

# Global fund for women: business development



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## Global Fund for Women: An Introduction

The Global Fund for Women is a non-profit working for the advancement of women's rights globally. Their unique structure, approach, and strategy provide a great example of socially responsible philanthropic innovation. This examination will explore the unique aspects of the Global Fund for Women's grant-making, leadership structure and strategy that enabled it to maximize its leverage as a global social investing funding intermediary. Second, the benefits to donors who support the Global Fund for Women will be outlined. Third, organization evolution since a historic leadership change will be examined. Finally, new program implementations to advance the Global Fund for Women's mission will be discussed. These facets will ultimately demonstrate ways in which socially responsible initiatives can maintain a competitive edge using innovated approaches.

### Maximizing Leverage as a Social Funding Intermediary

The organizational goal of the Global Fund for Women is to maximize their leverage as an intermediary for socially conscious philanthropic work. They are able to reach these goals through unique features of their grant-making ability, leadership structure, and organizational strategy in the following ways.

First, the Global Fund for Women has a unique approach to grant-making. Grants ranging from \$500 – \$15, 000 are awarded based on the following process. First, grant applications can be submitted in any language or format (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). Once received, applications are reviewed and informed by experts from the local area of the application and

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on the Global Fund for Women's advisory panel (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). Once the applications have been reviewed and vetted by multiple advisors, they are evaluated by the board of directors over a period of four to six months, with a final decision being rendered by the board (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). This structure and processes maximized leverage for the Global Fund for Women in that not only are the board implementing a decision-making model, based on objective criteria (c. f. Daft, 2016), they leverage the knowledge of local experts and their advisory board in order to maximize the amount of information and context that feeds into the decision-making process. As well, the period of four to six months for a decision to be rendered ensures decisions aren't made too hastily and can help avoid possible distortions or other pitfalls (Talley, 2011) that can plague the decision-making process.

Second, the Global Fund for Women has a unique leadership structure. At the top level, the board of directors consists of 12 members, each with a wealth of experience in many diverse areas and most of whom are not from the United States (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). Further, Global Fund's staff includes 29 members, hailing from a variety of countries (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). These staff and executives are divided into three teams. One team manages the development and communication, the second manages finance and administration, and programs and evaluation (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007).

This approach of having small globally positioned, and agile teams provides the Global Fund for Women maximum efficiency, thereby reducing overhead

to maintain and maximize leverage as the foremost global socially minded intermediary for socially responsible philanthropy.

Third, the Global Fund for Women's strategy is unique and provides many competitive advantages for the organization. This strategy is built upon relationships with advisors and local experts, adeptly illustrates a strategic constituencies model (Martz, 2013), whereby the strategy is geared towards mutual interests and goals of the various stakeholders of the organization. This increases buy-in and maximizes leverage in developing areas, as the networking and use of local experts and advisors plays an instrumental role in advising and informing where funding through grants is allocated

Another key point of strategy is the Global Fund for Women is geared towards helping smaller organizations connect to larger, more resourced ones, which helps the grant recipients learn to be self sustaining and sufficient (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). This approach helps break the cycle of power imbalance in developing countries whereby financial dependencies influence organizational development (Rauh, 2010). The Global Fund for Women's recognition of the importance of self-governance and autonomy of grant recipients is key to allowing organic development to occur. This approach allows the Global Fund for Women to increase performance appraisals and accountability structures and processes, which allows insight into what initiatives and approaches elicit the best results, without imposing any undue impediments to organic growth and development within organizations who receive grants.

Benefits to Donors

The outlined aspects of their grant-making ability, leadership structure, and organizational strategy maximizes leverage for global philanthropy, which provides donors interested in engaging in investing in the cause, maximum value and benefit for their donations. This maximum benefit is achieved through this outlined leverage and strategy to ensure the right programs are identified and supported. As well, the Global fund for women is focused on funding global initiatives that are start ups, working on difficult or controversial human rights issues, or led by or working with particularly marginalized populations (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007).

In addition to leverage maximizing through funding, structure, and strategy, the Global Fund for Women benefits donors through lean and diverse, globalized staffing, which provides efficient structures that ensure more money goes to actual cause not administration overhead. By virtue of having this lean structure, donors can see a pattern of responsible use of funds. Research shows that an organization's allocations of funds to initiatives and to cover overhead communicate significant albeit incomplete information to donors and key stakeholders (Bowman, 2006). This provides assurance that donors' money is well invested in a cause that will further social change globally.

### Historical Challenges & Evolution

Throughout the years, the Global Fund for Women implemented historical change in the course of their evolution. Perhaps the largest change came in 1996, when the original founder sought to step down to transition the leadership of the organization to the next generation (Arrillaga-Andreessen &

Chang, 2007). This new CEO named Kavita Ramdas was only 33 years of age at the time of taking leadership of the Global Fund for Women (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). Ramdas' fresh approach to managing the organization saw tremendous steps forward in the evolution as historical change was implemented.

First, Ramdas worked on staff development and creating a more professional and structured environment (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007).

Improving human resource management and staffing is shown to catalyze competitive advantage (Buller & McEvoy, 2012), thereby increasing overall efficacy of the organization as a whole. Additional points of significant evolution include focusing on grants in Africa, which prior to Ramdas' arrival was underserved by the organization compared to other regions (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). As well, Ramdas implemented changes in strategy to grant-making, external communications, and performance appraisal assessments and accountability systems (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). In addition, Ramdas created an endowment fund to ensure the long-term survival of the organization (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). The historical change of leadership and evolution of organizational practices, policy, procedures, and practice help the Global Fund for Women more effectively further their mission over the long term.

#### New Programs: Furthering the Mission

In working to further the mission of the Global Fund for Women, as outlined, Ramdas implemented new programs and changes, many of which already outlined in this examination. A couple highlights of these changes include

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The Africa Initiative and strategic changes to grant-making policy and how the success of grant initiatives is measured (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). First, as mentioned prior, the continent of Africa was receiving fewer grants compared to other areas. In 1998, Ramdas launched an outreach initiative to better understand some of the needs within Africa (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). After assessing these needs in conjunction with key local stakeholders, the number of grants increased from 29 grant recipients to 131 (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007).

Second, Ramdas implemented several changes to the grant-making structure. These changes include increasing the maximum amount that can be requested and increasing the frequency in which the board met to decide upon grants (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). Whereas prior to this change the board only met twice a year to decide which grants will be awarded, Ramdas understood that the need for these grants was at times more urgent (Arrillaga-Andreessen & Chang, 2007). With this realization, Ramdas increased the number of board meetings to improve grants from two per year to five per year. This ability to accept applications at a more frequent rate coupled with their focused approach on underserved areas like Africa, means an increase in the organization's effectiveness and responsiveness to empower change for women on a global scale.

## Conclusion

This examination sought to explore the unique aspects of the Global Fund for Women's grant-making, leadership structure and strategy that enabled it to maximize its leverage as a global social investing funding intermediary.

Additionally, it sought to examine the benefits to donors. As well, it outlined the organization's evolution since a historic leadership change. Finally, new program implementations to advance the Global Fund for Women's mission were discussed. These outlined facets provide a glimpse into this organization's history, a current snapshot of their ability to impact global change, and how they strategically implement a plan for sustainability in the future. All of which culminate to advance their mission to support and strengthen women's rights on a global scale.

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