WOMEN’S VOICE & LEADERSHIP - CARIBBEAN

VALIDATION & STRATEGY INCEPTION CONVENING

St. John’s, Antigua | June 24 - 25, 2019

Convened by
The MATCH International Women’s Fund and
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Funded by the Government of Canada
INTRODUCTION

Women’s Voice & Leadership (WVL) is a program supported by the Government of Canada in the framework of its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), to strengthen women’s organizations and movements in approximately 30 countries and/or regions around the world. In the Caribbean, the initiative is being implemented alongside women’s rights organizations (WROs) by The MATCH International Women’s Fund (The MATCH Fund) in partnership with the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice (Astraea). The MATCH Fund is Canada’s sole global fund for women, girls, and transgender people. Astraea is the only philanthropic organization working exclusively to advance lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LBTIQ) human rights around the world.

The two organizations share a rich history, deeply embedded in feminist and human rights movements the world over. For 40 years, both organizations have been exclusively investing in grassroots organizations advancing their own solutions to improve women’s human rights in their own contexts.

Investment in local WROs is critical to changing the systems, norms, attitudes and behaviours that harm women and hold them back. The WVL-Caribbean project will directly support the capacity, leadership and agendas of the women who belong to the very communities most affected by discrimination, poverty and violence. The project will invest in their feminist strategies and priorities for change, as well as strengthen women’s movements as a whole. The aim of the WVL - Caribbean project is to match the efforts and innovation happening at the grassroots with the resources required to sustain and scale the work.
THE CONVENING MEETING BACKGROUND

The MATCH Fund and Astraea hosted a two-day consultation from June 24-25, 2019 in St. John’s, Antigua with 31 participants from 12 Caribbean countries representing women’s rights organizations and LBTIQ groups from around the region to discuss the WVL - Caribbean project.

The aim of the convening was to explore how the WVL - Caribbean project can respond to movement priorities in the region, inform the project design, and to examine the funding landscape—as a means to strategize around the long-term sustainability of feminist organizing and movement building in the region.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The objective of the convening was to explore and inform the following:

- WROs and LBTIQ groups’ funding needs and priorities in the region;
- Initial priorities and geographic mandate with a focus on strategic advocacy opportunities;
- Grantmaking, capacity-building, and other programmatic and thematic approaches;
- Grant management and capacity-building across organizations, countries, and thematic areas;
- Challenges for advancing women’s rights across the region;
- Values, principles, and opportunities for feminist movement building; and
- Preliminary thinking to study the feasibility of a longer-term funding mechanism later in the project.

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<th>Country Representation at the Convening</th>
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<td>Other: MATCH &amp; Astraea Staff</td>
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Table 1: country representation at the WVL - Caribbean Convening
MEETING SUMMARY

At the end of the meeting, the participants’ feedback highlighted that the convening was a useful opportunity for networking and relationship building for participants and their organizations in the region. The majority also strongly agreed that—over the two days—they learned about organizations, work, and/or initiatives in the region that they previously did not know about. These insights further stressed the importance of providing collective spaces for strategizing, learning, and connecting across organizations, islands, themes, and intersections to strengthen movement building. The following sections of the report provide a summary of the key discussions and insights.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMINIST MOVEMENT BUILDING**

- Opportunities for collaboration between entities, including WROs and LBTIQ partners, as well as with the more sympathetic State/Gender Bureaus.
- Pre-existing sub-regional groups that can readily facilitate feminist movement building.
- Growing support for the feminist movement across the Caribbean.
- Committed advocates from across the region that are dedicated to advancing women’s rights.
- New injections of funding targeting women and girls and LBTIQ populations provide an optimistic environment for feminist movement building.
- Strong connections with international organizations that can provide technical assistance and funding.
- Existence of Caribbean expertise, as well as prior research, interventions, and materials that can support WROs and feminist movement building.
- Opportunity to access funding on climate change.
- However, not many WROs are currently working on this issue and they will require technical assistance to support their engagement on climate change.

**CHALLENGES FOR FEMINIST MOVEMENT BUILDING**

- Insufficient knowledge among WROs about available resources (e.g. donors, technical assistance, etc).
- Heavy competition for diminishing funds.
- High levels of donor dependency.
- Restrictive donor agendas and funding priorities.
- High cost of travel within the region that restricts regional convening and movement building.
- Movement building requires significant time investment and staff resources.
- Insufficient human resources (most organizations have only volunteers).
- Staff burnout and the need for self-care.
- Sustaining staff commitment without compensation.
- Insufficient research to inform inclusive policy-making.
- Need to increase political will, particularly as some States’ gender bureaus show resistance to feminist agendas.
- Some governments trying to renege on advances made to support women’s rights and gender justice.
- Working with other WROs and LBTIQ groups that do not share feminist values.
- Insufficient focus on LBTIQ people in feminist movement building.
- Threatening environment to WROs and activists.
PARTICIPANTS’ FEEDBACK

CARIBBEAN CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Need a wider and more diverse pool of support.
- Importance of local ownership (e.g. capacity-building provided by Caribbean experts & individuals).
- Need for shared learning spaces, including feminist leadership training.
- Improved communication between women’s organizations and other social movements needs more investment.
- Need for organizational development support (e.g. financial planning, succession planning, strategic planning).
- Recognition that civil society organizations (CSOs) have different stages of growth and that not all methodologies are suitable to all group-tailored approaches are required.

THE WVL - CARIBBEAN PROJECT SHOULD...

- Provide sustainable core and program funding.
- Support Caribbean feminist movement building by:
  - Supporting efforts towards a regional feminist advocacy.
  - Supporting/encouraging collaboration at the national, regional and sub-regional levels.
  - Providing institutional strengthening opportunities to umbrella (core movement) organizations.
  - Facilitating intergenerational & cross-movement dialogue.
- Enable mechanisms for information sharing (such as a database of regional WROs and LBTIQ groups and/or a web-based platform for information sharing and knowledge management).
- Provide support to partners around feminist resource mobilization.
- Provide capacity building opportunities (including communications training) that is grounded, analytical, and political.
- Prioritize an approach that centers collective care, well-being, and healing justice.

GRANTMAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Guidelines for selection criteria of WVL - Caribbean advisors:
  - Ensure transparency in selection.
  - Candidates should be from non-official development assistance (ODA) countries, be unattached and have demonstrable experience and understanding of feminist organizing and the Caribbean women’s and LBTIQ movements.
  - Advisors must indicate any existing/potential conflicts of interest.
- Multi-Year Grants
  - Recommended minimum value of CAD $20,000 with consideration of larger amounts to larger organizations
  - Supports core costs.
- Responsive Grants
  - More easily accessed.
  - Recommended value of CAD $6,000 - $15,000.
  - Based on a clear set of criteria.
  - Responsive to regional circumstances.
PARTICIPANTS’ FEEDBACK

WVL THEMATIC AREAS

RECOMMENDED THEMATIC AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED BY WVL

- Poverty and issues of economic justice—specifically women’s unpaid labour, domestic worker rights, trafficking & migration).

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)—specifically the decriminalization of abortion, non-discriminatory access to services, sex work, sexual rights & citizenship, child abuse.

- Social & cultural rights and policies—specifically for Indigenous peoples with regard to land rights & heritage concerns.

- Feminist leadership & movement building—specifically cross-movement relationship building, intergenerational shared learning.

- Safety & security for vulnerable populations—including provision of safe spaces/shelters for gender-based violence survivors and LBTIQ persons.

- Legal reform & access to justice—specifically gender protocols for the courts and for judges around sexual offences, rule of law, improving state & police responses to gender-based violence survivors, advocacy for equality Acts around the region.

CLIMATE CHANGE

While participants recognized the extreme importance of addressing climate change as a top priority in the region, many individuals expressed concern about how to draw connections and integrate this work into their organizations’ existing priorities for advancing women’s rights, feminist, and LBTIQ organising, and gender equality. The following observations were made:

- WROs and LBTIQ groups require responsive grants for effective disaster relief services/supports.

- WROs & LBTIQ groups need to build capacity around addressing climate change and drawing connections to existing organizational priorities.

- Recognition that climate change is an ongoing priority and extends beyond the usual Caribbean hurricane season.

- Working on this issue requires partnership with national disaster management offices and local groups such as: The Met Office, district nurses, and other resource persons that can readily identify community needs.

- Strong interest in strengthening capacity around feminist disaster planning and work around climate resilience.
MONEY MATTERS

"WHO" IS FUNDING "WHAT" IN THE CARIBBEAN?

- Global Affairs Canada
  - A broad cross-section of regional projects—excluding those focusing on climate change, economic improvement, & justice reform. All of GAC projects have a strong gender responsive focus.
  - Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)
- Diplomatic Missions
- COC Netherlands
  - Technical assistance and funding for LBTIQ work.
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
  - Core support for LBTIQ organizing.
- UN Women
  - Multi-year funding; based on predefined thematic areas.
- European Union
  - Multi-year funding for gender-based violence and human rights.
- World Association for Christian Communication
  - Technical assistance and funding.
- Maria Holder Memorial Trust
  - Multi-year funding for education/schooling for girls.
- FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund
  - Funding for non-registered feminist organizations.
- Caribbean Vulnerable Communities (CVC)
  - Activity specific funding, supporting non-registered organizations.
- The Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls (European Union and United Nations funding collaboration)
  - Focus in the Caribbean on Family Violence Private funders
- Corporate Funding (e.g. Digicel, Flow etc)
- Local Fundraising (accounts for < 5% of WROs money).

CHALLENGES THAT WRO’S & LBTIQ GROUPS FACE WITH DONORS

- Only a few donors provide multi-year funding. However, this is primarily for project activities and often does not cover core costs (e.g. Staff salaries, overhead costs, etc).
- Unlikely to get funded if not registered.
- Some donors don’t believe CSOs have the capacity to execute activities.
- Restrictive SRHR funding given the implications of the Global Gag Rule.
- Funding for specific ‘one-off’ events & activities.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- The MATCH Fund and Astraea will be conducting research from June to August 2019 to further inform the design of the WVL - Caribbean Project.
- The first Call for Proposals will be shared at the end of 2019, with the first grant cycle slated for Spring 2020.
EVALUATION FEEDBACK

Participants were asked to complete a brief evaluation following the Convening to provide feedback on the meeting and to inform the immediate actions that will inform the WVL - Caribbean project.

16 participants completed the evaluations and the findings are noted below:

THE CONVENING:
ASPECTS THAT WORKED WELL:
- Ability to share stories and speak openly.
- Felt empowering and rejuvenating.
- Diversity of and interlinkage between Women’s Rights and LBTIQ movements.
- Felt like a non-hierarchical, co-created space.

KNOWLEDGE GAPS THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE THE WVL - CARIBBEAN PROJECT’S RESEARCH TO INFORM:
- Clear understanding of legislation and policies which create inequality for women and LBTIQ communities in the Caribbean.
- Best practice models for resource mobilization for WROs and LBTIQ groups.
- Feminist movement building strategies and relevant capacity development initiatives.

FORWARD-LOOKING ISSUES THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE ADDRESSED IN THE WVL - CARIBBEAN PROJECT:
- Resource mobilization.
- Movement building.
- Climate and environmental justice.
- Navigating the social and political landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CONVENINGS:
- Additional meeting days.
- Accommodation and meeting venue in the same location.
- Time for socializing to support networking.
- Improved facilitation methodology to meet the objectives and support relationship building between the organizations.

LINGERING QUESTIONS FROM THE CONVENING:
Participants were interested in receiving key information about the Project, including the official start date, priority areas, other opportunities for convening, and next steps. There were specific questions on the grant-making component, such as the WROs eligibility criteria, funding duration, composition of the grant-making panel, criteria against which performance will be assessed. In addition, participants commented on establishing a Caribbean funding agency to support feminist movement building; furthering linkages between sexual, climate and economic justice with gender; and ensuring that the Caribbean feminist movement is inclusive of indigenous women’s leadership.
EVALUATION FEEDBACK

Adequacy of the time allotted at the Convening

Usefulness of Convening as an opportunity for networking & relationship building in the Region

Improved knowledge of other feminist organizations and their work/initiatives in the Region