Financing for Feminist Futures

Recommendations for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on feminist foreign policy

Walking the Talk

The Financing for Feminist Futures (F4FF) Conference, held in Madrid on October 8–10, 2025, gathered 200 partners, especially from the Global South, to address major ODA cuts and emerging 'post-ODA' challenges in the gender equality funding landscape. Participants explored how to protect traditional funding while mobilizing new resources.

Key recommendations included shifting to core and flexible funding, creating rapid-response grants, leveraging philanthropic and private capital through feminist principles, and advancing feminist fiscal and accountability measures. At a critical time for civic space and gender equality, F4FF provided a platform for reflection, collaboration, and shared commitment to diverse financing models.

Introduction

This document summarises relevant recommendations from the Financing for Feminist Futures (F4FF) Conference, organised by the Walking the Talk consortium in Madrid, October 8–10, 2025, to inform the 4th Feminist Foreign Policy Ministerial Conference in Paris.

The gender equality funding landscape is undergoing major disruption. Cuts to official development assistance (ODA), including funding for gender equality initiatives and feminist organisations, are pushing many to consider a 'post-ODA world.' As the impacts of these cuts become evident, many women's rights organisations face closure, staff losses, and reduced advocacy and accountability work. In this difficult environment, efforts are growing to both protect traditional funding sources and mobilise new ones. To sustain the diversity of gender justice work, equally diverse financial solutions are needed.

Amid upheavals in aid, trade, and other financial flows, governments met at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) to negotiate a path forward. The resulting Compromiso de Sevilla, though falling short of hoped-for transformation, signals renewed collective commitment, further reflected in the Seville Platform for Action. The next challenge is implementation and accountability, with civil society poised to play a central role.

Three months after FfD4, over 200 feminist activists, researchers, and leaders - especially from the Majority World - joined women's funds, policy-makers, and philanthropic representatives in Madrid to explore next steps. Using a participatory format, the conference focused on three tracks:

- Building our Movements: Strategizing Together
- Holding the Line: Protecting Traditional Financing Sources
- Strengthening Feminist Funding for Gender Equality: Building on FfD4 and Exploring New Possibilities

A more comprehensive conference report reflecting the diverse range of perspectives, reflections and strategies will be published at a later moment.

Emerging recommendations

Rethink Aid and Philanthropy.

Participants critically assessed the limitations of traditional ODA and donor-led funding models. Feminist movements, particularly in the Global South, continue to receive less than 0.2% of global ODA directly despite leading frontline work on rights, climate adaptation, and peacebuilding. Funding is increasingly fragmented and short-term, leaving movements vulnerable to burnout and backlash.

Recommendations:

- Move from project-based to core and flexible funding for feminist and women's rights organizations. Two innovative funding mechanisms to highlight include Fonds de Soutien aux organisations Féministes (FSOF) and Leading from the South (LFS). Walking the Talk wrote a policy brief uncovering their commonalities and opportunities[1].
- Support pooled, participatory funds and ecosystem-based resource justice models that redistribute power and decision-making. Two examples that embody these practices are The Guerilla Foundation[2] and Porto Alegre, Brazil's[3] approaches to funding models that focus on power sharing.
- Treat the failure to fund gender equality as a strategic risk and not an optional cost. Research commissioned by Walking the Talk highlights risks to gender equality and larger development goals when feminist movements are not funded[4].
- Develop emergency and rapid-response grant mechanisms to sustain activism in shrinking civic spaces. CIVICUS launched a crisis response fund that focuses on advocacy, resilience and emergency grants to address this[5]. The Urgent Action Fund also provides fast, flexible support to activists[6].
- Leverage partnerships with Women's Funds to support women's rights organisations to reduce risk and expand cooperation, while remaining context-relevant[7].

Philanthropy also needs to respond to feminist demands, shifting from "doing good" to "do no harm" by redistributing power and wealth in a co-designed approach with movements.

Mobilize Private and Innovative Finance.

While private sector engagement has often been approached with skepticism, several sessions explored pragmatic strategies to leverage corporate and private capital for feminist outcomes. Participants acknowledged that these partnerships may not work for all feminist organizations, but many signaled a willingness to explore discussions and partnerships.

Recommendations:

- Develop, and leverage/strengthen ethical frameworks for feminist corporate engagement, ensuring transparency and alignment with human rights.
- Use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and gender-lens investing as entry points to channel private finance toward community-led initiatives. Research commissioned by Walking the Talk looks into CSR as an opportunity and alternative to existing funding models[8].
- Promote regional mechanisms - such as India's 2% CSR law or Kenya's County-Level Climate Funds - as scalable models for locally driven, gender-responsive financing.

Participants stressed that profit and social good need not be opposites, but partnerships must be guided by feminist principles, accountability, and intersectional awareness.

Other Emerging Recommendations.

Fiscal and macroeconomic policies are feminist issues. They directly shape access to care, health, education, and livelihoods. Adopt feminist fiscal policies that prioritize redistribution, equity, and the care economy. This includes progressive taxation, public investment in social infrastructure, and transparent budgeting aligned with gender equality goals.

Evidence-based advocacy remains vital in accessible, actionable formats. Invest in gender-disaggregated data and participatory monitoring to track financing commitments and accountability.

Walking the Talk

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References

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