



CHANGE

that lasts

40 years of impact

Executive Summary

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Change that Lasts: 40 Years of Impact reflects on how global feminist movements, supported by Mama Cash since 1983, have driven transformative change led by women, girls, and trans and intersex activists worldwide. In its four decades, Mama Cash has provided €140 million¹ in funding and accompaniment,² including €91 million in 7,460 grants directly to feminist organisations and women's funds in 160 countries. This report celebrates feminist movements' achievements in advocating for political, economic, cultural, social, and civil rights, as well as bodily autonomy. It shows how this was made possible with support that required trust and adaptability, and offers practical recommendations and insights for funders to support this vital work.

Over the span of 40 years, Mama Cash has witnessed a remarkable era of social transformation driven by the relentless efforts of women, girls, and trans and intersex activists that it has supported from 1983 to 2023. In 1983, intimate partner violence legislation was virtually absent globally, with only Ireland having specific laws addressing it. By 2023, this had shifted dramatically with 162 countries, comprising 80% of the 193 UN member states, implementing such laws. Similarly, the accessibility of elective abortion saw a notable surge, with only 35 countries allowing it in 1983, compared to 77 countries in 2023. Furthermore, the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual behaviour experienced substantial progress, with the number of UN member states criminalising it reduced by half from 118 to 68 by 2023, alongside 36 nations legalising marriage equality.

These changes were propelled by rapidly growing feminist activism throughout the world, represented by increasing numbers of feminist activist groups, funds, and networks. Mama Cash has always prioritised lesbian and Black women's leadership and amplified the voices of trans and intersex individuals and sex workers in its funding and advocacy efforts.

Through short briefs, this study sheds light on ten of the many key issues and communities that have been central to feminist movements and Mama Cash's grantmaking over the past four decades.³

¹ This figure includes: €91,252,596 in direct grantmaking, €38,000,000 in grants to CMI! alliance partners, and €9,236,500 in RUF grantmaking between 2012-2023. Additionally, between 1983-2001, there were €1,200,000 in guarantees from the Guarantee Fund, and €408,228 in other loans and guarantees. All currency conversions from guilders (before 1999) to euros are based on a conversion rate of 0.45.

² In addition to funding, Mama Cash provides accompaniment support to grantee-partners to obtain, improve, and retain skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to fulfil their missions.

³ The ten key issues discussed in this report represent only a selection of the many issues that Mama Cash has supported over the past forty years. These ten issues were specifically identified based on a review of internal and external documents, as well as through an analysis of Mama Cash's grantmaking history as being representative of Mama Cash's work (see Methodology). Many other issues that Mama Cash has supported are not highlighted in this report.

1. Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Rights

With over €15.4 million in nearly 840 grants in 82 countries, Mama Cash supported Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) groups and movements that grew LBQ belonging, safety, and joy. Their work paved the way for legalising marriage equality, decriminalising same-sex sexual behaviour, and allowing adoption by same-sex couples in more than a dozen countries.

2. Reproductive Justice

Mama Cash invested nearly €17 million of its grantmaking funds in more than 920 grants into organisations advancing reproductive justice in 100 countries. Measures implemented by LBQ, trans, intersex, sex workers, girls, HIV positive, and disabled women's organisations broke down age-old barriers, opening up access to informed Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services and gender-affirming care, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

3. Countering Gender-Based Violence

Mama Cash gave 30%⁴ of its grantmaking funds – close to €27 million – in nearly 1,400 grants to organisations in 120 countries working to counter Gender Based Violence (GBV). With Mama Cash's support, grantee-partners made violence visible, created solutions, and catalysed international agreements and support networks. Trans and intersex activists were able to obtain legal protections and enhanced institutional responsiveness.

4. Sex Workers' Rights

Mama Cash moved €6.8 million, 7% of its grantmaking funds, in more than 360 grants to sex worker-led organisations in 66 countries, catalysing sex worker movements in every region of the world. As a result, sex worker activists successfully advocated for their rights to labour, health and safety, and managed to undo the conflation of sex work and trafficking. Mama Cash also incubated and rallied donors to support the Red Umbrella Fund, which has moved more than €9.2 million in grants to sex worker-led movements since 2012.

5. Racial Justice

Mama Cash channelled €5 million via nearly 400 grants in 52 countries to promote racial justice work led globally by Black, Indigenous, Roma, Dalit, Moro, and other racialised feminists, bringing community liberation and transnational solidarity around the world while shaping global feminist movement agendas.

⁴ Percentages will total more than 100% because each grant could address multiple issue areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Impact Study illustrates how four decades of feminist activism have created change from local to global scales. The interconnected nature of these efforts provides valuable insights for donors, highlighting effective resourcing strategies and practices.

1. Prioritise support to self-led feminist movements and activism.
2. Centre women's and feminist funds to move more and better money.
3. Strengthen feminist partnerships and networks.
4. Support seed funding and organisation building.
5. Maintain funding across the social change cycle.
6. Provide core and flexible support.
7. Prioritise 5-10 years – or more – of support.
8. Commit to listening and adapting, and pioneering grantmaking that echoes feminist principles.

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Kenya"





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