

CHANGE

that lasts

40 years of impact



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About Mama Cash:

Mama Cash provides grants and accompaniment support to women's, girls', trans and intersex people's rights groups to strengthen their collective feminist action to create and secure a world of joy, justice and liberation.

"CHANGE THAT LASTS: 40 YEARS OF IMPACT."

Commissioned by Mama Cash.

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"Organisation: Venir al Sur, Uruguay"

FOREWORD

By Mama Cash Co-Executive Directors Happy Mwendé Kinyili and Saranel Benjamin

Feminist movements are unstoppable forces of change. Even as women, girls, trans and intersex people worldwide face violence and inequality; even as the world is plunged in atrocity from Palestine to Sudan to Ukraine; even as a far-right surge threatens to drag us all back to more regressive times, feminist movements just keep going. With each push forward, they carve out more space, every small victory illuminating the path ahead. Their relentless efforts not only break barriers but also light the way for future generations, showing over and over that the power of feminist activism can and does reshape our world.

Supported by Mama Cash, feminist movements around the world have been working to dismantle oppressive systems, to make it easier for women, girls, trans and intersex people to exist in peace and dignity, and to thrive as individuals and in communities. *Change that Lasts: 40 Years of Impact* highlights how movements have made changes in laws, policies, societal, and cultural norms.

In Argentina, feminist movements paved the way for the landmark legalisation of abortion. In Ecuador, trans activists secured legal protections for their community and successfully shut down lesbian “conversion” therapy clinics. In India, feminists created safe spaces for LGBTQ+ communities, ushering in social acceptance and legal protection. In Mauritius, they worked to decriminalise abortion. In Turkey, they pushed for alignment with the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating gender-based violence, despite the country’s withdrawal from the convention. And at home, in the Netherlands, the sustained long-term efforts of feminist movements culminated in the country becoming the first in the world to legalise same-sex marriage.



But these stories of change and our impact are not bookmarked with a neat beginning and end. Progress has neither been linear, nor can it be shown by a simple set of indicators of success. Feminist movements are complex and multifaceted, responding to evolving challenges and opportunities. Their successes are often interwoven with setbacks, requiring constant adaptation and resilience.

Health inequities persist, with many trans and intersex individuals lacking access to gender-affirming care. Political underrepresentation remains a critical issue, with sex workers and disabled activists striving for visibility and leadership roles in global and national movements. Cultural and social norms continue to restrict freedoms, and social and political crises disproportionately affect marginalised groups. Environmental vulnerability is another pressing challenge, with activists leading efforts to address the impacts of climate change and climate injustice on agriculture and resource management.

Over four decades, Mama Cash has been supporting these feminist movements during the ups, the downs, when holding the line on regressions, and crucially, even during the quieter moments – when groups and movements needed time to appraise and reflect on past results and craft their future strategies. Feminist organisations and leaders have also faced political and social backlash, including armed attacks and death threats, requiring them to regularly re-organise and mobilise against violent opposition. Mama Cash’s long-term support and solidarity during these cycles is what has allowed them to adequately respond to the shifts and changes in their contexts that they are forced to face over and over.

Our journey began with a budget of 1.2 million euros from an inheritance, and with the support of thousands of donors, we have invested over 140 million euros in the rights of women, girls, trans, and intersex people. In looking at the last four decades, this report offers a window into the past to show just how far we have all come. It shows that despite setbacks and backlash, feminist movements keep boring through the challenges. It shows that persistence and determination, with the right support, can turn even the hardest rock into a clear path forward. It shows that today’s and tomorrow’s crises, challenges and injustices are no match for the potency of global solidarity and feminist visions converging.

Change that Lasts: 40 years of impact is a testament to the power of collective action and the enduring strength of feminist values.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mama Cash is beyond grateful to the feminist activists who preceded us and all those currently working to secure a more just and joyful world for all. We would not have a story to tell without our incredible founders, Dorelies Kraakman, Tania Leon, Marjan Sax, Patti Slegers and Lida van den Broek. Thank you for your commitment to backing feminist activists worldwide. We are also very grateful to everyone who journeyed along with Mama Cash over four decades in various roles as staff, board, volunteers, donors, and partners.

A special thank you to all past and current grantee-partners, from individuals, to collectives, to organisations, to networks, to women's and feminist funds whose work continues to challenge and drive us to work towards joyful feminist futures. This report would not have been possible without the tireless dedication and commitment from Sarah Vaill, Bipasha Ray, and Perrin Elkind of VIVA Strategy, and their quantitative data analysts. Their commitment to Mama Cash and to feminist movements has allowed us to create and share this archive of activism. We also want to extend our deep appreciation of our colleagues who contributed to various iterations of this report, with a special note of thanks to our Learning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Team – Jeske Ruigrok, Julia Bailey and Elisabetta Micaro – for guiding this project to its conclusion.



"Organisation: Chola Contravisual, Peru"





"Organisation: Colectivo Poliformas, Colombia"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Change that Lasts: 40 Years of Impact reflects on how global feminist movements, supported by Mama Cash since 1983, have driven transformative change led by women, girls, and trans and intersex activists worldwide. In its four decades, Mama Cash has provided €140 million¹ in funding and accompaniment,² including €91 million in 7,460 grants directly to feminist organisations and women's funds in 160 countries. This report celebrates feminist movements' achievements in advocating for political, economic, cultural, social, and civil rights, as well as bodily autonomy. It shows how this was made possible with support that required trust and adaptability, and offers practical recommendations and insights for funders to support this vital work.

Over the span of 40 years, Mama Cash has witnessed a remarkable era of social transformation driven by the relentless efforts of women, girls, and trans and intersex activists that it has supported from 1983 to 2023. In 1983, intimate partner violence legislation was virtually absent globally, with only Ireland having specific laws addressing it. By 2023, this had shifted dramatically with 162 countries, comprising 80% of the 193 UN member states, implementing such laws. Similarly, the accessibility of elective abortion saw a notable surge, with only 35 countries allowing it in 1983, compared to 77 countries in 2023. Furthermore, the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual behaviour experienced substantial progress, with the number of UN member states criminalising it reduced by half from 118 to 68 by 2023, alongside 36 nations legalising marriage equality.

These changes were propelled by rapidly growing feminist activism throughout the world, represented by increasing numbers of feminist activist groups, funds, and networks. Mama Cash has always prioritised lesbian and Black women's leadership and amplified the voices of trans and intersex individuals and sex workers in its funding and advocacy efforts.

Through short briefs, this study sheds light on ten of the many key issues and communities that have been central to feminist movements and Mama Cash's grantmaking over the past four decades.³

1. Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Rights

With over €15.4 million in nearly 840 grants in 82 countries, Mama Cash supported Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) groups and movements that grew LBQ belonging, safety, and joy. Their work paved the way for legalising marriage equality, decriminalising same-sex sexual behaviour, and allowing adoption by same-sex couples in more than a dozen countries.

2. Reproductive Justice

Mama Cash invested nearly €17 million of its grantmaking funds in more than 920 grants into organisations advancing reproductive justice in 100 countries. Measures implemented by LBQ, trans, intersex, sex workers, girls, HIV positive, and disabled women's organisations broke down age-old barriers, opening up access to informed Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services and gender-affirming care, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

3. Countering Gender-Based Violence

Mama Cash gave 30%⁴ of its grantmaking funds – close to €27 million – in nearly 1,400 grants to organisations in 120 countries working to counter Gender Based Violence (GBV). With Mama Cash's support, grantee-partners made violence visible, created solutions, and catalysed international agreements and support networks. Trans and intersex activists were able to obtain legal protections and enhanced institutional responsiveness.

¹ This figure includes: €91,252,596 in direct grantmaking, €38,000,000 in grants to CMI! alliance partners, and €9,236,500 in RUF grantmaking between 2012-2023. Additionally, between 1983-2001, there were €1,200,000 in guarantees from the Guarantee Fund, and €408,228 in other loans and guarantees. All currency conversions from guilders (before 1999) to euros are based on a conversion rate of 0.45.

² In addition to funding, Mama Cash provides accompaniment support to grantee-partners to obtain, improve, and retain skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to fulfil their missions.

³ The ten key issues discussed in this report represent only a selection of the many issues that Mama Cash has supported over the past forty years. These ten issues were specifically identified based on a review of internal and external documents, as well as through an analysis of Mama Cash's grantmaking history as being representative of Mama Cash's work (see Methodology). Many other issues that Mama Cash has supported are not highlighted in this report.

⁴ Percentages will total more than 100% because each grant could address multiple issue areas.

4. Sex Workers' Rights

Mama Cash moved €6.8 million, 7% of its grantmaking funds, in more than 360 grants to sex worker-led organisations in 66 countries, catalysing sex worker movements in every region of the world. As a result, sex worker activists successfully advocated for their rights to labour, health and safety, and managed to undo the conflation of sex work and trafficking. Mama Cash also incubated and rallied donors to support the Red Umbrella Fund, which has moved more than €9.2 million in grants to sex worker-led movements since 2012.

5. Racial Justice

Mama Cash channelled €5 million via nearly 400 grants in 52 countries to promote racial justice work led globally by Black, Indigenous, Roma, Dalit, Moro, and other racialised feminists, bringing community liberation and transnational solidarity around the world while shaping global feminist movement agendas.

6. Economic Justice

Mama Cash has distributed €21.5 million in more than 1,100 grants to organisations advancing economic justice in 120 countries. With this support, feminist activists have won labour protections and social security, reformed land, property, and inheritance rights, secured minimum wages, fought employment and housing discrimination against trans and intersex individuals, and protested the gendered impact of trade policies.

7. Disability Justice⁵

With Mama Cash's support, feminist disability justice movements in every region have filled critical gaps left by disability rights movements that centred men, and women's rights movements that ignored disability. Since its founding, Mama Cash has given over €6.1 million for disability justice through more than 210 grants in 57 countries, supporting grantee-partners in shaping legislation, health care delivery, norms around disability and sexuality, as well as global accountability for feminist disability justice.

⁵ Mama Cash uses both person first and social model language depending on the context. In this publication, we have chosen to use social model language because we wanted to stress that the way society is designed and organised is the major factor in disabling people. Differing language in this report reflects the terms that partners themselves use.

8. Environmental Justice

Since Mama Cash's first environmental justice grants in 1991, it has given nearly €14.9 million in over 330 grants in at least 45 countries. Of this, over €13.8 million went to feminist environmental justice groups in at least 39 countries since 2016 through the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA). Mama Cash grantee-partners everywhere have demonstrated that women, girls, trans, intersex, Indigenous, and rural activists are leading climate solutions that work towards advancing gender and environmental justice.

9. Relationships with Money

Mama Cash transformed views on power and justice through creative initiatives like loan guarantees,⁶ creating peer networks for women with inherited wealth, and promoting individual feminist giving in the Netherlands. By advancing €1.2 million in loan guarantees to launch 140 women-led businesses, Mama Cash convinced the Dutch banking sector in the 1980s and 1990s to see women entrepreneurs as viable investments.

10. Strengthening Feminist Funding Architectures

Mama Cash led and participated in collective efforts to unlock new resources for women's rights and gender justice. It used its voice as a feminist funder to influence and partner with a range of donors, including private and public foundations and governments, catalysing millions of euros and influencing the path of billions of euros towards more flexible and longer-term funding directly to feminist movements. In partnership with feminist allies, Mama Cash seeded and supported an ecosystem of national and regional women's funds in the Global South and Europe.

⁶ A guarantee for a loan is a legally binding agreement in which a third party agrees to pay the debt for a particular borrower if that borrower fails to pay their debt to the lending institution (such as a bank).

"Organisation: Patinaai Osim,
Kenya"



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Impact Study illustrates how four decades of feminist activism have created change from local to global scales. The interconnected nature of these efforts provides valuable insights for donors, highlighting effective resourcing strategies and practices.

- 1. Prioritise support to self-led feminist movements and activism.**
- 2. Centre women's and feminist funds to move more and better money.**
- 3. Strengthen feminist partnerships and networks.**
- 4. Support seed funding and organisation building.**

"Organisation: Patinaai Osim,
Kenya"

5. Maintain funding across the social change cycle.
6. Provide core and flexible support.
7. Prioritise 5-10 years — or more — of support.
8. Commit to listening and adapting, and pioneering grantmaking that echoes feminist principles.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“

We started as volunteer, collective, radical. We built the power, and we shared it – a different way of exercising and sharing power. It was a very strong feeling that we were in this together. Together, we all were the movement.

Marjan Sax

Mama Cash co-founder.⁷

⁷ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview, 29/11/23.





Provided to feminist movements worldwide in **40 years**

Mama Cash's 40-year history mirrors the evolution of feminist movements amid changes in society – changes that were not always linear, that weaved through advances, setbacks, progress, and regression during the decades. The lives of women, girls, and trans and intersex people today contrast profoundly with the lives we lived in 1983. And the ways in which our movements intersect today are starkly different from the state of organising 40 years ago. We have gained tremendous ground, sometimes holding it, other times losing it, often reclaiming it. But what we know for sure is that as movements power the way forward, feminist funds turn up the voltage.

In 40 years, Mama Cash has provided €140 million⁸ in funding to feminist movements worldwide. This includes €91 million in 7,460 direct grants to feminist organisations and women's funds in 160 countries.⁹ In the last ten years alone, Mama Cash disbursed more than €50 million – over 50 times more than it did in its first 10 years.

The Impact Study shines a light on how the movements – self-led by women, girls, and trans and intersex activists – that received funding drove change around the world. They changed narratives, shifted norms, secured rights, ended impunity, increased inclusion, expanded access, and brought about joy, healing, love, and liberation. We look at ten of the key issues and communities that featured prominently in

⁸ This figure includes: €91,252,596 in direct grantmaking, €38,000,000 in grants to CMI! alliance partners, €9,236,500 in RUF grantmaking between 2012-2023. Additionally, between 1983-2001, there were €1,200,000 in guarantees from the Guarantee Fund, and €408,228 in other loans and guarantees.

⁹ Annual Reports. Unless otherwise noted, all quantitative data about Mama Cash in this report is based on VIVA Strategy analysis of annual reports grants lists through 2021 and internal Mama Cash grants lists for 2022 and 2023.



feminist movements and Mama Cash's grantmaking. Each section examines pivotal moments, looks at grantmaking data, and highlights the impactful endeavours undertaken by organisations that received funding from Mama Cash. These examples represent a much broader set of trends but are not exhaustive accounts of all the outcomes and impacts that surfaced through this study.

This study acknowledges that despite these accomplishments, the world hasn't changed enough. Racist, misogynist, heteronormative, trans-antagonist, and colonial legacies endure. In response, feminist movements have confronted these challenges with fluidity, vigilance, and determination. Mama Cash has remained forward-thinking while staunchly combating setbacks, simultaneously nurturing the field and establishing itself as a cornerstone within it.

1983-1993:¹⁰ Mama Cash centred lesbian initiatives and Black women's organising in the Netherlands at a time when feminist, Black, migrant, refugee women's movements (Zwarte Migranten Vluchtelingen or ZMV¹¹) and LBQ organisations worked separately more often than together. In this first decade, Mama Cash distributed 632 grants, amounting to almost €775,000 in total. Three-quarters of those grants were distributed in the Netherlands, resourcing grassroots and inclusive feminist movements, art, culture, and documentation centres. The average grant size was €1,222 (median: €900), and 5% were travel grants. Notably, 14 travel grants went to individual activists to attend the UN World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985. Mama Cash's own participation in the Nairobi conference, as well as its solidarity with feminist organisations in post-Soviet countries, helped expand its nascent grantmaking in the Global South and Europe, reaching 44 countries by 1993.

1994-2003: The Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 helped Mama Cash crystallise its global approach and expand relationships with feminist activists in the Global South. Throughout this decade, feminist activists worldwide rallied for women's rights, often challenging deeply ingrained patriarchal systems and neoliberalism. The decade saw increased organising at the intersections of economic, environmental, anti-racist, and rural activism. Mama Cash issued more than 400 travel grants between 1994-2003 and supported many organisations in connecting transnationally by investing in infrastructure such as their first computers and dial-up internet. By the end of its second decade, Mama Cash's funding for Dutch feminist artists and entrepreneurs had tapered down. The foundation distributed 60% of the 3,581 grants (three quarters of grant money) to organisations in 124 countries (average grant €2,341; median €1,800).

¹⁰ The first decade includes 11 years because Mama Cash gave few grants in its first year, and all grants from the early 1990s are grouped together in a 1991-1993 annual report.

¹¹ Feminist movement in the Netherlands beginning in the 1970s amid anti-colonial movements in and migration from Suriname, Papua New Guinea, and other countries in Africa and Asia.

2004-2013: Transnational feminist movements featured prominently in Mama Cash's third decade of grantmaking, as organisations used new regional and international conventions to push for national laws and their implementation. These included the 2003 Maputo Protocol for the Rights of Women in Africa, the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2011 ILO Convention 189 on the Rights of Domestic Workers, and the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). This was coupled with an expansion in Mama Cash's support for organising by Dalit and Roma groups, migrant labour activists, girls, sex workers, trans activists, and reproductive justice movements advancing medical abortion.

During this period, LBQ organising became more visible in Africa and Asia. In addition, Mama Cash began increasing its own investment in feminist funds emerging in the Global South and Europe. This was seen as a way to redistribute philanthropic resources by sharing decision-making. In order to make larger grants, Mama Cash increased the average grant size by more than 700% (average grant €17,031; median €10,000) by shifting to 50% fewer grants in this decade compared to the prior one. In 2012, Mama Cash embarked on further systemic change initiatives by collectively launching and hosting the Red Umbrella Fund. This ground-breaking endeavour was led by and for sex workers.

2014-2023: Mama Cash's fourth and most recent decade reflected its commitment to match the courage and resilience of feminist activists driving change at some of the most heightened intersections of oppression, violence, and discrimination. These included trans and intersex activists, Indigenous women and other feminists leading the way on environmental justice, as well as sex workers, migrant women, and domestic workers organising for their labour rights. The momentum of the 2010s regarding gender identity, marriage equality, and the battle against discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex characteristics (SOGIESC) sparked a surge in trans and intersex rights activism. Mama Cash included trans and intersex activism (in 2014 and 2017 respectively) in its mission statement so as to make explicit its commitment to feminist trans and intersex movements. Over the course of the decade, Mama Cash awarded 346 grants for trans activism and 119 for intersex activism. As feminist movements responded to rising populism and the closing of civil society spaces, Mama Cash formalised its goal to influence the donor community to provide more and better money to feminist movements. It also called for increased funding for feminist activism from bilateral and multilateral initiatives. In parallel, multi-year and endowment grants from Mama Cash gave grantee-partners greater flexibility and sustainability, while the Spark Fund revived Mama Cash's grants to grassroots feminism in the Netherlands, in a nod to its origins. Overall, the average grant amount doubled in this decade to €35,205 (median €25,500).



FOUR DECADES OF FEMINIST CHANGE

Across the issues and the decades, Mama Cash's grantmaking stood out for funding early-stage organisations, funding broadly to foster an intersectional network of feminist actors, and funding hard-to-reach groups by decentralising decision-making and implementing accessible funding practices. Grantmaking internationally was always important to Mama Cash. It sought to reconcile with the provenance of its early grantmaking budget that came from stock market profits of an endowment that was tied to the exploitation of labour in the Global South.¹² **Mama Cash also gave grants in countries neglected by others – such as the Caribbean, where there is no regional women's fund; Andean and Central American countries with majority Indigenous populations; and Oceania island nations with some of the lowest representation of women parliamentarians in the world.**

Mama Cash did this work during an era of enormous social change for and by women, girls, and trans and intersex activists. Between 1983 and 2023, the landscape of global legislation has undergone significant transformation. The number of countries specifically addressing intimate partner violence has soared from just one (Ireland) to 162 nations, encompassing approximately 80% of UN member states.¹³ At the same time, the number of UN member states criminalising consensual same-sex sexual behaviour decreased by half from 118 to 68,¹⁴ and 36 nations today legalise marriage equality.¹⁵ The countries allowing elective abortion have more than doubled from 35 to 77.¹⁶

Notably, the number of female heads of state and government has surged from 15 to 87.¹⁷ And globally, women now hold nearly 27% of seats in national parliaments, up from the single-digit figures of the 1980s in many countries.¹⁸ This Impact Study explores many of these changes and provides a glimpse of where, how, and which ones took place with contributions from Mama Cash and its grantee-partners.

¹² Mama Cash. (1983-1986). Annual Report (Google translated from Dutch).

¹³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. [Gender data hub](#).

¹⁴ International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. [Legal frameworks: Criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts](#).

¹⁵ Human Rights Campaign. [Marriage equality around the world](#).

¹⁶ Center for Reproductive Rights. [The world's abortion laws](#).

¹⁷ GapMinder. [Almost half of all countries have had a woman leader](#).

¹⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2024, February). [Women in national parliaments](#).

For 40 years, Mama Cash has partnered with feminist groups challenging and changing the status quo. Traditional philanthropy can compel activists to bend or conform to funders' structures, timings, language, priorities and even the lens through which they choose to work. Starting with a radical inception by five lesbian activists firmly situated in the Dutch feminist vanguard, Mama Cash has strived for the opposite. It listened, adapted and directed its work to offer the types of support that activists deemed necessary for feminist social change.



Despite historical under-resourcing, feminist movements have attained monumental advances. These would not have happened without the organising, advocacy, awareness-raising, narrative change, and sustained efforts of activists. They have challenged and changed norms, laws, policies, access to resources, and decision-making at the local, national, and global levels.

Their achievements are evidenced by researchers like Mala Htun, S. Laurel Weldon and others who have tracked the transformative effects of feminist activism over time in different parts of the world.²⁰ The largest relevant statistical review ever conducted on GBV, with data from 70 countries over the course of four decades, found that the presence of autonomous feminist movements²¹ was the single most important factor in advancing action to stop violence against women. The presence of feminist organising achieved more, for example, than a country's wealth or the number of women in government.

GBV advocacy by **Karama**, a network based in Egypt that operates in Africa and West Asia, is a perfect illustration of this, particularly in countries with few women in parliament. In 2007, early on in its development, **Karama** used Mama Cash's support to convene women's rights activists who had been working in isolation to form a strong network with national, regional, and international influence. **Karama** supported its partner in Jordan to lobby the government – via the 2008 CEDAW Committee session – to develop national legislation to address family violence. The government committed publicly to doing so within two years – and delivered on its promise within six months. This is just one example of how **Karama**, and many other feminist groups and networks, create and maintain positive social changes through their activism.

Additionally, the findings in this report add to Weldon et al.'s 2020 research evidencing the relationship between the presence of national autonomous feminist movements and women's economic rights. In countries where there are strong autonomous feminist movements, there are smaller gender wage gaps, better access to landholding, inheritance, and access to financial institutions, as well as stronger legal protections for domestic workers, stronger sexual harassment laws, and reduced unpaid work.²² This shows that feminist mobilisation not only creates legal and policy change across a wide range of issues, but also ensures its implementation by holding those in power accountable. Creating shifts in social norms helps sustain this change. All this feeds the fact that feminist movements are associated with greater democracy and less authoritarianism.

²⁰ Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. (2012). The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975-2005. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 548-569.

²¹ Autonomous feminist movements are independent of the state, political parties and other associations that do not have the status of women as their main concern (Molyneux, M. (1998); Ray, R., & Korteweg, A. C. (1999); Weldon, S. L. (2002).)

²² Weldon, S. L., Forester, S., Kelly-Thompson, K., & Lusvardi, A. (2020, March). *Handmaidens or heroes? Feminist mobilisation as a force for economic equality around the world.*



Feminist strategists also showed a pattern of emulating successful movements in neighbouring countries. Htun and Weldon called these “neighbourhood effects.”²³ Argentina has been a bellwether in Latin America, where the 2015 mass protests against femicide under the banner #NiUnaMenos (Not One [Woman] More), spread to Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

As support for abortion rights in Argentina became symbolised by the green bandana distributed by **Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir - América Latina** (Catholics for a Free Choice - Latin America) during a national feminist encuentro, the Marea Verde (Green Wave) rippled across protests in Mexico and Colombia, galvanising their movements. Remarkably, all three countries decriminalised abortion between 2021 and 2022.

Neighbourhood effects can also apply in the opposite direction, provoking a regression of women’s rights and gender justice. When Turkey withdrew from the seminal Istanbul Convention for GBV in 2021,²⁴ Poland threatened to follow suit, and the Czech Republic declined to ratify it in 2024. However, a strong feminist movement in Poland is standing firm, and the new prime minister elected after the 2023 parliamentary elections withdrew his predecessor’s opposition to the Convention.

In examining regional and international conventions, this study found that their implementation further fuelled campaigns for the reform of discriminatory laws or the introduction of new legislation. This dynamic was described by Htun and Weldon (2012), who noted that regional conventions related to GBV have acted as decade tipping points, connected to at least a ten-year wave of ratification and reform in the corresponding region. “Local activist organisations bring home the value of international and regional treaties,” using them to train judicial, state, and civil officials, and to pressure legislatures to reform or write new laws, the researchers said. In *Violence against Women and the Law*, David Richards and Jillienne Haglund found that countries became about 23% more likely to adopt full legal protections against domestic violence within eight years of ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).²⁵ In Turkey, feminist, LBQ, and trans organisations like **Mor Çati** (Purple Roof) and **Pembe Hayat** (Pink Life) influenced the negotiation and passage of a stronger GBV law the same year that the country ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2012.

²³ Htun and Weldon, 2012.

²⁴ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011) is known as the Istanbul Convention.

²⁵ Richards, D., & Haglund, J. (2015). *Violence against women and the law*. Routledge.

This also occurred among Mama Cash grantee-partners advancing disability justice after the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2006, and among domestic worker organising after winning the International Labour Organization’s Convention 189 in 2011. Activists broke new ground by advancing intersex rights in several regions after a group of SOGIESC experts convened by the UN issued the Yogyakarta+10 Principles in 2017. Feminist organisations for abortion rights and care in Africa have used the 2003 African Union’s Maputo Protocol to propel reforms – 21 countries have since expanded their legal grounds for abortion, 11 have overturned absolute bans, and four others now permit elective abortion.²⁶

METHODOLOGY

This report is an observational study drawing upon the wisdom of feminist activists, funders, and other knowledge-holders whose experiences and stories were collected by Mama Cash over multiple decades, along with research, interviews, and analysis conducted specifically for this project. While this study explores and demonstrates the significant changes that have been supported by Mama Cash around the world, it is not an evaluation of Mama Cash or its grantee-partners. Nor does this study tell the full story of Mama Cash’s impact over 40 years.

This report draws on four decades worth of data collected through Mama Cash’s grantmaking records, annual reports, and the organisation’s learning and monitoring framework. In addition to these sources of data, the findings below surfaced through a review of hundreds of reports that include Mama Cash’s publications, grantee-partner documentation, evaluations, academic papers, and annual reports (see Appendix B),

²⁶ The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women, known as The Maputo Protocol, is a legally binding regional instrument. Article 14 obligates State Parties to lift restrictions on abortion in cases of rape and incest, risk to the pregnant person’s life or physical or mental health, and in cases of foetal anomaly. See [Centre for Reproductive Rights website, Maputo Protocol at 20: “Progress on Abortion Rights in Africa.”](#)



"Organisation: SABOKAHAN, Philippines"





"Organisation: Fundashon Orguyo
Kòrsou, Curaçao"

complemented by direct communication with Mama Cash staff and grantee-partners. These sources were supplemented with interviews with current and former Mama Cash staff and board. These interviews further explored Mama Cash's evolving, strategic and tactical priorities, as movements themselves changed. Guided by this process of reviewing documented changes, the study's consultants narrowed the scope of the Impact Study to ten illustrative issue areas – these are by no means exhaustive of all issue areas grantee-partners have covered and advanced, with Mama Cash's support. To further understand context, achievements, trends, challenges, and grantee-partners' impacts in those issue areas, they reviewed grantee-partners' websites and annual reports, media reports, video interviews, and external data sets, and archives of materials from global feminist philanthropy and movements.

Along with analysing data collected from grantee-partners and women's funds, the study's consultants created an extensive grants database from the grants lists in Mama Cash's annual reports spanning 40 years. They coded each grant according to the Impact Study issue areas and then analysed the data to identify trends in Mama Cash's grantmaking and priorities. This analysis provided information on the number of grants, their amounts, issues, geographies, clusters, trends, and shifts. Quantitative data on Mama Cash's grantmaking in the ten issue areas addressed in this report derive primarily from this database.

This study relied on a desk analysis to conserve grantee-partners' time, as many had previously provided Mama Cash with rich, documented insights through numerous learning initiatives. To complement that documentation and bring stories to life, the consultants held in-depth interviews with representatives of 13 organisations and collected survey responses from 15 organisations. These grantee-partners were drawn from an initial selection of almost 100 grantee-partner organisations representing Mama Cash's grantmaking across each decade, region, and issue.



Author's Note:

The interviews enabled us to explore longer-term impact by asking activists what happened after their Mama Cash grant term ended. We also were able to sense-check our developing analysis and observations, learn more about movement context and trajectories, and hear the activists' stories in their own words so we could better reflect them in this report.

All input from grantee-partners and past and current staff and board shaped our understanding and interpretation of other source materials. Though we could not include quotes from everyone who generously shared time, recollections, and insights through interviews, surveys, and emails, each contribution influenced our analysis.

When examining movement impact through all our sources, we looked for contributions by Mama Cash and grantee-partners, knowing that they were part of a much broader story with countless other actors and influences. We do not draw absolute conclusions about the roles of Mama Cash or the grantee-partners. Our analysis focused on what Mama Cash was trying to do, what its grantee-partners were trying to do, how they did it, to what extent they reported achieving their objectives, and what happened in the broader movement and in society. Where possible, we also followed-up on earlier reports of progress. Importantly, we looked for long-term developments following the end of a series of grants.





"Organisation: Fundashon Orguyo Kòrsou, Curaçao"

CHAPTER 2
TIMELINE
OF KEY
INTERNAL
MAMA CASH
INFLECTION
POINTS



1983-1993

FIRST DECADE

1983

- Five lesbian feminist activists formed Mama Cash with a ten-year loan of 2.5 million guilders (€1.125 million) from Marjan Sax.
- Funds include Guarantee Fund, Culture Fund, Fund for the Global South, Feminist Art Award.
- Women with Inherited Wealth Network politicised wealthy women to encourage individual giving.



1998

- The International Network of Women's Funds, precursor to Prospera, was launched at Mama Cash's 15th Anniversary party.

1999

- First grant from Dutch government.

2001

- Guarantee Fund, Art Awards, and Culture Fund wound down.
- Mama Cash supported women's funds in every region, including in South Africa, Ghana, India, Nepal, Mexico, Brazil, Mongolia, and Ukraine.



1994-2003

SECOND DECADE

1995

- Guarantee Fund narrowed criteria to prioritise Black, migrant, and refugee women.
- Central and Eastern Europe Fund created to respond to the fall of the Soviet Union.

2004-2008

FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN: SHE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

- Grantmaking organised by regions – Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and Europe – and by themes: Bodily Integrity, Women's Funds, Agency and Participation, Arts, Media and Culture, Economic Justice, Peace and Security.

2009-2014

SECOND STRATEGIC PLAN: ON THE MOVE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Most significant grantmaking pivot to mostly core and multi-year grants to a smaller number of grantee-partners; new focus on self-led movements and groups.
- Separate women's funds portfolio created for the first time.



2006:

- First international board members join.
- Gradual trend towards larger grants – the average grant size doubles from €1,222 in the first decade to €2,341 in the second decade.

2012

- Launch of Red Umbrella Fund hosted at Mama Cash

2008-2013

- Grantmaking budget increased 70%, and the combined budgets of Women's Funds supported by Mama Cash nearly doubled in this period.

2015-2020

THIRD STRATEGIC PLAN: FUNDING FEMINIST ACTIVISM

- Theory of Change – long term goal to mobilise and move resources to feminist movements.
- Influencing the Donor Community added as an explicit pillar of Mama Cash's work.
- Focus on partnerships and bilateral funding – CMI!, GAGGA, Leading from the South, etc.



2017

- Spark Fund launched to honour Mama Cash's roots in Dutch feminist movements.

2021

- Solidarity Fund launched by and for Women's Funds.



2014 / 2017

- Trans people and intersex people respectively are named in organisational mission and vision.

2015

- Opportunity Fund launched to be responsive to emergencies or new needs.

2021 - PRESENT

FOURTH STRATEGIC PLAN: IN MOVEMENT TOGETHER

- First ten-year strategy – shift away from themes and geographies in grantmaking to completely global.
- Transitioned into a fully participatory grantmaking institution.
- Over one-third of staff based outside the Netherlands and located in all regions where Mama Cash works.

- New Co-Executive Director model shows commitment to feminist power-sharing.



- Established five funding streams: Resilience Fund (largest grantmaking fund), Revolution Fund (previously Opportunity Fund), Radical Love Fund (for individuals), Solidarity Fund (for women's funds), and Spark Fund.


TO BE
CONTINUED

Photos in this timeline are sourced from www.history.mamacash.nl and www.mamacash.org



CHAPTER 3
**TEN AREAS
OF IMPACT
ACROSS FOUR
DECADES**



Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Rights (LBQ)

Impact:

Across 40 years, with over **€15.4 million in nearly 840 grants in 82 countries**, Mama Cash has supported lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) groups to create spaces of safety, joy, and power. They have led movements and contributed to changes in policies, norms, and opportunities. Long-term support contributed to creating favourable conditions in more than a dozen countries for legalising marriage equality, decriminalising same-sex sexual behaviour, and allowing same-sex couples to adopt children. For example, Mama Cash gave **110 grants to Dutch LBQ groups between 1983 and 2001** – when the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise marriage equality. Mama Cash also supported LBQ groups and movements facing the most repressive social and political forces, continuously mobilising resources for LBQ rights.

€15.4 million



PROVIDED TO LBQ GROUPS AND
MOVEMENTS OVER 40 YEARS

839 Grants

82 Countries



"Organisation: HER Fund, Hong Kong (China)"

A young lesbian couple stands across the street from Chaplin theatre in Kolkata, India, where Deepa Mehta's film "Fire" is playing. It is the first mainstream Indian film portraying a lesbian romance, and the couple across the street – Minakshi Sanyal and Subhagata Ghosh – is watching to see if anyone like them has come to see it. It is 1998 and they don't know any other lesbians. They are longing for community, but the only people they see enter the theatre are men, seeking titillation.²⁷ Minakshi and Subhagata went on to found **Sappho for Equality**, an organisation in Eastern India that works for the rights and social justice of individuals with non-normative gender-sexual orientations, identities and expressions.

Cut to fourteen years later, the centre that Minakshi and Subhagata founded, **Sappho for Equality's** Chetana Resource Centre in Kolkata is a thriving and welcoming hub for the community. Outside, Koyel Ghosh, a young non-binary person sits on their scooter, watching people talk and laugh as they go in and out of the centre. Koyel travels 35 km every week and stands outside seeking the courage to go in. The woman Koyel loves insists that this is a place where people "will not judge us for who we are." But it takes six months before Koyel will summon the strength to step inside. Immediately, they are welcomed with warmth and care. Today, Koyel is a managing trustee for **Sappho for Equality**. "I came for love," Koyel says, "and I never left."²⁸

²⁷ Minakshi Sanyal and Subhagata Ghosh, Sappho for Equality, VIVA Strategy Interview. 04/01/24.

²⁸ Koyel Ghosh, Sappho for Equality, VIVA Strategy Interview. 16/01/24.



Chetana Resource Centre was Minakshi's and Subhagata's dream, and creating it was the first thing they did with their very first grant, which came from Mama Cash. It still exists today, with Mama Cash's continued support. Sappho for Equality (SFE) members feed the stray cats that visit, and they are friends with neighbourhood shopkeepers and rickshaw pullers. "There is curiosity about the way we look ... our gender expression. It's a point not of concern, but of curiosity," says Koyel. "It's a very peaceful coexistence." Minakshi and Subhagata have travelled a great distance from that sidewalk across from the cinema all those years earlier, and they created a place where others like them can always see themselves reflected.

Around the world, in villages, towns and cities, homes, resource centres, film festivals and art exhibits, LBQ²⁹ people have created communities of safety, joy, and power. Mama Cash has supported many of those because its founders had experienced that coveted sense of belonging, freedom, and purpose in their own overlapping communities which included LBQ women, leftist activists, squatters, artists, and feminists. They knew that change happens when people work together rather than alone, and they understood viscerally the life-saving significance of seeing oneself reflected.

Supporting LBQ rights and communities has been central to Mama Cash's purpose from the start — unlike nearly every other international funder. Mama Cash delivered on this through nearly 840 grants in 82 countries over 40 years. Since 2000, every region that Mama Cash has supported has seen a dramatic rise in the existence of LBQ-led groups. Of the 378 groups surveyed by Mama Cash and Astraea in 2020, 89% were younger than 20 years old, and most had been around for less than ten years.³⁰ Mama Cash contributed to this growing movement of self-led LBQ groups. In 2000, it moved €66,000 to LBQ groups, in 2010 it moved over €480,000, and in 2019 it moved more than €1.4 million. Over those twenty years, Mama Cash moved more than €9.1 million in over 440 grants for LBQ rights in 66 countries.

Netherlands: LBQ visibility, movement building, and policy change

"There was an active lesbian movement," in the Netherlands in the early 1980s, according to Mama Cash founder Marjan Sax.³¹ It grew even as many feminist organisations excluded lesbians and pushed their priorities aside, and LGBTQ organisations centred gay men. Marjan and her co-founders believed

²⁹ Throughout this report, LBQ refers to lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer women, girls and/or all non-binary people on the gender spectrum who identify as LBQ. Based on the preferences of the individuals and partners referenced in this report, trans may be used in addition to this acronym.

³⁰ Mama Cash, & Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. (2020). *Vibrant yet Under-resourced: The State of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Movements*.

³¹ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.

that “lesbian women should be visible, and the heterosexual norm should be challenged.”³² Through the Guarantee Fund, Mama Cash supported lesbian-owned businesses – including literary magazines like **Lust en Gratie**, and lesbian periodicals. “We wanted to be heard and offer an alternative feminist press. We strategically chose to support our own culture, a counterculture independent from the institutions of the establishment,” Marjan said.³³ Through the Culture Fund, Mama Cash supported theatre, art exhibitions, and documentation and archiving of lesbian history, lesbian lives and realities in the Netherlands.³⁴ These grants supported activists to create spaces bringing LBQ people out of isolation. “Mama Cash’s impact on the lesbian movement was really important. It brought lesbians more to the forefront” and “resulted in [their] being more visible,” recalled Mama Cash’s first Executive Director, Lilianne Ploumen.³⁵

Mama Cash grew from and helped build the now visible and vibrant LBQ movement in the Netherlands. In 1998, the LBQ movement in the country succeeded in securing the right for same-sex couples to register partnership status. Furthermore, in 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage. Along with loan guarantees to LBQ entrepreneurs, Mama Cash supported LBQ groups with 110 grants between 1983 and 2001. Marriage equality was the work of thousands of activists, and in that mix was Mama Cash’s radical, determined, and vocal grantee-partners, staff and founders.

Supporting LBQ movements globally

Mama Cash also contributed to building LBQ movements outside of Europe. Four years after its founding, Mama Cash gave its first grant to a lesbian group outside the Netherlands, **Mitilene**. They, the first lesbian rights group in the Dominican Republic, used the grant to travel to Mexico for the first meeting of Latin American and Caribbean lesbians alongside the 4th Latin America and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro.³⁶ Beginning in 1987, Mama Cash supported LBQ activists’ participation in at least 11 regional Latin America and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros and Lesbian Encuentros – vital spaces for movement organising. Over time, LBQ movements in the region became some of the strongest in the world, with clear impact. Latin America is the only Global South region that has seen major advances in marriage equality, with legislation passed in nine countries.

³² Mama Cash. *Initial Strategies*.

³³ Mama Cash. *The first years*.

³⁴ Mama Cash. (1986). 1983-1986 Annual Report.

³⁵ Lilianne Ploumen, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.

³⁶ Mama Cash. (1993). *1991-1993 Annual Report*.

Mama Cash has nourished many LBQ groups who created a vibrant movement force that gained access to policy spaces, influenced policies, and changed laws. Mama Cash’s support of LBQ groups and their work spanned decades before significant laws were passed across many countries. LBQ movements in the Netherlands, South Africa, Argentina, and Taiwan became the first to achieve marriage equality in their regions (in 2001, 2006, 2010 and 2019 respectively). Mama Cash also supported in 1998 the first lesbian organisation in the former socialist Eastern European bloc, **ŠKUC-LL** in Slovenia, one year after its founding.³⁷ **ŠKUC-LL** grew and contributed to Slovenia’s own marriage equality win in 2022 – the first in Eastern Europe. Mama Cash supported LBQ groups for many years in many other countries that went on to legalise marriage equality, decriminalise same-sex sexual behaviour, and/or allow adoption by same-sex couples. These include Brazil, Georgia, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, India, Ecuador, Mexico. These advances were made possible because activist communities – including Mama Cash grantee-partners – claimed space and pushed society forward.

The number of countries that criminalise same-sex sexual behaviour has steadily decreased since 1983 – from 118 to 63 countries in 2023.³⁸ But while policy change is often transformative, it is not always the end point. When in a ground-breaking moment India’s Supreme Court struck down Penal Code Section 377, effectively decriminalising same-sex sexual behaviour, there was a burst of joy and relief, and for many members of **Sappho for Equality (SFE)**, a release from a lifetime of fear. But the decision also intensified some challenges. As more LBQ and trans individuals began coming out to their families or communities following decriminalisation, many encountered violence – often from family, with some forced into heterosexual marriage.³⁹ **SFE’s** helpline was inundated with calls, and Mama Cash’s support served to bolster **SFE’s** crisis intervention programme. In one case, a lesbian was held captive by her family in a village where a previous intervention ended with villagers assaulting **SFE** volunteers. This is where years of relationship-building with police officials and community leaders comes in. **SFE** successfully obtained police assistance and removed the young woman from her family. Their work remains as urgent as ever as the calls keep coming, and the violence is overwhelming.

SFE works to build bridges with doctors, lawyers, universities, and others.⁴⁰ This has borne fruit in myriad ways; more doctors provide LBQ-sensitive and gender-affirming care and more police respond to violence against LBQ individuals, among other results. Even in the face of overwhelming violence,

³⁷ Mama Cash. [SKUC-LL Slovenia](#).

³⁸ Despite progress in the 1990s and 2000s, 12 countries specifically criminalised same-sex sexual contact between women, adding to their laws that criminalised same-sex sexual behaviour among men. [ILGA World Database](#).

³⁹ Koyel Ghosh, Sappho for Equality, VIVA Strategy Interview. 16/01/24.

⁴⁰ Koyel Ghosh, Sappho for Equality, VIVA Strategy Interview. 16/01/24.



much-needed change in social norms is slowly taking place. Following the Supreme Court ruling, some women's rights organisations and corporations have been expressing more support for LBQ rights.

Popular culture and mainstream media have also signalled changes. Until recently, LBQ, trans, and intersex people were either rendered invisible or portrayed in caricatured, fetishised, and negative ways. Now, they are increasingly visible in Indian popular culture and cinema in positive ways: with their relationships and strong community bonds increasingly portrayed as part of Indian life.

Mobilising resources for LBQ-led organisations

As Mama Cash grew, its steadfast support for LBQ organising led to larger and more substantial grants. Mama Cash's LBQ grantmaking increased from about €77,000 in 1983-1993, with median grant size of €900, to nearly €11.6 million in 2014-2023, with a median of €25,000. Nearly 30 years ago, Mama Cash noted that most funders "do not want to get involved in the issue of lesbian women."⁴¹ Donors tended to fund LGBTQ organisations led by or centring gay men. From the start, Mama Cash used its platform as a radical, forward-thinking, feminist fund to advocate relentlessly for LBQ-led and trans-led organisations, and later for LBQ- and trans-led funds. "Whatever we could, we did," says Nicky McIntyre, former Mama Cash Executive Director.⁴² Mama Cash has seen support for LBQ-led organisations from women's funds and other donors grow.⁴³ Every women's fund supported by Mama Cash is committed to supporting LBQ and trans movements. Over time, LBQ, trans, and intersex groups have also gained capacity, confidence, and access. More have claimed their standing to tell donors "We can do this, and we'll prove it to you," Nicky observed, "And the number of funders that have come to the table has grown exponentially."



And the number of funders that have come to the table has grown exponentially.

Nicky McIntyre

Former Mama Cash Executive Director

⁴¹ Mama Cash. (1995). *1994-1995 Annual Report*.

⁴² Nicky McIntyre, VIVA Strategy interview. 07/11/23.

⁴³ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Mama Cash's support for LBQ organisations exemplifies the role it has played in movements and in philanthropy for four decades. It has supported marginalised groups as they worked to claim space at the centre. This has laid the groundwork for feminist leaders to rise, movements to build, and policies to change. LBQ groups also led organising within reproductive justice, GBV, and other movements. Mama Cash carries its commitment to social change into philanthropic spaces and global advocacy, always trying to mobilise resources. The challenges and threats to LBQ rights remain enormous and continue to grow in many places. With support, activists have more choices and more strength for their next steps. LBQ groups that have been supported by Mama Cash have taken risks to achieve progress – or survival – in every region.

Reproductive Justice

Impact:

Over four decades, Mama Cash has moved **€17 million, nearly one-fifth of its grantmaking funds, through more than 920 grants** to organisations and movements advancing reproductive justice in **100 countries**. Mama Cash resourced LBQ, trans, intersex, girl-led, sex workers, HIV positive, and disabled women's organisations that led advocacy for sexual health and rights, for education undoing taboos and breaking down barriers, and for access to adequate services or gender-affirming care. In the past twenty years, Mama Cash grantee-partners mobilised movements that achieved changes to laws that criminalised abortion and/or contraception, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Europe. They also won legal protections against forced sterilisation and obstetric violence.

€17 million

PROVIDED TO REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ACTIVISM
GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS OVER 40 YEARS

920

Grants

100

Countries



“What does abortion have to do with lesbians?’ The typical troll question!” wrote Luli Sanchez of Argentina’s *Lesbianas y Feministas por la Despenalización del Aborto* [Lesbians and Feminists for the Decriminalisation of Abortion] (LyF) in 2009.⁴⁴ “It has to do with love for women, with love for lesbians, with love for one’s own body, with the ways we have had to share and build knowledge because we were always excluded from public policies.”

LyF viewed the state’s prohibition of abortion as authoritarian, an overreach into private homes and bedrooms, imposing heterosexism and compulsory motherhood.⁴⁵ They named their own existence and activism as sexual dissidence against the status quo.⁴⁶ The LyF collective decided to contribute to the fight for safe abortion in Argentina with a concrete tool – the ‘Abortion Hotline: More Information, Less Risks.’ They resolved to “bring abortion out of the closet,” end silence and shame, and claim the right to abortion for people of all sexualities and genders who can become pregnant.⁴⁷

Mama Cash’s 2018 publication, “My Body Is Mine,” reiterated an important message: “the heart of the concept of reproductive justice is the fundamental right to make one’s own sexual and reproductive decisions.”⁴⁸ Over the past 40 years, choices in the sexual and reproductive – and non-reproductive – lives of women, girls, and trans and intersex people have seen dramatic positive change in many countries, due to decades of sustained activism by feminist organisations and networks. These organisations, networks and activists have done this work in the face of threats, challenges, and restrictive laws and norms in their contexts. Yet despite these threats, they have succeeded. In 1983, merely 35 nations allowed elective abortion, and only 70 countries legalised same-sex relations. By 2023, thanks to the efforts of feminist and LGBTI movements, these numbers had doubled, with 77 countries permitting elective abortion, and same-sex sexual behaviour decriminalised in 133 nations. Throughout this transformative journey, organisations backed by Mama Cash remained steadfast, resilient, and instrumental in shaping the circumstances and advocating for these hard-won gains.

⁴⁴ Sanchez, L. (2018, February 8). *Vamos Todas A Abortar*. Revista Anfibia. (Google translated from Spanish).

⁴⁵ González, M. (2009, June 26). [Amor prohibido. Página/12](#). Last accessed 27/01/24.

⁴⁶ González, M. (2013, August 23). [Lesbianas por la vida. Página/12](#). Last accessed 27/01/24.

⁴⁷ Mines Cuenya, A., Díaz Villa, G., Rueda, R., & Marzano, V. (2013). El aborto lesbiano que se hace con la mano. *Continuidades y Rupturas en la Militancia por el Derecho al Aborto en Argentina (2009-2012)*. *Bagoas. Estudos Gays, Gêneros e Sexualidades*, 7, 133-160.

⁴⁸ Mama Cash. (2018). *My body is Mine*.



Increasing acceptance, access, and individual agency

From the beginning, Mama Cash's five founders focused on "the right of women to their own bodies and sexuality."⁴⁹ Mama Cash's earliest grants in the 1980s implemented this basic principle; they supported a range of initiatives that increased people's access to sexual and reproductive information and services. For example, Mama Cash's funding supported publications about sex and sexuality in the Netherlands. Mama Cash further seeded the creation of women's health centres in immigrant and Indigenous communities globally. Funding also supported a feminist organisation in Brazil that manufactured and distributed affordable diaphragms to their communities.

Before launching its abortion hotline in 2009, **Lesbianas y Feministas por la Despenalización del Aborto (LyF)** spent six months studying and training with other Mama Cash grantee-partners – **Women on Waves** and **Fundación Desafío**, a hotline organisation in Ecuador that provided information and support for medical abortion. **LyF's** line drew 5,000 callers in its first year, which more than tripled to 18,000 the following year. In addition to the calls, **LyF's** book on self-managed abortions was downloaded 500,000 times and translated into Braille.

“

They all called with similar doubts, fears, and anxieties, united by the invisible chain of taboos surrounding the body, sexuality, motherhood, and the ability to decide.

Ana Mines Cuenya & Verónica Marzano

Members of **LyF**⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mama Cash. [Our history](#). Last accessed 29/1/24. Also see: In 2004 on the 10th anniversary of the ICPD, the UN Special Rapporteur on Health, Paul Hunt, defined sexual rights as part of the right to sexual and reproductive health, elaborating sexual rights as the "right of all persons to express their sexual orientation, with due regard for the well-being and rights of others, without fear of persecution, denial of liberty or social interference." United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (2004). *The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health: Report of the Special Rapporteur (E/CN.4/2004/49)*.

⁵⁰ Mines Cuenya, Diaz Villa, Rueda, and Marzano, 2013, 133-160.

The feminist slogan “the personal is political” has never rung truer. For individuals, information offered by the helpline and conversations destigmatised abortion and increased their knowledge, agency, and safe access to services. Hospitalisations for unsafe abortion decreased, and between 2010 and 2011 the percentage of callers with erroneous information dropped from 85% to 39%.⁵¹ For the movement, **LyF** helped transform abortion into a practical matter rather than an ideological debate. “When we started, abortion was censored. It was believed that talking about how abortion was done took away the strength of the debate over legalisation. Ten years later, the topic has exploded. It went from being forbidden knowledge to being basic knowledge.”⁵²

For policy change, the hotline proved essential in rallying the public and keeping abortion reform on the public policy agenda. The collective provided five reports to the National Congress, featuring quantitative data from the calls. More powerfully, it shared the voices and personal stories of people undergoing abortions in Argentina. Legislators listened. Using evidence from the hotline callers’ use of mifepristone – a drug that blocks a hormone called progesterone that is needed for a pregnancy to continue – through the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, **LyF** proposed a revised abortion bill extending decriminalisation from 12 to 14 weeks. This extension was included when the law passed in December 2020.

⁵¹ Lesbianas y Feministas por la Descriminalización del Aborto. (2012, November). [Quinto Informe de Atención de la Línea Aborto: Más Información, Menos Riesgos.](#)

⁵² Sanchez, L. (2018, February 8). [Vamos Todas A Abortar.](#) Revista Anfibia. (Google translated from Spanish). Last accessed 25/03/24.



"Organisation: Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres, Nicaragua"



Mama Cash's support to helplines for reproductive and sexual rights

*Like LyF, many other grantee-partners used helplines to expand public access to support and information, as they broke down taboos, and legal and societal barriers. Helplines proved crucial where sexuality and abortion rights were still criminalised or when broaching the topic brought great personal risk. Helplines alleviated isolation, empowered people with knowledge, and connected them to communities, safe health services, and feminist movements, working to secure rights and access for all. Rola Yasmine, founder of **The A Project** in Lebanon, shared the vision that guides her helpline: “I want to see a sexual and reproductive health and rights that is kind, political, and community-based. Moving away from a professionalisation of these issues. We should be able to be in solidarity with each other. Able to talk to someone on that line who is not a doctor, who can guide you through an abortion or gender-affirming health care. And in a way in which you do not hate your body.”⁵³*

*Grantee-partners like **Transgender and Intersex Africa (TIA)** also triggered societal and institutional changes with the introduction of a helpline. **TIA** improved the health care, legal, and social support systems for trans and intersex community members in South Africa. Their initiatives included a toll-free helpline and peer support groups that reached 500 people, among them a self-led group for trans sex workers. Using data from the helpline, TIA successfully advocated for four new trans clinics providing gender-affirming care, greater inclusion of trans men in national and regional HIV strategies, and a proposal for national guidelines on trans health care in South African public hospitals.⁵⁴ Other countries where grantee-partners used helplines to increase access, agency, and acceptance included Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Poland, and Thailand.⁵⁵*

⁵³ Rola Yasmine, The A Project, interview with VIVA Strategy. 17/01/24.

⁵⁴ Mama Cash. (2015). *Change Starts With Us*.

⁵⁵ Organisations that ran or still run helplines include: A Project in Lebanon, Taketoat in Jordan, AwareGirls in Pakistan, Asia Safe Abortion Partnership in Pakistan, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, Sahayatrika for Human Rights and TARSHI in India, Ponton and FemFund in Poland, Aireana Lesbian Justice Organisation and Consultoria Jurídico Feminista in Paraguay, LyF in Argentina, AzMina in Brazil, Fundación Desafío in Ecuador, Fondo MARIA in Mexico, and Young Feminists in Kyrgyzstan.



Building from individual support to collective advocacy, close to 130 Mama Cash grantee-partners (14% of reproductive justice grants) advocated for the rights of HIV positive women and girls or extended HIV prevention and education in their communities. These efforts included support for Muslim women immigrants in the Netherlands, incarcerated women, sex workers, Maasai women, women farmers, trans, and deaf women. **Namibia Women's Health Network** is one example, winning a Supreme Court case in 2014 that stopped the forced sterilisations of HIV positive women in public hospitals.

Decriminalising abortion

Mama Cash gave more travel grants (82) to reproductive justice organisations than for any other issue addressed in this report. This reflects the crucial role of national, regional, and international convenings and networks for the exchange of information, the mobilisation of movements, and the collaborative formulation of strategies and campaigns – particularly in the prolonged efforts to decriminalise abortion. In 1985, Mama Cash's single largest grant went to the **International Campaign for Abortion Sterilisation, and Contraception** (ICASC) to bring members from the Global South to ICASC's first international conference in Amsterdam, where participants addressed racism within women's movements and transformed the network to be led by women from the Global South.⁵⁶ ICASC became the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, still in existence today with 1,000 member organisations in 85 countries. Its secretariat is currently in the Philippines, while WGNRR-Africa is headquartered in Tanzania. In 2018, WGNRR-Africa supported the Democratic Republic of Congo in its recent expansion of legal abortion rights using the Maputo Protocol.⁵⁷

Over the past two decades, feminist organising for abortion rights and care in Africa has been supported by the Maputo Protocol.⁵⁸ This legally binding regional instrument obligates State Parties to lift restrictions on abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the pregnant person's life or physical or mental health, and in cases of foetal anomaly. Since its enactment in 2003, 21 countries have since expanded their legal grounds for abortion, 11 have overturned absolute bans, and four now permit elective abortion, joining four other countries that already granted this. A notable success was in Mauritius, where a campaign led by Mama Cash grantee-partner **Muvman Liberasyon Fam (MLF)** achieved the decriminalisation of abortion in key circumstances in 2012.

⁵⁶ Henry, A. (1984). [Population control: No - Women Decide](#). In *Tribunal Internacional De La Mujer Y Reunion Sobre Los Derechos Reproductivos. Off Our Backs*, 14(9), 2-7. Last accessed 01/10/ 24.

⁵⁷ [WGNRR-Africa](#). Last accessed 22/01/24.

⁵⁸ Center for Reproductive Rights. (2023, June 29). [Maputo Protocol at 20: Progress on Abortion Rights in Africa](#).

CONCLUSION

Mama Cash's grantee-partners propelled the reproductive justice movement forward, prioritising the self-led agendas of women, girls, and trans and intersex communities that had been pushed to the margins. Mama Cash understood and trusted their effectiveness, resilience, ingenuity, and specific needs. Grantee-partners secured greater access to health services, culturally appropriate care, bodily integrity, and healing justice. For 40 years, Mama Cash supported groups at the vanguard of the movement – the feminist activists who organised access to self-managed medical abortion and contraceptive choice, who pushed for justice for cases of forced sterilisation. Mama Cash supported those working on gender-affirming health care, better education about sexual rights, consent and pleasure, and freedom for all to love who they love.



Countering Gender-Based Violence

Impact:

Over the past 40 years, Mama Cash has disbursed 30%⁶² of its grantmaking funds – close to **€27 million** – in **nearly 1,400 grants** to organisations working to counter gender-based violence (GBV) in **120 countries**. Mama Cash grantee-partners have consistently brought attention to the issue of violence, identified solutions to root causes, and provided or pushed for international instruments, responsive safety measures, support systems, and paths to justice for survivors, especially those regularly overlooked by movements, donors, and governments. With Mama Cash support, trans and intersex activists have secured legal protections and improved responsiveness by public institutions.

€26.9 million

PROVIDED TO ORGANISATIONS THAT
WORK TO COUNTER GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE

1,392 Grants

120 Countries



⁶² Percentages will total more than 100% because each grant could address multiple issue areas.



*After dozens of women defenders in Mexico and Central America were attacked in the 2000'-s and early 2010'-s, several feminists started a research process to understand and map the violence they were facing. In a meeting with 55 women and trans leaders and activists held in Oaxaca, Mexico, they saw that the violence and threats women defenders experience were systematic and are often sexualised and gender specific. "It seemed that a coalition was being born right there – the process moved really fast because we definitely struck a nerve," one of the participants recalls.⁶³ Together, they created the **Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos** (Mesoamerican Initiative for Women Human Rights Defenders, now known as **IM-Defensoras**), consisting of national networks of WHRDs in Mexico and Central America. "It's a confluence of very diverse organisations and movements of defenders," including trans, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant women leaders, among others, says Lydia Alpízar Durán, co-executive director of **IM-Defensoras**.⁶⁴*

*In 2012, Mama Cash together with the founders of **IM-Defensoras** and the Nobel Women's Initiative identified a joint proposal opportunity to fundraise for and resource **IM-Defensoras** and the national networks. This resulted in Mama Cash being able to award the largest grant in its history, disbursed over two years, with funds from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery. By 2013, **IM-Defensoras** had documented more than 400 attacks on defenders and contributed with other organisations to the passage of the UN's first-ever resolution on WHRDs and the CEDAW Committee's first recommendations on WHRDs.⁶⁵ Between 2015 and 2023, **IM-Defensoras** supported over 23,000 WHRDs with accompaniment of WHRDs at risk, training, advocacy, communication and timely resources that have helped increase their safety and save lives.⁶⁶*

*In addition to developing one of the first trainings for protection of WHRDs, **IM-Defensoras** has pioneered one of few registries systematically documenting and analysing violence against WHRDs, both from a feminist, gender perspective. The network is also contributing to transforming movement norms, centring self-care and collective healing. It runs two healing houses in Honduras and Mexico, drawing from Indigenous and feminist therapeutic practices and practitioners, as well as trans and non-binary healers to support the growing numbers of women, trans and non-binary human rights defenders forced into exile. "We see care as justice, as political, as a right, in order to sustain our movements," says Lydia. "Protection and care are at the centre of changing the model of activism and at the centre of the Feminist Holistic Protection approach we have collectively built since 2010."⁶⁷*

⁶³ Lydia Alpízar Durán, IM-Defensoras, VIVA Strategy interview. 02/02/24.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Count Me In Consortium III. 1 Track record, Case 1: The Right to Defend Rights.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Lydia Alpízar Durán, IM-Defensoras, VIVA Strategy interview. 02/02/24.

Over the past 40 years, there has been a progressive shift in legislation and attitudes concerning domestic violence. In 1983, virtually no laws addressing this issue existed, but today, hundreds of laws have been enacted worldwide.⁶⁸ There are now thousands of shelters and helplines.⁶⁹ Increasingly, society is less likely to accept, defend, internalise, or dismiss GBV.⁷⁰ In response to specific femicides and assaults over the past 10 years, grassroots campaigns such as *#NiUnaMenos* [Not One (Woman) More], *#MeToo*, and *#Sendeanlat* [Tell Your Story, Too (Turkey)] became collective battle cries against the silence and impunity for GBV.

Nevertheless, GBV has remained as one of the most prevalent human rights abuses in the world.⁷¹ GBV festers, spikes, and persists, often intensifying in times of economic, political, climate and social crisis, as well as in war and armed conflict, environmental disasters, political repression, or anti-gender backlash. Communities and individuals who are pushed to the margins, who are criminalised, stigmatised, or exposed to discrimination are more vulnerable to GBV.⁷² Overall, an estimated 30% of all women (736 million) have experienced intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence

⁶⁸ UN DESA. [Gender Data Hub](#). Last accessed 24/03/24.

⁶⁹ World Bank. (2024). *Women, Business and the Law 2024*. Washington, DC: World Bank, p. 40. Eighty-one countries report providing the supportive infrastructure to implement their laws against GBV, such as institution shelters, legal aid, family courts.

⁷⁰ Klugman, J., Hanmer, L., Twigg, S., Hasan, T., McCleary-Sills, J., & Santamaria, J. (2014). *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

⁷¹ World Bank. [Gender Data Portal](#). Last accessed 24/03/24.

⁷² World Bank. (2022). [Forced Displacement and Violence Against Women: A Policy Brief](#). Last accessed 13/02/24.



"Organisation: Silueta X, Ecuador"



in their lifetimes.⁷³ That rate peaks for trans and intersex people, as well as for LBQ women. A nine-country study in Africa of people self-identifying as sexual and gender minorities found that 56% had experienced physical and sexual violence in their lifetime, reaching 73% for transgender women.⁷⁴ Of the 56% of lesbians who identified as survivors, many had experienced marital rape after being forced to marry a man. Some lack legal recourse; spousal rape is excluded or omitted from criminal codes in more than 50 countries.⁷⁵

THANKS TO FEMINIST ACTIVISM, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MARITAL RAPE ARE TODAY DEEMED CRIMES IN 162 AND 142 COUNTRIES, RESPECTIVELY.⁷⁶

Notably, the right to protection from GBV was entirely absent in international human rights law until feminist activists pushed the CEDAW Committee to adopt Recommendation No. 19 on violence against women in 1992. Gaining momentum in the 1990s and 2000s, activists progressively secured national and international laws against domestic violence, sexual assault, marital rape, and harassment.

Closing the gaps between law and implementation

In Turkey, **Mor Çati** (Purple Roof)'s activism has illustrated that meaningful change takes time – making gains over legislation needs to be backed by institutional and societal shifts. Established in 1990 and funded by Mama Cash one year later, **Mor Çati** operates the only independent shelter and helpline in Turkey. The organisation advocated for Turkey's first domestic violence legislation in 1998, and for subsequent reforms. In addition to directly housing more than 1,000 people fleeing GBV each year, **Mor Çati** has provided tens of thousands of women – including trans women, immigrants, refugees, and sex workers – vital information about their right to preventive and protective measures, custody arrangements, alimony, immigration visas, and day care.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Müller, A., Daskilewicz, K., Kabwe, M. L., Mmolai-Chalmers, A., Morroni, C., Muparamoto, N., Muula, A. S., Odira, V., & Zimba, M.; Southern and Eastern African Research Collective for Health. (2021). Experience of and factors associated with violence against sexual and gender minorities in nine African countries: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 357.

⁷⁵ World Bank. (2024). *Women, business and the law 2024*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁷⁶ UN Women. [Facts and figures: Ending violence against women](#). Last accessed 29/03/24.

The group also trains municipal officials and employees at state-run shelters and counselling centres to treat survivors with dignity. Their counselling services have helped combat misinformation and address harmful treatment from police and state-run shelters, which often encouraged victims to return to abusive families. To disrupt these practices and enhance the implementation of laws, **Mor Çati** founded and leads the Assembly of Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centres in Turkey.

Since the 2000s, **Mor Çati** has allied with other feminist organisations and successfully advocated for reform and implementation of laws that criminalise marital rape and increase the penalties for so-called ‘honour’ crimes. These reformed codes also establish equal marital property and child custody rights.⁷⁷

One of **Mor Çati**’s biggest wins came through the landmark 2009 Opuz vs. Turkey decision, in which a client it counselled was one of the plaintiffs. **Mor Çati** submitted an important contextual brief that was cited by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).⁷⁸ **The ECHR ruled, for the first time, that domestic violence is a form of discrimination, and that it is a government’s responsibility to eradicate it.**

Embarrassed by the ruling, Turkey’s then-pro-European government offered to host the meeting that produced the 2011 Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Turkey was the first nation to sign and ratify the Convention. The government then enlisted feminist, LBQ, and trans organisations, like **Mor Çati** and **Pembe Hayat** – also a grantee-partner – to align the national domestic violence law with the articles of the convention. This produced a law that includes preventative measures for the perpetrator and protective measures for the survivor.

Since then, waves of political backlash and regression have swept across Turkey under president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, mirroring global trends. In a significant move, Turkey became the first country to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention in 2021. However, the government is still bound by the ECHR’s Opuz ruling and must implement the law. The outcry against Turkey’s withdrawal from the Convention has sparked widespread awareness. “All people in Turkey know the Istanbul Convention now,” noted **Mor Çati**’s Hale Çelebi.

⁷⁷ Hale Çelebi, Mor Çati, VIVA Strategy Interview, 11/01/24.

⁷⁸ [Opuz v. Turkey](#), App no. 33401/02, (ECtHR, 9 September 2009, Section C.1)



Shifting funding and government norms to counter more forms of GBV

Staunchly committed to women's independence, in its first two decades, Mama Cash supported organisations contesting how early or forced marriage, female genital cutting, domestic violence, sexual harassment, femicide, and trafficking curtailed women's and girls' agency.⁷⁹ Notably, the international donor community provided limited support in these areas. Women's funds, including Mama Cash, filled the funding gap through the mid-2000s until the social determinants of maternal mortality and the spread of HIV galvanised wider funding interest in improving power relations within the family, decreasing sexual and domestic violence, and increasing health services and outreach in LGBTQI communities. More recently, Mama Cash has worked to make more official development assistance (ODA) for GBV accessible to self-led feminist movements through Count Me In! and its joint influencing work with the UN and EU's Spotlight Initiative.⁸⁰

Mama Cash grantee-partners have continuously worked to bring visibility to violence and identify solutions to root causes. They provided or pushed for responsive safety measures, support systems, and paths to justice for survivors of different types of GBV. Time and time again, Mama Cash grantee-partners brought attention to those who face higher levels of violence, yet remain systemically overlooked by movements, donors, and governments.

18% OF MAMA CASH'S GBV FUNDING HAS GONE TO ORGANISATIONS LED BY OR WORKING WITH TRANS COMMUNITIES.

⁷⁹ Mama Cash. (1986). *1983-1986 Annual report: "Promoting the independence of women is the most important criterion on which applications are assessed"* (Principles) (Google-translated from Dutch).

⁸⁰ Influencing the development of the Spotlight Initiative, the UN and EU's €500 million commitment to end GBV, Mama Cash and CMI! "created opportunities for civil society engagement throughout the governance structure and ensured some of the resources directly reached feminist organisations" (Mama Cash. (2020). *End term review*).

One such organisation is the transfeminist LGBTQI group **Silueta X** in Ecuador, which sounded the alarm in 2013 on lesbian “conversion therapy clinics” that tortured individuals and held LBQ women captive, leading to many shutdowns.⁸¹ **Silueta X**’s founder, Diane Rodriguez, won several legal precedents – including for name change and legal gender recognition – that protect the trans community from discrimination and trans-antagonistic violence. Rodriguez herself had been kidnapped several times, faced death threats, and was targeted by armed assailants who stormed her office.⁸² Her first candidacy for a national parliamentary seat in 2013 culminated in the historic first meeting of an LGBTQI organisation with a sitting Ecuadorian president, Rafael Correa.⁸³ **Silueta X** focused the meeting on their annual list of LGBTQI homicide victims, most of them trans women. They reached several agreements with the government including the creation of a commission to investigate the murders, positive media promotion of LGBTQI human rights, capacity building of LGBTQI individuals as civil servants, and the review of draft laws with a trans lens.⁸⁴ **Silueta X** in turn provided training to police and public health officials concerning the trans community and trans sex workers. **They opened the first counselling centre for trans women, particularly for individuals who were tortured at the lesbian “conversion” sites.**⁸⁵ In 2017, Diane became the first trans person in Ecuador to be elected to a seat in the national parliament. The work and achievements of organisations like **Silueta X** affirm Htun and Weldon’s assertion that autonomous feminist movements benefit overlooked groups, shift social norms, change public opinion, and pressure public officials.⁸⁶ In doing so, these movements deliver intersectional impact beyond GBV.

Progress on GBV is not linear and there is no finish line. Violence against women, girls, and trans and intersex people takes many forms. It is ubiquitous in our private, public, social, political, and professional spaces. Feminist activists have fought against impunity and lack of accountability on this issue. They have also used their voice to bring more forms of violence to light including – but not limited to – image-based online sexual abuse, and assault against trans and intersex youth and adults. These are just a few examples of how Mama Cash’s support to groups has led to changes in laws and policies, but also to the very definition of violence and who deserves to be free.

⁸¹ [Asociación Silueta X lanza campaña para denunciar abusos contra grupos GLBTI](#). (2013, June 20). *El Universo*. Last accessed 03/20/24.

⁸² LogoTV. [Once She Was Held at Gunpoint. Now This Trans Activists Is A Member of Parliament](#). Last accessed 27/04/24.

⁸³ Silueta X. (2013, December 26). [Encuentro entre el presidente de Ecuador y colectivo LGBT](#). Last accessed 04/21/24.

⁸⁴ Silueta X. [Compromisos del president Correa en Ecuador frente a Comunidad LGBT](#), and [Los grupos GLBTI se reunirán cada 6 meses con Correa](#). Last accessed 25/03/24.

⁸⁵ [Centro Psico Trans](#). (2017). *Founded and run by Silueta X*. Last accessed 21/04/24.

⁸⁶ Htun & Weldon, 2012.

CONCLUSION

Feminist activists have integrated GBV activism into broader movements that oppose social, legal, and economic injustice, extremism, racism, heterosexism, trans and intersex antagonism, and authoritarianism. They have articulated how violence is used as a tool to enforce unequal gender norms, patriarchal power relations, and entrench autocratic regimes. Mama Cash made a vital investment of 30% of its funding into feminist movements countering GBV. These movements have monitored compliance with laws and conventions addressing GBV, demanded that the state expedite the passage of new laws, enhanced laws' implementation, fostered cultural shifts and challenged behaviour that perpetuates GBV. Moreover, they have resisted regression and impunity, particularly for GBV's most intersectional forms.



Sex Workers' Rights

Impact:

Mama Cash resourced sex worker activists who successfully campaigned for their rights to labour, health, safety, and choice, while challenging societal and policy norms around sex work. Over 40 years, Mama Cash has given **€6.8 million**, more than 7% of its funding, in over **360 grants** to sex worker rights organisations in **66 countries**. This has contributed to catalysing sex worker movements all over the world. Through its advocacy in donor spaces, Mama Cash supported feminist movements and funders to separate sex work from anti-trafficking efforts, and it successfully advocated for sex workers' rights to be understood as a feminist issue of bodily autonomy and labour. Mama Cash also incubated and mobilised donor support for the Red Umbrella Fund, which has moved more than €9.2 million in grants to sex worker-led movements since 2012.

€6.8 million

PROVIDED TO SEX WORKER AND
MOVEMENTS OVER 40 YEARS

360 Grants

66 Countries



The *WONETHA* House sits on a courtyard of red clay in a peri-urban district of Kampala, Uganda. It's a symbol of permanence and belonging for the sex workers who form the *Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA)*, a Mama Cash grantee-partner between 2010-2020. Built on land bought with a Mama Cash endowment grant, this house is more than a physical structure, it's a sanctuary where sex worker members can drop in, have a snack and some tea, chat with friends old and new. Here, they can also access essential supplies like condoms, lubricant, and other tools of the trade.

They can receive psychosocial support, health tests, and HIV treatment. They can take a nap, or learn financial, vocational, and literacy skills, learn how to grow food – matoke, mushrooms, spices for tea. It is a space where they can organise, strategise on how to reshape societal norms that view their work as shameful and forced. "We are also there to laugh, to dance," Naumy Mbareeba says with joy and pride in her voice. "During our AGMs (Annual General Meetings), we all sleep there. There is life when you reach here."⁸⁷

Naumy is the Executive Director of **WONETHA**, and she is a "proud sex worker." Even two decades ago, not many sex workers in Uganda – or elsewhere – felt emboldened enough to say that. Marginalised by society, subjected to violence by law enforcement and health professionals, and called dehumanising terms, sex workers feared revealing their profession to their families and communities. Before 2003, every single country in the world criminalised adult, consensual sex work or related activities, increasing the impunity with which the state, private, and civil sectors could violate sex workers, especially those who were trans or intersex.

Sex workers were also shunned by some women's rights and human rights activists who saw sex work through the lens of abolition, coercion and victimhood. Their vaunted aim was to "rescue" sex workers from this life. Many denied sex workers agency over their own bodies, refused to accept them as workers, and insisted on so-called rehabilitation. With Mama Cash's support, sex worker movements have successfully challenged stigmas and laws, reframed the words that define their profession, and won over allies in feminist, labour, and human rights movements. Today, sex work is decriminalised in New Zealand and Belgium, and South Africa is on the verge of joining them.

⁸⁷ Naumy Mbareeba, WONETHA, VIVA Strategy Interview. 23/01/24.



Organisation: Red Umbrella Fund (RUF).

Mama Cash has always held a radical understanding of sex work as work – a means to sexual and economic self-determination – and as an expression of bodily autonomy. **Over its four decades, Mama Cash has dedicated more than 7% of its grantmaking to sex worker organisations – a stark contrast to the 1% of human rights funding that sex worker organisations generally receive.**⁸⁸ Mama Cash’s support for sex worker legitimacy and movement-building began as early as 1985 with grants for hosting and attending high-visibility international sex worker conferences in the Netherlands, India, Chile, and the United States.

Since its funding, Mama Cash has channelled more than €6.8 million to sex worker organisations in 66 countries in every region of the world. Its grantmaking has demonstrated the power of resourcing intersectionality – a quarter of those funds went to organisations that work with or are led by trans and intersex sex workers. This enabled trans and intersex sex workers to shift norms and assert their leadership in global and national sex worker and feminist movements, as well as in public policy and other decision-making spaces.

Most of Mama Cash’s funding for sex worker’s rights organisations has been in the form of multi-year and core support. This enabled emerging organisations to formalise their structures, cultivate leadership skills among their members, cover staff salaries, forge strategic alliances, and plan deliberate leadership transitions. Additionally, this assisted mature sex worker’s rights organisations in securing long-term sustainability through endowment grants. This trust-based support has bolstered more sex workers’ leadership in advocacy, with many sex workers speaking powerfully and authentically at national and international platforms, influencing decisions at all levels.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Funders Network. (2019). [Advancing human rights: The state of global foundation grantmaking](#). Last accessed 10/02/24.



*Sex workers' rights are at the nexus of feminist issues – women's rights to have control and autonomy over their bodies and choices over their bodies, labour rights issues for women for what's undervalued and what kind of work is considered labour, economic justice, and access to health rights, freedom from violence. The reason these folks are most victimised or excluded is because they are at the intersection of various systems of oppression. If you can get it right for sex workers, you can address several interlocking systems of oppression.*⁸⁹

zohra moosa

Former Mama Cash Executive Director

Despite social stigma, criminalisation and discrimination, sex workers have asserted their agency, organised for their right to health, labour, gender self-determination, protection from violence, and migration. In so doing, they achieved significant legislative and societal wins. As a result, today they have better access to labour rights, better health care and housing, and parental rights, and are more engaged in laws, policies, and programmes that affect their lives. They have a serious voice in local, national, regional, and international decision-making and are more visible as speakers and leaders in committees and panels including in bilateral and global spaces. With CMI's and Mama Cash's support, sex workers have been organising official side events at the UN Commission on the Status of Women since 2019 and participated at UN-convened Beijing+25 regional meetings in Geneva and Kenya in 2020.⁹⁰ Mama Cash has also meaningfully amplified the voices of sex workers in feminist spaces. In 2014, it partnered with sex worker-led grantee-partner **Asociación de Trabajadoras Sexuales Mujeres del Sur** in Peru to host the second regional meeting of all Mama Cash's Latin American grantee-partners at the 2014 Feminist Encuentro.⁹¹

⁸⁹ zohra moosa, VIVA Strategy Interview. 21/11/23.

⁹⁰ Mama Cash. (2019). *Annual report*.

⁹¹ Mama Cash. (2014). *Annual report*.



Supporting the first fund for and by sex workers

Mama Cash has engaged with women's movements and women's rights funders to disentangle anti-trafficking efforts from adult consensual sex work. This had a multiplier effect in convincing other women's rights donors and the broader women's movement to recognise and fund sex worker rights as a feminist issue of bodily autonomy and labour.

The most significant effort in this regard was the world's first fund run by and for sex workers, **Red Umbrella Fund (RUF)**. It was launched in 2012 as a result of dialogue initiated by the Open Society Foundations that spanned several years between donors and sex worker activists.⁹² Mama Cash incubated this fund as an "enactment of solidarity," going far beyond hosting and fiscal sponsorship.⁹³ "It was of real big significance that (RUF was hosted by) a feminist funder," founding RUF coordinator Nadia van der Linde recalled. "Mama Cash funded (and hosted) RUF from the perspective that 'we feel this is important, it fits our mission.'"⁹⁴ Since RUF's founding, Mama Cash has supported, accompanied and integrated RUF staff in its internal HR, finance, administrative and organisational operations, and hosted the fund at its Amsterdam offices. This partnership enabled a culture of mutual learning – when Mama Cash moved towards becoming an entirely participatory grantmaker, it turned to RUF for guidance. Moreover, RUF deepened Mama Cash's learning on sex worker rights movements and issues.

“*Mama Cash's belief in the sex worker-led movement's vision has helped the Fund provide millions of euros of grants to hundreds of sex worker-led organisations around the world.*”

Alexis Wilson Briggs

RUF Interim Coordinator⁹⁵

⁹² *Red Umbrella Fund: The Creation of a Collaborative Fund by and for Sex Workers*. (2014). Red Umbrella Fund.

⁹³ Mama Cash. (2020). *2015-2020 Strategy End of Term Review Report*, p. 35.

⁹⁴ Nadia van der Linde, VIVA Strategy Interview. 06/12/23.

⁹⁵ Alexis Wilson Briggs, RUF survey response, VIVA Strategy, January 2024.

A pivotal contribution from Mama Cash was rallying donors, supporting **RUF** in raising and moving €9.2 million in 317 grants to sex worker-led organisations in 72 countries. In the early years, “Nicky McIntyre, (then-Mama Cash Executive Director) opened doors to funders. She made introductions, invited me in ... to get funding and other collaborations,” Nadia said. “Mama Cash wanted to see this work.” This allowed **RUF** to have a stronger position within feminist movements and influence philanthropy to be more responsive to sex workers. Since its first year, **RUF** remains one of the top five funders of sex worker rights in terms of funds disbursed.

It was clear from the start how urgent the demand was for sex worker rights funding. In its first year, **RUF** got an overwhelming 1,200 applications, the most it has ever received in one year. Without Mama Cash’s knowledge, organisational mentorship, staff resources, and support for setting up systems and processes quickly, “it would have been mission impossible,” Nadia recalled. As one of the world’s first international participatory grantmaking funds, **RUF** built sex worker power, decision-making skills, and leadership. They were involved in all the discussions from selection criteria and funding priorities to geographic focus. When sex workers joined donor-only spaces as peers, they shifted the discourse and altered the practices that dominate the funding ecosystem.

Changing norms and narratives

Sex workers coined and normalised the term “sex work,” which is now regularly used in official government, UN, multilateral, and civil society documents. There are countries in almost every region that recognise that sex workers have rights to health, violence protection, anti-discrimination, and labour protections. With Mama Cash’s support, sex workers, in every region of the world, have built diverse coalitions, strengthened community knowledge, and deepened the security and protection of sex workers through education and sensitisation of health care workers, members of the police, and other institutions.⁹⁶

IN 2011, EMPOWER FOUNDATION, A MAMA CASH GRANTEE-PARTNER, SECURED ACCESS FOR SEX WORKERS TO THE THAI SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, ALLOWING THEM FREE HEALTH CARE AND PAID SICK AND PARENTAL LEAVE.

⁹⁶Mama Cash. *Coding Analysis of Grants 2009-2013*.

Sex work is a significant source of income, and many of Thailand’s 300,000 sex workers are migrants from neighbouring Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Levels of impunity for police or state violence against sex workers decreased, along with the frequency of “raid and rescue” operations, after **Empower**’s sex worker-led participatory research demonstrated the clear negative impacts of this approach.⁹⁷ One of the most significant sex worker rights wins came in 2022, when Mama Cash grantee-partner **Union des Travailleu(r)se du Sexe Organisees Pour l’Indépendance (UTSOPI)**, pushed Belgium to decriminalise sex work – the second country in the world and first in Europe to do so. Now sex workers, including migrants, across Belgium have access to the same health and labour rights as other workers – unemployment benefits, pension, paid sick leave, maternity leave and vacation.⁹⁸

In Uganda, the country that has received the most Mama Cash funding for sex worker rights in the Global South, **WONETHA** has wrestled its way into decision-making spaces. It sits in national and local committees that decide on policies affecting its members’ lives and livelihoods. This is especially important at a time of intense repression under restrictive NGO and anti-homosexuality laws. **WONETHA** now sits on two local district-level human rights and civil society committees and several national committees convened by the Ministry of Health and the Uganda AIDS Commission.

These societal and leadership efforts built upon movement leaders’ efforts to boost the self-confidence of sex workers, Naumy said, recalling her own **WONETHA** journey from member to Executive Director. **WONETHA**’s innovative Memory Project, funded by Mama Cash, supported 1,840 sex workers to build their self-confidence, receive mentorship and coaching on parenting skills, financial management and inheritance planning, and gain understanding of feminism and self-determination. This empowered them to stand with pride before their families and talk candidly about their profession.⁹⁹ “It was like being born again, like being saved,” Naumy said. “Maybe you had lost hope as a sex worker. Now the hope was restored, you bonded with your children. You could plan for your future and the future of your children.”

⁹⁷ Mama Cash. (2015). *Change Starts With Us*.

⁹⁸ Mama Cash. (2022). Annual Report.

⁹⁹ Armstrong, R., & Kabugo, R. (2020). *Capacity Development in the Bridging the Gaps Programme. Case Study Report WONETHA*. HEARD, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Last accessed 10/02/24.



CONCLUSION

Mama Cash's early and deep support for sex worker rights was a key factor in transforming the funding and recognition sex workers receive, especially among women's rights and human rights funders. With this support, sex workers were able to assert their agency, organise for their right to health, labour, gender determination, violence protection, and migration, and achieve significant legislative and societal wins. Even amid rising political authoritarianism and discrimination, sex workers managed to garner allies across feminist and labour movements in every region of the world to achieve their goals. Through its funding, accompaniment and convening power, Mama Cash helped bring sex workers' voices into international spaces, supported them to counter labels of victimhood and re-shape perceptions of sex work as a means for sexual and economic independence.



Racial Justice

Impact:

Mama Cash has channelled **€5 million through 400 grants in 52 countries** to promote racial justice work led by racialised feminists, notably Black, Indigenous, Roma, Dalit, and Moro feminists. Globally, through travel grants and conference sponsorship, Mama Cash sought to amplify the radical and powerful voices of racialised women, girls, and trans and intersex people. In the Netherlands, Mama Cash supported racial justice and anti-racist power-building organisations that challenged attitudes and behaviours that excluded Black, migrant, Muslim, and refugee women in economic, social, and cultural life. All these efforts combined to build transnational solidarity and to highlight the interconnectedness of struggles against systemic racism.

€5 million

PROVIDED TO RACIAL JUSTICE AND
ANTI-RACIST ORGANISATIONS OVER
40 YEARS

400

Grants

52

Countries



“There has been a notable global recognition of intersectionality, acknowledging the interconnected nature of various forms of discrimination, including racial and gender-based injustices. This recognition has fuelled more inclusive conversations and efforts to address the complex and layered experiences of individuals facing multiple oppressions.” – Afua Gyapomaa, African Women’s Development Fund.¹⁰⁰

Mama Cash was founded to support feminism as a “radical change strategy”¹⁰¹ – to break down barriers around women’s sexuality, combat structural gender inequity and oppression, and support radical feminist movements in the Netherlands and beyond. Challenging the white, heterosexual norm was part of its DNA, even if the road was sometimes rocky. Over its 40 years, Mama Cash has channelled €5 million through almost 400 grants in 52 countries to promote racial justice globally and further the rights of Black, Indigenous, Roma, Dalit, Moro, and other racialised feminists. While €3 million have gone to groups based in the Global South, the Netherlands has received more grants aimed at racial justice than any other country. This reflects Mama Cash’s objective of championing anti-racism efforts in its own backyard.



“Organisation: African Women’s Development Fund”

¹⁰⁰ AWDF Survey Response, VIVA Strategy. 24/01/2024.

¹⁰¹ Mama Cash. (1986). 1983-1986 Annual Report (Google translated from Dutch).





"Black Lives Matter protests in 2020"

Breaking taboos, increasing visibility of Black, migrant and refugee women in the Netherlands

In the 1970s, amid anti-colonial movements and massive migration from Suriname, Papua New Guinea, and other countries in Africa and Asia, many Black and other feminists of colour in the Netherlands joined forces in a pioneering wave of anti-racist activism under the umbrella “Zwarte Migranten Vluchtelingen (ZMV) vrouwenbeweging” (Black Migrant Refugee women’s movement) to address their lack of representation in mainstream feminist movements. The ZMV umbrella referred to solidarity among women of colour who shared a colonial past, varying forms of migration and differentiated experiences of racism. Together, ZMV-feminists also critiqued the white, middle class, heterosexual norms of mainstream feminism.

Another wave of anti-racism protests emerged around 2014-2015 in response to the rise of Islam-antagonism in Dutch politics and the immigration panic. Combined with the “new confrontational energy”¹⁰² against the racist imagery of Zwarte Piet (Black Pete),¹⁰³ this anti-racism wave culminated in Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 that rallied tens of thousands of protesters across the country. **In 2022, the Dutch government formally apologised for its exploitation of people from Africa and Asia who were enslaved and traded in its former colonies and the areas under the authority of the Dutch East India Company.**¹⁰⁴ **That same year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs admitted to its internal patterns of institutional racism.**¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Essed, P. (2014). [Afterword: A second wave of Dutch resistance against racism](#). *Frame*, 27(2), 135-142. Last accessed 13/02/24.

¹⁰³ Zwarte Piet is a racist Blackface caricature that was added in the mid-19th century, to the folklore of the Dutch traditional Sinterklaas Feast on December 5th.

¹⁰⁴ Government of the Netherlands. (2022, December 19). [Government apologises for the Netherlands’ role in the history of slavery](#). Last accessed 13/02/24.

¹⁰⁵ Government of the Netherlands. (2022, December 12). [Racism at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – an exploratory study](#). Last accessed 13/02/24.

Mama Cash supported the Dutch ecosystem of Black feminism and racial justice by funding hundreds of Black, migrant, and refugee women-led groups in the Netherlands, often at nascent stages when early funding is critical for expanding reach and building constituencies. And it made this framing explicit, articulating a focus on Black, migrant, and refugee women in funding criteria and in dedicated sections of its early annual reports. This was an important identifier of Mama Cash's racial justice priorities, and unequivocal support of Black feminism within the Dutch feminist agenda.

Mama Cash funded radio and television programmes, International Women's Day gatherings, health centres, helplines, cultural festivals, scholarships, and self-defence training led by Black and migrant women. It was among the first Dutch funders to recognise the importance of Black artists in the Netherlands and the nexus of art and activism – funding women's festivals, jazz workshops, and international cultural exchanges. These efforts helped reshape societal norms about whose production is regarded as art and whose narratives should be heard.

One of the legacies of Mama Cash's funding is the Black Magic Woman Festival. In the 1990s, Ernestine Comvalius, director of the **Krater Theatre** noticed “that Black people, migrants, and women weren't represented in the arts. We knew there were professionals and young talents whose performances we wanted to see,” she recalled in a 2013 interview. “We didn't want to wait around and see what would happen, we decided to take initiative.” **Krater Theatre** launched the festival in 1996 and ran it for several years, showcasing Black and migrant artists who performed stand-up comedy, theatre, subway poetry, spoken word, music, and visual art.¹⁰⁶ Mama Cash was the first funder on board in 1997, bringing other funders along, including VSB Fonds, one of Netherlands' largest private investment funds. This ground-breaking festival celebrating Blackness in all its cultural forms continued until the COVID pandemic in 2020. Its pioneering and lasting legacy was the elevation of Black and migrant artistic production and narratives onto the Dutch cultural and intellectual scene.

Mama Cash also supported other gathering spaces for Black, migrant, and refugee women. **Stichting Zami**, which received ten grants between 1993-2004, describes itself “as a meeting place where migrants and refugee women from different corners of the world come together, work together, eat together and speak together.”¹⁰⁷ Through empowerment training, art production, political and literary cafes, workshops on whiteness and racism, career paths for refugee women, debates at the Black Magic Woman Festival, and Dutch language circles, **Zami** strengthened the position of thousands of Black, migrant, and refugee women.

¹⁰⁶ Mama Cash. (2013). [Ernestine Comvalius Interview](#). Last accessed 13/02/24.

¹⁰⁷ [Zami](#). (Google translated from Dutch). Last accessed 13/02/24



“Mama Cash enabled us to collaborate with other organisations – Turkish, Moroccan, Hindustani (Indian), Surinamese, and undocumented women. And more critically, to be politically explicit”, said Dyi Dieuwertje Huijg, who was involved with **Zami** in the mid-2000s. “(Mama Cash’s funding) enabled us to hold space and organise with other groups around migration, Islamophobia; enabled us to organise more contested topics. We always wanted to do more controversial things and Mama Cash was our main funder.”

During the 1990s and 2000s, few feminist organisations were including Black, migrant, and intergenerational perspectives. Dyi and Astrid Runs-Engelhart recalled their work through **Zami** to change stereotypes about Black, migrant and refugee women. “Mainstream feminist discourse felt racist,” Dyi said. “We tried to showcase the diversity and contributions that Black migrant women make to Dutch society.” To demonstrate impact, Mama Cash commissioned a 2006 report “Migrant women’s philanthropic practices from the diaspora” that quantified the influence of migrant women on social change in their countries of origin as well as in the Netherlands. This report showed that many migrants were actively involved in their own and other migrant communities in the Netherlands through mutual aid and supporting women’s issues, and often drew little distinction between supporting their migrant sisters in the Netherlands and their countries of origin.¹⁰⁸

Today, Mama Cash continues to resource nascent groups in the Netherlands working on contested issues through an intersectional race and gender lens. Since 2020, 9% of the total number of grants distributed by Mama Cash (70 out of 756) equaling 6% of the total value of grantmaking (1.4m out of about €25 million euros), has had a racial justice lens. Despite the continued racist and exclusionary discourse in the Netherlands, Astrid, a former member of **Zami** and now a Black feminist rights activist in Suriname, sees signs of hope: “Older activists had started the debate and that provided building stones for the Dutch apology for slavery ... If we look at what has been achieved, there has been progress.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Mama Cash. (2006). *Migrant Women’s Philanthropic Practices from the Diaspora*.

¹⁰⁹ Astrid Runs-Engelhart, VIVA Strategy Interview. 31/01/2024.

In 1985, when Mama Cash learned that the Dutch government was only funding white women to travel to the UN Women’s Conference in Nairobi, it responded with 14 travel grants totalling €23,000 for Black women from the Global South to travel and assert their voice at the official UN conference and at the shadow NGO conference.¹¹² Similarly, in 1995, it sent Moroccan, Afro-Brazilian and South African feminists – as well as at least 15 Black and migrant feminists from the Netherlands – to the UN Women’s Conference in Beijing where they presented several sessions. In 1997, one-fifth of its Fund for Global South grants were for travel grants.¹¹³

Other travel grants over the years were used for similar purposes: Mama Cash funded exchanges of African women in Europe and Africa through the conference “African Women Towards the 21st Century” in 1997. Afro-Brazilian, Indian, and African feminists from across the continent travelled to Durban for the World Conference against Racism in 2001, where Mama Cash also organised a meeting of African funds and organisations.¹¹⁴ Mama Cash championed youth exchanges, sending Sierra Leonean youth to the Youth Peace Conference in Cape Town in 2001, and Indian Dalit, Thai, and Bolivian youth to the International Indigenous Youth Conference in the Philippines in 2002. African NGO representatives travelled to the Beijing+10 international conference in New York, and Philippine activists to the International Conference on Women and Peace Initiatives in Amsterdam in 2002, also with Mama Cash's support.

What reads like a dizzying list of travel grants, is in fact the spinning of a web of transnational and cross-racial feminist solidarity and action. As Global South and/or racialised feminists around the world actively participated in these spaces, they built South-South diaspora relationships and coalitions and found common cause in the interconnectedness of struggles against various forms of systemic injustice and racism. Coalitions, joint action plans, and campaigns have sprung from these convenings, including the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, International Domestic Workers Federation, and Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (CONLACTRAHO), showing the critical need for Black and Southern feminist voices to be present and vocal in these spaces.

¹¹² Mama Cash. (1986). *1983-1986 Annual Report* (Google translated from Dutch).

¹¹³ Mama Cash. (1997). *Annual Report*.

¹¹⁴ Mama Cash. (2001). *Annual Report*.

CONCLUSION

Since its founding, Mama Cash explicitly prioritised racial justice at home in the Netherlands by funding feminist knowledge and artistic production by Black, migrant, refugee and other racialised feminists, through documentation centres, archives, publishing houses, research, and cultural activism. In doing so, Mama Cash backed their struggle to be heard and recognised, and thrive in Dutch economic, political, social and cultural life. Its legacy of supporting anti-racist organising has grown over the years. Mama Cash has seeded transnational intersectional feminist networks and amplified the voices of thousands of Global South and/or racialised feminists by funding travel grants and conferences. Through these efforts, Mama Cash furthered the cause of Black, and racialised feminists as well as backing the struggle against systemic racism.



Economic Justice

Impact:

Mama Cash has distributed nearly **€21.5 million** in more than **1,100 grants** to organisations in **120 countries** that are advancing economic justice with a gender lens. Feminist activists have won labour protections and social security; reformed land, property, and inheritance rights; secured minimum wages; fought employment and housing discrimination against trans and intersex individuals, protested the gendered impact of trade policies, and influenced environmental and natural resource policies. Domestic workers, sex workers, home-based garment and maquila (factory) workers, and Indigenous leaders formed unions and self-led movements in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. They developed leadership, networks, and visibility in local, national, and international fora. Domestic workers negotiated two binding ILO conventions to protect their rights to dignified work (c189) and workplaces free from sexual violence and harassment (c190), now ratified by 36 and 39 countries respectively. Nearly one quarter of the grantee-partner organisations addressing economic justice have worked to counter gender-based violence and harassment, affecting opportunity, education, and safe transit.



€21.5 million

PROVIDED TO ORGANISATIONS ADVANCING
ECONOMIC JUSTICE OVER 40 YEARS

1,100 Grants

120 Countries



Ida LeBlanc points to a laminated newspaper ad that hangs in the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) office proclaiming: “Domestic workers are covered, too.”¹¹⁵ The ad refers to the inclusion of domestic workers under Trinidad and Tobago’s national insurance law. Globally, it points to the standards set in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 and Recommendation 201, ‘Decent Work for Domestic Workers,’ which Ida helped negotiate in 2011 as part of her country’s official trade union delegation to the ILO’s 100th Congress in Geneva.

*There she was joined by peers from fellow Mama Cash grantee-partner **ATRAHDOM** who were part of Guatemala’s delegation. Over three weeks, delegates negotiated the draft Convention 189 line by line – words that would affect the health, safety, and dignity of millions of workers. The employers group tried to shift important words out of the legally binding Convention text, to make it mere guidance in the Recommendation section. Resolute, Ida rose to speak in the Grand Plenary Hall and challenged the notion that domestic workers should be ‘on call’ 24 hours a day. Her argument prevailed – the Convention went on to include stand-by time as working time. It also entitles domestic workers to occupational safety, social security, minimum wage, maternity protections, health insurance, weekly rest, annual leave, and a pension.*

¹¹⁵ Milda LeBlanc, NUDE, VIVA Strategy interview. 12/01/24



The Convention 189 victory was enormous, with a final vote of 396 in favour, 16 against, and 63 abstentions. “Amid much clapping and cheering, there were many tears and hugs. Down on the floor of the Grand Plenary Hall, most of those in the country delegations – from all three parties – joined in the spontaneous applause,” recounted Celia Mather of the International Domestic Workers Federation. “Then they turned their heads upwards as a banner, smuggled in by domestic workers, was unfurled in the Observers Gallery high above. It read ‘C189 – Congratulations! Now comes the domestic work for governments: RATIFY – IMPLEMENT!’”¹¹⁶

Ida has said, “You have to make trouble to make history.”¹¹⁷ In doing so, she has helped change the lives of domestic workers far beyond her small island nation.

From the beginning, Mama Cash’s founders challenged “the world of money to also conquer a place in favour of women at a larger scale” – and with good reason.¹¹⁸ Globally, the gender wage gap remains dismal, as women earn 51 cents to every dollar paid to men.¹¹⁹ Governments are complicit, as only 51% of nations have pay equity laws, and merely 18% have enforcement mechanisms.¹²⁰ Nearly 100 countries lack comprehensive legislation prohibiting sexual harassment with criminal penalties or civil remedies for it.¹²¹ This points to the historical devaluation and exploitation of women, girls, and trans and intersex people, relegating them to informal and underpaid work to maximise profit for employers and capital. The lasting legacies of colonialism and enslaved labour were exacerbated by the harmful impact of structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s. Borrowing countries were forced to privatise industries, de-fund social services, and shift from food production to export crops for servicing debts. Women shouldered greater burdens of care, travelled further for depleted food and fuel resources, faced discrimination and exposure to harm, and were obliged to leave school sooner to work or care for children – the ‘feminisation’ of poverty.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Mather, C. (2013). “Yes, we did it!” *How the world’s domestic workers won their international rights and recognition*. Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), p. 67.

¹¹⁷ ESCR-Net. (n.d.). [“You have to make trouble to make history” – How domestic workers in Trinidad & Tobago are connecting parallel reporting to movement-building, advocacy and campaigning](#). Last accessed 12/02/24.

¹¹⁸ Mama Cash. (1990). 1987-1990 Annual Report, ‘Future’ section (Google-translated from Dutch).

¹¹⁹ International Labour Organization. (2023, March). *Spotlight on work statistics n°12: New data shine light on gender gaps in the labour market*. The wage gap between women and men drops to 33 and 29 cents in low and lower-middle-income countries, respectively, and reaches just 58 cents in high-income countries. The gap within each country depends not only on gender but also its intersections with race, sexual orientation, and trans identity.

¹²⁰ World Bank. (2024). *Women, Business, and the Law 2024*. Washington, DC: World Bank, xxvii and 31.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 70.

¹²² UN Women. (n.d.). [Poverty deepens for women and girls according to latest projections](#). Last accessed 29/03/24.

Mama Cash supported grantee-partners working to increase women’s, girls, trans and intersex people’s economic opportunities in the 1980s and 1990s, and since 2000, it has focused on supporting feminist organising and movements for economic justice and labour rights. In one example, between 2014 and 2016, **Women and Land in Zimbabwe (WLZ)** received support from Mama Cash to grow its movement for women’s land rights. In just one year, **WLZ** increased its members from 2,000 to 10,000.¹²³ Such growth is conducive to impact, as found by Weldon et al., that feminist mobilisation is positively associated with women’s greater access to landholding through the expansion of legal rights to property.¹²⁴ Indeed, rural women grew their influence because of **WLZ’s** vibrant activism and participation in public hearings on land and mining bills. And the movement continued growing – by 2024, **WLZ** had 30,000 members across 13 districts.¹²⁵

Supporting activists fighting immense wage disparities, legal discrimination, exploitation, and gendered notions of what is and isn’t considered valued work, Mama Cash has contributed to building and bolstering organisations and their movements with nearly €21.5 million in more than 1,100 grants across 120 countries. **Feminist grantee-partners have won women’s rights to land, property, and inheritances. They have collectively organised domestic workers and other women, trans and intersex labourers, and secured leadership positions in labour unions. They have successfully fought for social security benefits for sex workers and other informal workers, workplace safety and pay equity, environmental justice measures, protection from discrimination including for trans and intersex individuals, and criminalisation of sexual harassment in the workplace.** Increased economic globalisation is associated with fewer legal protections from sexual harassment – so it is little surprise that 23% of the grantee-partners of Mama Cash working in economic justice were also working to counter gender-based violence.¹²⁶ For example, in Mali, when the **Association pour la Defense des Droits des Aides Domestiques (Association for the Defense of Domestic Workers Rights, ADDAD)** organised peer educators and a drop-in centre for young domestic workers, the members began to make successful claims against perpetrators of sexual abuse, harassment, and unwanted pregnancy.¹²⁷ In this and other areas, domestic workers’ organising contributes to impact.

¹²³ Mama Cash. (2015). *Annual Report*, 8.

¹²⁴ Weldon et al., 2020.

¹²⁵ Womankind Worldwide. [Women and Land in Zimbabwe \(WLZ\)](#). Last accessed 30/03/24.

¹²⁶ DRichards & Haglund, 2015. Authors found an 8.7 percent decrease in the probability of adopting full sexual harassment legal protections in countries that increased trade globalisation.

¹²⁷ ADDAD. (2021 & 2022). Reporting to Mama Cash.



"Organisation: Association pour la Defense des Droits des Aides Domestiques,
Mali"



Domestic workers organising from the local to the regional and global

Globally, one in every 12 working women is a domestic worker, and nearly one in every five domestic workers is an international migrant.¹²⁸ In Latin America and the Caribbean, domestic workers make up almost 12% of all female workers, and they are disproportionately Indigenous and Black women.¹²⁹ In West Asia, 47% of employed women are domestic workers.¹³⁰ They are routinely undervalued for work historically associated with servitude, enslaved labour, and women's unpaid labour in the home. The work is invisible and takes place in non-formal work/living arrangements, unprotected by the ILO until Conventions 189 and 190 came along. Domestic workers have endured an explicit denial of rights guaranteed to other workers: normal weekly hours, weekly rest, paid annual leave, maternity leave, minimum wage, social security, and freedom from harassment.

Always "with the hope of influencing policies that will help as many women as possible,"¹³¹ Mama Cash has supported groups operating locally and with groups that connect regional and international movements. With nearly €3.6 million in grants (median €23,500), Mama Cash has supported domestic workers' organising in at least 30 countries. Ten of these countries have ratified ILO Convention 189, six have ratified ILO Convention 190 with more advocacy in progress on ratification and implementation. Though Mama Cash began increasing its grantmaking for domestic workers' rights in 2007, its support surged immediately following the ILO's adoption of Conventions 189 and 190 in 2011 and 2019, respectively. These ILO milestones sparked more organising, and Mama Cash was there and ready to seize the opportunity with more support for groups working nationally and regionally.

¹²⁸ Seiffarth, M., Bonnet, F., & Hobden, C. (2023). *The road to decent work for domestic workers*. Geneva: International Labour Office, p. 6.

¹²⁹ UN Women, International Labour Organization, & Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2020, June 12). *Domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19 crisis*.

¹³⁰ Bonnet, F., Carré, F., & Vanek, J. (2022, April). *Domestic workers in the world: A statistical profile* (Statistical Profile No. 32). WIEGO.

¹³¹ Mama Cash. (2004). *Annual Report*, p. 20.

Travel grants were another way for domestic workers to connect with regional and international organisations. Supported by Mama Cash, domestic workers travelled to pivotal conferences and built knowledge, relationships, strategy, and collaborations that brought about success. One grant supported two women workers from Mexico to participate in the first **Latin American 'Encuentro de Trabajadoras Domésticas'** in Colombia in 1988. This convening launched the Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (Confederation of Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, CONLACTRAHO), the first such regional confederation in the world, and the first to propose an ILO Convention for domestic work in 2004. In 2006, this confederation co-hosted the first-ever international conference of domestic workers in the Netherlands, along with the **Committee for Asian Women (CAW)**, and FNV, the Dutch confederation of trade unions. Mama Cash gave **CAW** a grant to support two Asian domestic workers to participate in this convening, which launched the formal campaign for the ILO convention for domestic workers. This conference was pivotal in the creation of a self-led global network, which in 2013 became **the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)**. Today, **IDWF** includes members from 88 domestic workers organisations and labour unions in 54 countries – with over 670,000 individual members. It is also the only women-led international labour union in the world. Mama Cash's early support helped make vital organising for workers' rights possible, affecting millions.



"Organisation: The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)"



Domestic worker organisations have tirelessly advocated for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 and 190, and also for the enactment of comprehensive national legislation and the enforcement of those laws. Demonstrating the scale of their gains, **since 2010, half of all 75 million domestic workers globally now have some legal protection under national laws.**¹³² In Trinidad and Tobago, even without ratification of ILO Convention 189, domestic workers now have access to a minimum wage, maternity leave, paid holiday leave, sick leave, overtime pay, and a pension, thanks to advocacy by **NUDE** and other labour unions. **NUDE** established a registry and a cooperative enabling domestic workers to obtain documentation they need for claims.¹³³ Unions can represent workers for noncompliance claims in Industrial Court, and in one six-month period, **NUDE** settled twenty matters for its members, securing backpay. **NUDE** also created an avenue for members to obtain a Caribbean Vocational Training Qualification, allowing them to move and work freely across the 17 countries of the region. They no longer need a work permit from employers, and they are still eligible for pension back home. Ida Le Blanc observed, “These are tremendous wins in an environment where the government refuses to ratify ILO Convention 189 and domestic workers have no protection against labour abuses, rights to collective bargaining or occupational safety.”¹³⁴

Making unions more responsive and inclusive

In many countries, feminist activists expanded the rights of women, girls, and trans and intersex workers and paved the way for their inclusion into communities. They gained collective bargaining and labour protections. In Guatemala, 44% of domestic workers are Indigenous women who have migrated from rural to urban areas.¹³⁵ In 2009, Mama Cash spent five years supporting **Asociación de Trabajadoras del Hogar, a Domicilio y de Maquila (Association of Domestic, Home-Based, and Factory Workers, ATRAHDOM)** to register as an organisation, and then to establish the first domestic workers union in Guatemala. This union operates independently from **ATRAHDOM** and is another Mama Cash grantee-partner today. Now 3,000 members strong, **ATRAHDOM** also created a union for women workers in maquilas (factories) and the first sex workers’ union in the country. After learning more about trans rights and priorities at a Mama Cash convening and the 2014 regional Encuentro Feminista in Colombia,

¹³² Seiffarth et al., 2023, p. 28.

¹³³ Ida LeBlanc, NUDE, VIVA Strategy interview, 12/1/24.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ OAS Inter-American Commission of Women. (2022). *Rights of remunerated domestic workers in the Americas: Progress and persistent gaps*, p. 25.

ATRAHDOM began promoting and defending the human rights of lesbian and transgender women workers in textile maquilas. In 2016, it published research on ‘The hidden faces in the maquila: situation of lesbians and trans in the maquila,’ and a manual on the rights of girls working in maquilas. **ATRAHDOM**’s annual Congress of Women Workers included activists from trans and intersex grantee-partners of Mama Cash, **Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad (OTD)** in Chile and Mulabi from Costa Rica.¹³⁶ By centring LBQ, trans, and intersex activism, Mama Cash has influenced inclusion in labour rights work.



When (ILO Convention 189) was finally adopted in the general assembly, I said in that moment: ‘We are not alone, together we are powerful’. The story is not over yet, and we continue to fight. I learned to defend myself to support other women in Guatemala and the Central American region. I’m a 47-year-old Guatemalan, former domestic worker, and now I am a defender of labour human rights, thanks to ATRAHDOM with the support of Mama Cash.

Susana Judith Vásquez

ATRAHDOM, Guatemala

¹³⁶ ATRAHDOM. (2012). Reporting to Mama Cash.



CONCLUSION

In every region and across interconnected issues, Mama Cash has supported feminist activists who have identified barriers to economic justice and then knocked them down. Workers and communities who experience compounding forms of discrimination related to race, ethnicity, and SOGIESC, have joined those restrained by the informal sector, including sex workers and domestic workers, to pursue systemic change. They have organised unions and collective advocacy to secure greater rights, justice, and safety, not simply greater opportunity, and their movements have grown from local to national, and from regional to global. This work and its reach have been highly intersectional, as personal as it is political, with new leaders developing and amplifying their voices while pursuing new laws, norms, and narratives that advance dignity and equal protection for all.



Disability Justice

Impact:

With Mama Cash support, feminist disability justice movements in every region have effectively addressed crucial advocacy and resource deficiencies overlooked by disability rights movements primarily focused on men, and by women's rights movements that ignored disability issues. Mama Cash grantee-partners have destigmatised disability while growing the skills, confidence, and political engagement of disabled women, girls, and trans and intersex people. Feminist disability justice activists have also influenced other movements including those addressing women's rights, disability¹³⁷ rights, reproductive justice, GBV, environmental justice – helping them become more intersectional. Mama Cash grantmaking in this area began in 1986 in the Netherlands before expanding internationally in 1994. Grants increased every decade and continued accelerating – **more than tripling in the last five years from €335,000 in 2019 to €1.1 million in 2023 for grants in 14 countries.** In total, Mama Cash has given **over €6.1 million** for disability justice through **more than 210 grants in 57 countries.** Grantee-partners have shaped legislation, health care delivery, norms around disability and sexuality, global accountability for feminist disability justice, and more.

¹³⁷ Mama Cash. (2001). *Annual Report*.

€6.1 million

PROVIDED TO FEMINIST DISABILITY JUSTICE MOVEMENTS OVER 40 YEARS

210 Grants

57 Countries



The new Persons with Disabilities Act, passed in Malawi in 2023, mandates that a Council must oversee its implementation – and it must include a person with a disability.¹³⁸ This is a triumph for the disability justice activists who have been advocating for a better law with more teeth than the 2012 Disability Act. But when the Council selects a man with a disability to fill that spot, Stella Nkhonya is quick to call a government representative to demand an affirmative action requirement, to also include a woman because she knows that the needs of women and girls with disabilities are rarely addressed unless they are in the room. The call in itself represents great progress. The fact that she can do this – make a call to government decision-makers, and that they will listen and consider her request for gender justice – is testament to how far the feminist disability justice movement in Malawi has come in just 15 years.

*When Stella founded **Malawi Human Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities (MHRWD)** in 2008, Malawi lacked disability rights and protections. The first two years were a struggle without funding, until **MHRWD** received a grant from Mama Cash. Without it, “I think our organisation would have [been] crushed,” Stella says. “Mama Cash believed in us, and Mama Cash made us grow.” It wasn’t just the funding – though that was critical – it was also the opportunity to develop herself as a leader and to develop her organisation’s strategy, policies, and systems. The funds, leadership development, and organisation-building across 11 grants from 2010 to 2021 contributed to where Stella sits today, serving on UN Women-Malawi’s Civil Society Advisory Group and selected by the Malawi government as the only woman with a disability on a team of 13 monitoring a World Bank project.*

¹³⁸ Stella Nkhonya, Interview, MHRWD, VIVA Strategy Interview. 22/01/24.



"Organisation: Malawi Human Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities (MHRWD)"



And the movement continues producing more leaders. Hundreds of women and girls are now politically active as MHRWD members, bringing intersectional gender and disability justice perspectives to movement organisations for women's rights, disability rights, and youth. Members participate at decision-making tables, serving on government committees shaping health care and GBV policies. Mama Cash's early and sustained support enabled MHRWD to do the work "to be visible ... and to be trusted," leading to its influence now at local, national, regional, and international levels.

Decades of disability rights¹³⁹ activism led to gains at the international level in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the watershed 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which applied a human rights framework to disability.¹⁴⁰ Since then, activists in countries around the world have leveraged CRPD to achieve national legislative and policy wins, including Malawi's Persons with Disabilities Act. Policy gains in Malawi and elsewhere have been significant but not sufficient, and laws are not always adequately implemented by states or adopted by society or other social justice movements. Feminist disability activists continue to challenge disablism in all spaces. Many of Mama Cash's disability justice grantee-partner organisations were founded by women with disabilities, like Stella Nkhonya in Malawi, who recognised that neither disability rights organisations nor women's rights groups adequately represented them. Disabled women and girls created organisations to operate at the intersection, advocating for the rights and priorities with and for their communities.

Mama Cash's funding for disability justice began in 1986 in the Netherlands and then expanded internationally in 1994. The momentum of dramatic increases escalated every decade, with funding more than tripling in the last five years – from nearly €340,000 in 2019 to €1.1 million in 2023 for grants (median €40,000) in 14 countries. In total, Mama Cash has given over €6.1 million for disability justice through more than 210 grants in 57 countries.

¹³⁹ The word "rights" is being used instead of "justice" here because it was the term used during the 1980s and 1990s, as referenced above.

¹⁴⁰ Sources include, for example: Sightsavers. (2023). [75 years of the UN and disability rights](#); Council of Canadians with Disabilities. (2011). *Timeline of major milestones in international disability policy: Moving from the charity model to the human rights paradigm*.



Disability justice for women, girls, trans, and intersex people often begins inward. It starts with untangling layers of internalised stigma and replacing them with an understanding of one’s intrinsic value, one’s own needs, desires, and ambitions, and awareness of structural barriers that need to be dismantled. **“Change comes from within. If you do not believe in yourself, no one will,” Stella said. “Change starts with us ... with the individual and her surroundings. From there, we collectively change society.”**¹⁴¹ These personal transformations have led to societal changes allowing more disabled women and girls to attend school, make their own decisions, participate in community life, and envision a different future.

Many of the individuals reached by grantee-partners have become activists themselves, helping make health care facilities accessible, ensuring disabled women and girls can receive appropriate sexual and reproductive health care, and enabling GBV survivors to pursue justice. This multiplier effect is how the ecosystem of activism grows – individuals begin taking action where they are, in their communities and within the institutions that are meant to serve them.

Individual, community, and movement transformation

MHRWD creates activists to seed the movement – providing girls and women with mentorship to find their voice. Stella recalls meeting a shy young disabled girl whose mother often hid her from public view.¹⁴² Young **MHRWD** members spoke with her mother, but she was not receptive to them. They persisted, bringing other girls with similar disabilities to meet the mother and show her the possibilities. After a year, the mother let her daughter join them. Now the girl is part of an educational theatre group that includes six girls with disabilities and others without. **MHRWD** embraced her, provided her with training and opportunities, and she spun this into a life of joy and purpose.

MHRWD’s visibility has built yet more bridges, expanding the movement. It produced a national radio show broadcasting information about the intersections of reproductive rights and disability. To achieve societal recognition of the rights of disabled women and girls, **MHRWD** also educated local chiefs and health care providers. As a result, disabled women and girls gained greater autonomy in personal choices – such as whom to marry – and they report better reproductive health care access. One village started offering prenatal classes for disabled women. Through **MHRWD** trainings, more than 1,000 members have gained literacy, knowledge about human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and a range of skills to recognise and practise their right to self-determination.

¹⁴¹ Mama Cash. (2022). *If you stay quiet, you stay invisible: Feminist disability rights activists share their stories of working for justice.*

¹⁴² Unless otherwise noted, source for section: Stella Nkhonya, MHRWD, VIVA Strategy Interview. 22/01/24.





MHRWD has also broadened the agendas of other social justice movements. It joined a consortium of organisations advocating against domestic violence where, and as the only member led by and for disabled women, it trained others on how to access justice for disabled women and girls. **MHRWD** is also a founding member of the regional **African Sexuality, Disability and Rights Coalition (ASDRC)**, which Mama Cash helped seed.¹⁴³ **ASDRC** fills a gap, securing space for women and girls and LGBTQI people within the disability justice movement in Africa. The rights of disabled people to control their own sexuality and reproductive lives are rarely addressed in reproductive justice and disability rights activism in Africa. Through organisations like **MHRWD**, disabled women begin to move from the margins to the centre of society, policies, and movements.

“ **People see us, people hear us now.** ”

MHRWD's Stella Nkhonya¹⁴⁴

Sustained effort for sustainable change

Along with seeding organisations that expanded and strengthened movements, Mama Cash also provided the sustained, flexible support needed for long-term advocacy gains. **Women With Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF)** in Bangladesh exemplifies how such support can contribute to cumulative gains. In 2010, Mama Cash gave **WDDF** its first grant, followed by seven more over the next decade.¹⁴⁵ Through relentless advocacy efforts led by **WDDF** and allied organisations, significant strides have been made in ensuring the inclusion and protection of women and girls with disabilities.

¹⁴⁴ Price, J. (2014, August). [African gathering starts up disability coalition](#). In *Plainspeak*. Last accessed 01/2024.

¹⁴⁴ Mama Cash. (2022). *If you stay quiet, you stay invisible: Feminist disability rights activists share their stories of working for justice*.

¹⁴⁵ Ashrafun 'Misti' Nahar of Women With Disabilities Foundation, Presentation at Mama Cash's CSW68 Parallel Event, "For love, for change, for justice: Impact Study Initial Results and Discussion," New York, NY, 15/3/24.



In 2010, their advocacy resulted in government regulations mandating accommodations under the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act. In 2013, WDDF helped achieve a government jobs quota as part of the Persons with Disabilities Act. In 2020, the National Building Act added accessibility provisions for public buildings and transit. Along the way, WDDF also contributed to the inclusion of women with disabilities in the anti-sexual harassment policy, Railway Act, and others.¹⁴⁶

These victories did not come right away. WDDF spent years being dismissed by government commissions, and its evidence and recommendations were repeatedly ignored – resulting in domestic violence legislation that did not accommodate the needs of women and girls with visual, speech, and hearing disabilities.¹⁴⁷ WDDF responded to these disappointments with perseverance – learning more about the legislative process, building relationships with officials, expanding its network, reaching more women and girls, gathering more evidence, and remaining vigilant. Mama Cash’s long-term, flexible support enabled WDDF to push through repeated setbacks and challenges, build the skills and relationships needed for policy wins, and guard against rollbacks of their achievements.

WDDF members also participate in global advocacy spaces. Co-founder Ashrafun ‘Misti’ Nahar spent a year attending national CEDAW monitoring meetings, spotlighting challenges for women and girls with disabilities, to inform the shadow report that would influence the UN CEDAW Committee’s recommendations to the Bangladesh government. When the report came out, with no mention of women with disabilities and Misti’s contributions, she confronted the authors: “All year long, I have been coming to these meetings and giving my input, but still you forgot me. You forgot disability issues, because you cannot recognise that there are women and girls in our society who are living with disabilities and who are being discriminated against.” This advocacy and persistence worked – since then, every Bangladesh CEDAW shadow report has included a section on women and girls with disabilities. WDDF’s sustained involvement helped bring visibility to the experiences of their community to a global monitoring body for human rights. WDDF has expanded its work with international organisations on climate change, and the Generation Equality Forum on women’s empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

¹⁴⁶ Source for paragraph, unless otherwise noted: Women with Disabilities Foundation report to Mama Cash.

¹⁴⁷ MSource for this paragraph and next: Mama Cash. (2022). *If you stay quiet, you stay invisible: Feminist disability rights activists share their stories of working for justice.*



CONCLUSION

Mama Cash supported disabled women and girls to destigmatise disability and prioritise their needs in households, in schools and communities, in social justice movements, and in national laws and international agreements. Grantee-partners created new activists by providing pathways for members to gain self-confidence, awareness of their rights, and advocacy skills.

Collectively, they challenged legal, bureaucratic, and accessibility barriers, along with stigma and ignorance. Disabled women have gained visibility and influenced international norms, laws, local practices, and movements for disability rights, women's rights, LBQ rights, climate justice, reproductive justice, and countering GBV. Mama Cash's support for nascent organisations contributed to the development of leaders at the local, national, regional, and international levels – disabled women and girls who claim space, make themselves heard, and create change.



Environmental Justice

Impact:

Mama Cash's impact in environmental justice began with support for women's, girls, and trans and intersex people's ownership, control, and use of land and natural resources, contesting state and corporate interests and cultural norms. Since its first environmental justice grants in 1991, Mama Cash has given nearly **€14.9 million** in over **330 grants** in at least **45 countries**, with a median grant of about €31,000. In 2016, Mama Cash joined the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), a ground-breaking consortium in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since it began, Mama Cash has given over €13.8 million in about 275 grants to groups in at least 39 countries, with a median grant of €38,000. Mama Cash has spearheaded efforts, demonstrating that women and girls, and LBQ, trans, intersex, Indigenous, and rural activists have climate solutions that work and that there can be no environmental justice without them.

€14.9 million

PROVIDED TO ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE MOVEMENTS OVER 40 YEARS

330 Grants

45 Countries





"Organisation: Green Girls Platform, Malawi"

*On a remote island in the Fiji archipelago, women and gender non-binary construction workers rebuilt a bridge that women and children once used to travel between home and school.¹⁴⁸ After it was destroyed by Cyclone Winston, it was not rebuilt for six years, leaving people to use a slippery, dangerous coconut tree trunk as an alternative. The construction workers were trained by **Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality**, a national collective of Pacific lesbian, bisexual, and gender non-conforming women and trans-masculine activists.*

*Based on their **DIVA for Equality** training, the builders saw the project as breaking critical social norms and taboos, while also offering a means to support women and girls from the village, who had been disproportionately disadvantaged by the cyclone and many other climate crises that have affected the region. As they reconstructed the bridge, the construction workers “negotiated safety and security within cultural settings that are not necessarily inclusive or youth friendly,” as **DIVA for Equality** notes.*

*The team of builders worked in coordination with the village administrator, a local Indigenous women-led group, and a local youth group to gain acceptance as experts in their work. After completing the bridge, just as the team was preparing to leave, another cyclone hit. Women from the community asked the builders to stay another week and give them a workshop about **DIVA** and the link between climate justice and gender justice. After the team left, the village replaced two more bridges with the remaining materials. “In the end, the project supported three bridges in a high-need, remote maritime village only accessible by boat, and helped to build further future gender justice work in the area.” Mama Cash’s support for intersectional groups is contributing to changing norms to move climate adaptation forward.*

¹⁴⁸ Source for section: DIVA for Equality. Report to Mama Cash.





"Organisation: Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva"

In 2015, following decades of activism, 196 nations adopted the Paris Agreement, an international treaty on climate change that marked a turning point for global climate and environmental justice movements. As feminist activists had demanded, the agreement recommended that parties pursue participatory, gender-responsive approaches to adaptation. It also acknowledged states' obligations to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and the human rights of Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations. The Paris Agreement came into effect in 2016, the same year that GAGGA launched – a strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by **Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM)** based in Nicaragua, in collaboration with Mama Cash and Both ENDS in the Netherlands. Mama Cash had been supporting **FCAM** since 2004, its second year in existence, and now they were collaborating to strengthen feminist environmental justice movements around the world.

“Mama Cash has played a pivotal role in empowering FCAM since its inception, providing general support funding,” said Claudia Samcam.¹⁴⁹ This early, flexible support had long-term impact, as evidenced by 20 years of growth. Launched in 2003 with a budget of USD \$15,000, **FCAM** gave its first grants in 2004 to five women's groups in Central America. Twenty years later, in 2023, **FCAM's** budget was USD \$11.6 million, and it supported 187 organisations and activists throughout Central America. The impact reaches beyond **FCAM's** grantee-partners, as **FCAM** also “actively participate[s] in joint initiatives with other women's funds and allied organisations around the world.” **FCAM's** leadership of the **GAGGA** consortium is one example of its global reach.

¹⁴⁹ Source for paragraph: Claudia Samcam, FCAM survey response, VIVA Strategy. 25/01/24.

The **GAGGA** consortium was ground-breaking because it was led by feminists in the Global South and because it bridged the silos separating funding for women’s rights and gender equality from climate finance. Through the **GAGGA** consortium, Mama Cash, **FCAM**, and Both ENDS have funded feminist and environmental justice funds and organisations in 39 countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific.¹⁵⁰ By supporting local movements, **GAGGA** amplifies the work of those with the most direct knowledge and experience in building resilience and addressing the root causes of the climate crisis.¹⁵¹ Through **GAGGA**, Mama Cash has supported at least 32 grantee-partners and nine women’s funds working at the nexus of women’s rights and environmental justice, including Indigenous women’s groups and LBQ, trans, and intersex groups.¹⁵² Of Mama Cash’s environmental justice grantmaking since 2016, 60% (€8.3 million) has gone to 14 women’s funds in the Global South, including eight working nationally and six regionally or internationally.

Women’s funds mobilising

In Mongolia, where herding families who rely on grazing pastures are extremely vulnerable to the rapidly changing climate, women are demanding changes in how decisions are made.¹⁵³ The **Mongolian Women’s Fund (MONES)** supports women’s rights and environmental justice. Mama Cash support through **GAGGA** since 2016 enabled **MONES** to more than triple its environmental justice grantmaking in a few years. **MONES’** grantee-partners work on issues related to gold mining, coal mining, water pollution and shortages, and other intersecting women’s rights and environmental justice issues. With a **MONES** grant, local women’s rights activists mitigated the effects of a coal mine expansion by educating women about their rights and enabling them to obtain compensation from the local administration for forced resettlement. In another case, local authorities halted a mining operation that was threatening water resources.

Activists have also mobilised women in mining-affected communities to hold companies accountable for the environmental damage they cause and the downstream health risks, such as in the gold mining region of Arkhangai province. Their work has resulted in the technical rehabilitation of 18 hectares and biological restoration of 18.2 hectares of mine land, with local women invited to join the Rehabilitation Review Committee. This example, among many others, shows how Mama Cash’s support to women’s funds through **GAGGA** reaches the women who are most directly affected by environmental injustice and have the least financial resources, information, and political leverage to challenge it.

¹⁵⁰ FCAM survey response, VIVA Strategy, 25/01/24; FCAM, VIVA Strategy correspondence, March 2024.

¹⁵¹ Mama Cash. *The climate crisis: Women’s funds in GAGGA* (Brief No. 4).

¹⁵² Mama Cash. (2022). *Annual Report*, p. 32.

¹⁵³ Source for section: MONES. Report to Mama Cash.

Frontline intersections and action

While recent international climate agreements acknowledge the needs of women and Indigenous peoples, they do not address the needs of lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people. Mama Cash, however, has been supporting organisations that challenge discrimination against these groups while advancing climate actions that address the rapidly rising loss and damage. **DIVA for Equality** in Fiji shines a light on the populations most at risk on the frontlines of climate change, as the Pacific region faces cyclones, floods, droughts, coastal erosion, ecosystem destruction, and loss of food, water, and sanitation resources, and more.

LBQTI people, especially youth, often face social exclusion and displacement, leaving them with less access to the information and resources needed to prepare for and respond to the consequences of climate change.¹⁵⁴ During climate disasters, emergency facilities may not be safe for them, and they are less likely to have the resources that enable resilience afterward.¹⁵⁵ **DIVA for Equality** has been preparing and supporting communities for LGBTQI+ inclusive and just adaptation processes, while holding decision-makers accountable. **“DIVA members are building confidence in themselves to learn, share information, negotiate and influence decisions in communities and village settings and in trying to access state and non-state services.”**¹⁵⁶ This includes taking the lead in distributing aid, securing help for SGBV survivors, promoting seed sovereignty,¹⁵⁷ running clean-up campaigns, and demanding system changes.

DIVA co-founder Noelene Nabulivou says that “Pacific society will not change until there is a large grassroots movement pushing power structures to change.”¹⁵⁸ This is challenging work in a frontline region of small islands constituting 22 states and territories spread across a quarter of the Earth’s surface. With deep networks across Fiji and the Pacific region, **DIVA** has nurtured groups of activists that now organise independently, responding to climate change impacts while also creating community and more liberation, ecological balance, justice, and safety for women, girls, and LBQTI+ people.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Hutchinson, M. (2020, December 18). [Facing intersecting crises: LGBTQI+ resilience in Fiji](#). *Open Global Rights*. Last accessed 28/01/2024.

¹⁵⁵ DIVA for Equality. [Our Herstory](#). Last accessed 29/03/24.

¹⁵⁶ DIVA for Equality. Report to Mama Cash

¹⁵⁷ Seed sovereignty is the right to breed, use, sell, and exchange seeds that are not patented, modified, owned, or controlled by private corporations. It contributes to protecting food security and biodiversity.

¹⁵⁸ DIVA for Equality. [Pacific Community](#). Last accessed 29/03/24.

¹⁵⁹ DIVA for Equality. (2018, October 8). *Talanoa reports: Women of Taveuni Island march for gender, ecological and climate justice*.



Local to global influence

Mama Cash has supported groups making a difference at the local level to expand their influence nationally, and then take their expertise to the global level. In Malawi, **Green Girls Platform** is led by girls and young women who are mobilising their peers and communities. They aim to reshape the future for themselves and their families, as frequent floods and drought threaten food security and livelihoods.¹⁶⁰ Since 2020, Mama Cash funds have supported the group to expand its reach from 150 to 10,000 girls and young women.¹⁶¹ National advocacy campaigns led to new international influence for the group, whose members are placing the priorities of girls and young women at the centre of climate justice discourse. For example, the Malawi government invited five **Green Girls Platform** representatives to join its delegation to COP27 in 2022. “The government asked us to be the bridge between the voices of girls and young women and the Malawi government on climate justice. This has led to more opportunities in decision-making spaces opening up and more girls and young women representing Malawi globally on climate change issues.”¹⁶²

Also taking the local to the global, **DIVA for Equality** has contributed to UNFCCC preparatory meetings and COP since 2015, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). Noelene is co-leader of Generation Equality Action Coalition’s Feminist Action for Climate Justice (GEF-FACJ). “Having a south based feminist LBTQ+ led group like **DIVA** in a climate frontline State co-lead GEF-FACJ is ... a strong, direct influence,” she says.¹⁶³ Mama Cash contributed to ensuring that women, girls, LBQ, and trans and intersex people working for environmental justice can take the lead at every level.

¹⁶⁰ [Green Girls Platform](#). Last accessed 29/03/24.

¹⁶¹ Green Girls Platform. (2024, March). *VIVA Strategy Communications*.

¹⁶² Green Girls Platform. Report to Mama Cash.

¹⁶³ DIVA for Equality. Report to Mama Cash.

CONCLUSION

Mama Cash's environmental justice funding has reached even the hard-to-reach, by supporting activists that mobilise their communities, build movements, influence decision-makers, and advance climate change action. Most importantly, the resources are reaching those who are most affected and have the least resources to plan, respond, recover and adapt, namely women, girls, LBQ and trans and intersex people, rural and Indigenous communities. It also includes those living in the shadow of extractive industries or on the frontlines of climate change. Activists are influencing their peers and local communities, local and national governments, and international agreements. With Mama Cash's resources, they show that change is possible, and they demonstrate that intersectional approaches work.



Relationships with Money

Impact:

Through creative programmes such as loan guarantees, building peer networks to educate women with inherited wealth, and nurturing a culture of individual feminist giving in the Netherlands, Mama Cash has reshaped practices and perspectives on power, equality, and mobilisation of resources. By **advancing €1.2 million in loan guarantees to launch 140 women-led businesses**, Mama Cash influenced the Dutch banking sector in the 1980s and 1990s to see women entrepreneurs as viable investments. And through the De Erfdochters network, Mama Cash strengthened the skills and resources of hundreds of Dutch women with inherited wealth to assume power and decision-making over their money in order to move funds towards feminist causes. The effects of this change are still felt to this day.



Money was power, and power was scary. Mama Cash started by saying ... we still have to deal with it. There was to be control over power, accountability.

Marjan Sax,

Mama Cash co-founder¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.



Mama Cash was born in 1983 with a radical feminist political analysis of capitalism. It saw fundraising and individual giving as a form of economic justice in the neoliberal era, and a corrective to the ever-growing inequalities of wealth and power that were most felt by Black, Indigenous and racialised women. Many feminists during this time who were anti-state, anti-capitalist, and critics of postcolonial power, were suspicious of the corrupting influence of wealth. Those with wealth often described conflicted feelings about it – guilt or shame, discomfort about how money was earned, and even rejection of funds linked to a patriarchal family structure. For years, co-founder Marjan Sax – herself an anti-apartheid and anti-colonial lesbian activist – hid the fact that her inherited wealth had funded Mama Cash’s creation. But unlike other wealthy Dutch women who donated their money towards charity, Marjan focused on activism, change, and shifting economic and political power.

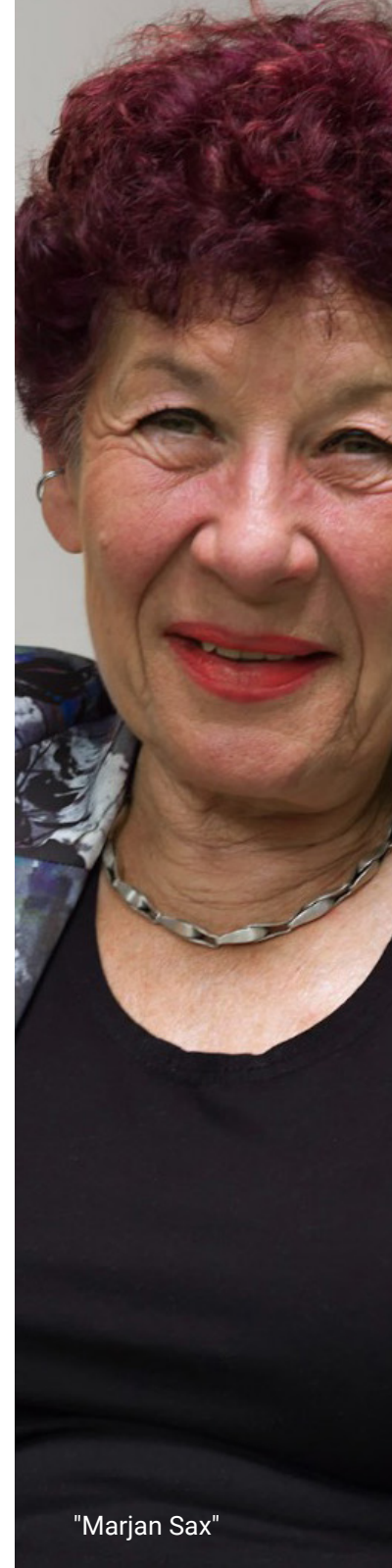
From the start, Mama Cash’s founders wanted to strengthen women’s financial expertise and power and infuse women’s movements with financial strategy and business acumen.¹⁶⁵ Mama Cash focused on the financial independence of women leading bold and innovative projects to further their own causes and support the emergence of a feminist culture. Through loan guarantees, political education of wealthy women, and nurturing a culture of individual giving, Mama Cash contributed to reshaping practices and perspectives on the power of money and the mobilisation of resources.

Strengthening a culture of Dutch feminist individual giving

Mama Cash’s efforts to politicise how women understood the power of inherited wealth and to build a culture of individual giving to feminist causes came from a very personal space. “When I inherited, it took a long time to realise that I could do something with that money,” Marjan recalled. “There were no examples for how you could use your money, rather than making it grow and becoming a capitalist asset. There was no one in the financial world who could advise me with a shared belief and ideology. I felt ashamed, unhappy, it made me feel different. I was part of the Left movement where capitalists are not welcome. I hadn’t prepared for that.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Mama Cash. (1986). *Forward*. In *1986 Annual Report* (Google translated from Dutch).

¹⁶⁶ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.



"Marjan Sax"



Marjan reckoned with those tensions and, with her Mama Cash co-founders, created vehicles for grants and loans to further feminists' access to financial resources, decision-making spaces, and the accompanying power. She used this experience to bring along her peers, and to increase resources dedicated for feminist and radical causes. In 1985, Marjan co-founded the **De Erfdochters (Women with Inherited Wealth) network** within Mama Cash, to support women to take back responsibility for their own resources from husbands, brothers, and financial advisors. Through over a dozen discussion circles, this network engaged hundreds of women with inherited wealth (inheritances of more than 100,000 guilders or €45,000) to develop their confidence, financial acumen and strategy. This enabled these women to move millions to align with their feminist values. "Mama Cash made feminist philanthropy sexy," said Nancy Jouwe, Mama Cash board co-chair. "They taught women with inherited wealth not to feel ashamed about it but ... to have a feminist vision and connect it to moving money smartly."¹⁶⁷

Mama Cash's work "was on the frontline of investing in women's rights. Money was used as a means for change," recounted **De Erfdochters** co-founder Marjo Meijers, a Dutch feminist and lesbian activist.¹⁶⁸ Participants' contributions have been significant. For example, the largest **De Erfdochters** individual donor gave €6 million to Mama Cash – this launched the Fund for Central and Eastern Europe, sponsored feminist cultural production, and ensured Mama Cash's sustainability during a post-September 11, 2001, financial shortfall.¹⁶⁹ Many participants also created donor-advised funds, enabling them to use Mama Cash's infrastructure while supporting feminist issues of personal interest.

The women supported each other to face their fears, aspirations, and challenges, and learn about financial planning and management, inheritance law, taxes, investing, and donations. These lessons and actions have passed down through generations as participants now impart this knowledge to their daughters and granddaughters. Inheritance law was particularly pertinent for Mama Cash's supporters who were often living outside of a heteronormative context – lesbians and bisexuals, single women, single mothers. If they didn't have wills, their assets might go to biological relatives who had not embraced them, rather than to the chosen family who had. These trainings emboldened them to be thoughtful about how they could use their assets to fight against patriarchy and structural oppression.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Nancy Jouwe, VIVA Strategy Interview. 21/11/23

¹⁶⁸ [Mama Cash History](#).

¹⁶⁹ Johanna is one of the women who inherited her wealth. [Mama Cash History](#).

¹⁷⁰ Mama Cash. (1986). *Annual Report* (Google translated from Dutch)



The courses were like a revelation to me. Money is often a taboo issue, but there is a lot to learn from each other, if you are open about your finances. It was very rewarding to exchange views with other women on what money means to you and how you handle it. I feel really empowered in dealing with financial issues.

Linda Kamerman,

Participant in Mama Cash's financial courses in 2010.¹⁷¹

Mama Cash's interest in transforming relationships with money also meant nurturing a culture of individual giving in the Netherlands. "Mama Cash sees philanthropy as a form of political activism and a strategy for securing social justice" facilitated through not just programmatic work but also through inspiring and politicising individual donors, as it noted in the 2014 Annual Report.¹⁷² Spurred by the seminal 2005 AWID research "Where is the Money for Women's Rights" that illustrated the severe underfunding of women's rights,¹⁷³ Mama Cash stepped up its individual fundraising efforts. Since 2008, Mama Cash formally engaged individual donors through support groups, financial and philanthropic literacy courses and thematically focused donor circles called MC2, as well as a legacy programme.¹⁷⁴

Mama Cash has drawn in supporters in creative and playful ways. In 2002, the then-Executive Director Ellen Sprenger participated in the popular Dutch TV reality show "Wie is de Mol?" (Who is... the Mole?), taking back the earnings to Mama Cash.¹⁷⁵ Inspired by the **HER Fund** in Hong Kong, Mama Cash started organising 88 Days Campaigns in 2005 (running from International Human Rights Day to International Women's Day), hosted bathtub races in the canals of Amsterdam in 2007 and 2008, and sponsored art and culture festivals to celebrate creative expression and engage new constituencies.

¹⁷¹ Mama Cash. (2010). *Annual Report*.

¹⁷² Mama Cash. (2014). *Annual Report*, p.16.

¹⁷³ Association for Women's Rights in Development. (2005). *Where is the money for women's rights?* AWID.

¹⁷⁴ McIntyre, N. (2017). *Reflections on ten years of funding feminist activism*. Mama Cash, p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ Mama Cash. (2002). *Annual Report*, p.13.



Mama Cash campaign
"My Body is Mine"



Between 2016-2019, Mama Cash carried out the successful annual “My Body Is Mine” campaign to promote bodily autonomy and pleasure, and protest gender-based violence. As part of this, it gave away vibrators to new individual donors, raising over €80,000.¹⁷⁶ Between 2016 and 2020, Mama Cash hosted an annual International Women’s Day feminist festival drawing sold-out crowds, engaging new audiences in the Netherlands, and celebrating the activism of its women, girls, and trans and intersex grantee-partners. “Through dance, music, performance art and graffiti they allowed us to imagine a different world: a world that is more just, joyous and colourful.”¹⁷⁷ Passionate and dedicated feminists came up with their own fundraising campaigns – ranging from birthday, anniversary and retirement donations, ping pong tournaments, art and literary auctions, sponsored walks, runs and spinning marathons, “Carbage races” for rundown cars, a wine auction, a biking tour, and a telethon for environmental justice.¹⁷⁸ Even religious groups were inspired to give – in 2010, the Provincial Franciscan Sisters of Heythuysen gave that year’s largest one-time donation of €100,000.¹⁷⁹

Transforming the banking sector

Alongside influencing individual behaviour, Mama Cash also understood the urgent need for systemic change within institutions. In the 1980s and 1990s, Mama Cash used its financial resources and status to transform the practices, policies, and norms of the Dutch banking sector and contributed to launching a generation of women entrepreneurs:

¹⁷⁶ Mama Cash. (2016). *Annual Report*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ Mama Cash. (2014). *Annual Report*, p.5.

¹⁷⁸ Mama Cash, 2002, p. 13; Mama Cash, 2008, p. 58; Mama Cash, 2013, pp. 45, 47; Mama Cash, 2014, p. 17; Mama Cash, 2019, p.19

¹⁷⁹ Mama Cash. (2010). *Annual Report*, p. 70.

“THE VERY ACT OF BRINGING TOGETHER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND BANKS IN THE 1980s AND 90s WAS RADICAL AND WAS AN IMPORTANT CATALYST IN CHANGING BANK PRACTICES AND CHANGING THE LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TO APPROACH BANKS FOR LOANS.”¹⁸⁰

In the 1980s, Dutch banks didn't view women, especially Black women, migrants, and refugees, as worthwhile investments. Women often didn't own property or have capital for collateral, and many wanted small start-up loans that weren't profitable for banks. Mama Cash realised that it could use its own institutional legitimacy as a source of financial inclusion for greater numbers of women. “You can have more guarantees than you have money,” co-founder Marjan noted.¹⁸¹

In 1985, Mama Cash started offering loan guarantees to women with robust business plans, sharing risks to change oppressive systems and structures.¹⁸² In its first decade, it spent almost as much on guarantees as it did on grants and saw the impact grow.¹⁸³ In 1985, only 16% of all entrepreneurs in the Netherlands were women, but within a decade, the percentage had grown to 23.5%.¹⁸⁴ Mama Cash supported non-traditional businesses including feminist publishers, women's bars, organic agriculture businesses, garage mechanics, a sailboat charter service, a carpentry collective, and women-friendly lingerie and sex shops. And these businesses did well. In 1993, the Dutch average for successful businesses was 75%, whereas 82% of the women supported by Mama Cash guarantees since the 1980s were successful.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ [Mama Cash History](#).

¹⁸¹ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.

¹⁸² [Mama Cash History](#).

¹⁸³ Mama Cash. (1990). *Annual Report*.

¹⁸⁴ Mama Cash. (1996). *Annual Report*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁵ Mama Cash. (1995). *Annual Report*, p. 45.

Mama Cash support to women entrepreneurs: Marcha Van Glaanen Weijgel

Marcha van Glaanen Weijgel, a Surinamese-Dutch woman, was one of those entrepreneurs. Seeing a gap in the Dutch fitness industry, where women often felt uncomfortable in the male environment of gyms, she believed she could better serve clients and their fitness needs.¹⁸⁶ But even with a sports management diploma, personal savings, entrepreneurship experience, and a robust business plan, banks refused to loan her the required 108,000 guilders (€48,600) to open her fitness studio. Then, Marcha saw a newspaper ad. “I saw (Mama Cash) would give a guarantee for 50,000 guilders (€24,000), which was comforting that they wanted to take the risk to support me as a woman.” In 1997, with Mama Cash’s guarantee, she opened Marcha’s Fitness Studio in Amsterdam, and was recognised as Mama Cash’s Entrepreneur of the Year the next year. Soon the fitness studio was on a path to growth, enabling her to pay back her five-year loan in just three and a half years. While she welcomed all genders, women appreciated having a woman trainer and felt more supported in her environment.

Mama Cash was the first institution to recognise and invest in Marcha’s business potential, while simultaneously changing how financial systems and banks treated women entrepreneurs. The Guarantee Fund fought sexist perceptions that “women didn’t know how to handle money, and women are too modest and too careful and don’t have entrepreneurial attitude,” as Marjan put it.¹⁸⁷ Marcha’s story demonstrates how women embody the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs – resilience, grit, smart risk-taking and financial acuity – and the importance of early investment in women breaking gender taboos.

¹⁸⁶ Marcha van Glaanen Weijgel, VIVA Strategy Interview. 19/01/24.

¹⁸⁷ Marjan Sax, VIVA Strategy Interview. 30/11/23.

"Mama Cash 40th Anniversary Event"



By the mid-1990s, Mama Cash's programme was shining national attention on women's entrepreneurship. Chambers of Commerce and government ministries responsible for social welfare, employment, and economic affairs began launching programmes for women entrepreneurs. But banks were still lending mostly to white women. In response, from 1995 onward, Mama Cash gave more than half its guarantees for Black, refugee, and migrant women.¹⁸⁸ In 1999 it brokered a pioneering new programme with Rabobank, splitting the risks of the loan guarantees, specifically for business owners who were women of colour or migrants. By 2002, the impact was clear. One-third of entrepreneurs running small to medium businesses in the Netherlands were women. The Guarantee Fund had guaranteed €1.2 million in loans to 140 women-led businesses, the vast majority of whom had started successful businesses. "The achievement of our goal – to stimulate female entrepreneurship through broadening their access to money – is now in sight," Mama Cash noted proudly in 2002, as it announced the winding down of the Guarantee Fund.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ "Black, migrant and refugee women" was a political and racial justice framing that originated from feminists of colour in the Netherlands in the 1970s and was used by Dutch progressive activists until the late 2010s, including by Mama Cash, to denote the political agenda of anti-colonial feminist activism and highlight the intersections of racial and gender justice.

¹⁸⁹ Mama Cash. (2002). *Annual Report*, p. 25.



CONCLUSION

From the start, Mama Cash challenged and changed norms around women's relationships with money, creating new ways to build and share the power of resources toward transformation. It drew on its own founding story to transform how a generation of women with inherited wealth understood the political and feminist potential of their money and nourished a culture of individual giving and engagement among feminists who sought to contribute through smaller, but nevertheless precious, donations in the Netherlands. Mama Cash also demonstrated through its loan guarantees how women embody the characteristics of successful entrepreneurship, including financial risk-taking, and shifted how Dutch banks understood the potential of women entrepreneurs. Having accomplished its mission with the Guarantee Fund by 2003, Mama Cash wound it down and turned its attention to shifting who controls philanthropy's purse-strings – by seeding and strengthening women's and feminist funds around the world and influencing governments and other large donors to give more and better money to feminist movements.



Strengthening Feminist

Funding Architectures

Impact:

Mama Cash led and participated in collective efforts to unlock new resources for women's rights and gender justice. It has used its voice as a feminist funder to influence and partner with a range of donors, including private and public foundations and governments, **catalysing at least €250 million towards more flexible and longer-term funding directly to feminist movements.** In partnership with feminist allies, Mama Cash has also expanded the global feminist funding architecture by seeding and supporting an ecosystem of national and regional women's and feminist funds around the world. This work has not only shifted the focus of decision-making around resources, but also brought women's and feminist funds into the corridors of power within philanthropy, bilateral and multilateral spaces.



Money is a resource which is a right ... which has been abused. This is a right which has been denied and kept away from our communities for a very long time.

Anisha Chugh,
Women's Fund Asia¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Anisha Chugh, WFA, VIVA Strategy Interview. 09/02/24.

In its first 13 years between 2004-2017, the *South Asian Women's Fund* disbursed USD \$3 million to 200 initiatives in five South Asian countries. Now renamed the *Women's Fund Asia (WFA)*, it moves almost USD \$7 million in grants each year to grassroots feminist self-led groups in 18 countries in South, East, and Southeast Asia. It is now "a foundational stone to feminist resource architecture not only in the region but across the world, particularly in the Global South," according to former executive director Tulika Srivastava.¹⁹¹ This remarkable growth has come largely through *WFA's* strategic vision and its leadership and participation in the Dutch-funded €40 million *Leading from the South (LFS)* initiative, along with its sister funds *African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)*, *Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS)*, and *International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI)*. Mama Cash used its home advantage and partnered with feminist allies to lobby the Dutch government to create the *LFS* and shift funding priorities towards more feminist, women-led and Global South-led grassroots groups. To facilitate *LFS'* success, Mama Cash supported the sister funds to strengthen their internal skills, knowledge, and grantmaking processes to handle greater volume, and it supported the *LFS Consortium* in securing additional funding to cover administration costs.

In recognition of *LFS'* impact, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) doubled the investment to €80 million when it renewed in 2021. The *LFS* initiative set "an important international precedent in recognising the expertise and leadership of these women's funds and their capacity to manage significant bilateral funding."¹⁹²

For decades, the evidence has been undeniable – women's rights organisations and movements are the drivers of long-term, transformative social change, and financial resources are the necessary fuel. Mama Cash's collective approach to strengthening feminist funding architectures has influenced private foundations and governments to give more money in better ways, and it has expanded the ecosystem of national and regional women's funds worldwide. This feminist resource mobilisation work has gained increasing urgency, as the world faces a growing and well-funded political backlash, as well as anti-gender waves seeking to undermine and reverse political and social progress on gender equity and women's rights.¹⁹³ Mama Cash's efforts, along with its feminist allies, have elevated gender justice in international development agendas, increased feminist resources, shifted decision-making power, and made more visible the rights and priorities of sex workers, trans and intersex people, and other groups structurally pushed to the margins.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ [Message from WFA's Outgoing Director, Tulika Srivastava.](#)

¹⁹² zohra moosa, *In Movement Together*, Mama Cash, 2022, p. 6.

¹⁹³ Global Philanthropy Project. (2024, February). [Philanthropy responding to anti-gender ideology.](#) Last accessed 23/4/24.

¹⁹⁴ Mama Cash. (2014). *End Term Review* 2014.



Since 1983, Mama Cash has spent more than one-fourth of its direct grantmaking – €24 million of €91 million – to seed and strengthen 62 women’s and feminist funds¹⁹⁸ in 42 countries through long-term core and flexible grants, and extensive accompaniment. This approach has had an enormous multiplier effect. From just a handful of women’s funds in the 1990s, today there are many women’s funds and feminist funds globally. Around 50 of these autonomous women’s funds are in Prospera, which unites women’s funds under one network.¹⁹⁹ At least 30 of their members are based in the Global South; a significant shift in decision-making power over resources. Mama Cash itself has moved to a participatory model in which funding priorities are determined by grant-seekers, and members of grassroots movements in its advisory network decide on its multi-million euro grantmaking. In recognition of their deep impacts throughout the globe, MacKenzie Scott awarded Mama Cash and Prospera along with 16 other women’s funds USD \$170 million in unrestricted grants between 2020 and 2022.”²⁰⁰



We support Mama Cash because we know Mama Cash is strategic, has deep knowledge, and has networks to reach groups that otherwise have a hard time accessing funding. But beyond being a funder, Mama Cash embraces a role in influencing the philanthropic sector to increase its funding for women’s rights. We think that’s a powerful combination!

Rini Banerjee,

Then-Executive Director, Foundation for A Just Society²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ This number includes some Mama Cash grantee-partners that have wound down over the decades.

¹⁹⁹ [Prospera](#).

²⁰⁰ Alliance Magazine. [The impact of MacKenzie Scott's resourcing of women's funds](#). Last accessed 19/09/23.

²⁰¹ Mama Cash. (2013). *Annual Report*, p. 44.



Influencing donors and widening the circle

Since its founding, Mama Cash viewed its purpose not just to directly fund feminist organisations and movements but also to persuade others to do so. Prioritising the untapped potential of philanthropy, Mama Cash has influenced donor agendas and funding discourses by commissioning landmark research and using its convening power and its own political capital to draw in donors.

Research, documentation, mapping, and counting are political acts as they shape the agenda for what gets spotlighted. To encourage more giving, Mama Cash supported efforts to map and make visible the experiences of feminist activists and the paucity of funding flows towards women's rights.

In 2005, feminist ally AWID published the first of its ground-breaking series *Where is The Money for Women's Rights?* showing that a mere 3.6% of official development aid (ODA) went towards women's equality.²⁰² In 2011, Mama Cash published results of the first effort to map European philanthropic giving for women's rights, finding that less than 5% of European philanthropic giving was earmarked for women and girls.²⁰³ In partnership with Hivos through the Riek Stienstra Fund, Mama Cash funded participatory research about the complex lived experiences of lesbian, bisexual, and trans people in Africa and South Asia, and used it to fundraise and triple its own grantmaking for LBT rights globally between 2008-2011.²⁰⁴ Mama Cash also engaged creatively to bring along new allies. Through co-hosting a series of convenings between 2013 and 2015 with AWID and the Dutch MFA, Mama Cash helped support the creation of the Win-Win global coalition of private sector and feminist movements – a milestone in fostering cross-sector partnerships between corporate actors and women's rights organisations.²⁰⁵

Having set the groundwork for influencing philanthropy, Mama Cash launched its "Influencing the Donor Community" (IDC) strategy in 2015, seeing the potential value and catalytic effect that could be achieved by targeting and influencing the billions of euros moving through bilateral and multilateral funding. After feminist activists succeeded in making gender equality part of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, ODA agencies committed unprecedented funds towards women's rights. A range of national and bilateral commitments from Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Sweden, the UK and Ireland have prioritised gender equality and funding grassroots gender justice organisations in the Global South.

²⁰² Clark, C., Sprenger, E., & VeneKlasen, L. (2005). *AWID*.

²⁰³ [Mama Cash History](#). Last accessed 22/04/24.

²⁰⁴ Mama Cash. (2011). *Annual Report*, p 76-77.

²⁰⁵ [Mama Cash History](#). Last accessed 12/02/24.

Mama Cash’s greatest impact on bilateral funding came through decades of engagement with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that its ODA funds reached grassroots and feminist groups worldwide. Since 2008, Mama Cash has conducted advocacy and partnered with the MFA to develop ambitious programmes for women’s rights and gender equality, from the MDG3 Fund in 2008 to the SDG5 Fund in 2021 (includes **Power of Women Fund** and the **LFS**). Each new programme has built on and incorporated lessons learned from previous iterations.²⁰⁷ To share this knowledge, Mama Cash and AWID published the seminal report “Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change” in 2020, articulating the building blocks of funding practice that multilateral and bilateral funders can use to reach feminist movements. Several government funders acknowledged the utility of this tool.²⁰⁸

Women’s funds’ efforts to influence the global flow of ODA have resulted in shifting control of resources to Global South feminist movements. Anisha Chugh, Executive Director of **WFA**, credits Mama Cash with modelling feminist power sharing in this regard. “One of the things we learned from Mama Cash is engagement with our sister funds. Strengthening the feminist aid architecture is a strong mandate for us. We can’t address it if we don’t support and collaborate with other sister funders, especially national funds,” she said.²⁰⁹ **WFA** and its sister funds pushed the Dutch government to allow regranting through the **LFS**, thus permitting the four implementing regional funds to support national women’s funds across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to then regrant to grassroots groups.²¹⁰

The **LFS** paved the way for other unprecedented collaborations, including the CAD \$300M Equality Fund in 2018²¹¹ and the AUD \$10M Amplify-Invest-Reach (AIR) partnership between the Australian government and four Asia Pacific women’s funds in 2022.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Mama Cash. (2020). *Moving more money to the drivers of change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements*, p. 37.

²⁰⁸ Mama Cash. (2020). *Annual Report*, p. 28.

²⁰⁹ Anisha Chugh, WFA, VIVA Strategy Interview. 09/02/24.

²¹⁰ Hof, P. D. (2024, March 13). Presentation at CSW68 Parallel Event “Feminist Financing Practices: Funding Movements to Make Change.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New York, NY.

²¹¹ zohra moosa, *In Movement Together*, Mama Cash, 2022, p. 6.

²¹² Anisha Chugh, WFA, VIVA Strategy Interview. 09/02/24.



CONCLUSION

Mama Cash has shifted power structures in philanthropy and strengthened feminist funding architectures by partnering with a range of stakeholders, including governments, feminist funds, and feminist allies. Through commissioning landmark research, deploying creative tactics to engage new allies, sharing its expertise in feminist funding, and using its convening power and political capital, Mama Cash has increased the quantity and quality of resources available for women's funds and feminist organisations globally. Women's funds now have seats and microphones in multilateral and multi-stakeholder funding spaces and are shifting the levers of power in philanthropy. Over the past 40 years, Mama Cash and its feminist allies have worked together to realise their vision of vibrant, joyful, fierce, gender justice movements around the globe. They imagined a new funding architecture to support feminist movements, and then they began to create it. Their impact is visible in the new resources and institutions supporting feminist movements, and in the growing strength of those movements.

CHAPTER 4 **CONCLUSION**

**“
*Feminism
costs
money*”**

*Mama Cash's first annual
report, 1983-1986*



KEY FORMS OF SUPPORT HAD COMPOUNDING EFFECTS.

FOR INSTANCE:

- **Start-up and early-stage funding catalysed the rise of new leaders and enduring movements.**
- **Support for travel and convenings strengthened leaders, community solidarity, transnational strategies and networks, and shaped global feminist agendas.**
- **Funding organisations working at the intersections of multiple issues expanded movements and fostered healthier, stronger movement ecosystems – such as when feminist disability justice organisations influenced both disability rights movements and women’s rights movement to address the needs of disabled women and girls. Sex workers pushed for a more inclusive understanding of feminist bodily autonomy that supported their right to choose work.**
- **Support for self-led organisations shifted movements’ centre of gravity. While many climate change initiatives tend to prioritise organisations based in the Global North and led by men, Mama Cash’s support for climate justice organisations led by women, girls, and LBQ, trans, and intersex people in the Global South contributed to centring feminist priorities.**
- **Core, flexible and long-term support created the space for building trust and partnerships across movements. It also allowed grantee-partners to grow their strengths and to plan, adapt, lead, and reach their key milestones and goals.**

Beyond these forms of support, Mama Cash’s focused, long-term advocacy in donor spaces and its work to expand grantee-partners’ access to donor spaces had multiplier effects, creating more funding sources for feminist organising. Mama Cash actively confronted and reshaped entrenched hierarchies of power, value, and ownership associated with financial resources, influencing how donors thought about sharing their resources, and how movements thought about their right to these resources. These shifts helped generate more and better funding for feminist organising.

How funders can multiply the Mama Cash effect

The past 40 years were only the beginning. The ways in which lives have been transformed for the better lay the foundation for the next 40 years. The organisations and stories highlighted in this report offer glimpses of the work Mama Cash has supported and the scope of its impact on the different individuals, groups and communities. Below are a set of recommendations that offer a framework for Mama Cash and other donors to further build on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritise support to self-led feminist movements and activism

Make self-led feminist movements and organisations the anchor of portfolio strategies, not a niche addition. This study has shown the many different ways people experience discrimination. Organisations who understood how these discriminations intersect have fuelled change across multiple interlocking systems of injustice and oppression, and made change more sustainable, resilient, and equitable. The study documents the profound reach, impact, and potency of feminist organisations as agents of systemic change – not just for women, girls, and trans and intersex people – but also as drivers of justice, equity, security, agency, dignity, prosperity, creativity, community, health, and opportunity for entire societies. Because gender inequality inextricably intersects with racism, ableism, violence, climate change, economic injustice, trans and LBQ antagonism, and reproductive oppression, feminist movements achieve wide-ranging wins with compounding impact, using creative strategies. Feminist activism redresses the harms that disproportionately target women, girls, and trans and intersex people and that have long been ignored by governments and philanthropy.

2. Centre feminist and women's funds to move more and better money

Feminist organising by women, girls, and trans and intersex activists drives intersectional social change, addresses the root causes of oppression and supports the vital defence of human rights. Women's and feminist funds are the most strategic partners for resourcing this. Feminist funds, like Mama Cash, that

are based in the Global North are committed to facilitating transnational funding and sharing power over decision-making. Exemplifying feminist funding practices, Mama Cash dedicated more than one-quarter of its grant funds over four decades to 66 women's and feminist funds, providing them long-term core support. Additionally, Mama Cash makes decisions on funding using a participatory model. It transformed its relationships with women's funds to a peer/partner model of solidarity, holding peer-led trainings and exchange of fundraising tactics among women's funds of the Global South and East.

National and regional feminist funds and women's funds have been able to expand the resources available to movements. These funds have also provided a plethora of non-financial support to help build connections between movements. Women's funds prioritise self-led organising by communities whose members are working at the nexus of intersecting oppressions. More deeply trusted by grantee-partners than foundations or governments half a world away are, local and regional women's funds are staffed by local feminists with close ties to the movements and relevant lived experiences. They are positioned to provide the responsiveness, comprehension, analysis, and proximity that most funders in the Global North cannot.

3. Strengthen international, regional, and national feminist partnerships and networks

Every chapter of this study has clearly shown that feminist partnerships and networks are crucial for achieving change and sustaining it for years, and even decades. Local, regional, and transnational networks break isolation, form new relationships, deepen ties, create spaces for dialogue and dissent, and generate resonant learning and exchange. They serve as an incubator and multiplier of new strategies, and a repository of historical knowledge and diverse approaches. They build the feminist movement ecosystem and create favourable conditions for change at the national and international levels. A grantee-partner noted, **"We know that Mama Cash has promoted several feminist projects in the country, which in our opinion is instrumental for strengthening the network of organisations and groups that fuel the feminist movement in [our country]."**²¹³

²¹³ Grantee-partner response, quoted by Center for Effective Philanthropy, Key Findings and Recommendations from Mama Cash's 2022 Grantee and Applicant Perception Report, p. 2.



Networks serve as vital support systems during moments of faltering hope. They can absorb or distribute shared costs for coalitions, and coordinate delegations, trainings, conferences, and advocacy campaigns. They support movements in building and gaining strength in numbers; in turn, government and multilateral agencies often pay more heed to networks as they represent larger constituencies. Transnational networks catalyse ‘neighbourhood effects’— enabling successful strategies in one country to be adapted in another.²¹⁴

4. Support the beginning and the building

Stories of positive impact often begin with taking a chance on an idea, a leader, or an opportunity. With seed funding, something new can begin. Continued funding and non-financial support can enable change to spread. This was captured in grantee-partners’ accounts throughout the report, as many received seed grants and support over multiple years. Their stories showed that support for movement-building can include funds for developing connections with members and constituencies, cultivating allies in adjacent movements, refining messaging and strategies, gaining media exposure and public engagement. Grantee-partners also benefit from non-financial support for organisation building, including training in financial management systems, monitoring and evaluation, and internal policies, supporting staff and leadership development, and brokering relationships with donors, media, and governments.

²¹⁴ Htun and Weldon, 2012.



"Organisation: Homebased Women Workers Federation, Pakistan"





"Organisation: Homebased Women Workers Federation, Pakistan"

In the words of Maritza Velásquez Estrada, the General Coordinator of grantee-partner **ATRAHDOM** in Guatemala, "Forging our association over those 5 years of support may not seem like much, but the truth is they were the first five pioneering years where we gained strength, where Mama Cash was a strategic ally and accomplice in all the struggles that we undertook, challenging the patriarchal system, the trade union movement, and social movements."²¹⁵

5. Maintain funding across the full social change cycle

Social and political change is driven by persistent, cumulative work and shaped by contexts that can change rapidly and dramatically. Activists must be prepared to recognise or create opportunities and must be ready to seize them. Support for preparation work is essential – this includes sustaining movements and alliances, maintaining allies in fluctuating decision-making spaces, raising public awareness, learning about political processes, monitoring legislative and policy developments, gaining leadership and advocacy skills, expanding networks. Activists must prepare the ground and till the soil during slow seasons to be ready to recognise opportunities and take the leap when they arise. Sometimes the preparation for opportunities grows from strategies developed for movement survival – surviving civil society repression, hate-based violence, hostile legal and political environments, armed conflict, economic crises, natural disasters, a global pandemic.

²¹⁵ Asociación de Trabajadoras del Hogar, a Domicilio y de Maquila (Association of Domestic, Home-Based, and Factory Workers).

Sustaining support during the slow period can enable organisations and movements to persist, recover, rebuild, and continue moving toward the change they envision. As Rajni Lallah of MUVMAN LIBERASYON FAM in Mauritius articulated, **“Shifts in the balance of forces get reflected in laws, conventions, covenants; gains are never permanent, so the struggle has to be permanent, and the spark of this political experience of gains and losses, victory and defeats resides in democratic organisational structures (not single issue/NGO-ish structures), however small in times of a downturn, but can get bigger in times of an upturn. Never take progressive changes for granted.”**²¹⁶ Because social change is never linear, activists need support to ensure that the public is aware and educated, and activists must remain ready to hold the line if and when there is resistance, regression, backlash. Every chapter of this report includes examples of groups supported by Mama Cash as they prepared for creating, recognising, and seizing opportunities.

6. Provide core and flexible support

Core and flexible support allow organisations to grow stronger and more agile. Grantee-partners interviewed and surveyed for this report described how such support gave them space to build strong organisations, hire, train, and retain staff, and build their knowledge and skills. The support also enabled the slow work of building movements and alliances, gaining the trust of community members and policymakers, shaping social norms and narratives, shepherding policies from design to consensus to approval to implementation. Core and flexible support also give organisations convening power, positioning self-led organisations to set the agenda and identify key ideas and leaders to elevate. And these forms of support allow organisations to test new strategies toward innovation, or respond effectively when contexts change, or opportunities arise.

²¹⁶ Rajni Lallah, Muvman Liberasyon Fam, correspondence with VIVA Strategy. 24/04/24.





“I would hope we have changed the way resources flow to our movements, that resources are there to support all the work but also to support a way of work that is sustainable. I would hope that we have good systems of social security and pensions and access to services for activists and decent salaries for activists, decent income that could be collective. I would hope that we understand that we need to work across all the issues and identities and build strength in our intersectional way.”

Lydia Alpízar Durán,
IM-Defensoras⁶⁰

7. Prioritise 5-10 years – or more – of support

Long-term grants enable organisations to build and sustain momentum and relationships with constituencies, and to plan for the multiple years needed to achieve policy and norm-shifting goals. Reliance on short-term grants can contribute to weakened credibility with constituents when programmes end abruptly without follow-up. In addition, major budget fluctuations from year to year create challenges for recruiting and retaining talent, and ensuring care of staff, members, and volunteers. Multi-year grants and long-term funding relationships provide a time horizon better matched to movement-building and societal change.

Every chapter of this report has shown that change takes time, and for many the long-term support from Mama Cash contributed significantly to their impact.



8. Commit to listening and adapting, and pioneering grantmaking that echoes feminist principles

Mama Cash's willingness to listen and to change course in response is at the root of its impact. Mama Cash began in 1983 with radical ideals and a handful of grants in the Netherlands. Forty years later, it has given €91 million in 7,460 direct grants in 160 countries. The numbers matter, but perhaps more important is how – how Mama Cash has given these grants, how it has supported grantee-partners and movements beyond the grants, how it shifted decision-making power, how it prioritised, how it course-corrected while always striving toward those radical ideals. Mama Cash's history shows how being willing to listen and change leads philanthropy to important paradigm shifts.

Over time, Mama Cash listened to its grantee-partners, evolving its grantmaking to give more core support and make its project support grants more flexible, so grantee-partners could adapt to changing contexts and opportunities. In response to grantee-partner feedback, Mama Cash changed course after 2009 to offer fewer but larger grants for longer terms. Mama Cash met grantee-partners where they were, supporting them to develop organisational systems, practices, and policies, and to manage leadership transitions. Mama Cash created opportunities for grantee-partners to learn from each other, and for donors to learn from them.

On this journey of self-reflection and course correction, and to better share power and be more reflective of the aims and priorities of the movements they serve, Mama Cash intentionally moved to a fully participatory grantmaking model in 2021, one of the largest international funders to do so.



In closing

Mama Cash grantee-partners – women, girls, and trans and intersex people working together – have demonstrated decade after decade that progress comes when feminist groups and movements organise, mobilise, advocate, and act singularly and collectively.

Grantee-partners have created a world where sex workers are lobbying for the safety of trans people. Where domestic worker unions are defending the right of trans and LBQ and sex workers to be free from sexual harassment, violence, and discrimination. Where LBQ activists are counselling pregnant people on medical abortion. Where women with disabilities are coming out as LBQ and creating inclusion in both movements. Where environmental justice activists are fighting for access to resources for women and girls with disabilities. Where Black and Indigenous women are creating collective care for women human rights defenders. Where reproductive rights and gender-based violence activists are denouncing forced sterilisations of women with disabilities, women with HIV, Indigenous women and girls, and unnecessary surgeries on intersex children. Where intersex activists are securing inclusive protection for bodily integrity. Where Indigenous women are risking their lives to challenge environmental harm. Where land rights activists are expanding inheritance and property rights for women. It is with these people that we see us all, together, forging the path for the next 40 years of change.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Acronyms

AWDF	Africa Women's Development Fund
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights
ASDRC	African Sexuality, Disability and Rights Coalition
AMMAR	Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina
ATRAHDOM	Asociación de Trabajadoras del Hogar, a Domicilio y de Maquila
ADDAD	Association de Défense des Droits des Aides
AWID	Association of Women's Rights in Development
CDD	Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMI!	Count Me In! Consortium
COP	Conference of Parties
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CONLACTRHO	Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ETR	End term review
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FCAM	Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
FMS	Fondo Mujeres Del Sur

FIMI	Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas
FLOW	Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
HBWWF	Home-Based Women Workers Federation in Pakistan
IACHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
ICASC	International Contraception, Abortion, and Sterilisation Campaign
IDC	Influencing the Donor Community
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMD	Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (Also known as IM-Defensoras)
IVIM	OII Internationale Vereinigung Intergeschlechtlicher Menschen – Organisation Intersex International Germany
LFS	Leading from the South Fund
LBQ	Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer
LBTI	Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, and Queer
LyF	Lesbianas y Feministas para las Descriminalizacion del Aborto
MHRWD	Malawian Human Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MONES	Mongolian Women's Fund
MLF	Muvman Liberasyon Fam



NUDE	National Union of Domestic Employees
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OTD	Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad
RUF	Red Umbrella Fund
SFE	Sappho for Equality
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SAWF	South Asia Women’s Fund
SAN	Survival Advocacy Network
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TIA	Transgender and Intersex Africa
UHAI-EASHRI	UHAI-East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiatives
UTSOPI	Union des Travailleu(r)se du Sexe Organisees Pour l’Indépendance
UAF	Urgent Action Fund
WDDF	Women With Disabilities Foundation
WFA	Women’s Fund Asia
WGNRR	Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHRD	Women’s human rights defender
WLZ	Women and Land in Zimbabwe
WONETHA	Women’s Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy
ZMV	Zwarte Migranten Vluchtelingen



Appendix B: Internal and External Reports and Documents Reviews

Mama Cash internal documents

- Baseline Report 2021-22
- Center for Effective Philanthropy Grantee Perception Surveys (2014, 2016, 2018, 2022).
- CMI! Annual reports and Impact Reports
- Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, 2015-2020
- Gigler, Amanda Mercedes. (2020 February-March). Reflections on Past Two Strategic Plans: 2009-2014 and 2015-2020, February-March 2020.
- Logframe results and analysis (2016-2020)
- LOI Analysis
- Portfolio strategies: Bodies Unbound!, February 2018; Money-Labour Rights, April 2017; Voice, November 2018.
- Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- RALF Final Results and LME process
- Reports from grantee-partners
- Strategic plans, MTRs and ETRs and Management Responses (2004-2008, 2009-2014, 2015-2020, 2021-2030)

Donor Reports and Evaluations:

- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- BMGF grant reports
- Dutch PostCode Lottery grant reports
- Irish Aid grant reports
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs grant reports

- NOVIB grant reports
- PSO grant reports
- With and For Girls Collective evaluation

Mama Cash publications and co-publications

- Alliance articles written by Mama Cash staff and board.
- Anderson, Katrina and Andrea Lynch. (2018, July). *In it Together: Reflections and Recommendations on Global Fund for Women and Mama Cash's Engagement with Women's Funds.*
- Basa, Charito, Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck, Judy Gummich, Cigdem Esin, Aygen Kurt, Carol Mann, and Anja Rudnick. (2006). *Migrant Women's Philanthropic Practices from the Diaspora.* (Research report). Mama Cash.
- Holden, Lydia. (2017, November). *Our Voices are Strong: Lessons from Women's, Girls' and Trans People's Self-led Organisations.*
- Horn, Jessica. (2008). *Reflecting on Mama Cash Strategic Plan "She Makes the Difference,"* Review of grantmaking 2004-2007. Mama Cash.
- Jessop, Susan and Kellea Miller. (2017, December 7). *Our voices are strong: why self-led activism works.* *Alliance Magazine.* <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/blog/voices-strong-self-led-activism-works/>
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