

Reflections on Ten Years of Funding Feminist Activism

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Looking back on a decade at Mama Cash

Mama Cash is the oldest international women's fund, founded in 1983 by five Dutch lesbian feminist activists who understood that financial resources are political and that access to money plays a critical role in supporting feminist-led social change.

I joined Mama Cash as Director of Development and Communications in 2007; in 2008, I was privileged to become the Executive Director – the first ED who was not Dutch. Mama Cash has grown and changed significantly since I arrived in 2007. Ten years ago, Mama Cash was not well known outside the Netherlands, except in feminist movement circles. Over the past decade, we have grown in size, visibility and reputation. Today Mama Cash is seen as a strategic player in donor circles, and we are taken more seriously.

Historically, our Board had also been Dutch. By the time I arrived, the Board was becoming international, with representation of feminist activists from the Global South and East which we felt was important for a women's fund that aims to be responsive to global movements. In 2007, we introduced Board Co-Chairs, with a Dutch and an international Co-Chair. An international Board is crucial for a fund like Mama Cash, and I have worked to bring seasoned activists to the Board to ensure that we are guided by feminists from around the world who are active in the movements we support.

Between 2007 and 2016, our total annual income nearly tripled, growing from €4.8 million to €13.9 million. In the same period, our annual grantmaking grew from €2.8 million to €5.3 million, and we are also providing more than €4 million annually to feminist partner organisations in a significant, five-year collaboration. The growth didn't happen overnight, and neither was it always steady. The period in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 was sometimes challenging for both individual and institutional fundraising. And with growing competition in the field, we have had to work hard to make the case for our approach to funding self-led feminist activism. In 2014 and 2015, we invested enormous time and energy in the development of two collaborative strategic partnership proposals to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These proposals were ultimately funded and have accounted for significant growth, though they required a great investment of resources without any guarantee of success.

In the end, with both ups and downs, we have grown significantly over ten years and launched two strategic plans under my watch, the first in 2009 and the second in 2015. The growth over the past decade has allowed us to achieve a lot, and it has also challenged and tested us. Mama Cash needed to improve and sharpen procedures, planning and decision-making. At the same time, we wanted to honour our commitment to feminist process, principles and shared leadership. The past decade has been a dynamic time of re-kindling and reclaiming our radical feminist politics, while at the same time professionalising the organisation – and acknowledging that there has sometimes been a challenging and painful tension between these dual ambitions.

We radically shifted our approach to grantmaking – from providing mostly short-term, project funding, to implementing a new movement-building model and partnering with grantees over periods of years. We also made a deeper commitment to supporting other women's funds around the world to become stronger and more stable so that they could also provide better support to our movements. And we realised that it was not enough for us just to continue to raise more money to give away. We saw that

the donor landscape itself needed to change and that we could play a valuable role in catalysing change. We realised that contributing to leveraging new money for women's, girls' and trans people's rights was crucial work to do, even if the new money did not come through Mama Cash.

As I leave Mama Cash, I take the opportunity to share my thoughts on some of the important changes we have been through in the past ten years. We have learned much about supporting feminist activism and also about nurturing an organisation that is stable and strong, but also has the energy, flexibility and appetite to continually interrogate our practice and look for new ways to better serve the women's, girls' and trans people's human rights organisations and movements that remains our core reason for being.

Launching a new grantmaking strategy to better serve feminist organisations and movements

In 2009, we launched a new strategic plan that radically changed our grantmaking strategy. A strategic review in 2008 made it clear that the more than 200 mostly small project grants that we had been giving annually were not sufficiently contributing to the change we wanted to see in the world. We also knew that women's rights organisations were dramatically underfunded. They had difficulty accessing the core funding that would allow them to grow, achieve stability and determine their own priorities. So, we began to provide larger, flexible core support grants and to emphasise multi-year funding. We chose to work with fewer partners over a longer period of time to support them to grow, take their work to scale and achieve deeper change in their communities.

We also moved from a regional to an issues-based approach and created three thematic portfolios: Body (bodily integrity and autonomy), Money (economic justice) and Voice (agency and participation). This shift responded to the reality that most issues facing women, girls and trans people, like violence, economic exclusion, and lack of access to decision-making and control of resources, are not confined to a particular region. Working thematically across regions has allowed us to facilitate contacts and learning between partners from different regions and to support stronger alliances and movement building.

In 2009, we also began to integrate non-financial support – *accompaniment* – into our model. Our intent was to partner more thoughtfully with our grantees to support them in the ways that they identified as most important. This accompaniment support – deepening our relationships with partners, listening and acting as a sounding-board, providing connections to skill-building resources, making introductions to new donors, facilitating contacts with other activists, groups and movements – has supported groups to build their skills and their networks in order to have a stronger collective voice.

I would add that building out an effective accompaniment programme did not just fall into place! It has been an ongoing process over many years. One learning from the early years was to be realistic about our limitations and what it is possible to do from Amsterdam. Within a couple of years, we had learned that one of the most valuable contributions we could make was to facilitate contacts between our grantee-partners for peer learning and South-South exchange. We have done a lot of testing – of convenings, for instance, as a way to contribute to movement building — and we continue to learn and systematise our accompaniment work.

'Re-inventing' ourselves was challenging, but it was the right thing to do. The changes we made were based on feedback from our grantee-partners and other allies who told us that this is what women's rights movements needed. Today, we hear from our grantee-partners that resourcing and trusting them to set and pursue their own agendas is one of our most important contributions. It is our ongoing commitment to stay in conversation with the activists and movements we support.

I think it's also useful to observe that important innovations often have unforeseen consequences – consequences that at a certain point call upon us again to review, question, refine and adapt. One thing we didn't entirely anticipate, though it seems clear in hindsight, is that focusing on providing longer-term and renewal support has meant we have had fewer resources available for new groups. So a challenge in more recent years has been figuring out how and when to 'graduate' groups from our support to free up resources for new partners. We do not have all the answers, but we know the process requires attention, and we are trying to engage thoughtfully with it, and also to learn from the experience of other funders who have grappled with this.

Another important observation is that implementing these shifts helped us to achieve a greater clarity of purpose – clarity that has guided us in the ensuing years. In 2014, when we reviewed the last strategic plan, sharpened our theory of change and created the new 2015-2020 strategic plan, I think it was critical that we undertook the process internally and under staff leadership. We had some support from consultants, but the work was principally conceived and carried out by staff. Doing the work ourselves allowed us to articulate what we had learned and to continue to build clarity about our role and added-value in supporting change.

One important result of our internal review process was to articulate more deliberately and clearly the rationale for funding *self-led organising* and *collective action*. Between 2009 and 2014, Mama Cash had developed a practice of funding *self-led groups*: groups that are composed of and led by the people who have direct experience of the discrimination, stigma and exclusion that they are fighting and who have solutions rooted in their own contexts. We believe that supporting groups of people speaking *for themselves* makes social change deeper, more empowering and more sustained. We had also decided that it was key for us to fund groups that were consciously engaging in *collective action as part of movements*.

In 2014, we engaged deeply in reviewing how our last strategic plan had gone and discussing what we had learned about how change happens. We refreshed our theory of change, and we also discussed what new opportunities we saw and what we hoped Mama Cash could accomplish over the next six years. The time that we took to reflect, think and vision together as an organisation contributed greatly to our clarity and focus on these key issues. This clarity has been very valuable, and it continues to provide ongoing support to our decision-making. Refreshing our theory of change and the resulting clarity about how change happens enabled us, after years of struggle, to develop a thoughtful and sensible learning, monitoring and evaluation (LM&E) approach and framework.

Strengthening women's funds and the women's funding movement

Mama Cash lives and moves in many worlds, but one of our core communities is the community of women's funds. We are a women's fund, and some of our donors fund us for that reason. We are also a funder and partner of other women's funds because we believe that women's funds play an important and unique role in building the resource base for women's rights work in contexts around the world. We are also an active participant in Prospera, an international network of 38 national, regional and international women's funds. For the past three years, I have served on Prospera's Board.

Ten years ago, we began to see that we had been supporting women's funds in the same way that we supported women's rights organisations. However, *as funders*, national, regional and international women's funds have unique needs. In 2009, we created a global women's funds grantmaking portfolio that was guided by a framework that laid out the criteria we would use in funding other women's funds. We provided the flexible grants and accompaniment support that women's funds need. We also brought our women's funds partners together for peer sharing and learning on a range of issues from

strengthening fundraising from local donors to improving their skills in supporting girls and young women activists. As we brought other funds together to build their capacities, we also recognised that we had much to learn from our sister funds – on subjects as diverse as sharpening the political clarity of our communications to understanding how to fund self-led girls' groups.

During the 2009-2014 strategic plan, we often struggled to define our work with women's funds. We had created a dedicated women's funds grantmaking portfolio, which was definitely a step in the right direction. We realised, however, that our work with women's funds went beyond grantmaking. For example, we worked together with some of our women's funds partners to advocate with other donors to increase and improve their funding to women's rights organisations. And we realised that the women's funds that we funded were also our peers – organisations engaged in similar work with whom we shared learning and exchanged thoughts about practice.

Finding the balance between being a *peer* and a *funder* of other women's funds has not been without challenges. As I have just noted, we play many roles: we make the case to donors to support women's funds; we fund many women's funds around the world; and, we *are* a women's fund that belongs to a global community of women's funds. Over the past ten years, I have been aware of all these roles and tried to encourage Mama Cash as an organisation to recognise and understand this multiplicity of roles – all of them meaningful. Many staff at Mama Cash and at other women's funds around the world have contributed to my thinking about this. I have also tried to be clear about balancing when we needed to step forward and use our voice, and when it was important for us to step back and yield the stage, recognising the voice and leadership of other women's funds, particularly funds based in the Global South.

One result of recognising and grappling with these multiple roles was to expand our work with women's funds to become a core strategy within the context of our 2015-2020 strategic plan. Through this strategy, which we have called Strengthening Women's Funds, we continue to provide grantmaking and accompaniment support to women's funds, but we also collaborate actively with both grantee and non-grantee women's funds in joint fundraising and donor advocacy. Through collaborating with other women's funds, we are better able to increase appreciation in the donor community for the roles that women's funds play in funding women's rights work and to leverage more and better funding for feminist movements. In 2016, for example, we supported a group of four Global South-based women's funds to partner with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs – leading to the creation of the Leading from the South Fund, a commitment of €40 million over four years for women's rights organisations. This Fund is managed by the four women's funds – setting an important international precedent in recognising the expertise and leadership of Global South-based women's funds and their capacity to manage significant bilateral funding.

Using our position and assets to leverage greater change and widen the circle

Mama Cash's core identity is as a funder and grantmaker: we mobilise resources to fund and support the strengthening of feminist organisations and movements around the world. But over the past ten years, we have increasingly seen that our role as a funder goes beyond grantmaking. We realised that we possessed other important assets that could serve the movements we support: our convening power, our access to other funders, our expertise on funding with a gender-lens, our experience in providing core funding and accompaniment to self-led groups. Figuring out how to leverage these many assets has also been a journey.

Prior to 2009, our work to influence other donors was mostly ad hoc – we used conferences and other speaking opportunities to bring a feminist voice into donor discussions. Starting in 2009, we have

worked to be more strategic and proactive. Initially, we called the work “influencing philanthropy”, and we began by engaging with private foundations, especially in Europe, and also with individual donors. It took a few years for this work to ‘gel’ within Mama Cash, but I always felt clear that we could and should draw on our relatively unique position as a movement-oriented feminist funder based in Europe. I believed that it was important to use our connections, networks and influence to respond proactively to both funding and knowledge gaps in the field and to deepen support for women’s, girls’ and trans people’s movements. By 2011, we had made good progress in articulating how this work fit into our strategic framework, but ownership within our organisation was still unclear, reflected in the lack of a workplan and budget. In 2012 and 2013, we addressed the gaps by creating infrastructure within Mama Cash: a workplan, budget, and roles and responsibilities for staff. Today, we are clear that our donor advocacy focuses on private foundations and bilateral donors. We call the strategy Influencing the Donor Community, and it has the objective of using our knowledge, experience and credibility within the donor community to leverage ‘more and better’ funding for the types of organisations and movements that Mama Cash supports. Over the course of the years since 2009, we’ve learned many lessons in this work.

Taking (calculated) risks

One lesson has been the importance of being willing to accept uncertainty and start what seems like a potentially important conversation, even when we don’t know exactly where it may lead. For example, several years ago, we heard of an interest in discussing how the private sector and corporate actors might contribute to efforts to mobilise more resources for women’s rights. In response, Mama Cash, together with the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, used our convening power to bring together 30 key stakeholders in 2013 for a meeting that was called “Innovation and Action”. That led to a further meeting twenty months later in January 2015 called the Win-Win Convening that brought together trailblazers from the corporate world, foundations, women’s funds, women’s rights organisations and others.

The second convening continued the conversation to identify opportunities for new linkages, collaborations and actions that could shape the growing conversation about the value of “investing in women and girls” and mobilise greater resources for work to advance women’s rights. Mama Cash ultimately moved away from influencing corporate actors and stepped out of the leadership in this initiative, but our initial investment of time contributed to the creation of the Win-Win coalition and subsequently Win-Win Strategies which continue to support women and girls globally by expanding resources to empower women and advance their rights. We didn’t know where this initiative would lead, but we sensed the appetite for exploration, and the result has been a dynamic and still-growing cross-sector conversation and collaboration.

Championing under-addressed and contested issues

A key aspect of Mama Cash’s efforts to influence the field has been our commitment to funding and elevating the visibility of women, girls and trans people working on under-addressed and contested issues – such as the human rights of sex workers, domestic workers, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, girls and young women, lesbians and bisexual women, women targeted by racism, migrants and refugees, and trans and intersex people.

For example, in 2009, when Mama Cash began to structurally integrate trans people into our work and to speak of “women, girls and trans people” in describing the groups we fund, we often got questions about why a women’s fund would support trans people. We took the time to explain that one of the

principal sources of oppression and violence facing trans people – a rigid, binary gender norm – is also at the root of patriarchal violence and oppression experienced by women and girls.

Eight years later, we see a growing interest in funding trans people and their organisations. The recent launch of the International Trans Fund on whose Steering Committee one of our staff members sits is a great development. Bringing a growing consciousness of intersex issues to our work, we are again reviewing our mission statement to consider including intersex people. We have learned over the years that *naming* is important if we want to shift the conversation, change ideas, and ensure that new resources flow where they are needed. And then, of course, we will have to go beyond naming to build an expanded focus into our practice – both our grantmaking and external positioning.

Sharing expertise about funding self-led groups

Over the past decade, as I noted earlier, we have sharpened our focus on providing support to self-led groups. Our decision to commit Mama Cash to supporting people speaking *for themselves* has meant difficult choices, and sometimes turning away otherwise very worthy applicants. But it has been the right course for Mama Cash, and it is a path that I urge other funders to explore.

We have shared our expertise on funding self-led groups and our learning that *how* we fund has important, political consequences. For instance, in 2014, Mama Cash became a founding member of the With and For Girls Collective, which has leveraged \$2 million in funding for girl-led organisations in its first two years (2015-2016). An important part of our role in this collaboration was to contribute to designing the With and For Girls Awards given annually by the Collective, allowing us to make sure that the Collective's funding was accessible to smaller, girl-led groups.

Working in activist-funder collaboration

Since our inception, Mama Cash has funded sex workers' organisations, but in 2009 we brought a more deliberate focus to this work. We realised that sex work was inaccurately conflated with human trafficking and that the human rights of sex workers around the world were routinely violated by both state and non-state actors. Sex workers' organisations had limited access to resources – particularly resources that allowed them to determine their own priorities and engage in human rights advocacy.

Recognising this gap led Mama Cash to get involved in facilitating conversation between activists and funders. Starting in 2009, Mama Cash, in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation's Sexual Health and Rights Project, the Global Network of Sex Work Projects and others, joined sex worker activists and donors to discuss how donors could be better allies and funders in supporting sex workers' activism. This initiative led to conversations over a period of years which culminated in 2012 in the creation and launch of the Red Umbrella Fund, a participatory fund that supports sex workers' rights organisations globally (hosted by Mama Cash). The Fund's grantmaking, which is led by sex workers, grew by 70% from €425,000 in 2012 to €725,000 in 2016 and has influenced the philanthropic sector to be more responsive to sex workers. The process of developing and launching a participatory, self-led fund by and for sex workers has been a great success both for funding sex workers' rights and also for the movement to create more democratic, participatory forms of grantmaking. It has been a collaborative effort from the beginning, and I am so proud of it.

Inviting people to join us

To me, being open, engaging, even playful, while remaining bold and fierce, are also important to how Mama Cash lives out our mission. We have a recognisable voice, and in the past ten years, we have tried to develop and use that voice to foster change. Our communications strategy aims to engage in debate

(with a focus on issues related to the funding of women's rights organising), to build our profile and 'brand' awareness, and to engage in community building with grantees, women's funds and other stakeholders.

One of our strategies has been to bring greater focus to playing a thought leadership role and to publishing more of what we are learning as a funder. There are many examples of this work, including our annual reports and newsletters, the Grantcraft guide for funders called "[Funding for Inclusion](#)" (2012) developed in collaboration with the Foundation Center and the European Foundation Centre (EFC), and "[Grantmaking with a Gender Lens](#)", a collection of case studies, including one from Mama Cash, published by the EFC in 2015. In 2013, on the occasion of Mama Cash's thirtieth birthday, we published a seven-part web series called "[Change is happening](#)"; this series was written by a number of staff members and captured our observations about changes secured by feminist movements over a period of several decades. We also published a series of case studies called "Change Starts With Us" in 2015 focused on the work of several of our grantee-partners that highlighted their contributions to change in their contexts, as well as what Mama Cash's support has meant to them. ([These case studies are available on our website.](#))

More recently, we have also published and blogged, in professional journals, like Alliance magazine, and influential online spaces, like openDemocracy 50.50. We have also invested resources to improve the quality of our visual images, photographs and video. In 2015, we published [a photo Gallery](#) focused on one of our grantee-partners in Bolivia, a group of Indigenous women fighting for their rights to a clean and safe environment. And we are investing in our ability to produce inviting and accessible infographics. We have engaged in this work in the spirit of sharing and inviting people to join us on the journey. I think that is how social change happens.

Mobilising resources to change the world

While our core identity is as a grantmaker, a defining characteristic of Mama Cash is that we engage in fundraising to support our work. We need to raise our budget each year, and we are able to raise money from donors that our most of our grantee-partners are not able to access directly. When I came to Mama Cash, we had plans to expand our financial resource base through attracting more varied and multi-year funding from sources including governments, individuals, and public, private and corporate foundations. A key goal was to secure as much unrestricted or flexible funding as possible in order to be responsive to the needs being articulated by feminist organisations and movements.

That said, we also understood that donors have specific priorities and that it is important to meet people where they are. Accepting funding with restrictions creates the opportunity to develop a relationship – one that may grow and become more flexible with time. A great example is the relationship we had with a donor-advised fund in 2008 and 2009. Mama Cash was approached by the trustees of a fund who felt that our work was consistent with the feminist values of the two deceased women whose trust they managed. We received €250,000 per year and met with the fund's trustees twice a year to present our suggested grants. Over the course of these meetings, we built a trusting relationship. By the third year of the partnership, the trustees had developed confidence in Mama Cash, and they transferred the remaining €1.8 million of the fund to us, giving us discretion in how to spend it.

We had set out in 2009 to significantly increase both the number of individual donors supporting us and the percentage of our annual funding that we raised from individuals. We also aimed to build our base of major individual donors through a variety of initiatives, including support groups for women with inherited wealth, financial and philanthropic literacy courses, and thematically-focused donor circles. One of the lessons here was how important cultural context is in fundraising. I learned, for example, that

major donor strategies that worked well in the United States, where I had previously worked at the Global Fund for Women, did not transfer well to the Netherlands. We saw that our staff found the strategies awkward to implement, and also that Dutch major donors felt uncomfortable being approached differently than others simply because they were in a position to give more money. The kind of special treatment that major donors in the US receive (and usually welcome) was uncomfortable for many of our Dutch major donors – a learning about the importance of culture and context.

We also learned about the scope of investment that was needed to significantly grow our core donor base (“core donors” is the term we use for those who make smaller gifts). By 2011, it was clear that our resources were not sufficient to achieve our original goals. While we continued to believe in and encourage the crucial contribution that smaller individual donors make to Mama Cash’s resource mobilisation ambitions, we concluded that emphasis should be placed on mid-level and major donors. For a period of years, we focused much of our individual donor team’s energy toward major donor cultivation and stewardship, as we felt made sense at the time. Over the past year, we have brought renewed focus to fundraising from people who give smaller amounts as we are now seeing new opportunities to grow this donor segment. In any case, we realise that it’s important keep our individual fundraising strategies fresh, relevant and responsive to opportunities.

In 2012, we received funding to develop a legacy giving programme, which has been another area of attention in our individual fundraising since 2013. We launched the legacy programme in 2013, our 30th anniversary year, and in that year alone, the number of donors who let us know they had named Mama Cash in their wills grew five-fold. I think one of the reasons that the campaign has been successful is that it is upbeat, humorous and embraces the strengths of getting older. Given Mama Cash’s roots in the “second wave” Dutch women’s movements, many of our individual donors are now women in their sixties and seventies, so the legacy strategy makes particular sense for us given our place in Dutch feminist history. But we are also keenly aware of the importance of bringing younger donors into our base of supporters, so we are moving to meet and link with a new generation of feminists. To this end, we are bringing increasing focus to communicating and campaigning through social media, as we did at the end of 2016 with the successful My Body Is Mine!, a campaign which was viewed more than 2.5 million times by close to 950,000 unique viewers.

Learning to collaborate – and to fund collaboration

Over the past ten years, we have increased our engagement in collaborations with other organisations. Sometimes, this was the preference or even the requirement of a donor; usually, it also made sense as a way of increasing our impact. Working together and leveraging our unique strengths and positions has allowed us to have a louder voice and greater impact. I would argue that collaboration is increasingly urgent as the forces of populism, nationalism and militarism gain ground around the world and as civil society space for democracy and dissent shrinks. These times demand strong, coordinated resistance.

But collaborating requires time, skills, relationship-building and resources. Within Mama Cash, I believe that we have sometimes underestimated what it would take to fully implement three significant collaborations in which we are now engaged – the *Count Me In! Consortium*, the *Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action*, and *Women Power Fashion*. We knew that engaging in these collaborations (in two of them, we hold the lead relationship with the donor) would be demanding, but I think we didn’t fully appreciate the range of skill sets that were needed to support flourishing collaborations, both ‘hard’ technical skills (e.g., LM&E, project management, etc.) and ‘soft’ skills (like patience, negotiating and consensus-building). The collaborations have also meant that Mama Cash has grown in size and that staff responsibilities have increased. The collaborations have raised questions about how

we structure ourselves, manage growth and balance competing demands. We have not yet figured it all out, but we are aware of the tensions and engaged in conversations about solutions.

I think it makes sense for funders to encourage collaboration, but they also need to provide the resources to make it possible. Funders, including Mama Cash, need to recognise what collaboration and movement building takes ... and then fund it. We have learned important lessons from our partners about funding collaborative work. The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM Defensoras), for example, organised in 2010 across hundreds of organisations into an effective coalition to support and advance the rights and well-being of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Mesoamerica. The IM Defensoras provide shelter and rapid response funding to ensure the safety of WHRDs, have created a register of violations against WHRDs, conduct lobby and advocacy with multilateral institutions using data from the register, and bring visibility to the attacks on WHRDs through communications campaigns. One member of the coalition was designated to coordinate fundraising and to serve as the conduit for funding; this organisation received the initial grant from Mama Cash (significant funding made possible by a special project grant from the Dutch Postcode Lottery to Mama Cash). This funding was then shared with other members of the coalition.

Mama Cash was able to leverage our relationship with the Lottery to access funding that the IM Defensoras could not have accessed directly. We learned that providing one large grant to the Initiative was much easier for it to receive than many smaller grants (each with its own due diligence and reporting process). When the initial two-year grant ended, other funders were asked to step up and keep the coalition funded. They did, and the Initiative is still active. But instead of coordinating their funding and supporting one coordinated proposal, the funders have worked individually with members of the coalition because of each individual funding institution's priorities and requirements. What had been a relatively simple administrative process became much more complicated and onerous for the IM Defensoras. This lesson – that it is important to provide funding in a way that meets activists' needs and supports their agendas – is one that funders interested in facilitating collaborative activism should take to heart and learn from. With humility, I acknowledge that as a funder, we don't always get it right. But in this case we did, and we were able to support a crucial activist initiative in a way that worked for our partners.

Building greater strength and purpose

In conclusion, I would say that several factors have contributed to Mama Cash's success and growth over the past ten years. A few that I would particularly point to are: having pushed for and achieved a higher level of professionalisation within the organisation; having been open to meeting people where they were and taking them on a journey with us to a more radical place; and, having achieved a clarity that our purpose was to support self-led feminist groups and movements working to achieve structural change and to invite others to join us. Taken together, these commitments have given us a sturdy base from which to be ambitious, take risks, and support and push feminist agendas.

I leave Mama Cash with a feeling of great pride in what we have collectively been able to contribute to women's, girls' and trans people's rights and movements. I am honoured to have learned, worked and created with our grantees, donors, staff, Board, allies and other partners. Together, we have seen Mama Cash grow and mature, and I feel that I have played my part in bringing the organisation to a place of greater strength and purpose. Mama Cash is both more radical and more professional than ten years ago, and I feel incredibly proud to have been a part of this.

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