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In a World of War, These Funders Want More Women Making Peace

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Inside Philanthropy

Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan [once said](#), “For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls.” All very true. But, as it turns out, the world of peacebuilding and conflict resolution is a male-dominated one.

Just how deep does this dominance run? According to [Kathleen Kuehnast](#) of the United States Institute of Peace, “Out of some 585 peace treaties drafted over the last two decades, only 16 percent contain specific references to women.” Meanwhile, the U.N. Women’s [2012 report](#), *Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*, found that of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, “only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 percent of negotiators” were women.

The disconnect between Kofi Annan's elementary insight and the actual practice of peace building worldwide is deeply troubling.

It's troubling enough that some global security funders have made it their business to address this issue. We look at four below.

Swanee Hunt Family Foundation

With a combined asset base of between \$40 and \$43 million, the [Swanee Hunt Family Foundation](#) and Hunt Alternatives aren’t exactly small in the world of philanthropy, but they aren’t exactly huge either. Its [Inclusive Security](#) program awards grants to global security outfits laser-focused on expanding the presence and influence of women in peacebuilding efforts around the world. Main areas of interest include influencing policy, equipping women with global security skills and knowledge, and increasing women’s access to peace building decision makers.

Related: [Swanee Hunt Family Foundation: Grants for Global Security](#)

How the funds operate is a bit confusing, Hunt’s CFO Kate Sears explained it to us like this: “We operate our two foundations on a consolidated basis. Hunt Alternatives, an operating foundation, is an outgrowth of the original Swanee Hunt Family Foundation.”

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It's important to note here that the vast majority of the foundation's \$16.4 million budget—88 percent in 2015—is dedicated to programs operated by the foundation. That 12 percent of the budget spent on grants in 2015 is marked decline from the 21 percent it dedicated to grantmaking the previous year. So while Hunt does make a few grants annually, this isn't your traditional grantmaker.

Swanee Hunt is a former U.S. ambassador to Austria and a lecturer in public policy at the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard University.

Compton Foundation

This is a progressive funder we've written about now and again best known for its unusual focus on leadership and storytelling as a means for achieving social change. Compton has long been a player in the peace and security field, among other areas, and earlier this year it took this work in a new direction with a Women, Peace, and Security Initiative that aims "to integrate a holistic, gendered perspective into mainstream US national security and foreign policy decision making over the next two to three years."

The premise of this work tracks with the basic idea that women are effective peace builders and more efforts are needed to include them in security deliberations and amplify their voices—starting in the most critical venue of all, the U.S. national security establishment. Compton points out that despite a growing recognition of the importance of gender in peace and security, such thinking has been slow to penetrate into the Washington, D.C. policy community that works on these issues. The foundation wants to change that, looking at this year's presidential election and the coming transition of administrations as an opportunity to build new bridges between the mainstream policy world and the women, peace, and security community. Grants are already going out the door. You can read more about Compton's strategy and plans [here](#).

Channel Foundation

The [Channel Foundation](#) has a vision in which all women and girls not only have equal protection and human rights, but also an equal voice in participating in political decision making. Channel is relatively small, with around \$7 million to \$8 million in assets. One group the foundation has supported over the years to achieve those ends is the Global Fund for Women (GFW).

Since 2000, Channel has awarded nearly \$350,000 grants to back GFW's women's rights efforts in various regions of the world, mainly in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA). Funds have gone toward the support of GFW's Women Dismantling Militarism Initiative, which

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focuses both global attention and resources on “women’s groups fighting the effects of militarism across the globe.”

Related: [Channel Foundation: Grants for Human Rights](#)

The International Civil Society Action Network or ICAN is a regular Channel Foundation grantee, having received \$75,000 in awards over the past few years. Grants went toward the support of ICANs mission to “support civil society activism in promoting women’s rights, peace and human security in countries affected by conflict, transition and closed political space.” Recent grants have supported ICANs Global Network of Women’s Peacebuilders Project.

Maypole Fund

[Maypole](#) is a U.K.-based funder that has worked tirelessly to “proactively challenge patriarchy” and increase women’s participation in the global security landscape since the mid-1980s.

Maypole’s grants in this space are considerably smaller—£750, or just a little over \$1,000USD—than those of the Hunt and Channel Foundation, but this funder is pretty dynamic one, homing in on anti-militarism, taking action against the arms trade, nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapons systems, peace building, conflict prevention, and women’s participation in disarmament policies. Maypole is also paying attention to young women's groups and lesbian groups, which are often overlooked in the global security landscape.

There are other funders we could mention, and it's encouraging to see more attention on women and security issues. That said, we're still talking about a very small niche, with this work is flying under the radar for many, if not most, of the funders in the global security space and beyond.

Philanthropy has some catching up to do, here. While funders now grasp the importance of women's empowerment in tackling global economic and health challenges, they're behind the curve on the equally important role of gender in ensuring peace and security. In turn, that kind of stability is critical to achieving all other societal gains.