



## **LGBTI Rights, Religious Conservatives, and Faith-Based Resistances (2018)**

### **Excerpt: Recommendations for Grantmakers**

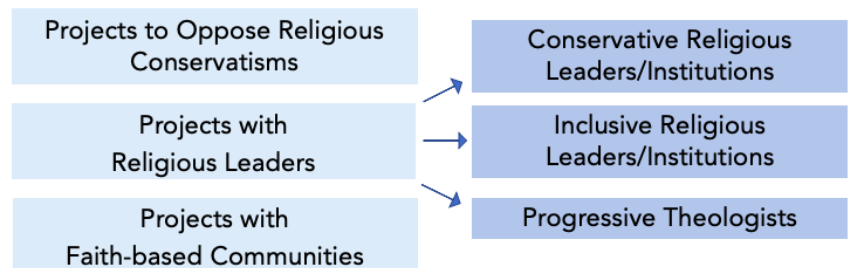
#### **INTRODUCTION**

In early 2018, Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) engaged a research team<sup>1</sup> to create a report with dual purposes: 1) systematize and analyze key dimensions of the impact of religious conservatisms on sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights; 2) Document and analyze the main funding sources of LGBTI-affirming faith initiatives, exploring the barriers and challenges presented to grantmakers to fund initiatives related to faith. This research was developed for the May 2018 GPP convening “Growing Solidarity: Funding at the Intersection of Faith, Religious Fundamentalism, Human Rights, and Social Justice.” This report was distributed privately to GPP members and convening attendees, and a public version of the first section was released in November 2018 in both English and Spanish ([available here](#)).

This short report is intended to share key findings of the second section of our research, focused on recommendations for grantmakers funding in the intersections identified by the convening: Faith, Religious Fundamentalism, Human Rights, and Social Justice. Our convening focused on grantmakers in the LGBTI, SHRR, and Feminist funding areas, however the recommendations clearly acknowledge that many additional funding focus areas can and must be key partners in this work.

Through analysis of data from the *Global Resources Report*, interviews with key grantmakers in the field, and wide review of relevant literature, the research team found that there are three primary types of projects being financed in this field: projects to oppose religious conservatisms, projects with faith-based communities, and projects with religious leaders. In this last type of project, they found that groups were working in three additional models: focusing on conservative religious leaders and institutions, on inclusive religious leaders/institutions, and/or focused on progressive theologians (demonstrated in adjacent chart).

#### **TYPES OF INITIATIVES LINKED TO RELIGION BEING FINANCED**



We now share these recommendations for grantmakers with intention to continue building the work together, in widening circles, towards resisting the harmful impacts of religious conservatisms and increasing support for faith communities which honor the human rights of LGBTI people around the world.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

While there is a generalized perception among grantmakers about the importance of mobilizing faith-based initiatives as a way to advance the recognition of SRR and SOGI rights, our research also identified a number of obstacles impeding this

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<sup>2</sup> *Global Resources Report: Philanthropic and Government Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Communities.* Global Philanthropy Project & Funders for LGBTQ Issues, 2018.

<https://globalphilanthropyproject.org/2018/04/17/gr15-16/> and <https://globalphilanthropyproject.org/2016/06/23/2013-2014-global-resources-report/>

support. In the following pages, we suggest three general recommendations towards breaking down barriers and strengthening the financing of faith-based initiatives: 1) recommendations to overcome grantmakers' internal barriers, 2) recommendations to broaden the resources and promote LGBTI movements, and 3) recommendations to fill the current financing gaps.

## 1) **INTERNAL BARRIERS**

- a. **Creating Spaces of Dialogue Among Grantmakers to Build and/or Strengthen Alliances:** Generating spaces of dialogue could allow sharing experiences and political, theoretical, and practical perspectives among different types of grantmakers. It is necessary to explore possibilities about the establishment of alliances among specialized grantmakers in LGBTI issues—religious or secular—with progressive funders focused in other movements such as feminism, disability, indigenous rights, struggle against racism, etc.

We suggest more attention to the following dimensions:

- i. **Focusing on dimensions other than religion to build alliances:** Some grantmakers argue there are explicit limits to finance religious institutions or projects because of ideological, strategic, or political motives. It is crucial for the rest of the grantmakers' community to respect those limits in order to evaluate alternative ways of creating alliances to finance religious issues. As a matter of fact, many initiatives seeking to promote SOGI rights from the field of faith do not necessarily finance religious institutions or their leaders. Local LGBTI organizations working together with priests, pastors, theologians, and communities of faith are performing an important part of the effort to promote a progressive vision within religions. The financing of these organizations entails the promotion of faith-based initiatives directly focusing the resources on supporting LGBTI organizations struggling for SOGI rights. In this sense, a way of avoiding some grantmakers' barriers of financing religious institutions is to concentrate the donations in LGBTI organizations leading the articulations with faith actors themselves.
  - ii. **Exploring intersectionalities and their tensions:** A deeper knowledge of possible intersectionalities between not only SOGI rights and religion, but also LGBTI organizations and other progressive movements, is paramount to design projects on faith-based joint actions. Each movement has windows of opportunities and objections to work with, or from, religion. To a part of the feminist movement, for example, a strong objection to financing is that many LGBTI theologians oppose the right to abortion and other reproductive rights. From the perspective of disability movements, the language of charity that many churches, including pro-LGBTI churches, use (instead of a rights approach) constitutes a barrier to articulate joint work. Thus, specific objections to work with churches, religious leaders, or communities of faith can be found within each movement. That is why, to grantmakers concerned about the promotion of SOGI rights, it is necessary to explore common grounds to support faith-based initiatives together with grantmakers focused on other movements. But at the same time, it is important to examine the specific barriers progressive movements can identify when working in the religious field.
  - iii. **Building frameworks to create alliances:** The framework of an alliance is key to its outcomes. Some frameworks are more appealing to some actors, and not others. Some frameworks make more sense in certain contexts and territories than others. As a consequence, alliances are usually understood as unstable and movable, and it is necessary to evaluate the best frameworks for each situation. A framework that prioritizes the establishment of alliances against a common enemy (religious conservatism) and a common resistance might create opportunities to connect the LGBTI movement with feminist movements, and even with some indigenous movements that consider Christianity as a threat to their beliefs. However, the same framework can close alliances' opportunities with other sectors interested in generating a dialogue with religious conservatism to transform them "from within," instead of seeing them as the enemy.
- b. **Sharing and Reflecting on Successful Cases:** Sharing successful experiences regarding the financing of faith-based initiatives within the grantmakers' community is essential. In this sense, there are four main objectives: 1) to generate a better understanding of religion as a dynamic field, comprehending that people's beliefs are not static and they change and adapt in time; 2) to show that projects connected with religion currently being supported are not based on a single strategy or theory of change, but on the contrary, they are diverse and adaptable to multiple tactics and specific goals; 3) to create dialogues and/or instruments about how to replicate successful experiences in other contexts, also providing information about

methodologies; 4) to raise awareness about the fact that financing religious initiatives is not the same as financing churches (conservative and progressive churches), as generally the ones supported by those initiatives are LGBTI organizations and their allies.

- c. **Develop Dialogues Regarding the Theories of Change:** Our research found that grantmakers use diverse methods to finance faith-based initiatives, and similarly utilize a wide range of theories of change in this work. We recommend generating spaces for common dialogues among grantmakers to share their experiences and build common theories of change related to how religion can promote SRR and SOGI rights. Amplifying progressive religious voices and working with conservative religious leaders to modify their perceptions and ideas, for example, are strategies that have managed to generate certain concrete local impacts. The challenge lies in identifying what elements could be incorporated into the theories of change in a coordinated way among grantmakers who, without neglecting the local, manage to generate global transformations and stop the transnational advance of religious conservatism.

## 2) RESOURCES TO PROMOTE LGBTI MOVEMENTS LOCALLY

Our research found that many of the organizations working with faith-based actions are small, and lack technical and human resources. Hence, to favor that work, it is necessary to strengthen local grantees' institutional and/or organizational capacities in the first place. Emphasis must be put on institutional support to create broader and better technical and human capacities in the medium and long term. To this aim, we propose:

- a. **Focalize on the Micro Level to Promote the Macro:** Particularities of the inclusive religious field make it necessary to pay attention to the local. However, this does not imply that a global perspective that allows a transnational impact must be disregarded. We suggest paying attention in particular to the following three areas:
  1. **Work with local organizations:** Even though national and transnational religious networks exist and must be promoted—such as the Global Interfaith Network—it is also necessary to support actions connected with religion at the local level. Local groups and grassroots organizations are the ones that know best the needs of LGBTI people, the threats in their territories, and the ways religious conservatisms act in everyday life. This is why it is important to concentrate a portion of the financing to local and grassroots LGBTI organizations interested in working from/with religion, and to include religious groups at the local and community levels. This prioritization of the local level should be accompanied by flexibility in the allocation of resources in order to allow organizations to channel funds in a strategic way, according to their needs and decisions on how to best intervene in their contexts.
  2. **Creation of networks and capacities with a global perspective:** Local and grassroots organizations' strengthening must be connected to a strategy that goes beyond the local. To this aim, it is necessary to solidify existing networks and to create new ones that allow local organizations to connect with each other in order to achieve a global impact. In other words, the promotion of actions and local organizations' capacities will allow for building and strengthening international networks of local actors. In addition, part of the financing could be earmarked to provide tools to local organizations to start acting internationally.
  3. **Focus on LGBTI organizations:** Although it is important to promote inclusive religious organizations and networks through financing, it is also necessary to be careful not to marginalize LGBTI organizations from the general financing process, or from the work associated with religion in particular. In general, LGBTI organizations can bring a more accurate focus on who are their best allies in the religious field. They can also provide information and analysis enriching the approaches and ideas of inclusive churches and progressive theologians, bringing them closer to the claims, experience, and language of the LGBTI movement. It is recommended, therefore, to promote LGBTI organizations' involvement in religious initiatives, creating mechanisms for them to bond with inclusive religious groups, and even promoting their leadership in the processes.
  4. **Avoid marginalization based on religion:** Considering that LGBTI organizations working with religious initiatives are not numerous, it is recommended to create financing processes that avoid an imposition of working "from the faith field" or "with the faith field" as a requirement to access

the resources. Doing so could marginalize secular LGBTI organizations and weaken the movement in some territories. It is better to encourage organizations to create networks and dialogues with religious actors, without disregarding each organization's identity.

- b. **Capacity Building:** The lack of technical capacities of local groups willing to work with religious groups is one of the main problems identified by grantmakers. As a consequence, it is important to focus part of the financing on helping to overcome these institutional shortages. Capacity building means the promotion of core funding. To do so, we recommend considering three complimentary dimensions:
1. **Flexibility of resources:** Creating mixed financing mechanisms that consider resources to develop specific projects and to strengthen organizations' institutional capacities seems central. When possible, we recommend avoiding the restriction of overhead resources, human resources, or other organizational capacities' items. As an alternative, we suggest building articulations among grantmakers to generate a mix of funders, where some can orient their donations to building capacities, and others to finance projects, for grantees to achieve more rounded financing packages.
  2. **Long-term commitments:** Long-term grants should be a priority when supporting initiatives connected with religion. This will allow the consolidation of groups and networks, facilitating processes of professionalization. This will also create broader impacts, since changes in religion are medium- and long-term projects.
  3. **Avoidance of marginalization of grantees due to a lack of resources:** It is necessary to create mechanisms to help grantees to apply for long-term grants in order to avoid that groups with possibilities of working in religious issues are marginalized from financing processes, due to a lack of basic initial capacities.

### 3) FILLING GAPS

From many grantmakers' perspectives, there are gaps that need to be filled when thinking about financing faith-based actions. In particular, we recommend amplifying work and resources in the following two areas:

1. **Amplifying Religious and Geographical Horizons:** Most of the inclusive religious work is oriented to financing initiatives related to Christianity and Islam. That is why it is recommended to know LGBTI organizations in Buddhist or Hindi contexts and to explore potential allies in those fields. This means also amplifying the geographic areas where resources are oriented—currently focused on Southern Africa.
2. **Research:** The source of religious conservatism's financing is still an underexplored area. Some of their financing dimensions are very difficult to know, and in some cases—such as the scale of their global financing—it is almost impossible. However, it is necessary to deepen the knowledge on other dimensions that can be addressed by medium- and long-term research, such as the sources of their funds, the general features of their resources (if they are flexible/rigid, short/long-term, etc.), actions developed in particular contexts, etc.

Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) is a collaboration of funders and philanthropic advisors working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in the Global South and East.

Established in 2009, GPP's 19 member organizations include many of the leading global funders and philanthropic advisors for LGBTI rights. As the first international cohort of LGBTI funders, GPP is internationally recognized as the primary thought leader and go-to partner for donor coordination around global LGBTI work.

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