



## Redefining the Parameters for Rebuilding: Evaluation of the Katrina Women's Response Fund

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### Final Report

December 18, 2006

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## OVERVIEW

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In response to the destruction and massive displacement caused by Hurricane Katrina, the Ms. Foundation for Women (MFW) and the Women's Funding Network (WFN) created The Katrina Women's Response fund. The Katrina Women's Response Fund (also referred to as "the Katrina Fund" or "the Fund") focused on ensuring that the priorities of low-income women, women of color and their families are central to the Hurricane Katrina relief, recovery and rebuilding process. The Kellogg Foundation became the single largest contributor to that fund, with a grant of \$1,184,039. WFN subsequently regranted funds to five women's funds across the country, including the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, Women's Fund of Greater Jackson, Atlanta Women's Foundation, the Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis, and the Chicago Foundation for Women. In 2006, MFW and five women's funds provided 47 Katrina Fund grants directly to a variety of local, regional, and national organizations totaling \$1,074,145.

This report details the results of Social Policy Research Associate's (SPR) external evaluation of the Katrina Women's Response Fund. It highlights outcomes arising from the grants and the approach furthered by MFW and the other women's funds, with a particular focus on how the initiative promoted the leadership of women of color. The report highlights a number of key findings related to the leadership of women of color, social change grantmaking, grantmaking in response to a natural disaster, and engaging local policy makers and decision makers.

Although much of the work of grantees is ongoing, the report highlights substantive grantee-level outcomes in the areas of housing, job training, childcare, mental and physical health services, and leadership development and advocacy. The Katrina Fund supported general operating expenses that contributed to organizational development outcomes such as increased staffing, acquisition of property, program planning, and evaluation. The infrastructure of nonprofits was increased through the creation of new alliances between traditionally defined "women's organizations" and organizations dedicated to serving communities of color or disabled populations.

This report also highlights the prominent leadership role that MFW, WFN, and several other women's funds took to work with and actively engage local stakeholders, link organizations to key powerbrokers, and introduce a gender lens and human rights framework that in turn influenced the way that grantees thought about and approached their work.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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*Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed the Gulf Coast's deep-rooted inequality [based on] gender, race, ethnicity, and class. One year after the storms, it remains unclear whether those inequalities will be addressed in plans for rebuilding, whether the disadvantaged of the region will be able to return home, and if they return, whether there will be a better life awaiting them. Efforts to reconstruct the region's devastated areas must include a re-evaluation of past policies and a commitment to better outcomes for women, particularly women of color, so many of whom have long been relegated to the low-wage labor market. (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2006)<sup>1</sup>*

In response to the destruction and massive displacement caused by Hurricane Katrina, the Ms. Foundation for Women (MFW) and the Women's Funding Network (WFN) created funds to provide support for Hurricane Katrina response effort. The Katrina Women's Response Fund (also referred to as "the Katrina Fund" or "the Fund") focused on ensuring that the priorities of low-income women, women of color and their families are central to the Hurricane Katrina relief, recovery and rebuilding process. A major contributor to The Katrina Fund was the W.K. Kellogg Foundation through a grant of \$1,184,039. This grant was made in recognition of the Ms. Foundation and WFN's leadership, connection of women's funds to the local organizations in the affected areas, and their grasp of the changes needed to address issues of social inequalities.

## About the Evaluation

One of MFW and WFN's grant objectives from the beginning was to evaluate the impact of the Katrina Fund grants that were funded by the W.K. Kellogg grant and document and disseminate the lessons learned from this effort. MFW selected Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) as the evaluator. SPR's goal was to capture outcomes of the project, as they relate to each of the

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, E., O. Sorokina, A. Jones-DeWeever & H. Hartman. (August 2006). *The Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast: Multiple Disadvantages and Key Assets for Recovery: Briefing Paper, Part 2 of a 2-part series.* Institute for Women's Policy Research.

core strategies. Following are the key evaluation and learning questions addressed in the evaluation:

1. How does this effort ensure local women's and other organizations have the capacity and resources to meet the immediate needs of low-income women evacuees?
2. In what ways have these investments rebuilt and strengthened the infrastructure of women's and other progressive organizations in affected regions?
3. How has this effort ensured that the perspectives of low-income women of color are central to policy decisions about relief, recovery and rebuilding? How has the input of women of color leaders shaped competing priorities in rebuilding efforts?
4. What difference does it have on short and intermediate term outcomes that there is a strong focus on the strength and leadership of women?
5. How has this effort exposed the depth of inequality due to race, economic means and gender, and the intersection of these inequalities?

## Data Sources

SPR used primarily a qualitative approach to capture (1) the individual and grantee level outcomes, and (2) the unique role of MFW, WFN, and women's funds in brokering relationships and information to ensure that the priorities of low-income women, women of color and their families are central to the Hurricane Katrina relief, recovery, and rebuilding process. We also used databases and spreadsheets to track numbers served and impacted, and financial resources leveraged. SPR implemented several core evaluation activities:

- **Case Study Visits.** We conducted one-day site visits to four grantee organizations funded by MFW. The resulting case study write-ups focused on community and regional needs, organizational capacity, role of grant in infrastructure development, the response to the disaster, and strategies to support grassroots empowerment among low-income women of color.
- **Phone Interviews of MFW and WFN Staff.** We conducted multiple rounds of interviews with MFW and WFN staff to document MFW's theory of change, strategies, activities and involvements in events in the region, outcomes, and lessons learned. Additionally, we participated in a planning meeting organized by WFN and provided information from the evaluation for the Katrina first anniversary report.
- **Observations of Activities or Events.** In order to understand the role of MFW in providing leadership and other capacity building training and connecting regional and local organizations, SPR conducted focus groups with (1) the six women's funds at the annual 2006 WFN conference (Pittsburg, PA), and (2) 10 Katrina Fund grantees at The MFW Institute for Women's EmPOWERment (June 2006 in Atlanta, GA).
- **Phone Interviews of Women's Funds.** We interviewed leaders of each of the five women's funds to their assessment of major accomplishments and lessons learned in the areas addressed by the evaluation questions.

- **Interviews of Grantees.** In the early Fall, SPR and MFW staff conducted interviews with grantees to document their progress, challenges, and outcomes in addressing evacuees’ needs and in elevating the voices of low-income women of color and other affected populations.
- **Document Review.** In order to broaden our understanding of the grant’s impact, we also reviewed grant documents, research reports, and grantees’ Making the Case evaluation reports.<sup>2</sup>

These data became the basis of the data analysis provided in this report of the work of the Katrina Women’s Response Fund.

## The Katrina Women’s Response Fund

Following Hurricane Katrina, philanthropic organizations were challenged to respond to the Gulf Coast Hurricanes in a manner that would interrupt decades of neglect and deeply ingrained racism in the affected region. In the aftermath of Katrina, an article in the Chronicle of Philanthropy (Sept., 2005), entitled “What Philanthropy Owes Katrina’s Victims,” argued: *“Philanthropy has the opportunity to make a huge difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people as it responds to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. But the end result of hundreds of millions of dollars of private philanthropic funds, combined with billions of government support, must not be the rebuilding of communities of exclusion, of institutionalized poverty, and of ignored racism.”* The women’s funds’ responses indicate that they paid considerable attention to *not* doing business as usual.

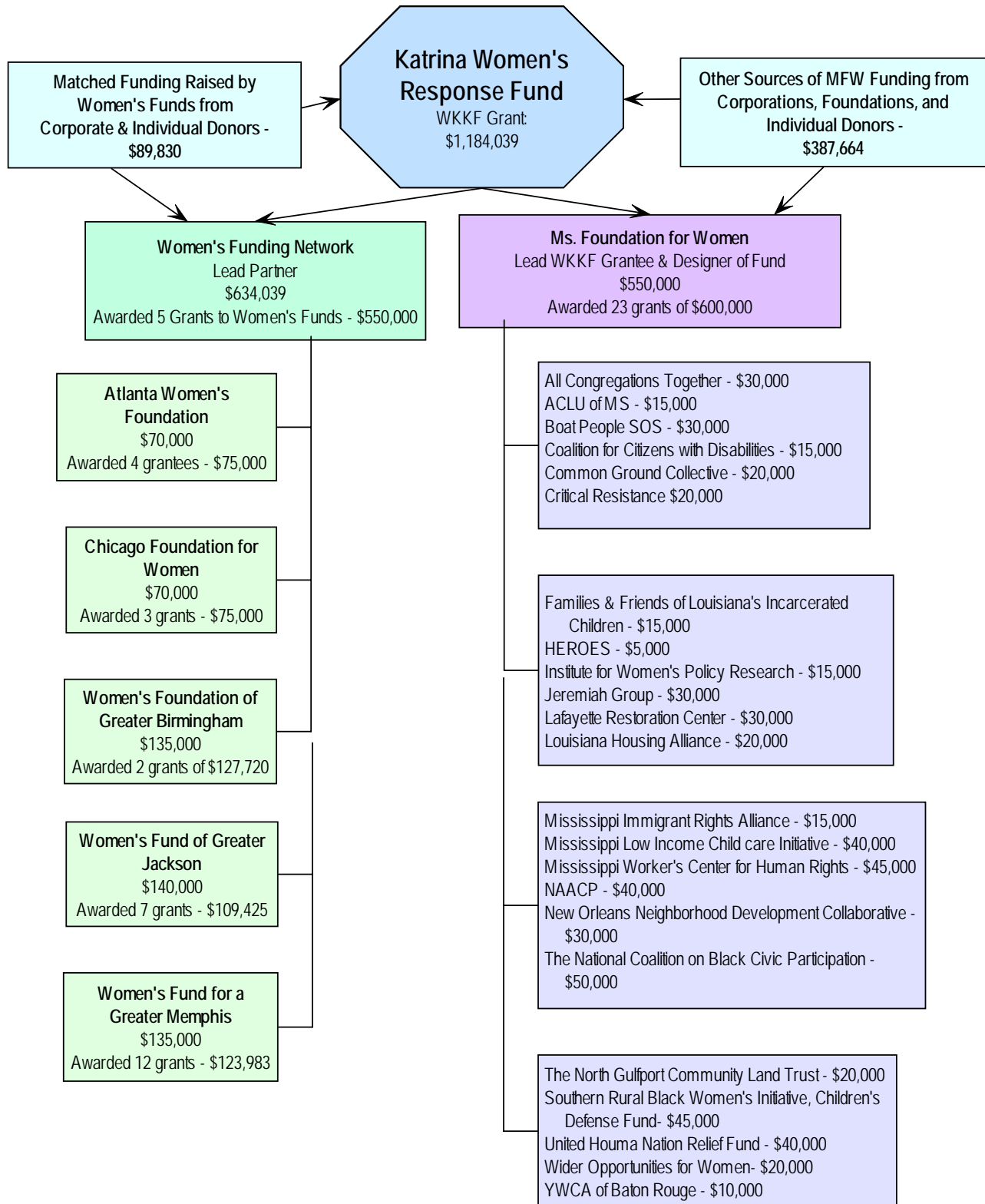
Figure 1, below, provides an overview of the contribution and distribution of the Kellogg grant to MFW and WFN and their grantees. In 2006, The Katrina Women’s Response Fund provided 47 grants directly to a variety of local, regional, and national organizations totaling \$1,074,145.<sup>3</sup> MFW and WFN used the Kellogg Foundation grant dollars to help leverage additional funds. MFW raised a total of \$387,664 in additional dollars, while WFN and the five women’s funds raised \$89,830.

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<sup>2</sup> Making the Case: A Learning and Measurement Tool for Social Change (MTC) is a tool developed by WFN to record grantmaking goals, strategies, and outcomes in a centralized database. MTC is an evaluation tool that enables funds, foundations, and their grantees to record stories, measure and document social change impact. WFN and all five women’s funds trained their grantees to enter information on outcomes in this database.

<sup>3</sup> More grantmaking for the Katrina Fund is occurring in Fiscal Year 2007. These grants are not included in our analysis, which include four additional MFW Katrina Fund grants totaling \$40,000, and another \$25,000 to be awarded by the Women’s Fund of Greater Jackson. We also did not include five MFW first-round emergency support grants in our analysis because funding came from other sources.

**Figure 1. Distribution of the Katrina Funds from the WKKF Grant in 2006**



## Areas of Funding

To ensure that the priorities of low-income women, women of color and their communities are central to the Hurricane Katrina relief, recovery and rebuilding process, The Katrina Fund grantmaking would prioritize the following:

- Provide direct response to low-income women evacuees' immediate needs in host communities;
- Rebuild the infrastructure of women's organizations and other social change organizations that were directly affected by the Hurricane and flooding;
- Facilitate the participation of women – especially those directly affected – in local and regional structures formed to make policy and allocate resources; and
- Ensure that state, regional and national advocacy organizations that are tracking and advocating around the allocation of relief and rehabilitation resources have leadership of women from the region while ensuring that the perspectives of low income women and women of color are prioritized.

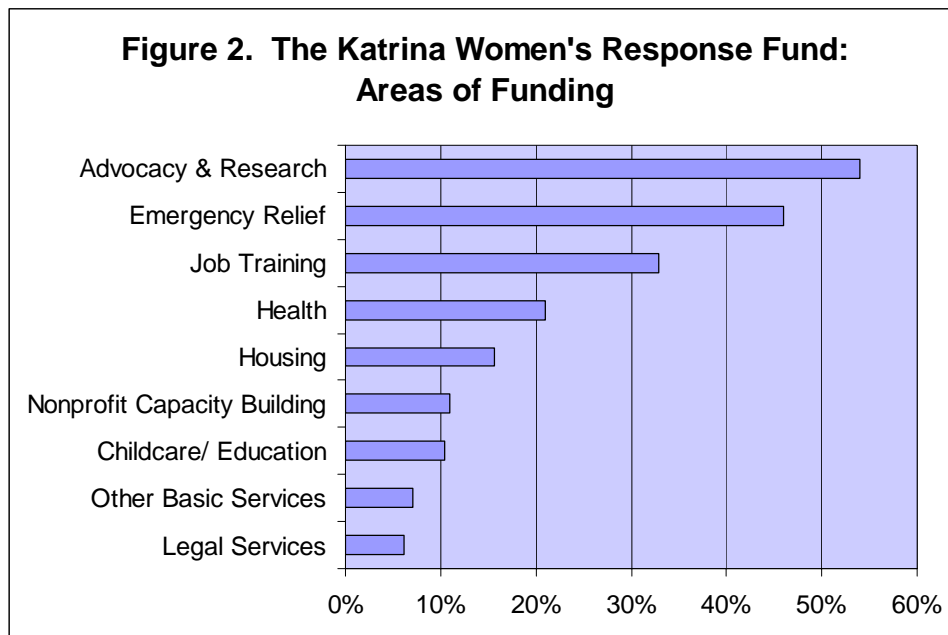
Through a grant of \$634,039 to WFN, MFW created a partnership with the WFN to engage women's funds in the Katrina Fund. WFN provided five grants to women's funds in areas receiving large numbers of evacuees and underwrote a matching grant fundraising effort housed at WFN. The five women's funds included the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, Women's Fund of Greater Jackson, Atlanta Women's Foundation, the Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis, and the Chicago Foundation for Women. They represented some of the first response lines of support for women and families displaced after Hurricane Katrina, and a number of women's funds granted in the Mississippi coast. Therefore, they pursued the following additional specific objectives: (1) rebuild severely damaged communities; (2) fill gaps in services offered to Katrina survivors and evacuees; (3) strengthen their infrastructure; (4) position themselves as leaders; and (5) influence state and local policy decisions.

Based on these guiding objectives, a review of the 47 Katrina Fund grants showed a strong focus on (1) issues affecting women, children, and families, (2) promotion of grassroots leadership of women of color,<sup>4</sup> (3) advocacy and research, and (4) traditional and non-traditional job training and supportive services (e.g., child care support) to promote longer-term self sufficiency. Explicit throughout all of the grants is special attention to assisting vulnerable populations, such as single mothers, traumatized children, disabled citizens, low-income residents, immigrants, domestic violence victims, etc. Figure 2 below highlights the most common areas of funding by

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<sup>4</sup> For example, 18 of 22 second-round MFW grantees are women led. Eleven are led by women of color and 2 are led by men of color.

MFW and the five women’s funds.<sup>5</sup> Appendix A provides a more detailed listing of each of the organizations funded, grant amount, and specific funding areas.



## Understanding the Katrina Fund within the Larger Context

In considering the Katrina Fund’s impact, it is important to understand how the Fund converged or differed from other philanthropic, corporate, and individual and public funding sources targeted toward Hurricane relief.

The more than million-dollar grant from the Kellogg Foundation provided a considerable amount of funds for MFW and the smaller women’s funds to do grantmaking on a scale that is unprecedented for these foundations. Relative to other sources of public and private funding in this area, however, the one million dollar Katrina Women’s Response Fund was small (see Figure 3). As of August 2006, the total amount of funds committed by the federal government in response to the Gulf coast hurricanes reached \$107 billion dollars.<sup>6</sup> According to the Foundation Center,<sup>7</sup> private giving reached a record level of \$5.3 billion for this relief effort. This provides a context for understanding the impact of Katrina Fund resources. Further, it points to the critical

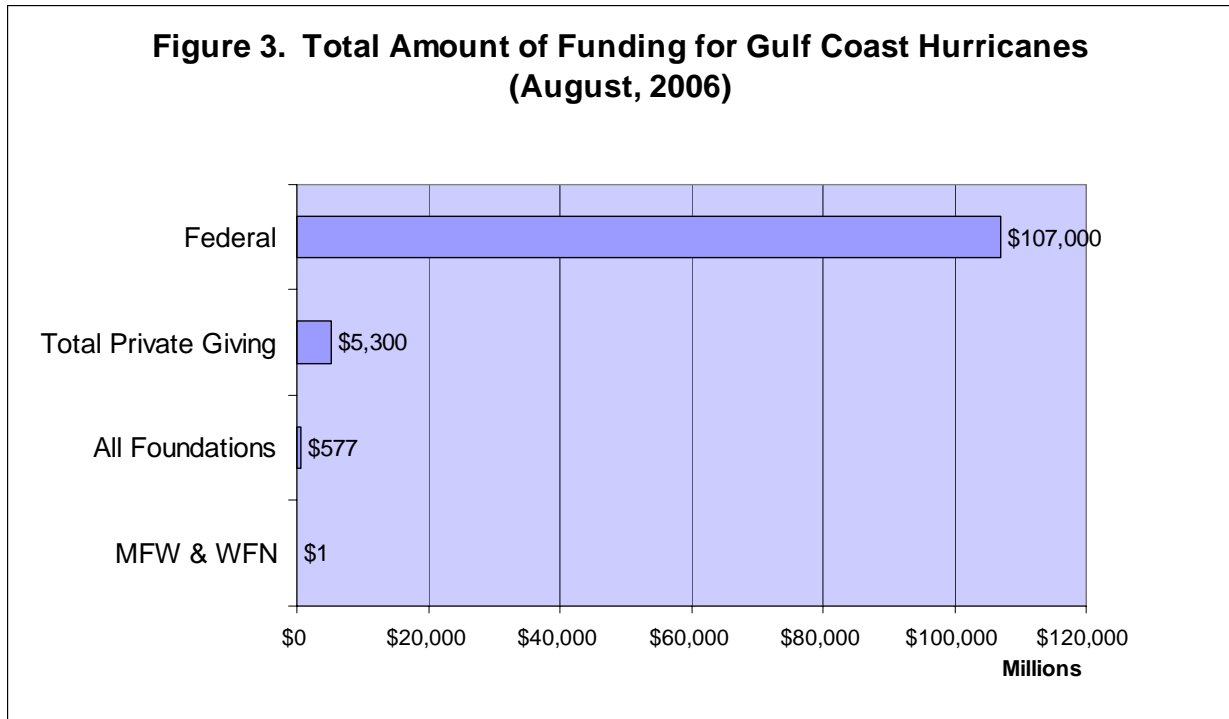
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<sup>5</sup> Note that grants often had multiple areas of focus.

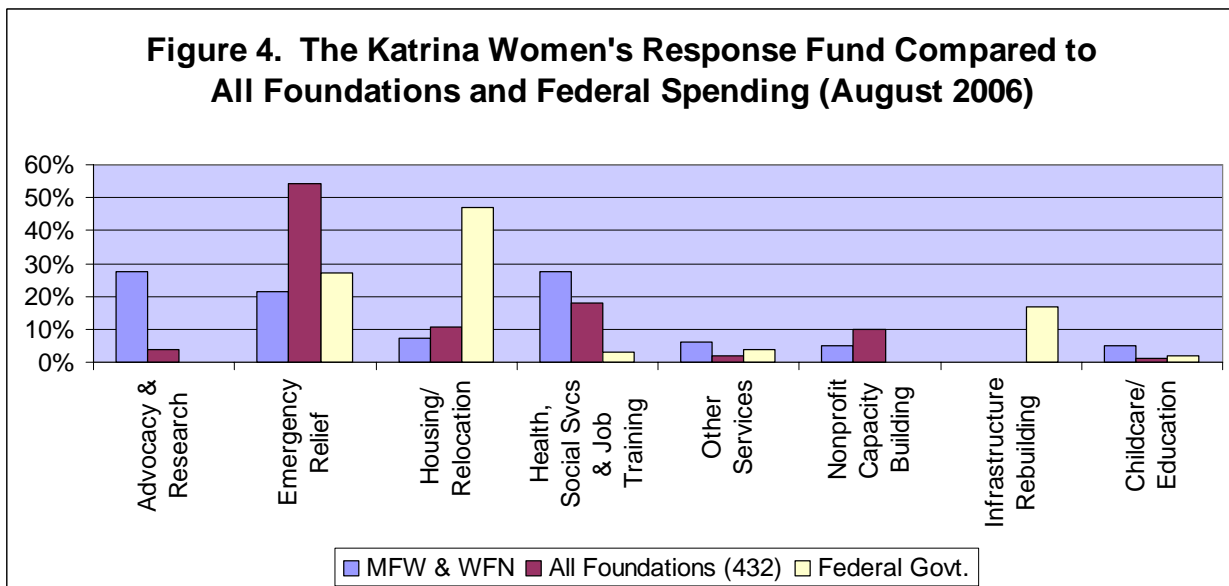
<sup>6</sup> Source: The Brookings Institution “Federal Allocations in Response to Katrina, Rita and Wilma: An Update.”

<sup>7</sup> Source: Foundation Center, *Giving in the Aftermath of the Gulf coast Hurricanes: Report on the Foundation and Corporate Response*, August 2006.

importance of the Fund being exceptionally strategic in how to maximize their investments by leveraging broader systems change.



How did MFW and partner fund investments differ from these other sources of funding? Our analysis of MFW and WFN women’s funds’ investments showed decisions and a pattern of grantmaking that were distinct from that of other foundations and from the federal government.



A comparison of the distribution of funding across various categories (in percentages) in Figure 4 above, reveals the following:<sup>8</sup>

- The Katrina Fund complemented federal, state, and local public responses by *not* investing in public infrastructure rebuilding (e.g., levee, road, and other public infrastructure, “bricks and mortar” repairs).
- The Katrina Fund invested in some short-term emergency relief, temporary housing, affordable housing development, and other recovery services. They did this, however, to a lesser extent than other foundations, private individuals, and public agencies. The investment in short-term emergency relief is not surprising given the vast amount of sustained resources required relative to the need.
- Like other foundations, The Katrina Fund invested heavily in areas where they saw gaps and potential for being effective, including aid to affected nonprofit organizations that provide physical and mental health, social services, and job training services.
- Most significantly, The Katrina Fund were more likely to invest in (1) childcare and education, and (2) advocacy and research than were other foundations or the government. Advocacy and research efforts were focused on tracking and influencing the allocation of relief and rehabilitation resources so as to ensure that the perspectives of low income women and women of color are prioritized.

## About the Grantee Selection Process

The six women’s funds used a variety of processes, approaches, and timing to selecting different types of grantees. We describe the grantee selection process in detail because of the potential for learning from the varied grantmaking models that was developed and used by MFW and other women’s funds. The specifics of their approaches are described next.

- ***Type of grantees.*** The majority of the grantees selected by the five women’s funds were “solid, well-respected” grantees that had an established record of doing good work in the communities. In contrast, although the first-wave, MFW emergency support grants went to previous grantees,<sup>9</sup> only six of the 23 organizations funded in the second round were previous grantees.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sources: (1) The Brookings Institution “Federal Allocations in Response to Katrina, Rita and Wilma: An Update,” July, 2006. (2) Foundation Center, *Giving in the Aftermath of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes: Report on the Foundation and Corporate Response*, August 2006. Note, because MFW, WFN partner funds, and other foundations grants had multiple purposes, percentages were weighted to lend comparability to federal reports of funding.

<sup>9</sup> These grants were supported by other funds within the Ms. Foundation.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Foundation Center’s survey of 432 foundations (2006), while about 60% of foundations funded new grantees, 40% decided to fund current or former grantees.

- **Timing of grant awards.** WFN and the majority of funds in the affected region were quick to react to the immediate needs of the evacuees and the nonprofits serving these populations. As soon as funds were available, those funds located in the affected regions moved quickly to identify and get needed resources to their grantees. Other funds that hosted evacuees provided limited emergency assistance while they assessed how to complement federal and other public spending. These funds waited to make the majority of their grants until they had a better idea of long-term needs and awarded grants as recently as August 2006. The Ms. Foundation used a dual approach, awarding a first round of funds for emergency support grants from their own funds in September 2005, then underwent a thorough process to identify and award grants in March 2006 to organizations that could bridge their efforts to longer-term recovery.
- **Selection process.** While funds such as the Atlanta Women’s Foundation used a request for proposal (RFP) process to identify organizations to fund, the Ms. Foundation and Women’s Fund of Greater Jackson used a different approach to grantmaking. Instead of issuing an RFP, these funds streamlined the proposal process to decrease the turnaround time and ease the paperwork burden on time-strapped organizational leaders consumed by disaster response activities. After an initial mapping process based on a series of site visits, a team of MFW staff conducted phone interviews with 30 potential organizations and took extensive notes (in lieu of a formal grantee proposal) that became the basis for grant award recommendations.

In summary, the data suggest that women’s funds adopted critical approaches to be timely and also respectful of organizations that were devastated by the storms and needed to restart quickly to focus on serving the pressing needs of the evacuees. Additionally, the areas of funding reflected different areas of emphasis by women’s funds (e.g., direct service vs. advocacy), and most grantmaking tried to complement rather than duplicate other major sources of funding.

## Overview of the Remainder of the Report

This report presents results to date; however, we emphasize that all of work begun by MFW, WFN, women’s funds, and grantees are still in process. Thus, the outcomes described in this report are preliminary. Based on the description of the goals and objectives of the Katrina Fund and the grants described in this chapter, we address the five central evaluation questions. In Chapter 2, we discuss the value of engaging mostly locally based women’s funds to respond to the Gulf Coast hurricanes. In this chapter, we address the question of how MFW, women’s funds, and grantees’ efforts exposed the depth of inequality due to race, economic means, and gender. Second, we review the extent to which this effort ensured that the perspectives of low-income women of color are central to policy decisions about relief, recovery, and rebuilding. In Chapter 3, we examine and summarize the outcomes based on the Fund’s focus on promoting nonprofits’ capacities, infrastructure, and outcomes for low-income women, women of color and

other populations affected by the storms. In the final chapter, we assess major lessons learned and offer recommendations to MFW, WFN and women's funds in their efforts to effectively invest and respond to disaster relief, recovery, and rebuilding.

## II. THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF WOMEN'S FUNDS AND WOMEN OF COLOR IN RESPONSE TO KATRINA

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*As Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath washed away homes and hopes, it also put in clear view of the whole world the reality of race, class, and gender inequality in our nation.*

*- The Ms. Foundation for Women*

In conceptualizing and implementing the Katrina Women's Response Fund ("the Katrina Fund"), the Ms. Foundation for Women and WFN were guided by a vision of creating a just and safe world where "power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, or age." Although the Gulf Coast storms have indiscriminately wiped out whole communities, they did not wash away the legacy of inequalities that most Americans have relegated to past eras. Therefore, the Katrina Fund was established to become a driving force against re-enactments of social inequalities in the affected region. This chapter assesses the Katrina Fund's ability to make progress on these issues by addressing the following key research questions:

- How has this effort **exposed the depth of inequality** due to race, economic means and gender, and the intersection of these inequalities?
- How has this effort ensured that the **perspectives of low-income women of color are central** to policy decisions about relief, recovery and rebuilding? How has the input of women of color leaders shaped competing priorities in rebuilding efforts?

### **How has this effort exposed the depth of inequality due to race, economic means, gender, and the intersection of these inequalities?**

Efforts to expose the depth of inequality due to race, class, gender and their intersection have occurred on two levels. The first is through actions by the women's funds themselves, and the second is through the work of the Katrina Fund grantees.

### ***Fund Level Actions to Expose Inequalities***

The assumptions and overall frame used by the women’s funds have played a pivotal role in exposing inequality, particularly gender inequality. Through strategic grantmaking and direct action strategies designed to affect change at the individual, organizational, community, and policy levels, the Fund appears to be making strides, as described below, in disrupting the status quo that perpetuates racial and class inequalities.

- ***Integrating a gender lens into the Katrina relief and rebuilding effort.*** As we discuss here and in Chapter 3, the Katrina Fund brings a strong gender lens to the extensive work of short-term relief and longer-term rebuilding in the Gulf Coast region. From interviews with Katrina Fund grantees, it is clear that many grantee leaders have internalized an understanding of why low-income women and women of color need to be viewed as assets and as an integral part of any decision making about community redevelopment:

*Women in low-income communities of color both understand their special needs and appreciate their incredible strength, talents, and resilience. The leadership of women of color and the groups that support them is crucial -- not only to rebuild lives and homes, but to transform the systems of racial, class and gender injustice that made the people of the Gulf Coast so vulnerable to disaster.<sup>1</sup>*

- ***Advancing a human rights framework.*** As evidence of the holistic and inclusive perspective that the Katrina Fund brought to the recovery and rebuilding work, a number of the grantees talked about the natural match between MFW’s goals and their multi-faceted gender-, race-, and class-based work. In fact, a number of the grantees supported by the Fund used the human rights framework and agenda from the United Nations Declaration. For example, one grantee, Oleta Fitzgerald of the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative, Children’s Defense Fund said, “We use the human rights frame to persuade the women to address their policymakers.....The focus is on the women so that they understand that [they] have rights to certain things.” Through ensuring that women understand their fundamental rights, this helps to reframe both their *and* policymakers’ understanding of what aspects of the current system need to change to create an equitable, inclusive, and self-sustaining post-Katrina society.
- ***Promoting research and dissemination.*** As we discuss throughout this report, MFW and WFN emphasized conducting and disseminating research to inform the media, policymakers, and the general public about the needs, gaps, and progress of the relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts, specifically through a gender and racial lens. According to many of the advocacy grantees, without the MFW support to increase their research capacity and additional informational resources, their work would not have gained the credibility and traction with key

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from The Ms. Foundation Kellogg Grant Application for the Katrina Fund.

policymakers that it did. Following are some key research and dissemination milestones in the past year.

**Key Research and Dissemination on the  
Leadership of Women and Their Impact**

***The Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast: Multiple Disadvantages and Key Assets for Recovery.*** Shortly after Katrina, MFW supported the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to begin a two-part series to inform policymakers. Part 1 provided stark statistics on poverty among women and people of color in the Gulf Coast region. In Part 2, IWPR presented (1) demographic data in the Gulf region from before and after the storms, (2) statistics and gaps in employment participation and earnings, and (3) a range of policy recommendations for reincorporating women into the workforce.

***The Calm in the Storm: Women Leaders in Gulf Coast Recovery:*** WFN and MFW co-sponsored a timely first anniversary report, thus delivering a strong message that women have become a critical force rebuilding the Gulf Coast after being disproportionately affected by Katrina. According to WFN, media visibility of local women's funds reached a new level because this report stimulated strong interest and coverage by the Birmingham News, a local Memphis TV channel, and the Associated Press.

- ***Promoting advocacy and community organizing through grantmaking.*** Three of Katrina Fund's major objectives were to (1) ensure support for state, regional, and national advocacy organizations that track and advocate around the allocation of relief and rehabilitation resources, (2) promote leadership of women from the region, and (3) prioritize the perspectives of low-income women and women of color. As described in Chapter 1, 59% of the Katrina Fund went to directly or indirectly supporting organizations that advocated for and organized low-income, women of color and their families to play an active role in policy decisions. Some of the major and well-established organizations supported by MFW to do this work included NAACP of MS, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, ACLU of Jackson MS, Children's Defense Fund, Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA), MS Worker for Human Rights, Critical Resistance, All Congregations Together (ACT), and Families & Friends of LA's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC). The efforts of these grantee organizations to expose the depth of inequalities will be described in the next section. Along with directly supporting and collaborating with these organizations, MFW was also catalytic in helping *new* groups to form and thrive.

### Newly Formed Groups to Expose Inequalities

**Coastal Women for Change** (CWC) is a new group in Biloxi started in January 2006 to organize women of color around healthcare and women's issues. They have become a fairly powerful group of women of color—several of their members are now on planning committees with the mayor's office. The Ms. Foundation gave CWC \$10,000 for a retreat to establish itself as a strong nonprofit organization.

**STEP Coalition** includes the MS-NAACP, the MS Low-Income Childcare Initiative, the North Gulf Port Land Trust, Turkey Creek. The idea for collaboration emerged from a funder gathering that MFW convened in the summer of 2006. A group of attending funders gave money to these organizations to meet in New Orleans to discuss their priorities. From this meeting, STEP, a coalition that focuses on housing rights, was formed.

In addition to the activities above, MFW and two of the other women's funds also played pivotal roles within the communities. Following are some of their major activities:

- **Providing community leadership through conducting listening sessions and other convenings.** A number of the women's funds used their politically neutral position to assemble evacuees and community groups to surface evacuees' needs and to begin to identify solutions. For example, two experienced MFW program officers of color who have worked to promote civic participation and leadership among low-income women and women of color, Mia White and Julia Beatty, collaborated with key grantees such as the NAACP of Mississippi and the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation (NCBCP). Together, they conducted listening sessions with women of color in Mississippi and Louisiana. The Women of Color Convening in Mississippi was attended by prominent women of color leaders and more than 100 other women of color. MFW also sponsored the "Hear Me Now" bus tour event in Louisiana, which is described further below.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis, held a number of convenings of hurricane evacuees in a space that was safe and "removed from territoriality" to facilitate needs assessments. These sessions helped to inform policy makers of evacuees' core needs and, according to Ruby Bright, "We had service providers in the same room, and when needs surfaced, we asked, 'How many of you are providing this?'"

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<sup>2</sup> Listening sessions were supported through a grant from Open Society Institute.

### **“Hear Me Now” Listening Bus Tour**

Organized by the NCBCP, The Black Women’s Roundtable Bus Listening Tour occurred around the first anniversary of Katrina. Tour stops featured local African American women, who spoke out emotionally on topics such as the housing crises, stress of dealing with insurance agencies, and mental health and wellness issues. The tour traveled from Mobile, AL to Gulfport, MS to New Orleans, LA to Lafayette, LA to Baton Rouge, LA to Jackson, MS and intentionally included more isolated, rural communities (not spotlighted by anniversary events), such as trailer communities in Baker, LA.

The Tour exposed the depth and persistence of inequalities in the region. Following are some of insights shared by Melanie Campbell of NCBCP and another participant of the tour:

- *These women were saying that they were afraid they were going to be abandoned and that they had fears that everyone would forget about them. It was uplifting for them just to know that [NCBCP & MFW] were there with them and that the national community was still interested in them.*
- *What we are seeing is that there is no healing and no resolution to problems that were already there before the storms and continue to exist at a higher level now. Due to multiple storms coming in there, the same problems with rebuilding are repeated and never resolved.*

- ***Including Katrina grantees in the Institute for Women’s EmPOWERment.***<sup>3</sup> Through its annual Institute for Women’s EmPOWERment, MFW provided a place for MFW’s Katrina grantees to meet, connect, and share across their projects and personal experiences. One participant of the Institute expressed appreciation in becoming a part of a larger network:

*I attended a retreat in Atlanta where a lot of different of grantees from different areas of the country came. We all discussed our issues and learned a lot from the way they were handling things. That has been just wonderful. Especially working with the people in this area, such as the ACLU and NAACP.*

*- Ms. Mary Troupe, Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities*

- ***Assuming leadership roles in public/private collaborations.*** A number of the women’s funds were already well-respected community leaders prior to Katrina, and with the infusion of resources from the Kellogg grant, they were well positioned to be invited to the table to influence immediate responses and long-range policy decisions related to disaster relief. The leaders of two women’s funds played prominent role in collaborating with local policy and public

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<sup>3</sup> This is MFW’s largest annual training event. The [Institute for Women’s EmPOWERment](#) brings together practitioners and activists from the foundation’s grantee partners.

agencies' approach to relief efforts. These funds were often seen as the "go to" agencies to gain a deeper understanding of women's issues, and community leaders rely on their expertise and connections to women's organizations.

### **Leadership of Women's Funds Shape Public Government's Focus**

**The Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis** was one of several agencies that the mayor's office called to the table to organize a citywide plan to respond to the streams of evacuees arriving in Memphis.

A board member of the **Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham** participated in Birmingham's "Unmet Needs" Committee to help shape recommendations regarding service providers' responses to the unique needs of women. The board member stressed the fact that mothers looking for job training and employment were at a distinct disadvantage because of childcare needs. Committee members were responsive and now recognize this as well as the benefits of taking an integrated approach to service delivery, especially as it relates to supporting and empowering families.

- **Collaboration with the Opportunity Agenda.** All through the Katrina response effort, MFW collaborated closely with the New York-based Opportunity Agenda.<sup>4</sup> Through monitoring of government policies and partnerships with research and advocacy groups, the Opportunity Agenda produced a communications toolkit, compendium of fact sheets, and background briefs on inequalities in health, employment, housing that Katrina survivors were confronting and related national policy issues useful for news reporting on the Katrina Anniversary.
- **Organizing philanthropy.** Ms. Foundation played a lead role in starting up the Gulf Coast Funders' Network. This network is made up of about 10 progressive funders who fund advocacy and organizing in the region. This group is organizing more wealth to go into the region, and MFW serves as a source of information and advice on priorities for funding. In addition, MFW participates on the Katrina Task Force of the New York Region Area Grantmakers and is willing to connect funders to community-based groups and organizing funders to visit the region. According to Susan Wefald of MFW, within these and other funding circles, MFW has often played a critical role of asking hard questions and calling attention to importance of including the perspectives and needs of women.

Whether directly through promoting a critical gender lens or a human rights framework, organizing listening sessions with grantees, sponsoring research on the status of vulnerable populations, or supporting advocacy work and community organizing, the Katrina Fund has

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<sup>4</sup> The Opportunity Agenda is dedicated to building the national will to expand opportunity in America. The organization works to elevate the national conversation about opportunity by lifting the voices of spokespersons, working with the media to help spokespersons create compelling and accurate stories, and connecting with creative professionals to promote a creative culture of opportunity.

enabled MFW and other women's funds to play a key leadership role along with other organizations to raise awareness of the continuing social injustices that are playing out in Katrina relief and rebuilding.

### **Grantee Level Actions to Expose Inequalities**

United in the Katrina Fund's mission to expose inequalities, a number of the advocacy grantees themselves are taking action to expose and rectify inequalities. Their strategies include (1) providing stories, (2) defining issues and solutions, and (3) taking actions to fight injustices.

- **Providing powerful stories of injustices.** Another way in which grantees expose inequalities is through the powerful and moving stories of those who they help within their work. Following are examples of the treatment that hurricane survivors have received from the educational and criminal justice systems.

#### **Stories of Survivors**

**Post traumatic stress and bureaucratic insensitivity.** Mental health services for hurricane evacuees and victims have been minimal. Among other things, the ACLU and other grantees have advocated for increased counselors for hurricane survivors in schools.

*There was a kindergarten student who was suspended twice for acting up, even though the mother told them that the child was crying every time it rained and showed clear signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. The school turned a deaf ear and said, 'We're going to discipline you regardless.'*

*-- Nsombi Lambright, ACLU in Mississippi*

*We had a call from a grandmother who is raising her grandchild and the four year old tried to commit suicide. We went down to talk to her, and the problem was that she was traumatized by Katrina. She talked about all the water that washed away her life. She lost friends, she lost her puppy, she lost toys, her mother is now in an institutional setting.*

*- Mary Troupe, Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities*

## Stories of Survivors (cont'd)

**Police harassment and racial profiling.** Many Mississippi communities have indicated that NOLA residents are not welcome, because they are seen as bringing a criminal element to the community. ACLU of MS has had to do a lot of education indicating that individuals cannot be singled out just because they are driving a car with Louisiana plates. That is “profiling.” They have also advocated for NOLA students who were expelled for fighting.

*We’ve also heard issues about people who were arrested either during the storm or right after the storm—there were mandatory curfews. So there were people that were arrested at their homes trying to collect valuables. To this day there are people in jail who were incarcerated and are still awaiting trial. They don’t have legal counsel....We’ve also heard complaints of racial profiling and police brutality. Of course, racial profiling didn’t just occur after Katrina, but after the storm it seems to have gotten worse. The Gulf Coast went into this police state. That culture still exists there, where policemen are saying, ‘we are going to do whatever we need to do to maintain control here. If we have to beat you then so be it.’*

*--Nsombi Lambright, ACLU in MS*

*What we’re seeing is a crackdown in the criminal justice system as a last resort to say, ‘If you are coming back after we’ve done all this to keep you out, we will arrest you and lock you up.’ They are arresting hundreds of people a week and they are proud of their statistics. 60 percent of their bookings are for municipal and traffic offenses! 60 percent! Hundreds of people, so many that they are getting lost in the system, and not getting court dates. I think it is a very clear message to poor black communities that the new New Orleans is supposed to be built without them.”*

*--Xochitl Brevara, FFLIC*

- **Defining issues and solutions.** As recognized and prominent community leaders, grantees have raised a steady and persistent voice to call public attention to remedying pre-existing, structural inequalities. Through listening closely to their constituencies, the grantees were able to shed light on key areas where vulnerable populations have been unjustly abused, criminalized, or overlooked. Along with exposing inequalities, these advocacy groups offer policy solutions that attempt to redefine the parameters for redevelopment at the *systems* level. Their work is of great value, as they are a select group of organizations that keep policymakers’ attention on issues that matter most to women, children and other vulnerable populations. Figure II-1 below provides some examples to illustrate how these groups define the issues on the ground, and offer strategic, longer-term solutions.

**Figure II-1. Exposing Inequalities: Grantees' Defining of Issues & Proactive Solutions**

The Critical Issues	The Solutions <sup>5</sup>
<p><b>1) Gentrification, Permanent Displacement, Economic Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We feel really strongly and what we're observing, is that the people who are being cast out, who are not welcome back, are poor black folks, poor black families... there are so many reasons why people are having a hard time returning to the city. It is very obvious when you make plans to demolish public housing, when you get rid of public health care, when you get rid of public schools, that your intent is to really shrink the public welfare, public safety net. (FFLIC)</i></li> <li><i>There is still to this day no kind of plan to rebuild low-income housing on the gulf coast but there are all kinds of incentives for homeowners. (ACLU)</i></li> <li><i>The casino industry has been drooling over [the land that the Vietnamese community has occupied for 30 years in East Biloxi]... There's a very strong clique of Democrats and Republicans that just want to remove that community completely and use it for casinos. (MIRA)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure the right to return</li> <li>➤ Provide affordable, rental housing in healthier, mixed-income neighborhoods.</li> <li>➤ Develop the small-business sector and support efforts by disadvantaged women and minorities.</li> <li>➤ Increase economic well-being by expanding access to education and training.</li> <li>➤ Provide non-traditional job training for women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2) Gaps in Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We've gotten hundreds of calls from parents that didn't have any schools for their children to attend. (Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative, CDF)</i></li> <li><i>People who lost relatives or loved one in the September 11th tragedy are still receiving counseling to this day because of post-traumatic stress disorder but people that are victims of Katrina are not receiving the same services. (ACLU)</i></li> <li><i>In Jackson County alone, the suicide rate is up 200% (especially high among teenagers and the elderly). (Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities)</i></li> <li><i>There are still no childcare services available to families in E. Biloxi. (Moore House)</i></li> <li><i>More often than not, previously relied upon networks of family and friend informal assistance no longer exist, and many of the formal childcare facilities that once served entire communities were washed away. (IWRP)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Restore basic services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reopening schools, health care facilities, and shelters, will help those impacted restart their lives and enable others to return.</li> <li>- Mental health services are particularly needed to combat the depression and devastation people continue to experience as they work to pick up the pieces of their lives and communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Provide childcare so that women can enter and remain in the workforce.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3) Leadership Vacuum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It is really, really important giving voice to the issues that really have unique impacts for women. We have seen the leadership of women in this coalition called STEPS, still there is so much more leadership development that needs to happen among women to position them to have a stronger voice in decisions that are impacting the community... Women's leadership was an issue before the hurricanes...if we had stronger leadership among women in the Gulf Coast, initiatives related to women's needs would be more successful, and that is true on every issue that could impact communities. (Mississippi Low Income Childcare Initiative)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Include women in the planning and rebuilding process.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Many of these recommendations come from reports generated by the Institute for Research on Women's Policies and the NAACP. However, many of the grantees echo similar recommendations in their interviews. Chapter 3 provides more details on solutions towards which grantees have worked.

- **Taking actions to fight injustices.** All of the advocacy grantees are experienced and have used a variety of techniques, including using research on the status of vulnerable populations, engaging low-income women and women of color, meeting with policymakers at all levels of government, and collaborating with other organizations. (See Chapter 3 for a summary of advocacy outcomes.) In addition, many of the organizations supported protests, media outreach, and filed complaints with federal, state, and local governmental agencies.

In sum, the Katrina Fund is rooted in a number of key strategies and principles to expose the depth of inequalities—many of which come from MFW’s and, in general, the women’s funding movement’s 30-year experience and expertise in promoting women’s leadership and economic self-sufficiency and in addressing gender inequalities. The data show that the Katrina Fund grantees explicitly acknowledged and directed attention to the inequalities that exist in the recovery and rebuilding efforts, particularly as the media spotlight turns away from the haunting images of survivors struggling to rebuild their lives. Secondly, those supported by the Katrina Fund promoted both a gender lens and a human rights framework to shed light on issues that need to be addressed. These perspectives strived to engage decision makers to consider an asset-oriented and rights-based approach and to engage in deeper, intersectional analysis of root causes of *structural* inequalities based on gender, race, class, etc. Third, and most importantly, the Fund recognized that a crucial step towards finding solutions lies in promoting the leadership of low-income, women of color.

## **How has this effort ensured that the perspectives of low-income women of color are central to policy decisions about relief, recovery, and rebuilding?**

*Funding community-based women's organizations in the Gulf Coast has offered the opportunity to help elevate women's voices, support their leadership and bring them to the policy table as real partners. This is the only road to just and equitable policies that meet the needs of all people.*

*- Sara Gould, President and CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women<sup>6</sup>*

One unique and important aspect of the Katrina Women’s Response Fund has been its emphasis on promoting the perspectives of low-income women of color so that they are central to policy

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpt from [Hurricane Katrina: An Eye-Opener to Reality, A Message from President and CEO Sara K. Gould](#) (September 2, 2005)

decisions about relief, recovery and rebuilding efforts. Interviews with grantees showed that the engagement of low-income women and women of color has been a transformative process for some of their organizations as well as for the women themselves. Following are some key themes and findings.

- ***Articulating value for promoting women’s perspectives.*** Katrina Fund support has helped a number of grantee leaders from progressive organizations to articulate more clearly the value of promoting the perspectives of women in general and low-income women of color more specifically. For a number of grantees, participation in the Katrina Fund was significant because—as we will elaborate in Chapter 3—it helped them to look at issues and their organizational work with a gender lens. Many discussed raised awareness of the pervasiveness of strong, formal and informal women leaders in their organizations and community. Within a few grantee organizations, such as the NAACP, the Katrina Fund grant created the space for women to identify the impacts of the storm and make policy recommendations. For many of the other grantees, the emphasis on promoting the perspective and leadership of women of color was a logical and natural focus:

*Women are very powerful leaders, strong leaders, because they are used to making strong decisions and they don’t overreact. They are more used to dealing with stress and pain. They are used to being able to persevere because women in this community have endured a lot.*

*-- Rose Johnson, North Gulfport Community Land Trust*

*A lot of times women play a leadership role, but more to the side. With the relief effort, they have been able to really come out and voice their concerns, helping with the assessment and helping with the case management. Most of our case managers in the Gulf Coast area are women.*

*-- Pharia Le and Tram Nguyen, Boat People SOS*

*I think that women’s leadership is the key. ... Women will ask [hard] questions until it satisfied them. Our leaders come to us with a set agenda and it’s up to [women] to make sure that that agenda is the agenda they feel is most beneficial to their lives. Women are making a difference because they asking right questions, staying the course, and not just taking ‘no’ for an answer.*

*-- Jackie Jones, Jeremiah Group*

- ***Helping women of color to find voice and assume leadership.*** Training and support for women of color has been key to their ability to find their voice and their assumption of leadership in the public arena. A number of grantees informed us that, through the MFW process, their consciousness was raised about

the supports women of color in positions of power need in order to better exercise their leadership. One grantee, ACLU in MS, described their work as unique in that they provide individuals with the tools they need to engage their government. In particular, they describe their focus on the rights of individuals to exercise their voice:

*Our approach is more focused on empowering people who have been impacted by the storm to make changes for themselves. Our approach overall is...about leadership development whereas other projects have been focused more on doing direct advocacy on behalf of people....we feel it is more important that people are empowered with the tools to make changes for themselves. Then they'll be empowered when the next storm comes to really control their own destiny.*

*-- Nsombi Lambright, ACLU in Mississippi*

- ***Providing frameworks for understanding, analysis, and communication.***

Training on intersectional analysis and the human rights framework provided a solid foundation for the leadership development of women of color. A powerful and transformative tool for women has been trainings such as the ones provided by the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative, Children's Defense Fund. This grantee elaborates on this process:

*We are working to help women think through—from the perspective of their local communities—how the global economy affects their lives...The larger group of [300] women will be trained on intersectionality, including gender and race. Then, there will be smaller and more specific sessions for the young women and the mayor commissioners so that they understand these issues and can communicate these issues. So they (1) understand how they connect to what is going on in their local communities, (2) talk about what they learned from their analysis of the status of women where they live; and (3) communicate that from a southern rural perspective to a broader audience participating in the U.S. south social forum and then up to the world social forum at some point in time.*

*-- Oleta Fitzgerald, Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative, Children's Defense Fund*

- ***Adapting cultural beliefs for greater voice and participation.*** Women of color, particularly those from immigrant backgrounds, need support to adapt or modify traditional cultural beliefs or practices so as to allow for greater voice and participation by women. A number of grantees who work closely with immigrant communities in the Gulf Coast advised that it takes time, patience, and appropriate staffing to engage women of color in community leadership roles. For example, leaders from Boat People SOS explained,

*The issue is that the Vietnamese women are not apt to voice their concerns. Vietnamese, in general, don't like to ask for help. [They are] very proud. With the women, it's hard to convince them why they need to participate more in community meetings....And so to have our organization and our staff who are able to identify with them on a cultural level has been really instrumental in getting the Vietnamese community, and women in particular, to start saying, 'We need this, we need this for our community.'*

A key ingredient to supporting participation within this group is to provide culturally responsive staffing so that trust, comfort, and understanding are established before engaging women in unfamiliar roles. Eventually, they understand that their actions will benefit their community in the long run. Another grantee, Bill Chandler of MS Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA), observed that cross-generational outreach has some potential for entree into communities: “Most of the people who were leaders during the Katrina campaign there were mainly [Vietnamese] young women.” However, he admitted that some resistance to women organizers and leaders are inevitable:

*I think really there is a resistance. We have had difficulties with other communities that are male dominated. I don't know if you've met [a Latina leader], but she's a very strong person and she doesn't take crap from anybody. Oddly enough, the people that you would expect to be most involved with us, like the Catholic Church, the priests have been very resistant to accepting her role and have been resistant to getting involved in an active way. They have been involved with MIRA for years, but being able to deal with a woman that is leading, rather than following—that's a major problem with particularly Catholics, and to a certain extent, other denominations.*

*-- Bill Chandler, MIRA*

In response, Mr. Chandler said that these women have learned to not give ground. “You have to be tough and you have to be strong and not take shit from The Man.” He has also served as a powerful ally to the women of color organizers, and has effectively promoted their leadership while staying in the background.

- **Women of color are seeing results.** As will be elaborated in Chapter 3, the outcomes are both tangible and intangible in terms of confidence building and policy changes:

*By us going to Washington and learning how to implement powerful change is empowering change. We didn't know how to do it but [are] now able to merge with others who can make our voices heard, including NAACP, Ms. Foundation, Oxfam, etc. STEPS coalition, of which we are a part, has been making a big difference. I know that numbers do matter and together we are a much bigger voice. The learning that still exists is unlimited and the women really appreciate it. We see that we're not just spinning our wheels, that it really does make a difference. For*

*examples, getting signatures can make a really big difference; we collected 951 signatures for one policy initiative. Sometimes, though you have to take care of personal things and then come back to that sort of work and giving these women this event is helpful in that way. We have seen that our work did make a difference and that is a big impact.*

*-- Sharon Hanshaw, Coastal Women for Change*

*The land trust is also making an impact with changing role in the government, making laws that meet the needs for low income communities. Women are really taking a lead in policymaking, specifically women of color, in this community. We have been working on this smart code project, trying to encourage economic development because there are very few opportunities for economic development happening in poor communities. We are encouraging people to operate businesses from home to have a greater voice without having to rent or own an office space.*

*-- Rose Johnson, North Gulfport Community Land Trust*

One grantee leader observed, “There are some wonderful advocates that are calling for policy reforms that are essential, but I think that in the end if we aren’t organizing those communities of color to say what it is that they need and to find their power, then we aren’t ever going to make it.” The findings above suggest that not only are Katrina Fund grantees organizing members of communities of color, but also women of color are truly bringing new perspectives that simultaneously address a range of key issues impacting women and families.

## **Conclusion**

The achievement of the above identified activities speak to the strategic value and difference of engaging progressive women-led organizations and women’s funds. A number of the grantees bring a deep-seated understanding of their respective communities, and they genuinely value grassroots leadership and the empowerment of women of color and other vulnerable populations to develop and own community-generated solutions.

The Ms. Foundation and a few of the women’s funds served as both regranting organizations *and* lead grantees by playing a leadership, training, technical assistance, and convening role. These activities enabled them to build relationships, collaborate with leadership groups in the region, and raise their grantees’ work to a higher level. The Katrina Women’s Response Fund models how other foundations can respond, not only to natural disaster relief, but also to other tragedies borne out of unjust treatment of vulnerable populations. Further, local, state, and national groups that have traditionally focused on issues of race and class but not gender and have never worked

with the Ms. Foundation, have developed a deep respect and understanding of the powerful leadership role that women's funds can play in exposing inequalities across *multiple* dimensions, including race, class, and gender. In the next chapter, we discuss the grantee-level outcomes and the progress of the Katrina Fund in building the infrastructure and capacity of organizations to address the needs of low-income women in the Gulf Coast storm recovery and rebuilding efforts.

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### III. GRANTEE-LEVEL OUTCOMES

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*For a non-profit organization of any size, it is a huge endeavor to provide long-term relief and recovery to victims of the hurricane. The real catalyst for recovery efforts is government and governmental funds because those funds dwarf the resources of the non-profit sector and the faith-based sector. How those funds are directed is really important [factor in] who receives support and who doesn't. So advocacy becomes the cutting-edge way to ensure an actionable recovery.*

— Derrick Johnson, Mississippi NAACP

As described in Chapter 1, the Katrina Response Fund represented a sizable investment on the part of MFW, WFN, and the other women's funds that participated in the effort, but one that was relatively small compared to the funds pouring from corporate foundations or the federal government. Yet, the grants that MFW and the community-based women's funds were distinct from other funding sources in that they were more likely to invest in advocacy and research. They were also more likely to invest in grassroots women's leadership, to focus on long-term needs like childcare and education, and to prioritize the needs of women of color. Furthermore, three of the women's funds in this effort, including most prominently MFW, took a very proactive hands-on approach to engaging grantees and community leaders, which further amplified the impact this work.

In this chapter, we present outcomes emerging from the Katrina Fund related to each of the following research questions:

- What are the short and intermediate outcomes arising from these grants? What difference does it have on outcomes that there is a strong focus on the strength and leadership of women?
- How does this effort ensure local women's and other organizations have the capacity and resources to meet the immediate needs of low-income women evacuees?
- In what ways have these investments rebuilt and strengthened the infrastructure of women's and other progressive organizations in affected regions?

## **What are the short and intermediate outcomes arising from these grants? What difference does it have on outcomes that there is a strong focus on the strength and leadership of women?**

Assessing the outcomes arising from these grants is challenging for a number of reasons. First, many grants were used for general operating support or staffing, so it is not always possible to isolate the work of this grant from the work of the entire organization. Second, some grantee organizations did not formally record or track the number of people served. Finally, as described in Chapter 1, many of these grants are still in process, and, thus, were not able to fully report outcomes. Our conservative estimate is that **over 50,000 people** have received relief services or directly benefited from legal advocacy efforts sponsored by these grantees, with a smaller number receiving more intensive job training, housing, and childcare services. Below, we highlight key grantee accomplishments and outcomes to-date.

### **Housing**

*When we talk about home ownership and its link to the high poverty rate, in many cases those households we are talking about are made up of single women and children. This is very much also true in public housing redevelopment. Therefore, the work we are doing in mixed income and the opportunity that is creating has an immediate impact [for women]. For women-led families, working to get affordable housing is the action approach.*

*–Una Anderson, The New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative*

Like Una Anderson, almost all respondents with whom we spoke cited the lack of affordable and safe housing as *the* most pressing issue facing the Gulf Coast region at this time. Many residents are living in small trailers, awaiting funds to rebuild or repair their homes. Homeowners who meet certain criteria (i.e. insured) will be receiving their federal reimbursements soon, while others (i.e. non-insured) will need to wait for a second or third wave of government relief funding in order to move forward with repairs or reconstruction. Policymakers have made only limited efforts to increase the supply of affordable and/or rental housing, and have simultaneously stalled on the repair of public housing. In New Orleans (NOLA), HUD has made plans to demolish 4000 units of public housing, even though some of this housing was not badly damaged. As Ms. Anderson argues, the lack of affordable and public housing disproportionately affects women, making it particularly difficult for them to return to the region or create a stable living environment for their children.

Given this context, it is perhaps not surprising that many grantees in the region focused on housing. Nine of 47 Katrina Fund grants focused on housing or housing advocacy. Although

many of the housing issues in the region are yet to be resolved, Katrina Fund grantees made steady progress on this issue.

- The Louisiana Housing Alliance in Franklin (LHA) used the MFW funds to help acquire a 30-unit housing development called safe haven, for elderly and disabled residents.
- Mississippi Center for Justice, in partnership with other housing advocacy groups, pressured FEMA to abandon their plan to evict 3,000 residents from trailers, advocated for the rights of 350 residents of public housing, and provided over 11,000 pro bono legal consulting hours to hurricane victims.
- The New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative (NONDC) negotiated with developers to create 600 units of affordable housing in the central city of NOLA. Further, 50% of work crew for this site will be local hires. NONDC also got the tax accreditation formula for the state changed so that it reflects national standards for what constitutes mixed income development.
- Nicholas House H2H in Atlanta provided intensive case management to help transition evacuee families into work and to stable housing. They have moved five families into permanent housing and jobs, with a plan to help five more families by the beginning of 2007.
- Common Ground Collective, in New Orleans, used grant funds to operate a women's center, which has housed 18 women since the storm. The grant funds have also contributed to the "gutting" of 640 houses in the upper and lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward.

### **Offering a Helping Hand: United Houma Nation**

United Houma Nation (UHN) is a Native American tribe of approximately 16,000 that live in Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Jefferson's and Terrebonne Parishes in Louisiana. UHN has been recognized as a tribe by the state of Louisiana, and has been working for over thirteen years to be recognized as a tribe by the federal government.

Over 8,000 Houma who were affected or displaced by Katrina have sought assistance from UHN. "Julie," an older Houma woman who is monolingual in French, is one of those 8,000. She lives, and raised her five children, in a small four-room home, which in some areas might be called a shack. During hurricanes Katrina and Rita, her home was flooded with 4 to 5 feet of water. Volunteers from UHN scrubbed the house of mold and flood residue, removed flooring, and painted the interior (which had never been painted before.) UHN also bought her curtains and replaced old cabinets.

After a lifetime in the Bayou, Julie believes that hurricanes are a reality of life. She lost her childhood home to coastal erosion, and understands that the land around her is always changing. Still, she can't imagine living anywhere else. With help from the Katrina Fund, UHN helps tribe members, like Julie, to rebuild their houses –in a way that they hope will better protect them from future flooding. With the grant, UHN has hired a staff member who is assessing and prioritizing the needs of Houma residents across a four county area.

## Job Training

*There is significant amount of occupational segregation in the area—men are taking advantage of the rebuilding economy by focusing on construction, while just now women are being trained for these things. The main sectors where women were really involved, healthcare and education, have been getting really wiped out.*

*—Avis Jones-DeWeever, Institute for Women's Policy Research*

Katrina left many residents of the gulf coast unemployed, and this is particularly true of women. As reported by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women have been disproportionately affected by the employment-sector shifts in the region, as good paying jobs in the health and education sector have been replaced by construction-trade work. This was a priority area of many Katrina Fund grantees, who recognized that job opportunities for women are key to long-term economic development. Eleven of the 47 grants focused primarily on providing women with job training. Job training programs within the effected region, however, have been slow to start, mostly because the basic needs of residents (housing, services) remain such a priority.

Grantees in cities that received evacuees, such as Birmingham, Atlanta, and Chicago, were able to make progress on this issue. Projects were very intentional about bundling job training services with services essential for single mothers, such as childcare, health, and transportation assistance. This “bundled” approach took into account the holistic needs of women and addressed obstacles, such as access to transportation and child care that interfere with women accessing job training services.

- Jeremiah Skills Center in Birmingham, Alabama provided comprehensive bundled job training services to 27 women dislocated by Hurricane Katrina. The training was in home health services. So far, seven women have completed the training and are employed at a living wage. The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham played a pivotal role in shaping the bundled service design and worked closely with Jeremiah Skills Center throughout the project.
- Heartland Alliance was the “one-stop shop” for Katrina evacuees in Chicago. With the grant it received from The Chicago Foundation for Women, Heartland Alliance provided 120 Katrina evacuees with transitional job training. As of March 2006, 53 women completed training and 41 of those women transitioned to unsubsidized stable employment.
- Women's Economic Development Agency (WEDA) in Atlanta, Georgia has focused on intensive entrepreneurship training. They have provided services to 22 Katrina evacuees, and six of those 22 are currently engaged in a 14-week entrepreneurship program that will lead to the development of a small business. WEDA collaborated with AFR & Associates (a for-profit Atlanta company that rehabilitates, manages and re-sells homes foreclosed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) to move families of program participants out of

hotels and into permanent, single-family housing for 36 months. The first 18-months will be rent free; the second half, residents will be expected to pay rent at a discount to market rate.

### **One Women’s Story: Finding a New Life in Chicago**

“Betty” came to Chicago after needing to evacuate her home in New Orleans. Betty’s housing case manager, at Heartland Human Care Services, referred her to the Transitional Jobs program. Betty, who had not worked in two years, was initially reluctant to begin work in such a large city after being there for such a short time. She attended a two-week job readiness program, where she learned about employers’ expectations of work, how to interview well, and completed her first resume. After the two-week work readiness program, Betty was placed in one of the program’s transitional job slots in a clerical position. There Betty worked with her site mentor to learn clerical skills and received feedback on her performance. After eight weeks on the job, she was ready to move to unsubsidized employment. She began working with the program’s employment placement coordinator who assisted her in the transition. Betty interviewed for a position as an administrative assistant and got the job. She now works full time in Chicago, earning \$9/hour.

With a Katrina Fund grant from the Chicago Foundation for Women, Heartland Human Care Services provided 120 women, like Betty, with transitional job training. At least forty-one of those women have since found stable unsubsidized employment.

## **Childcare**

*In considering childcare issues, most programs look at educating childcare personnel or they look at curricular issues. MLICI [Mississippi Low-Income Childcare Initiative] brings affordability to the childcare discussion. This is an important anti-poverty program. Assistance paying for childcare is the work support that moves family towards self-sufficiency.*

*—Carol Burnett, Moore Community House*

As Carol Burnett argues so persuasively, access to quality affordable childcare is crucial to the long-term economic well-being of women and their families, as well as to the overall community. The sensitivity of Katrina Fund grantees to the needs and experiences of poor women, made childcare and education a priority for many organizations. In addition to addressing these issues, many of the job training initiatives provided childcare as part of their package of services.

- Moore Community House and the associated organization—Mississippi Low-Income Childcare Initiative (MLICI)—received grants through the Ms. Foundation and through the Women’s Fund of Greater Jackson. These grants helped Moore Community House to sustain their childcare referral service, facilitate volunteer work to clear out debris from eight of their nine original childcare facilities, to leverage money for rebuilding, and to participate in

community forums and raise awareness about the importance of childcare to economic development and recovery.

- The Quality Childcare Program in Atlanta provided 22 women with 2-6 weeks of full-time childcare so that they could participate in job search or job training.

## **Mental and Physical Health**

*I remember this one woman who came into our free clinic and in the middle of our waiting room she announced that she was going to commit suicide and murder her family. This really exposed the mental issues that a lot of these people are dealing with. That was her way of very loudly asking for help, but very few ask and are willing to ask, even to this day.*

*– Pharia Le, Boat People SOS*

Many individuals, like the woman described above, continue to struggle with the long-term effects of Hurricane Katrina, such as financial stress, displaced support systems, and unstable housing. Many respondents we spoke with said that the long-term mental health implications of the storm are just emerging. The suicide rate in NOLA is three times what it was before the storm at the same time that state and local funding for mental health services has declined. As is discussed later in this chapter, there was also an initial priority placed by the Katrina Fund on maintaining vital services for women, such as services for sexual assault, abortion and reproductive health, AIDS, and domestic violence. Below, we have highlighted some of the core outcomes of the nine Katrina Fund grants that were focused primarily on issues of mental and physical health.

- The YWCA of Baton Rouge, LA has used their grant to create a “comfort for kids” program, designed to help parents deal with their children’s fears about disaster. As part of this program, they have created and disseminated 6,000 age-appropriate materials for helping children cope with trauma.
- The Jackson public schools used their grant to send 59 teachers to a training on how to recognize and address trauma in their students.
- The Community of Advanced Practice nurses in Atlanta, GA used the grant to provide medical assistance, including exams, pharmaceuticals, and referrals, to 128 women and/or children who were displaced by the storm.
- At least 10 grantees received funding to continue providing vital health services for women after the storm. This funding went to domestic violence shelters, health providers working on issues of HIV, reproductive rights, and sexual assault.

## **Community Leadership and Advocacy**

*I think our job is to break down the stereotypes of ‘good kids’ and ‘bad kids,’ ‘deserving poor,’ and, ‘non-deserving poor.’ Our kids are sucked into the system in a very targeted and clear way, and families are*

*struggling under the weight of that system. We feel we are one of the only voices out there pushing for unity. Also, we put the voices of women, mothers and grandmothers, who are talking about their families into the forefront.*

*—Xochitl Brevara, Families and Friends of LA  
Incarcerated Children*

As the quote above illustrates, organizations and programs that focused on participation and advocacy, prioritized leadership, empowerment, and advocacy for vulnerable populations. They often work on any or all of the key issues highlighted already in this chapter, but their central priority is on providing a voice for community members.

There has been a ground swell of public involvement and participation in the gulf region, driven mostly by citizens looking for information about when services will return and trying to lend their voice to discussions of how federal and state funds will be distributed. Organizations working on current hot-button issues (i.e. housing), have been able to take advantage of the increase in citizen activity and engagement for some measurable wins. Others who are focused on less hot-button issues (justice-reform; leadership development) have found that they have had to take it slow, until some of the more immediate needs of residents are met. Many, however, are hopeful that continued public involvement will translate into long-term change.

- NAACP engaged several hundred women of color across Mississippi in three policy forums, designed to surface a policy agenda for the 2007 legislative session. The session in Biloxi focused on issues of affordable housing, while the Mississippi Delta forum focused on issues of economic development.
- All Congregations Together (ACT) has 32 member congregations. ACT used their grant to hire pastors and organizers in order to influence policy discussions. ACT holds cluster meetings with up to 600 community members—within particular member congregations—to discuss key policy issues related to housing, crime and the environment. Currently, they are working to build housing for at least 300 seniors, lobbying for temporary housing so residents can return, and working to start a school in the 9th Ward.
- Approximately 90 women participated in ACLU presentations of “know your government” and “know your rights” workshops.
- Coastal Women for change gathered 950 signatures for a fair housing initiative and gathered 200 residents together to confront the mayor of Biloxi with the needs of their community.
- Critical Resistance gathered at least 1,600 signatures requesting amnesty for those who were arrested in the immediate aftermath of Katrina.

- Jeremiah Group, a national organization made up of independent churches and synagogues, has been active in building a broader base and trying to create forums where the voices of low-income women can be heard. For instance, they worked with 20,000 Houston evacuees in order to get their FEMA housing vouchers extended. The Katrina Fund grant provided the Jeremiah Group with funds to bring women together, and for travel costs to Houston and Baton Rouge so that they could do their advocacy work.

### **Cross-racial recovery and relief efforts: Common Ground Collective**

Common Ground Collective is an all-volunteer organization in NOLA that was created by former Black Panther activist Malik Rahim following Hurricane Katrina in September 2006. Common Ground works in the upper and lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward and throughout the city. The organization was founded to meet the immediate short-term needs of community members by providing goods through distribution centers and helping to gut and repair houses so that residents can return to the city. They have branched out in many directions, running a clinic in an apartment building and a clinic in the Algiers neighborhood, operating a bicycle distribution center, and working to clean and revive the soil by planting sunflowers around neighborhoods. Common Ground collective has also coordinated with other organizing groups in the city (such as ACORN and ACT) to demonstrate against the demolition of public housing and to advocate for the re-opening of MLK grammar school in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward.

Common Ground relies on a dedicated group of (non-paid) core organizers, and on short-term volunteers—often white college students—who work in teams to gut and repair houses. Although there are challenges involved in bringing white, often affluent, volunteers into neighborhoods that are predominantly black and poor, leaders of Common Ground feel that, like the freedom bus rides of the 1960's, their work has the potential to inspire a “second-wave” of white anti-racists. In an orientation for new volunteers, a staff member said, “We find ourselves in another moment in history where it is important to cross the racial divide... The gifts are available here if you are ready and able to accept them.” She also entreated them that, when interacting with community residents, it is important to “come from a place of humility and a place of respect.”

With the grant from MFW, Collective Ground Collective has operated a women's center, which has housed 18 women since the storm. Grant funds were also used in part to gut 640 houses by the end of September 2006. Looking forward, the organization is looking to gut 700 more houses, buy an apartment complex, and hire some permanent staff to help sustain their diverse programming efforts.

### **How does this effort ensure local women’s and other organizations have the capacity and resources to meet the immediate needs of low-income women evacuees?**

Beyond the grant support itself, grantees appreciated the flexibility of grant funds, which could be used for operations. Many of the grantees lost federal and state funding to administer programs and relied on the support of women’s funds to keep doors open or rebuild quickly.

Grantees used their funds in the following ways, which contributed to their ability to meet the needs of their constituency and sustain their programming.

- **Hire staff.** At least 10 grantees used the funding to hire staff. This was particularly common among grassroots organizing groups. Staff conducted outreach to community members and provided services.
- **Buy land.** The North Gulfport Community Land Trust in North Gulfport MS used the MWF funds to buy land for the permanent location of their office. Similarly, the Louisiana Housing Alliance used funds to help acquire a 30 unit building. See the text box on the North Gulfport Land Trust for more detail.
- **Plan and develop programs.** Wider Opportunities for Women, based in Washington, DC is working with leaders on the ground to develop a non-traditional job-training program for women focused on construction skills. They are in the planning stages and have leveraged the MFW grant for an additional \$30,000 in funds.

— *It is our belief that it's really critical that there be a certain planning period to bring in people to an assessment to make sure we are developing a comprehensive program really serving as a model for the gulf.... The Ms. Foundation for Women funding has ended up being the catalytic force to launch this entire initiative that results in individual women being economically self-sufficient and taking care of their children.*

- Joan Kuriansky, *Wider Opportunities for Women*

- **Participate in policy forums and discussions.** The Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights is using their grant to create an office in Jackson, Mississippi, which will better position them to participate in policy discussions about workers rights and housing issues. Organizations like MLCI and LHA also used their funds for this purpose.

— *I found that the ability for us to be able to designate our funds to trainings, public hearings, workshops, and seminars, to be at the table to discuss issues for low income women, is so valuable. There is a voice of our clients that has not been there before. The number of dollars with the agency has been limited but having these dollars available to us has let us make real points about the needs of low income women in policy and changes.*

- Almetra Franklin, *Louisiana Housing Alliance (LHA)*

- **Build evaluation expertise.** WFN worked closely with its network of women's funds and their grantees to build their capacity to evaluate their work using their Making the Case (MTC) tool. WFN trained women's funds on how to use the tool with their grantees. MTC provided a common framework for thinking about how to evaluate and articulate the change women's funds and their grantees are making in the communities. .

- **Fundraise.** Grantees used MFW funds to leverage an estimated \$2,100,000.<sup>1</sup>

### **Building a Lasting Community Resource: North Gulfport Land Trust**

In 1866, a group of newly emancipated African Americans purchased a few acres of land on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. These settlers transformed swampland into farmland, built the first African American school in the Gulfport region, and built a community that provided them with safety and shelter from racial violence. The historic community of Turkey Creek is now located in the town of North Gulfport, a community that remains 95% African American and largely poor.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, it damaged one-third of the houses in North Gulfport, all of the buildings in Turtle Creek, and left many residents homeless. As was true in many communities in the region, government relief did not arrive quickly. FEMA did not arrive in Turkey Creek until October 28<sup>th</sup>, two months after the storm.

Meanwhile, community leaders like Rose Johnson served hundreds of meals through the Good Deeds Community Center, an organization that was built during the Civil Rights Movement. Rose and her friends helped organize volunteers to remove fallen trees and debris, and developed community workshops to help inform residents about emergency assistance.

Rose Johnson was a community leader before Katrina hit. In 2005, she founded the North Gulfport Land Trust (NGLT). The mission of NGLT is to reclaim abandoned and foreclosed property in North Gulfport for redevelopment and to increase homeownership among African American residents. This process became more difficult after the storm, as land prices increased, rental prices soared, and housing everywhere became scarce. Rose Johnson is not discouraged, however, because she sees the strength and determination of North Gulfport residents and is inspired by the potential for them to rebuild their community. Rose says:

*People are strong enough to start rebuilding despite what they have lost. Everyone is drawing strength from each other. I see unlimited possibilities, a lot of growth and potential. It's just amazing to see these brave, courageous people starting their lives all over again.*

The grant of \$20,000 that NGLT received from the Katrina relief fund was an important step in that direction. With the grant NGLT acquired a parcel of land for their office. Moving forward, NGLT is seeking to build 10 units and rehabilitate five units of housing in the North Gulfport community over the coming year.

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<sup>1</sup> Leveraged funds were self-reported. Agencies often received “seed” funding from multiple sources. Further, we do not have comparable data from all grantees.

## **In what ways have these investments rebuilt and strengthened the infrastructure of women’s and other progressive organizations in affected regions?**

The Katrina Fund, particularly the funding provided by MFW, helped to strengthen the infrastructure of women’s and other progressive organizations because it: (1) sustained crucial services for women in a time of crisis, (2) introduced a gender lens, and (3) fostered cross-agency collaboration. We describe each of these—and related outcomes—in more detail below.

### **Sustained crucial services for women**

*A lot of the money was going to shelters—just shelter—for people that had fled from their homes. People weren’t thinking about the kinds of shelters that women and children were possibly already living in and funding was being taken away from that.*

—Ellen Collins, *Women’s Fund of Greater Jackson*

Katrina hit many non-profits in the region hard, including many organizations that were already serving vulnerable populations. The storm damaged or destroyed their buildings and staff members had to cope with devastating personal losses. MFW and other women’s funds took immediate steps to stabilize women’s organizations in the region, by providing grants to domestic violence shelters and organizations that were providing vital women’s health services (HIV, sexual assault, and abortion). For many organizations, this funding helped them keep their doors open and repair their facilities. The following grantees are representative:

- Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence used the \$15,000 grant from MFW as seed money for their Hurricane relief fund, which eventually grew to \$650,000. With this fund, they distributed \$50,000 grants to affected domestic violence shelters across the state and provided 200 women evacuees with \$2000 in relief funds.
- The Gulf Coast Women’s Center used their grant to help sustain their domestic violence center when their local funding was cut. They used the grant for operational expenses and staff salaries, allowing them to serve 209 women and to secure continued funding.

### **Introduced a Gender Lens**

*[The grant] helped us as an organization begin to look at things from a gender lens. [The gender lens] was there, but just not recognized. The organization is majority women and is an offshoot of the black church, which is also majority women. Often times you have women doing most or all of the work and the men sitting in the seats. Women couldn’t really*

*look at how [the storm] was effecting them and then set forth policy recommendations to remedy that impact. The Ms. Foundation allowed that time to step back and do that,*

*--Derrick Johnson, NAACP*

As discussed extensively in Chapter 2, MWF made a conscious decision to reach out to organizations focused on serving distinct communities, including disabled, immigrant communities, and African American communities. This strengthened the infrastructure of women's organizations in the region, by broadening who was at the table, building new alliances, and strengthening the capacity of diverse groups to support the voices of women. These organizations often did not have a well articulated "gender lens" before working with MWF, but this grant helped to surface discussions within and across organizations about the unique role of women's leadership and the distinct needs of women. The following are examples of organizations who did not have a previous relationship with MFW or the women's movement, but who have benefited from the introduction of a gender lens:

- Boat People SOS is working to raise awareness about issues facing the Southeast Asian population in the region, many of whom lost their boats and livelihood in the storm. They have provided comprehensive services to over 600 people affected by the storm, and have raised awareness among local service providers about linguistic and cultural barriers this population faces in seeking government services and assistance. Boat People SOS will use the grant to send staff to a Women's Institute in Atlanta and are taking steps to build the leadership of Southeast women in the region.
- Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) helped at least 500 disabled citizens to locate accessible housing, get access to health services (prescription drugs, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, etc), and to navigate the FEMA paperwork. The coalition has also been very active in trying to raise the awareness of local policymakers and relief agencies (Red Cross, FEMA) about the unique evacuation and recovery needs of the disabled population. Although most of the evacuees CCD worked with were women, many of whom were caretakers for disabled children, they had not previously approached their work with a gender lens.
- Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA) is using this grant to hire organizers and to reach out more to women, specifically Latinas and Vietnamese. Most of the staff is women and 50% of these are women of color.
- NAACP started policy forums for Black women, taking on an explicit "gender lens" for the first time.

### **Fostered cross-agency collaboration**

*[Our Ms. program officer] has been more than a grantor. She's been like a mentor. She has used every opportunity to not only connect us with other women's groups she's involved in, but also has made other women aware of the work we're trying to do.... It's been much of a proactive role*

*than someone taking a grant from a foundation. It's been more of a collaborative effort.*

*—Oleta Fitzgerald, Children's Defense Fund*

Lastly, the infrastructure of progressive and women's organizations in the Gulf Region was strengthened through enhanced collaboration. During MWF sponsored "listening sessions" women leaders and elected officials gathered to discuss policy issues facing the region. The leaders of ten grantee organizations met at the annual Ms. Institute for Women's EmPOWERment in Atlanta, where they shared their experiences and formed relationships with like-minded groups. Mary Troupe, from Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, said, "Being with other groups was so helpful for me. We hear about problems and through the convening we were able to hear... what has been successful and what hasn't been successful." Many respondents, particularly those based in Mississippi, emphasized the value of convening and collaborating for their work. Some we spoke with said that the convening in Mississippi had been an important first step towards the formation of the Steps Coalition in southern Mississippi. The Steps Coalition is an alliance of agencies, groups and organizations committed to healthy, just and sustainable renewal of all South Mississippi's families and community resources.

Other women's funds were also effective at brokering partnerships that enhanced the base of support available to Katrina evacuees. The Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis created a partnership with the local gas and electric company that allowed Memphis residents to donate money for evacuees by adding a few extra dollars onto their monthly bill. This, in turn, was used to help pay the energy bills of evacuees that had settled into the community. Generally, women's funds, like the Women's Fund for a Greater Memphis, acted as the go-to agency in their community when it came to generating innovative approaches to issues related to evacuee resettlement.

## **Conclusion**

Although much of the work of Katrina fund grantees is still in progress, the outcomes highlighted in this chapter illustrate that the grants have contributed to the network of services and the strength of nonprofit infrastructure within the region. In the next chapter we will discuss lessons learned and recommendations arising from this project.

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## IV. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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*This is the richest country in the world—but this area is still so decimated. What we are doing is barely a drop in the bucket.*

— Lisa Fithian, Common Ground Collective

*I'm stunned when I talk to people outside the region... They think that because of what happened and the attention paid to it that there was a national cavalry that came in and fixed things. They have no idea that things in New Orleans are probably worse than they were six months ago.*

— Xochitl Bevera, Families and Friends of LA  
Incarcerated Children

The first overarching lesson arising from our evaluation is, as is stated in the above quotes, that the important work of rebuilding and healing the gulf region is just beginning. Interviews with organizational leaders working on the ground in Louisiana and Mississippi described the overwhelming, ongoing, and unmet needs of those trying to rebuild their lives. Sustaining focus in multiple areas (e.g., social service, health care, education needs) and at multiple levels (e.g., direct service and advocacy) is crucial to long-term recovery.

A second overarching lesson is that, although organized philanthropy and the nonprofit sector are not a substitute for government, they do play a critical role in addressing the immediate post-disaster needs of communities. Within the disaster relief zone, many nonprofits left standing after the hurricane immediately opened their doors to help those that were in need—despite the fact that many staff and personnel were struggling to deal with the loss of their own homes or the relocation of their family members. In cities that received evacuees, such as Chicago, Atlanta, Birmingham, and Memphis, nonprofits were the first to respond to the needs of evacuees and advocate for their rights. Many of these organizations have not received any financial relief or compensation from the federal government. The people we spoke with repeatedly underscored the vital role that foundation support has played in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable citizens. In the words of one respondent, it is the role of the nonprofit sector to reach out to the “forgotten.”

A third overarching lesson is that, if the region is going to be rebuilt in a way that leads to more broad-based prosperity, then there needs to be funding to support a sustained research and media focus on the realities of what is going on in the region. Such a focus needs to ask, who is benefiting from rebuilding funds and why? This effort is important because it provides community leaders and the public with the information they need to hold policymakers accountable to their stated values. If, like Carol Burnett argues, “the recovery discussions are really a battle like David and Goliath, between casinos, condos, high property values and low income families, and especially single mother headed families,” then the media and the research community need to tell that story. Further, only sustained media attention can help to stimulate and facilitate ongoing discussions, among U.S. citizens, about how we as a nation are going to address the historically intractable issues of poverty and race that continue to shock and shame us.

The three “overarching” lessons, highlighted above, provide the broader context for this chapter. The rest of the chapter will focus more specifically on key findings on the role that MFW, WFN, and the participating women’s funds played in relief and recovery efforts. We conclude by making some recommendations for moving forward.

## Key Findings

### Providing rapid response in a catastrophic disaster situation

- **Quick turnaround grants were effective at providing immediate relief for some women’s organizations in the region.** In September 2005, within weeks of the storm, MFW gave the first round of 13 emergency support grants to existing grantees in the region. Often MFW was the first, or one of the first, funders to provide relief for organizations in the region.
- **Streamlined interview process helped to relieve the burden of grant application for grantees.** Respondents we spoke with indicated that MFW strategies were thoughtful and effective, and that it provided them with more time to do the “it” of their work at a time of great need. One grantee summed up their experience this way: *“The expedited interview process was so great. For us, in that moment, that was the most help and the most significant contribution of our relationship with the foundation.”* At least one fund leader who took a more traditional RFP approach to their grantmaking felt that they could have been more proactive. She said, “We as a foundation should have gotten on the ground.... I wish we had been able to do a little more outreach.”
- **It was particularly helpful to have flexible “general operating” grants.** One reason this was so helpful was because other disaster relief funds (FEMA or foundation support) are often restricted or reserved for specific project activities. For instance, one organization that was providing medical care to evacuees received FEMA aide, but they could not use the funds to treat “pre-existing

conditions.” Grantees were able to apply the flexible and non-restricted funds they received from the Katrina grant to the areas of their work in the most need of support or that would have the most immediate impact.

- **Within the Gulf Coast region, the grant process – and progress towards project outcomes--often moved slower than expected because grantee staff on the ground were coping with their own personal losses.** In a disaster of this magnitude, everyone, including those who work in nonprofit organizations are affected. Further, so much basic infrastructure (roads, utilities, garbage pick-up, etc) are affected by the storm that the pace of rebuilding often occurs at a much slower rate than stakeholders at first anticipate.

## Funding strategically

- **In order to avoid duplication of services, many of the women’s funds spent considerable time assessing the needs of service providers before making grants.** The Women’s Fund for a Greater Memphis, Atlanta Women’s Foundation, and Chicago Foundation for Women all took time to closely assess the local service needs before issuing an RFP and awarding grants. In most of these cases, foundation leaders decided that the most basic needs of evacuee women were being met and that their dollars were best reserved for longer-term recovery needs, such as job training and childcare. One fund leader said, “We felt like there was a lot of push when the crisis happened. There was a big crush to meet immediate needs. We let that work happen. We wanted our resources to be used for people that probably would still be here through the winter, at least.”
- **Aside from taking on the business of relief and rebuilding, grantees needed support to learn how to address multiple and complex problems.** As one activist indicated, “Its not just one issue that people are dealing with so you’ve got to help the whole person or the whole family. They’re not coming to you with just one problem.” Another woman leader underscored this statement by stating, “One issue may lead them to you but once you get finished, you’re not just dealing with that one issue or that one individual, you’re dealing with a whole family and all their issues.” Moreover, “Agencies that began post-Katrina and did not understand the importance of a family-strengthening model, were not able to [effectively] service the needs of the client population.”
- **Multiple rounds of grantmaking were an effective strategy for balancing the need for immediate relief with the need to be strategic.** MFW and the Women’s Fund for a Greater Memphis provided small grants at the onset to sustain local services providers before taking some time to survey the landscape of organizations before providing another wave of grants to the region. This approach ensured that they could provide the immediate relief that so many organizations needed, and still be strategic about identifying partners to work with on longer-term recovery.
- **When needs are great, advocacy and direct service are often difficult to separate.** MFW started the project with the assumption that the first period of grantmaking was going to be on supporting service work, followed by a period

supporting advocacy, and then a few pieces of key legislation. As their work progressed, they had to reassess these assumptions because the day-to-day needs of community members were too great: MFW staff, Julia Beatty stated, “We didn’t want to put advocacy above service.” Providing services is how many grassroots agencies were able to connect with new members. Although Ms. is focused on advocacy and grassroots leadership, they also learned that the direct service component was still very important.

## Re-granting models/strategies

- **The most effective re-granting models were those where foundation staff played a more hands on role.** Three of the six women’s funds that participated in this project stand out because they took a very hands-on role in helping to build local coalitions and shape service models. They were more than a “pass-through” organization that connected grant dollars to high-quality local non-profit organizations. MFW was proactive about the grantee recruitment process, engaged local stakeholders in listening circles and convenings to leverage learning, and worked actively to “organize philanthropy” on behalf of grantee organizations. Staff from the Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham participated in community decision making, creating a bundled service plan for women evacuees, and tried to galvanize other funders to sustain the bundled service approach. The Women’s Fund for Greater Memphis was an active participant in local decision-making from the start, helping gather a database of 4000 evacuees and working with the local power company and the city of Memphis to help fill the gap for nonprofits that provided food, shelter, and utility assistance to 450 evacuee families.
- **By funding women’s funds as regranting entities, a necessary focus was placed on the experiences of women, and particularly women of color.** Many of the respondents we spoke with stressed the value that the gender lens had for their work. In some cases, it affirmed the work that they were already doing, but with others it helped them to recognize that a disproportionate number of the people that were left stranded by the storm were women of color. As one informant said, “I think what the Ms. Foundation has done for our organization, post-Katrina, was to... realize that the majority of individuals we were serving post-Katrina, were women and children.... I think that when you’re in the haste of just trying to service a population... you don’t really analyze it... It really helped us to refocus and think about what we’re doing.”
- **Except for MFW, women’s funds distributed funds to existing grantees so that they could get funds to “trusted” nonprofits in at timely way.** Many of the women’s funds believed that, given the time constraints, this approach to grantmaking was more responsible than giving money to organizations that were unknown to them. One respondent explained, “*Because we were a women’s fund located in this area, we already had relationships with organizations...It wasn’t as hard to find the neediest organizations and the ones with the best reputations.*” Although the strategy of funding previous grantees was important for responding quickly, MFW consciously attempted to find established and emerging

progressive groups, outside their established network of grantees. This was important for enhancing their collective ability to address issues of gender, racial, and class inequalities.

### **Promoting the voice of women of color leaders**

- **Engagement of low-income women and women of color have been critical in changing the focus and tenor of discussions on community redevelopment priorities.** However, these women need support at multiple levels. At a basic level, these women need a space to reenergize, as they have been the primary care givers for so many others. They also benefit from training to talk about the needs of their communities within an asset and human rights framework. Grantee leaders shared that this helped women participants to understand that they have “rights to certain things” so that they “can communicate from a Southern, rural perspective to a broader audience.” Finally, community organizers interviewed observed that immigrant women need support in overcoming cultural barriers to civic activism. These barriers are rooted in beliefs of keeping personal problems in the private sphere and addressing attitudes about the traditional roles of women in the patriarchal family clan or religious structure.

### **Infrastructure Building**

- **The capacity and interconnectedness of progressive women’s organizations in the gulf region has been strengthened, but there is still a lot of work to be done.** This grant helped to strengthen the infrastructure of progressive women’s organizations by bringing women and women’s issues to the table and fostering collaboration between diverse organizations that engage women. Yet, more sustained support (grants, convenings, and technical assistance) is needed if emerging partnerships and coalitions are to be sustained in the long-term.
- **Bringing in groups that are not traditionally thought of as “women’s groups” helped both to broaden the use of a gender lens and the perceived inclusiveness of the women’s movement.** Respondents we spoke with talked about how they had appreciated the framework that MFW provided them to think about gender, but also the responsiveness of MFW to the unique concerns and issues facing particular demographic groups (i.e. immigrants, the disabled, African Americans, etc.). Many perceived that there was a mutual exchange of ideas between grantees and between grantees and MFW that enhanced their ability to collaborate and think of each other as allies.

### **Working with local and regional policy leaders for community and systems transformation**

- **Leaders in the region are “strapped” for time and for ideas and, thus, many are more open to problem solving than they were before the storm.** Although many respondents spoke of the unresponsiveness and inadequacy of the state and federal government’s attention to citizen input or public voice, some groups (like the NAACP in Mississippi) have been effective at working with policy leaders in

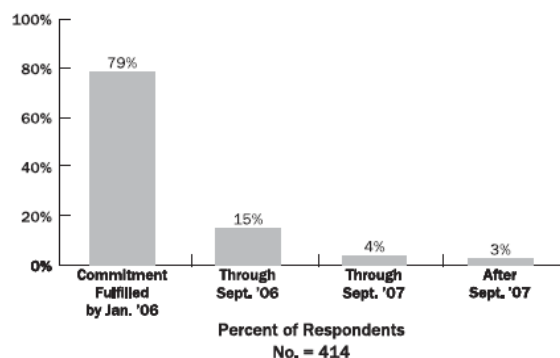
the region, by taking a proactive role in creating a policy agenda. Derrick Johnson of the NAACP, says that “state policy makers have no staff and there are no strong policy institutions. Groups that can develop agendas and push agendas become by default the staffers and the policy institutions.” Similarly, Xochitl Bevara indicated that there is an “idea vacuum” among many community leaders in New Orleans and that they are now open to hearing “best practices” or alternative approaches for addressing problems.

- **Research and data are essential to nonprofits being able to “make the case” for change are essential to local policymakers.** Derrick Johnson, of the NAACP, described that there are “huge gaps in information between policymakers and non-profits about what is sound policy. So without the requisite capacity of organizations being able to generate some true research to provide policy makers as they make these decisions, there are going to continue to be these huge gaps in equitable policies.” As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, we heard a lot from respondents about the value of having “numbers” and “research” at your fingertips when advocating for change with policymakers.
- **Women’s Funds and philanthropy can use their power and “capital” to help create a space at the decision-making table.** For many of the women’s funds we talked to, this grant represented an unusual opportunity to sit at the table with decision-makers and help to shape an approach for serving evacuees. Once at the table, they were able to raise the fact that a high percentage of evacuees and those affected by the storm were women. They were able to be intentional about meeting the unique needs of this population. Further, staff at the MFW were able to use their power and influence to help connect organizations with decision-makers and other funders so they could have more impact.

## Recommendations Moving Forward

A recent Foundation Center report on foundation funding for Gulf storms recovery revealed that the vast majority of funders who provided grants to the region in 2005/2006 do not anticipate providing any additional funding to the region. Few foundations expect to support longer-term rebuilding work in the region. Furthermore, of the 27 respondents (7%) who expect to provide support after the first year, fewer than half expect to make grants after the second year.

Over what timeframe does your foundation expect to provide support in response to the Gulf Coast hurricanes?



Source: The Foundation Center, *Giving in the Aftermath of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes*, August 2006. Due to rounding, percentages do not equal 100.

The lack of broader philanthropic interest in funding long-term Gulf area recovery has implications both for the region, for the grantees that the Katrina Fund supported, and for MFW and WFN’s roles in sustaining support for rebuilding. In this section we highlight priorities for moving forward.

- Continue to fund advocacy and grassroots organizations in order to nurture the burgeoning—yet still fragile—grassroots nonprofit sector in the South.** By all accounts, the breadth, capacity, and level of coordination between nonprofit groups in the south is growing. A number of grassroots organizations and coalitions, such as Coastal Women for Change, Common Ground Collective, and the STEP Coalition, started after the storm. These organizations and others like them will need continued funding and technical assistance if they are going to mature into stable and more long-term assets for the community.

*I am seeing, in a progressive way, momentum building that is not based on elected leadership. I am seeing grassroots leadership as progress in this community... I am worried, though, about missing this unprecedented opportunity, about not bringing the funding or the best practices at the time that we really need it. There is an under-funding of a lot of grassroots efforts going on and that is very worrisome given the opportunity for growth and change at this time.*

—Una Anderson, NONDC

- Continue to fund non-traditional job training, childcare, and affordable housing for women to strengthen the long-term economic health of the region.** MFW and other grantees are making progress on these fronts, but need much more support to increase the numbers reached and to leverage publicly supported workforce development programs. Backed by the data in the IWPR anniversary report, it is clear that structural inequalities will continue to exist unless the issues of—demographic displacement, land loss, labor market segregation by sex and race, lack of public housing—are addressed. MFW and

other grantees have women’s funds participating in this grant on training women for non-traditional and better paying jobs, these measures help to position them to increase their income and build assets for the longer-term recovery of whole communities. Similarly, focusing on meeting the childcare needs for women entering the job market is critical not only as an individual service but also as an economic development strategy.

- **To the extent possible, services should be “bundled” so as to decrease barriers low-income women face to accessing services.** This strategy takes into account the unique needs of single mothers, particularly those that are living in rural environments and who do not have the transportation the need to access services from multiple providers.
- **Support an intermediary or strategy center that can build the capacity of local organizing groups and help them to better coordinate their efforts.** We heard from many respondents that the “time is right” to shape policy on some vital issues in the region, including housing, employment and training, childcare, and transportation. Grassroots organizations in the region, however, find themselves sometimes working inadvertently at cross purposes. Some respondents suggested that is a strong role for MFW and other women’s funds to play in helping grassroots organizations to better coordinate their efforts in order to affect change.

*What we lack so much in Louisiana and truly the whole southeast is the kind of strategy centers and organizing hubs that help groups think through strategies. They help groups who want to fight the demolition of public housing, for instance, to identify who is behind the effort...If foundations and think-tanks across the country could come and help, I think we would be able to build a more unified plan.*

—Xochitl Bevara, FFLIC

- **Direct future grant dollars to organizations in the Gulf region now that many evacuees have integrated into resettlement communities.** Interviews with women’s funds that participated in re-granting outside of the affected region—such as Chicago and Atlanta—indicate that as the evacuee population has integrated into their host communities, they have become diffused and harder to serve. A number of these funds did not express a commitment to continue *specific* funding for Katrina survivors, believing that they could be served as part of the general population. Needs within the region, particularly for advocacy and women’s leadership, remain great.

## Conclusion

In the recent WFN and MFW Katrina anniversary report, *The Calm in the Storm: Women Leaders in Gulf Coast Recovery*, the authors concluded, “Among the many lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina is this: A natural disaster is an opportunity for a policy approach that actively

promotes the well-being of women and supports their solutions. This not only benefits the entire community, it also lifts more families into prosperity than an approach that ignores the assets and roles women bring to recovery and rebuilding.” This evaluation shows that the Katrina Fund has not only made tremendous progress in ensuring that issues affecting women and their families continue to be front and center in the recovery and rebuilding process, the Fund has also directly addressed deep fissures of social injustices that will likely remain long after levees, bridges, roads, and homes are rebuilt. The commitment of the Fund appears to be strong and the work needs to continue in making fundamental changes to current policies and systems. In this sense, the Fund is giving hope for an equitable and brighter future to many of the women, children, and families who have suffered so much.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**Katrina Women's Response Fund List of Grantees**

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## Appendix A: Katrina Women's Response Grantees

### Ms. Foundation for Women 2006 Grantees (N = 23)

MFW 2006 Katrina Grantees	Grant Amount	Areas of Funding
All Congregations Together (ACT), New Orleans, LA	\$30,000	Housing; schools
American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi (ACLU of MS), Jackson, MS	\$15,000	Housing workshop
Boat People SOS, Falls Church, VA	\$30,000	Health care
Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities , Jackson, MS	\$15,000	Health, housing
Coastal Women for Change	\$10,000	Health: healing
Common Ground Collective, New Orleans, LA	\$20,000	Housing
Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA	\$20,000	Advocacy - Criminal justice reform
Families & Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC), Lake Charles, LA	\$15,000	Advocacy - Criminal justice reform; Relocation of base constituency
HEROES	\$5,000	Health -- HIV AIDS
Institute for Women's Policy Research	\$15,000	Research
Jeremiah Group , Harvey, LA	\$30,000	Job Training
Lafayette Restoration Center, Lafayette, LA	\$30,000	Health advocacy: reproductive rts
Louisiana Housing Alliance (LHA), Franklin, LA	\$20,000	Job training: comprehensive
Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA), Jackson, MS	\$15,000	Job training
Mississippi Low Income Childcare Initiative, Biloxi, MS (MLICI)	\$40,000	Childcare advocacy
Mississippi Worker's Center For Human Rights, Oxford, MS	\$45,000	Advocacy
NAACP-MS, Baltimore, MD	\$40,000	Advocacy
New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative (NONDC) , New Orleans, LA	\$30,000	Housing
The National Coalition On Black Civic Participation, Washington, DC	\$50,000	Basic needs: Advocacy/voice
The North Gulfport Community Land Trust, North Gulfport, MS	\$20,000	Housing: Land trust
Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative/Children's Defense Fund (CDF), Jackson, MS (Regional Office)	\$45,000	workforce training
United Houma Nation Relief Fund, Lower Plaquemines, St Bernard, Jefferson Parishes, LA	\$40,000	Job Training
Wider Opportunities For Women, Washington, DC	\$20,000	Job training and advocacy
YWCA of Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, LA	\$10,000	Health: counseling
<b>Total Number of grants: 23</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	

**WFN & Women's Funds' Grantees (N = 24)**

<b>WFN Partner Fund Grantees</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>	<b>Areas of Funding</b>
<b>Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham</b>		
Jeremiah's Hope Skills Center	\$100,000	Job training: comprehensive
Women's fund of Southern Alabama	\$10,000	Health care
<b>Women's Fund of Greater Jackson</b>		
Catholic Charities Legal Assistance Clinic	\$20,000	Legal assistance
Gulf Coast Women's Center	\$20,000	Health: domestic violence
Jackson Public Schools	\$4,425	Mental health
March of Dimes	\$5,000	Maternal and infant health
Moore Community House	\$20,000	Childcare advocacy
Miss. Children's Justice Center	\$20,000	Health: at risk children
Miss. Center for Justice	\$20,000	Legal advocacy-- Housing
<b>Chicago Foundation for Women</b>		
Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries	\$25,000	Health: counseling
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights	\$25,000	Job Training--comprehensive
Austin People's Action Network	\$25,000	Basic needs
<b>Atlanta Foundation for Women</b>		
Women's Economic Development Agency (WEDA)	\$20,000	Job Training -- entrepreneurship
Community of Advanced Practice Nurses	\$15,000	Health
Nicholas House H2H	\$20,000	Housing: Job training
Quality Childcare Program	\$20,000	Childcare
<b>Women's Foundation of Greater Memphis</b>		
Choice, Inc.	\$10,000	Job Training
DeNeuville Learning Center (House of the Good Shepherd)	\$10,000	Job Training
Displaced Citizens of the Gulf Coast, Inc.	\$25,000	Research
Memphis Area Legal Services	\$10,000	Legal assistance
Memphis and Shelby County Community Services Agency	\$10,000	Basic needs/support
UCP/ Memphis Works for Women	\$12,000	Job training-
Community Legal Center: Hurricane Relief	\$10,000	Legal assistance
Dress for Success Memphis	\$5,000	Job training: job skills
<b>Total Number of grants: 24</b>	<b>\$474,145</b>	

**Total number of MFW and WFN/Women's Funds Grants = 47**

**Total funding amount = \$1,074,145**