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## Philanthropists urged to focus more on women

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THE first wave of the women's movement gave women the right to vote. The second wave gave them access to paid work, liberating them from the servitude of unpaid housework and caring duties. The latest episode in the third wave is a concerted push to ensure that philanthropic funds reach those who need it most and are often overlooked: women and girls.

Eve Mahlab, a former Australian businesswoman of the year and the co-founder of the Australian Women Donors Network, is one of the driving forces behind a campaign to increase philanthropic funding for women and girls - which she sees as a critical endeavour of the third wave.

Ms Mahlab said women "get the crumbs" from the philanthropic funding tables, and believes investing in women and girls gives "more bang for your [philanthropic] buck".

You really couldn't get more provocative. At a time when people are constantly being asked to give - to the world's starving, to people displaced by war, politics or natural disasters, to environmental causes - why, one may well ask, should women and girls be singled out for the charitable dollar?

"There are two reasons: one is fairness and the other is effectiveness," says Ms Mahlab, who points out that "gender still matters" and that women, despite their many advances in society, still confront inequity. One of the areas in which this is most obvious is in their cut of the charitable dollar, she says.

"As far as fairness is concerned, there is so much evidence that in almost every area of disadvantage women suffer more or differently than men," Ms Mahlab says.

She reels off some statistics. In Australia, older women are 2½ times more likely to live in poverty than men. The lifetime wages of a woman will be \$1 million less than those of a man. And while women make up 40 per cent of the homeless, most of the people turned away from emergency accommodation are women and their children, because their needs cannot be catered for.

Around the world, less than 10 per cent of foundation grants go to women and girls. And yet, as Ms Mahlab told the Victorian Women's Trust recently: "There is plenty of evidence that the funding of women spreads to children, families and communities. Whereas the funding of men stays with, well, men."

Making sure that philanthropic funds get to women makes sense - it's effective, says Ms Mahlab. But the message can be a difficult one to push. The trustee of one foundation told Ms Mahlab: "We are not interested in girls, we just fund people."

Next month, Ms Mahlab and her colleagues from the Australian Women Donors Network will launch the funding movement Women Mobilising Millions. The aim of the movement is to encourage Australians to think about how they mete out their philanthropic dollars, to apply a "gender lens" and to ask charitable foundations: "Is this appeal intended to benefit women and girls equally with men and boys?"

The Women Mobilising Millions campaign follows in the footsteps of the American funding movement Women Moving Millions, established in 2008 by American philanthropist Helen LaKelly Hunt, the daughter of oil tycoon H. L. Hunt, who will be the guest speaker at the Melbourne launch of the Australian Women Mobilising Millions campaign on February 16 at the Sofitel Hotel.

While in the US more than 100 donors have already made gifts of \$US1 million each, in Australia - where there are far fewer women capable of donating \$1 million - the emphasis will be on raising awareness and on encouraging men and women to donate their time, influence and whatever money they can to the cause of women and girls.

<http://womendonors.org.au>

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/philanthropists-urged-to-focus-more-on-women-20100124-msl2.html>*