Asia & the Pacific	331	24%	131	27%	4	17%	0.70
Europe & Central Asia	72	5%	22	4%	3	13%	2.41
Latin America & the Caribbean	309	22%	113	23%	6	25%	1.12

Regional progression clearly reflects institutional implementation, through which the Fund and UN Women reconfigure regional proportions to achieve a more “balanced” grant pool, regardless of the original percentage of applicants.<sup>27</sup> Africa, the region with the greatest number of applications, has the highest relative reduction between application and award in all grant cycles, dropping to between two-thirds and three-quarters of its

<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on some degree of regional balance and subsequent redistribution is a choice with consequences for final grant awards. In contrast, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women allocates grants that more closely follow applicant pool patterns. According to interviewees within UN Women, the Trust Fund’s “balance” is much less of a concern because it conducts (and raises money for) annual cycles. The regularity of its grantmaking places less pressure to have regional balance, which its staff sees as ideal but achievable over a longer time horizon.

baseline proportion. The Arab States receives a substantial boost in all three cycles, with its ratios of % applicant pool to % grant pool jumping from 1.7 to 2.4 to 1.45 in Cycles 1, 2, and 3. Even before the Fund's deliberate outreach to the region, the Arab States region was targeted for increased presence in the Fund's final grant selection. Europe and Central Asia shows the only erratic pattern across cycles, starting with an increase from 9% of the applicant pool to 15% of grantees in Cycle 1, a significant drop from 7% to 4% (and just two grants) in Cycle 2, then a sharp increase in Cycle 3 from 5% to 13 (a ratio of 2.41, almost double the second-highest ratio in for any region in all cycles). For ECA, the lower rate of applicants in Cycle 2 was paired with less intervention in the final grant allocation, leading to a lower rate of grant awards than in the other two cycles. All other regions receive at least *five times* as many grants, highlighting a major move away from funding in ECA in round 2. This might explain the "correction" made in the next cycle. From application to grant, the proportion of groups from Asia and the Pacific is cut slightly, and Latin America and the Caribbean is very moderately increased.

When are these interventions happening? Eligibility plays some role in the final regional allocation, such as cutting a higher percentage of African groups than, say, Latin American groups in Cycles 1 and 3. Detailed in "Unequal Eligibility" above, these effects show the disproportionate impact of the Fund's eligibility requirements by region. However, they do not fully explain the reportioning I find here. Rather, the most dramatic changes in a region's proportion of the grant pool occur between TC review and grant selection. For instance, in Cycle 3 the Arab States represented 14% of applicants and 12% of those reviewed by the TC, but jumped to 21% of grantees. In Cycle 2, Africa stays

relatively steady with 37% of all applicants and 36% of TC-reviewed proposals, but drops 7-percentage points to 29% of the final grantee pool.

The biases toward or against a given region are, in part, an effort to shave down disparities in the number of applicants for more balanced final grant allocation. Moreover, the proportional effects become more pronounced as the applicant pool drops from thousands to tens of proposals. A single application removed or added can shift a region's representation in a stage that totals just 24 or 40 grantees. Still, decisions about how to balance the grant pool and how to reintegrate the scores clearly shape final grant outcomes. The impact of these decisions underscores the Fund's discretion and exemplifies what I have called institutional implementation power.

Still, regional trends in every stage of grant review and in overall progress show differential likelihood to access development resources for gender equality. Some of this might reflect the applicants' economic realities. For example, AWID's report presents regional disparities in the sources and sizes of incomes by region. For instance, women's NGOs in Africa have a median annual income of just \$12K, versus \$20K in Latin America and the Caribbean, \$25K in Europe and Central Asia, \$30K in the Arab States, and \$32K in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>28</sup> Still, in a program decidedly aimed at groups with budgets of \$100,000 and higher, these disparities are not likely to be the cause.

Research on women's movements provides further insight into how applicants might differ by region. Feminist scholarship, including on NGOization, has emphasized

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<sup>28</sup> Though some of AWID's regions are the same as the Fund's, in cases where they are not, I have estimated values by grouping AWID's subregions. I was able to calculate estimates to fit all of the Fund's regions, with one exception: Asia and the Pacific. My region excludes higher-income countries like Australia and New Zealand, which are included in AWID's estimate but have only a few total groups. As a result, the estimate for this region is slightly higher.

regional characteristics in the emergence of women's organizations, their relationship with the state, and their funding sources (e.g. Alvarez, 1998; Lang, 1997; Jad, 2004; Friedman, 2009; Jaquette, 2001). My findings in "Unequal Eligibility" provides some very general support for these differences. For example, in ECA I find the presence of endorsement letters could suggest that women's NGOs have collaborative relationships with state institutions for gender (Lang, 1997; Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2013). Groups that apply from the Arab States are a relatively strong fit with the requirements overall, but drop off substantially when audits and endorsement letters are enforced in 2015. These later declines could reflect the newness of formalized groups in the wake of revolutionary events (i.e. without a track record of formal audits) and possibly either fewer gender institutions or ones less willing to support women's NGOs. LAC applicants are highly formalized relative to the other regions, which follows Alvarez's (1998) depiction of a Latin American NGO "boom." In Asia, a much large number of opportunistic applicants reflects more non-women's-led organizations, though the region has the lowest decline rate overall. In Africa, the largest decline category, formalization, is due to a combination of contextual factors, such as fewer legal frameworks, and organizational ones, such as lack of an audit. These findings alone do not provide enough information to understand the large and significant gap between Africa and LAC, though the gap itself does suggest regional differences in the kinds of characteristics the Fund promotes.

Though I find *that* region matters in bids to access development funding for gender equality, analysis into *how* and *why* requires more analysis. These results lay the groundwork for further investigation into the forms and contexts of NGOization. For example, country-by-country analysis would provide more fine-grained insight into the

relationship between national political and economic frameworks and women's movement activism. My findings about the Arab States suggest that conflict and post-conflict contexts could be relevant to having the kind of formalization necessary to access development resources. I would also expect to see some differences based on GDP and other national economic indicators.

b. Language-Region Interactions

One area in which my data do offer some regional nuance is language. In my regression model, non-English language yields mixed results. Though it is negative and significant in the basic model for all applicants, it is not significant in any other model, with either all-negative or mixed CIs. As I have described above, in my Master's thesis, I found lower rates of progress for applications from Francophone Africa. In this study, I have also speculated that the lack of Russian in Cycle 2 created lasting effects for the ECA region.

Several technical committee members I interviewed directly addressed the issue of language. First, the majority noted that they tried not to award points just for sophisticated language. Others cited the importance of reading applicants in organizations' own language to the extent possible. A TC member from Cycle 1's Africa region talked about the need to contextualize language within national contexts:

Frankly there are some countries that are just more articulate in English than other country populations, to be super honest about it, like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, you know, you just have a higher level of education, etcetera, than a Ghana or a Tanzania, a Zambia. I mean, it's different. And so, I would also take that into consideration in terms of recommending a variety of groups and recognizing that it doesn't help just to support the very best proposals, that you need action in different countries. So, you know, that's another sensitivity that I think is critical.

Another TCM from ECA noted that where the Fund required English or where it was perceived to prefer it, language created a barrier for smaller organizations, which “have to have people that can translate these project proposals in English, which is very problematic for some small organizations.”

To better understand the effects of the interaction between region and language, I have run hierarchical models for each cycle, first with the regions alone, then with regions plus non-English. To capture the effect of non-English on Latin America (omitted from the original list as the reference variable), I have run the same process for regions where I omit Africa. I again use Stage\_New as the dependent variable.

**Table 5.22 Region Parameter Change with Introduction of "Not English"**

Dependent Variable: Stage_NEW	All Applicants	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Africa	-0.25	-0.31	-0.18	-0.28
Arab States	-0.34	-0.27	<b>0.67</b>	-0.17
Asia & the Pacific	-0.35	-0.43	-0.24	-0.39
Europe & Central Asia	-0.28	-0.30	-0.24	-0.30
Latin America & the Caribbean*	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.28</b>
* Africa as reference variable. For all other parameters, LAC is the reference variable. <b>Bold</b> = positive interaction between region and non-English				

My findings are as expected. When I introduce non-English, the regional parameters drop in Africa, Asia, and ECA, both overall and in each of the cycles. In contrast, the parameters for Latin America *increase* when applications are not in English in all cycles. Latin America is the single region with consistently positive interaction with non-English. I find that applying in a region’s dominant language, such as Spanish in LAC and English in Africa, corresponds to greater odds of accessing this grant money. In the Arab States, the interaction reflects changes in the Fund’s review process for the region. Though negative in the model of all applicants and in Cycle 1, non-English boosts Arab States applicants in

Cycle 2, with a magnitude roughly three times greater than any other shift (positive or negative) in this cycle. In short, applying in Arabic is a boon to applicants from this region in the round when, due to the separate cycle, it hired a new crop of TC reviewers with more language capacity. For the third of applicants that submitted in Arabic, separate focus on the region corresponded to greater accessibility.

Overall, I conclude that language does play a role in predicting grant progress. As with my prior analysis, this could be about applicants themselves and the types of groups that submit in English (or Spanish in LAC), or about how reviewers interpret and score based on language. The preference for English could, as the ECA TC member forewarns, further promote highly professionalized organizations. It could also reward certain contexts over other, such as noted by the Africa TC member. Though I know all eligibility is conducted by consultants fluent in the approved languages, I do not have data on the TC members' language, which could provide one clue.

c. Applicants and Organizations

One area of The Middle is clear and consistent in all cycles: the emphasis on women's NGOs. In Cycles 1 and 2, women-led NGOs always positive and often significant. In Cycle 1, despite allowing mainstream NGOs to apply, the more open call overwhelmingly rewarded women-led NGOs above non-women's applicants. Starting at 30% of the applicant pool, women-led NGOs comprise 53% of grantees. Fund staff from this round bemoaned the number of non-gender-focused organizations that applied and the cost of having to weed them out. This revelation in part inspired the priority review stage that only took place in Cycle 1. It also highlights the mutual learning that occurs over time in

repeated grant cycles, with the Fund refining its criterion to more accurately target the kinds of groups it considers best positioned to effect change in women's rights. As expected, when Cycle 2 disallows and therefore eliminate) any non-women's NGOs, this parameter is *ten times* as large as in Cycle 1 (from .34 to 3.80). In this area, the Fund steadily revises its rules to align requirements with the ideal.

Cycle 3 provides a window women's organizations not available in the other two cycle. This model excludes women-led and NGO organization types, but includes a variable for the percentage of women on staff. I find that, as anticipated, the effect of having a higher percentage of women on staff is positive and significant for progress through the grant cycle. (The size of the parameter is small because the variables ranges from 1 to 100.) The average values for different stages reaffirm the trend: across the whole cycle, organizations report an after of 71% women on staff, but 68% among ineligible applicants, 76% for those that reached TC stage, and 81% for grantees. This finding shows us that beyond the basic cutoff of roughly 60% that the Fund uses to eliminate not-women's organizations, *it further rewards those groups with higher percentage of women*. Though being majority women does not guarantee an organization is feminist or part of a women's movement, the Fund's preference strongly places women at the helm for gender equality action.

I also find evidence of the middle and the impact of changes between the Fund's grant rounds. One of the clearest contrasts comes through in the coleads variable. Whereas Cycle 1 yields a positive parameter, but with a mixed confidence interval, Cycle 2 is completely negative and significant. The odds of reach a further stage as a co-led applicant is just .30 (95% CI .20 to .49, p-value = .000), or one-third the odds of an applicant without a colead. This finding fits precisely with my finding earlier that coleads are more likely to

be ineligible in Cycle 2, when the Fund staff was beginning to question the approach and underplayed this applicant option. Adding the results of this regression analysis, I conclude that the shift from promoting to merely accepting coleads has had an impact on the grant review overall, from who applied to how applicants are scored to final grant selection.

The changes in the colead formulation do not mean that the Fund has moved away from partnerships, a central component of “the middle” ideal and one of the NGOization-related characteristics I am investigating. Instead, the preference for partnerships shows up clearly in Cycles 1 and 2 when the Fund tracked whether an applicant identified additional organizations or agencies as partners for their programs. In this area, the Fund’s framing seems to influence applicants: in Cycle 1, three-quarters say they have additional partners, but less than half do in Cycle 2. The Fund *consistently rewards informal partnerships*. With additional partners, applicants have greater odds of advancing to further stages: 2.94 in Cycle 1 (95% CI 2.06 to 4.19, p-value = .000) and 1.36 in Cycle 2 (95% CI 1.01 to 1.80, p-value = .000) That is, they are up to three times more likely to advance in Cycle 1 and 30% more in likely in Cycle 2. More analysis is needed to understand the rate of NGOs partnership with governments – i.e. the precise kinds of collaboration that we would expect to see in Cycles 1 and 3, given their framing, though might also persist in Cycle 2.

The parameters for degrees NGOs also highlight cycle changes. With a fully positive CI in Cycle 1, applicants have increased odds of 1.40 the more of a pure “NGO” it is. For Cycle 2, the estimate is negative, with a standard error of .25 and mixed CI. The later cycle’s estimate is mostly a reflection of a very different applicant pool, in which few governments applied at all. I consider this variable a useful point of comparison between rounds, but not

a reliable estimate for progress through Cycle 2 or a more generalizable finding about NGOs versus government applicants.

d. Income

One of the most glaring gaps between the Fund's public priorities and its prized middle is in income size. Fund staff members from all periods unfailingly describe the ideal grantee as an intermediate-sized NGO, not the big or "usual" actors, but also decidedly *not* grassroots. No such requirement or priority is ever expressed in the Fund's application documents. The relatively stable distribution of organizations' incomes across grant cycles indicates that those in the lower and higher brackets continue to apply for grants. As I have described in "Who Applied?," the Fund's priority on midsized organizations may pose a material barrier and ideological contradiction when it comes to funding women's movement actors.

Income parameters strongly affirms my earlier findings. They are consistently positive and statistically significant in all the models. An increase in income category (1 to 6) is associated with the following odds of an increase in stage progress: 1.31 in Cycle 1; 1.51 in Cycle 2; and 1.19 in Cycle 3. These findings are illustrated in the distribution of incomes throughout the grant stages, which show that midsized and medium/large organizations clearly dominate the final grant selection. As depicted in Table 5.23, a midsize or medium/large applicant is *five times more likely* than a small organization to be awarded a grant and twice as likely as a medium/small group.<sup>29</sup> With a preponderance of

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<sup>29</sup> For these charts, I use lead income. As I have shown, colead and lead incomes do not vary significantly. Moreover, though coleads are present for 45% of applicants in Cycle 1, only 13% in Cycle 2 are co-led and none in Cycle 3.

applications to begin with, the midsize category overshadows all others in the final grantee pool at 58% (n = 63). Combined, small and medium/small groups make up only 13% of the grantee pool, despite constituting 31% of applicants. Fewer large organizations (\$1M-2M) apply, though their rate of receiving a grant is still higher than small or medium/small groups. In all, large applicants make up 10% of all grantees.

**Table 5.23 Lead Income Category Cut at Each Stage<sup>30</sup> (n & %)**

Income Category	Stage					Category Total
	Ineligible	Eligible No TC Review	TC Review	Semi-finalist	Grantee	
Small - Under 50K	330 (54%)	71 (12%)	199 (32%)	9 (1%)	6 (1%)	615 (100%)
Med/Small - 50-100K	128 (46%)	24 (9%)	109 (39%)	10 (4%)	8 (3%)	279 (100%)
Midsize - 100-500K	545 (42%)	130 (10%)	516 (40%)	41 (3%)	63 (5%)	1295 (100%)
Med/Large - 500K-1M	148 (35%)	47 (11%)	196 (46%)	17 (4%)	19 (4%)	427 (100%)
Large - 1-2M	88 (38%)	29 (13%)	99 (43%)	5 (2%)	11 (5%)	232 (100%)
Very Large - 2-10M (Gov only)	21 (47%)	5 (11%)	17 (38%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	45 (100%)
Stage Total	1260 (44%)	306 (11%)	1136 (39%)	83 (3%)	108 (4%)	2893 (100%)

Small groups are cut during eligibility review at the highest rate by far, whereas medium/large and large organizations make it through eligibility but are cut more than any other group during TC review. While eligibility requirements cut the lower strata, TC review shaves off the top. This makes sense: the TC removes groups that have the structures (and budgets) to pass through eligibility, but are not a good fit for the Fund. It also shows that, in applying the Fund's priorities, the TC further whittles the application pool toward the middle.

Table 5.24 further demonstrate the shrinking percentage of small and large groups over the course of grant review.

<sup>30</sup> Calculation for Tables 5.11 and 5.12 based on lead income. Valid n = 2,893, or 79% of all applicants.

**Table 5.24 Lead Income Categories: Applicants vs. Grantees**

Lead Income Category	% Valid Applicants (n = 2893)	% Valid Grantees (n = 108)
Small - Under 50K	21.3%	5.6%
Med/Small - 50-100K	9.6%	7.4%
Midsize - 100-500K	44.8%	58.3%
Med/Large - 500K-1M	14.8%	17.6%
Large - 1-2M	8.0%	10.2%
Very Large - 2-10M (Gov only)	1.6%	0.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The final allocation of grants reinforces the Fund's literal funding of the middle. These are not AWID's grassroots women's rights organizations, nor large-scale NGOs. They are resoundingly concentrated between incomes of \$100,000 and \$1M, numbers that demarcate the financial boundaries around the Fund's ideal middle.

e. Legacy Effects

Finally, one area I had anticipated would bear results was whether applicants had previously received funds from UNIFEM and if they had partnered with the agency, asked in Cycle 1. I had expected both to be clearly positive factors, supporting the formulation that working with international institutions would make groups more likely to progress through the grant cycle. However, first I find that the results are mixed: both are positive (.625 and .456), but with very large standard errors (over .8) and, as a result, large confidence intervals that span positive and negative values. This could also reflect the fact that UNIFEM plays a minimal role in grant review, especially in this round. Without UNIFEM staff familiar with the applicants, progress would not reflect a clear boost for these groups. As introducing the two variables does not dramatically alter my other parameters

or add to the explanatory power of my model, so I have omitted them in the final cycle model presented above.

In addition, I test whether past applications to the Fund improves progress. Though positive, repeat applicants do not have a large effect in Cycle 1 (odds of just 1.13), the effect is slightly larger in Cycle 2, with odds of 1.16. The lack of relationship could be due, in part, to the small sample size (82 in Cycle 2 and 143 in Cycle 3). It could also be a matter of the Fund's changing application and requirements. As the format of the application and framing of the Fund's priorities varies, having gone through the process before does not provide much of a leg up.

Lastly, my findings for inter-cycle effects are mixed. Country\_Granted does show a significant and positive correlations between Cycles 1 and 3, but only a small and insignificant one for Cycles 2 and 3. The positive relationship between countries in Cycles 1 and 3, when the number of grants was smaller, hints at two findings. First, when concentrated in a smaller number of countries, there are some countries that the Fund is more likely to support. Second, there might be an inter-cycle effect whereby the Fund pauses its support of a country and then re-invests in a later round. As I describe in chapter 4's "Award" stage analysis, UN Women's country and regional offices have played a stronger role in promoting certain countries in later cycles. Given these differences, I infer that any cross-cycle correspondence is not an overt strategy by the Fund, but might show that country offices with longer-standing grant programs are more able to advocate for grants in their country preferences.

f. Summarizing “Progress”

The different cycles’ applicants and their progress rates demonstrate the importance of understanding how power operates in each grant stage and overall. Namely, *the framing embedded in the call for proposals informs who applies and how grants are assessed*. Cycle 1 repeatedly stressed partnerships, especially between “mainstream” actors and civil society, and generated a large number of formal partnerships in response. The Fund then promoted them through the grant review process, particularly in moments of greater discretion such as priority review and grant selection. In Cycle 2, the opposite occurred. Despite allowing coleads, the call for proposals conveyed the Fund’s skepticism about formal partnership arrangements. Never expressly stated, funding to government agencies was also minimized in comparison to support of women’s NGOs. Many fewer partnerships and governments applied, and governments were cut more readily in every stage of grant review, from eligibility to the technical committee.

The Fund claims to run an open, competitive process. Its wide and broad calls for proposal leave ample space for myriad approaches to addresses gender inequality around the world. Fund staff members describe this as “demand-driven” grantmaking and laud the approach that enables applicants to define their own solutions for women’s rights and be judged on the merit of those ideas. The programs it supports are diverse and designed to fit their specific contexts and communities. As opposed to a program implementation model, where women’s NGOs implement part of a UN Women program, grantees define their own goals, manage and their own money.

And yet, after spending countless days or week completing an application, just 3% of applicants will receive a grant. Fund’s stated priorities and requirements tell only part of

the story about who will reach this stage. The gap between what applicants know and how grantmakers assess proposals is a feature of the field with such minimal transparency. For the Fund, the middle ideal leads to high rates of decline and low rates of progress for small organizations. It also has unequal effects in each of the five regions, generating promising directions for future research. Finally, it promotes a very specific but limited section of women's movement organizations.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

I do not want to diminish the importance the Fund for Gender Equality's support of women's rights. The Fund has made admirable grants to feminist organizations: building up a crop of women's political leaders in Mexico, securing rights for Dalit women in India, crafting new gender-sensitive approaches to climate change in Ghana, and so on. More mainstream approaches have also been funded, such as gender-responsive budgeting, and grants made to women's arms of mixed NGOs. Feminist and not, some programs succeed quickly, others fall short, and most build toward long-term shifts that are only slightly perceptible in time horizon of grant projects. In some ways, the grants speak to the accomplishment of the process. It works! Grants are made! Mostly to promising and women-led NGOs! But that is not the story I am telling. I am looking back, long before these monies go out the door, to understand what it takes for an organization to near the finish line.

What I hope my work has done is show the limitations that come from working within international institutions – limitations that I believe women's movements, feminist funders, and development professionals should take seriously. The size of resources that

can be mobilized through development agencies overshadows those held by feminist and social movement funders by an enormous magnitude. The former comes in complex packages, linked with bureaucratic rules and demanding levels of formalization that describe just a small segment of women's movement organizations.

In this context, we need programs such as the Fund for Gender Equality that aspire to access, transform, and remake development aid into grants and especially grants to women-led NGOs. These initiatives face an uphill battle. First, they must negotiate development agencies' frames of meaning, including ideas related to gender equality that promote the kinds of moderate change strategies and formalized structures described in NGOization literature. Second, bureaucracies' layers of rules and norms demand maintenance and attention that may curtail responsiveness to outside actors (e.g. women's movements) and fields (e.g. feminist funding). Finally, as I spell out in this chapter, like all grantmakers, development-led funders bake their ideals into grant review with some unexpected consequences.

The effects of the middle ideal are not extraordinary given the Fund's location within UN Women. In many ways, the criteria point in this direction. What is remarkable is the degree to which the middle permeates each stage and directs those actors whittling down the grant pool. The impact of these cuts points to what I had expected: a class of women's organizations that is more formalized, partnered, state-oriented, and larger than most women's movement actors. Moreover, as I had expected, not all applicants and regions fit this model equally. In my concluding chapter, I ask what these differential rates of access might tell us about movement-scale effects of grantmaking.

This middle could fit into of movement-wide strategies to equip some organizations to operate between women and institutions. However, one of the costs of the Fund's distance from women's movements is that it does not conceive of itself as a potentially pivotal piece of a broader funding landscape. The initial vision of the Fund's bold, experimental, multi-million-dollar grants is no longer feasible without the kind of money Spain initially invested. This is no longer *that* Fund. But it could be filling a space that might make it possible for women's organizations to be seen as viable, strong, and financially able to get the big money. The Fund's current grant sizes (\$300K on average) could help address the well-known gap that is needed for certain kinds of organizations – those with the infrastructure *and* the feminist roots – to catapult out of the small-change grants of up to \$50K that characterize so much of the funding for women's rights.

In the absence of this vision, the Fund's grants are important but not strategic with respect to other women's funding sources. In my final chapter, I argue that we cannot view this kind of grant pool in isolation. Rather, to understand NGOization in practice and in motion, we must explore what it means that grantmakers like the Fund concentrate such a large percentage of resources for women's rights in this narrow middle space.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

## Conclusion

My conclusions from this study all point back to power: the power to define and set the boundaries of action for individuals, organizations, and movements; the power to fund; the power (or lack of power) to hold institutions accountable. In this chapter, I consider how power cuts across the fields of development, funding, and women's movements and describe the scope and limitations of my findings.

### I. Summary of Findings

My dissertation ties together the accountabilities, enacted daily and enforced formally and informally, of institutionally-situated individuals within UN Women and the decisions they make in development funding for gender equality. I show how their decisions are informed by and conform to the institution's bureaucratic rules over time, playing out in who is hired and who leaves, what priorities drive the Fund's grantmaking, and in the amount of time and energy spent justifying the Fund's value within the agency. I discover that the Fund's increasing internal attention – its *institutional accountability* – eclipses its potential *movement accountability* – a commitment to feminist funding models and women's movement organizations brought in by early feminist funding experts. By disaggregating the stages of grant review over three grant cycles, I find that these competing accountabilities have direct consequences for the Fund's grant selection. I show that what happens within the black box of development-led grantmaking greatly affects

which kinds of organizations are most likely to access coveted large-scale grants for women's rights and gender equality.

In my first empirical chapter, "Accountable to Whom?," my institutional ethnography of the Fund underscores the fragility of movement accountability, which diminishes as the Fund commits more time and attention to institutional standards, rules, and politics. Under the Fund's ever-more internal focus, early feminist funding values are replaced by gender and development frameworks, and informal avenues for women's movement actors to advise the Fund dissolve entirely.

In my next chapter, "Grantmaking As a Social Process," I link these accountabilities to the forms of power that shape each stage of grant review. I find that Cycle 1's framing and grant review reflect a frenetic combination of movement and institutional accountability, in which Fund staff members attempt to insert feminist funding values into the existing development framework. During this period, the Fund elevates ranking and scoring procedures as a way to gain legitimacy within *and* autonomy from the institution. Cycle 2's more activist, movement-centered framing permeates the call for proposals and grant review. It is particularly evident in the discretion given to the women's-movement-heavy technical committee in their assessment of proposals. Nonetheless, the Fund's effort to align with UN Women is signaled by more rigidly enforced eligibility requirements and stronger emphasis on generating "results" through its grants. In Cycle 3, managed almost entirely by development experts, the Fund more easily pushes through changes related to core values of directly funding women, but without a feminist framework. The Fund's own framing, technical committee (TC) recruitment processes, and eligibility review reflect strong adherence to UN rules and an emphasis on development frameworks, such as the

Sustainable Development Goals. Working with much greater autonomy, the Fund has internalized the rules and frameworks that it once contested.

In the final chapter, “The Middle,” I bring this staged model of grant making to life, showing how the Fund’s requirements and priorities combine with implicit ideals about gender equality and women’s rights to promote a particular kind of actor: midsized women-led NGOs willing to collaborate with governments and able to prove a moderate to high level of formalization. On one hand, this middle ideal results from many unsurprising compromises made and intentional strategies employed to meld a feminist funding model with a development financing approach. However, it also reveals the impact of unspoken assumptions that become deeply embedded in grant review. Using quantitative analysis (descriptive statistics, means tests, and regression analysis), I show that the ideal middle limits who progresses through grant review – in other words, who is best poised and most likely to access such resources – and unevenly matches women’s movements in the Fund’s five regions. Moreover, it upholds hallmarks of NGOization that resource mobilization literature forewarns can deradicalize women’s movements.

## **II. Discussion**

What does it mean to “fund feminism”? Lydia Alpízar, former Executive Director of the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), writes:

...collective change processes for long-term social transformation in favour of gender equality cannot be built without resources... We recognize that many of the most successful women’s movements in the world are largely self-resourced and financially autonomous – but the organizations that helped build these movements are not (2013, p. 12-13).

The distinction Alpízar draws highlights a core paradox in resourcing feminist social change. While feminist activism and women's movement activities may persist autonomously and without external support, countless movement organizations regularly engage with donors and rely on their resources. Who gets funded and for what kinds of work may have movement-wide effects, carried on a wave of professionalized NGOs who must balance the work of their movements with the demands of their donors. As I explore below, UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality provides clues into how interactions between donors, international institutions, and women's movements creates a class of women's organization that is less radical than other movement actors.

My research also shows that discourses can have power, or, in Smith's (2005) terms, texts mediate the social relations of ruling. I uphold conclusions from a number of fields: social movements scholars who highlight the effects of framing on mobilization (e.g. Meyers and Zald, 1977; Thayer, 2010; Ferree, 2009); linguists such as Johnstone (2002) and feminist sociologists like Smith, who follow the relationship between discourse and power in a variety of settings; and discursive neoinstitutionalists who focus on "...the actual practices through which global ideas are incorporated in local contexts, as well as on the discourses that motivate actors in the modern world to behave so uniformly in several ways" (Alasuutari, 2015, p. 162). Discourses of development, gender equality, and feminism course through the Fund's key documents, from its calls for proposals and application forms to scoring guidelines. The language in these documents conveys frames of worth and modes of success for applicants. They reverberate with the Fund's changing position within UN Women. And they serve as the single mode of interaction between more than 3,000 applicants and the Fund.

In this discussion, I shed light on the complexity of “funding feminism,” expound on the effects of discourse, and trace power through institutions. I look outward to the kinds of groups the Fund deems worthy and why, and inward to the institutional setting in which feminist outsiders occupy a tenuous and ultimately untenable space. My findings have implications for our understanding of international institutions, donors, and social movements and the resources that sustain them.

a. Funding Feminism

The Fund is part of a broader movement to support women's rights and gender equality through grantmaking. AWIDs 2015 report spells out the major sectors from which such women's rights organizations receive their incomes: 1) bilateral and multilateral agencies; 2) private foundations; 3) local and national government; 4) international non-governmental organizations (INGOs); and 5) women's funds. On a much smaller scale, women's NGOs also survive on individual donations, income-generating activities, faith-based organizations, and investments, and other creative means to generate resources.

So, to whom is the fund relevant? And to what areas of sociological theory and funding in practice does it apply? First, my research broadly applies to grantmakers. My study provides extremely rare empirical data about the inner workings of a philanthropic/grantmaking operation. I lay out three findings pertinent to grantmaking in general, then delve into the specific fields in which the Fund operates. In addition to theoretical contributions, this discussion underlines the methodological potential of bridging institutional ethnographic and quantitative methods in analysis of grantmaking. It

also directs us toward the practical applications of my research, which I explore in this chapter.

Most straightforward, I find that *process matters*. The specific people that undertake each stage and the power vested in them informs who gets to the final, most visible outcome: a grant award. The differences in the Fund's technical committee scoring when given an open versus a closed format is just one of multiple examples I uncover where seemingly technical decisions shape how grants are assessed and where power lies. This is a matter of rules and procedures, and also of social relations and power.

To understand both, I theorize grantmaking *as a social process*, emphasizing both what and who drives each stage of grant review. I also go beyond analysis of discrete funders such as Ostrander (1995, 2004) and suggest that we can – and should – generate a more comparable model for understanding the relationship between grants processes and funders' influence on grantees and social movements. My staged model of grantmaking presupposes some general features of philanthropy: an agenda-setting/framing stage (application), proposal review, and grant award. I consider these sufficiently broad to provide a framework through which funders might be analyzed and compared. Formulating different staged models of grantmaking could serve as a valuable tool to identify power trends among different categories of donors. For example, social justice funders might be likely to have more external influences, such as through activist advisory boards or consultative processes, whereas private family foundations with closed applications could trend much more internal.

Second, as I foreground above, *discourse matters*. The Fund's framing – itself nested in development discourse – influenced who applied and how they were scored in each

cycle. As I describe below, I believe these donor-applicant interactions have last effects on social movements' activities and structures. Specific to funders, I consider grantmaking a heightened illustration of Lukes's (2005) second dimension of power to set an agenda. Though some moments of grantmaking, especially in interactions between funders and grantees, might include the first dimension of power *over*, I show that funders' framing introduces a less visible but equally important dynamic. This contributes to my third general finding: the asymmetrical power relationships inherent in philanthropy.

My case starkly illustrates the degree to which funders can operate almost entirely without oversight or external influence. Neither the Fund's explicit priorities nor its underlying values are ever subject to an audience outside of UNIFEM/UN Women. This philanthropic distance is inherent in a field where funders hold the money and get to choose if and how anyone on the outside might have a say in its allocation. For MDTFs and other development funding models, that power balance is compounded by the impenetrability of international institutions.

Philanthropy's asymmetrical dynamic offers a rich site to understand how power operates more broadly. This extreme case could shed light on when and if power can be democratized, the role of capital in shaping relations of power, and the influence of larger institutional norms and structures in exacerbating or reducing power asymmetries. It also provides insights into how individuals manage conflicting identifications, such as those of activist and donor. My formulation of accountabilities offers a promising way to theorize these individual negotiations.

In addition to general contributions, the findings about the Fund are most relevant to a rising field of women-focused development-led funders, such as the UN Trust Fund to

End Violence Against Women and the Dutch government's FLOW Fund and its predecessor, the MDG3 Fund. Both the MDG3 Fund and the Fund for Gender Equality were established with feminist movements in mind and both attempted to navigate development fields and their frames of meaning. The comparison tellingly illustrates the possibilities and limitations of development-led funding for women's movements.

Launched in 2008, the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation's MDG3 Fund provided 82 million euros in what an AWID evaluation report describes as "...the single largest fund ever created for gender equality, and targeting women's rights and civil society organizations, in the history of development cooperation" (Batliwala, Rosenhek, and Miller, 2013, p. 10). AWID's evaluation goes on:

...of the 45 grants awarded, 34 went to women's rights organizations or women's funds operating with a strong rights-based approach. We, at AWID, celebrated the launch of the Fund and were delighted to be one of its recipients. More importantly though, we felt it was vital that the changes catalyzed by this injection of resources to women's organizations, be tracked and captured in order to effectively speak to the difference that such resources can make (p. 11).

This was seen as a deliberate intervention to make development funding more responsive to and available for women's movements. Like the Fund for Gender Equality, the MDG3's grantmaking involved individuals affiliated with women's movements and gained legitimacy through its competitive review process designed to identify women's rights-based organizations. After the first round of grants, the MDG3 Fund concluded. In its place, the Dutch Ministry created the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) Fund.

The first round of FLOW grants went out in 2009 rather uneventfully. However, the second cycle in 2016 generated large backlash from women's rights groups. Granting 93 million euros, only one of the nine grants went to a women's organization. Letters flooded

the agency, prompting the Minister of Foreign of Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen, to issue a public response. In her letter posted on the FLOW website, she notes the concern, cites her ministry's enduring commitment to gender equality, and then writes:

There is a global trend towards multi-stakeholder approaches to solve today's complex challenges, and I consider it a positive development...

I believe empowerment and sustainable transformation strategies must be combined in order to achieve gender equality, and the FLOW 2016-2020 policy framework was designed with that in mind. After eight years of local empowerment of women through the MDG3 Fund and FLOW 2009-2015, FLOW 2016-2020 therefore focuses on strengthening the enabling environment for gender equality and, more than before, on the sustainability and measurability of results and the impact of interventions.

...As with the MDG3 Fund and the first FLOW fund, the call was open to different types of nongovernmental organisations, with no specific preference for women-led or feminist organisations (2013, p. 1)

She also details her decision to dedicate 5 million euro to "further strengthen feminist organisations in the South." (p. 2).

The letter insinuates that certain forms of development are out of the scope of women's organizations, which are better suited for "local empowerment of women." This is precisely what the Fund for Gender Equality and the MDG3 Fund were attempting to shift by showing that women's NGOs have the capacity to manage large funds, specifically development resources, and have national-level impact. Under different leadership and with new goals, the focus on strengthening women's movements dissolves entirely. While Ploumen endorses the open call, my research and the FLOW example show that in the absence of clearly prioritizing women's movement organizations and actors, development resources are very likely to end up in the hands of non-women-led actors, even when

ostensibly for women's rights and gender equality. The letter also highlights one of the major concerns raised within NGOization literature: that to partner at the level needed to influence policy or create so-called enabling environments for gender equality, feminists will be pushed aside in favor of more moderate actors. Beyond the text, however, is a bigger lesson about accountability. Having considered the Dutch money *for the movement*, women's organizations found ways to hold the government to account. The fact that Ploumen felt compelled to respond and, in doing so, dedicated more funding to feminist organizations (and said the word "feminist") is promising.

The FLOW Fund exchange affirms many of my core findings. I argue that feminist grantmaking and movement accountability are tenuous when set within international institutions. The FLOW Fund also adds to my case, showing that under some circumstances women's movement may respond and attempt to hold "their" donors accountable. In addition, my research shows that that donors' frames of meaning vitally shape the explicit and implicit values, priorities, and practices of their grantmaking. For donors like the Fund for Gender Equality and FLOW Fund, being set within development agencies' frameworks leads to linking gender equality actions to global norms and conventions, elevating the role of government and government partnerships, and requiring high levels of formalization. Of course, not all development agencies have the exact same frameworks. For example, SIDA, Sweden's development agency, has a more strongly rights-based framework in much of its funding. Nonetheless, grantees must report in logic frameworks and following strict financial guidelines. I do not anticipate the effects on movements would be much different from those that I have discovered for the Fund.

These examples speak more broadly to the real risks involved in institutionalizing feminist grantmaking practices within a development space. I find this especially worrying in light of the “aid effectiveness agenda” that has been building over the last ten years. As I describe in chapter 4, aid effectiveness and “donor harmonization” agendas have pushed for aid monies, including especially around gender equality, to go through national governments to then allocate. My findings raise extreme concerns about whether adding an additional layer of government oversight will foster positive shifts in women's funding.

Another trend to which my findings are applicable is the “investing in women” movement. Foundations based in corporations, such as the Nike Foundation’s “Girl Effect,” and other business-based models are getting into the field of funding for women. Very positively, they are bringing new resources into the field and doing some of the hard work of learning how to best support change in women's lives. Donors like the Nike Foundation, Gates Foundation, and others based originally in corporate resources, bring their own frames of meaning and point of reference to bear. This is not necessarily negative. Women's movements have learned much from business models. The problem comes from the complete and utter lack of accountability mechanisms and asymmetrical power to define the priorities. Whether or not they fund feminist action and women's movement is a matter of much debate.

There is another sector of income to which many of my findings apply, perhaps even as acutely: multilateral, bilateral, and government monies that come through program implementation rather than grants. From the UK Department for International Development (DfID) to the World Bank, development agencies around the world have created programs to address gender equality. As co-implementers with these agencies,

women's organizations are: a) more directly wedded to agency- or state-defined goals; b) more closely monitored than in many grant scenarios; and c) beholden to strict protocols and rules, including around financial management and organizational reporting. AWID does not distinguish between grants and other forms of income, but it does cite an uptick in funding from international institutions and governments that is certainly inclusive of these monies.

Thinking of the sources of funding available for women's movements also compels us to think of funding for women that is *not* going to women's movements. A significant amount of the bilateral and multilateral development aid money that is tagged for gender equality goes to projects that have claim to have gender elements but that are not led by women or women's movement organizations. For example, the World Bank (n.d.) reports, "In fiscal year 2012 alone, just over US\$29 billion, or 83 percent of the World Bank's lending and grants, were allocated to gender-informed operations in education, health, access to land, financial and agricultural services, jobs, and infrastructure." In addition, the overwhelming majority of multi-donor trust funds provide very limited grants to civil society organizations (CSOs). Instead, they support governments or development agency arms, such as the UN country offices. In my 2012 analysis of MDTFs at the UN, I found that only six of the top fifteen funds made grants to CSOs implementing independent programs. Of these, the Fund for Gender Equality was the only trust fund that did not also make grants to UN agencies (Miller, 2012).

The Fund for Gender Equality provides a critical window into the often-invisible forms of power that operate within funding organizations, where individuals mete out resources and face their own varied constraints. The outcomes of these negotiations are

more known and better theorized, with a small but robust field of scholarship on the impact of fundraising on social movements. My work contributes a deeper understanding to theorize and investigate the origin of those impacts.

b. Dueling Constituencies

Beyond grantmaking, my work speaks to the power of bureaucracies to inhibit disruptive change and block external influence. Following the Fund over three grant cycles and eight years, I have argued that UN Women's existing approaches to gender equality erode feminist outsiders' affiliations with women's movements and undermines successful integration of feminist funding models. The struggle to stay relevant and fit into an agency's rules and structure requires such a high level of attention that, over time, an external focus is extremely difficult to maintain. This raises larger issues about innovation within bureaucracy and indicates that programs that are not well established or core to the way an institution already operates may confront rigid rules and a combination of overt and implicit skepticism from within the institution. What is most new and most different about the Fund gives ways to greater alignment, both in how the Fund operates and in the language it uses. This alignment is precisely what a neoinstitutional approach would predict, emphasizing the ways that organizational norms generate conformity (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The bureaucratic features that Barnett and Finnemore (2004) define as integral to international institutions lead me to expect my findings to apply well beyond the Fund.

As the Fund is institutionalized and becomes more similar to the agency's frameworks in some ways, its legitimacy remains at risk. In chapter 3, I argue Fund's

achievement of institutional accountability does not confer legitimacy. My work builds on Conti's (2011) concept of legitimacy chains, in which individuals assess and appeal to the multiple and competing audiences. Where Conti's legitimacy claims occur between states and the WTO, I look within a single institution. By focusing the daily work of considering audience, I underscore the complexity of weighing internal and external actors in a bureaucracy. I show this to be an imbalanced equation, with the force of international institutions requiring extraordinary attention. These struggles are rarely moments of clear force. Rather, they take place through cultural work and interpersonal interactions over time.

The accountabilities that drive institutionalization also move legitimacy – both where it is claimed and how it might be achieved – deeper into the agency. In the case of the Fund, legitimacy “success” becomes divorced from meeting the needs of women's movements and is instead assessed by internal institutional actors. This has clear repercussions. For example, UN Women's current reorganization of its trust funds to increase “efficiency” may boost the Fund's legitimacy within a certain development framework, but would be unlikely to receive approval if it were also competing for legitimacy in the field of feminist funding. In a context where the Fund's value has been repeatedly questioned and where external input has been cut off, feminist values are no longer a part of the Fund's legitimacy claims. Under the restructuring, connections to women's movements may well be considered ancillary, leaving a grant tool to move money but without any movement accountability.

The weighing of audiences, enactments of accountability, and assessments of legitimacy are not unembodied processes. My findings stress the importance of the

individuals in positions of power, where power is enacted (and contested) in the many different forms I describe in chapter 4. I argue that individual feminist outsiders working within development agencies occupy a liminal and fragile place as they attempt to retain connections to feminist movements and respond to mounting institutional requirements and dynamics. While feminists might persist within development agencies, their ability to shift the modes of operation or underlying assumptions about gender and gender equality is limited. My work contributes a window into how precisely this happens, summarized above and detailed in chapter 3. I find that as they become development experts and more skillfully navigate their institutions, feminist outsiders face a dilemma. Knowing what is possible and where they must compromise, how far will they push their ideas for change? Some will choose to stay and attempt to make incremental change from within. But the compromises required to survive within the institution will drive others to leave, evident in the Fund staff's complete shift in composition from feminist funding to development expertise. In either case, the potential for transforming international institutions is highly curtailed.

The relevance of my study extends beyond feminists in international institutions. It addresses the broader question of what it means to serve an institution *and* an external constituency. The question highlights real tensions for institutions that aim or claim to provide meaningful pathways for social movements, stakeholder communities, or other external actors to participate in shaping their policies and programs. To what extent can outsiders, as well as "outsiders within," have a role? How might this be achieved? Cynically, I consider force of institutional accountability an uneven match with external accountabilities and one that comes with highly imbalanced incentives. For the Fund,

serving women's movements is largely theoretical and entirely informal, such as through disapproval by friends and colleagues. In contrast, serving the institution is enforced every day, from writing reports to interacting with colleagues, and in bigger ways, such as the allocation of resources.

The division between what happens within and outside of bureaucracies is not only a matter of the people who navigate between them. My study illuminates the larger forces at play that make both international institutions and philanthropic organizations notoriously impenetrable "black boxes." The Fund precisely displays the highly imbalanced power dynamics inherent in international institutions, much like the asymmetry in philanthropy. An entire accountability movement has grown around demanding greater transparency about development agencies' decision-making processes and projects (Clark et. al, 2003). While they might occasionally opt-in to transparency and provide in-roads for external involvement, such as participatory design and implementation, development agencies typically operate with impunity. Shielded behind the resources they hold and the convoluted rules that govern them, they rarely need to account for their values, assumptions, or processes to the movements and communities where they choose to intervene. My study shows that these values, assumptions, and processes have real effects for who is most likely to access development funding for gender equality.

b. Social Movements: NGOization, Discourse, and Donor Advocacy

Finally, my study has implications for how we understand social movement-funder interactions and the relationship they have with NGOization. My analysis of applicants and AWID's report together specify that some segments of women's movements that are poised

to receive development funds and others are not. With budgets of at least \$50,000 in AWID's report and \$100,000 for the Fund, bigger NGOs are the ones successfully securing most development monies. These are not the 68% of young feminist groups that lack access to core funding and, by and large, cannot afford office space or basic infrastructure (FRIDA Fund, 2016). They are not the full *three-quarters* of AWID's respondents with budgets under \$50,000. One of the Fund for Gender Equality's technical committee members describes the kinds of organizations that can receive large grants of \$100,000 and up, "You're really depending on an organization to already have that infrastructure built up, you know, whether that's the computer and the accountant and the systems and the relationships and the auditing features. All of that stuff cost money and time and extra staffing capacity."

It is not a bad thing to have such parameters for a grant program. However, I pose they may come at a cost, excluding the majority of women's movement organizations even before substantive grant review. Moreover, my grant pool shows that both large and small women's groups vie for the Fund's grants. While this mismatch is created, in part, by the Fund's lack of transparency about its "middle" ideal, it also points to the fact that women's organizations are engaging in broad fund-seeking efforts. AWID's mapping of women's rights organizations supports this image, with a preponderance of groups securing at least some external support. As I discuss below, both the material outcomes and the discursive effects of grantseeking have implications women's movements.

In my discussions about funding feminism and international institutions, I have described a range of income sources that women's movements are mobilizing. AWID's report places bilateral and multilateral funds at the top of this list, making up 27% of the

money women's rights organizations received in 2010 (AWID, 2013, p. 114). Organizations receiving development funding are at the crux of a compromise. Their increased access to development monies could place them in position to translate between the local and the global, between institutions international institutions and feminist actors. However, by accepting funding, they agree to play by certain rules that might hamper this very translation. To understand these interactions requires a critical understanding of the ways organizations receiving such funds operate for and with their movements. This is not to presume all women's NGOs are movement actors or that all movements work in collaboration. Instead, it is an internal analysis that targets the fissures created by funding and addresses the complexity of translating between languages that often undermine or make illegible some of the more radical work of the movements. In terms of NGOization, rather than asking if NGOization is present, we should ask: What happens to movements as a whole as the segment of professionalized, state-focused NGOs grows in different contexts and over time?

Neither my study nor AWID's report speaks to the relationship *between* segments of women's movements.<sup>31</sup> Women's movements and the activists and organizations that comprise them are diverse and varied, in part thanks to feminist efforts to challenge hierarchical structures and tactics (Ferree and Martin, 1995). Ostrander (2004) cites this diversity and writes, "women's organizations seem more able to resist a tendency toward isomorphic homogeneity that neoinstitutionalist theorists emphasize" (p. 30). I suspect that segmenting organizations, such as by size and income sources, will belie Ostrander's account, revealing isomorphic pressures that apply to certain segments of women's

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<sup>31</sup> AWID does explore women's funds, which often act as intermediaries by regranteeing large resources to small feminist groups.

organizations. For instance, I find that women's NGOs with annual budgets between \$100,000 and \$500,000 are likely to meet the Fund's basic requirements, pointing to organizational structures that fit a baseline of formalization. Moreover, I see this segmentation as a necessary step to understand NGOization as an interactive and complex process.

Donors certainly play a role. In chapter 5, I argue the Fund promotes formalized structures and more moderate strategies, including state-oriented activities and partnerships, over radical actions. In this chapter, I assert that this is most likely the case for the majority of funding sources available to women's movement NGOs, and even more so among those receiving development grants. However, this is not in and of itself a finding that NGOization exists or deradicalizes movements. NGOization rests on the extent to which well-resourced groups' strategies, goals, and structures co-opt or eclipse other segments of social movements.

To use my own terms, such analysis would entail understanding of the accountabilities among women's NGOs. To whom do they answer? My research highlights the important distinction between individual commitments and accountabilities in practice. While I center on the Fund, I believe my case can be extended to women's movement organization here, as well as institutions more generally. I follow Alvarez's (2009) argument that professionalized women's NGOs – the very kind the Fund targets – may retain their feminist roots. However, how does this translate into action? This is an issue of who gets to speak for women's organizations and women. Further analysis, including of women's networks and the interactions between feminist actors, is called for. Some political scientists such as Pamela Paxton provide some insight into how women's

organizations interact and gain power in transnational advocacy (Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 2006). However, they do not include the kind of power analysis that I am describing. Among my grants data there is potential to explore with whom organizations are aligned and partnering. Like the rest of my study, this is a flat, time-bound picture based on only on grants applications. Such work should be expanded longitudinally and with much more robust analysis within the field.

Millie Thayer's (2010b) excellent work clearly details the transformations and imbalances that can result between organizations engaged in transnational fundraising. Set in Brazil, a large feminist organization, S.O.S. Corpo - *Instituto Feminista para la Democracia* (Feminist Institute for Democracy), uses the language and labor of a rural organization to gain funds, but moves further from a collaborative approach to an appropriative relationship with the group over time. Several years after Thayer's fieldwork, S.O.S. Corpo received a \$3 million grant from the Fund for Gender Equality. The grant extends Thayer's story. From partnering with a small group of rural women, S.O.S. Corpo now exemplifies a state-centered approach, implementing their large-scale Fund-supported program jointly with Brazil's Secretariat for Women's Policies.

This example underscores the need for greater analysis of power between the segments of women's movements that receive development funding over time. Based on research on the impact of funding and my current study, I posit expect that ongoing engagement between professionalized women's NGO staff and feminist movements is likely to create the kind of informal accountabilities that will make organizations at least nominally attentive to broader movements. This could manifest in many ways. For example, women's funds intentionally occupy an intermediate space, receiving funds that

require a rigid structure and larger budget, and regranting to more radical feminist groups. However, this is the exception. Rather pessimistically, I do not imagine movement accountability will be an even match for the persistent explicit and underlying demands that come from donors, especially as external funding constitutes larger percentages of a group's budget. I speculate that the effort required to attend to multiple donors, each with their own frames of meaning, will contribute to a divide between segments. As I have defined it, accountabilities could shed light on how women's movement organizations respond to external influences, especially donors, and what this means for their interactions with each other and the movement as a whole.

My findings point to potential implications beyond just who gets the money. I have shown how thoroughly UN Women's frames of meaning influence the Fund, moving its language and position within the field toward development and away from feminist funding. Negotiations of these frames manifest in key texts, such as the calls for proposals and technical committee scoring guidance. In response, who applies and how they are scored changes in each cycle. These findings underscore that *discourse* can inform action, from who considers applying to how they are assessed.

These discourses foreground an important repercussion for women's movement organizations: the cost of translating their work and strategies into donors' frames of meaning. As donors set the terms for the kinds of applicants they will accept and the strategies they (say they) will prioritize, they are defining categories of worth. Though organizations knowingly write to their audiences, the act of translation itself may contribute to how organizations define themselves. Thayer spells out the narrowing effects of such translations, even when feminists attempt to resignify dominant funder or

development discourse. She also foregrounds the intra-movement power dynamics I discuss above. While Thayer examines the effects of translation and resignification for groups who have received funds, I argue a similar process occurs on a smaller scale when groups choose to seek funds in the first place.

A feminist activist TC member from Cycle 1 highlights how fundseeking discourse can translate into action. She starts, "When you don't use [funders'] language, they think you have no systems even if you do." I asked "Do you think that it affects groups to have to put their work, their ideas, into that language? Does it affect their actual work?" She quickly replied, "It does. They come in when they're authentic, but as time goes on, they know, even if they're authentic, they do not get funded. So they start checking the way they do things." Funding is the outcome that conveys discursive success or failure. In response, organizations learn, they iterate, and they adjust how they describe their work. Another TC member from Cycle 3 agreed, "Organizations are well aware that they have to use a certain language, to adjust to these rules." To "adjust to the rules," to "check" the way they do things can take different forms. It might mean adopting different language. But it can also ripple into their actual activities and structures.

The same Cycle 1 interviewee ties donors' seemingly innocuous questions to how groups are structured. She describes an NGO that started with a collective leadership model. As it fundraised, potential donors asked, Who is the director? Who is the board? The group arbitrarily chose a director. Over time and as the NGO gained more funding, the director started getting exposure as the face of the organization: "She started traveling. One day she came and she said, 'I've outgrown you as a group, so I'm dismissing you as my board.' ...I think we haven't learned to deal with organizations that are different and that

are not mainstreamed. We don't know what to do with them. And we try to make them mainstream NGOs." This was not some acute moment or deliberate intervention by a donor. Instead, the assumptions held by those with resources nudged the organization into a structure that changed its own internal power dynamics.

Social movements are complex and multi-sited, and their interactions with donors have financial and discursive manifestations. Though these compromises are not unknown, in more deeply understanding the ways that funders conceive of women's movements, I extend the picture of when and for whom development resources are available. To understand how these monies promote and contribute to NGOization, I call for continued and stronger analysis of the interaction between women's organizations and their accountabilities.

### **III. Practical Applications and Reflections**

The asymmetry between resource-holders and movements means that any kind of participatory, community-based, or movement-driven programming requires an extreme amount of care, attention, and intentionality. My work offers possible steps to build more responsive institutions and organizations.

First, for international institutions, formal accountability mechanisms (e.g. steering committees with women's movement representation and enforcement power) may create lasting pathways between internal actors and external audiences. In addition, I have shown the importance of the specific individuals in positions of power. Bureaucracies might leverage their famously impersonal hiring measures to build qualities like external or

movement networks into job descriptions. Seeking out, hiring, and rewarding individuals with such connections could prove a small step toward more inclusive institutions.

Second, if we are to imagine a field of funding that works in concert with social movements, advocating for greater transparency is not nominal. For funders, more introspective and rigorous review of grantmaking procedures has potential to strengthen the link between their goals and decisions. Ostrander's (2004) case study of the Boston Women's Fund shows that measures like interactive dialogues and community-led grant assessment can achieve less hierarchical and more inclusive philanthropic models. Social movement funders also rely on activist advisory boards, interpersonal relationships within movements, grantee feedback, and listening sessions to inform grant strategies. Even in these scenarios, a power dynamic persists and draws boundaries around what kinds of critiques or influences external actors can have on grantmakers. Being honest about funders' own accountabilities to their boards, their donors, and, in cases like the Fund, larger institutions is part of unpacking what different kinds of incomes portend for the areas of women's movements they support.

Third, I believe more donor advocacy is possible. Many donor organizations are staffed with well-meaning people who want to do good for the movements they support. This means that it is also the work of movements to advocate for funding that meets their needs and call out funding that does not. While this advocacy might add to already taxed activist organizations, I believe it is necessary to shift the funding landscape. Existing efforts currently concentrate on donors' strategies and goals. My research elevates the importance of donor processes and assumptions. Greater transparency about what those processes are and precisely who undertakes them should also be a consideration for this

advocacy. These steps might also lead to the added benefit of a meaningful constituency that can help advocate for institutionally-embedded grantmakers, like the Fund.

What do these recommendations mean in practice? What do they feel like for the people enacting them? During the many years dreaming up, researching, and at last writing this project, I have been reflecting on a personal level. I joined the Fund in the wild early days, when we knew only that Spain had given UNIFEM \$65 million and that we had a matter of months to get it out the door. Trying to cultivate something new, something feminist, something *fast* in the midst of a bureaucracy was a beautiful, frustrating, unreal experience. I left two years later, hoping I would someday write about what I had seen. I wanted to turn the hard-won lessons of traversing from outsider to insider and back again into a resource for funders and women's movements. This project is the first step.

This research has changed the way I understand my own experiences from nearly a decade ago. Now on the other side and having looked back with the tools of a sociologist, I think about what I would have done differently. My reflections are the personalized version of recommendations for the field.

First and foremost, I would have tried harder to build a sense of ownership among women's movements and in the spaces where transnational feminist activists advocate for better funding. After the first grants went out, instead of turning so entirely inward, which I witnessed and of which I was a part (out of necessity and out of exhaustion), I would have tried harder to ensure the Fund remained connected to our feminist philanthropy peers. I would have appreciated just how much we needed allies on the outside so that we could serve the movements from within. To the extent possible, I would have tried to formalize structures of input for women's movement actors. This could have remained within the

technical committee, though that would have required more public acknowledgment of the purpose we had envisioned: feminist reviewers with movement affiliations playing a large role in grant assessment.

Second, I would have been more strategic about publicizing that we were attempting to be one of the very rare development-led funders with potential to transform development monies into a fungible resource for women's rights. I would have put in place measures to track how the model itself could prove the efficacy of funding for women's movements. I would also have engaged in more conversations about the real constraints and limitations of this kind of funding and sparked a dialogue with other women's rights funders about how we could strategically collaborate so that more rigid development monies would be paired with flexible grants.

Very pragmatically, I would have changed the proposal form dramatically and had a first, very short document to assess groups quickly. (I say this as someone who helped create the initial format.) I would have taken applicants' time more seriously. As we began to understand which rules we could bend and which ones we could not, especially heading into the second cycle, I would have created an application form that made these requirements extremely clear. I would have used the power of discourse to convey exactly what our ideals were. For example, I would have asked, "If this grant will constitute more than half your organization's income each year, please describe in detail how you would plan to manage this grant. What additional financial structure is what you need to put in place?" I would not have required the lengthy attachments until much later in the process.

Finally, I would have done more donor advocacy with potential funders and governments. This did take place, but I think it could have been bolstered if we had not

been as afraid of being sanctioned internally for fundraising outside the formal channels. I would have been less afraid.

Would any of these steps have made a difference? In the big ways, probably not. The force of bureaucracy is fierce, and many of the negotiations that drove the Fund inward are part and parcel of working within an international institution. Moreover, money matters. Without additional resources, the Fund is unlikely to enjoy substantially more bargaining power or legitimacy. However, my study shows that the small shifts matter. They take shape in how development priorities are interpreted when done so by feminist reviewers; in the undercurrents and conversations that make funders more responsive to feminist change; and in the experience of working with and not just for women's movements. I believe that a feminist politics of accountability – the daily, lived-in kind of accountability – provides a framework to break open institutions that hold power. To do so requires compromise, collaboration, and most of all, fearlessness. I have to believe it is possible.

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