

# How the Equality Fund shows up in Global Spaces

Last updated: January 10, 2023

Recent discussions on the PSP team have got us thinking about the Equality Fund's role or niche in global spaces and fora. Clearly, we are a new type of organization and we don't fit neatly into existing categories. We would appreciate your thoughts and reflections on this theme.

These spaces include, but are not limited to:

- Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- Conference on the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP)
- Women Deliver
- OECD DAC GenderNet
- Generation Equality Forum follow-up
- AWID conference
- Alliance for Feminist Movements
- Prospera
- HRFN

## Background

We know that the Equality Fund is a new entity – by design. We are a feminist organization and a women's/feminist fund. We work to mobilize new and better resources for feminist movements. We do feminist grantmaking, are building a feminist philanthropy program, and work to reimagine gender lens investing. But we are more than these three programs, aiming for an impact that is more than the sum of our parts.

Within our policy and strategic partnerships work we aim to (among other things):

- Advocate for more and better resources for feminist movements;
- Influence policy environments/frameworks and encourage more feminist policy development and implementation;
- Amplify the perspectives of grantee partners and Global South allies.

Some of the factors that influence the role(s) we can and should play in global discussions include:

- We are both a funder (including a funder of other women's funds) and recipient of both government and philanthropic money.
- We are a relatively new organization without a long track record (even though we have our roots in The MATCH Fund).
- We are anchored in Canada, even as we become more and more a virtual organization.
- We have been told by others in our eco-system that we are not a civil society organization, given our role as a funder. Our presence can distort gatherings of feminist civil society actors.
- We are not a grass-roots organization or an organization established to advocate on a feminist issue such as a climate justice, SRHR, or youth activism.

- We need to be conscious of our power, position, and privilege as a global north organization with significant resources. However, we also know that these attributes also bring us advantages, including access to global north governments.
- Our investment program marks us as different from other women's funds. We have a different relationship to global capital than many other feminist activist organizations.

Two final thoughts from our team:

- We do see advocacy vis-à-vis the Canadian government and other global north governments as different from advocacy in global policy spaces as different. As an organization with a Canadian base, we have a responsibility to push the Canadian government to live into its feminist commitments. Participation in global discussions is different as our role is less defined.
- For us, we have a clear role to play in discussions that focus on resourcing feminist movements or discussions where we can highlight the importance of resourcing feminist movements and of creating space for feminist activists.

## **Questions for Reflection**

### **1. As the Equality Fund, what is the basis of our credibility/legitimacy when we participate in global policy discussions?**

(NCaruso) – our model for mobilizing resources to feminist movements and the fact that we are supporting orgs and movements, the investment + trust of Canada government (?)

### **2. Given the above points, what do you see as the Equality Fund's niche / role / responsibility / value added in global fora such as CSW, COP, SDG discussions, etc.**

**Do we have different roles in different discussions? Where/how should we step up, step back, or stand alongside feminist movements?**

### **How / to what extent do we work with feminist constituency groups e.g. CSW's Women's Rights Caucus or COP's Women and Gender Constituency?**

from Natalia - in order to help define the niche/responsibility would be important to have clarity on political positions and the role we play in those spaces (linked to the comparative advantages in the section above), whether they are supportive or in contradiction with the Canada government (+ other governments) as we grow into a global fund supporting groups around the world.

### **3. What should 'amplifying the perspectives and voices of grantee partners and allies' mean to us? What does this look like in practice? Is it convening partners? Is it synthesizing what we heard and putting out an 'Equality Fund' product that summarizes these 'asks'? Is it creating opportunities for them to be heard (like our COP 26 videos)? Is it helping them access policy spaces and decision-makers? Is it funding them to access global policy spaces? Is it all of the above? Is it something else? Does it matter (is this**

**even an important question)? What is the line between amplifying their voices and relaying what we've heard?**

*From Tat: We are having parallel conversations in Comms and I deeply appreciate this pause for deeper reflection. We state this broadly as core objective but I have concerns that this becomes rote unless we add nuance.*

*In short, 'amplifying the voices of grantee partners and allies' is/can be all of the above—and more. This is not a homogenous group so it follows that 'amplification' will look very different and will be case-dependent. The question I would like to add is what decision-making pathway/criteria do we have/want to follow as EF when making these decisions? And who makes these decisions?*

*My hunch is that this is at least a two-fold process to start: 1) working towards an organizational position and defining the 'line' between amplifying voices and relaying what we've heard; and 2) having a mechanism to keep revisiting, reflecting, and consolidating learnings (fluid team?) to ensure we are responding to the dynamic needs of our partners.*

*From Tamara: The dynamism of the needs of our partners and necessity to consider regional approaches are important considerations I would echo/add in Tat's comments. This is a great discussion document overall, Amina. Thank you for seeking ideas in this way. In recent discussions with grantee partners from WVU, there have been questions/asks related to our role in helping to challenge their governments over rights violations and the overall absence of feminist or gender-responsive national policies. The same could likely be argued at the CARICOM or OECS institutional level. In cases where amplifying their voices or grantee partners speaking for themselves may compromise their safety, I'm wondering where we can "step up", while holding true to the value that our voice should not command the loudest horn. Where our partners may need allyship and can guide what that allyship looks like, there is space to consider stepping up and stepping out with clear and strong positions, discussions, and statements that are South government-facing.*

**4. Are there things we should not do in global discussions?**

From Natalia - support positions that are not in line with our partners???

Mafe - speak on behalf of our partners.

**5. In most cases our advocacy focus is mobilizing more and better resources for women's organizations and feminist movements. We also push for greater space, protection, and access for these same organizations. How do we balance this with restating advocacy priorities of partners? Do we have other advocacy priorities?**

*From Tamara: Great Q. It better articulates what I am asking above. I hope we can challenge notions of balance. We do not need protection, or lack access. We have lots of space! Or at the least, the barriers we may face pale in comparison to the organizations EF funds and supports. As a result, is our advocacy priority/ies not chiefly guided by those who face these challenges where we do not? Is there a place to leverage our power in*

*favour of partners, while doing so rooted in anti-colonial and anti-oppressive framework?  
Can we agitate change more militantly, but responsively and responsibly.*

From Natalia: I see different purposes for the engagement with governments bc of the access, positioning, increasing credibility and the particular role EF can play in decision-making spaces and lobby spaces. On the other hand, I see the advocacy we do/might be able to do more strategically along with partners, opening spaces, bringing their voices + recommendations in global spaces.

**6. How do we engage / work with the Government of Canada, the Government of the UK, and other additional potential government ‘partners’ in international spaces? We talk about being a ‘critical friend’. How do we creatively lean into the tensions in this role?**

**7. Rephrased as: What is our process for making decisions about which international gatherings / meetings we participate in?** (How showing up legitimizes host (esp government), and do we want that... How do we weigh considerations about venues and spaces we turn up, how do we evaluate the upside/ downside of participation