

# Is Global Funding Reaching Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Local Community Women?

## Experiences from the Women in Global South Alliance (WiGSA)



#ThePledgeWeWant

- Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women's organizations are rightsholders in the climate and conservation funding ecosystem.
- Despite structural barriers in the global financing architecture, community women's organizations have vast experience managing funds with demonstrated long-term impact and are prepared to receive increased funding.
- The anticipated new funding Pledge at COP30 must ensure that funding opportunities are gender-inclusive and women are not left behind.

**What is WiGSA?** A cross-continental solidarity network of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Consisting of 27 groups and organizations as of August 2025, WiGSA members work together to inspire change to existing structural inequalities and historical injustices related to women's tenure and human rights, and advocate for their direct access to climate, conservation, and rights financing.

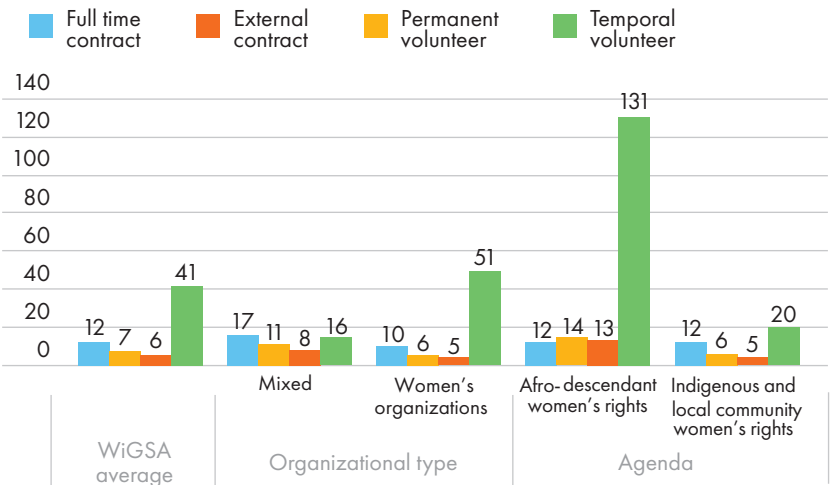


New quantitative and qualitative data<sup>1</sup> by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) and the Women in Global South Alliance (WiGSA) show that the current funding ecosystem is far from equitable.

### Key Findings

- Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women face **significant barriers in securing direct funding** that intersects with women's human and tenure rights and environmental and climate justice.
- 40% of WiGSA organizations identify institutional strengthening as the most challenging activity to fundraise for. Knowledge production and research (30%) and advocacy (25%) follow closely.
- **Women's organizations rely heavily on volunteer labor**, compounding existing inequalities of unpaid work.
- **53% of WiGSA organizations report having no core funding** or that it represents less than 10% of their total annual budget. Some have never received core funding.
- **Afro-descendant women or Afro-descendant women within mixed organizations have annual budgets that, on average, are less than half of those of other analyzed organizations.**
- 85% of member organizations receive **short-term grants of less than 24 months.**
- **38% of organizations report having no savings or reserves**, and 67% may go on for only up to 6 months without additional external funding.
- **The major source of funding for WiGSA organizations comes from international NGOs.** Private or philanthropic foundation donors are the next main sources of funding. It is noticeable that feminist funding and UN agencies play a relatively minor role, and human rights funds and national governments have an even more limited role as funding sources for the organizations.

### Organizational Structure of WiGSA Network Member Organizations



### What is a human rights and gender-sensitive approach to funding?

1. Led by Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples, and local communities
2. Mutual accountability
3. Flexible and long-term
4. Gender-inclusive
5. Timely and accessible



*"Due to a perceived lack of capacity to manage funds, women's organizations often rely on a large number of volunteers to function, reflecting patriarchal practices where women continue to perform unpaid work."*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The full report presents the results of the second phase of this collaborative research between RRI and WiGSA: "Tracking Global Funding Reaching Women: Pilot Implementation." The first phase was launched in 2024.

## Budget for Women’s Groups Within Mixed and Women’s Organizations in USD\*

Mixed organizations, composed of women and men, tend to have fewer resources dedicated specifically to women than organizations whose primary mission is to work exclusively with women. The proportion of a mixed organization’s annual budget allocated to women’s groups and projects was only 19% in 2023 and 28% in 2024.

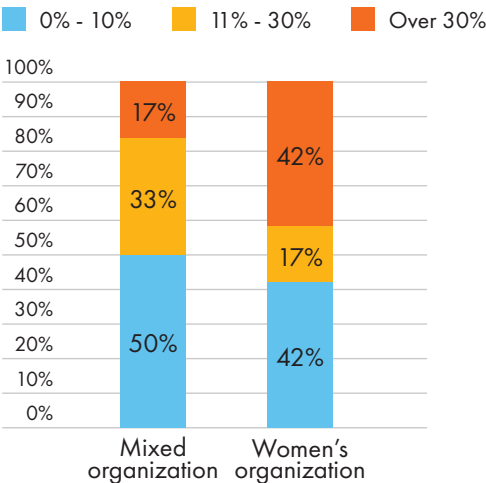
	Women’s Groups Within Mixed Organizations		Women’s Organizations	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Average	\$108,880	\$174,611	\$652,948	\$765,537
Median	\$61,142	\$57,738	\$385,582	\$422,000

\*Notably, 30% of all the women’s organizations analyzed have an operating budget of less than US\$100,000 annually.

## Percentage of Core Funding

Based on data collected from 19 organizations

Institutional core funding—funding not tied to specific projects—enables organizations to cover operating costs, strengthen internal structures, and invest in long-term initiatives beyond project implementation. Access to this funding is essential for long-term organizational sustainability. However, 53% report having no core funding or that it represents less than 10% of their total budget.<sup>3</sup>



## Budget 2024 vs. Aspirational Budget in USD

The average gap between the current annual budgets and aspirational budgets of WiGSA organizations needed to function sustainably is at least 50%.

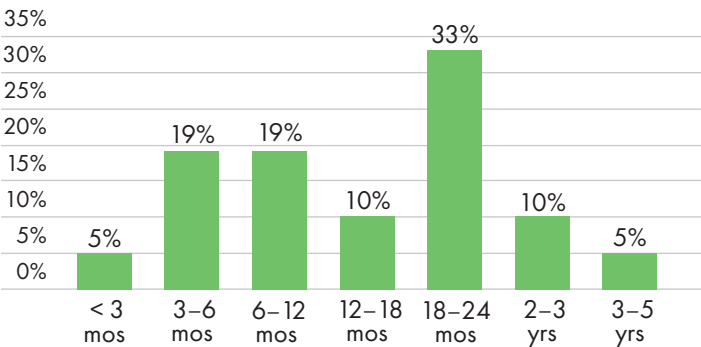
	Budget 2024	Aspirational Budget
Average	\$596,701	\$1,764,441
Median	\$338,066	\$717,500



**“This dynamic creates a kind of fundraising treadmill, where organizations divert valuable human resources and time from their core mission to ensure operational continuity.”<sup>2</sup>**

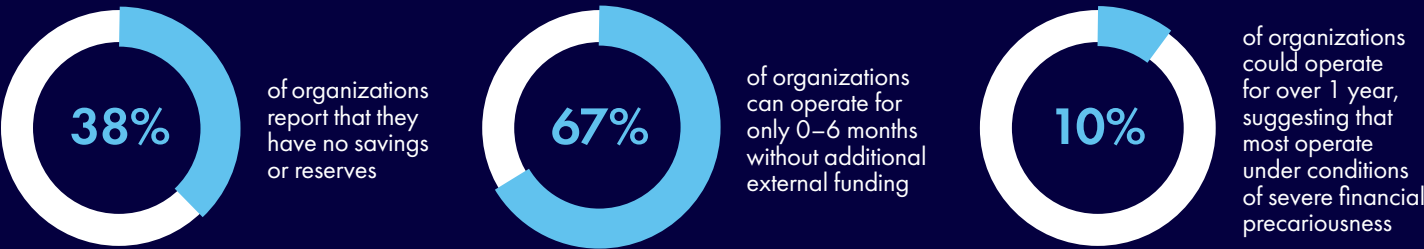
## Average Duration of Funding

Restricted access to medium and long-term financing is a major barrier to institutional strengthening. 85% of member organizations received short-term grants of two years or less.



## Number of Months WiGSA Organizations Could Operate Using Only Savings and Reserves

Based on data collected from 21 organizations



<sup>2</sup> All quotes included in this document are from members of WiGSA. For privacy and security reasons, individual names and identifying details have been withheld.

<sup>3</sup> Although the small sample size limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions, this percentage-based analysis offers a useful approximation and allows for the formulation of hypotheses for future research.

## Major Challenges Facing WiGSA members

- Resistance to funding Indigenous and/or Afro-descendant women's organizations or groups within mixed organizations.
- 52% of organizations cited **complex, inaccessible, and unrealistic<sup>4</sup> funding processes** as a major challenge. **Language barriers**, where Calls for Proposals and financial/narrative reporting systems are often only available in English.
- **Inadequate information** about funding sources.
- **Strong disconnect** between how funding mechanisms are structured and what women's organizations can realistically deliver.

## Good Practices

Despite these challenges, women's organizations are building influence, strengthening alliances, and asserting their leadership in the global funding landscape while also advancing global commitments in climate change and conservation. These are strategies used to navigate funding systems:

- 71% are part of global networks and 57% participate in national, regional, and global funding discussions on climate and conservation, engaging in open dialogue with donors to build trust, alliances, and internal capacity.
- 38% have staff trained in fundraising and accountability.
- 29% have dedicated staff for fundraising.

## Recommendations for Funders

- Transform the donor/recipient relationship from control to trust and strategic partnership.
- Establish dedicated and equitable funding lines for all women's organizations.
- Allocate dedicated percentages for gender strategies in grant-making structures.
- Reinvent impact measurement from quantitative reporting to systemic change evaluation.
- Invest in strengthening the local ecosystems that enable women's organizations to thrive.

## Spotlight: Afro-descendant Women and Climate Finance

Afro-descendant women's groups and organizations experience pointed difficulties in securing funding for their core agendas.

- As of May 2025, very little funding is being directed toward addressing racial discrimination and justice and its intersection with tenure rights and climate and conservation action.
- Afro-descendant Peoples—and particularly women—are forced to translate and adapt their agendas to fit donor frameworks, which can dilute their transformative mission.
- Average budgets of Afro-descendant women's organizations and women's groups within mixed organizations are on average less than half of other types of women's organizations.

	2023		2024	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
Afro-descendant women	\$214,750	\$154,500	\$258,000	\$233,500
Indigenous and local community women	\$564,030	\$273,466	\$676,396	\$338,066

Although Afro-descendant organizations generally operate with more limited resources, they might achieve relatively greater access to flexible funding. In the survey, 25% of Afro-descendant organizations reported that their core funding is zero or less than 10% of their total budget, while 53% of Indigenous and local community organizations indicated the same.

<sup>4</sup> Unrealistic in terms of the time given to prepare a proposal.



left: WiGSA members pose for a photo in Peru during the Nepal-Peru Bilateral Learning Exchange. | Photo by Lorene Moran-Valenzuela for Rights and Resources Initiative, 2025.  
center: Local woman cuts green overgrowth off a bush at the Shree Bindeshwari Community Forest, Nepal. | Photo by Asha Stuart for Rights and Resources Initiative, 2025.

right: Women leaders from the Ogiek, Maasai, Batwa, Aweer, Benet, Sengwer, and Yaaku Indigenous communities meet in Mt. Elgon, Kenya for the 2022 East Africa Assembly. | Photo by TonyWild Photography for Rights and Resources Initiative.