

## Analysis of International Human Rights Funding Trends

### Overview of Our Report

---

In June 2013, the Foundation Center and the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) jointly published the most important report in recent memory regarding the current state of American philanthropic funding in the field of international human rights. Their report provides 150 pages of comprehensive data, case studies, and analysis, and we highly recommend that you read it.<sup>1</sup> With an executive summary that comprises 15 pages alone, however, we recognize that intensive study of the entire report is difficult for most. Therefore, our brief report aims to summarize their reportage, build on their data and research, and provide additional insight of our own concerning the field's funding trends and opportunities.

### Foundation Center – International Human Rights Funders Group Report

---

#### A. Summary

The Foundation Center and the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) have recently published a comprehensive report entitled *Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking, Key Findings*, which provides the most recent data on philanthropic funding for this field. Their report is split into an introduction and initial chapter that summarize and define human rights grantmaking and the major funders; two chapters that utilize data to describe conditions for funding at present and in the future; and, a final chapter with lengthier funding profiles based on specific topics, populations, and regions. Most of the crucial data that we can draw upon is provided in the executive summary, as well as the final chapter's detailed funding profiles.

#### B. Key Findings from the Foundation Center IHRFG Report

- The Report analyzed a total of 703 funders, spanning 29 countries. Most of the funders included in its study were American (652).<sup>2</sup>
- Based on giving by U.S. foundations in 2010, matters related to human rights received approximately \$1.2 billion dollars in total funding, making up less than four percent of overall grant dollars and total number of grants that year.<sup>3</sup>
- Of those grant dollars, roughly 46%, or \$552 million, were focused on countries outside of the United States.<sup>4</sup>
- The largest funding priorities were two relatively general subcategories: [Individual Integrity, Liberty, and Security](#), which received 36% of total funding for human rights in 2010, and [Human Rights—General](#), which received 16%.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Although we summarize some of the joint report's data and findings, the report, in its entirety, can be accessed [here](#). It will hereinafter be referenced as 'Foundation Center-IHRFG report,' or 'the Report.'

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report (June 2013), 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 14-15. The former subcategory received \$429.2 million in 2010; the latter received \$194 million.

- ‘Individual Integrity, Liberty, and Security’ was also the highest funding priority in all eight geographical regions, but secondary priorities varied considerably.<sup>6</sup>
- The categories that received the least attention, in terms of funding, were [Environmental and Resource Rights](#) and [Civic and Political Participation](#) – each received 3%, respectively – as well as [Migration and Displacement](#); [Freedom from Violence](#); and, [Labor Rights](#), which received 4% each.<sup>7</sup>
- The two foundations that provide, by far, the greatest amount of funding in the field of human rights: the [Ford Foundation](#) and the [Open Society Foundations](#).<sup>8</sup>
- Many major funders, including these two leaders, focus a large portion of their human rights programs abroad on the protection of [Women’s Rights](#). The Foundation Center-IHRFG report found that 23% of the total human rights grant dollars in 2010 was directed to women and girls.<sup>9</sup>

## Our Recommendations: Areas of Opportunity

---

### A. Regional Discrepancies

The Foundation Center-IHRFG report’s fourth chapter provides funding profiles for specific subcategories; each profile covers a single topic or population and breaks down funding by geographical region. With this data in hand, we have undertaken our own thorough analysis of the Ford Foundation and Open Society Foundations’ human rights grantees in order to determine which countries or regions of the world tend to receive greater attention. We have found that American foundations tend to support projects focused on a few specific regions: China; Indonesia; Afghanistan-Pakistan; India; Mexico; the Southern Cone; Russia and Eastern Europe; South Africa; Eastern Africa.

However, the Foundation Center-IHRFG report demonstrates that other regions receive far less financial support from the major funders. It specifically notes the 2010 Arab Spring as a source of moderate increase in attention to human rights in parts of the [Middle East and North Africa](#), yet the Report’s data also shows that approximately \$24 million, or a mere 2% of all human rights funding dollars, went to programs in the region.<sup>10</sup> Our own analysis – separate from the Foundation Center-IHRFG report – has determined a few noticeable discrepancies in funding for other regions of the world. For example, the Ford Foundation has strong grant programs in Southern Africa and the Eastern Horn, yet there is a clear lack of funding for human rights in [West Africa](#).<sup>11</sup> Further analysis shows [Central America and the Caribbean](#) receive little support for

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 14-15. Environmental and Resource Rights received \$38.7 million in 2010; Civic and Political Participation received \$41.1 million; Migration and Displacement received \$45.8 million; Freedom from Violence received \$47.3 million; and, Labor Rights received \$48.5 million.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 8-9. In 2010, the Ford Foundation provided 657 grants at a sum of \$159.5 million (highest dollar amount), and the Open Society Foundations provided 1,248 grants (most grants) at a sum of \$140 million.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 17. Over 40% of funding dollars for women and girls however is spent on domestic programs. \$116.4 million in funding go to programs in North America (Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 118).

<sup>10</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 2, 35. Amount of funding determined from sum of all funding data in Chapter Four, from funding profiles for the issue categories and their application to the Middle East.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps lack of U.S. involvement is a result of greater Francophone influence, yet Ariadne – the European Human Rights Funders’ Network – does not show significant difference from U.S. funding for the West African region.

programs aside from justice-related efforts.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Afghanistan and Pakistan receive American attention while efforts in other [Central Asian](#) nations remain underfunded and overlooked by U.S. grant-makers. Although efforts at promoting human rights are certainly underway in the rapidly developing nations of [Southeast Asia](#), they draw less funding than their neighbors, such as China, Indonesia, and India.<sup>13</sup>

We have found that these five regions offer opportunities for funders to uniquely impact countries or locales that have yet to receive the outsized attention of other parts of the world. We believe that the very nature of human rights demands that funders leave no part of the world untouched, as the universality of the issues necessitates a global effort at their protection and promotion. The umbrella term, “human rights,” often includes widely funded programs that enshrine the rights of women or strengthen criminal justice systems. Below, we examine alternate subject areas that tend to receive less funding.

## **B. Migrant, Refugee, and Asylee Rights**

According to the 2013 Foundation Center-IHRFG report, programs in the promotion and protection of migration and displacement rights received \$45.8 million, or 4% of all foundation funding for human rights in 2010.<sup>14</sup> In the same year, the Report showed that the largest proportion of funding for migration rights outside the United States went to Western Europe (\$6 million, or roughly 13% of the total),<sup>15</sup> demonstrating a clear need to support related efforts in other parts of the world. Additionally, the Report found that only 18% of the total funding for Migration and Displacement focused on the [right to asylum in other countries from persecution](#).<sup>16</sup>

In our own analysis, we note that, in the past year alone, significant crises related to migrants, refugees, and asylees have arisen in the previously listed regions. The United Nations recently announced that the world faces the most serious refugee crisis in almost 20 years, with 15.4 million refugees, 937,000 asylum seekers, and 28.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) seeking refuge.<sup>17</sup> Regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been unable to react efficiently or effectively, as they cannot properly contend with the instability of conflict. We noted that the Open Society Foundations importantly focus on the rights of immigrants to an unwelcoming Europe,<sup>18</sup> yet we also recognize that alternate streams of funding could be redirected towards the suffering of the world’s refugees and migrants outside of the West. We note current events as

---

<sup>12</sup> Although it is difficult to delineate the Foundation Center-IHRFG report’s data on the funding specific to Central America (without including Mexico), it does show that the Caribbean received \$8 million in 2010, which makes up 0.67% of the total funding dollars for human rights that year.

<sup>13</sup> Assertions here are drawn from thorough analysis of the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Foundations’ programs in human rights. Regarding Southeast Asia, Burma (Myanmar) is one exception, as it will likely receive a disproportionate amount of attention in the coming years, as a result of its recent turn towards economic and political reform. For example on Burma, see Foundation-Center IHRFG report, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, xii.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Tran, *The Guardian*, “UN warns of worst refugee crisis in nearly 20 years,” (London, UK), June 19, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/jun/19/refugee-crisis-world-worst-united-nations>.

<sup>18</sup> Most of the Open Society Foundations’ programs on migration support the rights of migrants in the United States and the European Union. See <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/topics/migration>.

examples of the need for new funding elsewhere. Discrimination and violence in [Burma's Rakhine State](#) has led to a massive exodus of Rohingya Muslims to other parts of Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> War between Islamist separatists and the government in [Mali](#) pushed thousands of refugees into neighboring countries of the Sahel. The civil war in [Syria](#) propels the ongoing refugee crisis worldwide, contributing 4.25 million IDPs and 1.6 million refugees alone.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, we have noted some exemplary circumstances that are changing the opportunities that exist for funders in this field. In December 2012, the [African Union's Kampala Convention](#), a legally binding instrument to protect and assist IDPs, came into force, providing a measure of government support for civil society's action in promoting the rights and improvement of conditions for migrants. Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Iraq, former hotbeds of conflict and net producers of refugees, are beginning to stabilize.<sup>21</sup> The [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#) seeks to implement new policy mechanisms for ensuring a more secure system of migration among its ten member states.<sup>22</sup> Their work exemplifies a recent drive for greater data collection, which we believe provides further occasion for the involvement of outside funders and capable organizations. We also note that this cause inherently relates to many others, from post-conflict reconstruction to development to efforts at combatting human trafficking.<sup>23</sup>

## **C. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) Rights**

Although the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Foundations both dedicate specifically focused grant programs to LGBTQI rights, we have found that the field leaves room for further involvement. According to the Foundation Center-IHRFG Report, only 6% of foundation funding for human rights, or \$72.6 million, goes to the LGBTQI community.<sup>24</sup> We note the current momentum in promoting the equal rights of LGBTQI persons within the United States, but, at the international level, the cause ceases to gain the attention of the American public. The Foundation Center-IHRFG report shows that over 70% of grant dollars in 2010 for LGBT rights went to North America.<sup>25</sup> We similarly found that the Ford Foundation has focused its "Advancing LGBT Rights" grant program on the United States; Astraea and All Out, two movements for global LGBTQI rights, are the only Ford grantees with international programs, and they still work heavily

---

<sup>19</sup> Mark McDonald, *International Herald Tribune*, "As Violence Continues Rohingya Find Few Defenders in Myanmar," (New York, NY), October 31, 2012, <http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/31/as-violence-continues-rohingya-find-few-defenders-in-myanmar>.

<sup>20</sup> Tran, [www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/jun/19/refugee-crisis-world-worst-united-nations](http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/jun/19/refugee-crisis-world-worst-united-nations).

<sup>21</sup> Tran, [www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/jun/19/refugee-crisis-world-worst-united-nations](http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/jun/19/refugee-crisis-world-worst-united-nations).

<sup>22</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Plan of Action for Cooperation on Immigration Matters, <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/asean-plan-of-action-for-cooperation-on-immigration-matters>.

<sup>23</sup> For additional information on migration policy and rights, see the Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org>, and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, <http://www.internal-displacement.org>.

<sup>24</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 109. Human Rights Campaign, for example, is a major organization, which receives a large amount of foundation funding, yet it focuses on domestic matters: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org).

on domestic efforts.<sup>26</sup> While we recognize that this is perhaps a result of the ongoing struggle at home, we find that this suggests there is a space for concerted attention and financial support in order to build a more effective campaign for **LGBTQI rights abroad**.

One exception to our findings, however, is the **Arcus Foundation**. The Foundation Center-IHRFG report references its \$14.6 million in donations as the top funding source for the LGBT population in 2010. Although the Report shows that \$11.7 million of Arcus grant dollars went to causes in North America, it also notes that Arcus was the leading funder in many regions abroad, including Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia and the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> Through our own analysis, we have observed that traditional sentiments fuel prejudice against LGBTQI persons at a societal level, but the governments of many states, from Africa and the Middle East to Russia and Eastern Europe, enshrine discrimination into their laws and allow detention, violence, torture, and execution for this facet of human identity.<sup>28</sup> We posit that action can be taken to change both state and civil society through education, legal reform, and advocacy. Our analysis of Arcus suggests that the organization has sought to achieve this, through a simultaneous push for national reforms as well as media campaigns, investment in more equitable health care, and stronger, safer social networks.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, we find that international organizations promoting LGBTQI rights require further financial support. Although the Foundation Center-IHRFG report shows that Arcus is the leading funder in LGBT rights, the Report also specifies that Arcus contributed a mere \$3 million to foreign programs in 2010.<sup>30</sup> In our own research of this topic, we have noted some exemplary actions and programs that suggest new opportunities for action. International watchdogs need funding in order to more efficiently monitor infringements of human rights standards for LGBTQI persons.<sup>31</sup> More innovative measures can be and have been developed, as discrimination affects all aspects of life for the persons involved. We noted that the Open Society Foundations, for example, have begun to report on **transgender health**, with recommendations to ensure access to quality medical care, regardless of identity.<sup>32</sup> We encourage serious funding increases to provide such innovative mechanisms for greater public advocacy.

### **C. Environmental Rights & Impact of Climate Change on Human Rights**

Our research has found that the exploitation of raw materials or the construction of massive infrastructure projects come at a cost, both in environmental damage and human

---

<sup>26</sup> Ford Foundation grantmaking information found at <http://www.fordfoundation.org/issues/human-rights/advancing-lgbt-rights/grant-making>. Learn more about Astraea at <http://www.astraeafoundation.org> and All Out at <http://www.allout.org>.

<sup>27</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 109-113.

<sup>28</sup> See International SOGI Rights Map, Arcus Foundation, [http://www.arcusfoundation.org/socialjustice/what\\_we\\_support/international/international\\_sogi\\_rights\\_map](http://www.arcusfoundation.org/socialjustice/what_we_support/international/international_sogi_rights_map).

<sup>29</sup> See [http://www.arcusfoundation.org/socialjustice/what\\_we\\_support/international](http://www.arcusfoundation.org/socialjustice/what_we_support/international).

<sup>30</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 109, 112.

<sup>31</sup> An example of such monitoring guidelines comes from the *Yogyakarta Principles*, which, developed in 2006 by rights experts, seek to apply international human rights law to sexual orientation and gender identity. See [http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles\\_en.pdf](http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Open Society Foundations, *Transforming Health: International Rights-Based Advocacy for Trans Health* (February 2013), See <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/transforming-health>.

suffering, yet these matters receive lesser attention from foreign donors. The Foundation Center-IHRFG Report shows that only 3% of all foundation funding for human rights in 2010 went towards the protection of environmental and resource rights. Although Americans hold [property rights](#) in great esteem, the Report's data demonstrates that very little funding exists to promote this right around the globe: in 2010, the Report found that major foundations provided a mere \$860,000 for the promotion of this right in the entire world.<sup>33</sup> Our own analysis of this data has revealed a complex obstacle: although [Climate Change](#) is a threat that gains further relevance every year as the world faces stronger natural disasters and new migratory patterns, it has yet to alarm foundations to more urgently fund new programs that consider the intersection of Global Warming and Rights to the Environment, Resources, and Land.<sup>34</sup> We also note that, in many parts of the world, from the Mekong to the Amazon, these matters are innately tied to the [rights of indigenous peoples](#). The Foundation Center-IHRFG report shows that only 2% of human rights funding focused on indigenous populations in 2010,<sup>35</sup> so we suggest that their defense receive greater funding as well.

Our research regarding this topic examined two cases in Southeast Asia today, where governments aim for fast-paced development on the scale of China yet with the same lack of attention to the needs and rights of the citizens that stand in the way. [Laos](#) is considering many Chinese-funded projects to dam the Mekong River and its tributaries, projects that could lead to a crisis of unforeseen proportions in terms of damage to water systems, agriculture, and the environment.<sup>36</sup> [Cambodia](#) continues its march towards development by logging virgin forests for the use of massive foreign-owned mining and rubber operations. As indigenous communities and average citizens lose their land, they face government repression should they protest.<sup>37</sup> These are mere examples of the havoc that the development at-any-costs mindset can wreak on the rights of people around the globe, and they are issues that do not yet appear to receive great traction in terms of international foundation funding.

## **D. Transparency and Rights Amidst Technological Change**

In our research and analysis, we continued to return to the matter of rapid technological change, which will affect the field of human rights for many years to come. We have noted the recent domestic scandal regarding the National Security Agency's collection of private citizens' data on Internet platforms, as it demonstrates the capacity of

---

<sup>33</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 54. Of the 3% given to Environmental Rights as a general category, only 2% was directed to the Right to Own Property.

<sup>34</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights provides important information on this intersection as well: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/HRClimateChangeIndex.aspx>. EarthRights International's is an exemplary international NGO that works across regions in this field: <http://www.earthrights.org/>. The Ford Foundation provides an interesting but small funding stream: <http://www.fordfoundation.org/issues/sustainable-development/climate-change-responses-that-strengthen-rural-communities>.

<sup>35</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Rachel Vandenbrink, *Radio Free Asia*, "Assistance for Villagers Resettled by Xayaburi Dam to Last One Year" (June 18, 2013), <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/xayaburi-06182013164824.html>.

<sup>37</sup> For information on Cambodian development, see the monitoring work of Global Witness: <https://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/corruption/oil-gas-and-mining/cambodia>.

technological change to transform the [relationship between state and citizens](#).<sup>38</sup> Although social media and access to the Internet have offered a great opportunity to civil society and activist dissenters in authoritarian states, we recognize that they have similarly provided easy tools for state repression. China's obstruction and surveillance of the Internet is well documented, but fewer people know about the "Bamboo Firewall" of Vietnam,<sup>39</sup> or the recent use of Twitter comments to detain Bahraini activists for the "misuse" of the right to free expression.<sup>40</sup> Such manipulation of international human rights standards is clearer to those in the West who move seamlessly between the virtual and real worlds without risk of excessive government intrusion, yet we join the Foundation Center-IHRFG report in reminding funders that efforts must be taken to prepare foreign civil society organizations for such a negative impact.<sup>41</sup>

As funders increase support for the expansion of technology as a tool for advancing human rights, we encourage them to remain vigilant and curtail governments and non-state actors that use technology to repress. Our analysis suggests that this trend will only further develop as the global economy grows closer and eliminates remaining barriers between states and societies, but the matter of its cost versus its benefit remains. [Future success with technology](#) requires an intensive and complex discourse on the subject, innovations that can evade abuse, and greater coordination between funders around the world. With the proper resources and with attention to this constantly changing factor, we find that human rights actors can more securely and more efficiently bring about change.

## Concluding Remarks

---

As discussed previously, current efforts at protecting and promoting international human rights have displayed a range of successes and vulnerabilities. Although programs focused on women's rights or criminal justice reform receive greater funding from foundations, they nonetheless represent an important set of universal values that Western donors have sought to support across the world. The Foundation Center-IHRFG report has provided a greater awareness of the field of funding. Taking this into account, and, given an ability to initiate or alter new debates and trends, what next steps should be taken, and why? In our own research, we found that there are other programs and prospects that receive less support from donors yet require it just as deeply as those receiving wide investment from leading funders. Migrants in need of refugee aid; LGBTQI residents of nations that refuse to acknowledge their identity; indigenous peoples who have lost their communal lands; citizens who seek to make change through the use of new technology and deeper interconnectedness: all represent great opportunities for high impact investment within the sphere of international human rights.

---

<sup>38</sup> *The Guardian*, "Edward Snowden and the NSA Files—Timeline," (June 23, 2013), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/23/edward-snowden-nsa-files-timeline>.

<sup>39</sup> OpenNet Initiative, "Vietnam," <https://opennet.net/research/profiles/vietnam>.

<sup>40</sup> BBC News, "Twitter activists jailed in Bahrain for insulting king" (May 16, 2013), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22541625>.

<sup>41</sup> Foundation Center-IHRFG report, 31.