

## Exploring Series

## Collaborative Philanthropy and Investing with a Gender Lens

Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023Featuring guest speaker **Mona Sinha, Global Executive Director, Equality Now**Facilitated by **Andine Sutarjadi, Director, 21/64****Summary:**

This interactive, closed-group, virtual session was the first of a two-part Exploring Series for Circle members where different facets of strategic giving are explored from various perspectives featuring global keynote speakers, and with expert facilitation from [21/64](#).

The first part of the Exploring Series was on *'Exploring Collaborative Philanthropy and Investing with a Gender Lens'* and featured guest speaker **Mona Sinha, Global Executive Director at Equality Now** who explored the role of collaboration and partnerships in tackling complex challenges through a gender lens and how funders can integrate a gender lens into their own philanthropic and investing strategies.

Attendees learned how funders, who give and invest with a gender lens, have embraced collaboration and partnerships for long-term systemic change and had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in a discussion on how to integrate a gender lens into their own philanthropic and investing strategies. The session ended with a short debrief session where attendees shared any reflections, learnings, and personal stories with the group.

**Key takeaways:**

How can we creatively and boldly apply a gender lens in all aspects of our lives?

- Our childhood and experiences shape the way we exercise our philanthropy today and our areas of interest. When choosing what to fund, it is important to look for issues and communities you really care about and understand what the needs are from their perspective as well.
- A philanthropist's role is to facilitate solutions and make it easier for people on the ground to implement them, not necessarily to come up with the solutions.
- As a donor, it is vital to actively look for marginalised communities whose voices aren't heard. It is particularly important to centre the margins when giving towards issues related to gender equality.
- It is vital to collaborate and work closely with communities you are funding to better understand their needs, and also to provide practical support. Often, it is not exclusively through funding that you can support – but rather through sharing your knowledge and connections as well.

- As philanthropists, we need to reframe issues in a way that is understandable, relevant, and catches others' interests.
- Power dynamics shouldn't be held with the donor – both parties can acknowledge that the donor also wants to learn about and invest in projects that can enhance their philanthropy. Alignment of values often happens more naturally. Identify people and organisations that are doing similar work and then work towards collaborating with them.
  - It is easy to gravitate towards funding what is “trendy” – which can drown out other important issues. Media is a culprit here but as donors, there is a responsibility to keep the pressure on to make sure the right stories are heard.
  - It is beneficial for philanthropists to maintain a dynamic portfolio that is a mixture of high-risk and risk-averse funding and cover a variety of geographies.
- If a plan doesn't work, change the plan, not the goal. We must not undermine the progress already made because problems will always exist and evolve.

Individual donors who are a part of the Circle network joined the session with 21/64. Numerous attendees had previously known and had a relationship with Mona Sinha and were happy to be reconnected again. With high interest in this session, it was evident that regional donors have a high-interest in adapting a gender-lens to their philanthropy. Following the session, members shared feedback that they were emotionally moved by the virtual convening and that they were fond of the speaker and facilitator.

*The Circle network is a closed community of individual and institutional philanthropic donors. If you are interested in learning more, please visit [circlemena.org](http://circlemena.org). To express interest to join the network, kindly email Amreen Vadsaria, Programme Associate on the Governance in Philanthropy Programme directly on [avadsaria@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:avadsaria@pearlinitiative.org).*